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Ph.D Thesis:

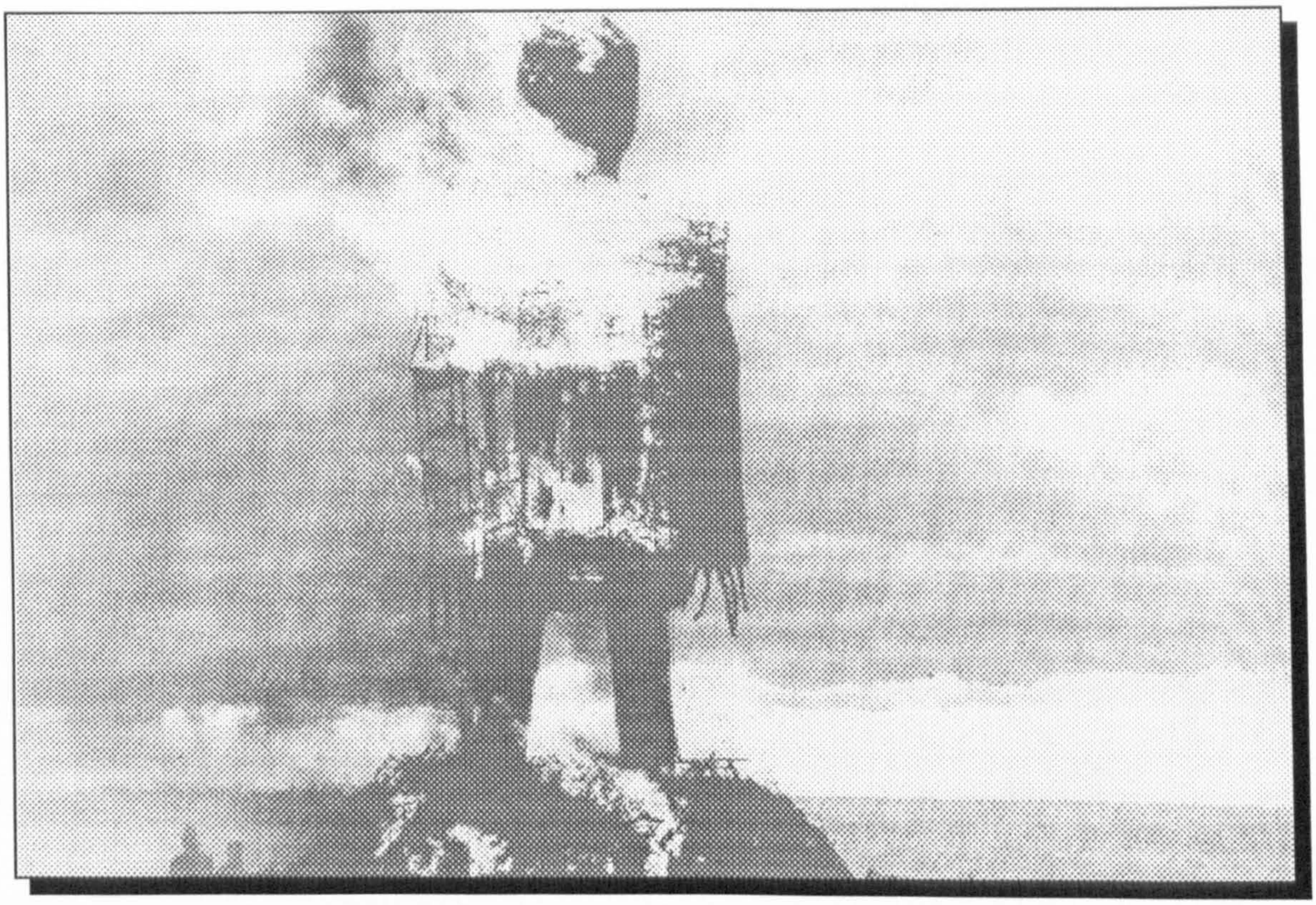
Narrating horror: the horror film as cultural construct

October 31st, 1997.

LIB COP.

'Society gets the films it deserves.'

- Jörg Buttgereit.



Scene from <u>The Wicker Man</u> (Robin Hardy, 1973).

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to Dr. Helen Stoddart for her supervision, constantly productive criticism and support, Rolfe James and Jim and Carol Andrew for their frequent technical help and great generosity with their time, and Andrew Billington for his continued interest and invaluable assistance in tracking down vital material. I would also like to thank my parents for eventually giving in and letting me watch the late night Hammer film when I was ten, without which this thesis would not have been written.

This thesis is dedicated with love to Tina Read, for whom words are not enough.

Abstract

This thesis examines horror films through an application of cultural analysis (primarily the work of Pierre Bourdieu) to selected texts in order to answer critics employing psychoanalytic perspectives to horror. It argues that psychoanalysis misses much of the heart of horror texts through its claims that textual 'meaning' lies within individuals rather than in the society in which horror texts were produced.

Bourdieu's hypotheses are applied to films, along with the work of more specific horror analysts such as Mark Jancovich, amending and fusing these approaches in order to question psychoanalytic criticism. The thesis argues that a limited academic canon of texts is employed in the (still relatively rare) analysis of horror, and that such a narrowing of the field is inappropriate and limiting. It argues that the study of extreme and banned material in analysis is constructive academically, accessing underground horror production through an extended focus on horror fan culture, following Robin Wood's assertion that horror aficionados form horror's main body of consumers. Through an examination of how fan culture perceives and defends itself, material previously neglected by academia, though potentially of great interest to cultural analysis (such as the underground and banned films) is analysed alongside canonical texts.

The thesis focuses mainly on post-1968 films, and so examines the influence of post-Fordist economics and ideals on the texts that it studies, arguing that at every level these structures construct the subtle fears of horror's audiences, delimited through what texts present as frightening. This is developed alongside a consideration of important historical events and cultural ideals surrounding the production of texts. It is argued that such events exert subtle influences during textual creation, and that they help to exacerbate the audience fears that horror films exploit. It is also argued that, with amendment, auteur theory may be applied to some horror directors, despite the majority of internal textual meanings being generated by a film's cultural frame rather than purely its director.

Though, through the horror underground and accepted academic canons many types of horror film are considered, especial attention is given to the Slasher and Possession genres, which, it is argued, oppose directly each other's subtextual, ideological agendas. Analysis of other genres and the texts (both canonical and underground/banned) that compose them is present throughout the thesis. Underlying all analysis is a consideration of how the mass (British and U.S) media seeks to demonise horror and its consumers, and how legislation against texts and individuals brings together fans in an alternative culture through the fanzines that they read.

It is hoped that through such an approach and emphasis on the non-canonical as well as the canonical, future academic analysis of horror will be more comprehensive in its choice of studied texts. This could occur, I suggest, through an acknowledgement that, following Wood, central to the analysis of horror is an understanding of its aficionados and the culture that they forge for themselves.

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Introduction

'It's just a plain old carnival,' said Will.
'Like heck,' said Jim.
-Something Wicked This Way Comes[1]

The purpose of a horror film is to scare its audience; films which do so are deemed successful, whilst those that do not are open to ridicule and frequent critical dismissal as failures. It has been claimed that 'one goes to a horror film in order to have a nightmare' (Kawin 1981, reproduced in Mast, Cohen and Braudy [eds] 1992: 550), and, when a film is successfill, literal nightmares are what it is hoped that viewers will get. Dawn Of The Dead (George Romero, 1978) is, therefore, promoted as 'as scary a movie as you could hope to see in a month of nightmares' on the cover of its 'Entertainment In Video' British release[2].

Such is the widespread cultural desire to be exposed to 'nightmarish' material that audiences pay to experience feelings that it is fair to assume they would generally rather avoid, such as fear, anxiety, revulsion and, frequently, nausea. Watching a successful horror film is not a calming, relaxing experience; nor in the majority of cases can it be claimed that watching horror is an overtly educational experience. The frequently cited 'rollercoaster' ride of horror (The Evil Dead [Sam Raimi, 1982] is described on its packaging as having a 'captivating, rollercoaster energy', for example) implies a wish by audiences to experience an alignment of thrills and fear in roughly equal proportions whilst watching horror texts. It is the social precedence for these audience desires that this thesis will attempt to locate through the

[1]Bradbury 1962.

[2]Such is the intensity of the nightmare-horror link that one of history's most successful honor cycles (the Nightmare On Elm Street series, running from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s) trades exclusively in the horrific linkage of dream states and the cinematic text. Here nightmares become literal, as the fears of a group of teenagers rise in the corporeal form of Freddy Kruger to sever the link between life and death, the waking and the nightmare, and trap their souls in a surreal, dream-state dimension.

application of cultural analysis to horror and its viewers.

Horror films, as popular culture, are mostly created for mass consumption through the cinema and video markets. They are, and, throughout the history of cinema have always been, a highly profitable art form taking as their unspoken internal philosophy that at heart everybody likes to be terrified. To scare a hypothetical audience a horror film must, by necessity, deal with what is scary and frightening to many people in order that it may attempt to terrify the majority of its viewers; therefore, if a film frightens the bulk of its audience, it may be claimed that it has partially accessed common fears through its narrative.

As a result, fears potentially common across the whole of a text's projected audience must ideally constitute the central narrative currency in a successful film. It is the contention of this thesis that through an examination of the textual projection of mass fear in horror, we may see revealed not only elements of the series of ideological frames that surround each narrative within a given culture (for example, as we shall see, how industrial ethics extend beyond the workplace into workers' everyday lives and help to formulate morality, a sense of what is right and wrong and so on), but also the socio-economic structures which support and empower such frames. The term 'ideology' essentially encompasses a body of ideas, usually political and/or economic, forming the basis of a national or sectarian policy. Therefore, I shall argue that what social agents[3] find fearful is dependent upon how the ideological structures framing their everyday lives (which are lived broadly in compliance with the often unspoken rules of such policies) operate to define what society deems acceptable and frightening. This allows a consideration of how agents position themselves in relation to the subtle machinations of those ideological structures.

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[3]'Agent' here and throughout refers to an individual existing and operating within a contemporary social structure and subject to all of the conditionings, interactions, fears and expectations that such existence implies. Agency is, then, the experience of agents within the social structures of which I write.

However, this thesis does not purport to provide a wholistic 'explanation' of horror films; rather, it attempts to examine the form and enunciation of mass fears as they manifest themselves through this particular type of popular culture. The examination of the projection of such concerns onto the symbolic 'screen' which constitutes part of western culture's filmed entertainment will allow the critical dissection of a series of texts in order to locate common themes and concerns and relate them outwards into the society from which, I will argue, they are generated. Such a framework will allow the identification of cultural policies which affect the everyday lives of horror's target audiences. In some cases, such fears will be identified as a cultural reaction to specific historical events and situations which have generated enough concern to become symbolically manifested in the popular culture of the period.

Robin Wood, an analyst whose work has become highly influential in the debates surrounding horror, seeks to provide an account of the post-Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) American horror text as a cultural construct (Wood 1984). He considers ideology to constitute a form of social conditioning, and establishes the individual unconscious as a receptacle for what is repressed by (patriarchal) ideological structures.

Sexuality unleashed through horror: Shivers (David Cronenberg, 1975).

Wood considers that agents become subject to subtle forms of control which channel them into accepting patriarchy,capitalism, monogamy and heterosexuality as doxic[4] normalcy. In order to do this, repression of

[4]Doxa is the unspoken rules of social existence under which agents operate. Pierre Bourdieu defines existence under doxa as 'an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident' (Bourdieu, 1984).

sexuality and creative energy occurs, ensuring that their dominant expression is delimited through the doxic. For Wood, horror monsters represent all that agents repress, ensuring through diegetic construction that they are figured as evil and, ultimately, are eliminated. Wood is essentially a psychoanalytic critic who fuses his approach with the tools of Marxist analysis; although, as will be seen, I do not believe that psychoanalysis provides the most productive method of horror analysis, much of Wood's culturally-based approach is applicable to the texts and issues that I will study, and many of his ideas inform my own positions.

Randal Johnson states that 'agents do not act in a vacuum, but rather in concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations' (Bourdieu 1993: 6). It is to these framing social relations as opposed to the more individualised, solipsistic approach advocated by psychoanalysis that I will look to seek out elements of the workings of the texts studied (ie, to the economic and political social operations surrounding each text rather than simply to the text itself). As Bourdieu claims,

> the history for perception of [a] work is the essential complement of the history of the instruments for production of the work, to the extent that every work is...made twice, by the originator and by the beholder, or rather, by the society to which the beholder belongs (ibid: 224).

Therefore, the repetition of structures, codes and icons within a generic frame reveals a continuity of the ideals that those repetitions represent across a body of texts; given this, it often proves more productive to study wider narrative conventions rather than only the close workings of an individual text.

It is, then, important to consider that cultural fields, as stipulated by Bourdieu, though essentially autonomous are closely related to each other through existence within the homologous structuring body of the culture which surrounds them. Bourdieu develops

elements of his model of social structuring from the Althussarian concept of Ideological and Restrictive State Apparatuses, providing what I would like to claim is a more rounded and specific series of analytic tools and concepts, as we shall discover later. Bourdieu's fields are, then, structures whose workings link together to form a given social whole, but which are capable of operating with relative autonomy despite being linked to the social frame surrounding them; we may divide the educational field from the artistic field, for example. This avoids Althusser's more rigid division of social institutions into Ideological[5] (such as the Church) and Restrictive (such as the police) agencies, whilst acknowledging the central importance of his influence and allowing that these central operations do exist, and furthermore exist to a greater or lesser extent through an exertion of influence upon agents.

Each field, according to Bourdieu, has its own laws of functioning but remains essentially dynamic, since if the position, function or beliefs of the agents within a field changes, then ultimately the field surrounding them will also change to incorporate these new developments. Extending this, I suggest that we may sub-divide Bourdieu's fields into more localised categories; therefore we may allow that within the cultural field exists fields of, for example, novel writing, the production of poetry, or the creative processes involved in film production. Unlike Marx, Bourdieu considers the economic field as one amongst many rather than the primary structure to which all other fields are ultimately reducible.

However, given the currency of horror films (mass fear) it seems that the current economic field, linked intimately as it is with the contemporary values of post-Fordism[6], provides a vital, if not always the primary, motivation for the enunciation of cultural concerns.

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[5]Ideological State Apparatuses are the concealed institutions which structure hegemony in society. Restrictive State Apparatuses are the official institutions which back this up through legistlation. See Althusser 1994.

[6]Further discussion follows.

Apocalypse Horror detailing events leading up to or following the end of the world, therefore, could not exist without widespread fear of apocalypse and, as we shall see, it is apparent that in such texts the invasion, attack or threat very frequently has at heart an economic origin. As Michael Klein claims,

> given...ideological hegemony...oppositional analyses of contemporary historical experience often have to be conveyed through a form of discourse that is both accessible and covert (Klein 1994: 211)

Horror is, I would like to claim, an ideal form of cultural discourse through which to express covertly common cultural fears to wide audiences.

However, by far the most important consideration for this thesis that Bourdieu provides is a critical distancing from the belief that bodies of meaning within a text are generated solely by the author, and that the meanings that s/he articulates are based entirely upon their class origin. Bourdieu considers that personal habitus[7] and social trajectory, class, gender, ethnicity, the personal relationship between the author and the cultural field within which s/he operates, and his/her relationship to positions of power within society, are combined to create a life experience which is translated indirectly through the texts produced. Aesthetic taste and the production of aesthetic standards against which texts are judged, accepted or rejected is, therefore, a complex social process, and one which changes constantly as agents' life experiences (and fluctuations within the cultural fields framing a text or genre) change. These considerations provide a key point of access into the analysis of generic change within horror, and are a preliminary concern when questioning why representations of mass fear, empowered by ideological dominance exerted upon a given society, changes over time,

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[7]Agents' 'second sense' of life experience - the unspoken 'rules' that ideology insists that they operate by, of which operations they remain unaware.

location and political state.

Using Bourdieu as a conceptual backdrop, my reading of horror will be delimited through an examination of what has become a central academic text for horror analysis: Carol Clover's Men, Women And Chainsaws: Gender In The Modern Horror Film (Clover 1992). Whilst I remain impressed with Clover's scope and analysis, I strongly oppose much of her hypothesis and readings. I will attempt to answer her analysis by providing an alternative hypothesis focused upon the social frame of horror which will operate through a modified application of Mark Jancovich's Horror (Jancovich 1992) and American Horror From 1951 To The Present (Jancovich 1994) and other cultural analysts[8].

To achieve this, this thesis is structured as follows: an overview of some of the major critical positions and debates surrounding horror opens my analysis, and is the subject of much of this introduction. I will then detail conservatism in the academic selection of a horror canon and argue for its expansion, claim that the so-called 'video nasty' is vital to academic debate, and detail the analytic approaches of Clover and Jancovich. These summary/commentaries will foreground a critical challenging of the former by a selective, modified application of the latter. I shall then examine the core horror audience and its construction of a horror meta-text through fan-culture with particular focus on how it seeks to legitimate its 'deviant' cultural taste. In addition, I will argue against the conception of horror as a self-contained genre, and address the popular (fan) conviction that auteurs exist within horror production.

I will analyse films included in the academic canon in order to challenge Clover and promote my own hypotheses and alternative readings of texts. To facilitate this, canonical

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[8]As this is a thesis dealing primarily with textual criticism as oppose to being a history thesis, historical events provide a context for the films analysed, rather than being the main focus. As such, and because I cite major historical events large enough to generate often global concerns (for example, Vietnam), I have assumed that readers will be familiar with these events rather than detailing them in depth and compromising my main focus - the analysis of horror.

analysis will be structured loosely around the model of Clover's text, focusing on films that she and fellow academics examine in order to challenge their hypotheses on common textual ground. There will, therefore, be an especial, and extended, focus on Slasher and Possession texts, which I shall argue oppose each other's subtextual ideological agendas. This should be considered as a working conclusion (and will take the place of a formal conclusion) since the ideas that I will express throughout the thesis regarding cultural analysis will be applied there as a concrete example of what I write about and the critical approach that I recommend. This seems a more useful approach than a conclusion which simply summarises the previous argument. Texts not falling under the headings of these two genres will be analysed, though not in the same depth.

Parallel to this, I will attempt to move beyond established horror criticism with the aim of expanding the academic canon to include universally vilified material. Broadly, in terms of horror films, the academic canon consists of texts which either changed a horror genre, are stylistically and/or narratively experimental, tie easily into the analysis of Gothic literature, or which may be regarded as mainstream 'classics' which utilise usually non-secular themes, such as Rosemary's Baby (Roman Polanski, 1968). Contentious or underground texts rarely enter the canon for a variety of reasons which will be explored later, alongside a further consideration of what constitutes the academic canon. It may be claimed that the canon has taken this form due to a reluctance on the part of the academy and its cultural analysts to be seen to embrace what is commonly considered as the lowest of 'low brow' culture.

In an attempt to challenge this perception, I will focus on the analysis of extreme, banned and underground horror alongside canonical texts in order to move into new areas of critical discussion. I will argue that as much of this material is illegal in Britain and many other countries, analysts may discover the presence within them of ideologies and aesthetics deemed

too challenging to hegemonic values to be legally available, exposing what our culture finds threatening enough to legislate against. It will become clear that such material is, for this reason, equally, if not more valid in terms of social analysis than that which constructs academia's cinematic canon. Where already heavily censored films have been banned in Britain (a frequent occurrence), full uncut versions will be analysed.

The framing ideological structures revealed through an examination of contemporary horror are, I shall argue, empowered (and in turn empower individual narratives) by the socio-economic structuring of post-Fordism. Although the operation of post-Fordist ideals will become evident through textual analysis, it is worth defining the term briefly. Post-Fordist social organisation grew out of the Fordist economic ideal of the 1950s, itself developing in America during Roosevelt's New Deal era of the 1930s[9]. The New Deal 'relief plan...gave employment to over 8 [sic] million people' (Mitchell and Maidment [eds] 1993: 283), a situation which allowed the simultaneous development of the new work ethic of Fordism in tandem with the welcoming back to work of a large percentage of America's long-term unemployed. In cultural analysis, the use of the terms 'Fordism' and post-Fordism is not necessarily restricted to the practical labour processes and operations associated with Henry Ford, but instead also refers to a particular system and organisation of social existence, dependent upon certain political and economic structures, means of organisation and beliefs. Jancovich states that,

> The Fordist system developed a bureaucratic rationality in which experts drawn from the state, corporations and organised labour collaborated to regulate social life...increas[ing] state powers...in favour of greater intervention in the

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[9]A number of texts have been used in the writing of this thesis to contextualise historically the events of which I write. A good starting point from which to consider such events is Twentieth-Century America: The Intellectual and Cultural Context (Tallack 1991).

> management of the economy...[as] the state took greater responsibility for social welfare (Jancovich 1994: 10-11)

This was achieved through the maintenance of a social hierarchy which separated the workers from those who governed them, and who were seen to be 'experts' of some kind. Jancovich continues, claiming that these experts not only regulated the labour process,

> but also personal relations, training, product design, and the planned obsolescence of equipment and product...regulat[ing] the process of consumption through...advertising (ibid).

Fordism was, therefore, a centrally ordered system which operated in a top-down fashion: instructions on work practices and social and personal ethics, rules and etiquette were formulated by 'experts' and passed down to the workers in order to safeguard Fordism and the experts' own positions within it. This 'advice' (albeit often non-negotiable, especially in the workplace) was disguised as information being offered in good faith, to no personal gain for the centralised experts, in order that workers would enjoy a better lifestyle. Therefore,

> an *élite* of experts used technical-scientific rationality in an attempt to regulate a whole series of social, economic and cultural activities...[this has been] referred to as 'the Power Elite' (ibid).

Over time, the centralisation of power within the workplace, which also had direct influence on the leisure activities and even moral beliefs of workers, came to be seen as manipulative and covert.

Ultimately, 'as this process developed...people [began] to claim that consciousness and desire were now integrated within the system of rational control' (ibid: 19). Increasingly, therefore, Fordism began to be seen as an oppressive force which sought to repress expressions of human creativity and individuality through the standardisation of the lives of

workers in order that they conform to the work and social ethic of which they were a part. Concern regarding such control over the bodies and minds of non-expert individuals throughout society becomes evident in countless horror texts of the 1950s, showing that Fordism was quickly becoming an area of real, mass cultural concern which found articulation not on the personal level of individual agents (potentially dangerous, as to speak against the system, then as now, was to effectively speak against western culture in its entirety) but through the distillation of these concerns into a popular discourse of fear: horror films.

However, I do not wish to claim that Fordism is a self-contained system which may be considered in isolation from the general capitalist hegemony which surrounds it. Fordism and post-Fordism are constructs generated and intricately connected to mid to late twentieth century western capitalism, and as such they need to be considered as both a symptom of a wider and more general series of ethics *and* as a cause of the myriad of concerns with which this thesis deals. Whilst I will focus dominantly upon the operation of Fordism and post-Fordism, the reader should always bear in mind their crucial connections to the wider capitalist ethic and its general hegemonic values, which, as we shall see, become specific values within Fordist and post-Fordist systems.

Fordist fears are evident in 1950s horror films at many levels, including an overwhelming fear of centralised bodies of organisation and increasing mass-consciousness. As Jancovich argues, Invasion Of The Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956) may be read in terms of the threat to humanity which its narrative details as not only utilising common fears of Communist invasion, but also projecting fears of being reduced to an unthinking agent operating within a dominant ideological structure by a centralised group of 'experts' (the invaders) - a fear of Fordist organisation, and especially the McCarthy anti-Communist 'witch-hunts'. For this reason, invasion narratives in the 1950s frequently detailed an attack by

ideological groups rather than by individual monsters such as vampires. This is evident in, for example, the threat of potentially totalitarian social reorganisation in The Thing From Another World (Christian Nyby, 1951), The Day The Earth Stood Still (Robert Wise, 1951), Them! (Gordon Douglas, 1954) and Invasion Of The Body Snatchers to name but four.

Fordist fears: The Thing From Another World.

This thesis is not concerned overtly with Fordist-era texts, so no further detail will be entered into here[10], though it is interesting to note a similar body of concerns surrounding the remake of Invasion Of The Body Snatchers by Phillip Kaufman in 1978. Under the Jimmy Carter administration (1977-1980) and previous weak leadership and foreign policy, previous president Richard Nixon claimed that,

> Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, South Yemen, Mozambique, Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam, all have been brought under communist [sic] domination since 1974; nearly 100 million people in the last five years (Nixon 1980: x).

Kaufman's remake, as in the original, connects with these concerns of universal Communist takeover, perhaps also in response to Carter's official pardoning of Vietnam draft evaders during its year of production. As in the original, it also attacks American government, not this time aiming at McCarthyism but at the common perception of Carter's weakened foreign and domestic policy, his seemingly inadequate handling of the Iran hostage crisis and his apparent handing over of much of his advisors' power to his wife, Rosalynn, all of which were seen by

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[10]See Jancovich for a detailed account of the projection of Fordist fears in 1950s horror. Also, for a more general overview of conventions in the context of wider American culture, see Maltby and Bowles 1993.

Nixon to contribute to America's weakening and Communism's strengthening. These events resonate through horror produced during this period, and, it may be claimed, inspired directly the prevalence of mindless, unthinking adversaries in 1970s horror, seen in the popularity of Zombie films, the physically and mentally reduced army of 'Lurkers' in Phantasm (Don. A Coscarelli, 1979) or the popularity of Possession narratives where the body and mind is invaded by hostile, controlling entities, reducing victims to unthinking puppets.

Fordist organisation eventually gave way to post-Fordist structuring in the late 1960s. Post-Fordism, a reformation of structures of existing economic power, exerted more subtle influence over the lives of agents through the breaking down of the rigidity of the Fordist 'expert'/workers division, apparently challenging and amending the power of organised labour, though in reality actually strengthening the control exerted upon individuals. As Jancovich states,

> Rather than offering labour stability and security in exchange for loyalty and obedience, there is [now] a tendency by employers to rely on short-term contracts which enable labour to be taken on and laid off in response to fluctuating circumstance (Jancovich 1992: 84).

It may be argued that this particular aspect of post-Fordism is grounds for much anxiety and feelings of insecurity amongst workforces. In addition to this, under post-Fordism,

> The state...was 'rolled back' as public programmes were privatised. National industries were sold off, and the population was encouraged to take greater responsibility for its own welfare, rather than looking to the state for support. New labour processes...enabled industry to manufacture cheaply small batches of products....As a result, standardized [sic] forms of mass production gave way to constantly changing markets, fleeting cultural goods, and a greater emphasis on

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difference. (ibid: 84-85).

Clearly, this does not lead to the removal of forms of rational control: instead, the process of control is hidden through its very de-centralisation. Whereas under Fordism agents could identify the forces controlling them, under post-Fordism control comes from all angles, and, to the increasingly paranoid and insecure post-Fordist mind, from all sides.

De-centralisation of power, combined with short-term contracting which constructs workers as easily disposable commodities, generates cultural concerns which are focused on these issues. In The Thing From Another World, the threat is horrific but visible and contained in one main body (though it is capable of reproducing) and hence is centralised. In the post-Fordist era remake, The Thing (John Carpenter, 1982), the threat is horrific because it remains largely invisible, reproduces frequently, has no one main body, and so is decentralised. In The Thing, the threat exists in the bodies of agents, in many places simultaneously. The threat exerts control over its victims, but potential future victims remain unaware of who is and who is not infected; this generates paranoia centred around concerns regarding the difficulty of identifying who is controlled, who is controlling, where and how that control operates and when it will manifest itself. Though the story is essentially the same in both versions, fear for characters and audiences is generated in very different ways across the two texts, reflecting directly the economic structures of Fordism and post-Fordism under which they were respectively created.

Agents dependent upon short-term contracts under post-Fordism are therefore at the financial mercy of fluctuating global consumer markets and needs through the introduction of vast consumer choice. To add to these concerns, technological innovation increasingly replaces human labour in the workplace. It may be argued that individuals, though having more market choice, become pawns within the employment market under post-Fordism, as the

stability of long-term contracting and its benefits (medical options and paid leave, for example) are removed.

Bourdieu refers to post-Fordist structures without identifying them as such (Bourdieu 1984: 153). He claims that, post-1960s, the bourgeoisie produced and maintained what he terms a new bodily hexis (essentially an ideal self and body image generated by new, pseudo-scientific 'experts' such as sex counsellors, style and fashion journalists and therapists), backed up by corresponding body images presented in the media through advertising, 'super-models', clothes, sexual attitudes and so on. Such experts are hidden; agents are not consciously aware that they affect their world view, but, such is the relentless nature with which they are bombarded by expert opinions which are presented as hegemonic, that agents become socialised into accepting the world view that experts forward.

These experts are de-centralised and subtly controlling, so constitute a self-governing body of arbiters of lifestyle, morals, attitudes and structures of belief . Working in tandem with other methods of de-centralised control (cited above), such structures seduce agents into complicity, allowing them to allow the experts to continue to exert influence. As Bourdieu claims, such approaches substitute seduction for suppression and repression, 'advertising for authority...[and] the velvet glove for the iron fist' (ibid: 154). Above all, such methods are subtle to the point of being almost invisible.

It may be claimed that such methods of control are partially established by the education system, as previously, under Fordist and pre-Fordist systems, agents either passed or failed their educations, either way being directed towards a clear-cut life course. Under post-Fordism, and in keeping with its diffuse nature, a greater choice is given: if an agent initially fails, s/he can still enter higher education by studying a less traditionally academic subject or attending a less prestigious educational institution. This results in a body of agents

with vague career aspirations who, it may be argued, have a greater chance of manoeuvre within the career market but who lack a focused career path.

Whereas the old system placed agents on a path from which they could not sway, not allowing fantasies of what alternatives could be achieved (in keeping with Fordism, a duller but more stable condition of existence), the diffuse modern system allows agents to delay gaining a relatively stable job or social position by filling alternative educational paths with individuals long considered as unsuitable. Ultimately an delay in the realisation that social aspirations and fantasies of 'high' careers are just that - fantasies - occurs, dependent upon the vagaries of the system in which agents exist. Continued vagueness, choice and de-centralised acknowledgments of agents' 'success' or 'failure' is essentially a means to maintain them in a system in which others exert control over them through diverting their attention for as long as possible from an acknowledgements of personal failure[11].

As a result, fears in post-Fordist era (post-1968) horror texts do not revolve dominantly around sinister *centralised* ideologies and controlling bodies such as mad scientists and aliens, but have become channelled primarily into two social structures: the military and the family which are figured as shaping agents' lives through subtle control, and permeating mass consciousness through hegemonic influence. Typically, in post-Fordist horror, the military is

> presented as the ultimate system of scientific technical rationality...[which] not only seeks to dominate and control the population, but also threatens it with ultimate annihilation (Jancovich 1992: 85)

by lurking in the background of political decision and controlling elements of existence by

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[11]Bourdieu 1984: 155-156.

'pulling the strings'.

> The family is typically presented with more ambivalence:
>
> as a primary site of socialization [sic] and male authority, it is frequently presented as a source of horror, an institution which threatens forms of violence and domination which are both physical and psychological....[yet] can also provide an image of community and interaction which challenges the systems of [dispersed] rational domination (ibid).

The family becomes a smaller version of the military ethic, subtly socialising agents into acceptance of a body of cultural ethics dominated by patriarchy, then 'pulling strings' throughout agents' lives until they become the socialisers of families of their own. The family, and in particular the role of the father, is at best a precarious institution in modern horror.

In American post-Fordist culture of the 1970s and 1980s we may also trace such concerns directly to historical events and figures. The 'family' of America and its governmental patriarch were increasingly demonised throughout the 1970s as weak, ineffectual, wrong-headed and corrupt. The last years of Carter's presidency were compromised by the Iran hostage situation to which he offered no immediate solution, appearing merely to sympathise on the sidelines with the families of the American hostages. Carter, however, did present himself during this period as a caring father: he famously kept family photographs of the hostages in the Oval Office and constantly referred to them as members of America's extended family.

Carter promoted an image of the worried parent wishing to protect his 'children', and spoke frequently of the crisis in such terms. As Susan Jeffords explains, 'Carter knew the names of each Iranian hostage, became friends with their families, and prayed for their rescue individually' (Jeffords 1994: 37). Carter claimed that the hostages 'seemed like part of [his]

own family' (Carter 1982: 4), underlining this paternal image.

This was a paradox: Carter, the 'caring parent', did not protect and liberate his 'children', or challenge effectively those who sought to harm them. Post-Fordist concern, already anxious about the roles of family and father, was focused, I would like to argue, through the image of an ineffectual, yet all powerful presidential father figure. If so, then because of the tension between well-meant worry and apparently weak inaction, elements of cultural concern could feasibly have been generated by the unspoken questions, 'is Carter's lack of direct action a betrayal of his symbolic-parental status?' and 'the 'father' appears not to *really* care, yet seems so sympathetic: which is the truth?'.

Such concerns apparently strengthen the development of negative, paranoid and suspicious visions of fathers in contemporary horror: the father is absent in Carrie (Brian De Palma, 1976), tacitly allowing the madness of Mrs. White to develop unchecked, whilst in Death Trap (Tobe Hooper, 1976) the weakened father is taken to his extreme. Here a family visits the hotel of a psychopath and is attacked by him. The mother and daughter are endlessly tormented by the killer whilst the father sinks into hysterical impotence, babbling incoherently and unable to protect them. For Americans, such images were surely borne out by Carter's impotent but emotional reaction to the chastisement of his 'children'.

This period also saw the release of Helter Skelter (Tom Gries, 1976) exploring Charles Manson's destructive dominance over his appropriately named Family, Demon Seed (Donald Cammell, 1977) in which the father is entirely dehumanised and becomes a mechanical rapist, The Hills Have Eyes (Wes Craven, 1977) in which an evil father presides over a family of cannibals and a good father, weakened with angina, is the first to die and so cannot protect his children, who are once again taken hostage, The Amityville Horror (Stuart Rosenberg, 1979) in which a father becomes a potential axe murderer and, amongst *many* others, The Omen

(Richard Donner, 1976) and Damien: Omen II (Don Taylor, 1978) in which the father is literally Satan and the action takes place in the political arena[12]. Post-Fordist concerns clearly became focused through historical figures and events during this, as any other, period to produce a concrete body of positions regarding, amongst other issues, fathers and the status of the family.

Though of a different period, it is directly because of post-Fordist father-paranoia that the third filmed version of Invasion Of The Body Snatchers, Abel Ferrara's Body Snatchers (1994) fuses family and military, primarily through the father, as a source of horror. Here the invasion occurs within both a military camp and a troubled family who live there, seen through the eyes of Marty, a sullen and angst-ridden teenager. Though modelled clearly on Freud's essay of Family Romance[13], the family-military premise, delimited through the role of the father (it was he who brought the family to the base and around whom Marty's anxiety revolves) adds a post-Fordist depth to perhaps the most paranoid of all horror scenarios: that everyone else is different from, and is after, you. This is enhanced by the father's role in Ferrara's version (a top government scientist), and perhaps had its paranoid roots in specific family and quasi-military based events which occurred in Waco, Texas during 1994.

Events at Waco during this time were brought to world attention when David Koresh, the leader of a Seventh Day Adventist-style religious cult, who clearly modelled his organisation on Manson's Family, infused his cult members with a blind faith in him similar to that promoted by the similarly (self) destructive Jim Jones in the 1970s, and ended an FBI seige at the cult's headquarters by ordering the deaths of his congregation. Koresh, whose 'brainwashing' techniques subsequently became the focus of much media attention, ordered

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[12]At the end of The Omen it is hinted that the anti-Christ is adopted by the president himself.

[13]A complex theory and common adolescent abduction fantasy, the basis of which is that the child believes his/her parents to have been replaced by hostile usurpers (Strachey 1966).

cult members to commit suicide. The majority of those who did not were killed in a huge fire when they consented to allow Koresh to burn the building into which they had sealed themselves[14]. The cult was structured as an incestuous family with Koresh as the all powerful father, controlling every element of his disciples' lives and thoughts, and was run with military precision, with cult members being heavily armed and trained in the use of weapons.

The FBI siege added a further military dimension to what was to become the leading news item on international television. Such concerns are clearly reflected, in corresponding terms, in Body Snatchers, pointing to the direct influence of specific cultural events in horror films when merged with largely unspoken economic concerns established in the social psyche through post-Fordism. The emergence of post-Fordist fears and paranoia in modern horror texts will be studied subsequently to expose common, specific cultural fears operating below the surface of selected texts, such as issues surrounding Vietnam, Reaganite 'family values', and modified gender roles in the wake of the expanding feminist movement during the 1970s.

Although it is inappropriately limiting to analysts to link bodies of meaning in texts only to specific historical and political events at the expense of an exploration of other means of analysis and analytic tools, it is profitable to recognise that certain events, when considered in the context of the political ethos framing them, do generate cultural responses which may then be reflected through popular culture. The majority of films in this study were made either in America, or were influenced by trends in American film production, in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The 1970s in America were, broadly speaking, characterised politically by doubt, uncertainty and negative feeling in the electorate[15]; Ronald Reagan came to power in 1980

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[14]Similar, though less overtly violent, events occurred in March 1997 when the leader of the Arizonan Heaven's Gate cult (affectionately but ominously known as John Doe to his followers) ordered mass suicide so that his congregations' souls could be taken aboard a UFO they believed was trailing the Hale-Bopp comet.

[15]For a comprehensive analysis of such concerns operating in the Action genre during the 1970s and 1980s see Jeffords 1994.

after a long line of presidents who public opinion widely held had failed, or, in the case of Kennedy, had been failed by, the country. Johnson was publicly and continually condemned for Vietnam, Nixon for Watergate, and Ford and Carter for 'going soft' on Communism during and in the wake of Vietnam, and, specifically for Carter, criticism was levelled at his weak stance on terrorism. Indeed,

> the 'stagflation' of the late 1970s (created in part by OPEC's oil embargo), the Iranian hostage crisis, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, were quickly interpreted by both Democratic and Republican leaders as the failure of Carter's well-intentioned but naïve approach to foreign affairs (Carpini and Klein 1994: 251).

Culture concerns regarding the leadership of America were, therefore, rife.

Furthermore, Carter was considered weak after 'caving in on SALT II' (Jeffords 1994: 8), the nuclear disarmament program, upon allegedly submitting to Russian demands. Nixon claimed that under Carter America was 'drifting...uncertain [and] irresolute' (ibid). This is emphasised by Carpini, who states that, during Carter's term of office,

> the [cultural] result was a political vacuum, interspersed with disconnected, often contradictory beliefs, attitudes and opinions, concerning the role of force in foreign relations (Carpini and Klein 1994: 251).

Nixon also claimed that America had become feminised, and that, 'thus reduced [it] will not survive - nor will freedom or Western values survive' (cited in Jeffords 1994: 8). The unspoken ideal stressed here by Nixon to combat the contradictory beliefs and attitudes of which Carpini speaks is, therefore, macho, action-orientated leadership employed to combat the social, political, personal and moral 'weaknesses' of the previous years.

America, experiencing a desperate need to feel good about itself again, would have, it may be argued, wanted Reagan to succeed after Carter's impotent failure to act effectively to

free the Iranian hostages. This crisis of confidence was doubtless enhanced by the subtleties of post-Fordist paranoia. That this is true is underlined by the assertion that 'new worries about people's vigour and ambition, industriousness and will' (Wilkinson 1984: 6) were rife during this period. Jeffords' analysis is hindered by her refusal to acknowledge such post-Fordist concerns directly, in relation to the specific historical events that she analyses through popular culture.

The disastrous politics of the 1970s, therefore, produced both the paranoid political thriller (for example Alan J. Pakula's The Parallax View and Francis Ford Coppola's The Conversation, both in 1974, the period of Watergate) and the Disaster film, in which everyday American life was figured as unstable and literally on the verge of collapse. An off-shoot of horror and a genre its own right, Disaster films, with their view of America at the constant point of self-destruction, remain an immediate indicator of political concerns reflected through popular culture[16].

The importance of popular culture and film in understanding the political frame of its production is underlined through the image that Reagan projected of himself during office. He presented himself politically as the hero persona of his film career, utilising a similar rhetoric to the characters he portrayed. Reagan's

> image [was] crafted more by his movies than his political past....His patriotic 'get tough' attitude proved the perfect panacea for a nation unable to accept a changing world order. During Reagan's tenure, military spending increased dramatically, as did

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[16]The genre died out in the early to mid 1980s and was replaced by the Action movie, the dynamics of which Jeffords traces in Hard Bodies. A mini Renaissance of the genre occurred in 1996 with Twister (Jan De Bont) and Daylight (Rob Cohen) and in the hybrid Disaster/Invasion film Independence Day (Roland Emmerich), perhaps feeding off fears of the threat of literal and potential political destruction of the American landscape by the anti-government para-military fascist groups - a growing body of concerns, fused with millennial fears, during the 1990s that were finally realised in the April 19th 1995 Oklahoma hotel and the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bombings. At the time of writing, the Disaster renaissance continues.

the willingness to use it (Carpini and Klein 1994: 252).

Reagan promoted himself as rescuing trapped American medical students in Grenada, confronting Quaddafi over Libyan-sponsored terrorism and coming to the rescue of the Nicaraguan Contras with military aid before riding victoriously into the sunset (after heroically surviving an assassination attempt - the only American president actually hit by an assassin's bullet to do so) in 1989[17]. Reagan's macho posturing was tempered somewhat during George Bush's term, which sought to amend many of Reagan's more confrontational ideals, adding emotion and stressing the importance of family love and compassion[18] in domestic policy (Jeffords 1994: ch.4).

Consequently, these concerns were also reflected in Bush-era popular culture, for example in the mock-Gothic construction of Batman (Tim Burton, 1989) in which the power of the hero, Bruce Wayne, appears to reside in the suit that he wears. The suit constitutes the role and position that Bruce has chosen to adopt and is a hard, Reaganite body. Under the suit is a different persona struggling with a division in his character which forces him to adopt hard body tactics in order to ensure that American society does not fall apart. Once again, such concerns, reflected through a contemporary text, are structured in terms of horror iconography, here employing the visual trappings, if not the narrative conventions, of Gothic horror.

As Reagan admitted openly to gaining inspiration for his Star Wars space defence program from the utopian vision at the end of The Day The Earth Stood Still, it is ironic that

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[17]Subsequent news coverage maximised Reagan's tough-guy image: news reports showed the recovering president chopping wood and breaking horses.

[18]However, Bush remained staunchly moralistic within his family-orientated rhetoric: in an early speech on January 23rd, 1989 he condemned the 'American tragedy of abortion on demand', stressing the importance of 'mother and child' and claiming that he, and other 'decent' American's spoke with 'the voice of faith' regarding the issue, and calling on 'God [to] bless life' (reproduced in Binder and Reimers 1996: 305).

he misunderstood the apparently Communist, actually fascist basis of this vision (Klaatu's enforced world order is totalitarian and policed through the threat of violence by an SS-style army of killer robots). Clearly, through Reagan's usage of the rhetoric of film, it may be argued that popular culture may potentially affect politics at the highest level as politics and economics affect popular culture at *every* level.

A major element of post-Fordist, often paranoid, concern is the belief generated by a gradual loss of individual personal accountability and guaranteed social stability, that shadowy dealings by unseen forces and agencies exert subtle, unnoticeable control over the lives of agents. Reagan, though largely supported in his policies by voters, still maintained a high level of secrecy and control over political dealings, frequently revealed only after the event. Though this is hardly an unusual political occurrence, for a society already experiencing the concerns and paranoias of post-Fordism following a decade of disappointment and scandal, such actions generated further, and more context specific, concerns.

Many of Reagan's actions (for example, covert dealings during the Iran-Contra affair, in order to overturn Iran's Marxist revolution[19]) had potentially great and direct influence over Americans' lives, yet were hidden from public awareness. Even though great support for Reagan's policies existed, when revealed this surely instilled feelings in the American public that subtle control over their lives was occurring at every level, without their permission. It was these concerns that lead to the public scandal regarding the IranContra affair when Reagan's covert deals were made public. Then, as now, a sense of a loss of control over agents' lives through covert, essentially post-Fordist, influence, was rife[20].

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[19]In which, in order to avoid direct public opposition to American involvement in the crisis on the grounds that it resembled another Vietnam, Reagan's administration concluded that 'US military objectives in Nicaragua (and elsewhere) would require the use of surrogate troops and, ultimately, covert actions' (Klein 1994: 253).

[20]Hence perhaps the continuing post-Fordist era fascination with conspiracy theories.

Reagan set out strong, ultimately controlling, moral guidelines[21] through the demonising of certain minority groups, as we shall discover. However, the mid-1980s 'Just Say No' anti-drugs campaign was promoted in typically Reaganite moralistic, negative language which generated conflicting concerns in the public arena: whilst the anti-drugs campaign surely seemed to be a package of positive policies, it also sought to demonise a culture (albeit an underground one) and a large body of agents that many thought would benefit more from medical and psychological attention to free them from addiction.

Carter was once again implicitly blamed by the Reagan press office; had moral values not been compromised in the 1970s, surely, it was claimed, the extent of the drug problem in the 1980s would have been considerably lessened. It may be claimed that Reagan's stance on drugs was a reaction against the growing body of illegitimate, 'immoral' (non-taxable) economic exchanges between dealers and clients. Drug users, it can be argued, were spending increasing amounts of money on drugs, without the government profiting from it; remove the dealers, and, the thinking seemed to go, this money would re-enter the legitimate economy, to the government's benefit via tax.

Frank Henenlotter's 1988 horror film Brain Damage focused these popular concerns into its narrative, telling the story of Edgar, a phallic, destructively masculine creature which enters a Faustian pact with the hero, Brian. Edgar injects hallucinogenic and highly addictive chemicals into Brian's brain, leading to murder, debauchery and a downward spiral of increasingly corrupt morality. Edgar, the dealer, is figured literally as a parasite needing a host body on which to live in order that it may survive. Brian becomes a symbolic body-politic, metaphorically representing an America controlled by dealers who literally feed off its youth,

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[21]It is interesting to contextualise this morality. As Tallack states, 'religious revivalism and the moral majority are...important themes for social and political historians...in 1980 all three Presidential candidates, Reagan, Carter and Anderson, were born again Christians' (Tallack 1991: 7).

destroying the representative body and mind. The exchange of drugs is not mutually beneficial, destroying one side and empowering the other, in terms which Reagan would have approved. Edgar's parasitic nature (tellingly named after the film's producer, Edgar Levins) emphasises the non-official, governmentally sanctioned and supported, basis of the exchange of forbidden material[22].

Exploring similar concerns, and pre-empting Reagan's crusade through the increasingly moral stance on such issues that he took during his election campaign, Altered States (Ken Russell, 1980) explores the seemingly mind-expanding and liberating, actually dangerously violent, mentally limiting and regressive results, as Russell sees it, of even the most scientifically controlled drug taking. Here a scientist post-Fordist expert conducting a series of formal, Timothy Leary[23]-style experiments with sensory deprivation and the effects of hallucinogenics on mental states and the physical self, regresses into a simian-like being. Yet, ultimately, the experience saves a doomed relationship and furthers the protagonists' awareness of themselves and their position in the social and historical order. These films clearly reflect concerns about Reagan's policies and, as such, reflect the often contradictory viewpoints and anxieties of the American public regarding Reagan's high-profile, vote-generating 'moral' crusades.

Such concerns, as with others expressed through horror, remain(ed) widely unexpressed, existing as a body of common cultural anxieties. With this in mind, it seems clear that we, as a mass body of semi-autonomous social agents, in Slavoj Žižek's terms[24],

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[22]This reflection of America's moral concerns is continued in a distasteful though highly camp scene cut from the British release of the film in which a prostitute, thinking she is performing oral sex on Brian, actually fellates Edgar who is hiding inside Brian's trousers. The usual public image of many prostitutes being controlled by drug dealers is taken to its extreme when Edgar eliminates her for this transgression.

[23]The 1960s counter-culture LSD guru and academic who proposed the use of hallucingenics in a controlled environment as a means to increase understanding of the self. For discussion of Leary in his cultural context see Steigerwald 1995, especially 175-176 and Leary 1964.

[24]See Žižek 1994.

enjoy our symptom: ie, the symptom of existing under a political ideology which demands that the structure of agents' lives corresponds with habitus. Our symptom is enjoyed because agents do not comprehend the ideological forces which influence their everyday experience of the world. It is impossible to understand every aspect of an ideology even where the external elements of it appear blatant (as in Reagan's 'Just Say No' anti-drugs campaign); the paradox of ideological analysis is that if agents' fully understood every element of ideology, it would cease to have any power over them. As ideological analysis is still possible, this must not have yet occurred nor, in reality ever will, for the hypothetical destruction of one ideology is by necessity conducive to the construction of another, which in turn is liable to be destroyed by a third, and so on.

It may be claimed that to analyse ideology critically implies an unrealistic access to 'absolute truth' by the analyst. Such a truth can never, by necessity, exist. Here, therefore, I am engaged in the analysis of a body of ideological *concepts*, themselves constituting only a fraction of the potential ideological framework which must encompass them.

Here it is useful to utilise a distinction forwarded by Pierre Bourdieu in 'Doxa And Common Life' (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1994). Bourdieu defines doxa as spontaneous belief or opinion, generated by individual, class and social habitus operating in tandem. He situates doxa within the prevalent structure of ideology operable within a given society. However, concerned with the negative implications of the term 'ideology', and no doubt aware of the paradox of ideology outlined above, he considers it in different, and more useful, terms: the symbolic power of one set of ideals over another, and the symbolic violence and/or symbolic domination of a series of controlling social attributes which manipulate agents living within social structures through habitus and, more specifically, doxa. The structuring of representations of actual (though fictional) violence within horror can, it follows, be directly

linked to the representations of mass fears that are articulated within texts and which, in turn, operate to frighten audiences through their depiction, an act which itself constitutes the demonising of symbolic power and the making literal of symbolic violence and domination within a fictive frame.

Thus, to cite an example purely on a manifest/surface 'story' level of a text, it may be argued that Siegel's Invasion Of The Body Snatchers is about the symbolic violence exerted by an invading intelligence onto victims. However, the symbolic *power* in question is, as we have seen, twofold: potentially both anti-Communist and anti-McCarthyist. Such symbolic domination requires a new level of habitus, enforced against the will of victims; symbolic power is translated into symbolic violence in order to dominate a representative body of agents: the audience, recognising itself through fictional agents figured as victims. Such symbolic power generates a new, compromised habitus which in turn alters social doxa radically. The invaded clearly *do* enjoy their symptom as they spend most of the film advocating the new world order that invasion heralds with an almost Evangelical fervour, though analysts must look to the subtextual, frequently subconscious levels of the film to discover this, and examine the habitus and doxa of the social frame surrounding the text in order to access this.

However, Bourdieu considers that social and economic factors only have influence on texts through their influence on the entire culture and each of the fields that constitute it at a given time. This is clearly an important consideration though horror renders these factors more blatant by trading in fear, which in post-Fordist society, it may be argued, is broadly reducible to anxiety regarding economic continuance of the family and self. For Bourdieu, popular culture constitutes a cultural field of large-scale production, relying on an essentially popular formula to survive economically. This is especially applicable to horror which is

typically, though not exclusively, formulaic, relying on established patterns of narrative and iconic convention, leading towards a questioning of horror as a generic form. Here it is advisable to amend Bourdieu's argument somewhat; as we shall see, horror is best considered as a mode within which generic structures exist rather than a set generic code in and of itself.

Bourdieu is also questionable in his linkage of artistic subject matter to market viability in times of (national and global) economic crisis. He states that 'the literary field is...defined by its position in the hierarchy of the arts, which varies from one period and one country to another' (Bourdieu 1993: 47). Bourdieu goes on to study the positioning of different modes within the artistic field (poetry, the novel, film and so on), leading him to state that 'the more economically profitable the various genres, the more strongly and directly they are affected by recession' (ibid). From a 'commonsense' point of view, this statement appears correct, but when applied to horror, as a particular form of cultural entertainment, Bourdieu's rather sweeping conviction becomes problematic. Though the common view of horror as a genre is debatable, leaving that aside temporarily and employing Bourdieu's terms, the 'generic' viability of horror during periods of economic crisis does not appear affected in the same manner as other entries into the artistic field, such as the romantic novel or poetry, in similarly hard times, and indeed seems to thrive during them.

For example, as David J. Skal states, 'the American abyss' (Skal 1993: 113) of the depression of the 1930s gave birth to the two most celebrated cinematic horror icons in the history of film: Dracula (Tod Browning, 1931) and Frankenstein (James Whale, 1931). That both films were produced in the same year appears remarkable in itself, especially given Bourdieu's statement, but, upon closer examination it becomes clear that horror is a significant exception to his rule, again establishing it as a form of entertainment that is unique in its operation and ability to filter narratives through contemporary traumatic events. Indeed, as

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Skal claims, Boris Karloff's interpretation of Frankenstein's monster became 'a hood ornament for a wrecked economy' (ibid), reflecting the period and its anxieties through the text.

1931 was as devastating a year for the American public and its vision of itself as was the period in the early 1970s following the Watergate crisis; so damaging and unexpected was the recession that Skal calls it a 'crack in the fabric of [American] reality...[which] appeared to many Americans to be the end of all earthly possibilities' (ibid: 114). In October 1929 the American stock market crashed, heralding the Great Depression[25] and, Skal records, within a year of the crash 'the industrialised world's unemployment population...reach[ed] an estimated 30 million people' (ibid). President Hoover's Emergency Committee For Unemployment Relief confirmed that the Depression was spiralling out of control. Shortly after, the collapse of the Austrian national bank heralded the fall of the European economy and created the cultural and political situation in which, thriving on despair and desperate to find a tangible group to blame, National Socialism, fuelled by Hitler's anti-Semitism, began to rise.

It follows that, at times of cultural crisis, when more fearful currency is available, greater investment is made in narratives which draw on cultural concerns and which in many ways reflect the experiences of contemporary audiences, and which may to some limited and debatable extent provide the partial cathartic release of elements of that fear. That horror thrives on actual cultural concerns is evident in the common focus of these two enduring texts: sexual reproduction during this period could literally destroy a family since the state of the economy was such that the addition of an extra child could result in an entire family starving. Contraception was, to all intents and purposes, unavailable.

Sexuality, therefore, became synonymous with death, destruction and disease,

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[25]For further discussion see Binder and Reimers 1996: ch 10.

providing the horrific core of the 1930s film versions of both Dracula and Frankenstein. Sensuality in Dracula is linked with the undead; sexual liberation follows death and vampirism. Reproduction is removed from sexuality, and reproductive penetration (Dracula's bite which reproduces through the creation of new vampires) is literally destructive, involves pain, death and the removal of the life-blood of victims as the life-blood of the family was drained by additional children, reflecting similar political-parasitic concerns to those embodied, in a different era and for different reasons, by Henenlotter's Edgar. In Dracula sexuality is also made bestial, degrading and literally reductive of human spirit. In Frankenstein reproduction is again distanced from sexuality as Frankenstein creates a highly destructive infant through science. This infant destroys families (he drowns a child, albeit accidentally), and threatens Frankenstein's family, stalking potential sexuality to prevent sexual activity. This occurs dominantly when the monster shadows Frankenstein's bride in her bedroom prior to their wedding night, which surely generated particular terror in its audience upon its original release.

Both texts, though especially Frankenstein, were largely re-structured from their original novel forms to enhance these themes. Frankenstein's setting is therefore modernised: though no direct evidence of era is provided by diegetic speech or non-diegetic captions, the action seems to take place in the 1930s rather than during the 1800s of the novel, especially with regard to costuming, hair-styles, modes of speech and the scientific apparatus used to bring the monster to life. The film is set in a German village, peopled, as in the war, with characters who speak with American and British accents. Furthermore,

> since the village sequences were shot on the same outdoor sets as All Quiet On

> The Western Front[26], no doubt many audience members experienced a certain level of *déjà vu*, whether or not they consciously equated Frankenstein with the celebrated war picture (Skal 1993: 136).

As the period, feeling and look of the film's construction appears to mirror that of the 1930s, so does its currency of fear and morality which, like Browning's Dracula, is figured specifically against the more sexually relaxed attitudes of the 1920s, during which,

> American society was moving...toward a view of erotic expression that can be defined as sexual liberalism - an overlapping set of beliefs that detached sexual activity from the instrumental goal of procreation, affirmed heterosexual pleasure as a value in itself, defined sexual satisfaction as a critical component of personal happiness and successful marriage, and weakened the connections between sexual expression and marriage by providing youth with room for some experimentation ('D'Emilio, Freidman, Binder and Reimers 1996: 168).

The change in cultural attitudes regarding sexuality in the space of a decade was immense, and is directly reflected through these contemporary horror texts.

Browning followed Dracula with Freaks in 1932. This twisted morality play, still terrifying today is 'unbearably Oedipal' (Skal 1993: 149), and its controversial use of real freaks proved too much for many audiences to bear, resulting in worldwide banning. In Browning's textual circus of horrors, sexual reproduction results in horrifyingly abnormal

Browning and his Freaks.

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[26]Lewis Milestone, 1930.

physical states, underlined by the Oedipal frisson between Hans, the midget-hero and Cleopatra, the sexual mother figure to whom Hans is married. Freaks remains perhaps the most blatant display of the fear of reproduction and sexuality in the history of cinema, and its emergence alongside similarly classic texts involved deeply with the same bodies of concerns reflect accurately the political and cultural climate of Depression-era America.

Towards the end of the Reagan term foreign industrial investment began to overshadow the previous American industrial dominance of the global market. Germany and Japan in particular began to gain huge control over previously safe American markets. American financial confidence began to weaken through an erosion of its previously dominant economic position. Simultaneously America was becoming more reliant on Middle-Eastern oil provisions. By 1988, America's economic status was dependent upon business decisions made in Europe, Japan and the Middle-East to a far greater extent than had been the case in the previous few decades. Concerns regarding these developments were strengthened by a global economic recession which reinforced non-American financial influence on American markets. America, hit hard by the recession, was also, it may be argued, becoming anxious about the upcoming season of political change as the Reagan term drew to a close and the Bush term approached. Fears regarding the handing over of national power bases, and what would become of the Reaganite ideals much of America had embraced, were rife[27].

Despite Reagan's continued hard line against Russia, his strong-arm policies increasingly appeared to be missing the mark, in line with the growing decline of American industrial prestige, which was in turn allowing America's allies to become dominant seemingly at America's expense. During this period, forces of evil in horrific texts frequently wish to

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[27]See Jeffords, 1994.

dominate America financially: OCP in RoboCop (Paul Verhoeven's 1987), for example, wishes to build and control the finances of a new Detroit, whilst in Don A. Coscarelli's 1988 film Phantasm II, the 'Tall Man' destroys small town America through his business front. Evil finance is also evident in the re-make of Les Yeux Sans Visage aka Eyes Without A Face and The Horror Chamber Of Dr. Faustus (Geroges Franju, 1959), Faceless (Jess Franco, 1988) in which Doctor Flamand is a plastic surgeon specialising in the rejuvenation of the extremely wealthy at his private clinic which operates as a front for surgical experiments designed to repair his sister's damaged face. Were it not for his wealth, Flamand would be unable to maintain his business, which involves destroying the acceptable face of America literally in order to reconstruct the unacceptable through murder, sadism and extreme violence.

Many other American horror texts from this period reflect these concerns, though many more reflect Reagan's conservative moral solution to the 'weakening' (in Reaganite macho terminology, effectively the feminisation) of America by newly dominant economic factions. The defence against such invasion becomes clear through an examination of the dominant structure through which contemporary horror heroes resist threats, allied with Reagan's general moral conservatism. During this period, and despite the post-Fordist fears that previously and subsequently restrained their whole hearted support, horror texts increasingly advocated the family and middle-class, conservative moralism as a defence against evil. If the 'family' of America was under threat, a defensive re-grouping of basic family units, strengthening the ideal of the family as Reagan defined it (white, hard working, heterosexual, affluent, middle-class, monogamous, moral and patriarchal) would seem defend the internal ethics of Reagan's America despite the continued assault on its external self. This effectively put post-Fordist fears of the family aside temporarily and, whilst such concerns were still an issue in horror, became in many cases (usually in conformist, 'safe', non-paranoid texts with

closed narratives) secondary to the ideological 'defence' of the country that horror during this period presented subtly.

Within such considerations, white, dominant males may still be considered heroic within the family unit in many films of the mid to late 1980s, despite the Reaganite ideal of national heroism floundering[28], though *evil* patriarchs still existed. The 'normal' patriarchal family is actively promoted as a means to combat evil in texts such as Beetlejuice (Tim Burton, 1988), Near Dark (Kathryn Bigelow, 1987), The Lost Boys (Joel Schumacher, 1987) and, fuelled by their increasingly distant Slasher basis, the Nightmare On Elm Street series from part II (Jack Sholder's Freddy's Revenge [1986], Chuck Russell's Dream Warriors [1987], Renny Harlin's 1988 The Dream Master and Stephen Hopkin's The Dream Child [1989]), amongst many others. In each of these texts it is ultimately the patriarchal, Reaganite nuclear family in which heroes and heroines find their strength and ultimately their social niche, and in which villains, threats and forces of evil find their albeit often only temporary nemesis.

In The Lost Boys destructive influences seek to infiltrate the American (single parent) family. Posing as a potential but evil, therefore non-heroic, father figure, the head vampire wishes to marry the mother of the two heroes, creating an alternative and evil anti-American family structure in direct opposition to the Reagan ideal of family unity. Such a family would come to mirror the anti-American family of vampires that already exists in the text. Such families represent the infiltrating foreign economic policies potentially destroying the American family and society through the larger threat to American financial dominance.

The white, moralist, middle-class, heterosexual, heroes struggles to defeat the anti-family threat and save their mother, re-establishing a patriarchal family structure where none

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[28]The exception being, as we shall discover, Slasher texts, which drew both off Reagan's machismo and late-term concerns regarding its potential compromise in Bush.

existed previously - the lack of which actually brought the family into contact with the threat. After the anti-American family has been destroyed, the mother submits to male rule by deferring power to her two sons and, dominantly, her father who is shown, in the final line of the film, to have greater knowledge than all other family members. The Reaganite taboo of her single-parent status is thus annulled by her deference to a more patriarchal family structure, consisting of her, her father and her two newly empowered sons.

The Lost Boys - the vampire gang - exist below the feet of America, in an underground labyrinth created during a Californian earthquake. They have a sustainable income, literally provided through the blood of others. In both of these respects, the Lost Boys' organisation mirrors that of increasingly dominant foreign markets in the American economy. The gang are considered outsiders by all (indeed, vampires are traditionally foreigners, though here are only symbolically so), drain the lifeblood of America to maintain their physical and economic existence, and lurk unseen beneath the surface of American economic and physical existence emerging when dominant to the detriment and loss of traditional American culture. The gang is figured as destructive juvenile delinquents, lacking a father figure (since the head vampire is only revealed as such during the climactic battle, and does not associate with the gang until then) and, therefore, parental discipline - the lack of which leads to chaos and murder.

It is because of such a re-focusing on patriarchal values, the ethics of male rule and the moralism of familial structures that many horror texts of this period distanced themselves from traditionally Reaganite 'gung-ho' tactics of reprisal and stressed gaining revenge and re-establishing normality 'by the book'. In non-horror texts of the era, an emphasis on personal morality and the law become stressed on a manifest, rather than subtextual level (for example, the 1988 releases of Garry Marshall's Beaches, Dennis Hopper's Colors, Michael Apted's

Gorillas In The Mist, Martin Scorsese's The Last Temptation Of Christ and Brian De Palma's 1989 film Casualties Of War). Heroes and heroines of this period are attractive not dominantly because of their capacity for direct action, but because of inner values such as morality, emotion, reliability, conservatism, the ability to stand up for individual belief, and humour.

Despite occasional omissions and generalisations in Bourdieu's application of his theories of culture to all forms of art, be it popular or 'high', at heart the prime consideration of this thesis lies with Bourdieu's vital observation regarding the interplay between the individual and the doxic: he considers that

> formal and historical concerns are inseparable, that human consciousness and thought are socially constituted, and that possibilities of action are socially and historically situated and defined (Bourdieu 1993: 19).

It is the overall project of this thesis to prove the significance of this statement to horror films.

It is ironic that, given the subject matter of this thesis, for Bourdieu any work of critical analysis becomes a struggle over the right to define legitimate discourse regarding art and, by extension, to define the limits of that art itself; in short, a form of symbolic violence. Occasionally Bourdieu's theoretical approach must be questioned, though it is of invaluable use to our understanding of all forms of cultural existence, horror included. It is with this in mind that by employing these methods of considering texts I hope to plot *some* of the diverse structures of meaning that empower the (sub) texts of selected modern horror films.

Finally, it may be useful to outline Bourdieu's terms of art. Art is, he claims, a field that is its own market, allied with a legitimising educational system, which confers the status of intellectual value to that art (for example, a Shakespeare play). Conversely, in the common view, non-legitimate art is 'a field of production organised as a function of external

demand...[perceived as] socially and culturally inferior' (ibid: 130) due to the absence of educational legitimation of that art (for example, a soap-opera). It is such common perceptions of the socially and culturally 'inferior' that I will discuss in relation to selected texts, viewing them as cultural constructs. My ultimate intention is, then, rather than to diagnose horror, to, if possible (and to quote John Waters' ironic statement), make 'trash one percent more respectable' (Cinefile, Channel 4, 22/7/95) through the application of cultural theory to this most popular but most often academically dismissed form of entertainment.

CHAPTER ONE

Critical Limitations And Adherence To The Canon

Bourdieu asserts that all social agents strive for 'cultural nobility' (Bourdieu 1984: 2), which effectively constitutes a struggle between groups of varying tastes for the right to claim primacy over the definition and transmission of their own taste. He goes on to claim that modernity has generated so many individuals and institutions involved in art production and criticism that discourse on art is now not simply an accompaniment to it but constitutes one stage in the production of its meaning, value and legitimacy[1]. What is reviewed, even if dismissed as 'trash' is, therefore, considered legitimate material for analytical study, even if in negative terms. Therefore, for Bourdieu, what is never reviewed is, by implication, considered devoid of cultural worth across and by society, warranting not even extreme criticism. Such material is therefore considered 'hollow', unrevealing of 'self', society and culture in terms of the social nobility with which agents seek to legitimate their positions as cultural arbiters of taste.

Critical studies of horror films as popular culture are, for these reasons, limited by the inherently canonical basis of the texts analysed by its major critics. Academic criticism has become focused on a small body of texts around which the hypotheses of critics are formulated and applied; subsequent criticism develops or argues against these hypotheses in relation to the same texts with the resulting canon becoming the standard for future analysis. Though the analysis of horror is a relatively new development within cultural studies, a situation formed by adherence to this largely inflexible canon has developed which is unacceptably reductive of the field. Whilst central critics such as Clover, Wood, Jancovich,

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[1]For further and related discussion see Bourdieu 1993: 110 onwards.

and Andrew Tudor for example, have influenced and furthered the horror debate greatly, they do so from a limited textual base.

As a result, a division of scope has occurred between academic and popular analysis of horror. Academics typically structure debate around texts which revolutionised horror upon their release, either subsequently creating a new genre, or expanding the possibilities of an existing one. Psycho, Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1960), Night Of The Living Dead (George Romero, 1968), Rosemary's Baby, The Exorcist (William Friedkin, 1973), The Omen, Halloween (John Carpenter, 1978), Alien (Ridley Scott, 1979) and Friday The Thirteenth (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980) have become standard academic texts. Often, in addition, the American boom in horror during the 1930s is discussed in relation to 1950s Invasion narratives and the emergence of Hammer and Roger Corman; it is only occasionally that critics analyse films outside of these limits - Clover (1992) studies I Spit On Your Grave (aka The Day Of The Woman, Meir Zarchi, 1978) and The Last House On The Left (aka Sex Crime Of The Century, Wes Craven, 1972) in the context of 'urbanoid' horror, though similar examples are difficult to find.

The Exorcist: a canonical text.

Whilst canonical texts are indeed central to the discussion of modern horror and the social frame in which it is produced, the continual usage of the same texts to generate different

hypotheses has the result of reducing the study of horror to a highly predictable pattern, at the expense of films of equal, and occasionally greater, cultural importance. Conversely, popular criticism such as is found within the pages of horror fanzines[2] (for example, Deep Red, Shock Xpress [recently published in compilation, book form]), or the work of Kim Newman (1988) and David Kerekes (1994) largely ignores the academical canon in favour of more obscure but hugely popular films such as Nekromantik (Jörg Buttgereit, 1987) or Cannibal Holocaust (Ruggero Deodata, 1979). Both academic and popular critics are, therefore, repressing analysis in the name of their own canonical ideals. My analysis will, then, fuse these two diverse approaches in order to widen the scope of analysis.

> Bourdieu isolates an essential consideration:
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> analysts who endorse...[textual] vetoes...are destined to an intrinsically vicious-circular form of explanation and understanding. They can only register, unaware, the effects of...authors they do not know on the authors they claim to analyse....They thus preclude any grasp of what, in their own works, is the indirect product of these refusals (Bourdieu 1993: 197).

In a field as revealing of social operations as horror, avoidance of the 'vicious-circular' is, as we shall see, paramount.

It is through Bourdieu that analysts may gain insight into why the vicious-circular has become dominant in textual analysis. Works of art, he contests, exist as concepts only for those with the means and cultural tools to decode them. Only those with the correct habitus

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[2]A fanzine is a amateur or semi-professional magazine dealing exclusively with a chosen aspect of (popular) culture, written by fans of that cultural product. Ranging in standard from highly professional to hand-written, photocopied sheets produced on an occasional basis, fanzines attempt to draw together a common (sub) culture of like minded individuals who share news and information through this essentially underground network. Fans define an alternative cultural and critical criteria dependent upon their chosen interests, often to combat wider social questioning of the cultural value of that interest.

(typically the highly educated) will incorporate art into their lifestyle as a necessity, for example through the continued study of criticism, or repeated visits to art galleries. It is therefore erroneous to claim that art is accessible to all simply because it is potentially open to all to experience; the correct habitus is required to compel agents to desire interaction with art in the first place, as well as the correct level of financial capital with which to access the often expensive art on offer in, for example, a London theatre. Such a habitus originates in the body of cultural capital[3] with which agents are endowed primarily by the home environment (which is therefore dependent upon the cultural, economic, and usually the educational, capital of their parents) and secondarily by the educational (school) environment which builds upon the cultural foundations established within the home.

This is one reason why horror is not generally considered art, despite many horror films for example, those of Dario Argento or German Expressionist horror displaying, it could be claimed, considerable 'artistic' merit. Bourdieu's theories must be reversed when considering popular culture, and especially horror. Popular culture in general and horror in particular are perceived by the academy (the arbiters of taste) as 'low' and 'vulgar' - the antithesis of 'good' art - primarily because of the apparent ease with which audiences decode it. However, as we shall see, this is a false consideration as different levels of cultural competence reveal hidden meanings to initiate horror viewers, primarily through the often complex structures of 'in-jokes' that abound in texts. That aside temporarily, the very ease of horror's access and its apparent simplicity of narrative structuring allows what Bourdieu terms meaning 'emission' (at least of a text's manifest level) to be widely and successfully interpreted

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[3]A body of social skills, learnt through education and socialisation which acts as a currency of culture and awareness for those who possess it, gaining them access and understanding of 'artistic' events in much the same way as monetary capital allows entrance to areas containing art through the purchase of a ticket.

by mass audience 'receptors'[4]. Cultural snobbery therefore considers horror as being too 'easy' to be worthy of analysis when in fact the very apparent ease of superficial interpretation often conceals far more subtle levels of meaning than 'high' art partly because the 'low' is often the last place analysts expect to find such information.

It may be argued that by ignoring popular texts and excluding them from curricula in higher education, the élitist values of the dominant classes (those who seek to define the legitimate by ignoring or demonising anything that does not conform to their model, often from their positions within education systems) seek to protect their own positions through symbolic violence. Although this has improved somewhat in the last ten years, in the case of horror exclusion still largely continues.

Bourdieu establishes how the formation of canons alienates many agents from the study of that canon, and therefore qualifications that may allow them to enter privileged social positions and jobs, by consciously incorporating study that opposes the habitus of a good percentage of its agents (Bourdieu 1993: 19-20). Horror, considered un-academic for these reasons is, when 'rogue' analysts choose to study it, never advanced beyond a limited canon because they remain bound by prevalent attitudes of what constitutes acceptable research, their own positions within often academic structures, *and* by their instincts to guard those positions within it. Within their own terms they are just as prone to cultural snobbery and decisions regarding what is and is not acceptable material, even though what they consider unacceptable (the uncut version of Cannibal Holocaust, which has never been studied academically, for example) often reveals far more than the latest Hollywood-endorsed entry

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[4]For Bourdieu bodies of meaning are emitted from texts to audience members with the correct decoding skills to receive and understand meaning; such members are receptors. See Bourdieu 1993 for extended discussion.

into the Freddy or Jason cycle[5].

Bourdieu identifies a further determinant in the rejection of the popular by the cultural 'elite' (academia, the self-proclaimed bourgeoisie arbiters of taste and so on); that of the initial speed of a sensory interpretation of pleasure (Bourdieu 1993: 24-25). Bourdieu's theories remain central to this thesis and to our understanding of popular culture, despite his often totalising and wholistic view of common behaviour within class boundaries. Though initially discussing food and differences in its perception and consumption by different classes dependent upon individual and class habitus, Bourdieu extends his argument to perceptions of art by agents of differing classes. 'Impure' taste, as defined by those who consider themselves culturally elite, is taste based upon immediate gratification of the senses. With food, literal 'bad' taste is therefore the cheaper, filling food of the lower classes, designed to provide maximum energy for minimum cost: high fat, greasy fast-food for example. Refined, or 'pure' taste is then subtle, light, mixing delicate flavours, and expensive.

The same theory, Bourdieu claims, is broadly applicable to art and academic divisions between 'high' and 'low' culture. The 'pure' aesthetic expresses the ethos of the cultural elite, especially what Bourdieu terms the dominated part of the dominant class (intellectuals and academia). Denial of the apparently facile and 'vulgar' implies social and cultural superiority through a definition of self based upon distancing, or what one is not.

Bourdieu argues that freedom of taste is not entirely possible as the idea of taste itself is generated by the bourgeoisie to establish their own difference from others and is, therefore, an economic necessity (Bourdieu 1984: 177). Given this, it is clear that 'choice' in taste is in

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[5]That such material is considered unacceptable rather than simply being neglected is to some extent evidenced by the continued and sustained avoidance of it by academics. The notoriety of many extreme horror texts has made them world famous, and the technical and artistic merits of some are equally famous (for example, Cannibal Holocaust and Tenebrae [Dario Argento, 1982]). *All* academics can hardly be unaware of them: avoidance of these texts cannot therefore simply be due to casual neglect, but must incorporate, on some level, value judgments.

actuality *delimited* choice. The taste that horror presupposes allows agents, through horror texts, to cope with the lack of self control they are granted within economic, social and political constraints (dominantly post-Fordism), through exposure of those constraints as a central concern of the texts being viewed. However, this is itself a forced choice (in the terms in which Bourdieu considers taste), since horror, through the translation of these feelings and concerns into monstrous metaphors, acts as a catharsis against them (dominantly the feelings of a lack of control) which, it may be argued, prevents agents from actual rebellion through the dispelling of such tension and concerns.

Following Bourdieu then, it could be argued that in order to provide catharsis, horror utilises a series of jolts, generates anticipation of those jolts, and exploits audiences' frustration when they do not occur. Horror plays with agents' emotions, winding them up tighter until they achieve a form of release when, for example, the monster they have long been expecting to leap out actually does, causing them to often literally jump in their seats. Physical gratification is here immediate; monsters leap, tension is dissipated and agents get the scare that they paid for. Because of this immediacy of 'cheap' experience (horror films are frequently sold on the promise of 'thrills', underlining the physicality of audience response[6] and gratification), for many critics horror is to all intents and purposes what Bourdieu's fast food is to culinary experts. Hence the usual, and perhaps correct, assumptions regarding 'typical' horror audiences (forwarded, for example, in Clover 1992: 6) as consisting primarily of young, lower-class males, since the young are considered stereotypically by many to be seeking immediate, hedonistic gratification, whilst males are considered to be interested in physicality, opposing the 'gentle', 'inward' nature of females[7]. The lower-class clause connects directly

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[6]For example, the original poster for Jack Clayton's hugely effective The Innocents (1961) advertises 'A strange new experience in shock', whilst the poster for Hammer's remake of The Mummy (Terence Fisher, 1959) claims that 'fear will freeze you', emphasising physical response.

with Bourdieu's food-taste paradigm of catering to cheap, filling, but shallow 'artistically' devoid sustenance[8].

Furthermore, Bourdieu argues, what is commercial is rejected as not 'art' as art is considered by arbiters of taste as 'refined' and inappropriate for 'common' tastes (Bourdieu 1993: 75). By extension, 'true' art is considered to be that which, though it may generate economic capital, is concerned primarily with the acquisition, for its producer(s), of symbolic, intellectual capital. Horror, as a self-proclaimed exploitative form, is usually concerned more with the acquisition of economic capital for its producers. Thus, academic critics, who often cannot advance beyond their initial revulsion at the direct nature of horror's designs on its audience, either reject the entire form or else allow only a narrow, canonical group of more 'artistic' texts, which are frequently rejected by horror aficionados as merely reflexive comments on horror rather than true horror, to be examined through analysis.

Bourdieu lays the foundations for the expression of these concerns: in analysis of controversy surrounding certain art, he claims that intellectuals (the artistically aware who are able, through cultural capital, to access secondary, subtextual readings of art rather than exclusively manifest readings) consider the representation of art, whereas those without such capital typically consider only the financial and/or practical value of what is represented (Bourdieu 1984). Controversial art therefore usually depicts the immoral as defined contemporarily, and, though deeper bodies of concerns are often addressed within such texts, controversy typically centres around surface depictions of immorality, from those unable to decode subtexts.

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[7]The audience gender split would seem to be borne out by the high ratio of male to female aficionados' letters and articles in horror fanzines.

[8]Steven King provides a more simplistic answer, perhaps as valid as Bourdieu's: 'You very rarely see old people...lurching out of theaters [sic] playing [horror films]...because they don't need that experience....They don't need to rehearse death. They've seen their relatives go....They know the pain, they live with the pain, and they don't need to rehearse it because it's there. The rest of us sometimes do.' (Underwood and Miller 1988: 24-25).

However, it is also true to argue that some texts utilise such concerns disingenuously in order to appear to be addressing cultural concerns whilst merely using this as a cover to validate an exercise in audience exploitation. Horror texts which do access secondary levels and add greatly to philosophical debate (such as A Clockwork Orange [Stanley Kubrick, 1971] or The Last House On The Left) are commonly banded together and condemned universally with insincere[9] texts such as Cannibal Ferox (Umberto Lenzi, 1981) or Beyond The Darkness (Joe D'Amato/Aristide Massaccesi, 1979) by those with a moralist agenda such as The Sun, whose front page of November 26th 1993 demonised Child's Play 3 [Jack Bender, 1991], feeding off hysteria following the Bulger case[10]. Such an approach by those with

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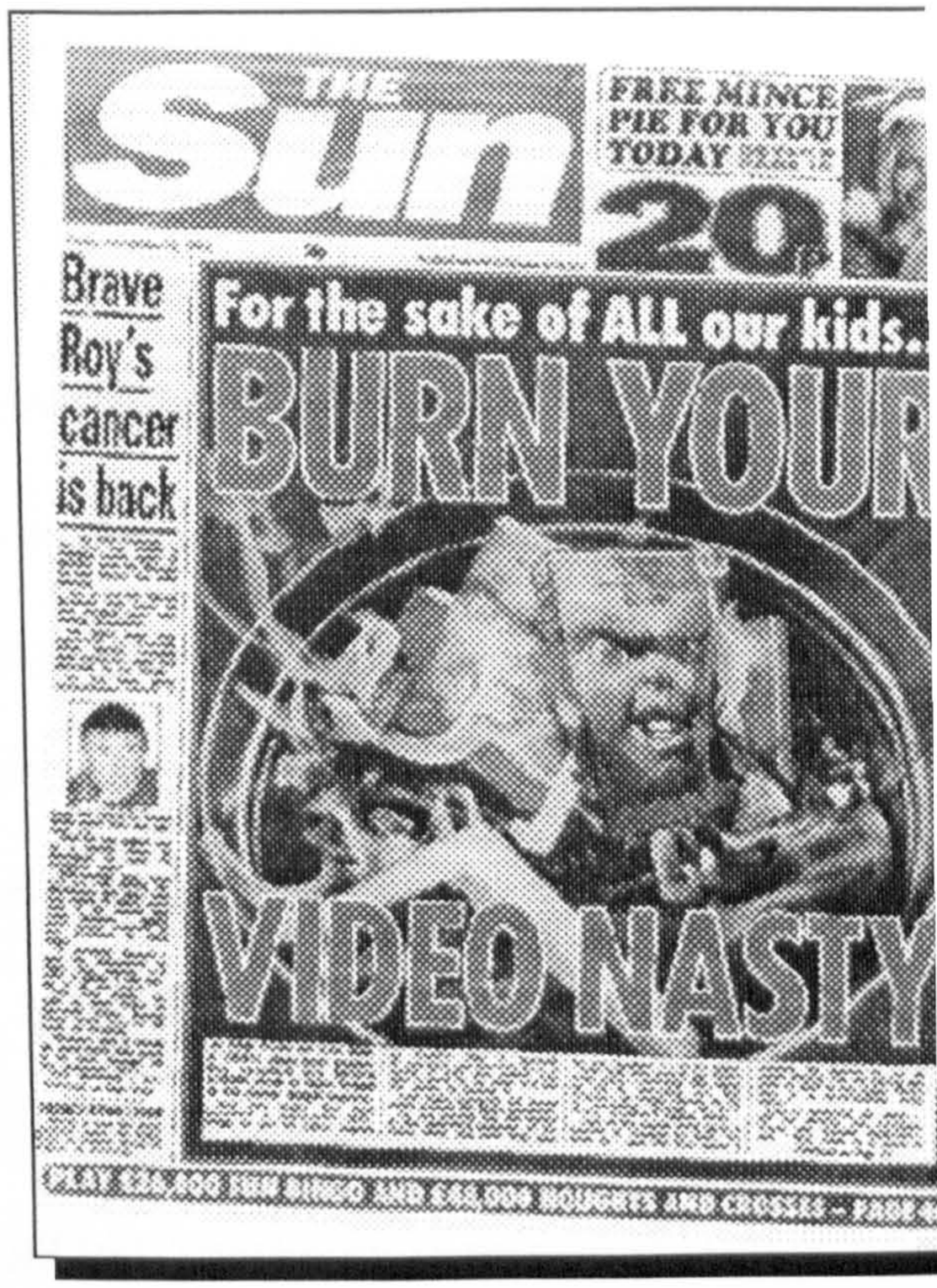
[9]In that they appear to shock for the sake of shocking, are typically cheap (and quite outrageously nasty) attempts to cash in on the success of texts which preceded them and which they rip-off mercilessly, and which are devoid of any pretence of intellectual, aesthetic or artistic content or originality. They exist merely to make a 'quick buck' by topping the level of explicit violence and sex of more established films (which are frequently extreme themselves). Such texts should not, however, be ignored; they still constitute valid material for analysis, and indeed, arguably constitute the majority of extreme horror texts, though should be placed in the context of the films which spawned them and have their cynicism recognised prior to study.

[10]The horrific death of James Bulger, a toddler from Liverpool, at the hands of young children in 1993 caused an immediate and sustained moral panic in the U.K. Elements of the murder were vaguely reminiscent of the demise of Chucky, the murderous doll of Child's Play 3, a film which the father of one of the young murderers had recently viewed, but which Thompson and Venables, the murderers, had not. The connection between the real life murder and events within the film are tenuous in the extreme, hinging on the fact that in both cases the area of violence was daubed in yellow paint. The News Of The World, a tabloid and a key player in the 1980s video nasty scare, called for a new blitz on horror films. Suddenly *all* horror became considered a video nasty, and Child's Play 3, whilst not legislated against, was removed from the majority of British rental outlets despite subsequent claims by the BBFC's senior examiner Robert W. Falcon that moralist campaigners 'were wrong about Child's Play 3, as was the press', calling media actions 'a campaign of disinformation' (Flesh And Blood 4: 12). In reaction to the panic, opportunist M.P David Alton campaigned successfully for increased censorship of films in the U.K to cope with the new wave of 'nasties'. Top of the list were the Child's Play films, Return Of The Living Dead Part 3 (Brian Yuzna, 1993), Braindead, (Peter Jackson, 1993) and anything by Quentin Tarantino. Alton's move to ban all films not suitable for the family market failed in the face of criticism that this would effectively ban texts such as Schindler's List (Steven Speilberg, 1993), though today violent films are more heavily censored for cinema release and many are cut further or refused certification for subsequent video release. It is clear that the media, unable to cope with the concept that children *can* commit acts of evil - which implies us all - went into denial and found a scapegoat in horror. Similar arguments have surfaced on a regular basis in diverse cultures throughout history, implicating, amongst others, the Gothic novel, the penny-dreadful, E.C comics, horror, Heavy Metal music, and, in the 1990s controversial groups such as Marilyn Manson or whole genres such as American 'Gangsta' Rap. Pam Cook points out that even in the 1930s, 'reports on [the] harmful social effects [of horror], especially on children, proliferated in the British trade press' (Cook 1985), in almost exactly the same terms as today, whilst Jeremy Mitchell and John Pearson record that, in the 1950s, 'defending American youth against corruption was the theme that united all those who found fault in rock n' roll music, whether it relied too much on black influences, fostered political dissent, showed support for the devil or communism, contained obscenities, or degraded musical ability' (Mitchell and Maidment 1993: 223). Here, as always, the emphasis

moralist agendas, whilst highly inappropriate is, for the reasons that Bourdieu stipulates, regrettably to be expected by moralist factions and, it seems, certain academics alike.

Bourdieu argues that, due to its basis in economic necessity, there is no true state of good and bad taste as boundaries of taste change depending upon agents' particular social positions and how the same economic situation that produced their taste has moulded their aesthetic and cultural values (Bourdieu 1984: 199-200). For some, horror is vulgar, fast-food culture, yet for others it provides the catharsis mentioned above, though this need not imply a lack of artistic value.



Money-spinning moral panic: <u>The Sun</u>, 26/11/93.

It seems clear that those who consider horror vulgar (typically the middle to upper classes if we are to believe Bourdieu's model of the construction of taste) have no need or desire to challenge the system that has positioned them favourably in society. Those who engage with horror primarily as an entertaining, cathartic confrontation of anxiety and fear as opposed to those interested in horror's function or in contextualising films, must therefore be those who feel trapped by such systems (economic, educational, social and political), and who consider themselves at the lower end of each scale. This provides proof of Clover's model of typical horror audiences and connects a cultural theory to a cultural theorist (Bourdieu) in a way that Clover's psychological approach cannot.

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is on the protection of children.

It may be argued that horror is a boundary-pushing mode, partly as its cathartic function challenges and is seen to challenge hegemony and the immediate economic and political status-quo in ways that other types of film - for example Musicals - often do not[11]. Such boundary-pushing is evident through aspects of horror's technical and social agenda(s). On a purely technical level (mirroring and pre-empting the social level), horror, frequently placing special effects at its narrative core, experiments continually with new methods of mise-en-scène and cinematographic construction that are often utilised subsequently in diverse non-horror texts. The matting process of IntroVision, for example, was developed and utilised in Army Of Darkness (Sam Raimi, 1992) in order to create an enhanced illusion of actor interaction with a complex, computer-generated landscape and has since become an industry standard.

Pioneering special/make-up effects such as the breathtaking transformation sequences in The Howling (Joe Dante, 1981), An American Werewolf In London (John Landis, 1981) and The Fly (David Cronenberg, 1986) created new, or enhanced existing, concepts of the potential usage and application of prosthetics throughout the production of film and were the direct inspiration for Michael Jackson's Thriller (John Landis, 1984). The experimental work of the KNB group which was created initially to provide horror effects, and their ground breaking prosthetic/make-up techniques were utilised extensively in Dances With Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990) to create, amongst other things, a herd of mechanical buffalo. Horror

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[11] Though horror is not the only type of film to do this, is may be argued that it achieves this goal in a more subtle way than most (for example, the often direct, superficial challenge of the political thriller or the modern war film).

make-up effects pioneered by Dick Smith and Tom Savini (in The Exorcist and Dawn Of The Dead respectively, for example) are now used commonly across generic and 'art house' texts (cf, the Saviniesque death sequences in Goodfellas [Martin Scorsese, 1990] and the Dick Smith inspired make-up of Harvey Two-Face in Batman Forever [Joel Schumacher, 1995]).

The computer-generated technique of Morphing, first used in Terminator II: Judgement Day (James Cameron, 1991) is now used throughout advertising, music videos (Michael Jackson uses the technique extensively) and all aspects of film, from childrens' (The Pagemaster, Joe Johnston/Maurice Hunt, 1993) to true life drama (Heavenly Creatures, Peter Jackson, 1994). Similarly, the first commercial use of virtual reality in the cinema was in a horror text: The Lawnmower Man (Brett Leonard, 1992); it has since been successfully used in countless films, from Batman Forever, Jurassic Park (Steven Spielberg, 1993) and Men In Black (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997) to the television based Wild Palms (Oliver Stone, 1993).

Thriller: Directly inspired by Landis, Romero and Savini.

Furthermore, the limits of what can and cannot be achieved physically within a text have been altered fundamentally by the concept of virtual reality through which it is now feasible to include long dead actors in new films, and though this was not developed specifically for horror, horror films were the first to employ it. Horror's frequent narrative

focus on the extraordinary and supernatural demands the increasingly realistic depiction of that realm through make-up, prosthetics and computer generated effects. In this respect, horror may be considered the dominant, though not the only, testing ground for the application of new, physical possibilities of mise-en-scène construction throughout cinema, especially, in the case of cinematographic innovation, in the work of Argento.

Bourdieu (1984) argues that art places form over function and technique over theme in order to challenge agents' perceptions of everyday reality. Though most horror is formulaic, and does not typically favour this approach (notable exceptions are the work of Argento, Cronenberg and Buttgereit) it certainly does, as a matter of course and a vital element of narrative construction, challenge common perceptions of reality. In the world of horror, highly unnatural, unusual events empower the narrative, allowing agents to question, or at least acknowledge the boundaries of, their perceptions of reality (in the case of Buttegereit, sexuality) for the duration of the text. If such acknowledgments were not made by audiences, then horror would be unable to scare them, since viewers would not allow the remote possibility of, for example, the existence of ghosts or vampires, and so would remain unmoved during a film's duration. Furthermore, socially, though not exclusively, horror is able to critique certain ideologies framing individual texts through its central agenda: to frighten and shock audiences, often through a questioning of taboos, moral structures, social institutions and value systems such as the family or marriage - evident in, for example, the figure of the 'immoral' bisexual vampire - which are central to the currently dominant economic frame of capitalism.

Bourdieu states that 'diffuse or symbolic power is closely intertwined with - but not reducible to - economic and political power' (Bourdieu 1993: 2). The symbolic power in question is essentially the ideological paradigm surrounding the production of a text, or, to use

the terms forwarded by Bourdieu, the symbolic power of the dominant politico-social ideal (Bourdieu and Eagleton 1994). Such symbolic power structures necessarily generate doxa and, therefore, the unspoken ideals (essentially, 'commonsense') which play a vital part in the generation of both class and individual habitus. Horror's textual discourses frequently centre around a challenge to hegemonic structures of symbolic power in order to 'open up' agents' conceptions of the physical and ideological world as they understand it; therefore, in the words of Robert W. Falcon, horror films 'speak the unspeakable' (Flesh And Blood 4: 12-13).

As a result, horror, due to its narrative currency of shock (detailing what hegemony has rendered as vulgar, unpleasant and distasteful), is, through such opening up of social 'reality'[12], able to dissect agents' generally unarticulated sense of doxa and habitus. For example, western belief, generated by doxa, deems that children are asexual beings: this belief is rarely questioned due to taboos generated by habitus. To challenge this belief is to be relegated to the sphere of either 'bad' taste, perversity and/or ignorance. Legislation protects the child from culturally defined premature sexuality through the age of consent, with breaches of this legal boundary being condemned in terms of moral outrage at every level.

In this instance it is clear that common morality is generated by doxa and habitus, springing from legislation, since abstract doxa is rendered concrete in law. However, horror texts, trading in what agents do not wish to acknowledge, believe or see, may subvert common beliefs through audience knowledge of this agenda. Audiences recognise that by the end of the film existing moral structures and codes of habitus will be restored to their original state either, firstly, through diegetic banishment of evil or secondly, in open-ended texts, by the very act of agents leaving the cinema and re-submitting themselves to existent structures of

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[12]Romero claims that horror 'want[s] to try and shock you into an alternate place' (Clive Barker's A-Z Of Horror episode three, [Dev Varma, A & C network Corporation, 1997], broadcast by the BBC on 18th October, 1997).

symbolic power. This is effectively exchanging the narrative violence viewed previously with Bourdieu's concept of the symbolic, ideological 'violence' of enforced codes of belief being re-thrust upon them.

The Exorcist, therefore, exposes structures of belief through refutation; the horror of Regan's possession is the blatant sexuality seemingly forced upon her by an invading symbolically male entity. The infamous crucifix masturbation scene is shocking on two counts: initially the age of the victim, and subsequently through its questioning of doxic morality separating the body of Christ from human sexual response via religious iconography. However, beneath this level of concern is a greater, more disturbing, one: there are hints of precocious sexuality, perhaps even incestuous desire between Regan and her mother, *before* possession; therefore, at every level established moral doxa and habitus are questioned by the removal of symbolic power and the instigation of a different kind of symbolic violence: the alternative structures of habitus embodied in the evil, invading demon.

Through exposure of the potentially anti-doxic nature of social agents (evident, for example, in the coding of the Slasher genre, which comes under closer examination later) horror questions the positioning of individuals within a series of ideological structures. A further consideration here is Bourdieu's claim that working class 'freedom' is figured primarily through the specifics of language; especially argot and slang (Bourdieu 1984: 395). Perhaps the ultimate expression of this in horror-related film and literature occurs in A Clockwork Orange in which Alex and his gang of 'Droogs' express working class identity through 'Nadsat': argot fusing English and Russian which has become the common voice of future street expression. For Bourdieu, argot implies a counter-cultural movement decrying the values of standard language and legitimising speakers in their own cultural groups; this is clearly the case for the (anti) socially coherent Droogs, who define themselves through their

language to be the antithesis of similarly coherent but doxic groups such as the police and social workers. Such challenges to standard language become a metaphor for the challenging of traditional values and morality through opposition to the very terms in which they are commonly expressed.

Clearly, 'negative', or at least alternative, bodies of visual aesthetics and narrative codes operating within horror constitutes a language (in visual terms) of their own. It may be argued that horror's aficionado audiences embrace such aesthetics as a challenge to high-brow culture. Here a potentially radical basis of horror becomes underlined; contemporary horror has become a form of visual argot whose syntax is a body of typically repulsive aesthetics with its own internal references, 'in-jokes' and hidden meanings which are accessible only to the initiate, to a much higher degree than in other genres. For the reasons which Bourdieu establishes above regarding verbal argot, horror fans gain cultural distinction from the visual argot of their chosen form of entertainment.

It is frequently through extreme horror texts that such issues arise; that academic conservatism rather than ignorance in its choice of texts operates throughout horror study becomes clear upon reading each new academic analysis produced. Bourdieu establishes that art which proved controversial in its time frequently becomes a classic of the future, typically through inappropriate canonical alignment with similarly 'classic' texts to which they were often entirely formally opposed; textual difference is then effectively neutralised through their classic, canonical status (Bourdieu 1993: 105). This process allows academics to analyse controversial texts when in fact, considered in terms of the declining public and critical concern surrounding them since their initial release (The Exorcist is no longer subject to moral campaigns outside cinemas for example), academics are, in the period in which they write, actually doing no such thing.

Furthermore, when analysing horror from any critical perspective, in reasonable depth, it is impossible not to become aware that texts of an extreme nature, as well as overtly teen-oriented films such as The Lost Boys, exist. Certainly British analysts of any validity will be aware of the 'video nasty' debate and subsequent banning of initially eighty-one films on the grounds of supposed obscenity[13], yet most choose to ignore such material. Jancovich, for example, opens Horror with a brief discussion of the effects of the 'nasty' scare and the increased censorship which ensued, yet does not mention any of the banned material despite it being of potentially central importance to his ensuing socially-based hypothesis, side-stepping the fact that horror became such a social issue in the 1980s that it was legislated against.

Similarly, analysts discussing Wes Craven's cinematic career often cite him as producing unusually intelligent horror texts yet, with the exception of Clover, hardly ever discuss his most controversial and intelligent work, The Last House On The Left (a partial re-make of Ingmar Bergman's 1959 revenge narrative, The Virgin Spring), which, whilst hugely popular with horror fans, has 'nasty' status. Academics cannot be unaware of the film; it appears on every Craven filmography and is central to an understanding of his body of work, yet, seemingly due to its extreme imagery and content (including rape, murder, mutilation, extended torture, the chiselling of a character's teeth, fellatio-castration and death by chainsaw) the text is ignored[14].

Similar instances surface throughout academic criticism; critics who study Slashers still operate within the margins of acceptability, often refusing to cross the boundary into

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[13]For the definitive history of the British 'video nasty' crisis, Martin 1993, which, though failing to mention a handful of subsequently banned titles, details the relevant moral panics and reproduces newspaper articles and political debate focusing on the nasty scare in the early 1980s and its resurrection in the early 1990s.

[14]In Britain (although not in many other countries) there are perhaps legal as well as academic reasons for the omission of such texts, though whether this should be a barrier to analysis of their popularity and cultural impact is debatable; after all, if fans can easily acquire these films, then so can academics.

underground/banned textual analysis. Whilst Slashers should be analysed, there is a world of difference between them and, for example, 'Nazi nasties' - films such as Deported Women Of The S.S Special Section (Rino Di Silvestro, 1979) and The Beast In Heat aka S.S Hell Camp, (Ivan Katansky, date uncredited) which attempt to turn reconstructed Nazi atrocities into soft-core quasi-pornographic 'entertainment' (seen, for example, in the title of The Gestapo's Last Orgy [Cesare Canevari, 1977]) and which are banned worldwide. In Ilsa, She Wolf Of The SS[15] (Don Edmonds, 1975), for example, Ilsa tortures Jewish women by inserting an electrocuting dildo into them. Films of this type are popular with many fans, are easily obtainable through underground video networks and provide potentially great insight into the cultural frame surrounding them. Academic ignorance is clearly not the issue here, but rather inappropriate academic conservatism.

Soft-core porn, hardcore violence: Ilsa, She Wolf Of The SS.

As a result, academics would profit from following the example of popular critics writing in fanzines (such as Stefan Jaworzyn, writer and editor of Shock Xpress or Harvey Fenton, writer and editor of Flesh And Blood) in utilising established canonical texts such as Rosemary's Baby as a springboard to equally vital but apparently obscure (due primarily to their non-canonical status) texts which are central to fans' constructions of alternative canons. Academic ignorance of such canons is widespread, and may be found at the heart of the most apparently comprehensive study of horror. Tudor (1989) attempts a quantitative evaluation of

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[15]Based on the real life career of Ilsa Koch, a concentration-camp commandant.

trends in horror but constructs its statistical base around mainstream, theatrically released texts. As the majority of modern horror films are released straight onto video, this approach overlooks low budget but frequently influential films, as well as foreign, and especially the huge body of European, horror un-released in Britain, most of the vital material banned in Britain, and underground production and distribution[16].

Similarly, James B. Twitchell is reductive of horror's potentially rich subject, since he attempts to reduce horror to only three distinct narrative formulas (Twitchell 1985). This renders it subject to a series of authorial concerns which, as Bourdieu establishes, may be considered as detrimental to the overall project of criticism. Bourdieu claims that critics should not attempt to define boundaries within the criticism of art (for example, when establishing canons and rejecting texts) as such divisions are formulated invariably by inner prejudices (Bourdieu 1993: 42-43). Twitchell's analysis breaches these considerations to such an extent that the reader is constantly frustrated at his textual reductionism in the name of mainstream canonical research. Following Bourdieu's advice then, instead of attempting to establish rigid boundaries, I shall instead attempt to 'describe the *state* (long lasting or temporary)' (ibid: 42) of the cultural struggles (political and economic frames and concerns) surrounding texts.

As Wood claims, the appeal of the horror 'is restricted to aficionados and complemented by total rejection, people tending to go to horror films either obsessively or not at all' (Wood 1979: 173). It is then also a mistake for academia to ignore the tastes of such aficionados by dismissing texts that they have taken to heart, for they constitute horror's core

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[16]Tudor's analysis also suffers from his habit of locating texts historically at the time of their UK release instead of the time of their creation. Many horror films are not released in the UK until several years after they were produced (for example, American war-period texts); Tudor therefore often places films in an inappropriate era, compromising cultural analysis of them.

audience. To do so is to be out of touch with the issues surrounding the production and consumption of horror.

It is necessary to expand the academic canon of horror in order to gain a more accurate picture of this form of entertainment through extended analysis. This will add to our understanding of the diverse meanings that horror's audience draws from its constituent texts over time, geographical location, gender and political ideology. Without canonical expansion, academia risks ignoring major genres and sub-genres, such as Rape Revenge (incorporating important films such as I Spit On Your Grave, Ms. 45 [aka Angel Of Vengeance, Abel Ferrara, 1981], Death And The Maiden [Roman Polanski, 1994[17]], Deliverance [John Boorman, 1972] and Dirty Weekend [Michael Winner, 1994]) where fear and/or appreciation of feminism and the American debate in the late 1970s regarding the castration of rapists frequently informs narratives. To avoid a genre because of its 'nasty', exploitative basis is often to ignore the diverse contemporary social issues without which such texts would not have been produced in the form that they were.

Academic analysis could expand both its canon and its boundaries by studying the generically marginal, 'underground' sphere of horror production and consumption, using popular and fan writing as a point of textual access. This would add new dimensions to analysis of cultural processes involved in audience readings of horror by being critically aware of the issues of taste and differing audience criteria of textual assessment. It is with such an aim that this thesis will subsequently examine the diverse underground/fan culture of horror production and consumption delimited through a modified reading of the work of Henry Jenkins (1992).

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[17]The film version of Ariel Dorfman's play, Muerte Y La Doncella, La/Death And The Maiden, (Dorfman 1992).

CHAPTER TWO

Aesthetics Of Revulsion: The Validity Of The 'Video Nasty'

'Any art perception involves a conscious or unconscious deciphering operation'

- (Bourdieu 1993: 215).

'In art there should be no reference to a standard of good or evil. The presence of such a reference implies incompleteness of vision....Art must be loved for its own sake, and not criticised by a standard of morality'

- Oscar Wilde[1].

Bourdieu divides common conceptions of taste into high, middle and low-brow texts representing what is commonly perceived as intellectual, semi-intellectual and non-intellectual art respectively. Horror, generally considered low-bow, non-intellectual, is therefore figured working-class by cultural arbiters of taste and their institutions of legitimation: for example, art galleries and universities. However, within horror we may subdivide texts to Bourdieu's broad criteria in terms of how they are perceived commonly by the non-fan public and media. High-brow, intellectual horror, we may claim, is represented by, for example, Nosferatu (Friedrich Murnau, 1921) or The Cabinet Of Doctor Caligari (Robert Wiene, 1919)[2]. Middle-brow, semi-intellectual horror is typified by texts such as Santa Sangre (Alejandro Jodorovsky, 1989) or Poison (Todd Haynes, 1991). Low-brow horror therefore revolves entirely around gruesome effects and is typified by Braindead or Friday The Thirteenth. Below the low-brow exists banned and underground horror though, as we shall see, much of this material may be considered avant-garde and, therefore, it may be argued, is equally as valid as commonly perceived high-brow texts within horror's low-brow form.

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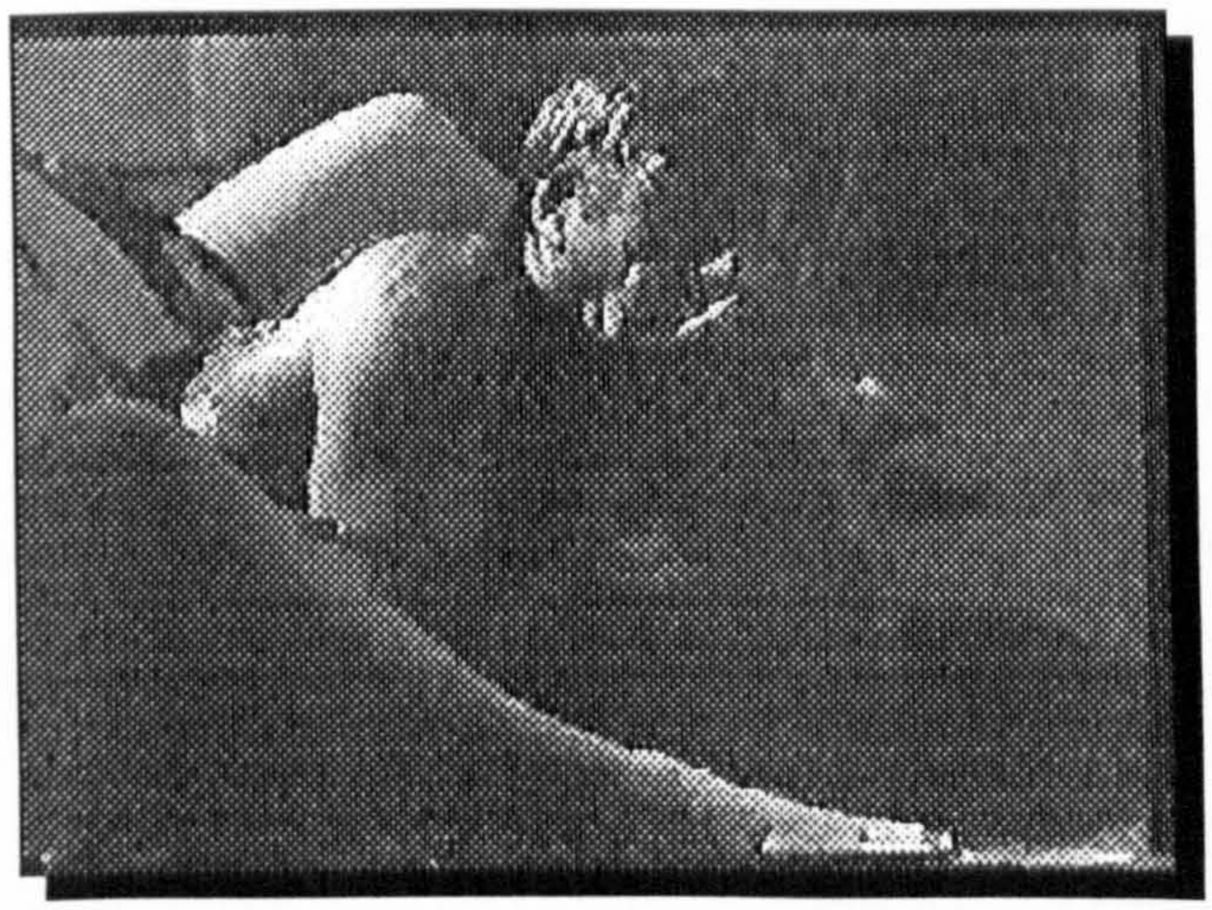
[1]In interview (Burnstone 1995: 1).

[2]As age and an established, recognised aesthetic (Expressionism) have rendered the texts acceptable and, further, canonical.

Often stripped of the budget, technical expertise and studio production systems of mainstream film, low budget and underground (amateur/semi-professionally produced) horror compensates for a lack of production values by exploiting freedom from studio imposed restraints of 'bad' taste. The resulting films are often crude and extreme but are frequently concerned with challenging radically the ideologies of their social frame through sustained attacks on commonly accepted boundaries of aesthetic judgements of 'good' taste. This in turn often allows attacks on certain ideologically moralistic institutions - typically the church and family. The questioning of social values through an upheaval and/or reworking of commonly accepted aesthetics, the attack on accepted cultural ideals and debates regarding the acceptability of widespread moral agendas that are often limited to the subtext of Hollywood productions frequently become the crudely directed manifest level of material such as The Devil Hunter (Jess Franco, 1981) or Xtro (Harry Bromley Davenport, 1982).

The challenging of 'good' taste aesthetic values often occurs through graphic violence and special effects, and frequently involves the depiction of 'distasteful' acts. The wonderfully titled Bloodsucking Freaks (Joel Reed, 1980) features the 'caged sexoids' and employs the catchy ad-line, 'they kill people for fun, they kill them slowly. They torture them, gouge their eyes out, suck their brains out...for fun' (video cover, Australian release). In Xtro a women gives birth, in gynaecological detail, to a fully grown man following her rape by an alien and a gestation of only a few hours. The subject matter of such a scene challenges



Bad taste in gynaecological detail: Xtro.

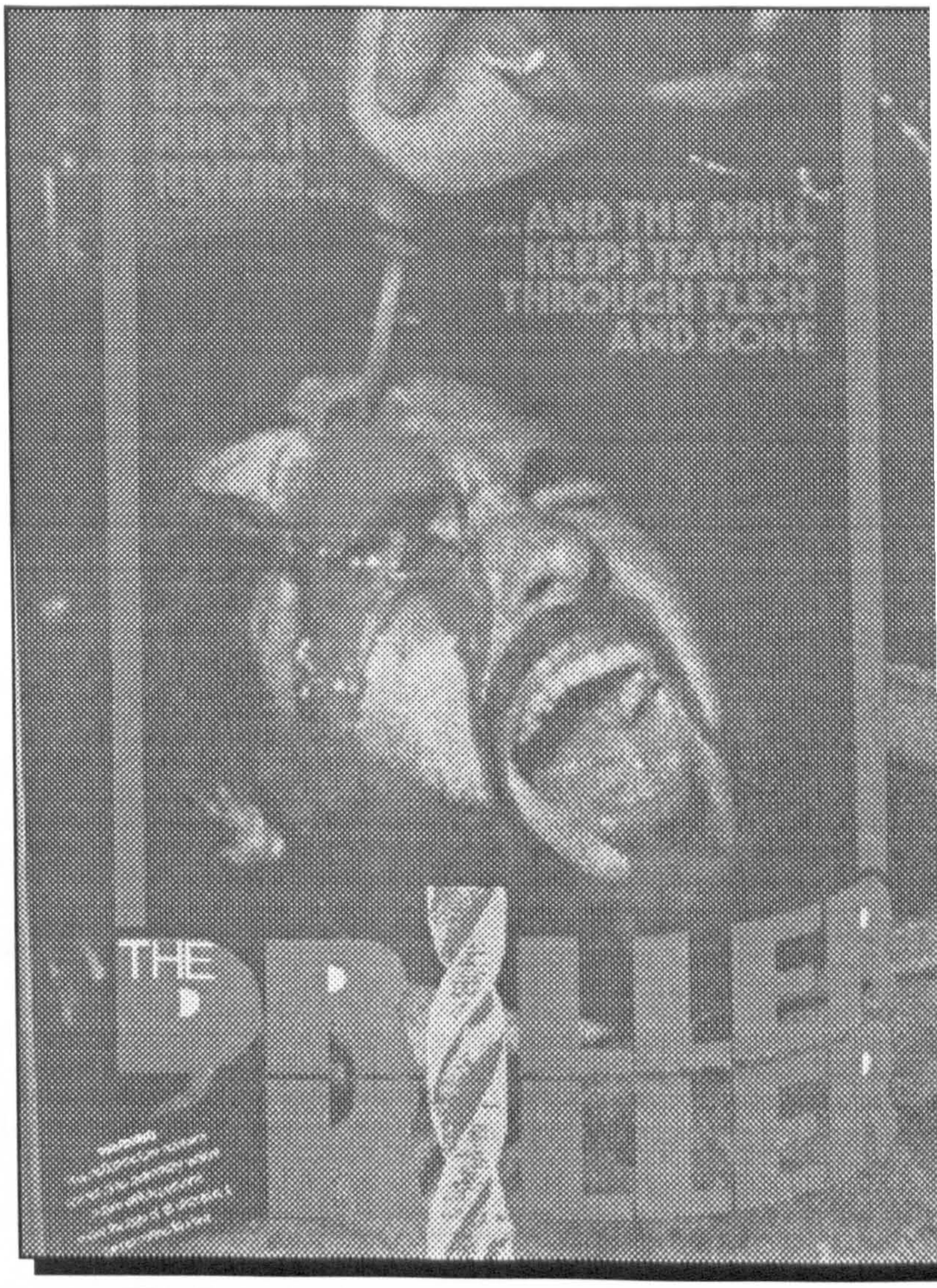
viewers' concepts of taste, whilst the gruesome nature of its realisation challenges cultural concepts of the 'acceptable' aesthetic arguably in a fashion comparable to surrealist art. Roland Barthes talks of 'the...surrealist 'jolt' in relation to the 'descacrilization of the image of the Author' in surrealist art (Barthes 1977). This 'jolt' is directly comparable to the physical and emotional jolt that horror provides, often through the challenging of doxa and hegemony through images such as this.

Similarly, the extended, lingering scenes of cannibalism, forced abortion and rape in Cannibal Holocaust seeks to offend viewers' sensibilities as much as their stomachs. To further this combined attack on 'good' taste and 'good' aesthetics, the real torture of real animals becomes a frequent part of Cannibal Holocaust's mise-en-scène. Such a challenging of ideological and moral structures is, then, figured frequently through a challenge to what agents find it acceptable to experience, and what they wish to consider (through the context in which they see it - for example, the textual fusing of disturbing ideas [Xtro's birth sequence] and its graphic realisation).

The challenging of ideological institutions such as the church and family through this device can be seen through the title and contents of Killer Nun (Giulio Berruti, 1978), a previously banned film detailing alcoholism, drug abuse, lesbianism and murder in a convent. It may be claimed that 'bad' taste is the application of hegemonically threatening issues to a text, delimited through typically taboo subject areas, such as child abuse. Here, then, a challenging aesthetic merges with an assault on agents' sensibilities and conceptions of 'good' and 'bad' taste in order to question the internal doctrines of religious structures and hypocrisy.

The Devils (Ken Russell, 1971) operates under much the same agenda; through the use of extreme violence, church-sanctioned graphic torture, religious sexual orgies and false possession, audiences' ideas of acceptability and aesthetic judgement are challenged, since we

do not generally wish to see people smashed with sledgehammers or undergoing anal and vaginal douches with boiling water . Russell's narrative extends this challenge to a questioning of wider religious moral structures, internally through its mise-en-scène and externally through the audience's projected reaction to the material. Many such texts were banned in Britain in the early 1980s[3], or were never submitted for British Board Of Film Censors (BBFC) certification; The Devils, though released, had most of its violence removed, being cut by six minutes. The eighty-one officially banned 'video nasties' in Britain (many of which have since been re-released, heavily cut) does not count underground horror such as Schramm (Jörg Buttgereit, 1993) or mainstream (if extreme) films such as Straw Dogs (Sam Peckinpah, 1971) which were never submitted to the BBFC for video certification.



The Driller Killer (Abel Ferrara, 1979): banned.

[3]The media moral panic which fuelled the 'nasty' debate continues to perpetuate myth about horror. The Daily Mirror (16/3/95: 6) claims that 'the most banned film ever is Make Them Die Slowly made in America in 1983. It includes more than 360 slayings and dismemberings, leaving only enough time for six and a half minutes of dialogue. It is banned in 31 countries'. Almost every 'fact' in this statement is incorrect. Make Them Die Slowly is the alternative American title for Cannibal Ferox. It was made in Italy, not America, in 1981, not 1983; less than thirty people die in the course of the film, not 360, and there is considerably more dialogue than violence. The point is not that Cannibal Ferox did not deserve its fate, but that misinformation still continues, over a decade later, to re-enforce myths generated by the media regarding horror and its audience.

Taste, as Bourdieu establishes, is always in flux and always contentious. Indeed, 'taste is all that one has...and all that one is for others' (Bourdieu 1984: 56) and, given this, it follows that when tastes have to be justified they are asserted negatively through the refusal of other, opposing tastes. Taste becomes, then, manifest preference and a practical affirmation of inevitable (given its existence within a social context) difference. As everyone considers their own taste to be legitimate where tastes collide disgust, and, according to Bourdieu, often violence, follows. In indigenous western culture, given the moral worth placed upon taste which is hegemonically un-threatening (especially to the body of aesthetics deemed legitimate), taste becomes a struggle between groups for how they live their lives. The vocal nature of moralist campaigners is surely a legacy of their basis in sermon and religious polemic (either high-church or fundamentalist Evangelism, but rarely mid-ground), and as such their campaigns against horror, and especially against extreme texts, are presented in the familiar terms of moral panic regarding the decay of 'traditional family values'. Both high art such as the confrontational work of Mapplethorpe and low-culture - in this instance, horror - utilising 'immoral' aesthetics are condemned in these terms.

As moralist campaigners form coherent groups such as Mary Whitehouse's 'Festival Of Light' in the 1970s, it is easier for them to campaign, en masse, for legislative change through moral panics. Horror fans, not united into organised bodies so by their nature diverse, are unable to group together to answer such challenges, or to demand legislative change from a mass standpoint and are therefore more legislated against than legislating.

True to the agenda of moral campaigns, films are certified by the BBFC on the subjective grounds of whether they are likely to deprave or corrupt audiences; material that is

not considered a dangerously corrupting influence undergoes certification[6]. Texts deemed likely to generate negative social effects are cut until enough material has been removed to render them allegedly non-corruptive, or are banned. James Ferman, head of the BBFC, states that a further criterion within the deprave/corrupt test is the consideration that a film or scene may 'make people morally bad': scenes such as graphic rape '[do] seem...to have that capacity' (lecture at the National Film Theatre, 18/10/1990). This is clearly a subjective judgement, and one which the video nasties were considered to have failed comprehensively.

Furthermore, a 'basic [guideline] is to balance the rights of the robust majority against the needs of the vulnerable minority' (ibid). Material is banned and/or cut in order to avoid depraving and corrupting potentially 'unstable' agents who, it is claimed, may be triggered by 'the drip-drip-drip' (ibid) effect of extreme imagery. Where the main narrative device within a horror text is the graphic depiction of [often sexual] violence, the deprave/corrupt test is applied. Certain films (typically those which utilise 'ultra-violence'[7] such as The Last House On The Left or The House On The Edge Of The Park [Ruggero Deodata, 1981]) construct their entire narratives around the very criteria that BBFC legislation seeks to protect 'vulnerable' minds from. Though individual texts may be valid in their discussion and portrayal of violence, the alleged potential mass impact of ultra-violent texts is an area of concern and frequent legislation for the BBFC; Ferman states:

> it's the social context...the kind of media climate the film is coming into [that forms the legislative and evaluative basis]. That was the thing about the video nasties: it wasn't

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[6]It would be wrong to accuse the BBFC of operating to the same agenda as moralist campaigners; rather they attempt to balance the views of many different groups, both moralist and artistic as best, and, as they consider it, as fairly as possible.

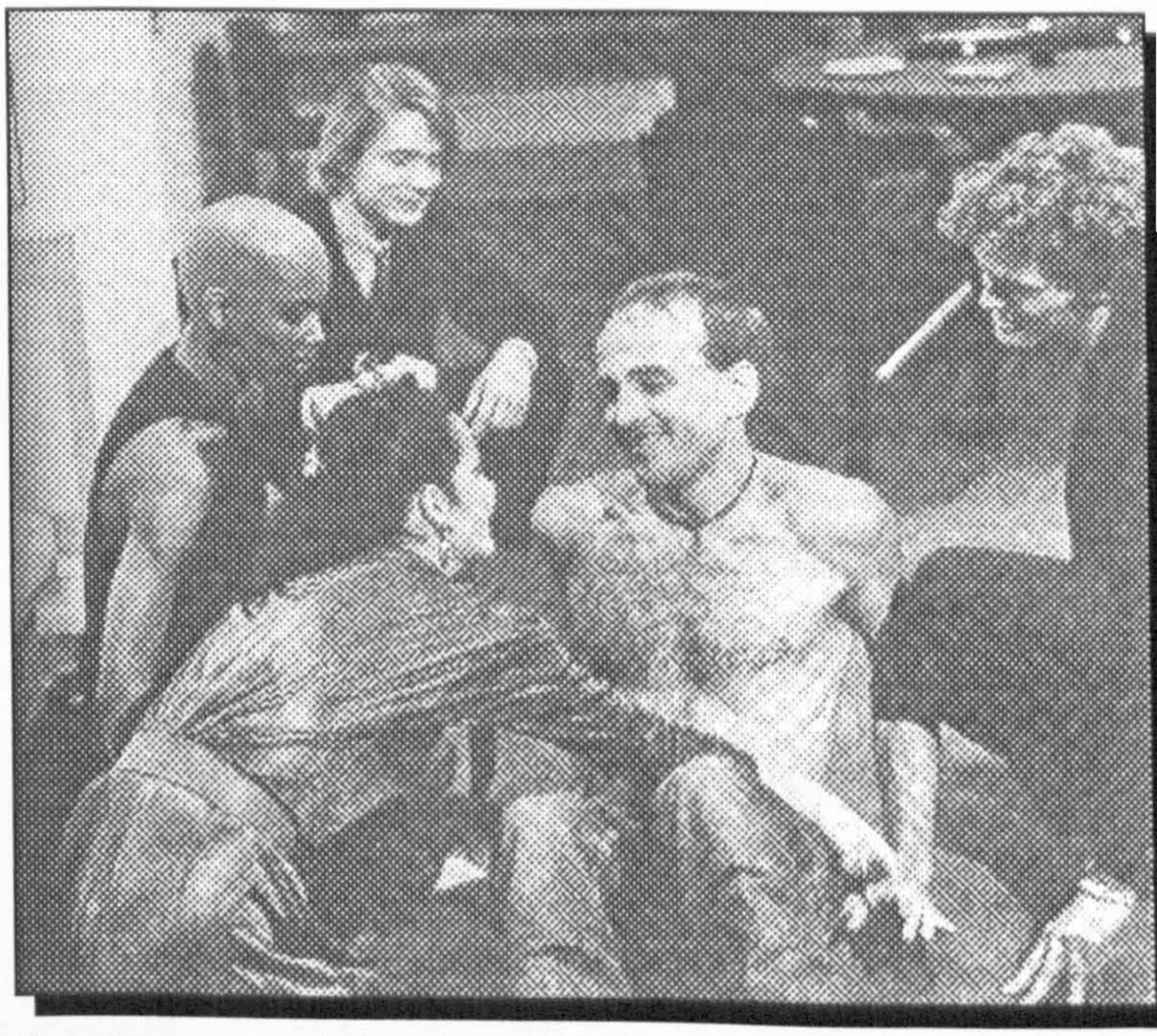
[7]The highly realistic, lingering and frequently sexually motivated portrayal of sadistic violence and extreme suffering. Ultra-violence is then the realism of violence in a realistic setting, not necessarily the amount of it. The original Realism movement within art was rejected for challenging bourgeoisie values and was, unsurprisingly, considered low and vulgar. The same applies to horror, which may be why the majority of banned horror texts utilise a realist approach.

so much the individual film after film of bodies being cut up, zombies eating flesh and so on. That's why we said, 'Wait a minute, is this all the video industry is about, [sic] and what is it doing to people to keep on seeing these images? First of all it devalues the images themselves, and what is it doing to people's sensibilities?' (ibid).

Films such as Cannibal Holocaust, Inferno (Dario Argento, 1979) and the other 'nasties' initially deemed and termed as such by The Daily Mail's moral panic[8], were considered, in the context of a mass market invasion of such material rather than as individual texts, to be harmful to public moral sensibility (effectively hegemonic ideology) through a questioning of acceptable and, therefore hegemonic, aesthetics. This moral sensibility is considered typically monolithic by the media and the BBFC.

However, legislation occurred at an individual level, so The Exorcist remains banned on video as 'it's got a unique power to disturb the religiously inclined young...[its] power comes from the fact that it's terribly persuasively done' (James Ferman, ibid). I Spit On Your Grave remains banned as

> it is debatable whether [the] film constitutes harsh realism...or an



The House On The Edge Of The Park: likely to deprav and corrupt.

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[8]Which, in it's editorial of the 30th June, 1983 indignantly and theatrically demanded to know 'how much longer will the government dither and Parliament blather while our children can continue to buy sadism from the video-pusher as easily - and almost as cheaply - as they can buy fruit gums from the sweetie shop?'. This moral panic directly heralded the banning of the 'nasties' and increased censorship in Britain. As usual, The Daily Mail centred its moral panic around the potential threat to children, writing in a sensationalist language of mock-childish innocence and subtly equating 'video-pushers' with drug pushers.

> exploitation of images of gang rape for some audiences who may be seeking not the true horror of the crime of rape, but the possible vicarious thrills of sexual violence for predisposed audiences (Flesh And Blood 4: 14).

Hegemonically challenging texts which operate to the twin criteria of a questioning of, firstly, ideological and moral structures, and secondly aesthetic acceptability through the depiction of ultra-violence, are banned if the narrative is dominantly and extensively focused through or centred around these considerations. Through legislation agents' personal and moral 'sensibilities' are, therefore, 'protected' by an official patriarchal body (the BBFC).

However, banned material is widely available to horror fans through networks set up via fan culture and through 'for sale' and 'wanted' advertisements in fanzines; social un-acceptability makes them required viewing for many (dominantly Wood's aficionados). Fanzines such as In The Flesh devote almost exclusive attention to underground/banned horror; there are literally hundreds of similar publications being produced on a regular basis, indicating a large audience for such material. A review of The Evil Dead claims that the film is an 'unrivalled classic of the genre' and 'strongly advise[s]' its readership to view the uncut, original banned release

The Evil Dead: an unrivalled classic.

(Flesh And Blood 7: 5)[9]. As we shall see, though differing meta-textual constructions of 'ideal' horror abound in fan culture, general aficionado consensus advocates a return to the independent, low budget production of horror typified by The Hills Have Eyes or The Last House On The Left. For fans, freedom from Hollywood studios implies freedom from an adherence to studio demands of moral 'acceptability' within the texts that they produce.

Whilst this is not to claim that Hollywood productions cannot challenge dominant ideologies and moral structures, they are often limited in the extent of such challenges by the financial and moral concerns of the major studios. Though this is an obvious point, it is worth making briefly: if a text is too extreme in its aesthetic and/or ideological realisation it risks offending the sensibilities of its target audience to an unacceptable degree, compromising patronage and limiting financial return. This, I would suggest, is why more extreme horror such as texts on the British banned list are typically low-budget, independent productions. Films such as I Spit On Your Grave, created on minimal budgets, do not require the blockbuster status of Hollywood films in order to regain their initial investments and move into profit, therefore they may utilise stronger, more disturbing, imagery and value structures.

This emerges through a comparison of texts dealing with the same issues inside and outside of the Hollywood system. The Accused (Jonathan Kaplan, 1988) discusses the same issues (violent patriarchy, figured through dominance over the female body and sexuality) as I Spit On Your Grave, but is a sanitised version[10]. Both films tell the story of a woman who is brutally gang raped, and the justice that she seeks. The Accused's post-rape justice operates through the legal system; in I Spit On Your Grave, Jennifer (the film's victim-heroine) never

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[9]Although the original UK release was still missing one minute of violence cut by the studio before submission to the BBFC for fear that the film may have been rejected outright were these scenes (an eye-gouging and the twisting of a pencil in a wound) left in.

[10]For further discussion, see Clover 1992

considers resorting to the law, but instead castrates, hangs, axes and drills (using an outboard motor) her attackers.

Perhaps more tellingly, I Spit On Your Grave challenges all structures of male dominance; the rapists are constructed as 'normal', everyday, family men - any man, according to Zarchi can become a rapist, and any patriarchal social structure may subtly enforce rape-power by suppressing females through social institutions such as the family or workplace. Jennifer, in ignoring the legal system, acknowledges that to seek retribution through it is to bow to patriarchal structures of 'justice', and is therefore to continue to be metaphorically raped by submitting her body, mind and freedom to masculine arbitration. Her method of reparation centres around her own (rather than patriarchal) law; she utilises *her* mind and body to punish her attackers. The Accused does not challenge hegemony, but rather forces the rape victim to bow to it; justice takes place within a male-dominated and defined courtroom and legal system.

Furthermore, The Accused's reparations are legal, ultimately protecting the rapists as prison, rather than castration and death, is the imposed sentence. This is not to claim that this is a preferable punishment for rapists; however, within the terms of I Spit On Your Grave, the punishment certainly fits the crime. Jennifer defines her own terms of reparation, and becomes judge, jury and executioner. It is suggested in The Accused that the victim, Sarah, would actually prefer a more physical and permanent form of punishment for those who raped her. Despite this, she is unable to put these ideas into practise as Jennifer did for two reasons: firstly, the studio generated, big-budget nature of the film does not allow actions of the kind advocated by Jennifer (especially, as we shall see, because of the specific period in which it was created), and secondly Sarah's attackers are protected by the legal system to which she turns.

The vital piece of evidence comes from Ken, a male witness to Sarah's rape; The Accused, whilst attacking certain men through the rapists, does not extend this to an attack on the whole system of patriarchal social organisation as I Spit On Your Grave is able to do; *some* men are figured as rapists, but controlling men generally and patriarchy particularly are supported through the subtle machinations of male institutions. This is partly evidenced by the fact that the group of four rapists are the only adult male characters to appear in Zarchi's text[11], and their points of view, values and ideologies are the only male discourses that audiences hear. In the world of the film, the rapists *are* male society, and no other sets of male values are seen to exist outside of it, directly contrasting with The Accused in which this is clearly not the case.

The men in Zarchi's film and the microcosmic patriarchal society that they represent are figured as cowardly, childlike and moronic from the first time that audiences see them playing 'chicken' with a knife to the end of the film. Furthermore, they underline their status as being representative every-males when a rapist later claims that their actions are typically masculine ('any man would've done it'). To further underline this, the family (the basic unit of patriarchal power) is figured as ideal through the rapist's position at the heart of it, when his wife later claims that 'he's a good father and a good husband'.

This is not to suggest that it is somehow more radical to present all men as rapists (indeed, it could be claimed that this feeds right-wing non-radical values, though the extensive empowerment of Jennifer after her repeated degradation would go some way to challenge this), however, in its own terms I Spit On Your Grave certainly seems to have greater courage of its polemical convictions that The Accused does. The former film's aesthetic,

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[11]Except for a briefly glimpsed bell boy at the start of the film and a male customer in the background of a bar scene, neither of which are established as characters.

orchestrated through its mise-en-scène, underlines this by detailing 'shocking' and 'distasteful' acts graphically; whilst The Accused's rape sequence is horrific, the extended rapes of I Spit On Your Grave (almost half of the film's running time) are far more brutally realised.

As if to emphasise this, there is never any doubt in I Spit On Your Grave that rape is a devastating, horrific experience; The Accused, meanwhile, centres its entire narrative around officially and privately expressed doubt that this is the case, and at one point it is suggested that the claim of rape be dropped to one of 'aggravated assault'. The attempted murder of Jennifer and her revenge are constructed to stun the audience into silence, and whilst viewers may walk away from The Accused still considering it as essentially entertainment, I Spit On Your Grave is an endurance test that many of its viewers cannot complete.

Despite regular condemnation claiming the opposite, I Spit On Your Grave never figures rape as even remotely erotic. During the rapes, point of view shots (POV) situate us with Jennifer rather than her attackers, their leering faces horribly distorted through extreme close-up. Jennifer displays only intense pain and humiliation; it may be argued that aware of popular culture's trivialisation of sexual objectification and violence, the text distances itself from Hollywood's aesthetic conventions. The style is naturalistic, and non-diegetic music is entirely absent. Before the threat surfaces, Jennifer swims naked in a river, viewed exclusively in long-shot, denying audiences' potentially erotic gaze. It may be claimed that where Hollywood and more typical exploitation texts would objectify Jennifer through an extended fetishism of her naked body,

Jennifer dominated and about to be penetrated by a symbolic-destructive phallus.

Zarchi consciously avoids and ultimately condemns such mainstream objectification as an extension of Jennifer's literal rape.

It is important to consider subsequent events in light of this avoidance of bodily fetishism. Typically, as psychoanalytic critics such as Barbara Creed and Clover claim, textual fetishism through shot construction seeks to endow the feminine with a symbolic phallus with which to displace lack. Physical control over bodily representation through fetishism also places the feminine under the limited 'control' of the masculine production system and viewing audience. This marks an important distinction between the exploitation frame (in the sense of text, narrative structure and emphasis rather than meaning exploitation of the body and sexual act as in pornography) of texts such as Zarchi's and 'respectable' Hollywood products such as The Accused, since Sarah's body is fetishised constantly prior to her rape. As Sarah dances, for example, the camera disturbingly echoes the leering rapist-gaze by adhering to the common Hollywood fetishistic figuration of women. It may be argued that the lack-negating fetish-phallus (Sarah) does not here imply homosexual undertones, but rather seeks to control the gendered feminine self through the application of easily understandable frames of (male) audience and producer reference.

Taking its cues from Zarchi's text, The Accused's male group dynamic is focused through a validation of masculine power bases. Sarah is raped on a 'Slam Dunk' pinball table below a television broadcasting sporting results, and dressed previously as a baseball player. The rapes are constructed as a baseball game with each rapist figured as a batter and Sarah the 'home-run'. However, such dynamics remain unchallenged by the text's conclusion, and even the figuration of rape is removed from a centralised position of female experience: the act is witnessed through male flashback, remaining divorced from Sarah's personal emotion. The text therefore privileges the male gaze and critical position during crucial events.

Clover worryingly considers that act defines gender (rape implies victim status, in turn defining victims as female) rather than a state of birth; revenge, considered masculine direct-action therefore translates the avenger into male-by-proxy. I would like to argue that in Zarchi's film this is actually not the case, despite Clover's argument to the contrary. During revenge and after praying, Jennifer dresses in a white, quasi-sacrificial robe; after the castration she plays classical music and burns the rapist's clothes. The white of the robes, bloodletting, music and purifying fire all combine to figure Jennifer's revenge as a neo-religious, justifiable act. Her robes and the woodland setting give her the appearance of a druid or wood-nymph, marking her revenge as both justifiable before God (through her prayers) and before nature and natural states.

Jennifer's sacrificial robe.

The lack of fetish-phallicism of Jennifer renders her vengeance a restructuring of masculine perceptions of gender roles through the maintenance of lack and successful recourse to a feminised system of justice, albeit one specific to that female (Jennifer) only. Accordingly, Jennifer utilises masculine perceptions of sexual roles against men to punish the system they represent; her vitally feminine usurpation of masculine power bases, including phallic weaponry, thus marks her, textually, as a radical female who rejects the compromise that Sarah accepts.

Jennifer accurately un-mans masculine sexual dominance with no recourse to, or even mention of, masculine law. She is entirely successful; by the text's conclusion she has taken control of the previously masculine/rapist domain of the powerboat and steers it away from

Jennifer takes control.

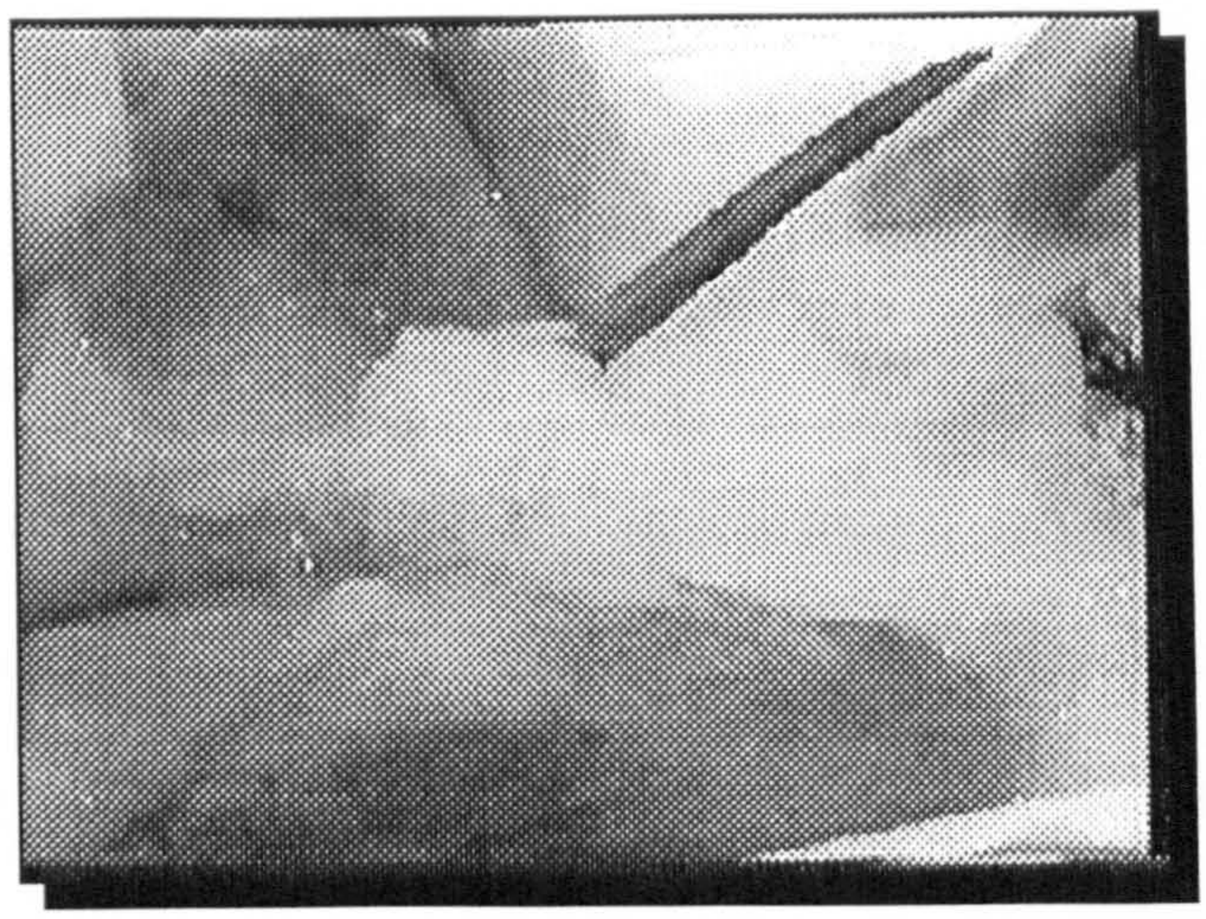
the remains of oppressive sexual dominance towards a life symbolically free of its values. The powerboat was central to the rapes, since the rapists used it to keep ahead of the Jennifer and as a reconnaissance device. It is important that Jennifer gains control of the powerboat, as it constitutes a primary textual power*base*. Through the boat, Jennifer uses masculinity against itself to eliminate two of the rapists, employing it as a weapon with which to disembowel one and from which to axe the other.

As the rapists' male group dynamic constitutes the film's representative patriarchal power base, Jennifer's literal deconstruction of that dynamic is a devastatingly effective retaliation against patriarchy. Separated from the group, each rapist cites post-Fordist diffuse structuring, claiming that the rapes were the idea of the others. In removing the phallus from the symbolic patriarchal system through a literal castration, Jennifer symbolically destroys the patriarchal ethic.

Thereafter, other women in the text are empowered: the wife of one of the rapists dominates the others who cower impotently before her - a situation that was unthinkable during the first half of the film. Clover misreads this crucial exchange of power through gender re-evaluation. As Jennifer kills a rapist, Clover claims that she 'trips a switch, and hangs him' (Clover 1992: 117). In fact, Jennifer physically pulls him into the air, displaying enormous strength. In gaining symbolic control through manipulation of the gang Jennifer also gains considerable and largely unfeasible physical strength, which renders her actions and what they represent symbolic. The gender war is here resolved in both physical and

ideological terms in order to herald a new ideological state.

The Accused appears to operate to a different agenda. It was created during the period in Reagan's term of office in which America's economic status was challenged severely by foreign market dominance. During this period evil in films was often defeated through American, white male social institutions, representative of the defensive family, explaining in part Sarah's reliance on masculinity to protect her.



Jennifer re-figures gendered identity to castrate representative patriarchy.

However, perhaps even more disturbing is what she becomes symbolically: here the female body becomes American economic property (economic because of the Reaganite ideal of the family, in which the reproductive female body is paramount) damaged by hostile invaders. Effectively, Sarah becomes representative of contemporary economics and economic concerns. It is, therefore, the responsibility of American patriarchs, through social structures representative of the Reaganite family, to protect its property from - here literal - foreign bodies, transforming the rapists into symbols of external American economic structures damaging American values through Sarah's body politic. Tellingly, the rapists are dark-haired, giving them a vaguely foreign appearance, whilst Ken, the 'good' observer who provides the vital evidence is distanced spatially from the rape, and is a blonde haired, blue eyed, emotional, and thoughtful individual with a clear sense of 'right' and 'wrong', directly contrasting the morally and traditionally 'un-American' rapists with an almost Aryan embodiment of the values that America was adopting to counter foreign economic investment.

Similar examples of Hollywood's inability to transcend hegemonic ideologies (partially) through aesthetics surface regularly. The portrayal of the alleged media causation of violence could not be figured more differently in the aesthetics and the non-hegemonic ideologies of, for example, Cannibal Holocaust and Natural Born Killers[12] (Oliver Stone, 1994). Similarly, Fatal Attraction (Adrian Lyne, 1987) was not conceived originally in its current form. In the original version, Alex (a spurned woman seeking revenge) punished her former lover by destroying his marriage and future career. After a disastrous test screening this potentially radical sequence was re-filmed to incorporate Alex's elimination and the reinstatement of the male power that she had usurped. A text considered too potentially radical was deemed to have no place within its studio's output, and was altered substantially to guarantee financial gain. For these reasons, many fans contend that low-budget, non-studio 'freedom', as experienced by Zarchi, allows film-makers to produce truly frightening and disturbing films rather than the lightweight comedy-horror, conservative output of Hollywood, typified by The Lost Boys[13].

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[12]The original international release of Natural Born Killers had in excess of 150 cuts made for violence. In 1996 an American laser-disk re-release re-instating all previous cuts was issued, unrated, with a series of documentaries following the film, after the cut version was withdrawn on video in Britain. Future analysts would be advised to view the uncut laser-disk. All subsequent discussion of the film in this thesis will refer to this definitive version.

[13]Clover is also of the opinion that low budget/underground horror is preferable and often more successful than Hollywood's big budget, 'low risk' output for the same reasons (Clover 1992: 236). Underground horror is made on a shoe-string budget by enthusiastic amateurs using basic equipment and technical expertise, producing results ranging from appallingly poor, to deeply shocking and highly intelligent films such as Nekromantik, Nekromantik II (Jörg Buttgereit, 1991) and Der Todesking (Jörg Buttgereit, 1990). The magazine Gore Zone says of underground production, 'genre enthusiasts will stop at *nothing* in order to shock admittedly calloused connoisseurs into crying uncle. Nekromantik is a cavalcade of depravity climaxing in an unforgettable act of suicidal self-abuse that is quite simply one of the most shocking, repellent and unmentionable sequences you'll ever witness on film' (Gore Zone 17: 19). In The Flesh claims that 'Nekromantik I has pretty much established itself as the sicko cult classic of the late '80s...the name on every self-respecting gore/horror fan's lips...to this day' (In The Flesh 6: 38). It is important to remember that Belgium's internationally acclaimed Man Bites Dog (Remy Belvaux, Andre Bonzel, Benoit Poelvoorde, 1992) is an underground horror film, produced by three friends on a budget of only seven and a half thousand pounds. Its popular underground cult appeal lead to its subsequent art-house/semi-mainstream international theatrical and video release. As the UK video cover notes state, 'Man Bites Dog...successfully out-grossed all the previously released Belgian films to date....And it went snapping at the heels of the Hollywood blockbuster Lethal Weapon 3 (Richard Donner), which only just kept its number one spot - Man Bites Dog leapt straight into the second position'. It subsequently became Belgium's entry at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival, where

Traditional academic exclusion of fan culture implies that a criterion of assessment is applied to texts on the basis of 'good' and 'bad' taste, as covertly defined by dominant cultural and artistic aesthetics at the time of production. This is at odds with the potential agendas of horror, especially the 'opening up' of possible alternatives to dominant cultural ideologies and systems (as in I Spit On Your Grave's conception of 'true' justice), as we shall discover.

Many films banned in Britain were outlawed because of their direct challenging of hegemony rather than, as is usually assumed, their depiction of graphic violence. Occasionally banned films side-step assaults on their audiences' aesthetic sensibilities through violence and attack hegemonic ideology directly. The bloodless but banned Human Experiments (Gregory Goodall, 1979) examines psychological degradation by figures of authority within the allegorical microcosm of an American prison. It appears to have been banned because of its subversive political implications, including the demonising of justice systems and patriarchal values, which are figured as sadistic and corrupt, rather than physical brutality. Conversely, Braindead, possibly the bloodiest film ever created (and which was marketed as such) was released theatrically and on video uncut due to its humour.

Though Braindead undoubtedly challenges 'good' taste through its reliance on excessive gore, the film remains hegemonically un-threatening because of its parodic basis. The film is never serious or 'mean spirited'; it uses cartoon-like imagery, sound-effects and narrative structuring, and so, though aesthetically challenging, does not deliver 'serious' (realistic) violence such as is found in The Last House On The Left. When Braindead's characters are badly injured they soon recover; parody operates within such texts to diffuse

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'near riots' kept 'frantic distributers out of over-crowded screenings' (ibid). It is a testimony to the potential emotional power of underground horror that the film went on to win the 1992 Prix de la Critique Internationale, the Prix de la Critique Francaise and the coveted Prix Special du Jury Prix de Jeunesse.

ultra-violent potential and render them 'acceptable' if 'distasteful'.

Braindead: Hegemonically un-threatening.

As a result, only two of eighty-one texts on the initial banned list display a sustained sense of humour overtly: The Evil Dead and Flesh For Frankenstein (Paul Morrissey, 1974). Indeed, parody, at heart, constitutes a means of gaining control of the form in question through systematic debasing of the acceptable norms operable within more serious (therefore 'genuine') examples of that form (Bourdieu 1993: 31). Camp humour, even when displayed through excessive gore, imbues a text with a form of quasi-Brechtian distancing which displays the text, and the texts which precede and follow it, in a different light fuelled by an often unspoken critique of the conventions which generated the parodic text itself. Flesh For Frankenstein, through excessive gore and the 'inappropriate' method of handling it (the Baron - never actually called Frankenstein - becomes orgasmically fixated with the innards of his creations) comments directly upon the conventions and even the set designs of Hammer films. The sequel, Blood For Dracula (Paul Morrissey, 1974) completes the parodic linkage of Hammer's Dracula and Frankenstein cycles which, by the time of the Warhol/Morrissey productions had gone into decline. The deadly serious nature of other

banned texts, therefore, helped to deem them legally 'obscene'.

The parody of Morrissey's texts inspired further parodic texts employing excessive gore. For example, the final, bloody scene in Blood For Dracula in which Dracula is gradually dismembered is repeated almost shot for shot in the Black Knight sequence of Monty Python And The Holy Grail (Terry Gilliam, 1974). Camp, then, becomes the entry point for internal criticism of source, inspirational material and allows subsequent film makers to challenge further conventions within the field. Without the direct parody of 'splatter' evident within Morrissey's text, Gilliam's comment on it could not have existed. Without Flesh For Frankenstein it may also be claimed that the highly parodic The Rocky Horror Picture Show (Jim Sharman, 1975[14]) could not been constructed in the way that it was.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show utilises almost exactly the same set designs as Flesh For Frankenstein, including (as well as blatant parodies from the Warhol/Morrissey text of Hammer's The Curse Of Frankenstein [Terence Fisher, 1957] such as the birth-device vat), mise-en-scène constructions too unusual within the genre to be anything other than a direct furthering of the parody originated by Warhol/Morrissey. Examples of these include the positioning of stylised Greek statues within the laboratory, the presence before the birth-vat of huge, semi-circular ramps and, amongst others, the pastel-tiled, modern colour scheme of the lab within each castle's Gothic façade[15]. Furthermore, in each the creations are beautiful, directly opposing the conventional appearance of Frankenstein's monster, and in each they are objects of lust for other major characters, having been designed with this purpose specifically in mind.

Returning to Bourdieu, it is clear that his statements regarding the avant-garde

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[14]Note that all of these films appear in 1974 or 1975, displaying clearly the lead that the Warhol/Morrissey productions took and the momentum maintained by subsequent directors through parody of the form.

[15]See inset page, below.

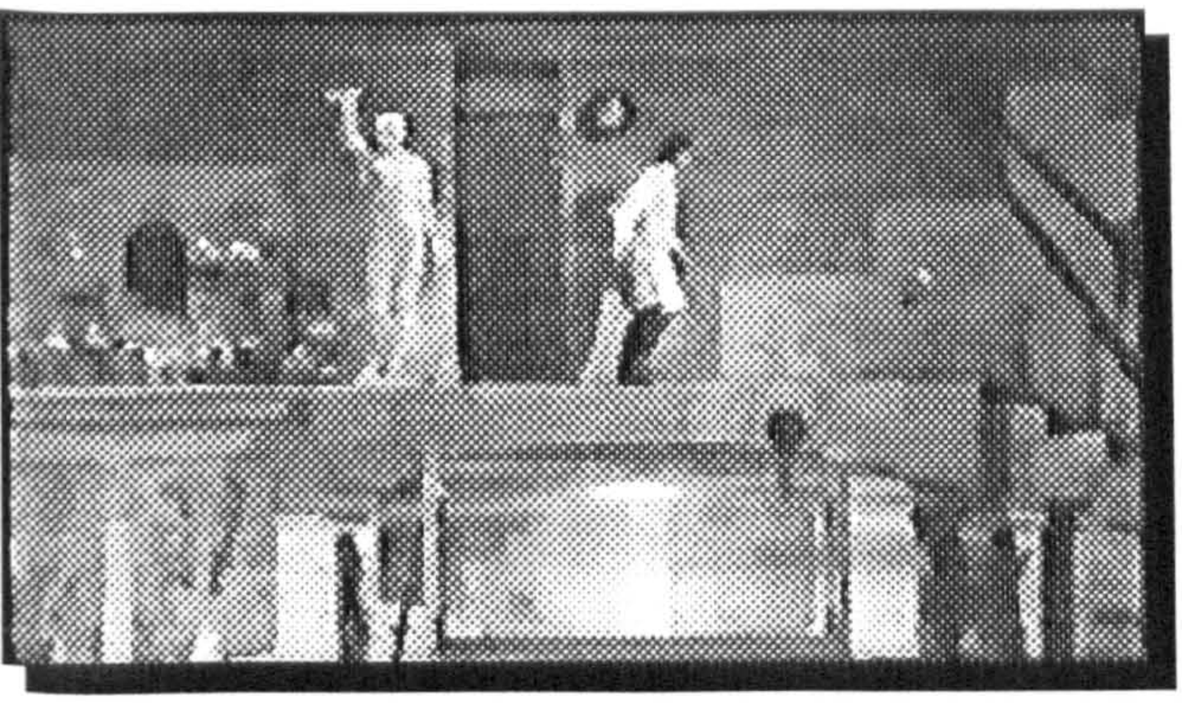
movement within art production allow recognition of a certain merit in the production of underground material, however extreme, in relation to the production of mainstream texts (Bourdieu 1993: 64). For Bourdieu, the 'pure' artist is one who remains at a critical distance from largely economic necessity; without financial ties to an established institution (the Hollywood studio system for example), the underground/avant-garde producer is freed from a number of constraints. The avant-garde artist such as Morrissey, is, for Bourdieu, freed from such considerations by wealth with which s/he supports themselves whilst producing art, and until that art may support them unaided by recourse to previously accumulated wealth.

This, however, is certainly not the case for the producers of underground horror who are often equally as avant-garde as their more 'serious' and highbrow artistic counterparts. Reflecting Clover's typical horror audience, such producers tend to be young, working or lower middle-class, usually white males. As Bourdieu claims, they utilise their own distribution networks to market the products that they create (Buttgereit, for example, runs his own distribution company which markets underground horror including, dominantly, his own), though are rarely free from economic necessity. Many are students (Alex Chandon's successful Bad Karma [1991] was produced, though later disowned, by his university whilst he completed a media studies course), or maintain low paid jobs (Buttgereit was a cinema projectionist) whilst struggling to fund and distribute their films, and break even. It is, in the eyes of horror fans, such artistic hardship that generates affection for the work of underground producers.

Fanzines often represent directors such as Buttgereit or Chandon as Romantic, struggling artists prepared to endure hardship to create entertainment for aficionados, often at considerable financial loss. Born of a need to challenge the mainstream and produce original work which exposes the limitations of the typically Hollywood horror canon (as Bourdieu

Parodic connections in mise-en-scène construction:

Flesh For Frankenstein and The Rocky Horror Picture Show



Flesh For Frankenstein:
statue, ramp, vat.

Flesh For Frankenstein:
tiles, ramp, machinery.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show:
statue, ramp, vat.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show:
statues, tiles.

The Rocky Picture Horror Show:
tiles, ramp, machinery.

would consider it, the necessarily blinkered bourgeoisie conception of acceptability[16]), such directors amend the rule of 'pure' artistic production by remaining distant from enforced ties and obligations to external bodies, but struggle financially to produce their visions.

It is then inappropriate, especially given the proposed centrality of aficionado opinion to horror analysis, to condemn a text merely on the level of its 'gore' content; gore *per se* is not the entire issue, but rather the focus and tone of a text. It is worth considering why a text indulges in a seemingly inappropriate level of gore in its narrative (as evidenced by Braindead) before rejecting it. As Bourdieu established, each entry into a generic pattern within the artistic field is influenced by *every* previous entry in the same manner that the sixth digit in a telephone number is influenced by the previous five and cannot meaningfully exist without an awareness of that influence. As the Possession genre was never the same after The Exorcist, neither was any text which utilised gore after The Evil Dead or Re-Animator (Stuart Gordon, 1986). Stylistic construction within horror was re-defined through the camp parody of extremity operating within these texts and, though at first glance they may appear outrageously 'nasty', this is often only an initial, immediate reaction generated by aesthetic revulsion; once beyond this, and beyond moral condemnation of such texts routinely handed out by critics and moralist groups, agents may begin to consider what exactly the aesthetics of revulsion challenges.

The aesthetic of revulsion itself, in the hands of an intelligent director, may be utilised to great effect within a text to underline and enhance theme and narrative construction; the repulsive need not be of detriment to a text but can enhance understanding of the processes of

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[16]Though Bourdieu himself often makes inappropriate value and aesthetic distinctions of a similar kind to those he criticises in others. For example, he associates a photograph of a pregnant woman with that which is 'repugnant, horrible [and] distasteful' (Bourdieu 1984: 39). It is clear that this value judgement is his own, despite being in the context of a wider public reaction.

meaning emission and reception by the text to its audience. One such example is Argento's Opera (1987), which underlines the linkage between audience reaction and the psychological impact of witnessing often nauseating imagery within a text through a direct challenge to agents' doxic sense of the boundaries of acceptability. Here, diegetic events mirror audiences' (physical) reaction to those events so closely and intelligently that we must question typical media and academic rejection of 'ultra-violence' as cheapening and 'sick'. Argento states:

> For years I've been annoyed by people covering their eyes during the gorier moments in my films...I film these images because I want people to see them and not avoid...positive confrontation...by looking away (Jones 1996: 43).

His exploration of the response and contract between audiences and diegetic characters (both of whom witness revulsion but are compelled to continue viewing) transcends the text and, whilst providing 'the core of what Opera is about' (ibid), also stands as a symbol of Argento's own, and horror's general, theatre of cruelty. Such cinema is painful to watch, but for much analysed and complex reasons[17], audiences continue to view it. In the scenes in question, a young ingénue is repeatedly kidnapped by a psychotic killer. She is restrained and needles are strapped under her eyes, preventing her from closing them even momentarily to blink. If she tries to shut her eyes, her eyelids will be pierced. The killer then murders a friend or colleague compelling her to watch the entire, horrific event before releasing her unhurt.

The extreme, gruesome nature of the murders repel the audience, but, crucially, Argento has constructed these scenes to be so outrageously sadistic that, despite our revulsion, we cannot tear our eyes from the screen. Audience reaction directly mirrors that unfolding before them in the diegetic world; they temporarily become the kidnapped ingénue.

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[17]See, for example, Carroll 1990.

Argento has inverted audience revulsion not by playing down the violence from which they may look away, but by increasing it through an exploration of the masochistic and sadistic tendencies which drew them to horror in the first place[18]. The aesthetic of revulsion here reveals a truth about audiences' own desires which goes far beyond the running time of the text. This constitutes a central concern of Argento's, evident to some extent in all of his work, which typically revolves around central, artistic characters who witness mysterious and horrific events to which they hold the key, but which they cannot bring to mind[19]. The voyeuristic, scopophilic impulse is, therefore, vital to an understanding of the extreme, 'negative' aesthetic that horror, and especially Argento, presents.

> In his 'Notes sur une révolution', Jacques Rivette claims of artistic creators that, violence is their prime virtue...virile anger, which comes from the heart, and lies less in the scenario and choice of events, than in the tone of the narrative and the very technique of the mise en scène (Rivette 1955).

Argento clearly conforms to this though he infuses violence of an extreme nature, through negative aesthetics, into scenario and events as well as narrative tone and mise en scène technique. If Rivette is correct, then through negative aesthetics (which for many critics would be reason enough to reject him), Argento is an artist.

Though the radical political implications of Human Experiments may seem tame by today's standards, nevertheless it was banned whilst Braindead's ultimate conservatism and narrative closure (essentially the positioning of the subject within ideology) allowed its release.

Braindead was, however, condemned on all sides as offensive and furthermore, unlike

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[18]Peeping Tom also confronts many of these issues, though in a less aesthetically extreme manner.

[19]Argento returns to the theme of the compulsion to view repulsive artistic material in, at the time of writing, his latest film, The Stendhal Syndrome (1996), in which a young woman becomes obsessed with art that affects her mental balance and also marks her as the target of a serial killer with a disturbing sexual obsession.

Argento's oeuvre of extremity, childishly so. Regardless of whether or not this is the case, Braindead, like Flesh For Frankenstein before it, was a startling new assault on the tacit and unspoken audience belief in an 'acceptable' body of cinematic aesthetic values, and where its boundaries lie. Such texts may be 'nasty' but they are not as grimly realistic or morally devoid as texts such as Man Bites Dog and therefore surely are not as *truly* violent, and, to follow the BBFC's lead, likely to deprave and corrupt.

As Britain moves into a post-Bulger period of the labelling of all horror, as opposed to certain kinds of 'morally void' extreme horror, as video-nasties, analysts will hopefully recognise that moral panics and critical rejection of the form as inappropriate material for analysis because of its culturally 'low' status operates continually in this country. If so, and if they are to study popular culture (which necessarily includes analysis of the cultural doxa generated by such panics), they will hopefully then look to what is deemed nasty, immoral and 'beneath' contemplation, regardless of its aesthetic basis, to understand *why* such material is deemed unacceptable. Through this device, analysts may not only acknowledge what horror fans regard as preferable entertainment, but utilise Bourdieu's concepts of taste in order to locate fan taste, its expression through fanzines, and the rejection of such material by non-fans for doxic reasons (frequently expressed through a morally-based perception of 'common sense'[20]), based upon agents' everyday perceptions of social, political and economic 'reality'.

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[20]The term is also used as a defence against liberalism in moralist condemnation of any explicit material, but especially horror. Common sense in that usage usually means 'what I consider to be true' and those who do not agree are condemned as not operating to the common sense standards of the speaker who typically assumes that the rest of society also operates by them.

CHAPTER THREE

Psychoanalysis And The Text: Carol Clover

Clover's Men, Women And Chainsaws has become a central critical text in the academic analysis of horror. She utilises a Freudian, gender-centred approach to her subject matter, employing a one-sex model to claim that the gender-politics of horror are located primarily with and in the figuration and operation of the 'threat'. In doing so, Clover opens up new areas of critical debate, challenges perceptions of the sexual politics and mechanics of horror and analyses individual texts to examine gender issues. However, whilst Men, Women And Chainsaws remains vitally important to a psychoanalytic reading of horror, it is, in common with other psychoanalytic studies of the subject, ultimately reductive in its approach. For Clover, complex social commentary within horror is figured through the individual self. In opposition to this, as we shall see, I believe that the self constitutes only a single agent within a wider cultural frame, and it is to this frame that analysts must look to isolate social issues.

Although psychoanalysis is undeniably a diverse and complex form of criticism and I do not wish to imply that the approach is in any way reductive to the angles which Clover and Creed take, it is their work that I take issue with here as a symptom of the wider implications of psychoanalysis. It seems that the bias towards psychoanalytic interpretations of horror has produced a body of work which, it may be argued, isolates textual meaning and refuses to consider the context in which works are produced. It is with this in mind that I shall argue that analysts need to redress the balance away from solipsistic interpretations of horror in order to see the whole picture more clearly.

Bourdieu argues that the 'pure' gaze of philosophy occurs when solipsistic philosophers search within themselves for meaning without considering themselves as the historical, sociological products (agents) of a given culture (Bourdieu 1993: 257). Bourdieu goes on to

claim that agents can never truly perceive anything in isolation, as the 'pure' gaze itself is a complex social construction, even if only in response to existing social values. For Clover, the socio-economic frame surrounding horror's production and consumption is largely extra-textual, and so is of little or no use during critical readings of a text. Partly in line with Twitchell's analysis, Clover asserts that the individual 'meaning' of a horror text may be reduced to an internal, gendered dynamic. The production and interpretation of Twitchell's 'horror' (largely uncontrollable, permanent fear surfacing from the unconscious) and 'terror' (temporary, fleeting fear that is resolved textually through special effects and the use of narrative shock) are ultimately produced and rendered operable by the (enforced) sexual repression of agents.

> Similarly, Steven King states that horror is:
>
> as Republican as a banker in a three-piece suit....you come out [and]...say, 'Hey, I'm not so bad...a lot better than I thought'. It has that effect of reconfirming values, of reconfirming self-image and our good feelings about ourselves (Underwood and Miller 1988: 22).

Though King is correct in some instances such as the closed narrative, he does not consider the open/paranoid narrative[1], or those texts which exude nihilism to a point that audiences must question seriously the 'normality' that is being protected from threat by heroes (consider The Texas Chainsaw Massacre), rendering such readings of horror ultimately hollow. It is my

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[1]The comedy/horror/science-fiction film Men In Black comments on the paranoid narrative and also the contemporary vogue for conspiracy theories in a typically post-Fordist fashion. 'MiB' operatives work for a politically operated agency that not even the government knows exists, to monitor the presence of legal and illegal (literal) aliens on Earth. They are, therefore, highly de-centralised. Drawing from Invasion Of The Body Snatchers, the aliens pass for normal members of society. The Men In Black are described in terms of post-Fordist paranoid ('we are 'Them', we are 'They''), and conceal the constant threat of global destruction by alien forces from the inhabitants of the Earth, for, they claim, ignorance is the only way that civilisation can continue to exist. They enforce this through the continual erasing of the minds of citizens who have seen too much. The final shots of the film display pure post-Fordist paranoia; the entire galaxy is revealed to be contained in one of countless marbles that an unseen creature is playing with, and which, it is supposed, may break at any moment. Control is once again de-centralised, and distinctly un-stable.

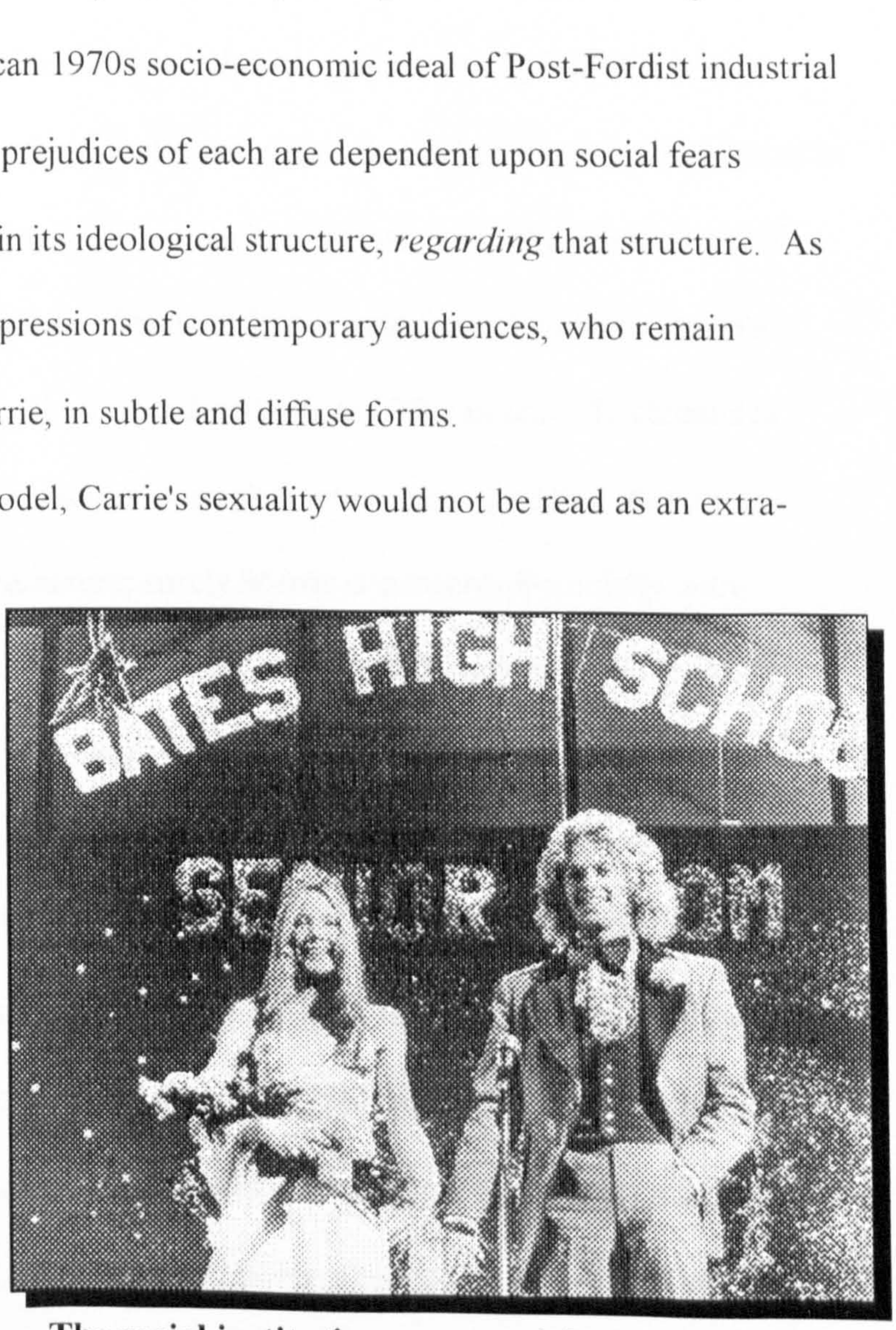
contention that relocation of the socio-economic, political and ideological away from texts, whilst clearly valid for psychoanalysis, is reductive of the cultural construction of images of fear, and of what agents within a social frame find fearful. The consumption of horror as a cultural event is framed, marketed and produced in cultural terms. The construction of gender identity, role and social function is, if not entirely produced by the culture surrounding individual agents, interpolated by the cultural frame; understanding and expectation of gender roles and identities is informed by the contemporary social, and as a result is largely hegemonic.

To focus critically on 'gender in the modern horror film' (Clover 1992: subtitle) without an acknowledgement of the influence of strictures of culture which formulate the need to create and experience horror is to ignore a textual reading that is equally, if not more important to an understanding of the cultural event of an audience's reading of a 'scary' film. Whilst the basis of a need to be scared may lie deep within the psyche, the contemporary realisation of such needs - channelled through cinematic representation and re-creation of this fear - is linked intimately to the social; this is why, following Jancovich, Jonathan Lake Crane (1994) and Skal, we may acknowledge a change in fearful images (for example, the monster) over time, location and through ideology. Gender roles are clearly as much a part of this series of processes as the politico-psychological process of sexual development; during analysis of cultural events, to divorce one from the other is analytically entirely inappropriate.

In her introduction, Clover discusses Carrie. She asserts that Carrie embodies, 'in turn' the film's 'representative monster,...victim [and]...hero' (Clover 1992: 4). She focuses on the psychological and physical gendering of Carrie as the personification of these three emotive states (emotive in their positioning relative to the production of terror/horror and the terrorised/horrified). However, whilst Carrie certainly is the victim, the hero and becomes

monstrous, she is not the text's exclusive monster. The interchange of states of terror within Clover's internalised model does not account for diverse fears within contemporary, spatially, temporally and ideologically positioned audiences. Carrie is a victim, not of her internal and external self, but of her positioning within an overtly hostile culture. Peer hostility directed against her originates within clearly defined, interconnected hegemonic arenas: the microcosmic high school, religion, and family, specifically through the monstrous single parent. Each exists within the American 1970s socio-economic ideal of Post-Fordist industrial organisation, and the repressions and prejudices of each are dependent upon social fears generated by everyday existence within its ideological structure, *regarding* that structure. As such, they reflect the real fears and repressions of contemporary audiences, who remain subject to the same restrictions as Carrie, in subtle and diffuse forms.

Under a culturally focused model, Carrie's sexuality would not be read as an extra-socially developed identity. Her sexuality and ability to 'move things' (both previously dormant), develop together in the context of and in response to the culture which surrounds her. Carrie is torn between social institutions rather than psychological states; dominant old-world religion, focused through her mother, and sexualised contemporary high school culture exert political, economic and sexual pressure upon her through the expectations of firstly, her mother and secondly, her peer group. Carrie



The social institution as potential monster: <u>Carrie</u>.

attempts to mediate between these opposing social poles, one highly morally dominant, the other liberal. Whilst gender-identity and developing sexuality are crucial to these tensions, critical awareness of culture and an attempt to understand aspects of changing cultures in producing horror necessitates alignment of the self within culture. This allows that cultural forces operate upon a viewing agent's surrogate diegetic personae upon the screen, as they simultaneously function within the social.

Paradoxically, Clover later denies Carrie a cohesive gender, seeing her as a supernatural creature rather then a psychic female; she claims that 'when the assaultive gazer is a women, she is either not really the gazer...or not really a woman, as in the 'telekinitic girl' films' (ibid: 204). For Clover, the presence of natural forces (telekinesis) nullifies Carrie's gender to create a sexual cypher rather than a gendered whole. This potentially eliminates audience identification with diegetic characters as an alternative, non-gendered identity is formed through the imposition of supernature; surely horror is concerned crucially with audience identification with textual protagonists in order that agents may take sides and forge ideological and sympathetic alliances with those protagonists.

This is argued convincingly by Carroll: he claims that audiences' emotions parallel roughly the emotions of diegetic characters (Carroll 1990). Without such identification, narratives lose much of their power and drama is effaced. I would like to claim that the 'monster', 'victim' and 'hero' statuses conferred upon characters within a text are empowered by social projections of ideology which flow from culture to text during the production process. Texts then both reflect and are dependent upon the cultural sphere which generated the mass fears they seek to emulate and personify in the figure of the monster.

However, the 'monstrous' it not always a self-evident category, as is the case in Carrie. Identification of monsters is located within viewers' awareness of social institutions, the

ideological structures that they embody and the positioning of the potential monster in relation to these structures. Audiences identify Carrie, her mother and classmates, as well as the institutions of family, school and church as primary monsters, most of which existed long before Carrie assumed the monstrous role. It is a combination of the effects of these potential monsters upon Carrie that makes her the primary monster within the film. Other more subtle social monsters frequently lie behind the creation of overtly monstrous figures; these may be identified by focusing on a text's social frame, which often reveals itself through institutions demonised by the narrative. Clover's psychoanalytic model is limiting in this respect since it only allows that Carrie is the (extra-socially constructed) primary monster.

Clover claims that horror constructs gender identity according to a pre-modern, pre-psychoanalytic one-sex model under which male and female are archaically perceived as not two sexes, but exterior (male) and interior (female) manifestations of the same sexual identity. For Clover, monsters, typically constructed as pre-modern, are thus sexually ambiguous[2]. Male characters often have female characteristics, female characters take on male characteristics (Clover cites the Slasher's Final Girl), and some characters are impossible to sex effectively, such as the hermaphroditic 'saviour' of God Told Me To (aka Demon, Larry Cohen, 1976). One-sex logic assumes that sex is generated from the gender of the social function which agents represent. However, such functions are gendered products of the society within which the act takes place; Clover sidesteps this to focus on the internal dynamics of one-sex textual construction.

This is problematic; it would be more productive were Clover to focus upon the cultural production and operation of the act rather than to focus entirely on the implications of

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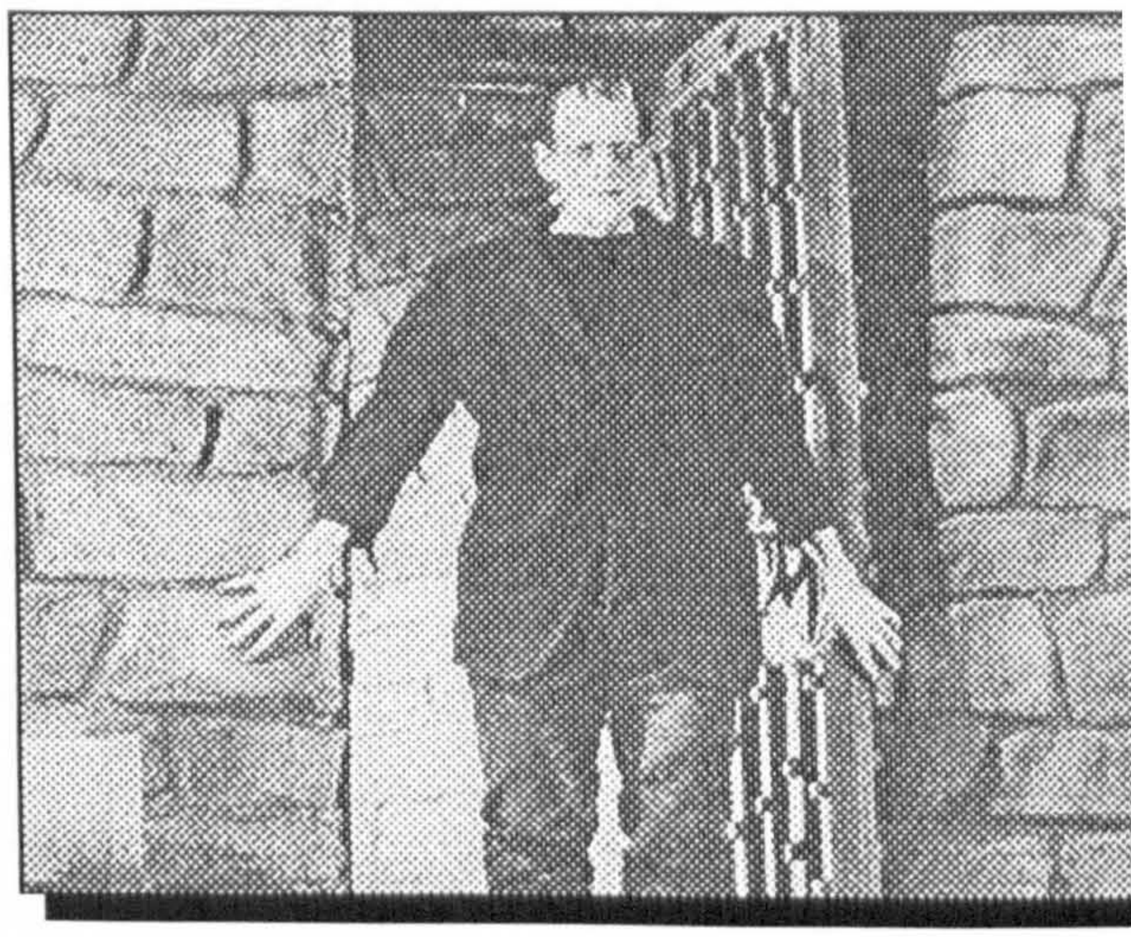
[2]Leatherface from The Texas Chainsaw Massacre displays male-gendered rage but is constructed as female in later scenes; similarly in Psycho Norman blurs male and female gender definitions within one splintered self, for example.

gender-blurring. This would expose diverse cultural mechanics operating through and informing the text. A focus on (traditionally female) victim-centrality has recently (pre-1990) occurred within horror. This move constituted a large shift within narrative structuring. Before about 1970, horror texts were concerned dominantly with a narrative focus on the monster. The Universal horror cycles, for example, linked films through the figure of the monster; Frankenstein's monster, Dracula or the werewolf, amongst others, were constantly found buried alive, frozen in blocks of ice or living in caves.

The same is true of Hammer's Frankenstein and Dracula cycles, except that for Hammer, Frankenstein himself was figured as the monster, and was portrayed by Peter Cushing as an egotistical, ruthless, increasingly insane character not above rape and murder. With the advent of Slashers, monsters across all genres became secondary within narratives to the victim. It is Laurie, the victim, who constitutes the initial link between Halloween and Halloween 2 (Rick Rosenthal, 1981) rather than Michael (the killer), and though monsters such as Michael, Freddy, Jason *et al* are vital to each successive text, the plight of the teenage victims provides the focus of narratives rather than the monster's torment and revenge, as was the case in, for example, in King Kong (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933). Increased narrative focus on victims effectively reduced monsters to textual cyphers. The phenomenon of victim-centrality is not unique to horror, though I would argue that the shift from event to victim in, for example, Westerns, is perhaps not so great. It could be argued that such a shift is due in part to post-Fordist paranoia regarding the status of the self in the apparently de-



Monster centrality: Frankenstein.

centralised operation of society, as we shall discover.

Rather than utilise Clover's argument in terms of sexual constructions evident within the narrative, it may be argued that analysts should focus upon why horror has indulged increasingly in victim centrality and consider what socio-political ideologies have caused this narrative change. Rather than constituting a refusal of Clover's analysis, this is instead a shift in focus, and one which is important to the cultural analysis of a cultural event. Clover later argues against readings of films such as Halloween and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre from a culturally focused standpoint, extending her model through Slashers to Rape-Revenge and Possession films. I will argue against Clover, claiming that the point of analytic focus should be within the culture which constructs the audience through symbolic violence/hegemonic domination, and the market forces which allow horror's continued production.

However, Clover's work must be praised for her wide scope of analysis. By focusing on both mainstream and marginal horror, she in part accesses the underground as some of the films within her study are examples of 'extreme' horror banned in Britain (though not in America, her home country), and expands discussion further, and in more detail, than any other academic critic to date. Through Clover, in conjunction with fan culture, we have access to a detailed, alternative reading of the 'extreme' and 'acceptable' faces of horror which, though existing outside of and in opposition to my cultural-critical model of analysis, I find thorough in its argument and refreshingly radical in its hypothesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cultural Analysis: Challenging The Psychoanalytic

'Fiction is undoubtedly...a way of making known that which one does not wish to know...this no doubt explains how it happens that literature so often reveals...truths which social sciences, with their Promethean ambition, cannot quite grasp'

- (Bourdieu 1993: 158-159.

As Bourdieu establishes, texts within the literary field are subject to invisible, subtle and crucially external forces during their period of production (Bourdieu 1993). The social world operates upon the creator through contemporary cultural doxa, class and individual habitus to create a body of thought, being and ways of contemplating existence that empowers the act of writing and which becomes transcribed into the subtext of a work. This may be in the form of widespread perceptions of social etiquette, right and wrong, or what is 'good' and 'bad'; essentially what a period calls its 'common sense', and which is, to all intents and purposes, unseen, unfelt symbolic violence. Such values change with time; location of the common doxic within texts may reveal levels of information regarding cultural structuring which remains inaccessible through formal, historical analysis.

Bourdieu then underlines a truth regarding academic considerations of cultural commodity. Given that we may consider horror a field of productive endeavour, Bourdieu states that

> changes which affect the structure of the field as a whole...[are] directly determined by...external changes which supply the new producers...and their new products with socially homologous consumers (ibid: 55).

Similarly,

> by considering the relationship between the social world and works of culture in terms of *reflection*, external analysis...directly links these works to the social characteristics [the social origins] of their authors or of the groups for whom they were really or potentially destined and whose expectations they were intended to meet (ibid: 180).

External changes to the field of production therefore shape internal change and the focus of material, explaining, in essence, the continually evolving face of horror, whose threats, resolutions and conventions clearly differ from period to period, between for example, the 1950s and 1990s.

Furthermore, 'deep seated changes in the audience of consumers' (ibid: 58), for example the inevitable social changes evident under different political and economic policies, conversely become vital considerations in the development of the artistic form in question, since with change in the sensibilities, doxa and habitus that economic modification may bring comes change in taste and therefore in the acceptance and/or rejection of facets of culture and entertainment. Such changes to the structure of the field are evidence in itself that horror is subject to political and economically induced change. Horror, though generally (and frequently in the mass media) rejected on grounds of 'decency', is especially subject to such shifts in boundaries; the unacceptable of 1960s is largely acceptable now, and banned films or cut sequences are very often re-released or re-instated after time.

It is crucial to acknowledge the truth of a statement by Christian Metz at this point. He claims that film's 'defining quality, and the secret of its efficacy as discourse, is that it effaces all marks of enunciation, and disguises itself as a story' (Metz 1981: 226). The heart of a cinematic text is social enunciation and cultural discourse, since film is created out of a given culture and features cultural agents (actors) working for and speaking the ideological language

of viewers. Characters figured evil in films usually speak against the ideological structures of audiences, actually strengthening those ideologies through his/her status as evil. These enunciations and discourses are, as Metz claims, operating within texts that appear to be, and sell themselves as, simply stories.

For these reasons, culture becomes the vital currency for examination of popular horrific entertainment. Wood claims that horror's monsters constitute all that is anti-doxic, anti-hegemonic and is considered anti-social in contemporary society[1]. The monster is monstrous because these values compose it and are allowed to run rampant through its body and its actions. Opposing the 'evil' monster are the 'good' heroes, who are usually figured as the antithesis of the monster - typically symbols of doxic and hegemonic acceptability[2]. It is for these reasons, Wood suggests, that horror is usually formulaic, and why 'good' is figured as typically young, white, heterosexual, middle-class, monogamous, moral, and delimited through institutions such as the church and the police.

What Wood does not acknowledge is that the structures of which he writes are dominated by the political and economic structuring of, in modern texts, post-Fordist systems. Post-Fordism protects its own operations through the repressions of which Wood speaks and the social hierarchy upon which it is dependent; the patriarchal family (Wood's main repressing institution) is essential to post-Fordism, constituting, as we discover through Jancovich, its primary socialising institution.

As a cultural studies critic, Jancovich's work is concerned crucially with expanding the boundaries of the critical analysis of horror by relocating horror within a cultural sphere of production and consumption. Jancovich distances himself from psychoanalytic readings of

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[1]See Wood: 1984.
[2]There are clearly exceptions to this however, as we shall see later during analysis of Slashers.

horror as an expression of taboo and repressed sexual anxiety and places generic entries into the mode in their socio-economic and political contexts. Jancovich, using Wood as his critical foundation, furthers discussion through a direct questioning of psychoanalysis. By contextualising the production and the reception of horror, the field of study may be expanded from the individual self into a social whole in which the self is a constituent part, albeit one of many. Subsequently, Jancovich explores not only the reaction of the individual self to cultural material with which s/he interacts, but how that self, part of a coherent social structure (defined across time, space, geographical location, gender, ideology and political and moral symbolic violence) is representative of that whole, as a constituent cultural agent.

For Jancovich and largely for myself, horror reflects the fears and anxieties of the mass individual within the social structure in question, whether Depression-era America or Britain in the early 1980s as moral panic regarding horror caused widespread social concern and heralded changes in law and censorship legislation. Through Jancovich we may move between two levels of social consciousness: macro - the socio-economic political whole which frames and defines the role of individual agents within it, and micro - the individual, whose personal fears and anxieties are shaped by the macro within which s/he operates, but which seems alien to individual existence. It is upon the resultant critical perspective that elements of this thesis are based, though Jancovich's treatment of individual texts needs often serious revision and expansion. By widening the reception of horror away from the psychoanalytic whilst retaining an awareness of its influence on some texts, focusing primarily on effects that cinematic representations of the horrific have on agents' perceptions of their position within Western contemporary culture, we may provide a clearer picture of the fears and political structures that horror reacts to and/or, in part, reflects.

A merging of Bourdieu's theory of the space of possibles[3] with Jancovich's direct linkage of horror narratives to cultural change makes it possible for analysts to utilise a more comprehensive set of analytical tools, more specifically relevant to horror analysis than the utilisation of only one view can provide. Bourdieu, therefore, constitutes the analytic backdrop to this work, elements of Jancovich the cultural context and mode of critical attack, fandom its inspiration and the challenging of the purely psychoanalytic (specifically Clover) its target.

Through Jancovich's brief discussion of censorship we discover that no objective definition of what constitutes a 'video nasty' (Jancovich 1992: 7) was ever produced, and that the common sense judgement of the harm that such material (considered to constitute a vague cross-over point between horror and pornography via ultra-violent imagery) causes is an inappropriate basis for legislative reform. However, it is to the detriment of subsequent analysis that Jancovich displays a typically conservative adherence to the academic canon. Whilst Jancovich displays a wider analytic scope than Clover in that he discusses the psychoanalytic in its varying forms and approaches, as opposed to ignoring alternative critical structures, his analysis does not cover the same individual depth as Clover. Whilst Clover deconstructs texts to locate the gender issues that she considers to be at their heart, Jancovich analyses films in limited detail, looking outwards to the ideologies that inform production.

This is both a virtue and a limitation; the social frame is vital to what cultural agents consider fearful, yet individual textual analysis is limited in content to the extent that it constitutes a general, rather than a comprehensive, view of each text. Effective horror criticism should, I believe, utilise his approach to political and economic ideology, merging it

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[3]The universe of knowledge, ways of thinking, structures of belief, common phrases, contemporary points of view, history, jokes, and so on that are part of an artist's everyday experience of the world and which s/he transmits unconsciously into the art s/he creates.

with Clover's depth of textual analysis, delimiting both through a textual base developed from fan culture, and fused with social analysis (here, Bourdieu). As it stands, Jancovich's argument is more interesting than totalising though it is critically convincing to the extent that its concepts may, and I believe should, be extracted from his body of textual analysis and reapplied to canonical and non-canonical texts in order to generate more comprehensive analysis.

Recent forms of post-structuralist psychoanalytic criticism of horror have focused on its supposed demonising of female sexuality through generic coding seeking to degrade the feminine. Both Stephen Neale (1980) and Barbara Creed (1993) claim that horror is based upon an essentially patriarchal fear of the female body and sexual self. Post-structural psychoanalytic critique places emphasis on the subjugation of the text to the (psycho-sexual) social signifiers that compose it; texts become a product shaped and 'determined by the structures of language' (Jancovich 1994: 10). Jancovich argues that in extreme examples the text itself becomes critically redundant as it is considered merely a product of subtle mental processes seeking to locate the text within an extra-social arena. Textual processes which '[position]...the subject within ideology', therefore, make 'what is social, constructed and historical appear to be individual and natural' (ibid).

Jancovich points out contradictions in the methods that post-structuralists employ in order that they may conclude that horror is based upon patriarchal fear of the monstrous-feminine. Neale, for example, claims that audience pleasure in horror is derived from a sustained male desire to witness the suppression of females by patriarchal figures (this is only sometimes the case, as we shall discover, in, for example, Slashers), whilst Creed considers the monster to embody twisted representations of femininity itself. For the post-structuralist, following Lacan, this is closely linked to the emergence of gender identity and the acquisition

of language through passage through the mirror stage of development. Language acquisition is in itself a repressive action for the feminine since it depends upon the acceptance and usage of a primarily patriarchal series of discursive codes, structured to strengthen the patriarchal order into which the subject enters once language is acquired. Jancovich properly acknowledges the views of post-structuralists: specifically that horror addresses male sexual anxieties through repression of the feminine, compromising the maternal semiotic[4]. However, language acquisition, if a patriarchal device, is then surely also an ideological and social device, and, therefore, partly a cultural construct. This, it may be argued, could be taken into account profitably by horror analysts concerned with a semiotic approach to their subject matter.

Creed's monsters are figured textually as female and devouring; really walking vagina dentatas. For Creed, Mrs. Bates in Psycho is the essence of horror's definition of the monstrous. Neale agrees that male desire for females also constitutes a feminine power base, generating male sexual anxiety and terror. The Creed/Neale view constitutes the bedrock of Clover's hypothesis, though is modified by her. It would figure Jennifer in I Spit On Your Grave as monstrous by default - a female who, within the terms of the text, embodies sexual desirability for males, and who ultimately terrifies previously dominant men. Though Jennifer becomes a literally castrating female, such analysis ignores the socio-political frame evident within horror texts.

This reveals a paradox which lies at the heart of the psychoanalytic approach to horror. Its is argued by psychoanalysts (for example Creed and Neale) that the generation of terror in the audience is symptomatic of displaced castration anxiety which is ultimately fear of the lack

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[4] A feminine, non-patriarchal form of childhood 'language' acquisition centred around the sensual, irrational linkage of sounds and rhythms, which begins in the womb. For extensive discussion see Julia Kristeva (1982).

figured through the 'monster'; this supposes an exclusively male audience, of monolithic and timeless sensibility. Of greater concern are the issues that arise from this catch-all definition of monstrosity. If, as Neale argues, the function of cinematic fetishism is 'the disavowal of sexual difference' (Neale 1980: 36), then what is fetishised fills the 'terrifying' space that sexual difference through male fear of lack instills in viewers in order to direct focus away from the castration anxiety allegedly arising each time females appear on screen. If this is the case, and the monster is the prime fetish of horror, then I Spit On Your Grave reveals holes in this model.

Two sets of monsters exist here: in the first half of the film, the monsters are exclusively male rapists. Their machismo is channelled through the act of rape, yet they are not objects of camera fetishism, though their *actions* are, since the act of rape and the effect that it has on Jennifer during her ordeal is usually constructed at the centre of the frame through a focus on her face, her bruised and battered body and her suffering. Therefore, the rapists do not represent lack, but rather an aggressive and violent reaction to lack that thrives on, rather than is repulsed by, sexual difference. However, the post-rape 'monster' (though to what extent she is monstrous is debatable, as she is entirely a figure of sympathy for the audience by this stage) is Jennifer, the previous victim.

Jennifer is fetishised during her vengeance stage (though, it may be argued, not figured sexually or objectified through the construction of the frame, despite her frequent use of sex as a weapon), becoming a literal castrator. Yet, if she becomes the cause of lack, she was also earlier a figure powerless to challenge sexual aggression channelled through difference, and her subsequent fetishism should make her, by Neale's rules, a figure of comfort for male viewers through disavowal of lack. Jennifer is then ultimately cause, result, fetish and embodiment of lack, whilst the primary monsters of the text are neither personally fetishised,

nor can they represent, in their monstrous rather than their victim form, the above concerns. According to Neale, the birth and death of the monster (which he claims *must* be physically represented[5]) are essential moments in the construction of the lack-disavowing fetish, yet in I Spit On Your Grave, no monstrous births exist (Jennifer prays in church before taking her revenge, which, though constituting a birth of sorts, does not conform to Neale's model), and though the deaths of the previous male monsters are detailed, Jennifer does not die, nor is there any indication that she will continue murdering, thereby distancing the film from other horror texts which deny narrative closure.

Neale concedes that the monster's function may be that of 'simultaneously representing and disavowing the problems of sexual difference' (ibid: 44), though he cannot accommodate 'monsters' who are exclusively female and who cause lack to occur in others *during* fetishism, or monsters who are entirely male (as opposed to bisexual cyphers) and who become either victims or are supplanted by 'monsters' who held a previous victim status. Despite the use of psychoanalysis in vital areas of many representations of fear (for example, as we have seen, elements of Family Romance), its attempts to provide blanket definitions based upon a presupposed monolithic male audience are problematic in that in order to accommodate texts such as I Spit On Your Grave (or, for that matter, The Last House On The Left or The House On The Edge Of The Park) a complex analytic juggling act is required to fuse often contradictory theories. Cultural analysis, however, provides more comprehensive explanations of such texts, avoiding such problems.

As Jancovich claims regarding the psychoanalytic focus on sexual abjection as the root of fear in horror, 'it is not always - or even usually - female sexuality which is defined as

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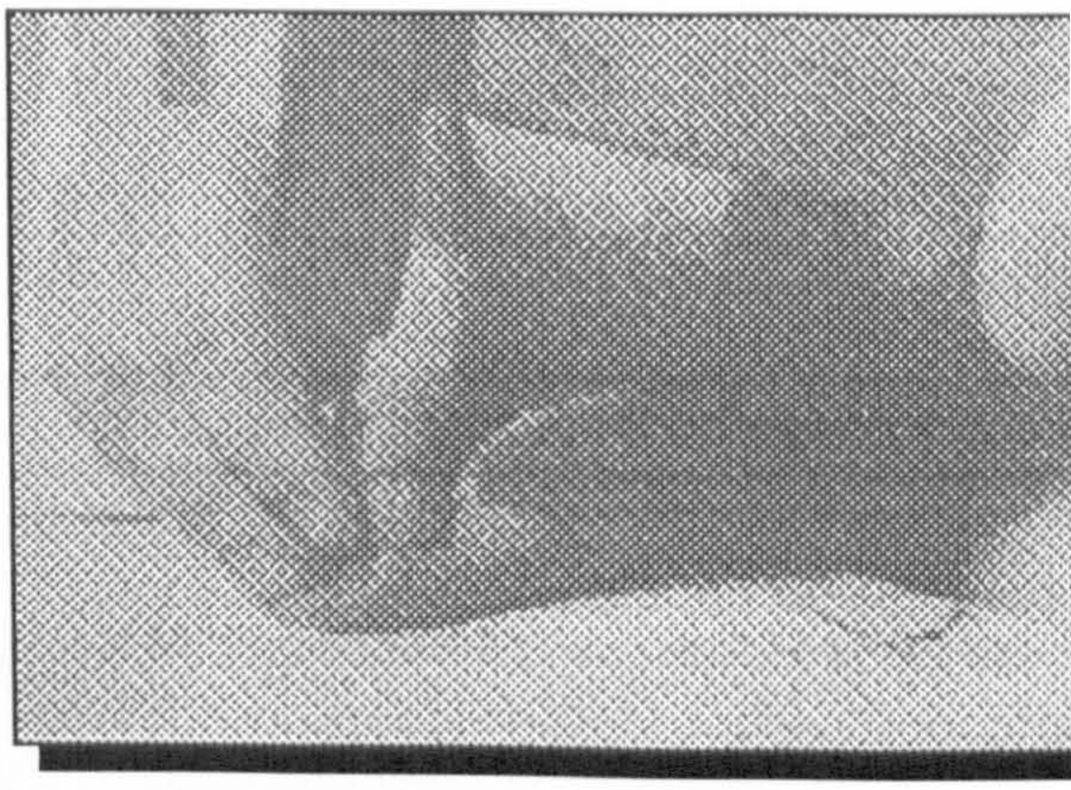
[5]According to which, some of the most terrifying films ever created could not frighten monolithic audiences as the monster remains unseen (for example, Robert Wise's 1963 film The Haunting).

monstrous' (Jancovich 1994: 9), unless we consider the sweeping proposition that, because of deep subconscious structuring, monsters are always representative of lack. This is a stance against which it is impossible to argue and equally impossible to prove, since to do so requires analysts to access their own unconscious and to prove its operations in order to locate repressions within it

> However, that monstrous 'representations...develop historically' (ibid) is proof that culture is vital to horror analysis; the concept of giant ants which terrified the 1950s audiences of Them! does not terrify mass post-Cold War audiences. Social and political concerns of a period always surface in some form through representations of 'fearful' images within popular entertainment - a consideration which will be addressed throughout the remainder of this study.

> We must allow, though, that psychoanalysis does add an interesting dimension to social readings of a text at a narrative level. Whilst a culturally focused reading of, for example, Schramm, is highly appropriate, the consideration of a monstrous character's internal motivations and what they represent are often enhanced through the psychoanalytic. It would be hard to analyse Schramm without acknowledging that Schramm suffers from a modified castration-complex in which his own projected and fantasised lack (as well as the lack of females) is both fearful and desirable, though this, operating within a text which explores a mental landscape, constitutes an intentional if unspoken theme of the film rather than deep meaning that may be located through psychoanalytic criticism.



Schramm: castration complex.

> Buttgereit has quite clearly and purposefully infused his text with many instances of

psychological conditions made literal (such as a snapping 'vagina monster' [Kerekes 1994: 128] representative of both the fantasy of the vagina dentata and Schramm's own castration complex) to reveal the operations of Schramm's mind which would normally go unseen. Psychoanalytic extremity is, then, what the film is about rather than what it reveals. Schramm's mental state reflects an external cultural state throughout the text; it is the contemporary culture in which Schramm operates that has caused his sexual obsession and castration fear alongside his masochistic desire to embody lack, and therefore we must look to the culture informing the film's production, placing psychoanalysis as a secondary critical position, in order to fully understand the text and the monster(s) it provides[6]. Schramm is a symptom of the culture in which it was generated; given the extremity of the text it may be argued that a critical focus on that culture is of primary value in order to locate what anxieties, concerns and issues generated such extremity.

Furthermore, the unavoidably solipsistic focus of psychoanalysis insists that texts within generic codings must, by necessity, be projecting the same ideologies: for example, fear of lack, or an audience pleasure in being symbolically beaten (or pleasure in seeing others representative of their own psychological complexes being punished) through assaults on diegetic characters with whom they may identify[7]. Yet if what is deemed horrific in texts is so as a direct result of enforced language acquisition - which the horrific is seen to represent - which forcibly challenges and seeks to separate the child from the language which s/he finds comforting (the semiotic), then under this approach horror must advocate only forms of the

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[6]Though Schramm is not a monster in the traditional sense, and does not conform to Neale's ideas of diegetic monsters. Rather he is a sexually fixated, dying figure of either disgust or empathy for the audience. His repulsion of and attraction to the lack further renders Neale's approach problematic, especially when considered in term of audience response to and supposed fear of lack, figured through the monstrous persona of Schramm.

[7]For example, for Creed, Xtro's birth sequence implicates the viewer in 'a bizarre primal phantasy in which man is born fully grown and therefore completely independent of the mother' (Creed 1993: 44); this shared 'phantasy' is, according to her, where the horror of this sequence lies for its audience.

dominant industrialised social 'ideal' of patriarchy.

Because of this, under such a model all horror films *must* be fearful of the feminine, demonising the mother because they are composed within and through patriarchal-discursive frames which seek to eliminate the semiotic, and hence the mother's 'natural' socialising of the child through language in order that patriarchy may take over that role. This is clearly not the case since many horror films do not demonise the mother; such a critical approach is concerned with a differing subject-focus than that employed by cultural studies, since psychoanalysis privileges the individual as opposed to mass agent as the primary location in which meanings in texts may be found.

> Jancovich quotes Stuart Hall: under psychoanalytic criticism,
>
> the manner in which this 'subject' of culture is conceptualised is of a trans-historical and 'universal' character; it addresses the subject-in-general, not historically-determined social subjects, or socially determined particular languages (Jancovich 1992: 12).

In addition to this assertion, with which I am in full agreement, as psychoanalysis deals with the unconscious, agents' personal experiences and understandings of individual textual form becomes irrelevant; it is what agents *do not* consider that is deemed important, and so 'produce[s] interpretations which not only have little or no relation to one's actual experiences of a text, but actively contradict those experiences' (ibid), as all argument against psychoanalysis may be rejected by psychoanalysts as a product of repression.

Through Jancovich (whose argument is in informed by that of Volosinov[8]), we may critique unspoken assertions of a monolithic audience (unified by existence within and under

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[8]Especially Volosinov 1973.

the same unconscious mental processes and faculties regardless of spatial, temporal and cultural difference), to assert that though

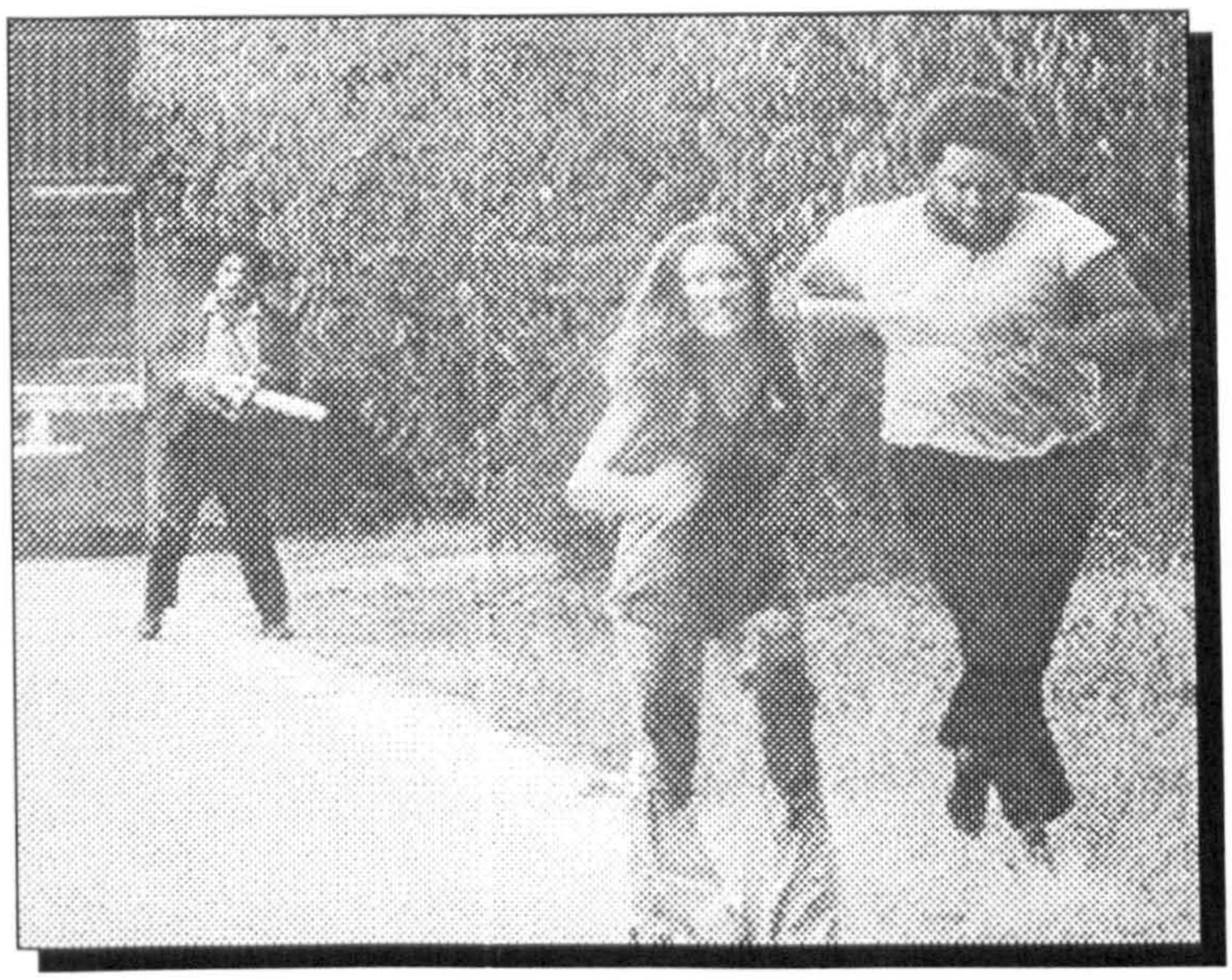
> texts may inscribe positions for 'The Audience'...actual audiences are also subject to other social and historical processes which will affect their relationship to these textual positions (ibid: 15).

Jancovich's statement is important. Through it we may become aware of the dominant notion of horror as a mode which has a set effect on its audience - a viewpoint which is promoted rigorously by the media in order to validate its frequent moral panics regarding horror's supposedly de-humanising effects (the most recent, post-Bulger victim of which, following Child's Play 3, is, at the time of writing, David Cronenberg's 1996 film Crash). In this sense, though not necessarily in others, Jancovich is close in theme and position to Crane (1994). Both Jancovich and Crane look to contemporary audiences and the world that they inhabit/ed to locate textual meaning(s), though whilst Crane looks to the emergence of a violence-oriented society rearing its children on the dubious pleasures of computer-based interactive ultra-violence such as Mortal Kombat II, Jancovich looks to economic ideology in order to gain an accurate picture of contemporary social fear, and hence perceived contemporary social 'reality'.

Alton's new video nasties: Chucky from Child's Play 3.

Horror is, then, a direct product of perceptions of social and cultural 'reality', though is considered 'low-brow' in its execution through its very commercialism, itself dependent upon mass fears which exist within perceived 'reality'. Bourdieu claims that art legitimates itself in

opposition to economic gain; the commercial is typically considered low-brow, and texts appealing to select audiences high-brow. This view is established and promoted through artistic legitimators such as critics and academics who maintain a vested interest in defining their own cultural position as high-brow in order to protect it (Bourdieu 1993: 82). The struggle between 'commercial' and 'non-commercial' in popular culture and art therefore reveals much about a given economy during a given period through a given culture.



A radical Slasher: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

Jancovich provides an unconventional but convincing reading of canonical horror texts: for example, he reads Slashers as potentially radical (a position taken, for entirely different reasons and through a directly opposing approach, by Clover) rather than, as is usually argued, conservative. As we shall see, with few exceptions this assertion is, I believe, false. Though there are many areas of agreement between Jancovich's reading of Slashers and my own, it is my contention that with the exceptions of Halloween and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre the genre *is* deeply conservative[9]. Though this, for only this particular genre, appears to align my sympathies with reactionary critics of horror such as David Alton, it will become clear that my approach constitutes an entirely different perspective from the moralist agenda to which they operate. I shall subsequently revise Jancovich's argument in order to challenge Clover's alternative

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[9]Even those claiming to be a response to Slashers, such as the self-reflexive Scream (Wes Craven, 1996), in which two horror fans become killers partly because of the 'millennium' and follow the generic rules of favourite Slasher texts, even warning victims of those rules, operate to essentially conservative values.

hypothesis of the radical nature of Slashers.

Body Horror[10] is analysed usefully by Jancovich in terms of control exerted upon the modern body/self through medical advancement, technology and the social idolisation of the 'perfect' body via advertising and, implicitly, the super-model phenomenon. In this way, through an extraction of the issues that he raises, analysts may oppose readings of horror texts which claim that they display nothing more than a deeply conservative fear of the human, and specifically the female, body[11].

Through Jancovich we may focus on the cultural concerns that, it can be claimed, technological advancement generates. Modernity favours automation in the workplace at the expense of workers' jobs through the post-Fordist ideal of maximum productivity, short-term contracting and the subsequent loss of workers' rights; this may be fuelled by political ideals and practices prevalent during certain periods (for example, Reagan's Star Wars program in the 1980s). As a result, technology is rarely considered 'good' in modern horror. The killing machines of The Terminator (James Cameron, 1984) and Terminator II, for example, are destructive creations programmed to suppress and ultimately destroy humanity. Established technology though, which has become accepted and is no longer feared, is figured frequently as being good; the old model Terminator, the object of fear in Cameron's first film, is a force of good in the second because it has been superseded by the 'T-1000' model.

A fantasy common to the two films is that of returning to the past to challenge domination before it occurs. That this domination is technical is perhaps a wishful reaction to double-edged concerns regarding technology in the era in which the two texts were created.

John Connor, who effectively creates himself in a time-loop, is humankind's saviour. In both

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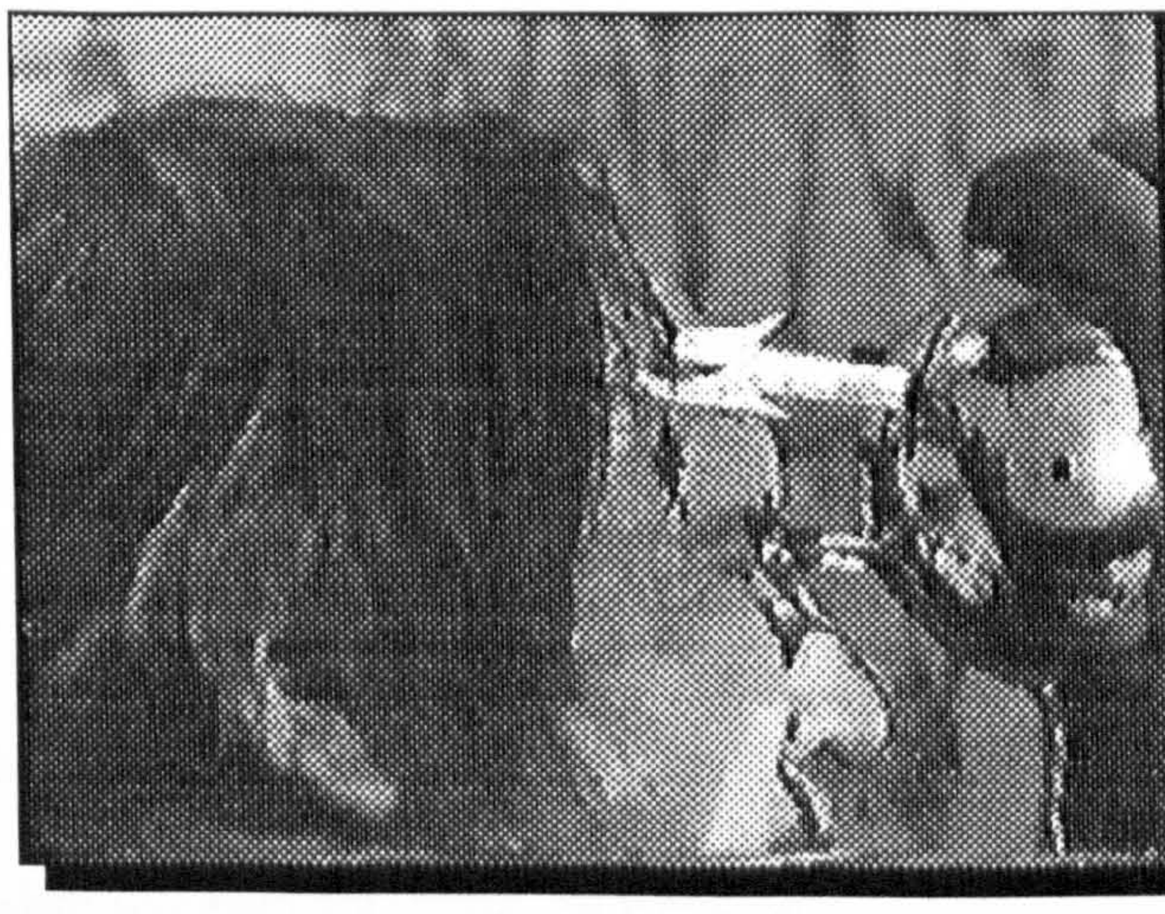
[10]A genre dominated by the work of Cronenberg in which the main narrative focus is the mutation of the human body into new, horrific forms.

[11]For instance, Creed (1993) and Neale (1980).

films his initials (J.C) hint at the conservative basis of Reagan's policy (and, to a lesser extent, subsequent moral-based Bush policies, under which Terminator II was produced) through a clear linkage, through name, character and what he represents, to Jesus Christ. It is perhaps worth bearing in mind here the traditional linkage of technology to evil; Evangelism often cites computer technology as a practical materialisation of the 'Beast' in sermons, and as far back in cinematic history as Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1926), machines are figured as demonic and, at one point, equated with Moloch and presented as human-devouring demons.

It is, then, usually new technology, real examples of which may threaten jobs and lifestyles, that is represented metaphorically as evil in horror. So, in Phantasm II the Spheres (futuristic flying balls armed with an assortment of drills and buzzsaws which are used to alarming effect on victims' heads) are figured evil, yet the hero, Reggie's, old-style chainsaw and shotgun. with which he defends himself from evil, are figured as good through his usage of them to destroy the threat[12].



Evil technology: a Sphere in operation.

Horror in The Terminator therefore centres around Reaganite weaponry, whereas its sequel deals with the legacy that such weaponry has left humankind, and the choice it must make between continued technological advancement or disarmament. The religious subtext, reflecting conservative, Republican policies in both cases advocates technological advancement to protect America from foreign influence, yet figures it as fearful when operating at home, since in real life it may cause social destruction as in Terminator II it

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[12]Similarly, a shotgun is used in Phantasm to destroy an attacking sphere, and nunchas are used to the same effect in Phantasm III: Lord Of The Dead (Don A. Coscarelli, 1994).

causes the literal destruction of society through nuclear war.

This development of post-Fordist paranoia regarding the supposed challenges to personal integrity and job security that new technology brings is also reflected in typically horrific Action films. In texts such as Die Hard (John McTiernan, 1988), which was produced the same year as Phantasm II, Die Hard II: Die Harder (Renny Harlin, 1990) or RoboCop (in which technology is literally de-humanising and is specifically designed to replace the human workforce), it is always enemies - who are usually foreign - who employ superior technology in order to destroy aspects of American society. Though RoboCop is a hero, he was designed by an evil character to police his vision of a corrupt, drug-ridden society. Heroes therefore use established technology to restore, rather than restrict, freedom whilst enemies use state-of-the-art non-established technology to herald, rather than challenge, suppression.

Good machines during this period therefore develop the human capacity for autonomous thought and morality (as in RoboCop and Terminator II), underlining the Reaganite policy of employing technology to 'better' mankind through the hard, aggressive human body. Bad machines have no such capacity and are of one destructive, unthinking mind clearly representative in part of the Communist, reductive mass-consciousness that Reagan opposed vehemently. RoboCop, by opposing faceless post-Fordist control through retained emotion, is therefore able to literally reveal his true, heroic face by the end of the film.

That such texts appeared during the period of development of Reagan's 'Star Wars' space defence program, which constituted both defence *and* pre-emptive strike weaponry of immense power, is surely no coincidence. Star Wars, its very title establishing connections with the language of cinema, was both a technology which was frighteningly destructive and also potentially beneficial to western democratic society. In texts emerging between 1990 and 1992 where Americans enter hostile, evil environments (for example in Jeff Burr's 1990

Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III), it may be argued that social consciousness, focused by the American intervention in Panama following Bush's 1990 invasion, projected a coherent body of concerns regarding Americans at war, battling evil to achieve personal and symbolic freedom. Though there was public support for Bush's actions against Noriega in Panama, it may be argued that as the situation developed widespread concerns were generated. Carpini records that,

> the invasion of Panama was less 'clean' than Grenada's had been - the fighting lasted longer, there were more civilian casualties, Noriega proved somewhat more difficult to capture than had been expected, and [at the time of Carpini's writing - 1994] almost four years after the invasion, thousands of US troops remain in Panama (Carpini and Klein 1994: 255).

Despite the undoubted political success of the invasion, nonetheless, as Carpini states, concerns were raised. Similar concerns, surfacing in countless texts during this period, point to the fact that real social anxieties regarding even apparently successful political strategies are frequently reflected through horror's narrative structuring, even if only on the level that such events remain entirely out of the hands and control of the average person on the street.

Importantly, and paradoxically, protection against destruction in horror films of this period is typically figured through the male (frequently also figured as Reaganite through machismo, aggressive pro-action, tough body image and so on) despite Reagan, and often the diegetic males figured like him, being the cause of much of the initial concern. Connor, for example, in The Terminator is an unseen macho hero who, we discover, both creates the threat (in Terminator II, it is the paradoxical discovery of advanced technology from the future which ultimately creates that future technology) and saves the world from it, generating

himself by selecting his own father in the process[13].

Similarly, Reagan was both a contributor to the threat of technology at home through continued investment in Star Wars, and the primary western defender against foreign nuclear technology's potentially dangerous onslaught, also through the Star Wars system. Also, after the concerns surrounding the Carter administration, Reagan, it may be argued, was considered the saviour of America, especially after entering his second term with a record majority vote, linking him to Connor through a quasi-religious resurrection (of America's global reputation, for America had, as established by Nixon earlier, been considered weak internationally) underlined by his outspoken born-again Christian moralism.

Therefore, when audiences meet the young Connor in Terminator II, it is no surprise to find that, to a large degree, he operates to a modified Reaganite value structure, as did Bush during this period: though young, Connor takes control of situations by employing machismo to protect the world through aggressive, action-orientated tactics. In addition, Connor becomes aligned with the good Terminator to defeat the new technology of the T1000, has better ideas than, and ultimately dominates, his mother, and silences her often hysterical outbursts with cool authority and leadership[14].

Women, therefore, become subservient to Connor, as do non-white males. Dyson, the black scientist partly and unknowingly responsible for creation of the threat follows the white male lead of Connor. This corresponds with Reagan's policies of unspoken white, male, middle class, conservative, macho ideals, yet is tempered with Bush's gentler approach to these issues. Connor, therefore, achieves his goals through action and dialogue, refusing to judge political figures such as Dyson or the Terminator on past transgressions, but, employing

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[13]Furthering the religious subtext of the film through enhancement of Connor's God-like status.
[14]For further and related discussion, see Jeffords 1994.

Bush's approach to international politics, he judges political figures on their current actions rather than the policies they employed in the past - as Jeffords shows, for example, for Bush this emerges through his support and continued usage of Nixon as an advisor. Bush also toned down the Star Wars program during his term of office, considering it too costly and impractical; a view filtered into Terminator II in which, instead of protecting Sarah Connor so that her son may fight in the future technological war, attempts to stop that war ever starting through the elimination of the Star Wars-style research program leading to its outbreak are favoured by the males in charge. As Bush stepped down Star Wars, so Terminator II steps down Dyson's destructive SkyNet/Cyberdyne defensive research program.

Though Jancovich focuses on economic structures he does not look to specific historical events and figures which influenced those structures and through which and/or whom are distilled and filtered fears regarding that structure by mass agents. Resonances of both economic structures and political events inform cultural fears, though are rarely, if ever, presented literally on screen. Therefore, to locate some of the issues to be found within texts, both a focus on contemporary economics and recent historical events may be employed by analysts in order to discover their resonances within horror films[15].

Jancovich states that his 'study will inevitably concentrate on certain aspects of the genre at the expense of others' (Jancovich 1992: 17), yet a work which supports radical elements evident within horror could reasonably be expected to employ a more radical choice of texts instead of finding the radical in established texts, and could be equally expected to

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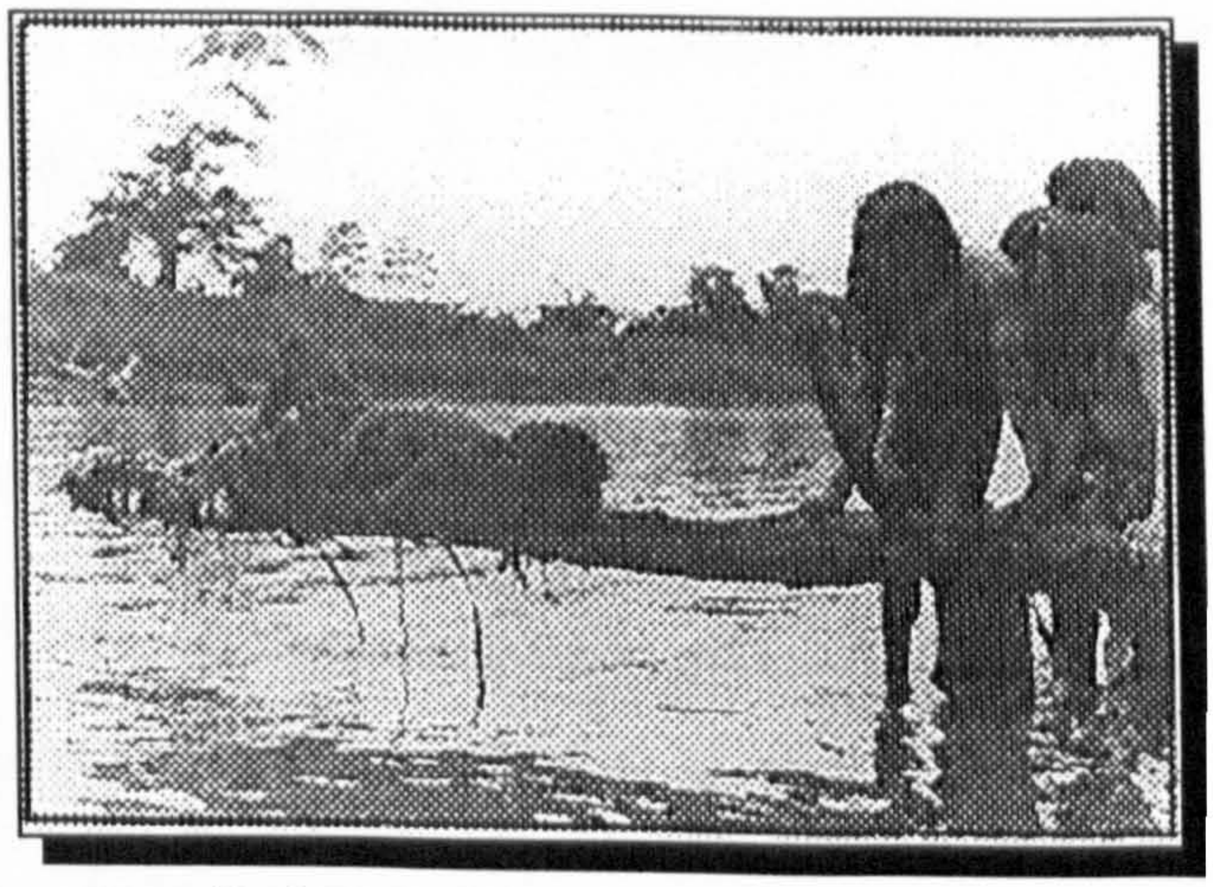
[15]It is also crucial to consider who or what is demonised in horror texts if cultural analysis is to be applied to them. Few of Reagan's 'immoral' adversaries, for example, escaped being figured as evil or destructively misguided in Reagan-era horror, including academics (Re-Animator), drug users (Brain Damage), non-Christian religious groups (Q - The Winged Serpent [Larry Cohen, 1982]), those who regret Vietnam - a Carter-like 'soft' sentiment - (House [Steve Miner, 1986]), the 'invasion' of foreign ideals through asylum-seekers (a subplot of The Serpent And The Rainbow [Wes Craven, 1987]), feminists (in Slashers), and, amongst many others, those who undergo or agree with abortion (It's Alive III: The Island Of The Alive [Larry Cohen, 1987]).

focus on actual, as well as general, cultural anxieties. Furthermore, Jancovich's critical focus is unnecessarily limited to dominantly American texts. Though the British Welfare State system may be usefully considered as Britain's equivalent to American Fordist social ideology[16] in that it may be argued that it took responsibility for the wellbeing of the self and the family away from individuals and placed it into the hands of a group of centralised experts, who offered advice on all aspects of 'healthy', productive living, this is mentioned only in passing.

Such American bias excludes texts vital to horror analysis; there is no room here for Argento, Soavi, or Buttgereit for example. It is ultimately disappointing that Jancovich does not offer his insight or a wider global plane. A considered application of his approach to, for example, the socio-political frame of Cannibal Holocaust would have widened the scope and impact of his analysis, as well as constituting a new critical approach to what is considered by many to be the most controversial film of all time.

Cannibal Holocaust's narrative splits the location of the action between inner city New York and the Amazon jungle, and its timescale over the present (circa 1979) and the recent past (a few months previously), examining the increasing degradation of a team of Western news reporters who exploit a cannibal tribe violently in order to gain sensationalist news footage. The film ends by asking, 'who are the real cannibals?' - the 'civilised' or the 'savage'? Cannibal Holocaust is a text of increasing depravity and extremity, its violence so strong that members of the crew



Cannibal Holocaust: the suppressed scene (source: Fantasy Film Memory 1: 21).

[16]Although the Fordist work ethic was not limited to only America, and was of course operating in Britain during this period.

'refused to be on set' during the infamous scene in which an impaled body is discovered (Balun 1991: 45). Banned world-wide, the film has achieved underground cult status and is perhaps the ultimate example of the power of cinema to provoke an emotional, and frequently physical, reaction in its audience However, even uncut prints are missing a scene in which a character is lowered into a piranha infested river; this was allegedly destroyed by an outraged member of the crew during post-production[17].

It is important to acknowledge the potential relevance of an application of Jancovich's critical model to this text. Deodata's film dissects complex social issues including, self-reflexively, the role of film-makers as often unconscious recorders of political and economic issues through their work. Though the serious intention of Cannibal Holocaust may be questioned as it appears to revel in the very acts it condemns, the film reflects the violence occurring within the society framing its production (Italy), and is clearly empowered by that violence. Deodata himself has stated publicly that

> at that time in Italy we had terrible street violence with the Brigado Rosso, the red brigade[18]. I remember my son watching the television, and there were so many killings and bombings on the news...I became very angry with newspapers too, horrible pictures of death all over them (Gore Zone 17: 9-10).

The news reporting of these incidents prompted Deodata to question whether the graphic nature of such reporting represents realistic freedom of information and responsible news reporting, or is simply pandering to the lowest common denominator of audience voyeurism and unspoken sadism. Therefore his anti-heroes are reporters concerned with producing sensationalist footage under the guise of responsible journalism.

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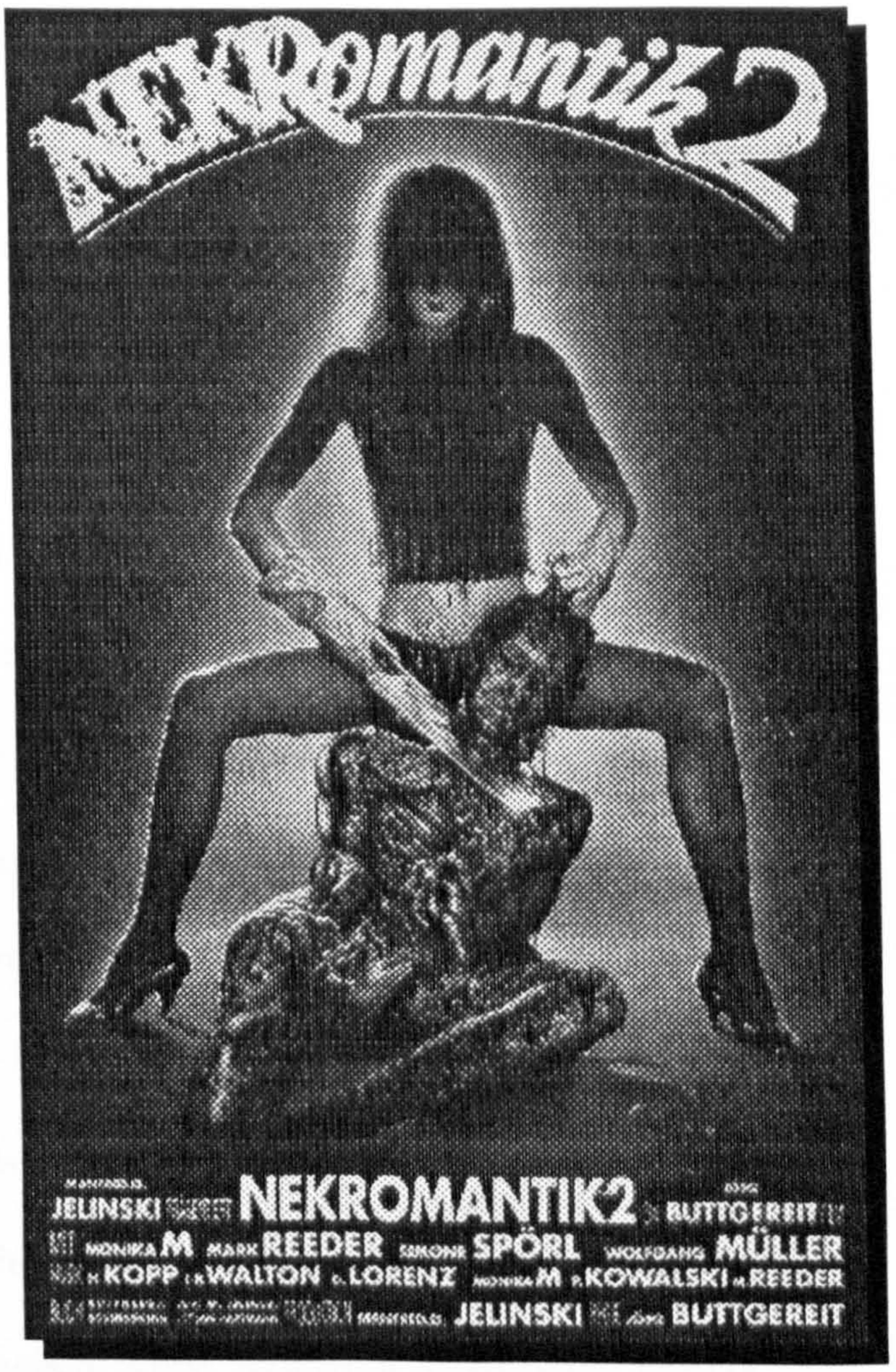
[17]Though this may be a further example of the vast body of urban myth which surrounds the film. It is more likely that the reproduced still was a publicity shot.

[18]An urban terrorist organisation responsible for the assassination of Aldo Moro, an ex-Prime Minister.

a dominantly unconscious level (onto which conscious concerns such as these may be, and according to Deodata have been, projected), and so may be discussed in terms of the specific generating culture itself.

Similarly, Germany's Nekromantik films deal with issues of gender and sexual 'perversion' in the crucial periods before (1987) and after (1991) the fall of the Berlin Wall, whilst Schramm relocates fragile national identity within the twisted psyche of its eponymous socio-path, a man desperate to forge a coherent self-identity before his mind and body collapse forever. Buttgereit's narratives merge the pathological, figured through 'perverse' sexuality, with narrative explorations of a microcosm of German society (represented by his characters and the cultures in which they exist) teetering on the verge of destruction and madness.



Psychotic necrophiles: Nekromantik II.

Destruction and madness are the inevitable outcome for characters in Buttgereit's films, who always take their behaviour to extreme limits: it is the continued need to experience greater levels of sensual experience that destroy Buttgereit's protagonists. Schramm falls to his death whilst painting over blood on his wall, commenting, it may be argued, on the fall of the Berlin wall; like Schramm himself, the wall was for many a destructive cultural 'perversion' which was also painted over with endless graffiti and messages of protest and which was itself a structure around and upon which

bloodshed occurred.

Nekromantik and Nekromantik II detail the lives of psychotic necrophiles to pre-figure destruction of the self through destruction of existing moral orders and the culture within which they operate. Each text links sex and death closely, ending with the suicide or murder of a main character during or as part of a sexual act. Schramm utilises a non-linear, complex narrative structure to examine the last thoughts of a sexual deviant. In all of these cases, the extreme sexual act becomes a metaphor for a social and political condition which seeks to label extremism as 'perverse' through hegemony; it is through the figuring of perversion as a social construct that each text reflects back upon its own culture.

Though my criticism of Jancovich is an extension of my earlier criticism of wider academic adherence to a 'respectable', conservative canon, slightly different issues are at stake. The nature of Jancovich's hypothesis demands its application to socio-political and economic frameworks surrounding texts though he often remains vague about historical events which could cause the post-Fordist concerns of which he writes: for example, it could be argued convincingly that Bush-era post-Fordist paranoia was strengthened by public awareness of Bush's previous role as the head of the CIA, and the shadowy, covert and de-centralised controlling system that this implies. Jancovich claims to stress 'radical or progressive aspects' of horror as a vital element of the structure of his hypothesis (Jancovich 1994: 9), 'as a corrective to other works which over emphasise its reactionary or conservative elements' (ibid). This claim is compromised at every level by a limited textual base. Jancovich's hypothesis *is* applicable outside of his self-imposed limits; though academics are usually guilty of such conservatism, most writers do not claim to be radical and progressive to the extent that Jancovich does.

However, on an *internal* level, and within their own scopes, Jancovich's work offers an

impressive foil to post-structural psychoanalysis of horror. Unlike with Clover, my response constitutes more a disagreement with certain aspects of Jancovich's hypothesis rather than a separate critical position to it; subsequently I will expand and modify his argument through its application to texts with which he does not or will not deal.

CHAPTER FIVE

Horror Fandom 1: The Core Horror Audience:

Fans, Fanzines And Subversive Legitimation

Though Wood's polemical division of film audiences into horror aficionados/obsessives and those who reject the form totally is a little too rigid, it does highlight the centrality and importance of fans to the cultural reception of horror. There is a huge and ever-expanding body of fan writing which connects fans to 'their' texts in the form of fanzines. As Bourdieu claims, works of art exist only when a cultural belief in the artistic status of a created work exists (Bourdieu 1993: 34-37); fans in possession of that belief regarding horror face considerable challenges to it from non-fan culture. Bourdieu argues, and fans would surely agree, that art, existing as a concept, has no fixed price or value since it depends upon subjective, sensory enjoyment (ibid: 74).

Fanzines provides a space of cultural struggle within which fans attempt to repel negative opinions and document their own critical positions and tastes. It is through fanzines that fans keep in touch with news and events regarding horror, define for themselves an alternative criteria for textual criticism (rejecting open hostility towards horror by 'legitimate' critics) centred around the contextualisation of individual films, and access the underground and cutting edge of contemporary horror. Critical awareness of fan receptions of horror may be developed through a close study of the fanzines that they produce and read.

Fans constitute a central, hard core horror audience through whose standards and views of cultural ideologies we see reflected the subtexts and agendas of the films themselves, as well as those of wider non-fan audiences - though often through a challenging of non-fan views - which Wood rejects but which consists of casual horror consumers. Though casual audiences may not maintain the same aesthetic and narrative criteria as fan audiences, there are

Aficionado enthusiam: Scarlet Street 14: 87.

crucial ideological overlaps between the two, necessitated by films' financial need to speak to wider audiences than fandom can provide. Fanzine writers and readers frequently straddle areas of film production (mainly, though not exclusively, underground texts) and reception. An understanding of their critical agendas allows access to wider audience receptions of horror revealing ultimately the social values that such receptions embrace, in light of core/fan reception. This provides a point of access to the vital horror underground through its production and consumption. I will subsequently trace differences in critical and ideological agendas between fanzines, demonstrating how fandom seeks to justify its 'bad' cultural taste. To this end I shall draw upon a modified reading of Jenkins (1992) to argue that fan reception and subsequent wider, casual reception of horror is delimited through the construction of meta-texts, by which standards horror films are judged.

Samhain, a highly professional mass-marketed fanzine, promotes itself as 'Britain's

Longest Running Horror Film Magazine' (cover subtitle). In common with other horror fanzines, it covers a wide range of material, from the mainstream (reviews of The Nightmare Before Christmas [Tim Burton, 1993]) through obscure (Cemetery Of The Living Dead [Ralph Zucker, 1966]) and underground (Nausea [director unknown, 1994] and Bitter Vengeance [director unknown, 1994]) in one issue (Samhain 49). News of horror festivals, interviews with established mainstream and underground directors, release information for other fanzines (since they encourage competetion in the spirit of furthering their 'cause'), book, script and soundtrack reviews, retrospectives of favourite and obscure horror actors' careers, set reports, anti-censorship debates, thinly disguised underground contact addresses ('For sale: hundreds of rare original tapes...mostly horror', [Samhain 44: 19]) and debates regarding the future, past and present of horror appear within its pages.

Horror fanzines, though varying in quality and intelligent criticism, typically address related political and social issues such as censorship, moral panics, the alleged adverse effect of horror on the mind, and misogyny within horror. Often, fanzine writers and/or readers support or propose limited, constantly biased and usually defensive research into the 'meaning' or 'result' of horror consumption. For example,

> Wanted - your views. To get a more accurate picture of horror film fans than the 'crazed psychopath' image beloved by the media, I'm doing some research. Please help me by writing...with your views on why horror films matter to you. Which are your favourites and why, [sic] and so on (Samhain 44: 18).

Such research seeks to legitimate horror as a cultural mode of popular consumption through often complex reasoning, historical and political social argument, and deconstruction of culturally-defined boundaries of taste.

This complex reasoning is evident throughout fanzines: for example, Necronomicon

ran an article by Xavier Mendik entitled 'Upon The Eyelids Of Ophelia - The Sexual 'Fragment' Of Trauma' (Necronomicon 7: 20-22) which deconstructs Dario Argento's films through an application of Freudian analysis. Mendik claims that,

> Trauma [Dario Argento, 1993] continues Argento's fascination with...female sexual transgression through consideration of the visual particle. To understand the Argento construction of gender is to comprehend the visual *fragment*, as it is paradoxically the segmented representation which gives ultimate meaning to the narrative drive (ibid: 20).

He states that the fragmented (through mental instability and anorexia) character of Aura in Trauma is constructed through 'the camera's concentration on a reproduction of Sir John Everett Millais [sic] painting Ophelia (1851)' and reflected through a narrative obsession with Oedipal states. The argument is lucid, intelligent and complex.

Similarly, Necronomicon's editorial proves aware of academic debate if not itself operating to academic standards, seeking perhaps to partly legitimate the publication through connections with academia despite being mostly distant from it. This incorporates Clover, whose work is considered to be

> essential reading, shattering typically-held [sic] preconceptions of 'misogyny' amongst the male horror audience in favour of a more balanced approach suggesting how a male audience will in fact identify more readily with the female victim (ibid: 3)

and Creed, whose work is considered to include 'invigorating ideas on 'possession' films viz a viz the female form' (ibid) in its argument. It may be claimed that the inclusion of such material helps to validate fanzines' claims of cultural legitimation for its producers and their readerships.

Flesh And Blood applies the critical approaches of, amongst others, Bazin and Clover

to explain the 'demystification of the flesh' (Flesh And Blood 4: 55) evident within hardcore pornography, employing a similarly complex hypothesis to the 'low' subject matter of its interests. Deconstruction of cultural taste-boundaries is evident in Fantasy Film Memory's discussion of the real animal slaughter for which Cannibal Holocaust is frequently attacked: this, it is claimed,

> was used [in Italy] as a pretext to forbid a picture which was found to be too hard and likely to shock too many people. If showing the death of animals...is cause of withdrawal, then it is surprising that some directors do not seem to have any problem while doing so (cf. F.F. Coppola) (Fantasy Film Memory 1: 23).

Fanzines, then, frequently employ comparisons between horror texts and texts which, though potentially as controversial, are accepted as valid by mainstream audiences in a sustained attempt to label those who reject horror as aesthetic hypocrites.

Innovative and subversive data collection techniques are utilised in order to access and assess critical perspectives of reactionary critics of horror. Subsequent predictable dismissal of these perspectives is seen to legitimate horror through challenges to the alleged social and sexual repressions of moral campaigners and those who agree with them. A fictional 'Campaign For Decency In Literature' was advertised throughout Britain in 1994 in order to create publicity for the contraversial text Killing For Culture: An Illustrated History Of Death Film From Mondo To Snuff (Kerekes and Slater 1993), in which letters were requested from those concerned at the decline in social morality due to the easy availability of horror films and literature, and specifically the appearance of De Sade in public libraries. The campaign was advertised in newspapers from The Glasgow Evening Times to The Christian Herald, and responses are analysed in Headpress issue 10 in order to form the basis of a discussion against moral reactionaries. It is through sustained challenging of the reactionary that fanzines and

fans position themselves and their aesthetic judgements. Anti-reactionary aesthetics such as gore, sex and violence are considered acceptable in part because they propose alternative moral orders through an overt challenge to censorship and reactionary outrage at challenging subject matter.

In addition to being simply magazines for those interested in horror, fanzines are concerned with exposing the socially constructed moral background of the largely negative reception of horror by wider society[1]. Analysis of moralist reactions allows fanzines to contextualise media-based moral panics and react against those who marginalise horror and label it subversive[2]. An alternative aesthetic and moral order is advocated, shared across fanzines (though critical opinion is often not), forming a backdrop to the reception of horror by fans.

However, the primary task of fanzines is to endorse appreciation of horror and inform readerships of developments within the mode. The forging of alternative ideological criteria rejecting conservative moralism, though vital to fanzine construction, is secondary to this task. This agenda, though often covertly expressed, unites all horror fanzines though as we shall see, excepting this consideration, horror fan culture is not cohesive but comprises of differing

Schramm: not moralist.

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[1]For example, In The Flesh's regular report on the state of world wide 'censorshit', especially the article in 11: 29 dealing with moral panics and the 'Big Brother' (ibid) culture of Great Britain in the 1990s.

[2]Hereafter I shall use 'moralist' generically to denote those opposed to horror on religious and/or moral grounds and who consider it to be of detrimental social and/or psychological value through, firstly, the depiction or suggestion of violence and its effects as a dominant narrative device, secondly, the graphic depiction of sexuality and sex, thirdly, the centrality of a figure or figures of evil and/or immorality within the narrative, and fourthly the questioning and/or debasing of Biblical 'truths' (for example, moral law and religious iconography).

internal discourses. The challenging of religious-moralism is central to fanzines' alternative moral order(s); the conclusion of Headpress' examination of the 'Campaign For Decency In Literature' was that it had

> prove[d] again the obvious but important fact that organised religion is the enemy of freedom of thought or expression. It also proved that there are too many people out there who leap the yawning logical chasm between 'I don't like it' and 'Burn it!' without blinking an eye (ibid).

Furthermore, horror fanzines seek to relocate the production and consumption of horror into a critical arena of public acceptance through attacks on moralist aesthetics, which they consider doxic. Rejecting media-fuelled images of themselves as mentally deficient, morally corrupt and potentially harmful 'deviants', fans stress their 'normality' through extended editorials and letters pages which seek to invert moralist thinking to prove that through strict application of moralist/'family' values, moralists become more corrupt than those that they condemn. However, creation of an alternative criterion of aesthetic acceptability, which, for non-fans would constitute the aesthetics of revulsion, does not necessitate the entire rejection of the moral(ist) ideals which it challenges; fans are keen to assert that although they reject censorship and moralist prejudice, they live according to many of their values. They claim that they are not violent, anarchistic radicals, but rather seek to embrace the nihilism of contemporary horror as an ideological alternative to existing repressive hegemony.

For fans, seeking pleasure in images of horror provides crucial, covert access to alternative ideological structures by addressing, through the guidance of the text, physical and mental repressions which lead ultimately to social and sexual decay[3]. Repression in horror

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[3]So, fans are interested in social subtexts of, for example, Cronenberg's work, rather than just plot and special effects. Through Cronenberg they may see revealed symbolic horror occurring with increased state and technological control over the self. Cronenberg's horror depends upon the enforced application of

usually leads to destruction, frequently figured through symbolic monsters, as argued by Wood. Repression is, for fans, symptomatic of existence within a culture which endorses moralist-aesthetics[4] (cf. Headpress' conclusion). Horror texts become arenas of battle within fanzine culture; texts are at once separated and re-defined in terms of alternative cultural ideologies, yet are presented as aesthetic ideals through which hegemonic, moralist repressions may be revealed and challenged through re-conceptualisation of the boundaries of 'good' and 'bad' taste.

Jenkins validates this, asserting that 'concepts of "good taste", appropriate conduct, or aesthetic merit are not natural or universal...[but] are rooted in social experience and reflect particular class interests' (Jenkins 1992: 16). Furthermore:

> taste is always in crisis; taste can never remain stable, because it is challenged by the existence of other tastes that often seem just as 'natural' to their proponents. The boundaries of 'good taste', then, must constantly be policed; proper tastes must be separated from improper tastes; those who possess the wrong tastes must be distinguished from those who tastes conform more closely to our own expectations...aesthetic distaste brings with it the full force of moral excommunication and social rejection (ibid).

This, in line with Bourdieu's analysis, is developed into a critique of the cultural reception of

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experimental science on the body. This critique of modernity challenges scientific and 'expert'-generated hegemony, and as such endorses hypothetical alternative social structures through Cronenberg's revaluation of cultural control.

[4]The now defunct Today newspaper, taking a moralist stance over sex and violence on television, claimed that 'standards of taste and decency began deteriorating years ago, and have been allowed to go unchecked for so long that they have now become the norm' (28/7/95: 6). The same issue condemned the childrens' film Casper (Brad Silberling, 1995) for an alleged quasi-sexual attraction between Casper, a ghost, and Kat, his human (female) friend, claiming that 'necrophilia is box-office' and asking, 'since death is the last word in unhealthiness, why should we want our kids to cosy up to it?' (ibid: 36).

'bad' taste, which, for those not sharing that taste,

> is not simply undesirable; it is un-acceptable. Debates about aesthetic choices or interpretative practices, then, necessarily have an important social dimension and often draw upon social or psychological categories as a source of justification. Materials viewed as undesirable within a particular aesthetic are often accused of harmful social effects or negative influences upon their consumers. Aesthetic preferences then are imposed through legislation and public pressure; for example, in the cause of protecting children from the 'corrupting' influence of undesired cultural materials. Those who enjoy such texts are seen as intellectually debased, psychologically suspect, or emotionally immature (ibid: 16-17).

Horror fans are routinely considered to be intellectually debased, psychologically suspect and emotionally insecure, especially during moral panics regarding the supposed effects of horror on society. In line with Bourdieu's claims, and much to the continued annoyance of fans, horror is condemned during moral panics as potentially corrupting to society in general and children in particular[5].

Because of these reasons, moralists and self-appointed cultural 'watchdogs' such as Mary Whitehouse consider the 'bad taste' of horror to be 'unacceptable', seek to protect others from its 'corrupting influence' and question the mental faculties of those who enjoy it[6]. In retaliation, fans attempt to reappropriate 'bad' as 'good' taste. In order to facilitate this, editors, writers and underground horror producers repeatedly use fanzines as a platform from

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[5]As seen on page 48 through The Sun's headline of Friday November 26th, 1993.

[6]Following a nation-wide crackdown on illegal horror videos orchestrated by Merseyside Trading Standards, a representative stated that 'the people who watch and enjoy such material should really question their sanity' (ITV news, 7th May 1992). Though not overtly of moralist mentality, the terminology employed by Trading Standards remains the same.

which to proclaim their 'normality' and everyday 'good' taste:

> me and the Mrs got a kitten, it was a stray, three weeks old when we found it....Just a little story to show...this is a horror fanzine with a heart, a place where kittens can find a home (In The Flesh 11: 2)

or, Jörg Buttgereit's assertion that he is 'sorry to disappoint [the reader] but I'm not a necrophile. I feel quite normal. Some days a little too normal for my own taste' (Kerekes 1994: v). Often this is in the face of considerable individual negative media and/or moralist attention - John Gullidge, editor of Samhain details his experience in 1994 with the Express And Echo newspaper, who

> decided [that he] was committing the unpardonable crime of publishing a horror film magazine and helping out at a local playgroup [sic]. If you had read any of the crap...written in the E & E at the time you could be forgiven for thinking [that he] was the lowest form of child abuser. Sadly many people *do* believe what they read in the papers and perhaps one of the most upsetting incidences [sic] for [him] was when a local man was overheard...saying 'It's all very well keeping him on at the playgroup [sic] but what about when the abuse starts?' (Samhain 48: 3).

Such authorial response defends Gullidge and fans, validating their aesthetic criteria by implication; horror fans are here considered wrongly demonised - in reality they are 'normal' enough to wish to assist local communities (to adopt stray animals and work voluntarily at play groups), yet are attacked for this essentially moral behaviour by moralist, here media, factions.

Given the frequent lucidity of argument which fans present, and, following Whitehouse, the increasingly moralistic and largely illogical stance of 'common sense' campaigners such as Alton, it is important to consider that social 'problems' such as the

availability of 'corrupting' material such as horror and pornography are ultimately social relations; essentially simply differences of opinion between antagonistic groups and theses. This itself is reason enough to question the demonising of all horror as dangerous; it is evidently more profitable to focus on how groups react against each other in terms of their economic backgrounds - a position which would surely be supported by fanzines. As Tom Dewe Matthews states,

> cinema going was the essential habit of...Edwardian[s], yet highly educated people saw in it only vulgarity and the end of Old England....For, then as now, film censorship was not governed by the actual content of films; it was more concerned with their effect. Thus the censors's long-serving, silently spoken rubric: the larger the audience, the lower the moral mass resistance to suggestion (Matthews 1994: 2).

This has lead to 'Britain['s possession of] the most rigorous film censorship system in the western world' (ibid: 1), and the unspoken assumption of those who support censorship that society will destroy itself if boundaries and limitations of what is aesthetically acceptable are not established and policed effectively.

As a class-based distinction, this echoes Bourdieu's perception of the rejection of the popular by the middle and upper classes (considering themselves the cultured elite) in tandem with self-appointed arbiters of taste in the visual arts. There, as here, those rejecting the popular label it as both facile and, in often vague, undefined terms as somehow dangerous. Matthew's evocation of 'Old England' is therefore important to an understanding of what those who reject are seeking to protect and what those who defend horror and themselves from charges of dangerous imbecility react against. Today, rejection of horror is couched in corresponding terms; the constant onslaught of such material is considered to be destroying the fabric of society and eroding the moral 'decency' that moralist campaigners claim to

remember. Horror fans would argue that logically 'Old England' never existed and is simply a rose-tinted view of the moralist campaigners' own childhoods and that this, for each successive generation, empowers moralists' arguments. Therefore, moral campaigners begin from positions of sentimentality which fans counter with frequently sophisticated and highly logical anti-moralist approaches[7].

A second part of the process of cultural, critical reappropriation develops out of such a defence through a relocation of fictional horror away from the purely textual and the social (or more accurately the *sub*-social) and into the real world. It is this strategy which effectively distances texts from 'real' horror as opposed to cinematic versions of it[8]. For fans, 'real' horror is, for example, that America condones the use of the electric chair, or the constant moralist pressure in Britain for re-introduction of the death sentence. Horror films become the domain of the sub-social (fan culture), allowing a defence of fan tastes as more valid, and indeed in *better* taste than that which is commonly culturally accepted, which, for fans is subtly defined by moralist agendas throughout society through, for example, Evangelism or groups such as the Mothers' Union. This allows Gullidge's defence that he was working at the playgroup for valid reasons; therefore, if moralist society wishes to believe that he is a child molester, the problem lies with *their* cultural perceptions and suspicious moralist agenda.

For fans, a reversal of traditional 'good' and 'bad' taste occurs; though believing

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[7]A further explanation is provided by Bourdieu: declining groups, here moralist factions, always look to a nostalgic past where their social position and values held real power because the best they can hope for is a return to those values rather than an extension of their powers, and an accompanying restoration of their social status (Bourdieu 1984: 111-113).

[8]'Real' horror here denotes the non-fictional, non-textual. Whereas Jason slaughtering his victims is textual, fictional and un-real, Michael Ryan (instigator of the Hungerford massacre in August 1987) is, for example, factual, and hence real. Occasionally the two collide, as in the quasi-fictional Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer (John McNaughton, 1986/1990) which deals with a dramatised account of the crimes of serial killer Henry Lee Lucas. It is usual, in such cases, for these films to be advertised and critically evaluated as 'serious' works rather than 'frivolous' or 'childish' horror.

themselves to be operating from positions of 'good' taste against individuals with 'bad' taste, in effect the media and moralists become the ones with bad taste for considering child abuse a possibility in an innocent circumstance. Real social/political horrors such as terrorist bombings or genocide in Bosnia for example, form the context within which fan culture challenges 'acceptable'/hegemonic concepts of taste in order to appropriate and re-evaluate it to their anti-conservative, anti-censorship, anti-sexual and moral repression criteria.

Fiction and reality collide in <u>Henry: Portrait Of A Serial Killer</u>.

Crane describes such a context, positioning audience readings of horror within a violent, contemporary cultural context (Crane 1994). In line with the stance of this thesis and fans' reappropriation of 'bad' taste as a cultural construct to be challenged, Crane rejects total critical dependence on psychoanalysis, claiming that 'there is more to screen violence than thwarted libidinal desire or some other variation of psychic upheaval' (ibid: vi). Crane, like fans, considers the restructuring of 'ultraviolence' (ibid: vii) evident within contemporary society into entertainment as dependent upon the cultural value placed on depictions of real violence within society (news portrayal of dead and injured victims of the 18th April 1995 Oklahoma hotel bombing, for example), mirroring in part Deodata's earlier concerns. Such restructuring throws a revealing light upon society as an emotive backdrop to horror's textual

construction[9]. Crane considers that 'the worst monsters are created under monstrous conditions of existence' (ibid: 154); contemporary films therefore do not have to be strictly horror films to be frightening and bloody (cf. Reservoir Dogs, Quentin Tarantino, 1990).

The mid-1970s to pre-1990s shift from monster centrality to victim centrality shifted again from 1990 onwards; a backwards move within horror narratives occurred, once again shifting internal focus from victims to monsters. However, monsters themselves changed, perhaps because of the previous years of human victim centrality; they became increasingly less supernatural, and of more human construction (Hannibal Lector, the Single White Female [Barbet Schroeder, 1992] or Mickey and Mallory, for example)[10]. At the time of writing

Human monsters: Mickey and Mallory.

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[9]This constitutes the effective but sledgehammer subtext of Natural Born Killers. The social creates horror (O. J. Simpson, John Wayne Gacy, the Mendez brothers and others, seen in montage at the end of the film) in a two-way process with the media. The media fuels horror by sensationalising it, creating further horror (Mickey and Mallory, who are idolised by the media under the pretence of moralist outrage and the public). The perversion of contextually real horror into entertainment by the media causes new horrors in a never-ending cycle. Outside of the text, the film itself becomes part of this process - an irony not lost on Stone during the recent media furore following the film's release. In textual terms, the media (by extension Hollywood) becomes the focus for the production of horror - a reversal of 'good' and 'bad' taste. This is made explicit when Mickey states, 'Stupid fucking movies! Don't anyone in Hollywood believe in kissing any more?', to a montage backdrop of Hollywood films. A similar point is made throughout Cannibal Holocaust and Man Bites Dog.

[10]For more general statistical evidence, see Tudor 1989.

the monstrous is currently frequently figured as a facet of human nature (albeit a nature which has been transformed into the body of the new human monsters), and is exemplified by the monstrous activity of Buttgereit's protagonists. Recently, then, social agents have all become potential victims, or worse, potential monsters. So,

> few, if any, entertainments have neglected the lessons most successfully executed in the Slasher film. Video games let you finish off your opponents by ripping their heart and spine out, local television news continues to make crime pay with endless clips of civic mayhem, 'Court TV' devotes gavel-to-gavel coverage of the most lurid and violent crimes we commit, tabloid television continues to offer the finest in programming relentlessly fascinated with human brutality...action heroes grow ever meaner (ibid: 168)

Here, modern culture is set against a media fuelled backdrop of cruelty which, though presented as valid news, plays to agents' base desires to witness another's misfortune through sensationalism: for example the fascination in the 1990s with real-life police 'action' documentaries or scurrilous, legally purchasable mondo-'documentaries' such as Executions (David Maughman, David Herman, Arun Kumar, 1995). As Crane states, it seems that increasingly, 'the truest images, and the most entertaining, are those...which make us hurt' (ibid), and, audiences, it seems, are prepared to pay to be hurt in their millions.

Fan culture deconstructs this process to defend choosing horrific fiction as entertainment over horrific, socially condoned (through repeated media representation) fact. Headpress' article, 'Laugh? I Could Run A Chainsaw Through Your Cortex, Or: Why The Humour Of The Situation Somehow Strangely Seems To Be Sidestepping The Whole Fucking Point' (Headpress 10: 2-5), explicitly states this usually subtextual critique. The article discusses concepts of taste in humour and film, stating that mass media influenced society

condemns the supposedly inherent 'sickness' of horror, whilst operating to the standards that it condemns. Horror fans are, therefore, less 'sick' than those who condemn them because, though subject to the same social regulations, they do not deny what they find fascinating. The author considers that,

> the joke is on the fact that I might think, as an adult, I'm treated like a retard in what I'm allowed to read or view. And then the joke stops because THEN I am scum, filth, depraved, the kind of inhuman crud that will bring society to its knees. Had sex in the missionary position lately? Well done - at least you're not some PERVERT with UNNATURAL DESIRES TOO EXTREME TO BE DESCRIBED IN A FAMILY NEWSPAPER (ibid: 2, their emphasis).

Headpress, then, cites a repressed, repressive society eager for horrific titillation but unable to admit it except through the condemnation of a group (horror fans) to blame, despite society's own concealed tastes.

Moralists, and frequently the society in which they exist, therefore shun horror as 'sick' despite finding their own entertainment covertly through real horror. Adopting moralist language, fan culture deems this more 'sick' than the fictional, 'escapist' mode in which they find pleasure. Society gleefully allows the media, 'to describe rape cases as though [they were] an excerpt from a pornoflick novelization' (ibid: 3); moral(ist) law is

> bullshit presented as the Living Gospel...you still get busted for your dupe of Cannibal Holocaust and the papers call it SNUFF...[whilst] Roger Levitt still holidays in Ghana despite his conviction for defrauding millions (ibid, their emphasis).

Validation of fan tastes occur, then, through attacks on the allegedly hidden hypocrisy of those who condemn them.

This is orchestrated through a sustained challenging of 'acceptable' media moral

subtexts; The Sun's ideology, for example, reveals wider society's prejudiced, hierarchical and misogynist infrastructure through its conservative, moralist agenda, which, according to Headpress is that:

> AIDS don't MATTER, homelessness don't MATTER, poverty don't MATTER, starvation don't MATTER, wogs with their bollocks wired to the main grid don't MATTER, a projected civilisation where we all know our place, where we all eat shit and pronounce it a gourmet delicacy don't MATTER...not in the long run, not when you take into account the benefits accrued of being part of it all[11] (ibid, their emphasis).

As a result,

> what you get is a world capsized...with its self-righting mechanism - humanity, compassion, trust and affection...shot to shit, way beyond repair. Everything is off balance; everything is, if not completely inverted, then at least 50% on the way there (ibid).

When stated in these terms, it seems perfectly reasonable that a fan should view Day Of The Dead (George Romero, 1985) and admit that they enjoy the thrill of being scared and excited rather than deny such emotions and thrill privately at graphic news of the latest genocide or rape while proclaiming publicly disgust[12].

This social-moral(ist) paradox mirrors the transmission of Slasher sensibility into mainstream cinema:

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[11]The passion and anger of these sentiments is evident in the almost hysterical tone of writing, mirroring the similar tone of reporting by tabloid newspapers during moral panics.

[12]In Natural Born Killers, Wayne Gale, a TV host, justifies his repeated usage of sensationalistic violence in his show dedicated to the 'careers' of serial killers: 'do you think those nitwits out there in zombieland *remember* anything? This is junk-food for the brains; it's...filler, fodder - whatever'. The connection between agents' modern need for consumer culture in 'zombieland' (junk food) and their need for a continual background of real violence (as filler for the brains) against which they define themselves, is clear.

> just as, on the day of assault mass murderers take whoever happens to be in line to order a Whopper® or is riding the train, mainstream films have elected to offer death to a more demographically respectable range of victims' than the traditional 'witless' teenagers in Slashers (Crane 1994: 166).

Similarly, and rooted in the same cause, other forms of popular culture have become imbibed with socially reflective nihilism: for example, 'in its first-person celebration of death and destruction, Gangsta Rap uses one of the signature formalisms of the Slasher film' (ibid: 164) to address cultural concerns through a popular media, argues Crane[13].

Samhain disputes moralist 'acceptability' through a citation of a Daily Mirror headline following the Alton commissioned Newson report into the supposed effects of horror on audiences:

> **'At last experts admit: Movie nasties DO kill VIDIOTS!'**...on the same day...a drunk driver was jailed for three years for killing a father of two by jumping a red light...where was the Mirror headline on the lines of **'Alcohol DOES kill'** ? (Samhain 44: 3, their emphasis).

Here the term 'vidiot' is interesting. Bourdieu claims that the further one is able to differentiate branches of art (for example, knowing different artistic movements, or being able to identify the work of a specific period within a given artist's output), the more intellectual the viewer is considered and the more legitimate that cultural knowledge is commonly perceived to be (Bourdieu 1984: 27-28).

Bourdieu's approach does not take into account the widespread popular cultural rejection of 'trainspotters', who are those who are seen to place inappropriate importance on

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[13]Though true, this disavows the social background - typically the poor, black, male, uneducated American underclass - of Gangsta Rap, which accounts in part for its frequently extreme content.

trivial knowledge perceived generally as dull. Furthermore, and specifically related to horror, it is the common perception that the more viewers interact with it the more debased (non-intellectual and hegemonically illegitimate) both the knowledge and the holder of that knowledge becomes. Fans, attracted to 'video nasties' through a fascination for pushing established boundaries of aesthetic experience, therefore become, in the eyes of a media generating moral panics cynically through 'shock horror' headlines to increase sales, 'vidiots'.

To combat such accusations of debased intellectualism, and following the 7th May 1992 crackdown on 'unacceptable' (banned and underground) horror in Liverpool and the Midlands, In The Flesh ran an article entitled 'Big Brother' which, following widespread media and moralist condemnation of horror, sought to justify itself through comparison of horror fans to other fan groups:

> you will much more likely run into violent individuals out for blood on your local football ground terraces or outside your local night-club on a Saturday night [than at a horror convention]...this crap about horror fans being sick psychotics is a myth and an increasingly tired one (ibid: 30).

It is in such terms of righteous, typically comparative, indignation that horror fans defend themselves and their tastes.

Jenkins underlines some of the strategies which fans utilise in order to forge coherent (sub) cultural identities. He discusses non-horror fans, focusing on participatory television fan culture typified by the cults surrounding, for example, Star Trek (NBC, 1966-1969), Blake's 7 (BBC, 1978-1981) and The Prisoner (ITC TV, 1968). Here, fans are dominantly female; they write fiction to fill the 'gaps' in their favourite texts, write songs, create complex edited audio-visual tapes of favourite programmes conforming to personal ideals of a projected series meta-text, and create 'slash' fiction (homoerotic stories detailing sexual relationships between male

characters in a series - 'K/S' slash deals with projected sexual encounters between Kirk and Spock [Crane 1994: 185-186], for example). These are fans of science-fiction and fantasy, in a cultural (TV) arena of mass-media consumption. They communicate through the Internet as well as fanzines in order, through limited (in the sense that fan writing is creative yet dependent upon pre-existing, pre-defined textual universes) creative devices to forge alternative cultural existences. By finding deep value in popular culture and appropriating non-hegemonic criteria of artistic validity, these fans connect not only through shared interests, but also through shared cultural values.

Horror fandom operates in a different, though related form. Conventions regularly occur and meta-textual constructions of 'ideal' horror dominates fanzine writing, but though horror fiction does sometimes appear in fanzines it is rarely centred around pre-existing characters and textual universes. Subsequently, 'Slash' does not exist since horror already deals with issues of sexuality; similarly, fan songs, poetry and edited videos are not prevalent in horror fandom, though underground horror production has its basis in enthusiastic fan-creation.

Three central variations between horror and science-fiction fandom exist, dependent upon audience bias. Firstly, horror fans are dominantly male[14], opposing the female dominance of Jenkins' science-fiction fans. Secondly, the Internet is far less frequently used to construct alternative discursive cultural arenas. Science-fiction fans focus on projected future utopias (rarely dystopias) which develop from a cultural investment in present-day technology. As a result, science-fiction fans consider the future as dependent upon their fascination with and promotion of technology in the present; there are countless pages of science-fiction fan

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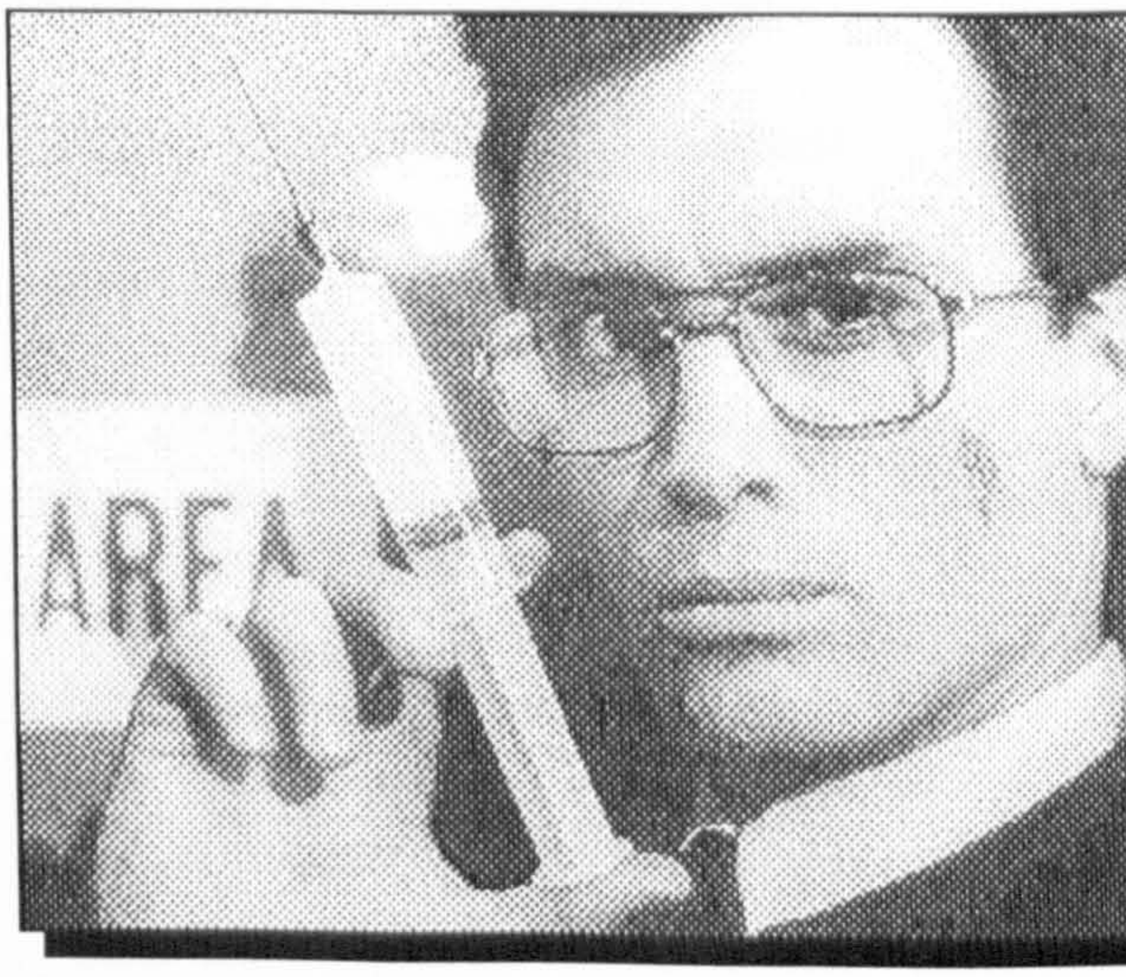
[14]For varying accounts of the supposed reasons for this, see Clover, Skal, Wood and Grant (ed).

sites and newsgroups on the Internet, for example, since it suits their cultural preference.

Horror, with its emphasis on looking backward to myths and legend does not embrace the future dominantly, focusing mainly on the past and present within its narratives. Where the future is invoked, it is invariably dystopian; as a result far less discussion of horror exists on the Internet than the thousands of science-fiction pages[15]. Thirdly, horror fandom is based not on science-fiction's ethos of cultural inclusion and allegiance to an ideologically and technologically evolving society, but on cultural exclusion and a continual challenging of those ideologies and their potential moralist strategies.

Operating through re-definition of taste boundaries, horror fans consider humour to be a vital axis upon which lines of social and moral(ist) acceptability and 'good' and 'bad' taste are drawn. A directorial use of humour in a violent context is often condemned as 'unacceptable' and 'sick' by the media and moralists (see, for example, the death of Melvin in Pulp Fiction [Quentin Tarantino, 1994] or the visual necrophilia jokes in the fifteen-certificated The Frighteners [Peter Jackson, 1996]). Horrific humour frequently combines anti-moralist aesthetics with a seemingly inappropriate physical response to violence - laughter; for example, the scenes in Braindead where the hero unsuccessfully attempts to suppress a zombie baby by throwing and kicking it around a park[16]. To the frequent annoyance of fans, horror is condemned for dealing with such



Humour and the horror text: Reanimato

[15]Although there is still a sizeable amount of horror sites.

[16]A 'sick' extension of the traditional form of slapstick used by, amongst others, The Three Stooges.

narrative and emotive juxtapositions whilst mainstream comedy is not[17].

The social acceptability of humour based on the misfortune of others is embraced by non-horror, including moralist, culture on the unspoken condition that that culture is not required to acknowledge the 'deviant' and cruel origin of its taste consciously. Headpress underlines the socially acceptable face of cruel humour:

> we don't mind being patronised, bullied, revealed as dupes before millions on TV; we don't mind the fact that it's Jeremy Beadle with the £Million contract and the adulation while [his victim] sit[s] there...as the VT rolls of [him/her] falling for a set-up even a three-year-old could have seen through - anything than rather be the kind of bastard who refuses to laugh with the rest (Headpress 10: 2).

For fans, this extends into cultural perceptions of what is and is not funny; if, they argue, humour is based upon Schadenfreude then moralist society is hypocritical in its condemnation of *any* subject matter on the grounds of taste, as its own entertainment-criteria is rooted in cruelty[18]. Ultimately, then, the Lorena/John Wayne Bobbit case[19] becomes 'Man Slips On Banana Skin updated for the 90s...so ultimately the thing becomes a joke' (ibid: 3). Humour is, therefore, considered to be grounded in

> those nebulous ideas of a consensus conscience, where 'good' or 'bad' taste is determined by the milieu, again bogus in existence, for consensus...is determined not by individual minds working in unison, but by those individual minds being directed and coaxed towards a homogenised viewpoint by those who control information, who

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[17]See, for example, Bean (Mel Smith, 1997), in which the eponymous hero loses a chocolate in the intestines of a patient in an operating theatre, then retrieves and eats it, and who has earlier inflated and burst a full sick bag over the head of a sleeping passenger on an aeroplane.

[18]A point made by Samuel Beckett in Endgame: 'Nothing is funnier than unhappiness [in others]...it's the most comical thing in the world' (Beckett 1958: 20).

[19]After years of abuse Lorena castrated her husband, who later provided evidence at her trial and who is now, bizarrely, a hard-core porn star.

set the STANDARDS for 'socially acceptable' behaviour (ibid: 4, their emphasis), which is essentially hegemony enforced through symbolic violence. Humour constitutes the basis of constructions of cultural 'acceptability'; it becomes, through a challenging of doxic values, a major point of (sub) cultural determination for horror fans[20].

The resulting paradox is reacted against by fans through fanzines each time horror is attacked by moralist factions or those who seek to divert blame for anti-social behaviour away from socially condoned legislation (for example, lack of investment in 'problem' council estates) and onto convenient textual scapegoats. The values that society overtly rejects, according to horror fandom, are then the values that it operates by covertly:

> Nazis firebomb Asian family, kill many...HORROR UNBOUNDED, the sickening truth about Britain in the 90s etc...CUT: Bernard Manning, Jim Davidson...there was this nig-nog, right? (ibid: 4, their emphasis).

Through these concerns fans are united in an alternative culture, establishing a platform from which they can defend themselves through an argument reminiscent of Crane's model.

Despite traditionalist, common sense proclamations to the contrary, fans argue that moralists, and, due to their influence in the formation of doxic values, the society in which they exist, have lost their ability to empathise with victims:

> suffering becomes so much visual wallpaper. The news bulletin that begins with murder, rape and unfathomable atrocities ends with a feelgood [sic] item about skateboarding Basset Hounds...in the 90s we are expected to mourn...those we would never have known to have existed or died had not CNN had a camera right there to bring you the vivid cruelty of their demise in glorious sanguineous technicolour

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[20]Explaining in part the continual inclusion of 'sick' humour in even the most extreme horror text (cf Cannibal Holocaust or Nekromantik).

(Headpress 10: 3-4).

Defending horror, Headpress asserts that 'the blacker the times get, the blacker the comedy gets (just ask Stephen Milligan)'[21] (ibid: 5), which, in the context of the settings and periods of creation of films such as The Frighteners, Re-Animator or the post-apocalyptic cannibalism-comedy, Delicatessen (Jean-Pierre Jeunot and Marc Caro, 1991), certainly seems to be the case.

The aesthetics of differing tastes change according to the class, habitus and social status of the agents in question, with, as always, one taste fighting to dominate all others to establish itself as the only legitimate aesthetic framework. As we have seen through Bourdieu, those without cultural capital typically favour form over function, reducing the potential richness of the former to the minimalism of the latter. Those with hegemonic cultural capital frequently do the same, yet they do so by masking this with ceremony or by attempting to raise the status of what they are doing to fit their habitus[22].

Despite such considerations, fan audiences are far from ideologically (even aesthetically) monolithic; debates rage within fanzines regarding the acceptability and entertainment value of their canonical texts - morality is discussed and analysed and vast differences of opinion regarding 'meaning(s)' and popular readings of certain texts surface. In order to explore this, I shall now consider constructions of alternative fanzine meta-texts and their relationships to the fans who consume and help to maintain them.

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[21]A Conservative MP found dead due to auto-erotic asphyxiation, and who subsequently became the focus of 'sick' jokes due to his active involvement in Prime Minster John Major's moral 'back to basics' campaign.

[22]See Bourdieu 1984: 200.

Horror Fandom 2:

The Construction Of Multiple Meta-Texts

A consideration of horror as a mode, and an awareness of the implications of this during analysis[1] is valuable when studying fan culture, since canonisation or rejection of 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' texts is dependent upon a series of interlocking horror meta-texts, projected by fans. Through a consideration of meta-textual constructions analysts may locate criteria of judgement and meaning acquisition that exists covertly within fan culture. An awareness of the implications arising from canonisation of 'ideal' horror texts across audiences and fan culture allows the assessment of aficionado responses to those texts and the varied ideological structures they that advocate.

Reactions to the same text vary across fanzines in accordance with the horror meta-text promoted by the fanzine itself, and embraced by its regular readership. In the context of reviews it seems apparent that when the dispositions of the critical position occupied by a reviewing body such as a fanzine coincides with those of either the artist or the readership (assuming that each has broadly the same views) then sincerity is achieved in the reviewing body's critical reaction. This in turn helps define and develop that publication's conceptual meta-text.

In terms of Star Trek, Jenkins terms meta-texts as "ideal' version[s]' which 'blur...boundaries between aesthetic judgement and textual interpretation' providing groundings 'against which a film or episode is evaluated...constructed by the fan community through its progressively more detailed analysis of the previously aired episodes' (Jenkins 1992: 98). Meta-texts are extra-textual projections by fans of what they consider ideal films

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[1]See subsequent discussion of horror's 'generic' structuring.

should be, based upon their evaluations of previously existing films. For some fanzines A Nightmare On Elm Street (Wes Craven, 1984) may conform to their conception of an 'ideal' horror film; for others it is the antithesis of good horror. Such judgements utilise cross-textual constructions of an 'ideal'/meta-text as an aesthetic and narrative yardstick. Differences in focus between fanzines, as well as differences in critical receptions of individual texts are dependent upon different meta-textual criteria, reflecting critical judgements by fanzine writers, editors and readerships.

> An In The Flesh review of I Spit On Your Grave claims that the
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> trouble is the rape scenes, they are just too graphic and seem to be there as titillation, every little detail is dwelled on way too long and it ends up looking like a porn movie gone wrong....the whole centre section of I Spit On Your Grave [is] very disturbing, unpleasant and basically unnecessary, one rape would have made the point...definitely not recommended (In The Flesh 9: 6).

This position perhaps seeks to disavow moralist assertions of horror fans' misogyny. The same fanzine however, has no qualms about recommending other highly disturbing, extreme texts such as Nightmares In A Damaged Brain (Romano Scavolini, 1981), or The Beyond (Lucio Fulci, 1981) as examples of generic excellence: The Last House On The Left is recommended as 'quite simply a good film, a nasty sadistic film, but an entertaining tale of murder and revenge. One of the best [of the] nasties. See it if you haven't already' (In The Flesh 10: 5).

An earlier review of Faces Of Death (Conan Le Cilaire, 1974)[2] (In The Flesh 7: 6)

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[2]A compilation 'documentary' comprised of international news footage of supposedly real though often laughably faked death sequences such as suicides and parachute failures. The film, typical of the Mondo/'shockumentary' school (a scurrilous movement which presents highly sensational 'real life' footage of, for example, African tribal rituals in Mondo Cane, [Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Prosperi, Paolo Cavara, 1961] under the guise of serious anthropological research), was banned in 1982 as a video nasty, and is a sort of a

states that 'human nature makes [us] all...curious but as for entertainment? Well I'd look elsewhere', refusing to judge the film on its usual criteria of narrative, technical standard and 'gore content'. The horror meta-text which In The Flesh has developed favours extreme texts of the most 'gut-wrenching' kind, but which may still be considered as 'entertainment'. However, though fanzines may disapprove of certain texts, they are never censorious in a moralist sense. Films may be considered as inappropriate entertainment material, but fanzines always advise readers to view challenging texts and make up their own minds about them in order to provoke further debate.

This highlights a further difference between the construction of fanzines and their internal ideologies and those of mainstream culture. As Bourdieu claims, there operates in society a complex net of relations providing agents with a definite sense of social placement, leading to individual acceptance of some aspects of culture (for example football) and rejection of others such as blood sports. Once individuals become comfortable with these choices, cross-over between accepted and rejected facets of their culture rarely occurs (Bourdieu 1984: 470). For fanzines the same does not apply. Fans are willing to accept formal experimentation in texts, or to branch out into seemingly unrelated cultural areas in search of connections to their preferred material.

This stems from the liberal meta-texts promoted by fanzines, tying into the fans' hatred of cultural repression and censorship. As long as possible connections to horror exist, fans are willing to broaden cultural experiences often in ways that non-fans are not. For example, horror fans are willing to attempt to appreciate the violent Roman Polanski version of Macbeth (1971) whereas non-fans who would appreciate Macbeth in the theatre would

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post-modern Candid Camera with blood. Its original Japanese cinema release out-grossed Star Wars (George Lucas, 1977) at the box office for thirteen straight weeks, in every sense of the phrase.

largely, it may be argued, not consider watching Nightmares In A Damaged Brain, for, as an example of 'low' culture, interaction with it may be considered to compromise their 'high' tastes and, therefore, their position of cultural 'superiority'[3]. It is ironic that it is generally considered that horror fans possess a narrower cultural awareness than those with 'legitimate' tastes, just as it is often the case that fans are more willing to broaden their cultural horizons than those who condemn them for having a limited cultural scope.

For In The Flesh, the 'nastier' (in the post-1982 sense) the film the better the review, yet Faces Of Death and I Spit On Your Grave are rejected as non-meta-textual; they encroach too closely on real life, crossing the self-imposed border between 'entertainment' and objectionable 'reality'[4]. This is because In The Flesh, in line with many other fanzines, constructs its meta-text according to a criteria of non-implication. Potential 'reality' implicates viewers in textual atrocities; the everyday 'normality' of the rapists in I Spit On Your Grave, and the depiction of rape as male group sport implicates all sporting men (inside and outside of the text, for it is claimed that the rapists' views are common to all males) in the real horror of rape, since the violation of Jennifer is constructed as the ultimate male sport, and the macho right of the rapists throughout the text. For this reason an In The Flesh reader claims that the film

> isn't supposed to be entertaining, it treats its subject very seriously indeed - in no way is it even remotely erotic or titillating. It's really supposed to make you feel slimy and ashamed to be male and in that respect succeeds very well...surely a perfect example of the power of film and filmmakers [sic] - if you are honest, you don't want to turn I Spit

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[3]See Bourdieu 1984 for related discussion, especially p.56.

[4]This is not to imply that In The Flesh considers I Spit On Your Grave to be anything other than a work of fiction, though it *does* consider it a work too closely mirroring contemporary dismissive attitudes towards sexual abuse (typically evident within the legal system), albeit in extreme form, for comfort.

off because it's a shit film, but because it makes you feel uncomfortable to be so close to something so disgustingly realistic (In The Flesh 11: 18).

Similarly, Faces Of Death implicates viewers as sadistic voyeurs of real suffering; the text brands its consumers as perverse through the act of interaction with the text itself for wishing to view 'real' atrocities in the first place. By playing willing voyeur, under the peep-show-style guidance of the film's host, 'Dr. Francis B. Gröss', to, for example, scenes of extended slaughter-house footage, seal clubbing or suicide, viewers become aware of their desire to witness the lowest common denominator of horrific imagery. For many viewers, this realisation heralds feelings of having been morally and aesthetically cheapened through a confrontation of aspects of human nature that they would rather not admit to possessing. Many fanzines therefore speak for their readers when they assert that Mondo, and especially Faces Of Death, is 'as tasteless as chewing cardboard when you've got a cold' (In The Flesh 11: 29).

Implication also operates on a further level: the reality of some of the sequences in Faces Of Death allows viewers to watch effective rehearsals of their own deaths - an experience too traumatic to be meta-textually classed as entertainment. For this reason, The Man Behind The Sun[5] (T.F Mous, 1991) constitutes reality for many fanzine writers and readers since it uses real corpses and details real events and the reconstructed deaths of real people. Viewers are implicated at every narrative level: as voyeurs wishing to experience such

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[5]The Man Behind The Sun (aka Men Behind The Sun) is a neo-mondo exploitation film, detailing horrific 'medical' experiments by the Japanese 731 squadron in a prisoner of war camp during World War II. Experiments are conducted in sickening detail, alongside non-diegetic, on-screen information regarding the real life victim(s) currently being represented. Made partially as anti-Japanese propaganda by the Chinese, the Chinese government allowed use of real bodies during morgue scenes and in one particularly disturbing autopsy sequence. Certainly the special effects are so realistic that it is hard to discount this allegation. The film is upsetting, depressing and, perhaps for these reasons, has become a much sought after text on the underground. Copies are usually imported from Australia where it is available uncut, apparently in the interest of public knowledge.

disturbing material and as creatures of finite existence through the usage of real bodies. For these reasons The Man Behind The Sun is routinely condemned by fanzines (memorably in a review which labelled it as 'the lowest of the low' [In The Flesh 6: 37]).

Occasionally 'reality' and non-reality clash; Cannibal Holocaust, frequently praised for its unrelenting, extremist narrative, is always condemned for its extreme animal cruelty. For In The Flesh, even the most disturbing but non-implicating text is potentially 'good' entertainment; highly misogynist texts (for example, The New York Ripper [Lucio Fulci, 1982]) are acceptable *if* the central psychopaths are figured as 'other'. For fanzines, if characters are insane then audiences are distanced

The Last House On The Left: non-implicatio

from their actions, and are therefore not implicated in their behaviour: Krug's actions in The Last House On The Left, though morally reprehensible, are defended by In The Flesh since 'we're dealing with nutters here and that's what they're supposed to do, isn't it?' (In The Flesh 10: 5). Furthermore,

> Last House...though probably intending to make you feel just as bad [as I Spit On Your Grave] does have that added 'entertainment' kick, probably brought on by [Krug]..being almost likeable in a perverse way (In The Flesh 11: 18).

Therefore, certain diegetic atrocities are deemed meta-textually acceptable if non-implication of viewers occurs; Krug, figured as mad is, by extension, 'not us'.

A fanzine's meta-text becomes revealed gradually across issues and through the sub-texts of reviews, editorials and readers' comments. Variation in meta-textual constructions

reveals ideological differences within hard-core horror audiences, as ideals of horror constructed by fanzines are usually shared by the majority of specific readerships. If a fan disagrees radically with a given fanzine's evaluative criteria, s/he will move to a fanzine better suited to his/her taste and focus of interest. This leads to an important consideration: by signposting some of the main ideological and canonical differences between a sample of fanzines, we may consider the differing ideological stances of their readerships regarding horror, dispelling blanket portrayals of fans as ideologically monolithic (misogynist, violent, 'sick', anti-social, anarchistic) groups of limited intelligence. The point is not to analyse aficionado ideology comprehensively (a potential thesis in its own right) but to deconstruct the myth of the monolithic character of fans.

Before attempting such an exercise, a claim made by Bourdieu requires amendment: he argues that agents' political opinions may vary frequently from those presented in their regular choice of newspaper (Bourdieu 1984: 441-442). This occurs for many reasons, not least because of a publication's desire not to lose advertisers by expressing extreme views, causing editors to neutralise political bias to some extent. This could not be further removed from the operation of fanzines, their editors and readerships. By their very nature horror fanzines unite readers in a common political view: they all promote liberal, left-wing, anti-censorship ideals through meta-textual construction, regardless of differences between those constructions across different publications. This ties directly to the social basis of the majority of their readerships. Fanzines, as well as providing information regarding a common field of interest, are, therefore, also operating to a series of political agendas through construction of their meta-texts.

The largely mainstream oriented Fear cannot decide whether to accept or reject Slashers, agreeing in principle with Clover's claims that the genre exists 'at the bottom of the

horror heap', and is 'drenched in taboo and encroach[es] vigorously on the pornographic' (Clover 1992: 21[6]), whilst it admits that Halloween is a classic. Fear's target audience is predominantly mid-teenage males, constructing its meta-text accordingly; for Fear, horror is good, creepy fun rather than the taboo-shattering, painful viewing experience constructed by In The Flesh or Headpress. These fanzines, as well as Fatal Visions, mix mainstream reviews and articles with highly controversial material such as interviews with serial killers, analysis of texts such as Salo: The 120 Days Of Sodom (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1970)[7], Nekromantik II or The Man Behind The Sun. Flesh Hunter merges a similar textual focus with appreciation and reviews of hardcore pornography, whilst Scarlet Street is interested in horror primarily as non-subversive escapism, eliminating challenging material through a nostalgic focus on 1950s 'B' movies from a 1990s critical perspective.

From fanzine letters and personal advertisement pages it becomes apparent that the closer fanzines adhere to typically academic[8] canons and meta-textual constructions, the younger and more equally gendered their readerships. As meta-texts begin to include underground material, readerships tend to become slightly older (though rarely exceeding the late thirties), and dominantly male. Subsequently, the more 'extreme' the meta-text, the more obviously 'male' the fanzines' presentation.

Scream Queens Illustrated reveals this most clearly and disturbingly. The fanzine focuses on the phenomenon of 'Scream Queens' - female stars of American, 'trashy' low budget exploitation/B-grade horror films typified by Sonority Babes In The Slimeball Bowl-A-Rama

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[6]Clover has clearly never seen a Nazi-nasty, which are typically more drenched in taboo and encroaching on the pornographic than Slashers.

[7]The film version of The 120 Days Of Sodom (Sade [1785] 1966).

[8]Always excluding chapter three of Clover which to some extent does transcend academic canonical boundaries.

(David D. Coteau, 1987), Vampire Vixens From Venus (director unknown, 1994) and Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers (Fred Olen Ray, 1988). Such films operate by pitching themselves deliberately low; they are intentionally violent and sexist, their flimsy plots centred around extreme but amateurish gore (mainly directed at the 'Scream Queens'), and extended nude sequences, since female characters often lose their clothes for no apparent reason or inexplicably take showers whilst avoiding monsters.

As examples of horror it may be argued that these are poor texts since their intention is to titillate rather than to frighten, and usually their only disturbing qualities lie in the images of women that they promote. The 'Scream Queens' invariably have the most graphic and inventive deaths saved for them; outside of horror their names (for example, Linnea Quigley, Monique Gabrielle, and Brinke Stevens) mean little. The bulk of Scream Queens Illustrated consists of naked, full frontal photographs of the actresses, usually pandering to male sexual fantasies. Though apparently expounding conservative values regarding the traditional sexual and social roles of women, Scream Queens Illustrated is never traditionalist in its construction; its images are, in traditionalist terms, too extreme to be acceptable to overt conservative aesthetic tastes.

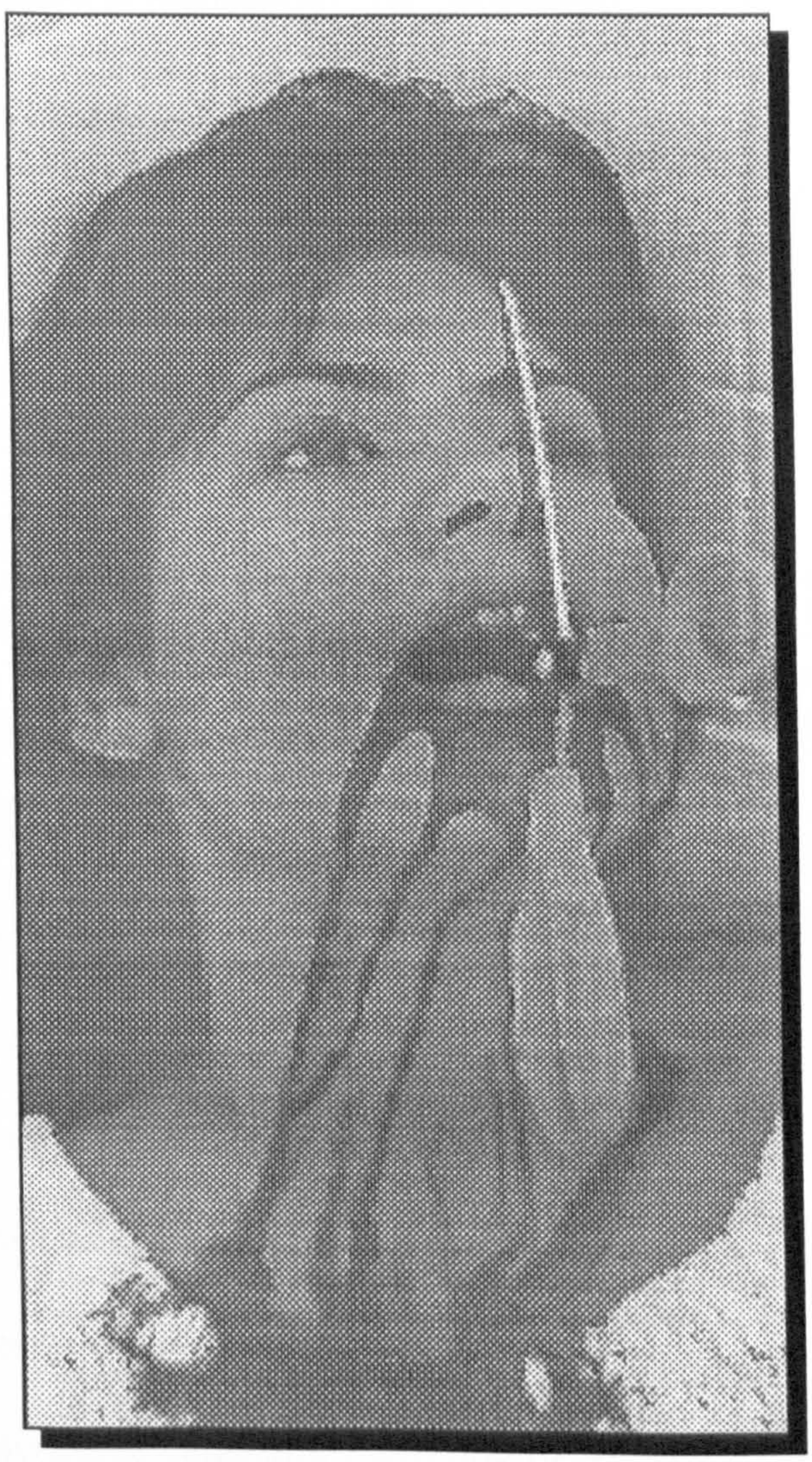
As a result the fanzine has been attacked by both conservative and moralist groups, as well as feminists. It is both offensive to liberals and expresses traditional sexual roles too blatantly, with excessive anti-moralist imagery (violence, sex and demonology) to be conservative. The alternative moral order that it appears to be promoting is almost Sadean/fascist, and rather than being in line with other fanzines, by rejecting conservatism it rejects only the 'acceptable' aesthetic limits through which conservatism operates. It does this by a constant merging of soft-core pornography with simulated extreme violence against

women.

Scream Queens Illustrated contains images of the kind that Andrea Dworkin falsely claims are the domain of all pornography (Dworkin 1981), since the fanzine does not deal overtly with explicit sex but rather with male power.

Dworkin's view is an extreme example of women writing on pornography, but nevertheless was the view consulted by Congress during the Bush administration when seeking to define pornography through legislation. For Dworkin the explicit presentation of sex and male power are inseparable: male 'objectification [of women] is [figured] natural, normal, to be encouraged' within patriarchy (ibid: 127).

The object (woman) becomes 'the made thing that most consistently provokes erection' (ibid). Objectification here equals the sexual act; to be objectified is, according to this view, to be raped metaphorically. The ability to objectify is, for Dworkin, an exclusively male power base. It may be argued that this is a sexist view which is limiting of women and which re-enforces the patriarchal control against which she argues. However, in some horror genres this *is* the case, as we shall discover regarding Slashers.



Scream Queens Illustrated imagery: 5: 58.

In Scream Queens Illustrated then, a 'true confession'-style photo-story details the seduction of a photographer (objectifier) by a bride (objectified, therefore, on two levels - in

the story, and as a model in the fanzine), yet finishes before the sex actually starts (Scream Quenns Illustrated 5: 54-57). In this way, the fanzine attempts to deny its primary role as violent pornography by employing its lack of overt sex as an unspoken defence. Furthermore, it is suggested that this is the woman's last 'fling' as a free agent before submitting to the sexual restrictions of the patriarchal institution of marriage. Nowhere in the *written* text are women degraded or humiliated; that is left to photographic images in order that the fanzine may be promoted as a film, rather than a soft-core pornographic, publication.

However, as typical images juxtapose naked women figured as terrified and/or violated with monsters figured as masculine, the sub - and hence meta - text reveals a horror ideal utilising extended, extreme misogyny, and fusing the objectification of women with their deaths, often through sexual violence. A poll (5: 62-63) reveals that its readers' favourite post-1980 film is Nightmare Sisters (David D. Coteau, 1987) - a sado-masochistic lesbian-vampire text, whilst their favourite pre-1980 film is, disturbingly, I Spit On Your Grave.

Headpress and Necronomicon, British publications, deal in horror, 'alternative' society and erotica. Far less misogynistic, these fanzines attract an appreciative female readership, though remain oriented dominantly towards males, since erotic response is usually considered in masculine terms. These publications mix quasi-academic and popular analysis, and much relevant material may be gained from them. Their meta-texts evoke a challenging of doxic morality and repression (sexual and social) through an advocated cinematic shattering of taboo via horror. Fangoria and GoreZone meanwhile, focus on special effects and are often considered immature by meta-textually underground fanzines for their total adherence to aesthetics at the expense of meta-textual ideological construction.

Construction of meta-texts allows readers to fill in the gaps between primary source materials (texts), drawing diffuse elements engaged in this activity together into a coherent,

though not necessarily cohesive, cultural group of fans. Constituent groups within this process (each fanzines' readership) are, in a broad sense, internally ideologically cohesive and are defined through internal meta-textual constructions. Differences in ideology between fanzines are explored and argued through letters pages, whilst the universe of primary texts (incorporating the supernatural, sensual, and sudden death) rather than any individual text is central to the formation of meta-textual criteria.

Favourite primary texts fit the criteria of meta-texts enough to be included, though can never fit all meta-textual requirements as this would imply a perfect horror text, regardless of subjective opinions between readers. Construction is a mass event, focused through fanzines; though perfect texts may exist for individuals, this remains dependent upon subjective preference rather than ideals drawn from the mass amalgamation of texts, iconography and narrative and technical structures.

In terms of wider reactions to and/or against certain cultural areas, revealing parallels exist in fanzine culture that effectively reverse the terms of play that exist outside of it. Bourdieu claims that, in the class struggle, culture becomes 'the supreme fetish' (Bourdieu 1984: 250); the 'cultured' defines itself against everything 'low' (in the eyes of those claiming to be cultured), whilst cultural pretension, typically on the part of the petit-bourgeoisie, renders a class ridiculous for trying too hard to be what it is not. However, in an age of mass-media, that which is traditionally high-culture (for example, opera) quickly becomes popularised and accessible to agents with less cultural capital or a lower social status than those who originally patronised it: opera has recently become linked with football, for example. Those who consider themselves cultured therefore have to effectively run to stand still within the cultural spaces that they see as their own; they must strive constantly to locate new areas of high-culture such as new artists, plays, and art forms to replace those that have become popularised

and 'vulgar' before these new forms also become popularised.

Horror fanzines, reversing the terms of this, exert a form of inverted snobbery regarding what they consider as the popularisation of *their* cultural choices, considering themselves as cultured as Bourdieu's high-culture consumers. When a fanzine that previously employed an extreme, underground meta-text begins to include articles about mainstream horror or cinema in general, a critical backlash from its readership ensues. A writer to In The Flesh's letter page complains that

> the quality of ITF is beginning to go downhill. Your reviews are becoming more mainstream...please keep your reviews more 'underground', ie. 'classic' gore...or new stuff which won't get a UK release (In The Flesh 9: 17).

Such inverted snobbery thrives by emphasising distance from 'unacceptable' groups and/or material. The same writer complains that, after reading a review of Terminator II he 'thought [that he] was reading Fear' (ibid). From a non-fan perspective, the terms of the correspondent's argument would be reversed but, due to the exclusive nature of meta-textual construction in horror fanzines and the way in which this colours fans' expectations of what constitutes entertainment, here the commonly rejected (cinematic extremity) becomes the ideal, and the common 'ideal' (the mainstream) becomes the rejected.

These positions are generated by fans' need to define themselves, in the face of widespread denial of their cultural and intellectual faculties, as possessors of cultural rarity. Rather than stating this in Bourdieu's terms of high culture - for example, high levels of reception to art based upon possession of focused cultural capital - fans delimit their positions through low culture, its rarity stemming from physical rather than intellectual exclusiveness, such as material that is banned or 'won't get a UK release' (ibid). As Bourdieu establishes, the bourgeoisie, as a politically right of centre social group, expect conformity and tradition in

their lives, and, by extension, their culture, to maintain their hierarchical social position (Bourdieu 1984: 288-293).

Any artistic challenge to these values is considered dangerous, subversive, and typically the domain of any combination of, firstly, the immoral, secondly, the left, and thirdly, intellectuals, who are considered frequently to embody both the first and second positions. Taking Clover's general model of horror consumers, horror fans are typically left of centre politically, young and working class. Therefore, they are condemned for their 'inappropriate' popular cultural choices *through* culture, usually by right-wing media factions with a working class consumer base engaged upon moral crusades (in the UK, very often The Daily Mail[9] or, as we have seen, The Sun). It may be argued that at heart these factions are protecting their own social positions through such crusades by seeking to define working class morality and taste against that which may threaten their conservative position - ie, non-hegemonic material.

Intellectual and left of centre art challenges bourgeois values frequently; right of centre art seeks to confirm exclusivity, strengthening class distinctions surrounding it. The challenging and cheap nature of horror therefore makes it appear subversive in these terms, and is available widely to the very social groups that the bourgeoisie hope will accept their social positions. As Bourdieu establishes (ibid: 436), agents' political opinions are frequently tied to their own class interests in order to protect those interests; manual workers are, then, more likely to be pro-trade unionist than executive management, for example. Morality typically goes hand in hand with this, since political opinions appear influenced by moral decisions which reflect the everyday experience of morally responding agents.

As morality colours response, Bourdieu argues that groups most likely to infuse

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[9]A major campaigner against horror films during the original video nasty scare.

morality into responses to political or cultural questions are either the bourgeoisie, to protect their social positioning through continued emphasis on old hegemonic values, or the petit-bourgeoisie who struggle for acknowledgement of their 'superior' status by the bourgeoisie, so argue in terms which place them on the same moral high ground. Despite, or perhaps because of, such considerations, the media claims a general catch-all definition of horror exists, yet never seeks to define it.

Similarly, the media assumes the existence of generalised, 'standard' horror fans defined as an ideologically cohesive, essentially nihilist and anti-social group of low-intelligence consumers. However, fanzines utilise semi-independent critical ideologies and readerships; though reader cross-over between fanzines occurs, this is, I would suggest, limited in the long term to those publications which construct similar meta-texts. What is abhorrent to In The Flesh's readership therefore remains entertaining to Scream Queens Illustrated's. Furthermore, each readership will gain different, and here opposing, structures of meaning from the same text.

As horror texts are not as simple in their internal, ideological structure as the media and moralists would have us believe, neither are fans ideologically, culturally and universally monolithic in their sub-cultural 'bad' taste and 'anti-social' nihilism. Rather, the self-generated culture of horror aficionados is a complex construction, united primarily through struggles to validate its judgement of 'appropriate' taste through a complex, often contradictory, series of interlocking, frequently separate and internally opposing meta-textual cultural projections.

CHAPTER SIX

Issues Of Genre 1:

Pam Cook, Stephen Neale And Thomas Schatz

Generic codes are heteronomous devices, linking specific texts to earlier texts with which they share a direct genealogy. Such generic heteronomy, for Bourdieu, 'arises from *demand*, which may take the form of...the sanction of an autonomous *market*, which may be *anticipated*' (Bourdieu 1993: 45-46, his italics). When demand occurs, generated typically by a financially successful primary text, validity of that text is judged by economic return, revealing directly how well attended by its anticipating audience the film was. In horror, whilst mainstream audiences may reject certain texts, specific aficionado audiences may embrace them; here Bourdieu's anticipating market may be sub-divided into non-mutually exclusive splinter groups of differing sensibilities, demands and tastes. Subsequent entries into developing genres increase anticipation, therefore demand, in the splinter group (here, horror consumers) and a generic code becomes established through patterns of/an economy of similarity, difference, developments of theme, narrative patterns and iconography throughout the developing body of conventions.

However, academic and popular critics of horror regard horror typically as an isolated, clearly defined genre, itself comprised of many sub-genres - each, presumably, having generated a splinter group of anticipating market agents. The generic coding of 'horror' is invoked as Westerns, or Musicals are cited as critical categories; horror's generic boundaries may be indistinct, but it is practically always discussed in these terms. Whether the writer is Chas Balun, editor of Deep Red, Clover, Jancovich, Tudor, Cook[1] or Neale, horror is analysed

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[1]I shall refer to Cook as the author of this work; though Gledhill wrote on genre in The Cinema Book, it is unclear where the work of Cook, as co-writer and editor, and Gledhill begin and end, and to what extent authorial cross-over occurs.

within a generic model, using the critical tools of generic analysis to trace issues and developments between individual texts, often regardless of their individual dependence upon separate generic structures.

Largely, critics fail to engage with the actual criteria of horror as a generic form, asserting only that it is generic before discussing the internal dynamics and structures of key texts in the 'generic' whole. Cook, admitting that 'the business of definition and demarcation is less clear cut' than the 'self-evident fact' of the 'existence of...major genres' (Cook 1985: 59), fails to foreground subsequent horror analysis with any attempt to define and demarcate it. However, she subsequently develops a consideration vital to analysis:

> the problem of [generic] evaluation re-appears in the need for genre criticism to sort out its relation to auteurism and the relative weight it gives to the play of conventions compared to the work of the author in the production of particular genre films (ibid).

This will be explored later; for the moment I will concentrate upon the usual critical dependence on generic criticism, subsequently suggesting a potentially more flexible critical approach which I shall term the modal-generic model.

Cook states that 'work on individual genres sooner or later comes up against the problem of where one genre stops and another begins' (ibid). This, a consideration for any generic analysis, is particularly pertinent to horror. One of horror's primary influencing literary texts highlights this issue; where do analysts place Frankenstein (Shelley [1818] 1985)? Do they shelve it hypothetically under 'horror' or

Horror zombies or the creation of science? - Flesh For Frankenstein.

'science-fiction'? The monster is an amalgamated, re-animated corpse; is he then a zombie? Magic was not involved in his creation; nor were ancient curses - science, rather than the typical horror fare of myth and legend, was used. Should analysts therefore consider Frankenstein as an early example of Body Horror?[2] Gothic elements in literary and cinematic texts forming the Frankenstein mythos seem to dispute this. Furthermore, into which genre should analysts place film versions of Lovecraft's strange oeuvre, which employ elements of Gothic and Science-Fiction? Alien is a horror text, albeit one with Science-Fiction overtones; horror, as a genre, is unable to reconcile these paradoxes, ignoring vital narrative textual elements. If we agree, under the assumption that horror constitutes a self-contained genre, then how can a generic model cope with its sequel, Aliens (James Cameron, 1986), which also fuses elements of War and Action codings to an already confused generic mix?

The dictionary definition of horror is: 'intense repugnance: a power of exciting...feeling...having gruesome, violent, horrifying or bloodcurdling themes' (O.E.D). The associated definition of 'horrifying' is: 'exciting horror: frightful...to shudder' (ibid). Dario Argento paraphrases these considerations, providing an important consideration, in his introduction to Mondo Argento: 'Horror by definition, is the emotion of...revulsion. Terror...is that of fearful anticipation' (Jones 1996: 3). Argento employs this distinction throughout his films in order to generate very real feelings of fear in audiences through the interplay of terror and horror.

Argento structures his films around the sensation, logic and appearance of paranoid 'chaos and nightmare' (ibid). For Argento, terror constitutes the 'set-up' situation within horror; viewers become fearful on behalf of diegetic characters in life-threatening situations.

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[2]Perhaps recognising this, Cronenberg was at one time scheduled to write and direct a version of Frankenstein. Though announced, the project was never completed.

'Horror' therefore constitutes the release of part of this tension through the resolution of the ultimate fate of characters. However, not all tension is dissipated; as the existence of nightmares do not cease when individual dreams are over, so it is the same for horror. The continuing potential existence of horrific events fuels continued production of horror texts which tap into such fears, ensuring that horror is never dissipated comprehensively. This constitutes a central consideration of Twitchell's when he claims that: 'the etiology of horror is *always* in dreams, while the basis of terror is in actuality' (Twitchell 1985: 19). He considers that whilst terror may be effectively laid to rest through plot resolution, horror, what *really* scares us, is deeper. For Bruce Lanier Wright this distinction is grounded in reality. Terror is a

> mammalian instinct, written into our genes', manifested as 'fear of pain, of injury...all our dark alley shudders over violent incident, over the prospect of rape, assault, or murder [which] express the same fear animals know (Wright 1995: 2).

Wright's horror is 'fear unconnected to thoughts of...personal welfare...you fear a madman because he might harm you. You fear a ghost...simply because of its existence' (ibid). Horror, merging these considerations, is the feeling of dread upon waking from the worst of nightmares, stopping agents from even switching on the lights for fear of crossing the room. Terror, pale by comparison, occurs when someone leaps out and shouts 'boo!'.

Thus Twitchell may state that 'interpretation of horror will finally be psychological while...interpretation of terror will be contextual' (Twitchell 1985: 20). Wright expands:

> an element of awe is always present in true horror...in effect, horror tells us that our maps of 'reality' are incomplete, that some impossible thing can in fact happen...[it is] a suspicion that the universe is even stranger and more uncertain than we had imagined it to be (Wright 1995: 3).

Reality, as agents experience it, is clearly defined by doxic hegemony; a social consideration always to be taken into account. Close linkage between deep psychological fear (horror) and anticipation and resolution of its apparent manifest/surface projection (terror) produces the 'shudder' of effective horror texts[3] - essentially what Argento exploits to the full through his infusing of the diegetic crumbling of symbolic violence (hegemony) through actual violence, through representations of horrified dream-states of paranoid 'reality'.

We may compare these definitions to, for example, the Western: 'a film...whose scene is the western United States, esp. the former Wild West' (ibid), or Film Noir, which contains:

> deep shadows, clutching hands, exploding revolvers, sadistic villains and heroines
>
> ...flashed across the screen in a panting display of psychoneuroses, unsublimated sex
>
> and murder most foul (Schatz 1981: 111).

Definitions of Film Noir and Westerns are more clear in their citation of generic convention, iconography and narrative structures. Horror's definition is less objective, for its defining textual currency is emotional and subjective; this basis results frequently in physical audience reaction - revulsion and 'shudders'. How, then, can analysts isolate the physical heart of horror's 'generic', actually hegemonically coded construction? As it is impossible to establish accurately the narrative coding of all dream-state nightmares to explain away their power, so it is also impossible for analysts to do this comprehensively with a form of entertainment which utilises its audiences' emotive reaction as the dominant narrative currency in its construction.

Horror, therefore, cannot constitute a set generic code with central identifiable themes,

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[3]Agents' experiences of horror, dependent upon manipulations of terror within a text, but not necessarily so in the real, non-fictional, world are so established within the psyche and capable of producing physiological effect (a literal example of mind over bodily matter) that medical terms exist for it. 'Horrorpilation' is the zoological term for what is commonly called 'the shudders', or 'gooseflesh' brought about through fear. Furthermore, Twitchell claims that in nineteenth century medical terminology 'horror' 'described the sudden tremors associated with the plummeting body temperature as a fever receded' (Twitchell 1985: 11).

conventions and iconography; the centrality of identifiable convention in Film Noir and Westerns is revealed through their citation at the heart of their respective definitions. Horror, not then a set generic code, is surely an emotive state aspired to by its constituent texts and the generic codings (Werewolf or Vampire films, for example) which compose it. The term 'horror' is actually a convenient label created to group together texts aspiring to evoke emotional and/or physical audience reactions through horrific imagery, *not* an identifiable generic code per se. It is my contention that as analysts cannot isolate horror's codings they cannot utilise accurately theme, convention or iconography to reveal an essential horror 'code', though internal genres aspiring to horror may be identified through such devices (silver bullets, transformations and crucifixes, for example). The modal-generic model, however, accommodates better such considerations.

The crossing of generic codes is common-place in film; Calamity Jane (David Butler, 1953) fuses the generic conventions, themes and iconography of Westerns and Musicals, whilst the films of Kathryn Bigelow challenge boundaries of established generic formulae constantly: Near Dark is a Vampire/Western/Road-movie, and Point Break [1991] combines Action, Heist, Buddy and Beach/surfing codes, for example. Such texts exist within the frame of genre criticism because they exploit audiences' generic expectations cleverly. They are conscious amalgams of recognised codings, accessible to audiences skilled in reading and decoding their forms, though they co-exist within single texts. Equipped with knowledge of the composite generic codes within texts, skilled readers may understand and separate constituent codes, relocating them within overall, cohesive readings of texts within recognisable (de)coded generic wholes. Where generic cross-over occurs, a dominant generic code is established within a text under which subordinate codings operate.

Near Dark, for example, structures its constituent generic codes hierarchically, telling

the story of Caleb, an Arizonan farm boy who becomes involved with a group of itinerant vampires. He falls in love with Mae who introduces him to the cult which consists of Jesse, the leader, Diamondback, his female partner, Severen, and Homer - a fifty year old trapped in a child's body. The group, figured as 'poor white trash', descend on small town America causing mayhem and violence and exposing the dark side of the 'American Dream'. Vampire and Western iconography merge - Severen dresses and acts like a cowboy, killing victims with his spurs, Jesse is a Southern veteran of the civil war, and the small town setting mirrors that of many Westerns, such as Shane (George Stevens, 1952). The landscape framing the vampires is also figured as 'Western' - farms, dusty roads, bars, deserted small town high streets, open plains and desert surround characters who, against type, mirror this iconography through their costuming (spurs, Stetsons, jeans, guns, denim jackets, Jesse's ponytail and 'Long Rider' split overcoat are not traditional Vampire iconographic clothing, for example). They are literally a group of lone riders; outlaws on the run who, in over two hundred years, have not found a safe haven from sunlight.

The film also utilises generic themes of the Biker-movie through the actions of the gang; drawing upon Bigelow's earlier The Loveless (1981) and Biker texts in general, the drifters destroy values operating within the areas that they travel through, forming an alternative community complete with 'deviant' moral structures and internal organisation. As in The Loveless, the gang attacks clients in a small town bar, here antagonising then slaughtering them. A bar-room brawl, a generic scene borrowed from Western and Biker films, is employed in the context of a Vampire text.

Here, traditional Vampire iconography has been reduced to a minimum; there are no bats, castles, stakes, transformations, lack of reflection in mirrors, garlic or even fangs - knives and spurs take this role. Vampirism has become reversible; a transfusion will remove the bad

blood of vampirism permanently; in the novel Dracula (Stoker [1897] 1992) and its subsequent film versions, Lucy's transfusions simply replace lost blood rather than remove the 'infection' of vampirism, and consequently, unlike Caleb and Mae, she dies. Such distillation of myth has been achieved through a fusion of other generic codings. Furthermore, Caleb, though now 'undead', still retains his human conscience finding that he cannot disavow social morality, refusing to kill for blood, and so denying his Vampire status.

The final stand-off between Caleb and the gang is figured as almost pure 'Western'; dependent upon a projected Western meta-textual duel, it is reminiscent of fights in High Noon (Fred Zinneman, 1952), the Leone/Eastwood 'Dollars' trilogy and many other Western showdowns. Severen and Caleb approach each other from opposite ends of a long town street in typical High Noon fashion; however, the battle is between human and vampire/modern and ancient. Caleb's 'weapon' is a truck; established, and therefore 'good', technology[4], further combining the iconography of Biker, Road-movies and Westerns with that of Vampire texts, and denying the typical generic convention of using non-technological, ancient 'weapons' against vampires (stakes, crucifixes, holy water and so on).

As in Biker texts, the gang find themselves under siege by the police and must escape - no vampire hunters and experts exist here, and traditional threats to vampires typically personified in Van Helsing-like characters, with the exception of the sun, are not evident. Instead hegemonic human agencies such as the legal system pose a threat to the non-hegemonic evil, marking the film, along with the re-establishment of the nuclear family as a cultural ideal at the end, as an ultimately conservative, closed narrative text. Caleb is

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[4]Though the vampire gang also use established technology in the form of their van, it is not used as an offensive weapon and has been altered by them (windows blacked out, etc), distancing it from 'normal' established technology. Where vampires use established weaponry, its form or purpose is typically altered: for example, the use of Severen's spurs.

presented with one of Severen's spurs after helping the gang to escape, marking his symbolic acceptance into the group. This evokes strongly both Western and Biker celebrations of elite male groups, with inclusion being figured through the Western iconography of the spur. Cook comments that:

> when Caleb rides out, in the film's climactic sequence...he is, like Ethan Edwards in The Searchers[5], fighting...to preserve a lost dream of agrarian innocence [and]...overcome the barbaric, primitive impulses within himself (Monthly Film Bulletin 55, 648: 4).

Furthermore, the film constructs its narrative around a 'rigorous insistence on the duality of good and evil, a dialectic reflected in striking chiaroscuro images and hard-edged, high contrast lighting' (ibid). This rigorous insistence once again mirrors Western iconography, which frequently makes clear-cut distinctions between 'good' and 'evil' through costuming - traditionally 'good' characters wear white whilst 'evil' characters wear black.

Elements of Action in the police siege and Melodrama through internal tensions within the 'family' group codings are also evident. Directorial skill ensures that the dominant code remains that of Vampire films, marking Near Dark primarily a Vampire text. Constituent generic codes are hierarchically structured, operating beneath this overall code; the Western constitutes secondary coding, Biker the tertiary coding, and Road-movie codings inform all three, connecting them to the dominant coding. Bigelow cross-references and de-constructs each generic form to ensure that the boundaries of genre become indistinct; iconography, theme and narrative structure from each become relocated and redefined to construct a composite textual whole. The narrative construction of Near Dark therefore operates in the

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[5]John Ford, 1955.

same basic way as modal structuring of generic codes does in horror generally; its dominant generic code (Vampire) forms an canopy over secondary and tertiary codes in a similar way to how the emotive modal basis of horror covers *its* constituent generic codes[6].

Though not restricted to horror, generic cross-over is much easier to achieve through horror's emotive base; texts may attempt to scare in many ways, and freed from restraints often fuse constituent generic codes into convincingly coherent textual composites[7]. It is for these reasons that perhaps the most blatant and unexpected merging of genres in recent memory occurs in what turns out to be a horror film: From Dusk Till Dawn (Robert Rodriguez, 1995). Rodriguez's film begins as a Tarantino-style Gangster movie in which Tarantino, who wrote the script, plays one of the anti-heroes, Richie. With no warning, half-way through the film a Mexican bar in which the characters are to make a rendezvous turns out to be populated by vampires. The rest of the film depicts the main characters' increasingly over-the-top battle to stay alive. No justification or explanation is given for this sudden generic shift, yet the switch is vital to the issues that the film explores.

From Dusk Till Dawn's freedom from generic exclusivity allows its exploration of the figuring of violence and iconography in both of the genres that it encompasses. The first half follows the construction of Tarantino[8] films, conveying an air of horrible violence but showing very little of it, exploiting instead the audiences' imagination to fill in the gaps of what they do not see. The violence here is realistic and genuinely disturbing. However, following the

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[6]See Raymond Williams' work on structures of feeling (Williams 1980), especially his theory of actual and possible consciousness. Williams' possible consciousness forms a canopy within which actual consciousness resides, as mode exists over constituent genres in my modal-generic horror model. Similarly, Williams contends that analysts should consider literature not in terms of overt relations between writers and readerships, but in terms of deeper organising categories of structure.

[7]As freedom from coded generic structures is harder to apply outside of horror, this in part explains the lack of, for example, musical action films.

[8]Tarantino becomes his own generic icon here, playing a gangster of the type appearing in other Tarantino films, and who is psychopathically violent and sexually fixated.

introduction of the vampires, the subsequent and seemingly endless violence is shown in close detail in the camp, 'gross-out' horror style of Braindead. The film explores cleverly the usage of violence within the cinema across two different though combined genres since no attempt to generate a dominant code, uniting the two genres, is evident, and as a result watching From Dusk Till Dawn is very much like watching two separate films. This allows audiences to question their responses to different forms of violence and consider how it operates in different genres through their direct response to it - typically revulsion during the first half and laughter during the second.

Iconography is central to this: the first half draws heavily on Reservoir Dogs, Pulp Fiction and Natural Born Killers in its iconographic, narrative and thematic construction, whilst following the generic shift, the usual conventions operating in Vampire texts also change, and traditional Vampire iconography is amended and challenged. A destructive crucifix is constructed from a shotgun and a baseball bat, holy-water bombs made of condoms are thrown like grenades and backed up with pump-action holy water pistols, pencils are used instead of stakes, vampires are killed by crossbow shots to the head as if they were zombies (and are so malleable that they can be pulled easily apart) and a phallic, pneumatic staking-machine is wielded by the anti hero in a similar way to how Leatherface wields his chainsaw.

Amended iconography: From Dusk Till Dawn.

The male vampires are not sexually attractive, going against generic type, but are overweight, greasy-haired 'low-life' characters before they change into creatures resembling skeletal rats. If internal generic dynamics were rigid and monolithic extreme deviations of this

From Dusk Till Dawn's phallic staking machine

nature would not be possible within what becomes ultimately a Vampire film. If this were the case generally, then the 'rules' of generic coding would reduce generic patterns to constant re-formulations of repeated constituent parts as Cook demonstrates, reproducing new versions of the same texts eternally.

Attempts to identify set characteristics of horror's supposed generic code (a criteria of early genre criticism) is reductive of texts and renders the subject area too diffuse. Genre thrives through the utilisation of differences between constituent parts, rather than through the adoption of set 'laws'. Subsequently there can exist no definitive textual example of a generic structure, though establishing texts are identifiable[9].

Halloween, for example, established many of the generic conventions of Slashers, including the use of primitive defensive and offensive weaponry, the introduction of the 'Shape' (the masculine hulking killer), sexual trauma which precipitates madness - a trait drawn from Psycho - the Final Girl and stylised camera-shots[10]. Though preceded by similar films such as The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Dementia

The Shape: Halloween.

[9]Meta-texts, as we have seen, are projected ideals, not definitive 'perfect' texts.

[10]It is surely the case, arguing against Cook, that camera style and movement may be considered iconic in themselves, as the Slasher killer's point of view shot has become an expected (or, as Bourdieu would term it, anticipated) staple of the genre, and is parodied regularly.

13 (Francis Ford Coppola, 1963), which utilised elements of what is now recognisable as Slasher coding, Halloween may be considered a 'classic' Slasher text. It became history's most financially successful independent film and was widely plagiarised by less talented film-makers, heralding the Slasher boom of the early 1980s, and which largely replacing intelligent direction with increasingly graphic gore.

Difference between generic texts must exist within established generic frames in order to perpetuate the economic viability of a coding. However, critics seeking to define individual generic codes operate from problematic analytic perspectives; in order to define, for example, the Western coding, individual examples of that code must be isolated so that iconic similarity and difference may be located. This pre-supposes knowledge of a 'typical' generic Western coding, as an initial textual selection occurs necessarily *before* examination can begin; this is clearly a paradoxical position, since the search to define a generic code here becomes dependent upon prior knowledge of that code during the isolation of suitable texts.

In order to consider individual texts in their proper generic terms constructively, it may benefit future analysis if two broad approaches to texts - those of Neale and Cook - are employed simultaneously. From Neale, analysts may recognise that difference between generic texts is the key to understanding the development and reception of a generic code. From Cook analysts may recognise the problems inherent in any attempt to define essential generic coding using only iconography. Generic iconography *is* important to textual analysis, but as a central determinant of a generic code, it is problematic.

Through combined readings of Cook and Thomas Schatz (1981) we learn of the internal studio system and the economic frames that render production of generic texts viable. Schatz's work is as central to the debate as that of Neale, though from a different perspective. In line with Neale, Schatz claims that 'the audience demands creativity or variation (within

generic texts) but only within the context of a familiar narrative experience' (Schatz 1981: 6), whilst expressing the characteristic heart of generic codes in the clearest terms: 'a genre film involves familiar, essentially one-dimensional characters acting out a predictable story pattern within a familiar setting' (ibid). Like Cook, Schatz focuses on the social frame that produces individual generic codes:

> any viewer's familiarity with a genre is the result of a *cumulative process*...with repeated viewings...the genre's narrative pattern comes into focus and the viewer's *expectations* [broadly reducible to Bourdieu's 'anticipations'] take shape. And when we consider that the generic pattern involves not only narrative elements...but thematic issues as well, the genre's *socialising* influence becomes apparent (ibid: 11).

Properly, genre and the social are intricately connected.

Fusion of all of these considerations allows the development of what I have termed the modal-generic approach to horror analysis. Horror is undoubtedly discussed to best advantage in terms of generic coding, yet does not appear to constitute a set code in and of itself despite academic assertions to the contrary. I suggest that horror is not actually a set generic code, but a mode *within which* genres exist.

Schatz's statement (crucially applicable outside of considerations of horror) confirms that audience expectation/anticipation of generic narrative form emerges as familiarity with that genre increases. Due to its emotive base, horror is so diffuse a form that if it *were* a set genre then it could only provide the expectation/anticipation that each of its texts will attempt to scare audiences; Braindead, though, deliberately does not scare but rather seeks to 'gross out' viewers[11]. A camp use of over-the-top gore renders Braindead a Splatter movie[12] - a

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[11] Jackson himself claims that 'the film is designed to make people laugh...the film is a comedy' (Flesh And Blood 3: 9). This is achieved through the depiction of bloodshed taken to such an extreme level that it becomes absurd.

constituent horror genre in its own right. The ways in which texts attempt to scare viewers are too different within horror to allow wider expectation; Poltergeist (Tobe Hooper, 1982) does not scare in the same way as Halloween for example - one utilises malevolent supernature, the other fear of insanity and physical violence: essentially Wright's dark alley shudders. If horror is a genre, and not a mode, how can this be?

Expectations are frequently shattered when viewing horror - there is no apparent threat in Naked Lunch (David Cronenberg, 1991), and Inferno's narrative includes seemingly irrelevant characters and scenes: a practical example of what Argento terms his chaos and nightmare structuring. This contributes to the overall nightmarish feeling of the piece rather than to its narrative. In both cases, the emotive basis of horror is used to evoke feelings of unease in audiences rather than coherent narratives. The same may be argued about David Lynch's extraordinary Eraserhead (1976); as part of the story, the surrealist narrative makes no immediate sense - audience expectations of horror are totally confounded, yet the film remains highly disturbing and very frightening. Lynch has reproduced the emotional feeling of nightmares, distilling horror to its definitional essence, with the lack of a coherent plot mirroring a nightmare's chaotic 'narrative' state.

Naked Lunch: no apparent threat.

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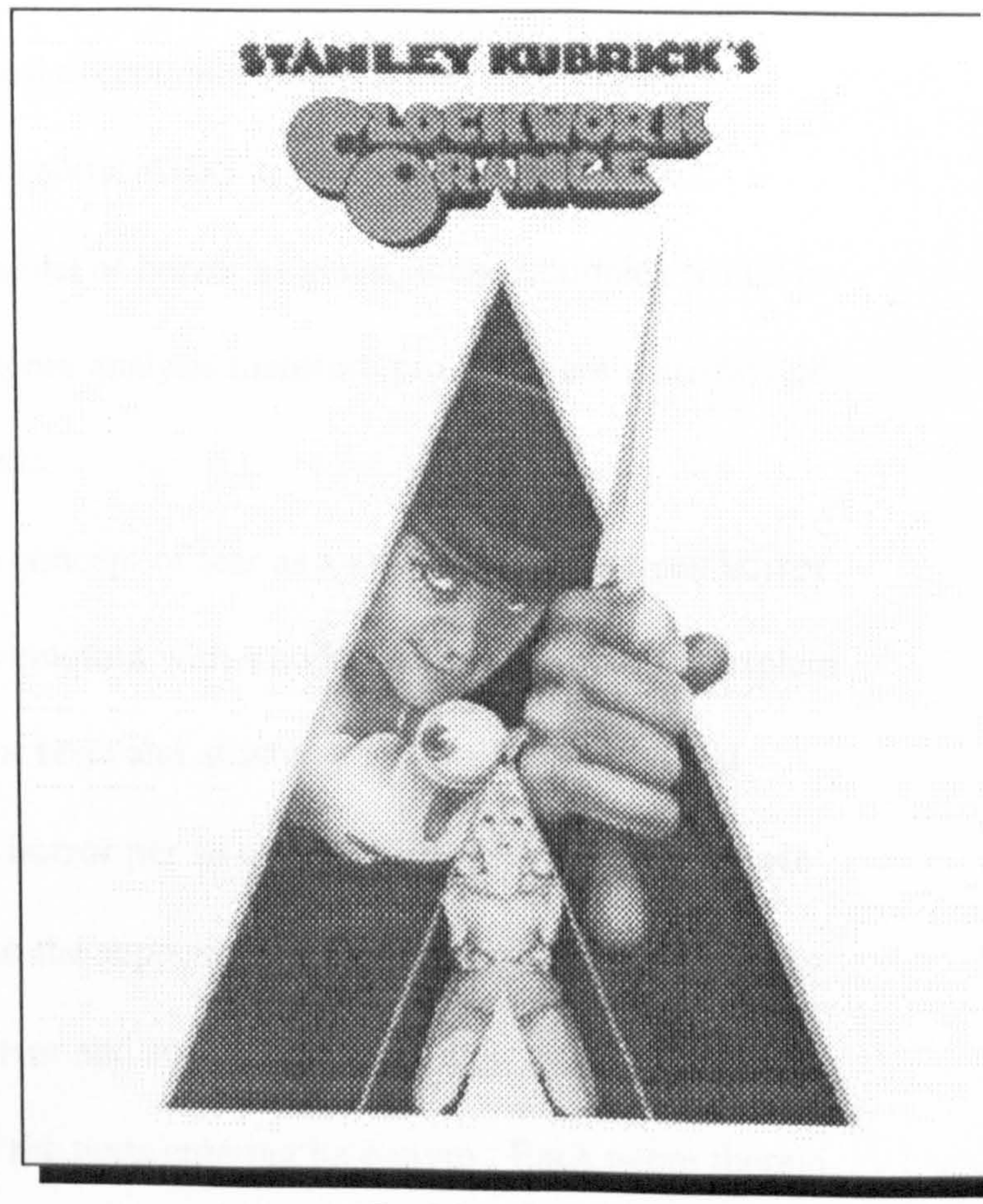
[12]Splatter movies place special make-up effects and gore at the centre of their narratives. The difference between pure Splatter and, for example, extremely gruesome Slasher texts is that it is the gore itself that provides narrative focus in the former. The plots of pure Splatter texts such as Body Melt (Philip Brophy, 1993) are essentially linkages between gruesome set pieces. Jackson, fusing comedy with 'gross' visuals calls Braindead 'splatstick' (Flesh And Blood 3: 9). Splatter frequently fuses its simplistic narrative structure with other genres in which, whilst gore is essential to the narrative, a strong narrative is equally as important (for instance, Re-Animator).

Sexual anxiety empowers Eraserhead, producing horror of extreme intensity operating through a total rejection of established horror conventions and audience expectations. This is also true of Lynch's nightmarish Lost Highway (1996) in which a coherent, linear narrative is rejected in order to concentrate on generating fear within an abstract narrative centred around the destruction of fixed personal identity[13], self-knowledge and the distinction between dream and waking states.

If Neale is correct, then tracing difference between generic entries exposes the framing code itself, yet if this is applied to horror as a genre, no coherent code emerges. Comparison of Slashers, Possession or Body Horror texts with a film centring its narrative around, for example, a haunted house, would, under a generic model, be analysed on the same terms to locate differences in texts considered as comprising of the same coding structure. Though thematic and iconic links between films of these types exist, differences are infinitely more apparent than similarities. Apparent textual linkages tend to operate on emotive rather than physical levels, strengthening a case for horror as mode, since whilst emotive states are not



Is this a horror film?

[13]Halfway through the film the main character changes into another character played by a different actor, only to change back again at the film's conclusion, whilst his wife, previously seen to be murdered, appears to resurface as a different character despite being played by the same actress.

sufficient to define generic codings, they are sufficient to constitute the basis of a mode. The defence that such films constitute differing *sub*-genres within the horror 'genre' implies (through the use of 'sub') that though generic patterns may differ, they are linked intimately to and informed by the upper hierarchy within which they exist, sharing aspects of narrative construction, theme and iconography with the main horror code.

As no universal coded conventions may be isolated in horror other than an intention to scare - not itself sufficient to constitute a generic code - 'sub'-genres cannot effectively connect *to* that code. Platoon (Oliver Stone, 1986) may scare and horrify viewers depending upon their sensibilities, but it is not a horror text. To be horrified depends upon agents' personal fears and thresholds of aesthetic and ideological acceptability; agents may be horrified watching medical programmes, documentaries about AIDS or upon hearing speeches questioning the existence of God. Under a model of horror as genre, these examples would be considered sub-genres of horror; genre/sub-genre analysis therefore promotes comparison and linkage of unacceptably diverse, unrelated texts.

Genre critics have always utilised the concept of fear as a unifying link between horror texts; I would like to claim that they confuse emotion with a coded structure, failing to explain their division between what constitutes horror texts and at what point (and through what linkages from texts to the main horror code) horror per se ends and sub-genre begins. Mode centralises emotion through non-adherence to the supposed code-structure of horror, leaving individual generic codes (Slashers, Body Horror and so on) to exist in their own right. Horror actually constitutes a *concept* which informs the texts entering its oeuvre. Each genre therein forges individual identity, rules, iconography and themes, so that Vampire codings and iconography typically feature crucifixes, garlic, stakes, fangs, bats, and castles, whilst Werewolf codings include the moon, forests, transformations and silver bullets.

Themes are more easily traced within individual generic codes under modal analysis as constituent generic themes and iconography are considered in their own right rather than as sub-codes that engage with sub-themes of the indefinable horror 'genre'. So, Vampire texts displace genital reproduction, restructuring and relocating it as oral reproduction, and in the process typically question social constructions of sexuality and gender identity through attractive bisexual monsters, whilst Slashers, though they are not necessarily all conservative, restructure male identity through sexual displacement of the feminine as a product of being Slashers rather than simply horror texts. This avoids the undesirable cross-generic linkage, frequently occurring in analysis, of, for example, texts such as The Silence Of The Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1990) and Plan 9 From Outer Space (Ed Wood, 1956).

> Neale makes important points regarding the generic patterning of horror. He considers cinema...[to be] a constantly fluctuating series of signifying processes, a 'machine' for the production of meanings and positions, or rather, positionings for readings; a machine for the regulation of the orders of subjectivity (Neale 1980: 19).

Neale conceptualises each genre as a cog within cinema's 'machine', and each cog capable of a crucial though different function. Their functions are primarily discursive, concerned with a separate, though not exclusive, series of social issues and ideological positions. Several genres, including horror (which for Neale is generic/sub-generic) and Gangster films, centre around the effects of social disequilibrium and the subsequent efforts and struggles of characters and institutions to regain 'normality'/equilibrium[14]. Normality is here understood to be the social, ideological and personal states existing prior to disturbance.

In Gangster and horror films, disequilibrium is founded in violence. Whilst both figure

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[14]This is not intended, nor would suffice, as an attempt by Neale to define horror's 'generic' code. The same struggle to regain equilibrium is evident within War films, Melodrama, Action films and even Musicals.

disequilibrium literally, Gangster texts utilise a violent base to discuss 'crime, legality, justice, social order, civilisation, private property [and] civil responsibility' (ibid: 21), framed by the 'presence/absence, effectiveness/ineffectiveness of legal institutions and their agents' (ibid). Neale's genre/sub-genre approach implies incorrectly that diverse texts share iconography, theme and elements of content across forms. Even the 'opening up' of everyday reality to accommodate violence as a shared horror trait is insufficient to connect the 'genre' of horror to constituent sub-genres, as each genre does this in a different way (Body Horror through science, Slashers through the venting of psycho-sexual fury and so on).

However, when the concept of 'opening up' reality is fused with the emotive, horror's modal incorporation of generic codings becomes complete. A uniting feature common to all horror texts, regardless of genre, is the potential for audience fear to parallel roughly the diegetic fear of textual characters. This comes from a questioning of social and physical reality through the opening up of its boundaries by means of supernature and/or violence[15].

This criterion, too abstract to constitute a generic code, does constitute a mode. Opening up through violence is evident within issues of justice in I Spit On Your Grave; Jennifer's rejection of patriarchal, legal 'justice' opens up narrative possibilities of alternative and arguably perhaps more appropriate structures of reparation, depending upon the ideological, political and sexual sympathies of the audience. This is clarified through a consideration of links between texts which, for Neale, exist within the same generic coding by virtue of their status as horror - for example, Cannibal Holocaust and Poltergeist. The former deals with extreme violence and anthropological reality whilst the latter is a special effects

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[15]Cook maintains that 'terror relies on convincing the audience of the fallibility of the logic we assume governs the world' (Cook 1985: 102), ie, opening up perceptions of social and physical reality. Social reality here implies dominant, hegemonic (typically capitalist, patriarchal) ideology.

driven haunted house tale. Poltergeist, which is not confrontational, is deemed acceptable viewing for television audiences whilst Cannibal Holocaust remains banned world-wide. Poltergeist deals with supernature, Cannibal Holocaust with ultra-violent nature. The only link between the two derives from emotional response; both, to varying degrees utilise fear to generate tension for characters and audiences (developed through an opening up of 'normal' existence and social equilibrium) and empower their narratives.

Issues Of Genre 2:

The Internal Trope

For Neale, horror is best understood in terms of 'images and definitions of the monstrous' (Cook 1985: 21). This remains a central consideration for horror analysts. Neale, however, avoids detailed textual analysis since his study is a general discussion of generic coding, intentionally limited to general issues. He cites the articulation of discourses between human and 'natural' (ibid) as being projected onto the textual definition of monsters and monstrosity, discussing horror's ability to manipulate generic conventions to connect with ideological conventions external to textual structures. When the monstrous remains threatening at the conclusion of a text, narrative openness and the assimilation of the threat into the social (by its continued existence within it) is the result.

The monstrous is thus absorbed into the social world which originally deemed it monstrous, and as a result becomes 'normalised' (ibid) - a functioning part of the world it threatened initially, and perhaps continues to threaten. Neale asserts that the threat itself always challenges social definitions of 'human' and 'natural' through the bodies of monsters. Release of the monstrous into society marks it as an integral part of the society initially seeking to destroy it, since once able to understand the former threat, the social defines itself *against* that threat safe in the knowledge that human understanding is powerful enough to contain it. Such a discourse becomes the horror equivalent of the 'Law/disorder dichotomy' (ibid) evident within Western, Gangster and Film Noir codings.

Such assimilation is vital to considerations of many, though not all as Neale is compelled to assert under his generic model, horror texts. Though this is never expanded on by Neale, or even discussed in relation to specific films, it remains crucial to the analysis of

horror cycles such as the Friday The 13th, Halloween, or A Nightmare On Elm Street films. However, I do not wish to claim that social orders find such assimilation acceptable; Neale leaves the reader to develop his claims, and it seems appropriate to do so in terms of social necessity rather than acceptability. Clearly, within the terms of such cycles society does not regard the continuing rampage of Jason, Michael or Freddy as an asset. It does, however, through assimilation of the monstrous into its social 'reality', deem it as necessary, even vital, to the continuation of that society. The monstrous shifts into the realm of legend within the diegesis of the texts themselves; frequently a telling of the legend constitutes a rite of passage for the very characters who will ultimately battle assimilated monsters.

Each of the Friday The 13th films transforms monstrosity into social discourse, typically around a communal campfire: a safe area from which characters familiar with the gruesome details relate them to an awe-struck crowd of peers[1]. Similar scenes exist throughout the mode; Freddy is a legend in his own diegetic universe through transformation of his murderous exploits into childhood folk lore ('one, two, Freddy's coming for you, three, four, better lock your door...'). Similarly, The Fog (John Carpenter, 1979) opens with a rite of passage ritual as a story teller informs his terrified audience of children about the ghostly fog and its undead inhabitants ('almost midnight...').

The Evil Dead also employs this device, though in a slightly different form: the legend is recounted, in front of a log fire, via a tape-recorder by an academic who has recorded his story as demons launch their final attack on him. A conventional group of wide-mouthed teenagers listen, treating the warning as a joke. Evil Dead II: Dead By Dawn (Sam Raimi, 1986) takes this further; a hole in the time-space continuum strands Ash, the hero, in thirteenth

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[1]It may be argued that the generic convention of the communal fire represents the warmth and companionship of existence within the temporarily un-threatened hegemonic social. The cold darkness surrounding the fire is where the monsters live.

century England. His subsequent exploits, detailed in Army Of Darkness, are inscribed in the 'Necronomicon Ex Mortis', the volume about which he was warned by the academic back in the twentieth century during the first two films of the series. Here, the diegetic telling of the legend by the academic precedes involvement with that legend (the Necronomicon), through the act of writing.

In The Burning (Tony Maylam, 1981) the entire film constitutes the warning/legend relayed to teenage campers around a communal fire at the end, indicating that events previously witnessed by viewers will occur again:

> His spirit lives in the forest; this forest. A maniac - a fiend no longer human. They say he lives on whatever he can catch; eats them raw - alive maybe, and every year he picks on a summer camp and seeks his revenge for the terrible things those kids did to him. Every year he kills; right now he's out there, watching - waiting. So don't look: he'll see you. Don't breathe: he'll hear you. Don't move: you're dead!

Where, as in The Evil Dead or the Slasher film within the film in Demons (Lamberto Bava, 1985), ghastly texts rather than open discourse are used to warn potential victims, this constitutes essentially inter-textual, textual discourse. Rather than the simple assimilation of the threat evident within communal spoken discourse, the device of the warning text (Raimi's tape recording, for example) constitutes a more sophisticated device of diegetic threat-assimilation. In The Beyond, a hero discovers the truth behind a series of murders from an ancient text stored in the city hall vaults. The text warns that the murder site was constructed upon one of seven entrances to Hell. Here the threat has clearly been diegetically assimilated socially through the act of writing down the legend/warning and placing it in public archives.

Attempts to 'normalise' horror through language do not necessarily remove the power of the threat though; as the warning in The Evil Dead leads to subsequent attacks, and the tale

in The Fog is replayed after the telling, so the researcher in The Beyond is destroyed by the forces of evil after discovering the truth. The diegetic need to normalise threat through language constitutes an attempt to comprehend it by forcing it into a discursive frame which allows those who tell and listen to the legend to face the threat in terms that they understand. In The Beyond, engaging with monstrous discourse, whether spoken or inter-textual constitutes a rite of passage, involving those engaged in the discourse in a direct confrontation with the threat despite its attempted 'normalisation'. Eventually those facing the threat because of engaging with warning discourses become textual themselves, blinded and trapped in a painting of 'The Sea Of Darkness' - the Hellish landscape of which the inter-textual discourse warned.

In The Mouth Of Madness (John Carpenter, 1994) the portal of evil is an author, Sutter Cane, whose novels describe the real, Lovecraftian horror that will soon dominate the world. As Gothic horror stories Cane's novels are universally popular[2]; only a few people realise that they are accurate descriptions of a new world order that will ensue once the 'Old Ones' claim the Earth. The threat is normalised through language and legend to the extent that the discourses themselves become best sellers. Cane finally reveals *himself* to be inter-textual; he tears himself open, revealing that he is a printed page within one of his own books. The act of opening up the text/self tears a hole in the fabric of reality, which itself is figured as a text when a cavity opens up within the diegetic landscape, the outer flaps of which hang down as though a hole has been torn in a page, revealing the story so far written on the tattered other side of reality. Stepping through this hole in reality, and therefore through the inter-textual text, Trent, the hero, stands in total blackness; after a few moments the Old Ones emerge from

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[2]Like most horror discourses, Cane's novels are blamed for the destruction of society through the 'perverting' of their readers' minds; here though, this is actually the truth.

behind the text/reality and enter reality/the diegetic 'real' world.

Within In The Mouth Of Madness' surreal diegetic, the threat is normalised through Cane's novels on two levels: firstly, simply as novels about the threat which have become accepted and embraced by society, and secondly as instruments of the implementation of elements of the threat through the new world order that they detail and which they are the portals of entry for. A *further* level of trope convention operates here: Trent tells the tale of Cane's inter-textual discourses to a third party as a warning about the threat, because of *by* the threat. Cane is himself a text from behind which the threat emerges; the act of engaging in a discourse of warning again acts as a rite of passage into the terror that the discourse initially warns against. As the discourse(s) here are globally best-selling novels, in common with other attempts to normalise the threat through language, all those who engage with the discourse undergo a rite of passage and face the threat. World-wide interaction with the discourse/novels therefore heralds a world-wide invasion by the Old Ones.

Tearing through the text: <u>In The Mouth Of Madness</u>.

In a sense, even here the threat is eventually normalised through language - what was once horrifying finally constitutes a new world-order, and ultimately a new hegemonic and doxic reality/normality, albeit one straight from the pages of Cane's novels. Therefore, the old 'normal' world order is, after the invasion, what will be considered as 'abnormal' and threatening, since it was the previous order under which the now triumphant Old Ones were

originally banished.

> Here we must challenge an assertion made by Metz: he claims that
>
> all that [the viewer] requires - but he [sic] requires it absolutely - is that the actor should behave as though he is not being seen, and so cannot see him [sic], the voyeur. He must...live his life as the film story ordains...taking the greatest possible care not to notice that a rectangle of glass has been let into one of the walls, that he lives in a sort of aquarium (Metz 1981: 229).

Metz implies that the contract between audience and text breaks down if this requirement is not made, alienating audiences through a shattering of the cinematic illusion of reality that they observe voyeuristically.

However, breaking the cinematic frame (when diegetic characters look directly at the camera, either acknowledging its presence or recognising through implication the boundaries of their textual universe) occurs frequently in the cinema, and is accepted by audiences under certain conditions; this acceptance has important implications for the internal trope conventions of horror films. Breaking of the frame occurs most often in non-realist texts or comedies. Wayne's World (Penelope Spheeris, 1992) constructs its entire narrative and most of its comedy around the lead character's recognition of the presence of the audience as if a documentary were being made of his life. Similarly, the films of Jerry Lewis employ this device frequently; for example at the end of his 1964 film The Patsy, Lewis assures viewers that they are only watching a film. The camera pulls back to reveal the crew filming him as the credits roll[3].

The convention, albeit not in forms as extreme as this, also occurs in Musicals (for

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[3]This ending was effectively mirrored in the conclusion of Blazing Saddles (Mel Brooks, 1973) where similar events occur.

example during Frank's entrance in The Rocky Horror Picture Show), and in science fiction/horror (for example, Tetsuo II: Body Hammer [Shinya Tsukamoto, 1991]). In The Mouth Of Madness would not be able to implicate its viewers in the horror that it details were it not to break, it may be argued, shatter entirely, the frame. The implication that what the audience is watching is only a film is vital to the paranoid horror of the text, since it establishes that what the real audience has just viewed is a part of the invasion plan, the very act of watching which will inaugurate them into the new world order.

However, the operation of breaking the frame is not limited to non-realist texts, and is frequently used to examine perceptions of reality and fiction in an audience: much of the power of Cannibal Holocaust revolves around breaking the frame, since audiences are constantly confused as to whether or not they are watching reality and a real documentary about cannibalism that went horribly wrong[4], or fiction since the framing story is clearly a fictional construct. Similarly, it was the act of breaking the frame in the notorious Snuff (aka The Slaughter, Michael and Roberta Findlay, 1971/1974) that, for those banning the text, constituted realism, not the destruction of the illusion of textual reality that Metz claims. At the end of Snuff, the camera pulls back to reveal the crew making the film. Aroused by the violence of the preceding material, a crew member moves into shot and apparently murders an actress while filming continues.

This laughably faked segment, added to the end of the film three years after it was originally released as The Slaughter, was marketed as real murder, ensuring huge box office returns for the film in America and resulting in its ban in Britain. What in Metz's argument should destroy the credibility and realism of the text here enhances it and the material which

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[4]For the film includes actual newsreel footage of executions and murder, and what is simulated is constructed to appear as realistic as possible. Deodata even deliberately scratches the film and manufactures sound drop-outs to enhance the illusion that the camera crew is under attack and filming has broken down.

came before the break which dealt with violence breeding violence in a Manson-esque cult. The break does not destroy the validity of what came before it, but in many ways is a logical extension of it, for the 'thrill' of watching the violence being filmed leads the 'director' to engage in 'real' and extreme Manson-like violence himself.

It may be argued that horror texts, whether realist or non-realist in basis, are implicitly aware of their textuality, using that textuality as a means to challenge the doxic and hegemonic. When horrific texts are used within horror films, this signals an awareness of the textuality of the framing film for audiences; for example, Demons is set in a cinema showing a horror film, and the diegetic audience watching it become heroes and victims of the text that they, and the real-world horror audience, are viewing. Similarly, in From Dusk Till Dawn the heroes pool the information about vampires that they have gained over years of watching horror films. They defeat the threat by recourse to how Peter Cushing eliminates vampires in his films. Significantly, Sex Machine, a hero and later a vampire, is played by Tom Savini, a further internal reference which signals to audiences the ultimate textuality of the film that they are watching. These techniques signpost the fact that beneath the apparent surfaces of horror films lie the enunciations and social discourses of which Metz speaks, and, this implicitly claims, if viewers can tear through the text as Trent in In The Mouth Of Madness is able to do, these discourses will become clear.

In The Mouth Of Madness, therefore, breaks the cinematic frame cleverly in order to implicate viewers in this internal trope, forcing them to challenge their concepts of what constitutes a text, and what texts seek to conceal or reveal. The film that audiences are watching is figured as a literal translation of Cane's last book before he disappeared, tearing himself and reality open. This is designed to implicate those who have not read the book (the cinema audience) in the telling of the legend, ultimately forcing them to face the 'real' threat of

the Old Ones, who emerge as reality for all those who have faced the warning discourse. In tearing open the self/reality, Cane also tears apart distinctions between the diegetic and the non-diegetic world. Characters within the film become aware that they are constructs within a text, but that somehow that text, themselves and the events surrounding them are becoming real.

The film ends with Trent, now insane, wandering through deserted streets strewn with pages of the warning texts/novels. He enters an empty cinema and sits down to watch John Carpenter's In The Mouth Of Madness, sees himself upon the screen, recognises that he is part of the trope convention/warning text and watches the film that the real audience are currently watching, which finishes, like a textual Moëbius-strip, with Trent entering the cinema within the film *within* the film to watch himself over and over again[5]. The boundary between textual warning/discourse and reality breaks down as the narrative collapses in on itself repeatedly, implying that when the real audience who have just engaged with a warning text leave the cinema, they will step into an apocalyptic landscape where reality and fiction merge and the Old Ones rule.

Within horror texts legends therefore become tales that diegetic characters tell ultimately about themselves, whilst new concepts of 'normality' are forged which incorporate the monstrous. In texts, and through such tropes, reality is opened up to new possibilities through the fears of listening, reading or viewing characters. On a textual level here we see the modal-generic structure of horror operating through its emotive axis by means of the fears of diegetic characters. As cycles develop, monsters become ingrained in their audiences' consciousness; Freddy, Jason and Michael have become universally recognised figures through

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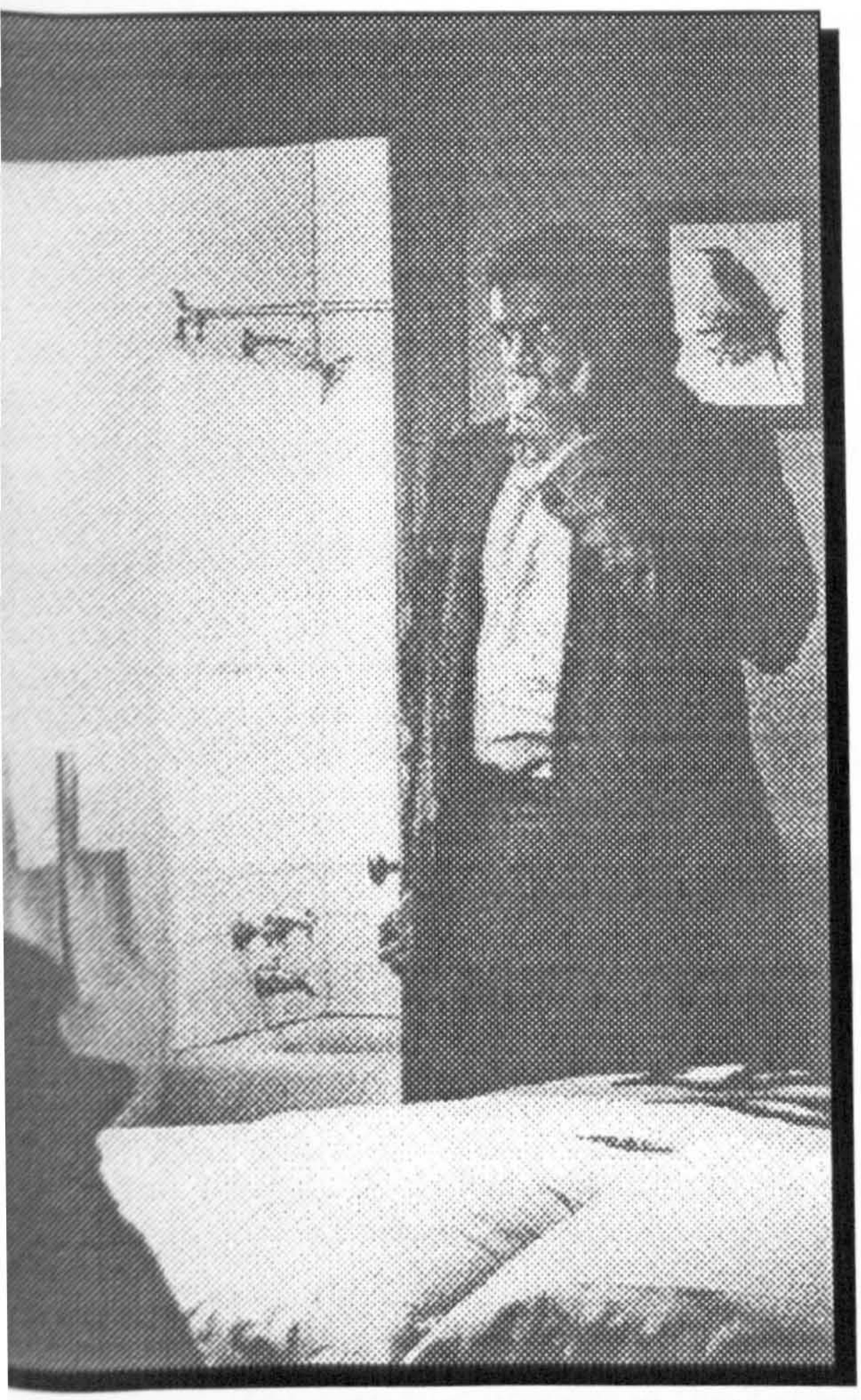
[5]Despite this interaction with the warning text, Trent is not eliminated for two reasons: firstly, diegetically he now *is* the text, and secondly he is required to ensure the Moëbius-strip's continued existence.

continual textual appearance and real popularity.

The real world, mirroring the texts, has also assimilated the fictional-monstrous into its constructions of normality, though not necessarily acceptability; when many monsters appeared initially they were largely vilified, some (such as Jason) triggering moral panics due to their anti-hero status. Reality has mirrored art; viewing The Texas Chainsaw Massacre has since become a real rite of passage[6]. Generic coding allows horror to connect directly to society; in the real world, fictitious legends allow agents, through mass, repeated consumption and the resulting longevity of a generic coding, to tell tales about themselves in real if indirect terms.



Threat displaced by language: Psycho.

Neale traces narrative patterning through horror texts in terms of internal/character knowledge acquisition which is utilised in order to resolve the textual disruption of the status-quo and restore equilibrium[7]. Struggles to regain pre-narrative normality consequently revolve around the acquisition of esoteric knowledge with which to destroy threats. Therefore, the psychiatrist who provides an explanation for the events that audiences have witnessed throughout Psycho plays a vital narrative role: he explains the

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[6]Clover, for example, states that her study 'began in 1985 when a friend dared [her] to go see The Texas Chainsaw Massacre' (Cook 1992: 19).

[7]For Neale, disruption occurs when the 'unnatural' displaces what is consider as 'natural' by characters within texts and, to a greater or lesser extent, their audiences.

disequilibrium of Norman's sexual identity and his subsequent character motivation in order to lay the threat temporarily to rest, normalising it through language. This is essentially the discursive equivalent of a stake through a vampire's heart. It may be argued then, that horror attempts to render the social and cultural fears that it makes monstrous safe temporarily through their expression in cinematic language as a form of catharsis, as well as often challenging (or in conservative texts ultimately re-enforcing) the ideologies from which those fears spring.

In Psycho, for the moment Norman/Norma (Mother) becomes 'Normal' in that the explanation of Norman's psychosis renders it understandable to those, both diegetic and in the real audience, who have witnessed its effects. Though Norman is still potentially threatening, once conceptualisation of that threat's mechanics become apparent, an intellectual extension of perceptions of reality and impossibility occurs, both textually and externally, since both audiences and characters may comprehend diegetic events. This process is mirrored in Norman's forced submission to jurisdiction; once explained, society deals with the threat and Norman is incarcerated, restraining though not eliminating the immediate danger.

In horror, normalisation of the threat through language becomes focused through the figures of experts, most notably Van Helsing in Dracula[8]. For Neale, the only difference between the solutions offered by experts in Psycho and Dracula lies in the discursive terms of their analysis: Freudian-scientific in the former and religious-metaphysical in the latter.

Horror, as a *generic* term locates this device at the centre of its diverse narrative structures:

> the narrative process in the horror film tends to be marked by a search for that discourse, that specialised form of knowledge which will enable the human characters

[8]For further discussion see Hutchings (1993), which locates the professional/expert within 1950s to 1970s British culture.

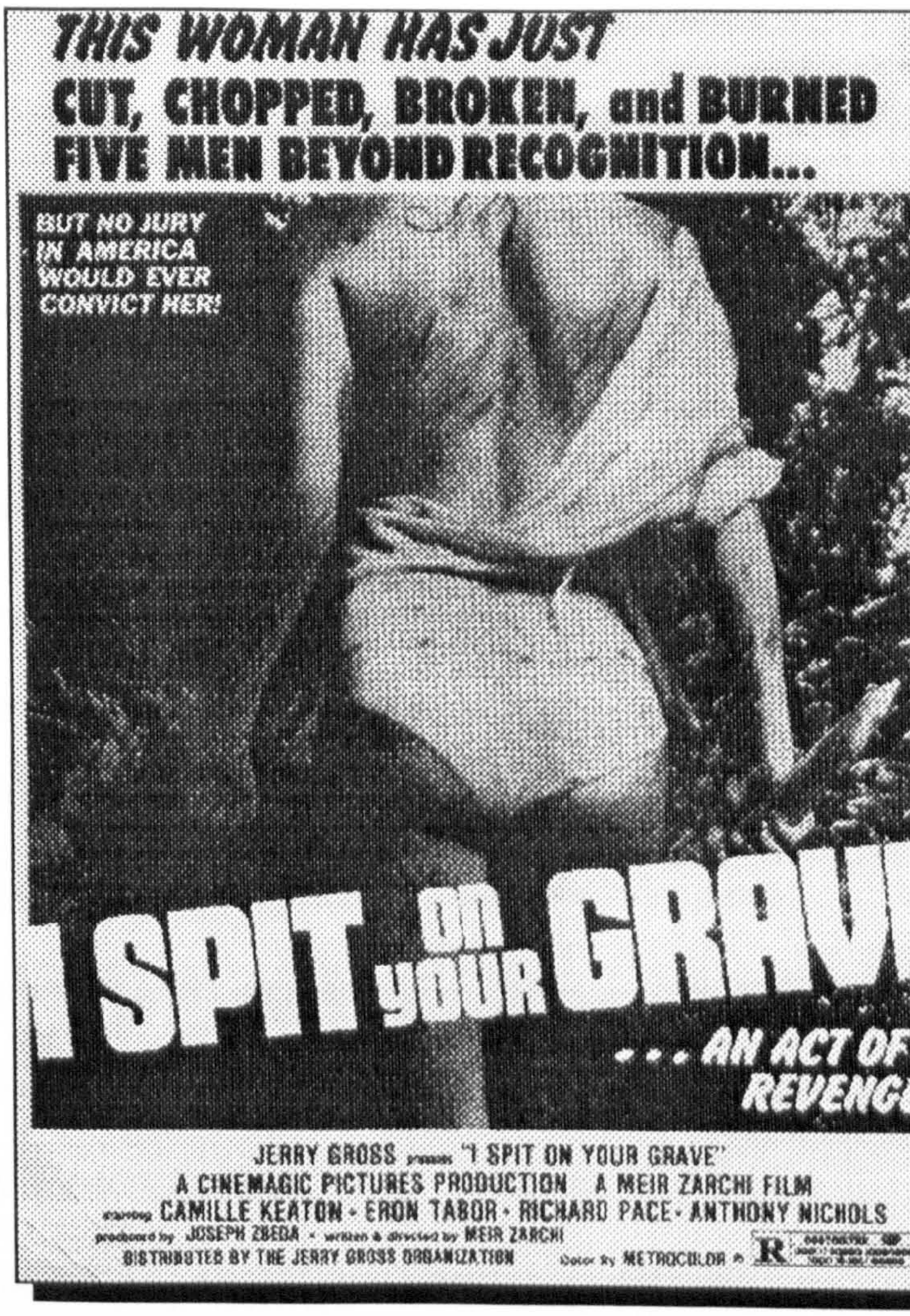
to comprehend and to control that which simultaneously embodies and causes its 'trouble' (Neale 1980: 22).

It is to the issue of knowledge acquisition that I will now turn in order to examine its operation in relation to the self-reflexive nature of horror and the fetishism which operates within it.

Issues Of Genre 3:

Knowledge Acquisition, Fetishism, Self-Reference, Cultural Commentary

Knowledge per se, is frequently not sufficient to displace the threats emerging in horror. Often knowledge is not acquired, but rather re-moulded to accommodate situations which created the threat. The knowledge actually gained in such texts is limited to the extent that knowledge is gained by characters in all texts, horror based or otherwise. Furthermore, texts in which knowledge acquisition is not central to elimination of the horrific typically lie in the *sub*-sub-genres of generic analysis. In I Spit On You Grave knowledge is not acquired post-rape in Neale's sense. Indeed, whilst the actual horror, the threat itself, is made real during the extended gang rape,



Re-evaluated sexual identity.

Jennifer is powerless. She flees, but is always caught; screams and struggles, but is beaten into submission. No knowledge, new or otherwise, comes to her aid, and no knowledge can prevent the continuing attack. Once the rapes are over, for Jennifer the immediate threat, if not the horror of what has occurred, has effectively ended.

Jennifer subsequently re-evaluates social and sexual identities[1] (masculine and feminine as aggressor and victim respectively) using sexuality to punish the rapists, within the film's terms after the fact. If we were to argue that the removal of the horror ultimately rests in removal of the rapists from society and life, we still could not argue that Jennifer actually acquires knowledge to bring this about: rather, she has re-formulated existing gendered power bases. Here rape is seen to brutalise everyone involved; Jennifer is not a female Van Helsing employing an academic knowledge acquisition, but rather is engaged in a re-focusing of primal energy and anger - a different consideration than that which Neale proposes. His model of horror as a genre in itself cannot accommodate such directional knowledge variation, yet I Spit On Your Grave *is* a horror film, and a 'classic', if such a term can be applied to such a film, of the Rape Revenge genre. Within mode, however, critical space for Rape Revenge texts may be found, since fear constitutes the genre's major narrative currency.

Furthermore, in Cannibal Holocaust and its inferior imitator Cannibal Ferox, the only knowledge with which survivors emerge is that most of the other diegetic characters are dead. This knowledge is not employed to combat the 'threat' of the cannibals who continue to exist after the films have ended. Technically the threat no longer exists, as the cannibals only constituted a threat when provoked severely by Western 'heroes', and by the end those Westerners are removed from the equation. The lack of knowledge acquisition, traditionally used to combat the threat, mirrors this. From the cannibal's perspective no acquisition of esoteric knowledge has occurred; to combat the threat as *they* perceive it, they simply direct everyday, ultra-violent rituals towards the foreign invaders.

Neale's canonical approach effectively narrows horror to limited generic codes: it

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[1]The film's poster (reproduced above) clearly shows a figure representing Jennifer turning her back on the male gaze and walking away, re-appropriated phallic weapon in hand.

'consist[s] of bundles of discourses already defined as pertaining to the domain of...imagination and phantasy' (Neale 1980: 37). Such a device is applicable only to non-realist narratives and Gothic horror of the type produced by Hammer, or in supernature narratives such as The Exorcist or Poltergeist. There is, then, no room within Neale's model for many texts, including 'nasties' such as The Last House On The Left, Driller Killer (a study of an ultra-violent descent into madness), or Cannibal Holocaust. Furthermore, 'horror...seem[s] to involve special demands on the spectator's faculties of belief' (ibid: 38), though whether Straw Dogs, The House On The Edge Of The Park or any of their ilk demand this to an extent that other, non-horror texts do remains unanswered. However, Neale does incorporate the non-Gothic into his critical perspective in his excellent analysis of the interplay and structuring of the suspense-violence dichotomy through the framing shots of Halloween (Neale 1984)[2].

Neale's brief study of fetishism in horror is relevant to any consideration of iconography within its constituent genres. Although 'the horror film...is a veritable festival of fetishistic effects' (Neale 1980: 45), it is the image of the monster that embodies fetishism for Neale. The birth/first appearance of monsters and their ultimate destruction become subject to fetishism through 'all the resources of the costume and make-up department' (ibid) to render the monstrous both believable and frightening; here hinges the fetishistic 'division of belief' (ibid) within horror. Though signifying something different for Neale, this is clearly the case; through horror's fetishism of monsters viewers witness elements of the operation of their culture's status-quo, often through the directly opposing views and non-hegemonic actions of monsters.

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[2]Neale's analysis has greatly influenced my own subsequent reading of Halloween's technique of framing Michael.

This is nowhere clearer than in Dawn Of The Dead or The Texas Chainsaw Massacre. Through concentration on the consumer-zombies of Dawn, or the apocalyptic deconstruction of American society and Southern legend personified by Leatherface, elements of the social and ideological frames surrounding the production of both texts may be isolated and studied. I shall return to this theme later, but the central point is clear: through images of monsters - and crucially their 'births' and deaths - the primary figure of narrative disorder is created and empowered, before being destroyed, or, as is often the case in contemporary texts, escaping. The monster becomes a fetish, primarily textually, though often also on a social (textually external) level, raising issues regarding texts' social and ideological frames; Leatherface's mask of patch-worked human skin is a central icon in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, and physically, though not psychologically, makes the monster. It may be argued that the mask, an emblem of dehumanisation (flesh made leather and human made monster), symbolises personal fragmentation, its coarse, crude stitching pointing to a wider symbolic questioning of the reformation of society by modernity. Leatherface exists behind a mask and physically and ideologically behind society, alienated in an alternative, insane but strangely coherent society which feeds literally off a wider, fragmented but sane modernity in order to survive. The alternative market economy

An alternative market economy: Leatherface and fa

evident in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, in which the major currency is human flesh sold as barbecue, furthers the film's internal critique of modernity and post-Fordism.

It may also be argued that The Texas Chainsaw Massacre is a complex, highly intelligent satire of consumerism and post-Fordist work ethics, created during and informed by the characteristics of Nixon's government and political ideals. The 'account of the tragedy which befell...Sally Hardesty' constitutes a partial attack on those values and also a metaphoric account of the tragedy which befell America under Nixon. Set in 1973 when anxieties regarding Nixon were rife, the text challenges the hippy peace ethic of the period through constant references to the heralding of an Evil Age[3], as Watergate similarly challenged America's image of itself; at the start of the film, therefore, a constantly playing radio informs of nothing but death, destruction, famine, torture and natural disaster.

The hippy ideal of the 1960s and 1970s was shattered by Vietnam and Watergate, both occurring during the period of the text's narrative and creation. That the Chainsaw family (Leatherface, Hitch-Hike, Cook and Grandpa) is entirely patriarchal is therefore vital, for this basic unit of post-Fordism is demonised throughout the text. The killers' victims are hippies, a group demonised by Nixon as destructively immoral 'slackers'[4]. Their utopian ideals of peace are shattered through violence mirroring the destruction of faith in Nixon's government, underlined textually by 'malevolent' spiritual/planetary influence which will ultimately lead, it is claimed, to devastating historical events.

The Chainsaw family forge an alternative economic structure, transforming humanity into pure commodity. Human meat is sold as barbecue and inedible material is transformed into 'grisly work[s] of art', displaying the blackest humour including literal head-lamps and

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[3]See Sharrett (1984) for a detailed study of the film's apocalyptic construction.

[4]Nixon says of them: 'coddled, pampered, truckled to, a generation of Americans has been bred to believe that they should coast through life' (Nixon 1980: 243).

arm-chairs. This human dissolution into commodity mirrors post-Fordist industrial ethics which treat workers purely as commodities. As such, the highly effective 'music' soundtrack consists entirely of industrial noise. The ethic has not changed here, though its components have (dead instead of living flesh), revealing the system through exaggeration and its expression as a twisted fairy tale[5].

Crucially, generations of the Chainsaw family worked previously at a slaughter house prior to enforced redundancy after the introduction of machinery, rendering their 'skills' obsolete - a typically post-Fordist fear of advancing technology and the de-humanising effect that it has on workforces. The workers have here been reduced to the status of the cattle that they previously disposed of by their employers. This is underlined by the shots of milling cattle which are reminiscent of shots of the workers in Metropolis. Furthermore, their contracts were not renewed, effectively rendering them short-term and heralding a transition from workers to killers due to necessity.

Hooper satirises dog-eat-dog consumerist ethics: humans consume humans, then are consumed themselves as they become victims in turn. Consumerist ethics are controlling (cannibalism is figured as the ultimate consumerist expression), exploitative and destructive, heralding suppression for consumers by the system and strengthened integration into that system through becoming a commodity within it. The killers represent patriarchal capitalists/bourgeoisie, and the only female in the family - Grandma - is dead. Natural resources such as Sally's pool have been compromised (actually dried up) though connection with capitalism since the pool is adjacent to the Chainsaw house, exposing the post-Fordist

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[5]The narrative mirrors Hansel And Gretel with Sally and her brother discovering a 'bad' house, being prepared for consumption, and Sally escaping back to society. In the sequel, Stretch plays Sally's part and the fairy-tale narrative is continued: she falls down a representative rabbit-hole into a mad world below where killers live in a network of underground passages. In both films there is a literally mad tea-party.

control of natural resources/agents by the 'evil', patriarchal capitalist family.

Those who discover truths regarding post-Fordism are figured as corrupt and/or evil (the killers and a drunken 'chorus' who claims to have 'seen things'[6]); it is these characters who reveal the textually figured hidden, extreme control of contemporary economics. The slaughter and Chainsaw houses partly represent elements of the negative face of consumerist/post-Fordist work ethics and existence, in which 'people're put outta jobs' under 'the new way' of working. This satire is furthered through its linkage to the American Dream which the killers have achieved through business and post-Fordist exploitation, destruction, violence and depravity, mirroring the failure of the American Dream of social dominance (liberating Vietnam), the shattering of faith in elected political systems (Watergate) and the destruction of hope (with Kennedy) through symbolic inevitability, figured as cosmic influence.

The killers are labelled 'a whole family of Draculas' by Franklin; Dracula - a member of the class elite who fed literally off those beneath him socially in order to maintain his existence - operates to exactly the same agenda as the Chainsaw family. Underlining this, Leatherface only emerges at night and is weakened by his own chainsaw as dawn breaks, and Grandpa sucks Sally's blood. They too constitute the elite classes through their twisted mastery of the American Dream and exploitative employer status.

Intruder (Scott Spiegel, 1989), a Slasher, works to a similar, though less skilfully expressed, agenda. Bill, the killer, is the owner of a small supermarket compelled to close due to competition. The viewers' gaze is reified when they discover that are constantly positioned

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[6]Played by the blacklisted 1950s radio host John Henry Faulk who was condemned as obscene, dangerous and an anarchist during his career. In granting this character insight into social 'reality' despite being drunk and played by a 'dangerous' figure, Hooper furthers his critique - it is through social taboo (that which is suppressed and 'bad') that the 'truth' of existence under post-Fordism is revealed.

as purchasable products on shelves. Viewers are placed inside a telephone gazing out through the dial, inside a turning doorknob, as financial commodity inside a till, behind the bars of a shopping trolley (suggesting the 'prison' of consumerist dependency) and even dirt on the floor that is swept away.

Compromising the audience gaze: <u>Intruder</u>.

Such reification delimits each death sequence, establishing the store employees as disposable extensions of the stock they sell, since body parts are stored with the other products and are even shrink-wrapped for sale. For Bourdieu agents are classified by the products that they consume; here they are classified by the products that they become. Potential unemployment causes madness; Bill kills 'for the store..the store's [his] whole life'. So ingrained is consumer/ist-dependency that even whilst chasing a victim Bill straightens shelves and promote sales.

For much the same reason, Hitch-Hike enthuses about 'headcheese'[7], which is partly representative of post-Fordism's reduction of agents into mass-products. He demands payment for a photograph, establishing his capitalist status; this is refused, marking the group for destruction. Oppose the system too much, Hooper warns, and face elimination by it. By <u>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre II</u> (Tobe Hooper, 1986), capitalist ethics have expanded across Texas, where Cook's barbecue/'family secret' is considered the best in the state. Post-Fordist capitalist expansion survives through consumer demand as cannibalistic consumerism spreads

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[7]A product making use of every part of a slaughtered animal.

across America.

For the moment I shall move away from a focus on individual texts and look to generic structures, starting with Pam Cook who provides an overview of the debates surrounding genre, advancing an impressive account of it as the structural basis of horror. Merging Neale's post-structuralist psychoanalysis with a distinct social and political perspective, she considers the relevance of iconography alongside critical values traditionally associated with auteur, rather than genre, theory. Cook suggests an area of cross-over between the analytic tools concerned with both of these approaches. Her analysis of previous studies claims that critics utilise frequently approaches and terminology connected intimately to the auteur in order to avoid the fact that iconography often ignores important issues such as camera movement and style and narrative patterning, within an apparently rigid generic code. Furthermore, Cook asserts that whilst genres undoubtedly detail cultural, social and historical concerns, they also refer to generic perceptions of these issues. The Western's iconography is, therefore, not based purely on historical reality, but on coded mixtures of reality and iconographic tradition, informed by previous examples within the genre. Therefore, genres do not simply connect with history, but also with each other. This is of particular importance to horror - perhaps the most overtly self-reflexive mode of cinema.

Horror refers constantly to itself as a cinematic system[8], and texts often refer

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[8]Wes Craven's New Nightmare (1994) is perhaps the most startlingly self-reflexive horror text since Peeping Tom. Its narrative structure is complex and surreal; the premise is that the Nightmare On Elm Street series were just films. Wes Craven's New Nightmare follows the supernatural events which occur during the writing of a new Elm Street film. Freddy's cultural popularity allows him to escape from the previous fictive texts in order to break into reality and attack the stars and crew of the earlier films who play themselves, baffled that events in the unfolding script mirror exactly events in real life. The film that viewers are watching turns out to be the film being made *within* the film, with the opening credits appearing at the end as the heroine (playing herself) reads Craven's script aloud. The disclaimer at the end of the credits which normally distances characters and events from real and similar characters and events informs audiences that the film and the film within the film really occurred, and only the actors too frightened to appear have not been played by themselves.

specifically to other horror texts. Nekromantik is discussed in Schramm and a torn The Hills Have Eyes poster adorns a cellar wall during a rare quiet moment in The Evil Dead. Horror director-writers give frequent cameo appearances in peer's work: for example, David Cronenberg, Sam Raimi, Clive Barker and Steven King all appear in the disastrous Sleepwalkers (Mick Garris, 1992), whilst Roger Corman appears to be in more films than he ever actually directed. In no other type of film may so many self-references be located[9]. Scream, for example, is structured entirely around references to other horror texts and to their generic operations. To explore the reasons for such conventions, we must employ the work of cultural analysts.

Bourdieu points analysists towards the work of J.S Cloyd and A. P Bates in order to explain the need that agents, and by extension art through its generation by artists, have to quote (Bourdieu 1993: 138). Cloyd and Bates call this 'citatology' (Sociological Inquiry 34 2: 122), and their usage of the term is important. They claim that

> people quote...for complex reasons - to confer meaning, authority or depth upon a statement, to demonstrate familiarity with other works in the same field and to avoid the appearance of plagiarising even ideas conceived independently....[Readers] are supposed to have some knowledge of the work quoted (ibid).

Although fanzines and horror films are not scholarly communications, the same considerations apply to popular and academic/high-brow discourse; horror's 'in-jokes' render the full experience of reading texts available only to fandom's 'in-crowd', granting fans an authority and depth of understanding usually denied to them by media commentators who consider them

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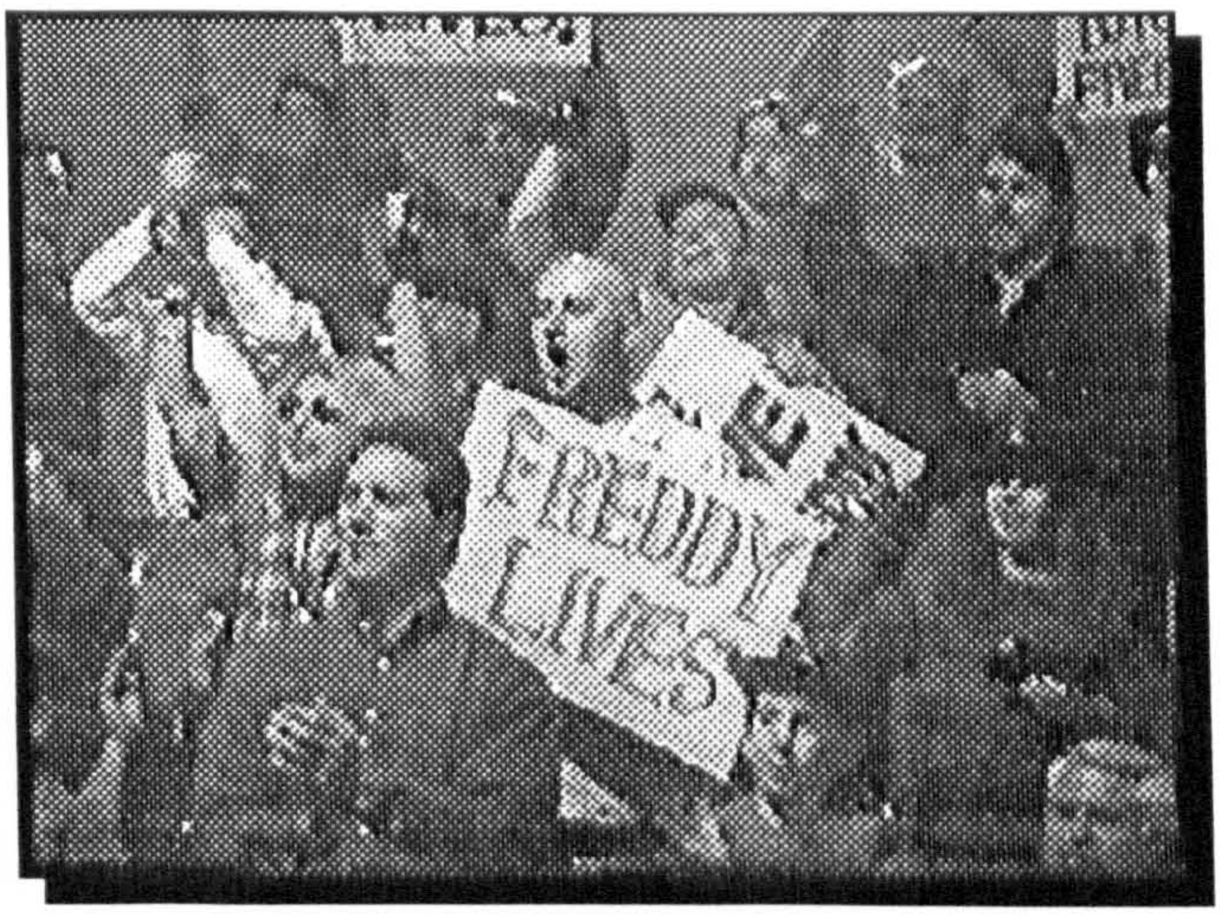
[9]The films of Robert Altman are an exception, though star cameos are used for a different purpose than in horror; whilst horror refers to itself, the cameos in, for example, Pret A Porter (1994) refer to the Hollywood industry that created the film. Film refers to film in The Player (1990) rather than genre to genre.

to be debased and lacking in intellect.

This establishes feelings of exclusivity and distinction for fans, constituting a covert attempt at self legitimation. If the exclusive nature of art is established by legitimating agencies in direct proportion to an exclusive body of interpretative skills held by cultured, hence 'legitimate', minorities, then attempts to render the full 'meaning' of horror more exclusive (by demanding an extensive knowledge of previous generic entries and the personalities involved in their production) operate to the same agenda as those agencies in order to legitimate both subject matter and audiences. The aficionado base becomes possessed of esoteric knowledge on which it prides itself; lay-readers of horror, without a full set of decoding tools, and who may view horror as an inappropriate medium for intellectual interaction, will literally not see the whole picture. Therefore, fans may claim that those who condemn horror frequently do not fully understand it; this typically proves to be the case when fanzines react to moral panics concerning horror or the public condemnation of violent films such as Natural Born Killers.



Self-reflection:
Wes Craven's New Nightmare.

Such considerations challenge Bourdieu's idea that large-scale cultural production (works of popular culture) are 'more or less independent of the educational level of consumers' (Bourdieu 1993: 120). Though this is the case with horror, we must challenge Bourdieu's terms, despite his acknowledgemen that 'a genre containing ever more references to the history of that genre calls for a second-degree reading, reserved for the initiate' (ibid: 128). He fails to reconcile this with his own previous argument regarding the position of high-brow art as

maintaining its status through the necessity of similar bodies of initiate knowledge. If large-scale production constitutes that which is popular, then restricted production is, for Bourdieu, 'pure' (ibid), since audiences need to be versed in the relevant codes in order to read texts adequately; furthermore, possession of such knowledge itself constitutes a high-brow cultural commodity. Intellectualist art is then pure and restricted, being seen to create its own audiences, whereas non-intellectual art (popular culture) is considered to be created by its audiences. Horror, excluding full meaning transmission to audiences who are only partially receptive is, then, paradoxically operating under a pure, restricted and distinctly high-brow agenda (through fanzine culture, essentially creating its own public) though it nonetheless is deemed large-scale and 'low-brow'.

I do not claim that critics should consider horror as traditionally 'high-brow' art, but that they should instead examine the terms in which its condemnation is couched, for it clearly operates in partly the same way as art forms which are deemed acceptable. Furthermore, as Bourdieu claims, restricted production and its champions (legitimating agencies such as literary groups, libraries, and journals) operate to legitimate a certain type of art through condemnation of all other artistic forms in relation to it (ibid). Horror, as evidenced by its continual self-reference and subject matter, remains acutely aware of its own agenda, yet does not seek overtly to label other art forms as 'trash', even when they constitute the antithesis of horror texts' visions of social acceptability. In this sense it may be claimed that horror is more 'pure' than many other works of 'pure'/restricted art, for it is not typically motivated and marketed in accordance with the values of class-based didacticism even when questioning the established boundaries of morality and acceptability directly[10].

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[10]The Last House On The Left for example, though discussing overtly society's relationship to violence across class divisions, leaves audiences to draw their own conclusions about whether the avenging parents constitute good or understandable evil. The film presents a case and leaves it open for discussion in a way that pure, restricted texts usually

Though within generic codes it may be argued that all constituent texts refer, however indirectly, to previous examples of the same genre simply by existing within that code and utilising its conventions, such generic self-consciousness is not directly what I am discussing here. Horror texts appear frequently aware that their genre is fictive. Their self-references also underlines their winking acknowledgement to audiences that they, and the text, are aware that there is a limit to the suspension of disbelief. In self-referencing horror texts, horror films within the films play frequently at diegetic cinemas; for example, the extreme Slashers playing in Demons or Nekromantik (which, on a further level of reference, uses the soundtrack from the notorious eye-piercing scene from Zombie Flesh Eaters [Lucio Fulci, 1979] during its film within the film). Often, horror texts give sly reference to their own textuality; Body Bags (John Carpenter and Tobe Hooper, 1993) is partially set in Haddonfield, the setting of Halloween. Cameos by horror directors (Sam Raimi plays a dead body) and dialogue from Carpenter's previous films abound. Similarly, lighting and special effects from The Thing are evoked in In The Mouth Of Madness, whilst in Nekromantik II, the heroine/monster owns a video of Buttgereit's earlier Hot Love (1985).

I would like to claim that in no other mode or genre can it be stated that overt references to its constituent texts takes place so frequently and at such a conscious level. The difference between this and indirect references made by texts to their generic codes because of their utilisation of shared conventions is vast; the former constitutes a conscious inclusion of material as a shared joke with aficionados audiences, whilst the latter is an unavoidable condition of generic textuality. How many Westerns, for example, point overtly to other Westerns by displaying portraits of, say, John Ford, in their mise-en-scène construction as

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would not, as they typically guide viewers to the conclusions that the director wishes them to draw.

Body Bags does with horror directors? Would lines from famous Melodramas be quoted, entirely in context and only detectable by fans of the genre, in other Melodramas in the way that Ash in Army Of Darkness casts a spell beginning, 'Klaatu, Barada, Nikto'?[11]

Such references underline the aspirations of a cultural legitimacy which many horror aficionados covet through the fanzines that they read. In-humour is an integral element of aficionado culture, binding its members together in the appreciation of a series of private jokes. This marks them as viewers with superior knowledge and awareness of the texts being viewed, allowing them feelings of belonging to a legitimate, as opposed to a demonised, cultural group. Crucially, in-humour challenges directly the common view that horror films are accessible immediately to even the most inexperienced viewer, and are totally understandable due to their apparent lack of intellectual or exclusive artistic construction.

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[11]The command to halt the destruction of Earth in The Day The Earth Stood Still.

Issues Of Genre 4:

Interpretive Codes And Perception

If the art of deciphering art hinges on the immediate and unconscious application of the correct interpretive codes to read that art, then the viewers' mastery of such codes must be assumed. Where this mastery does not exist, inappropriate interpretative codes are applied by viewers, leading to confusion or dismissal of texts as 'rubbish'[1]. This manifests itself, for example, when viewers with no previous experience of film analysis or German Expressionism view The Cabinet Of Doctor Caligari and criticise the sets and acting as unrealistic. These viewers would have, in this example, applied inappropriate realist codes of interpretation to a text not suited to such a reading. Horror's self-references provide further elements for the effective interpretation of texts: horror aficionados, aware of generic conventions and the frequent self-references evident within the breakage of such conventions are able to interpret and laugh at the private jokes often at the heart of that breakage.

For example, in Braindead fans appreciate the ironic inversion of the established generic coding of zombie texts: instead of characters barricaded inside a space under siege from zombies that they try to keep out, they are locked voluntarily inside a space with zombies that they try to keep in. This is a different kind of reference to horror's form; one that requires not only intimate knowledge of specific texts, but also aficionado awareness of the rules governing the binding together of those texts as a distinct genre. Viewers without such knowledge watch the film with different (still often realist) eyes, asking why the hero does not simply just leave the house as he is often quite able to do. Realistic motivations, though, are not the point; generic self-reflection through ironic inversion is. Those who seek to apply an

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[1]For related discussion, see Bourdieu 1993, chapter eight.

inappropriate realism to horror often remain dismissive of individual films because they cannot see beyond the text itself to the generic conventions that surround it, and upon which the text may be commenting.

Perception is clearly case specific though. As Bourdieu states, those lacking the correct codes of cultural interpretation due to a lack of education or experience reject mis-interpreted art as being 'devoid of significance' (Bourdieu 1993: 218). An appropriate reading (for Bourdieu, academic and knowledgeable, but, as we have seen, in reality case-specific) is able to access different levels of metaphor, meaning, iconography and so on. Bourdieu terms this an iconographic reading (ibid). Despite Bourdieu's claims, pre-iconographic interpretation (an inability to access different levels of metaphor, meaning and iconography) is applied by those without specific background knowledge, regardless of academic ability.

Those who place function over form do so frequently according to the dictates of mass, common sense morality which is socialised into agents by, primarily, the church. This limits such viewers' perceptions of art either through direct condemnation of the 'immoral', or, more frequently, simply through a focus on the manifest level of texts at the unacknowledged and unconsidered expense of an awareness of subtext. Because of, and in an attempt to remedy this, it is to our advantage to apply iconographic readings of popular culture (especially horror) through a focus on the transference of social ethics to 'unsuitable' texts. Such texts are typically deemed unsuitable through pre-iconographic interpretation by socially sanctioned academic and moralist arbiters of taste, who themselves are usually already at several removes from competent interpretations of the subject matter.

If the complexity of texts is measurable by their high levels of emission of meaning, then those who mis-interpret them have lower levels of reception than is implicitly required. Horror, traditionally considered to be of low emission, is expected to demand low reception,

therefore is considered as the aesthetic domain of the uneducated. However, rather than simply having low levels of emission, horror has *different* levels of emission, relying on alternative aesthetics and concerns to those which typically embody highbrow art. Viewers of low reception may simply be those not receptive to horror, regardless of social, cultural, sexual, class or academic status.

Therefore, a merging of approaches to film analysis based on the elimination of inappropriate decodings through a re-thinking of common academic boundaries may be a more fitting platform from which to discuss the generic constructions of horror. Cook's opening up of the possibility of the existence of auteurs within generic structures deserves discussion in its own right. Recognised auteurs operate frequently within generic forms: John Ford and the Western or Hitchcock's entry into horror with Psycho and The Birds (1963) for example. A consideration of horror as mode helps us to conceptualise this argument within an expanded canon just as the modal perspective allows access to more representative, though academically non-canonical, genres and underground texts, for it is here that directors with the most startling and obsessive themes and styles may often be located.

Cook opens her analysis with an abridged history of horror films from the early 1930s to the near-present, noting that 'only in the second half of the 70s was the genre [sic] put on the agenda of film studies' (Cook 1985: 99). Cook underlines the fact that horror is a social product, empowered through what agents find fearful or acceptable/non-challenging, though she does not attempt detailed analysis of this. Cinema's industrial base (detailed by Schatz and foregrounded partly by Neale) locates the potentially 'fearful' within market economies, essentially centred around the accumulation of maximum profit. Cook considers that the socio-politically based work of Carlos Clarens and Ivan Butler in the late 1960s allows access to the 'long literary tradition of 'the art of terror'' (ibid). Following this, the central

development for Cook emerged in connection to 'question[s] of [the] social/psychological significance of the 70s boom in horror with violence, frequently against women' (ibid). In acknowledging that during 'the late 70s/early 80s feminists mounted public protest at the perpetuation of a wide-spread cultural misogyny by such films' (ibid), she advocates the reading of horror as a mass cultural event. Subsequently, her analysis is compounded and informed by social frameworks through an appreciation of Schatz and Neale.

Cook acknowledges the importance of fan(zine) culture to horror analysis; the development of fanzines 'attests to the special relationship of the horror films with its 'aficionados" (ibid). Fanzine culture therefore embodies the highest form of reception for what is considered typically to contain the lowest form of cinematic emission (horror), the purpose of which is to stimulate the body rather than, overtly, the mind through shock[2]. However, Cook argues against forms of analysis which focus *entirely* on aficionados to the detriment of the social, which 'arguably [inhibit] theoretical elaboration of' horror (ibid). Cook's allegiance is to 'psycho-sociological explanation[s]' (ibid: 100) of horror, though this approach remains largely unexplored by her.

She subsequently opens up the possibility of the existence of what I shall term auteur sensibility within the dominantly generic codings of texts composing horror's mode, quoting Brian Murphy's claim that 'horror's never-never land is bearable because it is so entirely rational' (ibid: 99) and hence predictable. Though undoubtedly true for the majority of horror texts (allowing readings of social concerns reflected through them), directors such as

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[2]As Andy Waller convincingly establishes in 'Everything On Show' (Flesh And Blood 4: 52-56), the same is true of the similarly rejected mode of pornography, which also seeks to 'literally 'move' the viewer' (ibid: 52). As with horror, 'its power is in the potentially involuntary nature of this movement' (ibid) - essentially to jump in horror or to become aroused in pornography. Such a position partly explains pornography's similar lack of analysis (as opposed to its usual outright condemnation) to horror, directly linking the two modes through the central physical effect each attempts to produce in the viewer.

Cronenberg, Argento, Romero, Buttgereit and Craven confound 'bearable' rationality by infusing texts with a conscious subtextual critique of the ideological structures surrounding their work, through the injection of a series of unique and sustained personal concerns.

Horror's constituent genres, in common with all generic codings, evolve. For Bourdieu different art evolves in different ways: bourgeois art ages depending upon the advancement or regression of bourgeois morality, common sense and ethics, for example[3].

Horror, whilst evolving dominantly in accordance with political and cultural surrounding frames, also evolves through its dependence upon technological advancement to an apparently greater degree than is the case with other genres. This is not simply because technological advancement renders new levels of special effects - vital to most horror films - possible, but also because as technology advances its price drops. Horror thrives on new talents in underground production; such films use cheaply bought, basic equipment, heralding new generations of experimental directorial talent. The relative cheapness of equipment also has the effect of releasing such productions from external influence and moral obligation - hence Buttgereit's continuing and total control over his output.

Horror, through fan networks, is unique in that there is a sizeable market for amateur and underground material which does not appear to be the case for Westerns, Melodramas or Musicals. It evolves uniquely in direct tandem with technological advancement at two levels: for the mainstream this heralds new possibilities through special effects and what can be presented feasibly on screen, whilst for the avant-garde, inexpensive equipment allows the vital underground to flourish, producing new talent and texts which over time filter into mainstream production as, for example, Sam Raimi and The Evil Dead films have done.

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[3]See Bourdieu 1993: 52.

Following Cook's suggestion of the possibility of connections between theories of authorship and genre theory existing, it is desirable to examine the role of horror directors who work within the mode, despite it being constructed of genres, to express and explore their own personal conscious concerns through each of the texts that they produce. Through such an examination it may be possible to challenge the polemical division of traditional auteur and genre theories to explore the role of directors possessing such sensibilities, in order to point the way towards analysis of how their work connects to the study of horror in general, and the modal analysis of it in particular.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Genre and 'Auteur Sensibility'

Bourdieu defines two dominant states of critical interpretation and analysis: subjectivism and objectivism. Subjectivism, perhaps the most widely accepted of these positions, allows that creative agents ('authors') formulate and constitute the centre of meaning and its imposition upon texts. To understand the author is, therefore, to understand the text.

Subjectivist criticism is what is taught typically through highly selective and politically defined canons throughout the education system. Seemingly opposing this, objectivist positioning maintains a distance from the belief that authors insert all textual meaning into their work intentionally, looking instead to textually external events which influence artistic creation to discover covert levels of meaning. This appears to be the preferable proposition; structures of belief, doxa and the habitus of the period of creation, experienced by authors every day of their lives, constitute their lived experience; such experience emerges through their texts.

As Roland Barthes claims, this then renders texts 'multi-dimensional space[s] in which a variety of writings...blend and clash' (Barthes [1977] 1981: 210). This applies to texts of all kinds: in literature, for example, Austen did not create the social manners of which she writes; rather the habitus in which she existed prompted her to create texts which reflect her lived experience of the social world of which she was a part. Because of these considerations, for Barthes a text is 'a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture' (ibid), in horror clearly both internally through in-jokes and references and externally by drawing upon common cultural fears.

Edward Buscombe argues against Andrew Sarris' polemical division of auteurs and

metteurs (Buscombe [1973] 1981)[4]. Buscombe's objections are well grounded, and I will attempt to locate an analytic mid-point between the two positions. As a starting point for this, I would like to claim that it seems reductive to consider objectivism and subjectivism as mutually exclusive approaches, for one clearly influences the other. As Bourdieu states, 'symbolic aspects of social life are inseparably intertwined with the material conditions of existence, without one being reducible to the other' (Bourdieu 1993: 4). In addition I am in agreement with Buscombe's claims that auteur theory is guilty of frequently making 'the assumption that because there [is] meaning in a work someone must have deliberately put it there, and that someone must be the auteur' (Buscombe [1973] 1981 :32). Intentional meaning clearly exists within texts, but so do large bodies of unintentional meaning (in horror generated by cultural fears), and the latter is often of more interest to cultural analysts than the former.

> As Buscombe goes onto claim, the
>
> conscious will and talent [of an 'artist'] are also in turn the product of those forces that act upon the artist, and it is here that traditional auteur theory most seriously breaks down (ibid),

since classic auteur theory will not accept that the 'meanings' evident within a text may be unintentional. Buscombe concludes that 'what is needed now is a theory of the cinema that locates directors in a total situation, rather than one which assumes that their development has only an internal dynamic' (ibid) recommending a move away from the polemic that Sarris advocates - a recommendation that I shall follow.

Following his previous statement, Bourdieu therefore merges objective analysis with an

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[4]Buscombe's view is commented upon by Heath (1973).

awareness that 'subjective' creation is a symptom of objectivity plus personal (author) insight into framing doxic systems. This allows a study of social mechanisms alongside an analysis of the genesis of those mechanisms within the individual mental structures of the creating agent(s). Adopting this critical stance, it is possible and, following Buscombe, preferable to argue both for the imposition of individual meaning and vision within texts *and* that wider meanings exist outside of texts, influencing individual authorial vision directly.

We may merge these considerations with further points of Bourdieu's to gain a more wholistic argument; he later discusses the positioning within the artistic field of works of art as symbolic goods (Bourdieu 1993: 117). If we then expand Bourdieu's argument into the analysis of film, it is possible to develop the following hypotheses from it: if works of art are symbolic goods, then artists create for the public but also for artistic competitors in order to gain a reputation. Such reputation is, therefore, generated when consumers compare the art in question to that of existing artists and validate or reject it and them, critically and, by extension, financially. The autonomy of a field from external, shaping influences (typically financial) is measurable by the degree to which it is capable of operating as a specific market, generating its own value for the goods in question. Crucially, both validated and rejected artists become distinguished by style and mannerisms or lack of them; possession or absence of such artistic signatures/monikers sets him/her apart from others in the field.

These considerations relate to Michel Foucault's work on authorship in which he states that differences of style, mannerisms and content,

> indicate that an author's name is not simply an element of speech....It's presence is functional in that it serves as a means of classification. A name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others. A name also establishes different forms of relationship among texts (Foucault 1977: 284).

The name/moniker of authors is then a vital classifying and validating symbolic structure. The successful artistic creator with an established moniker enjoys a reputation (specific to the field - or here the mode - in which s/he operates) distinct from other creators. According to Foucault,

> the author's name characterises a particular manner of existence of discourse.
>
> Discourse that possesses an author's name is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten; neither is it accorded the momentary attention given to ordinary, fleeting words. Rather, its status and its manner of reception are regulated by the culture in which it circulates (ibid).

The culture in question here is that of horror consumers and, dominantly, fan culture. If we sub-divide Bourdieu's field of cultural production to include film as a distinct area, then divide it again to include horror as a further, sub-sub category, it becomes clear that Bourdieu's considerations, and the related considerations of Foucault, apply.

Fans consider consecrated horror 'artists' to be creating for both the public and knowledgeable critics (themselves), and, given the comparison of art to existing art and artists by consumers in order to accept or reject that art and those that generate it, subsequently reject or validate new horror directors/artists. This is done through fanzine reviews, articles and the showing of new directors' work at festivals, accompanied frequently by personal appearances by those directors. As in all forms of art, recognised monikers are central to horror consumers' loyalty and interaction with texts; it is primarily the stylistics of an Argento or Cronenberg film, for example, that draws aficionado audiences to their new output rather than the subject matter.

Chris Rodley isolates what he terms the 'Cronenberg Project' (Rodley and Cronenberg 1992: xvi): thematic and stylistic concerns evident in all Cronenberg films. He claims that to:

his followers' surprise Cronenberg continued to work on the same project, which was becoming increasingly complex, refined and highly achieved with each film he made. Shivers and Rabid (1976) were not pragmatic, low budget s trategies, the ideas informing them to be abandoned or diluted when Hollywood recognition was finally bestowed on yet another North American maverick talent: they were not just a phase to be gone through...they were as serious as they were original (ibid: xvi-xvii).

Rodley is of the firm opinion that Cronenberg, through his internal textual/thematic concerns, is an 'auteur' (ibid), and would, therefore, agree with André Bazin's statement that

> to a certain extent...the auteur is always his [sic] own subject matter; whatever the scenario, he always tells the same story, or, in case the word 'story' is confusing, let's say he has the same attitude and passes the same moral judgements on the action and on the characters (Bazin [1957] 1992: 45).

Rodley's 'Cronenberg Project' connects to Bazin's statement through the repeated telling of what is actually the same 'story' in many varied forms.

For Bourdieu both Bazin's and Rodley's assertions would represent 'the charismatic ideology' of the artist as both the centre of meaning in art and the ultimate basis of belief in the value of art (Bourdieu 1993: 76). However, attention needs to be paid to the culture that generates the attitudes and moral judgements of directors, since such attitudes do not exist in a vacuum. If horror audiences are subject to the mass cultural fears that they confront in the cinema, then so too are the directors who create the texts containing the physical and emotional manifestations of those fears. In the case of name directors like Cronenberg, Craven and others these fears are often channelled into their own personal 'projects', such as the forced alteration of the body and self by sinister institutions, or the invasion of the home and family by hostile social groups and ideologies.

Auteur theory, indicative of this as an extension of such values evident within visual arts, sought originally (in the 1950s and 1960s) to legitimate cinema academically through a distancing of it from its commercial basis by identifying 'serious' artists operating within the form. Though not generally the case for the study of cinema in the late 1990s, to a broad extent this is still applicable to horror since it is still often considered illegitimate material for analysis by many critics and academics. If, as Bourdieu implies, this is the case, then as a device to defend and legitimate rather than to further the understanding of art, in the specific case of horror auteur theory may be considered a barrier to viewers' explorations of the 'true' meaning(s) of art. However, certain directors do focus upon recurring and obviously personal bodies of themes within their films; it may be argued therefore that it is inappropriate to reject the concept of authorial 'vision', concern and conscious input of meaning into texts entirely.

It is, then, useful to consider authorship within the terms that Bourdieu forwards (that the artist constitutes only the 'apparent producer', and ask 'what authorizes the author [and]what creates the authority with which authors authorize', or 'who creates the creator?' (Bourdieu 1993: 76). We may do this in economic and political terms, contextualising films within the culture that produced them; however, Rodley's convictions, shared by most horror fans and some critics, are important and should not be dismissed since his is the common perception of aficionados. Cronenberg clearly *is* working through a life project, articulating a consistently personal vision within his texts which therefore dominates critical readings of them. However, Cronenberg also operates within a distinctly generic framework; the mode of horror and its constituent generic codings. Generic 'sameness' directly opposes auteur 'individuality'; how, then, can we reconcile these polemics within the work of directors such as Cronenberg?

Alignment of these opposing critical positions is possible and desirable through an

acknowledgement that considerable individual creativity can exist within generic frames, and that those frames, formulated by public and financial demand, are also surrogate authors, infused with meanings drawn from mass desires and concerns which in turn authorize the 'author'-director. A consideration of certain directors, the texts they produce and the continuum of inter-structural meaning to be found within them throws light onto how such a situation generates a two-way flow of meaning between the social and the individual, and, in these cases, how directors re-structure generic codes to accommodate personal vision and meaning.

Cook claims that: 'a central concern of genre criticism [is] the relationship between the art product, its source and its audience' (Cook 1985: 58), placing these concerns at three points of a hypothetical equilateral triangle. The inclusion of an audience category within this structure underlines the importance of the mutually empowering lines of meaning drawn from and directed back into the social frame upon which the structure remains financially dependent. To further this dependence, the triangle is placed within two concentric circles; the inner representing the studio system from which a text emerges, and the outer representing contemporary society and the varied ideological structures which operate within it. The social ensures longevity of a genre through two levels of this structure; internally through hypothetical audiences, and externally through the sensibilities of the market within which it operates.

Parallel to this structure, we may employ a similar model formulated by Sarris to chart the three essential premises of classic auteur theory, though elements of it need amending. Sarris' model may be visualised as 'three concentric circles: the outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning' (Sarris [1962] 1992: 587). For Sarris, those directors on the outer circle are designated as technicians (essentially

metteurs), those on the second stylists, and those on the inner auteurs.

Those of auteur-sensibility (excepting Argento, who if we were to follow this model would have passed through each circle to be placed ultimately on the inner circle) straddle the outer and second circles without progressing to the final stage; they are classic metteurs employing highly personal stylistics and concerns, who, like all creators, also exist within Cook's triangular structure of the flow of meaning and generic longevity. It is in this straddling that we partly avoid the polemical division of Sarris' auteur/metteur division. Sarris' model has here been adapted by allowing that directors may exist between categories in order to situate those of auteur-sensibility appropriately rather than simply dividing directors into three categories with barriers separating each, which must be breached to achieve classic auteur status, and by placing it within Cook's model.

For Cook, 'American society [and] western capitalism' (ibid: 59) are central considerations in terms of her model since 'art is understood as one of the social practices in which society exists' (ibid). Extending this we may claim that certain 'name' directors, though placed equidistantly in Sarris' amended model[5], form part of the social frame as both agents and the partly motivating forces behind the concentric studios' decision to invest financially in a film, because of their previous 'marketability'.

Though operating within the Cook/Ryall generic structure, name horror directors are 'sold' above their products. Fans discuss 'the new Argento', 'Cronenberg's latest', or Wes Craven's New Nightmare. However, with the exception of Argento, the stylistic construction of their texts does not rise above the technical level of the metteur en scène[6]. Aligning these

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[5]Drawn from the work of Tom Ryall (1978).

[6]Argento appears to be denied artistic status by auteurist critics due to the audacious subject matter of his films. Argento trademarks include breathtakingly acrobatic crane shots and a quasi-Expressionistic use of primary colour schemes in mise-en-scène construction to heighten viewers' perceptions of a world internally awry (c.f Deep Red [1975], Suspiria [1976] and Inferno). Argento states:'I was always inspired by the German Expressionists and their strange

directors to the concept of textual authorship is their consistent 'world view', thematic concerns and their continual projection of them through their texts. Though it would be limiting to consider their texts exclusively in these terms it is nevertheless interesting and necessary to be aware of their texts' internal bodies of meaning as well as their subtextual reflections of wider, ideological structures of meaning.

Genre theory is undoubtedly the most productive tool that analysts may utilise in their understanding of horror, yet critical space does exist within generic texts for the inclusion of individual bodies of directorial concern. Following the work of Alan Lovell, the application of auteur theory should clearly be 'descriptive rather than evaluative in intent, and collaborative in order to avoid the solipsism of the individual critic accountable only to her/himself' (Cook 1985: 168). Such reworking of the traditionally evaluative application of auteur theory avoids criticism that the label of 'great art' placed on certain texts by some critics is based subjectively upon that critic's personal moral structures and codes which s/he considers should be an integral part of every 'great' text, and which are praised hyperbolically when discovered.

Furthermore, through revised conceptions of the role of the author/director within texts, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith states that 'the purpose of criticism becomes therefore to uncover behind the superficial contrasts of subject and treatment a structural hard core of basic and often recondite motifs' (Nowell-Smith [1967] 1981: 137). These statements, in the context of the role of the name horror directors and their texts, are relevant to our consideration of auteur-sensibility. The concerns of these directors mirror that of the Cahiers Du Cinéma category 'E'. Category E films contain 'an internal criticism...which cracks the film apart at the

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corners, lights and movements' (Balun 1991: 15). Bourdieu claims (Bourdieu 1993: 60) that such an approach to art is, not actually (in this case) Expressionistic, but rather a modern slant on this movement from a critical distance empowered by time and appreciation of all the texts appearing subsequent to the original movement. Argento recognises and reacts to this to great effect throughout his work.

seams...[they are] splitting under an internal tension which is simply not there in an ideologically innocuous film' (Cahiers Du Cinéma, editorial, autumn 1969); texts which appear to be conservative/reactionary (a criticism frequently levelled at the work of Cronenberg, Argento, Buttgereit, Craven and Romero) are often actually progressive/radical, as they contain subtextual, but partly intentional and comprehensive criticism of dominant ideological structures and doxic hegemony.

If our consideration of conscious directorial input remains on this level, it is applicable to those horror directors with an auteur-sensibility. As Cook acknowledges, post-Category E British auteur-criticism valued 'those directors whose work seemed to offer a radical criticism of the hegemonic system through manipulation, *conscious or unconscious*' (Cook 1985: 173, my italics), an important consideration as it acknowledges that both forms of structures of meaning (intentional and unintentional respectively) are relevant to the reading of texts.

Though this thesis is concerned primarily with unconscious ideological meanings, it would be a mistake to claim that *all* meaning generated within texts remains unconscious. Many would claim that since language is a cultural currency which operates within, and may be said to constitute, all art, its deep structures stipulate that no one individual meaning may be produced, but that many meanings are produced simultaneously through the application of a language system which brings with it whole packages and resonances of meanings. I am not claiming that the above directors create most of the meanings to be found within their texts, but that they do create a small part of it. A clear body of intentional and personal concerns *do* surface across all of the texts of these directors alongside the majority meanings produced unintentionally through the necessary application of language/discoursal codes and hegemonic ideologies during textual creation. As name horror directors are continually sold as such, it is necessary to acknowledge this, especially as, as Cook states,

> the sway of the Author remains powerful as a social institution and it would be utopian to assume that structuralism or new practices of writing could have achieved its annihilation (ibid: 166).

The concept of the auteur is favoured strongly within fanzine culture, perhaps as it raises the status of horror to include potential 'great' works of art, legitimising a mode which is usually vilified.

Bourdieu states that avant-garde art, specifically in the theatre, claims to be disinterested in profit, focusing instead on production for the love of art (Bourdieu: 41). He terms this the 'autonomous principle' of art production (ibid), where financial success is often considered to be artistic compromise. In terms of some horror directors with a clear 'vision', this consideration is worth establishing. Buttgereit, for example, as well as many of his fanzine critics, considers his work to constitute art. Certainly, as with Argento, there is a powerful argument for this case, along the same lines as that defending Warhol's work as art through an inversion of 'trash' culture.

Buttgereit adopted a common phrase used by fanzine critics regarding his work as the title of his 'making of' documentary, Corpse Fucking Art (1992). The usage of 'art' here, whether appropriate or not, ties in with Bourdieu's model of the avant-garde artist distancing him/herself from the 'vulgarities' of financial concerns; Buttgereit's monetary gain from the sale of his films is always a distant future prospect - his first financial priority being to break even, though his long-term marketing strategy will provide a modest profit eventually.

To this end, as Bourdieu stipulates, Buttgereit controls the means of distribution of his films through the 'J & B' (Jelinski - his producer - and Buttgereit) video label: a catalogue service selling a variety of underground texts. Buttgereit is content to allow the slow global exposure of his work, waiving quick profit. This view is shared by other name directors of

consistent vision such as Argento, who maintains a small body of 'customers', though one which is much larger that Buttgereit's due to Argento's bigger budget, globally distributed output. He too also has a hand in marketing through his famous Italian special effects company, 'Profundo Rosso' which has itself become a name product.

Such attempts at self-promotion aimed at small, aficionado groups underlines an earlier point established by Bourdieu. Given that Buttgereit's distribution is through an exclusive catalogue circulated only to those who know how to obtain it (information usually gleaned from references in fanzines), this is surely evidence of his financial autonomy since he operates as his own specific market and generates the value of his own products. The autonomy of Buttgereit's (and other underground producers') own personal field within horror's wider sub-field of cultural production is evidenced by its distance from the external, shaping influence of financial control, since it operates outside of the studio system and without major sponsorship. Because of this and the distribution networks that Buttgereit has instigated, he and others like him are operating as a specific market, catering to a body of aesthetic and narrative preferences, and generating the value of the goods in question through this self-inflicted closed market.

Because of this autonomous approach, though operating through generic codes, such directors have been able to alter those codes fundamentally and permanently (for example, Romero with the Zombie film or Argento with the Giallo/Gothic thriller) or have been responsible for the formation of new genres (Body Horror with Cronenberg, Family Invasion narratives with Craven, and Sex Horror with Buttgereit). As Foucault claims,

> the [name] author explains the presence of certain events within a text, as well as their transformations, distortions, and their various modifications...a text always bears a number of signs that refer to the author (Caughie 1981: 287-288).

Individual generic codes do not constrain these directors as they are aware of codes' potentially artistically limiting boundaries and have no financial accountability (or have generated the freedom to experiment due to past successes) to external forces requiring them to adhere to set formulas without experimentation. Through fanzines, such directors sell to a closed market of almost captive consumers who define their culture through difference to 'normality'. Therefore, with a body of audience preferences already established and a market willing and hoping to experience difference, directors such as Buttgereit give themselves free reign (indeed are almost obliged) to experiment with form in order to establish themselves through difference to existing codes.

Here we must recall Bourdieu's telephone number model of generic entry, recognising that though any generic entry has influence on future and past readings[8], directors whose contribution is enough to alter fundamentally the framing codes (as opposed to merely the susequent entry of texts within that code) so that elements of it depart significantly from their point of origin, are different to other producers of generic texts. Such directors manipulate generic frames to push them in new, challenging directions, fulfilling their own visions and the unspoken expectations of closed fan audiences whilst maintaining the essential core of original codings (iconography, theme and style of plotting for example) yet significantly amending the rest in order to comment upon the previous code.

To establish a name, directors have to make their mark distinct from other directorial monikers; such an alteration of generic convention establishes name value through high esteem, or more often notoriety, which labels them as mavericks, and hence often more interesting than established figures. For Bourdieu, name legitimates and grants status to

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[8]For example, we talk of post and pre-Tarantino Gangster films as a way of conceptualising a new movement in the code's development through generic entry.

newcomers, who operate typically through direct production of the avant-garde. Status is here context-specific in that it is generated for select (fan) audiences, and often complemented by condemnation and rejection outside of those audiences. Argento, for example, is widely dismissed outside of horror circles, despite his technical and visionary ability. The subject matter of his texts is, for many critics, bigger than his technical achievements and proves a block to critical appraisal. Ironically, critics are then opposing Bourdieu's concept of cultural awareness, for in certain contexts they are guilty of placing function over form despite their frequent condemnation of others, for example many horror fans, for doing the same.

In creating a context-specific, unique directorial moniker through generic amendment, Buttgereit takes the core Slasher code and alters it radically in Schramm whilst maintaining elements of Slasher iconography to 'clue' the audience into his changes to the standard coding. For example, instead of the usual endless killings, Schramm kills only two people during the film, marking him as only marginally a serial killer. Instead audiences see into his mind through a fragmented, almost montage-dominant narrative which reveals the sexual 'perversions' at the heart of his madness. Schramm is not a typical Slasher killer - which is what audiences are expecting him to be; furthermore the character established as the Final Girl is never attacked by Schramm, who despite his unhealthy sexual obsession with her, actually goes out of his way to protect her from other, predatory males.

Over time the past innovations of name directors become the trademark of his/her subsequent work and, therefore (paradoxically given the genre-altering novelty of their early output - for example, Night Of The Living Dead) what the audience comes to expect of his/her work. For Bourdieu, artists tend to produce art to a formula that will please the dominant consumers of that type of art in order to gain personal recognition (Bourdieu 1993: 44). For 'low' culture, the dominant group still consists of that arts' consumers (its fan base);

unless directors can remain truly avant-garde (for horror fans, producing non-Hollywood mainstream, typically underground and/or low budget output) then monetary concerns generated by profit-oriented studio-systems become paramount and, for fans, that artist is considered to have 'sold out'. This connects to Bourdieu's consideration of the privileging by high brow art consumers' of 'pure' artistic production. Hooper and Carpenter, for example, though creating films that please fans frequently such as In The Mouth Of Madness, cannot, in the common fan view, recapture the brilliance of their early, ground-breaking 'artistic' work such as The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Halloween. So, Hooper's big-budget, studio sequel to the former is universally rejected by horror fans as a disappointing attempt to cash in on the original film, as is Carpenter's Escape From LA (1996), a reworking of his fan acclaimed Escape From New York (1981).

Buttgereit remains avant-garde in the eyes of fans; he shows no signs of or even interest in moving into mainstream production, though to some extent each of the other horror directors of auteur-sensibility have. What places them above the status of 'sell-out' directors is their consistency of vision despite the demands of studio systems; they still produce material which gains fan approval, but now do so on a bigger scale. Paradoxically, fan networks largely consider such directors as still operating within the avant-garde, but doing so with considerable money behind them. To fans' credit this irony is rarely lost on them, though it is clear from fanzines that the 'true' continuing auteur status of Buttgereit and his continually evolving vision places him at the current head of fans' lists of 'star' directors at the time of writing.

As Bourdieu claims, the movement of avant-garde texts is essentially circular (Bourdieu 1993: 60). The current avant-garde art is largely rejected by critics as facile, immature and frequently obscene; the underground provides its audience. Over time these avant-garde

producers become established and enter the mainstream, by which time they are no longer truly avant-garde, being replaced by new artists reacting to and against the new-mainstream avant-garde. The current avant-garde operates through a rejection of the established (including the newly mainstream 'avant-garde', which by that point is considered passé), and, therefore, the established effectively runs to stand still, re-producing work consisting of re-workings of the old, original material in order to maintain its position through the production of now familiar works.

Other directors of horror who remain unchallenged by the limitations of generic coding, feeling no desire to modify it, frequently produce interchangeable texts (see any number of Slashers such as Intruder or Nightmares In A Damaged Brain). Rather, generic coding is utilised by such directors, rather than the genre utilising directors of less personal vision, such as Spiegel. Cook provides three alternative models explaining consistent directorial 'vision' within generic texts; a 'relation between generic convention and authorial concerns' (Cook 1985: 63) is seen to exist potentially through three opposing views: firstly 'a coincidence between genre and author' (ibid) is cited, which essentially allows a director to use generic conventions as a form of shorthand to move directly to the heart of his/her concerns. This allows the director to express those concerns by formulating them through the generic structure, or 'through the interplay of genre convention and motif' (ibid). Secondly, Cook claims that directors strain against generic codes, 'work[ing] in tension with the conventions' (ibid) in order to express a personal vision and bodies of concern through the differences between what the audience expects to see due to generic convention, and the new angles and twists that the director develops.

Finally, generic codes are 'a beneficial constraint [providing]...a formal ordering and control over the drive to personal expression' (ibid). This prevents and protects against textual

dissolution 'in an excess of individualism and incomprehensibility' (ibid). However, as well as providing restraint, this position is also 'capable of [allowing]...the theatricality or expressionism of a baroque sensibility' (ibid). Each of these positions has potentially different implications for our consideration of auteur sensibility and its relation to and existence within the generic structures of horror texts.

Though the above directors' lack of technical excellence (always excepting Argento), relegates them to the status of the metteur[9], thematic continuity evident throughout their work displays what may be considered as an auteur sensibility: continued and identifiable themes, concerns and motifs through which may be traced directorial statements and ideology. In terms of horror a fusion of the first two of Cook's explanations produces the most feasible hypothesis. Whilst questioning the usage of the word 'coincidence' (ibid), it seems correct to state in the case of horror directors of auteur sensibility that they utilise the conventions of genre as 'shorthand enabling [them] to go straight to the heart of [their] concerns' (ibid). Romero's use of zombies to critique post-Fordist consumerism, Argento's use of the Giallo to expose the chaos and nightmare which lies below the surface of capitalist society as he sees it, Cronenberg's extension of 'mad scientist' films to detail a contemporary society increasingly alienated from itself through advancements in science, Buttgereit's perverse fusion of sex and death to deconstruct the German socio-political circumstances before and after the fall of the Berlin wall, and Craven's textual struggles between polemical family groups to examine the degradation of humanity through conflict all support this view.

Typically these directors write, direct and produce their films in order to maintain maximum artistic control. In each case aspects of generic texts are moulded to directorial

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[9]For further discussion see Bazin [1967] 1992.

concerns; these remain stable though expressed in vastly differing ways through their entire catalogues of work. Cronenberg texts, for example, may be identified through the presence of concerns regarding the manipulation of the body and self by modernity and the enforced ravages of creative cancer/mutation and change on the human body and/or mind; to some degree all of Cronenberg's films delimit their narratives through this concern - even apparently non-horror texts such as M. Butterfly (1993)[10].

Similarly intelligent name horror directors (Hooper, De Palma or Carpenter[11]for example), whilst producing hugely influential films with considerable skill, containing several layers of meaning and social deconstruction (for example, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Dressed To Kill [Brian De Palma, 1980]) have not displayed a sustained thematic consistency throughout their texts (cf. Hooper's Life Force [1985], De Palma's Casualties Of War and Carpenter's They Live [1989]). De Palma's war film shares no significant concerns with Dressed To Kill, whilst Hooper and Carpenter's two films deal with alien invasions, operating in vastly different ways to their other works. The social satire of big-business evident in They Live (the aliens' allies are human business executives who reap financial rewards because of alien subliminal advertising) is not evident within other Carpenter text, with the very limited exception of In The Mouth Of Madness.

Similarly, Hooper's deconstruction of capitalist modernity, so central to The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, is not evident in Life Force. It is hard to trace unified, consistent bodies of political and thematic concern throughout either Hooper's or Carpenter's films in the same way that we may in Cronenberg's or Craven's. Craven's The Last House On The Left, The Hills Have Eyes, A Nightmare On Elm Street and The People Under The Stairs (1991) all

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[10]See Rodley and Cronenberg 1992.

[11]All of whom are labelled auteurs by Kim Newman (1988), though for Newman most name directors of horror are best considered auteurs.

contain de-constructions of the threatening and monstrous post-Fordist family through violence and images of destructive parenting; even Freddy assumes the role of destructive father when he says to his victims in A Nightmare On Elm Street, 'you are all my children now', underlining Craven's thematic concerns.

This is not to claim that Carpenter's films are less valid than those by directors with a distinct auteur sensibility; they are often *more* valid and are of great critical value for this thesis, as I am concerned generally with unintentional bodies of meaning evident within texts. I do not argue for validity, or claim that analysts should value structures of meaning derived from analysis of certain texts above others because of the permanence of directorial vision; rather I propose that the polemical opposition of genre and auteur theory needs revision in order to assess critically horror texts in relation both to socially informed structures of meaning *and* the presence of limited conscious directorial input within texts where it is clearly evident.

Rodley claims that 'Cronenberg is likely to be unsympathetic to the notion that the auteurist discourse is redundant merely because it construes thematic consistency as solely personal and in no meaningful way societal' (Rodley and Cronenberg 1992: 18). For Cronenberg, the auteur remains an unconscious vehicle for discourses of social ideology, fear and moral structures, as well as a conscious 'voice' behind the text. Whilst filming VideoDrome (David Cronenberg, 1982), he therefore began 'to understand more of what was going on in the movie' (ibid: 98). Textual coherence is produced from a fusion of Cronenberg's thematic concerns and projections of ideological structures onto developing texts, independently of his intentional narrative control.

Displaying typical post-Fordist paranoia, Cronenberg states that in his texts, 'nobody's in control' (ibid: 67), and that 'you have these little pockets of private and personal chaos

Cronenberg directs Naked Lunch.

brewing in the intestines in the structure of society, which likes to stress its order and control' (ibid: 25). This chaos within order and control emerges in part through Cronenberg's fascination with social organisation, focused through the mechanics of sinister institutions representative of elements of post-Fordist and governmental organisation: Consec in Scanners (1980), Spectacular Optical in VideoDrome, Starline Tower in Shivers, the Keloid Clinic in Rabid, the Somafree Institute in The Brood (1979), Interzone in Naked Lunch, The Canadian Academy Of Erotic Inquiry, The Institute of Neo-Venereal Disease, The Oceanic Podiatry Group and The House Of Skin in Stereo (1969) and Crimes Of The Future (1970), government in M. Butterfly, the organised car-wreck fetishists of Crash and, by association, the whole scientific and medical community in The Fly and Dead Ringers (1988) respectively.

Cronenberg's conscious concerns seem to derive from deep-seated fears, anxieties and assumptions regarding the positioning of individuals within modern culture. In particular his fascination with corrupt and corrupting institutions has a two-fold basis. Initially, and most obviously, this stems from general unspoken concerns regarding governmental institutions and their corrupt, covert manipulations during and subsequent to Watergate; indeed, Shivers' nightmarish vision of the respectable institution of Starline Towers gone morally bad was released in the year following Nixon's resignation. Historian John Morton Blum records that Nixon's farewell speech underlined the American public's already prevalent feelings of paranoia

regarding their government through the untruths and the projected sense of false martyrdom that it contained:

> 'Sure we have done some things wrong...' [Nixon] said, 'and the top man takes the responsibility'. But it was the top man's underlings who were going to prison. Then another lie: '...no man...came into this Administration and left it with more of the world's goods than when he came in' (Blum 1991: 473-474).

Furthermore, after Nixon stood down on August 8th, 1974, his co-accused were still facing trial for, 'as the prosecutor put it...their parts in the "massive, covert, secret operation"' (ibid: 474) that was Watergate.

It may be argued that this very public accusation of governmental corruption would have underlined social feelings of paranoia and concern as to who was really 'pulling the strings' of America, and these concerns appear to have become physically realised in Cronenberg's narratives. Within weeks of Ford taking office, he had 'granted Nixon a 'full, free and absolute pardon' for all crimes he had committed against the United States during his presidency.' (ibid). This, I would like to claim, furthered public paranoia through the discovery that in America's 'land of the free' 'there were two standards of justice [which]...let [a] major felon remain untried, unconvicted...[It seemed that] the greater the crime, the less the accountability' (ibid).

Cronenberg's Body Horror, drawing upon such anxieties, is itself an off-shoot of the Possession narrative, in which forces of evil enter, change and mutate the human body. Though his concerns are channelled through representative institutions, similar concerns (and specifically concerns surrounding Watergate in texts generated during the 1970s) are, as we shall see, also highly evident in Possession narratives. What allows Cronenberg auteur-sensibility is that he fused these anxieties with other issues, both ideological and physical, and

developed and evolved them continually through each of this films.

Cronenberg's concerns appear to develop along similar lines in the 1980s, and, it may be argued, were fuelled partly by Reagan's demonising of governmental bureaucracy and his outspoken desire to cut back on funding to unnecessary, financially draining internal agencies. Reagan claimed that such governmental agencies were overly bureaucratic, controlling and interested in protecting their position through the over use of 'red tape' at huge public expense instead of being of true benefit to the public. He characterised such agencies as being both covert and self-interested, whilst, it seemed, he was also guilty of acting covertly, for example when

> without prior congressional consent, [he] ordered [the] invasion of Grenada and an American military presence in Lebanon', and when 'the CIA conspired with...Reagan's national security staff in defiance of the law [to]...secretly and illegally (arrange) to transfer monies obtained from Iran to antigovernment [sic] forces in Nicaragua (Blum 1991: 478).

As Jeffords claims, during this period heroes in Action films, typically embodying Reagan's macho politics, and so implicitly supporting him, fought increasingly against examples of the covert agencies and bureaucracy which Reagan condemned, it may be claimed, hypocritically: in Rambo: First Blood Part II (Geroge P. Cosmatos, 1985) Rambo struggles against governmental-military bureaucracy which forbids him to rescue political hostages, and which later abandons him to die, for example. These values were instilled in Reagan perhaps by his frustrations at an overly bureaucratic congress which employed 'red tape' to prevent him from, as he saw it, 'doing his job' (Jeffords 1994: 60). The same is clearly true in Cronenberg's films in which, as in RoboCop, heroes struggle against sinister agencies, operating typically with government permission but without full government knowledge of

their activities[12].

Such post-Watergate concerns (and post-Iran-hostage crisis concerns, also centring around the weakening limitations of bureaucracy through Carter's inaction) actually vindicate the government, for it is always seen to be corrupt individuals, rather than the system itself, who are ultimately to blame and the removal of whom ensures a better future society: this constituted Reagan's justification for his streamlining of government and, in conservative, pro-Reagan (typically Action) films, this empowers narratives frequently. Cronenberg, through his continual figuring of sinister institutions as representative of aspects of covert governmental operations and interference in agents' lives, is able to challenge such policies, and does so subtly throughout his texts, employing Body Horror as a metaphor through which to explore the life-changing physical and mental effects of such control on agents.

However, Cronenberg also focuses upon more specific political concerns which arose during the genesis of his texts. For example, Dead Ringers, appearing in the year before Reagan's term ended, details the obsessive and destructive love of Beverly and Elliot Mantle, twin male gynaecologists, for Claire Niveau, one of their patients. The brothers, apparently identical in every aspect, appear to share a soul. However, differences emerge: it becomes clear that Beverly's personality constitutes the more female side of their combined yin/yang identity. Whilst Elliot is colder, shallower and has greater casual sexual experience, Beverly is caring, warm and more capable of establishing emotional rapport. Beverly's attempts to exist on Elliot's terms ultimately destroy them both.

Such concerns seem to parallel those regarding the Reagan to Bush transference of power in 1989, and the concerns leading up to it in late 1987 and throughout 1988. The

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[12]In RoboCop this is OCP, a company which has privatised the police; its CEO controls a major drugs operation.

Republican ideal, which was, as Jeffords establishes, presented in terms of a father to son transference of power from Reagan to Bush, implied common policies and political perspectives for the two presidents, despite Bush's indications that he would compromise Reagan's macho politics. The alliteration between Beverly and Bush reflects their *apparantly* broadly similar approaches to others; as Elliot and Beverly are professionals seemingly constituting one mind but are actually subtly different, so are Reagan and Bush. Bush, like Beverly, is the more 'feminine' of the connected minds and bodies, rejecting elements of Reagan's Elliot-like cold, macho policies for ones of more understanding and emotion. Bush, with his different ideals, distanced himself through a gentler body of some domestic policies whilst outwardly supporting the general political ideals of his predecessor.

Bush also adopted a policy of judging individuals and governments by their present actions rather than their past histories[13], allowing him to accept Nixon's current policy advise rather than rejecting it on the grounds of his past record. This, opposing Reagan's rather more long-term negative reaction to problematic events and policies, could potentially have made Bush appear weak. Therefore, it may be argued that the apparent ideological battle between Reagan's and Bush's values generated anxiety about which policies and stances Bush would reject or maintain. Bush, then, needed to forge his own distinct personality through the amendment of Reaganism to incorporate his own ideological perspectives. It is possible to claim that contemporary public anxiety focused on this transference of power and the implications for America of the splitting of two previously apparently harmonious personalities into their constituent parts[14]. Cronenberg's film proposes (and pre-empts actions taken by Bush) the embracing of a single distinctive personality, since compromising emotion and

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[13]For further details and historical evidence see Jeffords 1994, especially 102-103.

[14]Also a subtext of the contemporary comedy Twins (Ivan Reitman, 1988), which featured the Republican figure of Schwarzenegger embroiled in a similar conflict.

policies to adhere to the personality of another results only in confusion, weakness and destruction.

Cook's second explanation of genre/auteur cross-over may be merged productively with the first: before Romero, Zombie films were typified by White Zombie (Victor Halperin, 1932), or, in a more extreme (and unusual) example, Hammer's Plague Of The Zombies (John Gilling, 1966). The post-1968 (post-Night Of The Living Dead) Zombie text is entirely different in aesthetic construction, theme, narrative convention, character, setting, special effects - in fact Romero's influence is apparent in almost every aspect of 'new' Zombie coding.

The new zombie mythos: Night Of The Living Dead.

After Romero's convention shattering and audacious début, a return to the calm mysticism of Halperin's text is surely impossible for it would break what has become new generic conventions and anticipations[15]. Romero constructed a whole new mythos which has entirely replaced the previous generic conventions of Zombie texts. Romero eliminated the figure of the Boker/magician, removed magic from its crucial positioning at the causal head of the Zombie narrative, and replaced it with vaguely defined scientific (modern as opposed to archaic) causation. Furthermore he amalgamated the resultant code with that of a separate horror coding - that of the vampire text. Post-1968 zombies become carriers of the 'disease' of reanimation; those bitten or killed by zombies now transform into zombies themselves.

Zombies are no longer the exploited slaves of White Zombie but an apocalyptic force of

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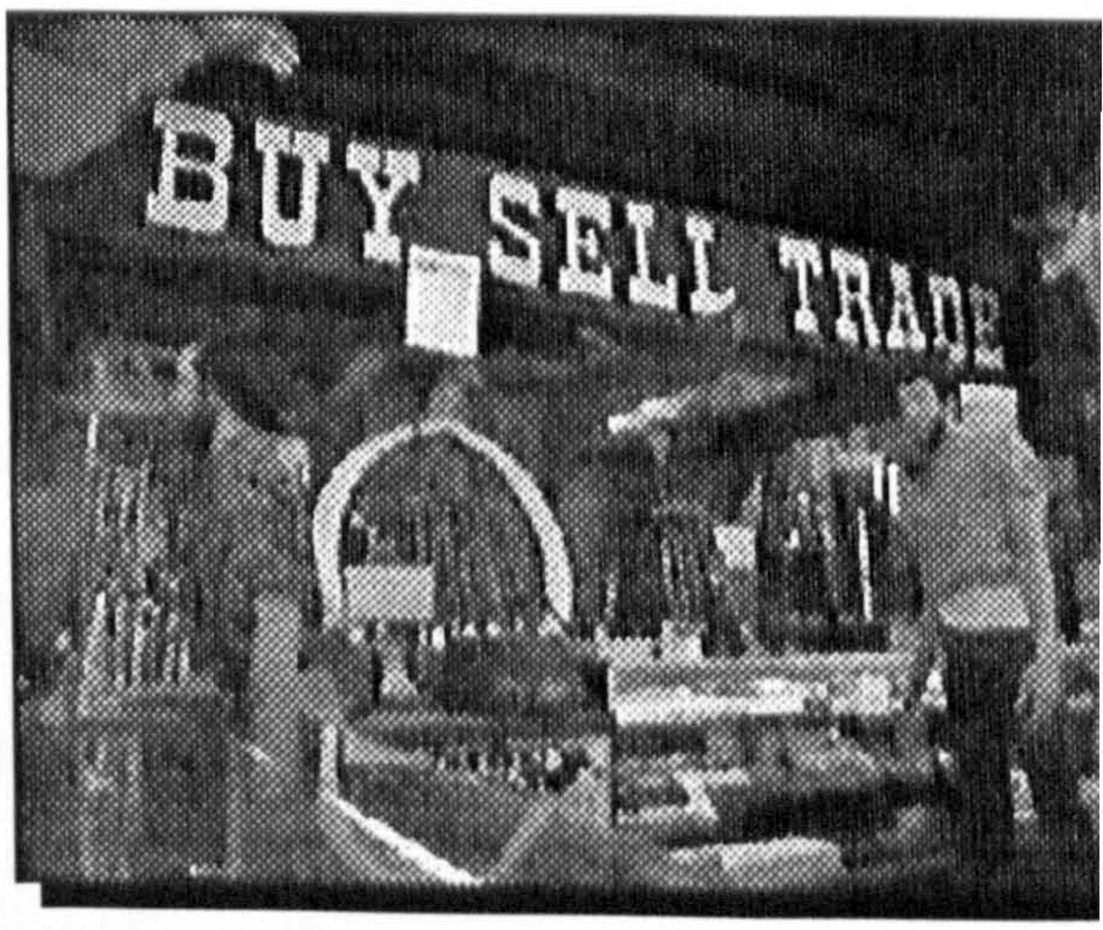
[15]Perhaps the only recent text to attempt this is The Serpent And The Rainbow, though it still utilises elements of Romero's new Zombie coding in much of its imagery.

Romero's zombies go shopping.

regressed consumerism; famously, Dawn Of The Dead takes place within a deserted shopping mall, for zombies now gravitate to places (representative of political structures, here post-Fordist consumerist ideology) that meant most to them in life.

Infusing his work with a recognition of the power and control evident throughout post-Fordist consumerism, Romero therefore terms his zombies 'blue collar workers' in Document Of The Dead[16] (Roy Frumkes, 1993). Bourdieu claims that the working class can only rebel against systems of exploitation in which they exist by evoking physical strength, en masse to both withdraw labour and, if this does not succeed, threaten violence (Bourdieu 1984: 382). Romero's blue collar workers rebel in these terms only when free of the controlling system physically, through death. The physical strength of groups is used in zombie attacks since it is rare for single zombies to attack - heroes typically face zombie crowds; they threaten and carry out extreme violence and, through death and rebellion against consumerism, withdraw and seek to actively destroy labour on a global scale.



Consumer culture advice: Dawn Of The Dead.

Here consumerist advertising transcends death; zombies un-thinkingly desire material items for which

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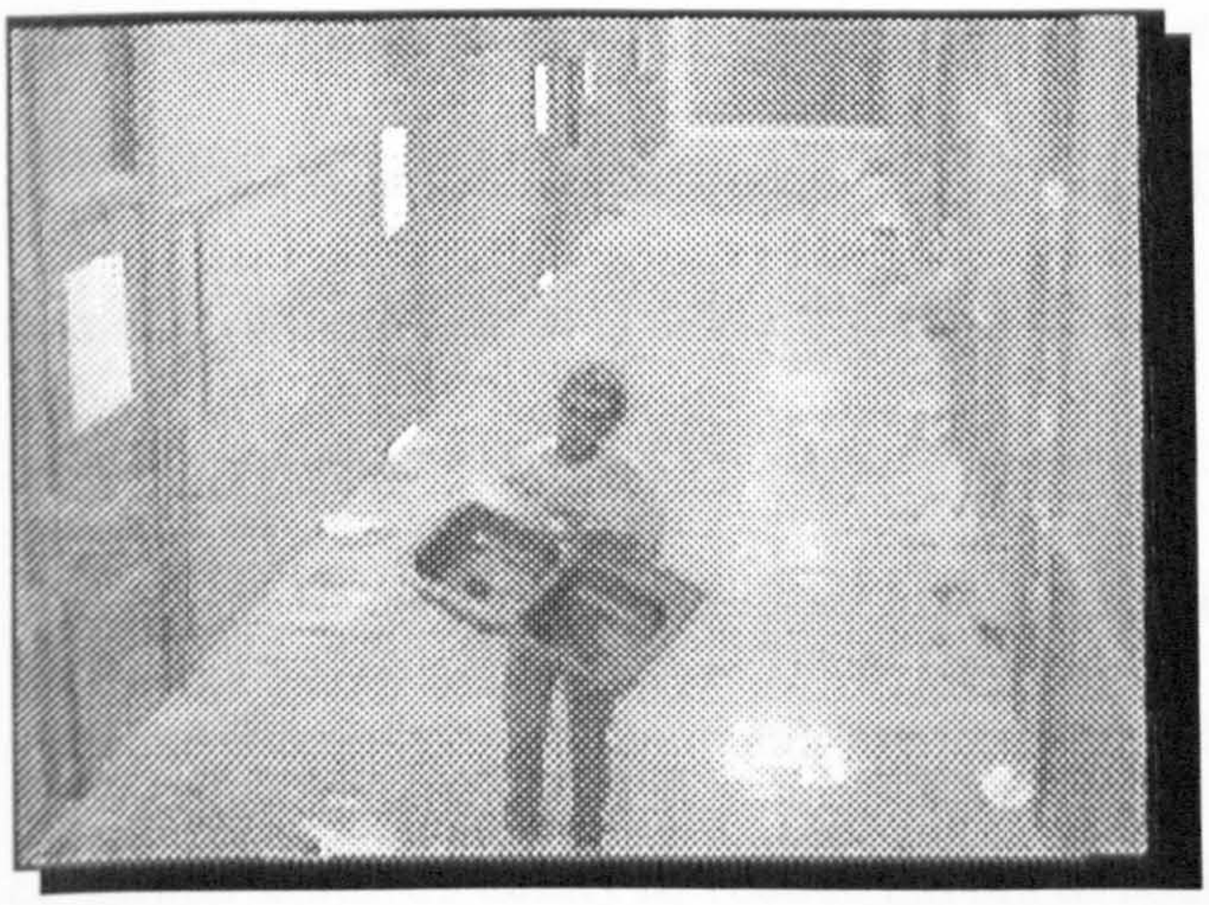
[16]A comprehensive documentary covering Romero's career up until 1993.

they now have no use (televisions, clothes and sporting equipment for example), fighting each other and human survivors to gain possession of them constantly. This new series of generic conventions became so firmly established that it is open to parody; Twisted Sister's rock tribute to Romero, Be Chrool To Your Scuel[20] (Marty Callner, 1985) has its final zombie making off with the kitchen sink. As a result of the competitive market basis of the modern capitalist frame surrounding Zombie texts, zombies are no longer harmless reanimations but now function only to devour human flesh, spreading their infection and perpetuating their new un-thinking order - a metaphor for post-Fordist consumer ideology in which the zombies now literally 'consume'.

However, under Carter, fears of 'going soft' on Communism were rife, fuelled by high profile public criticism from figures like Nixon. Dawn On The Dead reflects such concerns: it may be argued that Romero's zombies are not only symbols of consumerism but also partly represent a cultural fear of Communism. They form a cohesive, destructive invading force, concerned with infiltrating and destroying American capitalism through their sustained attack on the mall and are of one limited mind: their 'mission' is to spread their mode of existence through the world until its population is reduced to un-thinking social machines in a corruption of society where death is favoured over life.



Kitchen sink drama: Be Chrool To Your Scuel.

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[20]Which, like Romero's films, had its special effects designed and featured a cameo by Tom Savini.

Dawn Of The Dead was created during the Vietnam war, and in a period when it had become clear that Communism would be victorious and America must concede defeat. As if to underline this, the special effects created by Savini were inspired directly by the horrific injuries he had been compelled to document during his time as a combat photographer in Vietnam[21]. Savini has stated that 'I felt a kind of safety behind my camera...perhaps my mind was seeing it as special effects to protect me. It was a distance I could not cross until long after I came back' (Savini 1983: 12). Furthermore, the real horrors that Savini documented, such as discovering,

> a human being blown nearly in half by a grenade blast...a human arm, one end of it jagged and torn, and the other, its fist clenched and grabbing the ground, completely severed from the body it was once attached to...[and] friends who've had certain private parts of their bodies blown off (ibid)

are all reproduced, to a greater or lesser extent, in Dawn Of The Dead. Romero's text, re-addressing the anti-Vietnam concerns of Night Of The Living Dead, also operates as a scathing critique of (para) military machismo and, especially, male excessively macho combat and survival tactics.

As in the original Invasion Of The Body Snatchers, common cultural fears (of the same invading ideology - Communism), are fused with broader fears - dominantly post-Fordist consumer culture's ability to reduce agents to social 'zombies' - and the specific, personal and individualised fears and concerns of the creative team producing the film. It is therefore no coincidence that Dawn Of The Dead, drawing on Savini's immediate experiences, set a new precedent for on-screen violence.

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[21]It was only his period of active service that prevented Savini from being involved in the creation of Night Of The Living Dead a decade before.

In the Reagan-era sequel, Day Of The Dead, Romero's anti-macho stance takes its most extreme form. Conflict emerges in a military bunker in which a macho, hard-bodied Reaganite army clash with the intellectual, academic, peaceful and socially motivated medical scientists. It is the inability of the Reaganite hard-bodies to compromise their aggressive machismo that leads to the destruction of the few remaining survivors of the zombie invasion which began seventeen years previously in 1968. Romero produces a devastating critique of the Reagan ideal of the macho hero, figuring such ideals as un-thinking and ultimately self destructive: here, under Reaganite machismo, not only the last hopes of America, but the last hopes of the world are destroyed as the zombies finally populate all, it is suggested, but remote Caribbean islands[22].

The stars of Day Of The Dead are Savini's zombies, now considerably more decayed and repulsive after seventeen years of rot, and the focus is on their soft-bodied, horrific physical putrefaction. Romero has produced the antithesis of the Reaganite vision of bodily and mental perfection in the final text of a sustained satire of contemporary politics which covers almost two decades. If Rambo, produced in the same year as Day Of The Dead, underlines total support for Reaganite physical and ideological idealism, then Romero's text underlines total opposition. The focus on American physicality in Romero's film opposes that of Rambo directly: here bodies fall apart, are weak, un-thinking and repulsive instead of hard, heroic, muscular and sculptured. Furthermore, Day Of The Dead's potential Reaganite heroes (the military) are figured as idiotic, destructive and, ultimately, the characters that audiences are lead to read as evil, since they pose more of an immediate threat to the heroes than the

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[22]Revealing Romero's inversion of pre-Night Of The Living Dead zombie-lore, where such a location would have housed the threat rather than being a last resort for mankind, and would be somewhere to escape from rather than to. In Zombie Flesh Eaters (Lucio Fulci, 1979) though the main location is such an island the cause is still medical science rather than magic.

zombies.

Since Romero, Zombie texts tend to centre around the entrapment and subsequent graphic destruction and re-animation of microcosmic groups of survivors; Romero retained little of the previous zombie coding when forging his own code which is, as a director of auteur-sensibility, infused with his personal concerns. As a result, Romero's revised code has become the standard against which all other Zombie texts are now evaluated, at both academic and popular levels, becoming, to all intents and purposes, the last digit in the Zombie 'number' (as Bourdieu would consider it) at the time of his texts' initial releases. However, Romero is no longer the latest 'number', having been followed by others such as Lucio Fulci and Peter Jackson who, building on his coding, have added elements of their own which have or will also become subsequent 'numbers', though never re-writing the initial code comprehensively in the way that Romero did.

Craven, Cronenberg and the other name directors of auteur sensibility also de-constructed genres in which they operated initially, re-codified them and forging careers out of the resultant generic reformations by infusing each new text with socio-political themes. Buttgereit, through Nekromantik, Nekromantik II, Der Todesking, Hot Love and Schramm created the Sex Horror genre, in which sexual perversions of an extreme nature (challenging to dominant aesthetic and moral[ist] ideals of 'good' sexual taste, such as necrophilia and violent sado-masochism) constitutes the horror within his narratives. Distinct from Rape Revenge narratives since no revenge is plotted or gained by victim-protagonists, Buttgereit's formation of code is, like Cronenberg's, based upon central thematic concerns evident at the heart of each text. For Buttgereit sexual horror is utilised to access issues beyond its obvious psychoanalytic implications; he uses Sex Horror to deconstruct a social frame within which gender identity and issues of 'appropriate' moral and sexual behaviour are formulated.

Genre, thematic concerns and social deconstruction are of equal importance, indeed inseparable within the textual codings of horror directors with auteur sensibility, and though their input may constitute only a small part of the diverse 'meaning'(s) analysts may draw from texts, directorial concern is central to the overt plotting of each film.

Sex Horror: Nekromantik.

Such directors may then be considered usefully as often self-conscious generic heretics, and this is usually, in the eyes of strictly generic directors, to the detriment of their careers, if mapped in entirely financial terms. Despite such dismissals from less able directors, the generic metamorphosis of codes which those of auteur-sensibility instigate frequently become an integral part of the future development of the generic form in question.

Popular, dominantly fanzine, writing usually praises these directors hyperbolically as visionary auteurs in the traditional sense; Argento is therefore considered to be 'the genre's [horror's] Greatest Living Director', producing 'an unbroken body of work that is unparalleled' in the field (Balun 1991: 9). Argento's manipulation of the generic coding of Giallo thrillers is cited as his central appeal:

> his consistency of vision, his unbridled, deeply-felt passions and masterful control of his medium have produced a series of films that showcase many of the finest moments ever seen in genre filmmaking [sic] (ibid).

It is the 'unadultered personal vision of genre grandeur' (ibid) that, for Deep Red and many fanzine readerships, maintains Argento's hero status.

In the context of horror analysis, Cook's third explanation is only partly relevant. The conceptualisation of genre as a 'beneficial constraint...control[ing and limiting

directorial]...drive to personal expression' (ibid) appears not to apply in these contexts. Cook claims that the imposition of generic coding (presumably, though not entirely, at studio level in order to utilise and shape directors towards the production of financially rewarding projects) still allows directorial 'theatricality or expressionism of a baroque sensibility' (ibid). Though generic codes may not be reduced to economic considerations, financial returns are a vital factor in their individual longevity. However, when the *whole* body of, for example, Craven's films are studied, it emerges that his most interesting, personally and thematically expressive works were produced at a low budget, independent level.

Typically, horror's directors of auteur-sensibility operate outside of major studios; Cook's third explanation cannot, then, apply under such conditions entirely. When the cited directors do work within studio systems, it is to a limited extent that they are able to transcend studio restrictions and control over subject matter and presentation of material. Craven's most overt expression of personal concerns surface through low-budget independent productions; The Last House On The Left and The Hills Have Eyes retain the power to shock and provoke despite being produced, at the time of writing, over two decades ago, whilst in Shocker (1989) Craven toned down his personal themes seemingly due to studio demands. Craven managed to re-state his personal concerns to great effect through the studio-produced A Nightmare On Elm Street, Wes Craven's New Nightmare, and The People Under The Stairs, though never with the direct power and ability to shock and disturb through extreme imagery that is evident in his early films.

It may reasonably be asked why, then, it is that such directors do not move outside of horror's form and infuse a wider range of cinematic genres with their personal concerns. For an answer we must turn to Bourdieu who ascertains that the ultimate 'value' of art is generated through struggles which authors, producers, promotion agencies and so on undergo within the

cultural field in order to establish their own art as 'legitimate'. Dealers (or cultural businessmen - here cinema distribution companies) form protective barriers between artists and the public, manifesting themselves as pre-publicity, promotion, hype and so on. As, however, artists are also deeply self-motivated and jealous of their name-status and continuing financial situation, dealers and artists collude to produce and market work that is ultimately profitable whilst often advocating economic disinterest and claiming to produce for pure love of artistic expression. This may be claimed to accumulate symbolic capital and kudos for the dealers and artists alongside financial gain (Bourdieu 1993: 78-80).

Studio production systems, then, operate to maintain constant audiences, and therefore constant profit (dependent upon the anticipations of hypothetical audiences being fulfilled) by maintaining the continued production of a body of essentially similar works. Deviation from generic 'normality' then imbues directorial output with a sense of artistry and experimentation even within an apparently reductive generic form. True economic disinterest therefore applies logically to the continuing producers of underground horror, for whom it remains a struggle to produce their texts and who cannot expect more than modest financial gain. The symbolic capital that they gain is from fans, for they are inevitably rejected by media commentators and critics as 'sick'[23].

Horror directors of auteur-sensibility cannot generally rise above the aesthetic and thematic moral restrictions imposed by major studios as it may be claimed that 'true' auteurs can, so operate extensively outside of such systems to create independent productions in order to explore personal themes and emulate underground producers (to achieve true, if only temporary, economic disinterest) within texts. Doing this, they avoid having to struggle

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[23]A Berlin court claimed in 1993 that Necromantik 2 "'propagat[es] violence", has no artistic content and is therefore a "criminal act"', for example (Kerekes 1994: 100).

through value-systems imposed through studio control. Though such directors' independent texts can be powerful and shocking, when struggling against the barriers of aesthetically restrictive studio morality, their personal 'visions' and film-making skills are not generally strong enough to allow their preferred presentations of those visions.

This is revealed in the studio treatment of Craven's Deadly Blessing (1981); the studio originally re-edited the climax of the film to remove the supernatural causation central to Craven's original version. The studio ignored Craven's artistic sensibilities and, despite his sustained protest, reformulated the text to their criteria to gain, as they saw it, better financial return on their initial investment. Similarly, Cronenberg's The Dead Zone (1983), a major studio production, does not express Cronenberg's thematic obsessions to anywhere near the audacious effect of his independent work, typified by Shivers (a reworking of Night Of The Living Dead centring around sexual parasites which unleash gangs of sex maniacs on Canada, heralding a new sexual world order) despite textual potential to do so . In effect those of auteur-sensibility take the easy option by working within independent production systems where they are not restricted in personal expression, since they do not generally possess the power to rise above such restrictions by other means. However, this is not to claim that independent production companies do not also have financial concerns. I do not wish to idealise the freedoms of independent producers; rather I wish to acknowledge that the larger the studio, the larger their financial concerns and so the less confrontational and

Dr. St. Luc is initiated into a new world order in Shivers.

controversial their output will generally be. The smaller the company, the more they are generally willing to confront taboo issues. When taken to an extreme (Buttgereit is entirely self funded, so has responsibility only to his own sensibilities), texts also often become extreme - as evidenced by Buttgereit's output.

Art becomes art when artists are already validated through their monikers (Bourdieu 1993: 81). This remains central to considerations of the artistic status granted to favourite directors by aficionados; as in the visual arts, the signature of artists - whether literal or, as in film analysis, a stylistic approach, common body of themes or certain narrative structures with which directorial output becomes synonymous - becomes, for artists already validated by, for our purposes, fans, a guarantee of the legitimacy and legitimation of each subsequent work. Cronenberg's name alone therefore constitutes a cultural product in its own right based on his previous reputation and celebrity status amongst fans, legitimating, and legitimated by, itself.

Similarly, Romero has become synonymous with a certain kind and standard of film, rejected by many critics[24] but accepted by most fans; he has, therefore, become a self-legitimating brand name through Bourdieu's concept of anticipation; a fact which underlines the market forces shaping the boundaries of his career, and which remain unseen to his audiences. The value of monikers is misrecognised by audiences, Bourdieu claims, therefore endowing artists with automatic legitimacy often regardless of individual textual content; past glories basically constitute an artist's future and present reputation.

Therefore, for Bourdieu, 'faith in the game and its stakes...is produced by the game itself' (ibid) where the game constitutes both the field of cultural production *and* the produced cultural product. The rarity of the art, for Bourdieu, brings social status for customers

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[24]Pauline Kael, for example, claims that Dawn Of The Dead is 'stupefyingly obvious and repetitive...it's just a gross-out' (Microsoft 1995).

through the purchase of that art. Horror fans, in order to combat widespread views of horror's 'common'/non-rare status champion 'exclusive' directors such as Buttgereit whose work, to non-fan audiences, remains rare due to its obscure nature and limited, underground distribution.

Craven returned to the series he initiated to resurrect Freddy for Wes Craven's New Nightmare[25], his first Elm Street film as writer and director since the original. Since 1984, Freddy had become a social institution, appearing on and even hosting chat shows, promoting television series, books and so on. Craven's original home invasion concerns had become lost in the mass marketing of a character rather than a theme. In Wes Craven's New Nightmare Craven re-introduced his original theme through a self-reflexive, multi-layered narrative patterning of diegetic reality de-constructing the Freddy mythos and collapsing the previous texts' internal generic conventions.

Reclaiming control: Freddy on a diegetic cha show in Wes Craven's New Nightmare.

Craven reclaimed control of the generic code that he initiated but which, wrested from him by market(ing) forces, had developed in ways which did not conform to his initial concerns despite being already limited in part through his inability to remain entirely personally expressive through studio restrictions. In fact, an acknowledgement of the studio restriction of Craven's directorial concerns is evident throughout Wes Craven's New Nightmare in the financial obsessions of the diegetic producers, as is a parody of the previous marketing of the Freddy character. That Craven can critique such restrictions yet not entirely rise above them

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[25]The title of which underlines the power of directorial monikers through the privileging of Craven's name.

is testimony to his status as a director with auteur-sensibility rather than what is usually considered to be a classic auteur.

Though technically Buttgereit's films are often unavoidably crude, they are intelligent and thematically consistent. His texts are produced independently, starting off as amateur experiments with Super 8 film and advancing to the 16mm to 32mm blow up of Schramm. Buttgereit crews his films with friends and unpaid amateurs and improvises equipment and special effects with often startlingly effective results: in Schramm for example, a modified shopping trolley was used as a camera harness/dolly during tracking shots, and at one point the camera spirals impressively down from ceiling level into Schramm's psyche. Sexual horror empowers each narrative through multiple castrations, necrophilia, self-mutilation, sexual murder and bloody ejaculation, though Buttgereit's intention is clearly not to shock for shock's sake[26], but to shock economically in order to provoke an examination of the self and wider social reactions to the self through its positioning within ideological structures.

Buttgereit uses the exploitation basis of his work to explore the relationships between society and the hegemonic morality implicit within it which both empower and restrict self-definition and self-expression. Der Todesking rejects narrative continuity in favour of internal thematic continuity. The seven days covered by the narrative detail the deaths of apparently unconnected individuals, identifiable only through what for Buttgereit is the ultimate form of self-expression: suicide. Buttgereit frames his discussion of the objectification of the body and

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[26]Buttgereit's co-writer and assistant director Franz Rodenkirchen claims that 'by showing violence and violence and more violence, you (do not) challenge anything. You just *restore* values and reinforce the opinion of people who think violence in movies should be banned. It doesn't really offend. That's not the way to do it' (Kerekes 1994: 40). Buttgereit later expands on his selective use of shock in relation to Nekromantik's infamous rabbit skinning scene: he 'thought it important to put the rabbit sequence in because there has to be a scene that people are positive is not faked - that...isn't fun any more. That's why I don't understand this 'Glorifying Violence' argument levelled at us, because every time we cut something up it's a mess' (ibid: 43).

self within modernity ('that's the fact in real life. Just the actual death of most people is interesting to newspapers...its a strange relationship - exploitation and real life. Not art imitating life, but art showing it', [Kerekes 1994: 63]) with a reflexive awareness of the generic codings that he has imposed upon himself.

Again, Cook's first two explanations are useful here - Buttgereit explores the usage of genre by expanding the boundaries of a recognised code (Sex Horror is the distillation of Body Horror to its primary concerns - the body and sexuality), displaying a distinct auteur sensibility throughout his work. Der Todesking reflects such considerations internally: early in the film a man is tortured by the S.S and castrated graphically. Subsequent sequences, though extreme and highly disturbing, are not gruesome. Buttgereit manipulates audience anticipation intentionally: the S.S scene 'was a conscious effort to say, 'Look, I could have made Der Todesking like this' (ibid: 64). The sequence is revealed to be part of an underground horror film which a man is watching. The man shoots his wife, framing the blood splashed onto a wall with an ornate picture frame. This is also revealed to be a film, playing to a room empty but for an anonymous suicide victim hanging in the background. The literal framing of the blood is,

Argento and Jörg Buttgereit
Source: Kerekes 1994: 144.

making art out of sleaze. It's not so much a reference toward horror films in general, but

more of the audience, people who just want to see more violence in the movies and nothing else...just seeing heads blowing away is not interesting to me (ibid).

On an external level Buttgereit is also making art out of sleaze through his texts, consciously and with thematic purpose.

As with Cronenberg, Argento, Craven and Romero and their concerns, this distinct sensibility is evident through the thematic concerns introduced into each Buttgereit film *and* the interplay of textual levels within those films, for example the text within the text imagery above[27]. Such conscious manipulations of generic codings aligned with the textual infusion of strongly personal bodies of concern, is evidence in these directors of considered authorial design. Buttgereit is then, through his underground position combined with the intelligence of his textual discourse, what Bourdieu would term a 'proletaroid intellectual' (Bourdieu 1993: 196), or, in another time, a poor Bohemian.

Here it is useful to refer to Cook, who states that:

> the practice of attributing cultural products back to the name of an individual artist performs an important function in the process of commodity production, ensuring that a product is marketed...as 'art' rather than 'mass production' (Cook 1985: 115).

This appears to be drawn directly from Foucault, who establishes that, historically, "literary' discourse was acceptable only if it carried an author's name...the meaning and value attributed to the text depended upon this information' (Caughie 1981: 286). This identifies a cultural division between the 'literary' and the 'non-literary' which centres around the presence or absence of recognisable monikers. Therefore, 'the name of the author is a variable that accompanies only certain texts to the exclusion of others' (ibid: 284), underlining the 'artistic'

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[27]Which is itself an example of a self-reflexive horror trope through its citation of itself as textual, since it is its own last level of this 'zooming out' of internal texts (the TVs, the framing of the blood and so on).

value of some texts through the direct challenging of this status in other texts.

However, horror, in most cases regardless of the monikers of those with auteur-sensibility, is rarely considered 'art' (examples that are, such as Santa Sangre, usually perform badly at the box office), and, in order to gain maximum financial returns access generic coding at a typically safe, formulaic level. Imagine the box office returns for a hypothetical Friday The 13th film in which no murders occur; audience anticipations of a set generic coding demands adherence to its basic tenets. The most successful recent horror monster cycles (Freddy/Jason/Michael), and some of the lesser ones (for example The Stepfather [Joseph Ruben, 1987] or the Phantasm trilogies) have become generic franchises reaching mass audiences through mass production.

Santa Sangre: considered 'art'.

However, the polemical critical division between 'art' and 'popular entertainment' needs re-addressing, since 'art is constantly appropriated by popular culture, and vice versa' (ibid). Though it seems to be the case that where 'art' and horror meet, mass audience levels fall despite the critical appreciation from fanzines (cf. the limited theatrical release and disappointing financial returns of the universally praised Cronos [Guillermo Del Toro, 1992]), the appropriations of which Cook speaks are dominantly produced by name directors of auteur sensibility. Excepting The Fly, Cronenberg's films also only ever achieve modest box office success[28]; the same is true of Romero, Argento, Craven and, inevitably due to world-wide

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[28]See Rodley and Cronenberg (1992) for more comprehensive financial breakdowns.

censorship, Buttgereit. Within the bodies of these texts, tensions between 'art' and popular culture are played out constantly; debate rages throughout fanzines as to whether Buttgereit's texts are 'sick'[29] or pure 'art', and similar debates have occurred regarding all of the above directors.

Here we must once again challenge Bourdieu's approach to cultural analysis. He claims that divisions of art production exist in regard to the audiences that are anticipated by the artist (Bourdieu 1993: 131-141). This constitutes a reversal of the idea of anticipating audiences, since artists are here seen to anticipate what their audiences anticipate of them and their output.

Nekromantik II: Sick or art?

'Intellectual' art, in the view of artistic establishments, is considered to be that produced by artists for other artists, whilst non-intellectual art is that produced for non-producers and for mass consumption. Given that by Bourdieu's own admission fields of production and consumption are subject specific with each field essentially being autonomous, it does not follow logically that this assumption can be applied to all aspects of culture and popular culture.

Horror, it seems, is an exception to the intellectual versus non-intellectual paradigm of production that Bourdieu outlines, though only in its own terms, with regard to fan audiences. Fan culture often helps to generate underground producers of horror, so audiences become producers to some extent, since a mutual feedback of information and anticipation generates

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[29]In The Flesh, for example, calls Nekromantik both 'the greatest' and the 'sickest' horror film 'of recent years' (7: 11).

artistry from its own ranks. Also, established horror names are considered as producers of intellectual art by fans; The Last House On The Left, for example, is considered by most fanzines to be a highly intelligent exploration of violence within a generic structure which it cleverly exploits in order to give the appearance of an exploitation basis from which it can operate comfortably.

Intellectual producers (for fans distinct from directors who create standard 'B' movie fare, such as most Slashers) cannot therefore be said to simply produce for other producers; not only is film, and especially horror, a commercial form, but its audiences create such fan-defined intellectual producers frequently - for example Buttgereit. For Bourdieu, works and artists are classified by peers and audiences in this way; it is my contention that analysts should be aware that the specific culture of horror production, through the blurring of the boundaries between audiences and artistic producers, merges what is considered intellectual and non-intellectual.

Following broadly Bourdieu's claims that art which is designed and marketed to generate short-term financial gain (essentially a 'quick buck') is the domain of the uncultured, Cook claims that,

> The disposable ideology of 'trash' exploitation films seems...incompatible with the notion of the discerning critic analysing and evaluating films according to their status as classic works (Cook 1985: 145-146).

However, to some extent all horror is exploitation, and we cannot deny a degree of conscious meaning to texts and interlocking generic structures on this basis alone, as Sarris suggests (Sarris [1963] 1981: 65). Such codes may not constitute 'art' in the traditional (bourgeois) sense that a Bergman film does, but this is not a sufficient reason to deny internal coherence to whole bodies of texts and textual structures.

An exploitation film is a cinematic text in which, I would like to claim, subject matter alone, regardless of the quality of execution, guarantees audiences. This does not mean that within such texts personal and societal meanings and ideological structures cannot be projected at limited intentional and extensive unintentional levels. Roger Corman does not have auteur-sensibility as his main concern, by his own frequent admission, was to make a 'quick buck' at the expense of detailing personal concerns through his texts. Corman utilised rigid generic structures and, unlike Romero *et al*, never sought to extend, modify or subvert those codes to aid personal expression. As Twitchell claims, 'artists are cultural architects - they don't want to just restack the blocks of myth, they want to re-arrange them, creating something of their own' (Twitchell 1985: 141). For directors with auteur-sensibility, blocks of myth are generic codes re-arranged to allow and withstand the infusion of limited personal thematic coherence and concerns. Most importantly though, Corman does not constitute a director of auteur-sensibility because, to paraphrase VideoDrome, other directors (Buttgereit, Craven, Argento and so on) have something that Corman does not: a coherent, textually cohesive philosophy.

Though this thesis is concerned primarily with generic codings and unintentional meaning acquisition, it would constitute an avoidance of issues which complicate its essential hypothesis to ignore the fact that certain horror directors produce work infused with areas of conscious meaning and extended generic modification. Such texts allow frequently different and equally vital readings of the social ideologies informing their emergence, the values that they employ and enforce, and the moral and political codes that they seek to dissect, deconstruct or re-enforce.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Gendered Identities: Slashers And Possession Narratives

1: Introduction And Historical Context

Slashers, a dominantly American genre, came to prominence during a period of unprecedented feminist activity and growing cultural awareness of the issues surrounding sexual equality during the 1970 and 1980s. Possession films also emerged during this period: both of these genres centre their narratives around a distinct body of gender issues, drawing upon aspects of cultural concerns prevalent at the time. I shall argue that these genres present different, directly opposing angles on the same historical period and social issues through their figurations of masculinity and femininity, Slashers generally supporting anti-feminist ethics and Possession texts, despite appearances to the contrary, criticising such ethics. Both genres operate through a primary narrative focus on destructive masculinity.

Though critics (for example Clover and Jancovich) have recently searched for anti-reactionary or radical elements in Slashers, when all of these views are taken into account I feel that, ultimately, the most appropriate reading of these films is that they *do* react strongly and consistently against female empowerment. In order to establish this, I will initially provide a basic outline of some of the political and sexual issues which generated concern and debate during the 1970s and 1980s.

The revival and expansion of American feminism in the 1970s had its roots half a century earlier when, in 1923, a womens' group lead by Alice Paul proposed an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the American constitution, designed to ensure sexual equality and the empowerment of women by freeing them from the role of mother, nurse and teacher and allowing them the same rights, jobs and sexual freedoms as men. Paul's proposal was not acted upon and remained only a series of formalised ideals until 1970, when, due to the

renewed interest in feminism that had been gathering momentum since the previous decade, it was presented formally before a Senate committee.

Drawing from Paul's proposals, Betty Friedan formed the highly visible National Organisation for Women (NOW) in 1966 to demand women's rights, and soon:

> every [television] network [and most magazines] devoted special programs [sic] to the reasons for...feminist protest....alert[ing] millions of uninvolved women to the possibility that they too might be victims of discrimination (Chafe [1972] 1996: 295).

From the late 1960s onwards, feminism and the feminist demand for equality grew at an unprecedented rate.

In 1970 the ERA was brought before the House of Representatives where it received great support. Feminists continued to apply direct pressure to the government in order to get the proposal passed. Chafe records that,

> under feminist pressure, the Nixon Administration [sic] required 2,000 colleges and universities to turn over their personal files to the federal government so that it could determine whether females were victims of prejudice in hiring and wages (ibid: 296).

During the same period, and despite vigorous opposition from Church and moralist groups, successful feminist campaigns resulted in reformed abortion laws being passed in seventeen states, effectively de-criminalising already common practices in those areas. Nixon's distrust of feminists grew, and he challenged feminism directly, stating that 'the keystone of...civilisation' should remain the family, in which traditional sexual roles and specifically the mother as the primary child-rearing figure are crucial (Binder and Reimers 1996: 297). Nixon then issued a statement opposing abortion reform directly and emotionally attacking the 'radical' stance of contemporary feminism in the strongest terms.

Subsequently, Gloria Steinem, a feminist writer, was summoned before Congress in

1970 to speak in support of the ERA. During her speech, she claimed that women were biologically superior to men, and, reversing the terms of traditional discourse on sexual roles, that men were 'as strong as women, fleeter of foot, but not very bright' (testimony reproduced in Binder and Reimers 1996: 300). Furthermore, and surely to the horror of traditionalists, she claimed that equality in the workplace was of more importance than children having full-time mothers at home. Though feminism was clearly developing huge support during this time amongst women, it was inevitably through a direct challenging of patriarchal values. Therefore, as Chafe claims, traditionalist 'opposition to change remained both strong and effective' (ibid: 297). Because of this, when Congress approved the ERA in 1972 it failed to receive ratification by the required three-quarters of the states (challenges to it emerged dominantly in the South, many western states, Missouri and Illinois), and was defeated. Despite this, feminism grew and, in 1984, Geraldine Ferraro was the first women to be selected as a vice-presidential candidate.

American machismo was further compromised in 1973 when, for the first time, America conceded defeat to a less technologically advanced foe and pulled out of Vietnam. Blum connects the fall of Vietnam and the rise of liberalism and feminism (all challenges to patriarchal views regarding the 'proper' state of America) with widespread cultural anxieties, since 'liberating forces in personal life had been rapid and dramatic, more so than in most eras of comparable length' (Patterson 1996: 788). As a result,

> Americans expressed more and more open doubts about their ability to get ahead and about the chances that their children would do as well as or better than they had. Faith in upward social mobility - so central to the American Dream - seemed to weaken. Some of the special vibrancy and energy of postwar American culture...seemed in

decline[1] (ibid: 789).

The 'ideal' of American machismo was, for all of these reasons, compromised severely during the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 1980s, under Reagan, this 'failure' of American machismo and patriarchy on both the world stage and at home was deemed a feminisation and a crippling of America under the influence of previous weak leadership (Carter - demonised by Reagan and Nixon) and governmental corruption, primarily during Watergate. Furthermore, Reagan 'never stopped insisting that the [Vietnam] war need not have been lost' (ibid: 770), which underlined common perceptions of the previous presidents, and America under them, as weak - a situation that Reagan set out to reverse. Such concerns, fused with increasing feminist power[2], led, it may be argued, to a desire in some quarters to re-dress the balance of a gender war which increasingly appeared to favour the feminine, framed through Reagan and traditionalists as damaging, dangerous and distinctly un-American[3].

Slashers recognise and respond to such sexual and cultural upheaval usually negatively, interweaving conservative, anti-feminist and highly misogynist ideology into their narratives and generic structures, operating partly to strengthen the 'patriarchal dictate of womanly reputation' (Adorno 1994: 37) compromised by feminism. This is fuelled by the anxieties of audience members responding to feminism's new form of, as they consider it, symbolic anti-male violence. Patriarchal dominance is, therefore, stressed frequently through the advertising

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[1]This, as Blum goes on to establish, was also partly because of economic decline following the 'feminising' American withdrawal from Vietnam.

[2]In 1963 Betty Friedan wrote of the rising feminist backlash against patriarchal rule: she claims that this 'may well be the key to our future as a nation and a culture' (Friedan [1963] 1996: 260). Furthermore, Americans 'can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home" (ibid). Friedan's book sold more than a million copies, helping to 'crystallise a sense of [female] grievance' (ibid: 290) and mobilise women into re-evaluating their traditional sexual positions.

[3]For further discussion and evidence see Patterson 1996 and Binder and Reimers 1996.

of Slasher texts. Halloween is 'the night HE came home' (cinema poster and video cover); the capitalisation of 'HE' suggesting Michael's ultra-masculinity, exaggerated in order to combat the increasing 'feminisation' of America. Nowhere are the Slasher's socio-sexual and political 'ideals' so foregrounded as in The New York Ripper's advertising, which proclaims proudly that 'slashing up women was his pleasure'. Although it is usually argued otherwise, Possession films in many ways answer such misogyny through their internal construction, narrative conventions and language, as we shall discover.

A further immediate context for this during the 1970s was the increasing and highly political role of Rosalynn Carter, who enjoyed great power as America's first lady. Carter considered her to be his primary, finest advisor on political, ethical and moral issues. Rosalynn Carter became one of her husband's top ten advisors, holding a hundred scheduled and countless unofficial, unscheduled meetings with him to discuss policy during his term of office[4].

This, combined with criticism levelled at Carter regarding his seemingly weak political stance, for example regarding his inaction during the Iran hostage crisis, and apparent bowing to Russian demands over SALT II furthered the contemporary view, underlined in the 1980s by Reagan, that Carter was an increasingly ineffectual leader ruled not only by foreign powers and internal weaknesses but also by a dominant wife. Rosalynn Carter portrayed herself as an aggressive, tough and assertive politician, appearing to embody the personality traits that her husband lacked. During his term, Carter, 'building more off the public's weariness than its active support,...implemented many of the foreign policies advocated by the...Left' (Klein: 251), such as cutting defence spending - further apparent evidence that America was 'going

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[4]See Jeffords 1994.

soft' on the world stage.

Female power bases, seen to be emerging throughout society during this period, were now apparently at the very heart of politics, influencing and shaping the country directly whilst male power floundered. Simultaneously, in Britain Margaret Thatcher was the leader of the Conservative party and would soon become Britain's first female Prime Minister, the 'Iron Lady' of politics.

It may be argued that in response to elements of male concern regarding this, Slashers detail the re-suppression of women. In Slashers, attempts by females to oppose patriarchal control end in suppression and/or the destruction of that female or feminist power-base. This generic convention surfaced through repeated attempts to cash in on the phenomenal success of Halloween and through sustained directorial mis-reading and mis-applications of its intelligent internal mechanisms and apparent surface-level ideology, producing the highly misogynist generic structures of texts such as Mutilator (Buddy Cooper, 1984), The Prowler (Joseph Zito, 1981), and Maniac (William Lustig, 1980). It is important to recognise that all Slashers are directed, and frequently written and produced, by men[5].

Slasher texts are divided into three distinct sections which I shall term Cause, Stalk and Fight; in Cause audiences are introduced to the killer and witness and/or discover events which occurred to dislodge his[6] mind - events linked typically to sexual voyeurism combined with violence. Texts not explicitly detailing Cause usually hint at Causal events during their narratives, so Cause in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Death Trap enter the texts through killers' prolonged agonizing over past and present events. Stalk is the longest, central Slasher

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[5]With the exceptions of the highly parodic Slumber Party Massacre (Amy Jones, 1982) and Slumber Party Massacre III (Catherine Cyran, 1990).

[6]The killer is male in the majority of Slashers, the famous exception being Friday The Thirteenth. Even here Mrs. Vorheers was replaced by her son, Jason, in its endless sequels.

section: here killers return to areas representative of Causal space and pursue then kill many people until the virginal Final Girl (the survivor, often fixated upon by killers) fights back. Parallel to this abortive investigations are often under way by ineffective male authority figures such as police or doctors. Fight details the cat and mouse game of evasion and attack between seemingly invincible killers and Final Girls, ending with the apparent elimination of the killer, and frequent hints or actual evidence that he remains alive.

In her analysis of Slashers (Clover 1992: ch.1), Clover considers the Causally-initiated psycho-sexual identities of killers as constituting a *de*-masculinising force which locks them into infantile bisexuality and creates a sexual void within their psyches. Killers becomes asexual cyphers; alleged rejection of gender-specific sexuality provides Clover's crucial reading, delimited through the figure of the killer as a (bi)sexual descendent of Norman Bates. For Clover, recognition of their asexuality disgusts killers: rejecting their inherent femininity they become fixated sexually, partly explaining the generic convention of eliminating couples involved in illicit sexual activity, projecting their rage towards *general* femininity, which results in the mass slaughter of ('most often and most conspicuously') females (Clover 1992: 33). For Clover the killer has no ideology or control over his actions, merely reacting to sexual situations in the only way that he can comprehend. Jancovich agrees that it is the killers' 'lack of conscious motivation which makes...[them] interesting' (Jancovich 1992: 105), and he attempts to validate the sexual politics of Slashers by arguing that they are literally 'killing machine[s]' (ibid: 106), lacking consciousness but operating to their 'own [unconsciously realised] relentless and compulsive logic' (ibid).

I would to claim that these positions do not stand up to close textual analysis; what principally enables Slashers to emphasise masculine dominance is the presentation of sustained psychosexual fury of a different kind, situated and delimited through psycho*social*

considerations which strengthen killers' masculinity rather than diminishing it. Death Trap's Judd therefore murders 'accordin' to [patriarchal] regulations', writing constant, insane reports to unseen hegemonic figures of socially sanctioned patriarchal power - 'Sir's and 'General's. Killers emerge through a complex psychosocial and sexual interchange, existing in a western context of feminist awareness[7] during the generic cycle. Though some East Asian serial killer texts such as Bunman - The Untold Story (Danny Lee, 1992) exist, they do not follow the generic coding of Slashers, and constitute a genre in their own right. Although occasional Slashers do still appear, they are anomalies and often comment upon the original cycle which constituted the dominant horror code of the 1970s and 1980s. For these reasons, I will consider Slashers to have reached the end of their cycle by 1989.

Amongst the many other shifts in conceptions of gender role and sexuality that occurred during this period was the increased usage and availability of the Pill, allowing women access to a device which gave them far greater regulation of their bodies through its ability to control fertility cycles, appearing to also largely free them from social and sexual taboos and restraints[8]. The murder of Judith, Michael's sister, at the start of Halloween occurs in 1963 - a crucial period in both the development of the Pill and the growing social and sexual revolution in which it played a part.

As Jeffords establishes, the period between 1980 and 1989 (Reagan's term of office) was an era of American politics delineated through a series of positive and negative body images. As we have seen, Reagan projected himself as a hard-bodied hero: strong, decisive,

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[7]Which I shall term a post-feminist period, meaning not that feminism has ceased but that agents are now aware of its central truths in a way that they were not, in, for example, the 1950s.

[8]Although this is debatable, since as a man-made device it may also be argued that the Pill places greater male control over the female body, with the added advantage for men of providing the possibility of more regular, commitment-free sex.

resolute, brave and, importantly, macho. This challenged directly the values associated with the preceding presidents: Johnson, Nixon, Ford, and, crucially, Carter. Reagan endorsed positive body images, dominantly those projected by himself of himself. These images were formulated to constitute the Republican ideal and, in effect, were also embodied in another famous Republican, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Further widespread awareness of the 'superiority' of macho idealism came with the resolution of the 1985 TWA hostage crisis (also the year in which Rambo was released). Reagan played the role of heroic protector, figuring the terrorists' taking of the hostages as a direct assault on the American public (as Jeffords records, he told the hostages that 'you were held simply because you were Americans. In the minds of your captors, you represented us' [Jeffords 1994: 37]) from which he had saved them.

Compromising these values were tensions between the positive image that Reagan projected and his increasing age, with its negative implications of weakness and infirmity. It may be argued that Reagan cleverly redirected such anxieties to other groups through the promotion of moral issues, demonising others to distance himself from accusations of weakness. As such, he became considered highly conservative, taking moral stances against anything perceived to challenge traditional 'family values': famously abortion, drug use, promiscuity, homosexuality and AIDS[9] victims.

Recalling McCarthy's allegations of un-American activity, Reagan also attacked and demonised liberal academics, single mothers, welfare recipients, the unemployed and Cuban

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[9]Reagan was often open in his condemnation of AIDS sufferers, whom he considered to be reaping what they had sown. As such he refused continually to provide funding for AIDS research. For further discussion of Reagan's moralism, and especially his 'deafening silence' see Watney 1990: 173. So apparently uncaring was Reagan's aggressive moral stance for the minorities that were demonised, that at AIDS awareness rallies in New York in the 1980s, protesters carried placards displaying photographs of Reagan and the slogan 'the government has blood on its hands' (for this and further evidence see Saalfield and Navarro 1991: 355).

refugees. That which was not moral, macho and 'hard bodied' (healthy, fit, employed and, tacitly, white) was represented as the antithesis of American idealism - as Jeffords terms it, a 'soft body' (Jeffords 1994: 24) typically delineated on grounds of race, class and gender, and 'invariably belonged to a female and/or a person of color [sic]' (ibid). The anti-American soft body was then lazy, unfit, female, ethnic, containing disease, drugs, endangered foetuses, 'inappropriate' sexuality and/or promiscuity. These values, embodied in the typical victims of Slasher texts, become the targets of killers who are defined, like Schwarzenegger, through a bodily image of size, physicality and masculinity.

Adding to concerns regarding Carter's alleged weakness, on January 21st 1977 Carter granted pardons to Vietnam draft evaders, effectively aligning him with those whom the right considered either cowards, Communists, homosexuals or 'beatniks'. That which was considered 'bad' and 'weak' was increasingly figured feminine and, further, feminine in a position of power over men. During Reagan's term, such 'weakness' was challenged comprehensively through the development of ultra-masculine body images.

Slasher killers exaggerate and re-emphasise traditional male sexual and social dominance in order to re-strengthen patriarchy and combat such 'threats' of feminist socio-sexual power. Many Slashers are set during typically American public holidays or celebrations: for example, Halloween, Mother's Day (Kevin Conner, 1980), My Bloody Valentine (George Mihalka, 1980), Happy Birthday To Me (J. Lee Thompson, 1981), April Fool's Day (Fred Walton, 1986), to some extent Friday The Thirteenth and even Black Christmas (Robert Clark, 1974). Killers often exert their suppressive ideology through such cultural family or social events, seeking to re-establish male dominance over the social through the family.

In this way they re-define the focus of family events which, to the increasingly paranoid

traditionalist mind, feminists were gradually removing from male control. In such films, male control is placed back at the centre of these events, albeit in an extreme form: days which traditionally revolved around the male head of the household do so once again, and the forces which sought to remove him are eliminated comprehensively. This re-establishes the basis from which these consumerist events operate - under post-Fordism, the bottom level of capitalist control and consumerism is hegemonic patriarchal rule operating through doxic symbolic violence. However, as we shall see, whilst killers are presented dominantly as the ideal figures to combat the sexual challenge to male rule, Possession texts figure masculinity typically as destructive invading entities controlling the female form through a sexualised bodily invasion which is figured as the antithesis of what is socially, sexually and morally acceptable.

Slasher killers' fury at the attempted 'feminisation' of patriarchy is, then, translated into neurosis resulting in the elimination of 'new' women (figured as sexually or socially equal or dominant) or their symbolic representatives, Carter-esque weakened males. To combat feminist power killers restructure themselves into what I shall term ultra-males; anonymous masculine cyphers of immense physical power and dominance - ie, the Shape. In Maniac, the killer, a social failure of the kind which Nixon claimed that Carter has compelled Americans to become against their wishes, eliminates women who are socially and/or sexually powerful including a prostitute who holds sexual power which men must pay to access. The destruction of such women strengthens his sense of masculinity in a new world in which he is increasingly inconsequential and where he states that the 'bitch[es]' hold power.

Ultra-male idealism associated with and promoted by Reagan continued throughout

the 1980s[10], strengthened by at least two issues of political importance through which Reagan emphasised his macho image. The first was Reagan's much publicised 'strongman' reaction to the Hinkley assassination attempt of 1981[11], and the second the invasion of Grenada in October 1983. Reagan's survival of the assassination attempt has, for Jeffords, especial cultural significance. She argues that, through Reagan, 'like Rambo, the nation can repair itself' (Jeffords 1994: 51) of the 'wounds' (ibid) inflicted on the country by Carter's soft body politics, especially 'Iran, hostages, inflation, Afghanistan, Nicaragua' (ibid). Extending this, the Grenadan solution in particular was clearly constructed through Reagan's press office in terms of heroic machismo: Reagan was presented as storming into Grenada to 'protect' vulnerable US medical students and repelling evil through strong-arm tactics. Carpini terms this Reaganite 'macho mentality' (Klein 1994: 252), a theme expanded upon by Noam Chomsky in an interview with Michael Klein entitled 'The 1990s and Beyond: After the Gulf' (Klein 1994: 285-290): Chomsky claims that similar 'strong arm' tactics were employed by Reagan throughout his tenure in order to continually underline his 'heroic' tactics. The strategy was to:

> pick a weak and relatively defenceless target; organise a huge media campaign to convert the intended victim into a demon...terrify or enrage the domestic population; and then win a rapid, massive, decisive and overwhelming victory over the monster, so that everybody sighs with relief and praises the courage of the leaders who had the

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[10]It is no surprise then that the three Rambo films, which, as Jeffords proves, encapsulate perfectly Reagan's promotion of his political self, span the duration of his term of office (the first appeared in 1982, the last in 1988). Reagan actually referred to Rambo: First Blood Part 2 when, after the US employed tactics directly opposing those of Carter during the Iran hostage crisis, the Lebanon crisis was resolved. Reagan claimed that since watching the film, he knew what action would be appropriate next time.

[11]A further connection to horrific film, since Hinkley was obsessed with Jodie Foster's performance in Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976), and shot Reagan to gain her attention. It is ironic that Hinkley was acting to the macho ideals that Reagan himself promoted.

strength to save us in the nick of time from the threat (ibid: 287).

That this is the case is strengthened by a different political event which occurred two days before the invasion, and which was largely forgotten in the coverage of Grenada that followed: the potentially much larger issue of the deaths of two hundred American marines in Beirut. It may be argued that Grenada essentially constituted a diversion technique to promote Reagan as a hero where, only two days before, he had failed to protect his countrymen.

For Carpini, the placing of American troops in Lebanon 'proved a misguided flexing of muscle' (ibid: 252). Therefore, Reagan's handling of Grenada was promoted in opposing terms - he once again became a successful protector - to silence critics and distance him from the sort of charges which he had levelled at Carter for failure (though, ironically, on a much smaller scale) during the Iran hostages crisis. The success of these events in promoting the aggressive macho ideal of suppressing what is considered feminine (and the Grenadan threatening of the medical students was promoted as cowardly, weak and so, in Reagan's terms, feminine) fuelled the unprecedented boom in the production of Slashers which continued through the 1980s.

Clover's conviction that Slashers detail 'a world in which femininity and masculinity are at desperate odds but in which...masculinity and femininity are more states of mind than body' (Clover 1992: 22) could not be further, I would like to claim, from the truth. This is especially apparent with regard to texts which structure their entire narratives, almost shot for shot, around misogynist values - notorious and banned examples of which being The New York Ripper and Don't Answer The 'Phone (Robert Hammer, 1980).

Realisation of the 'ultimate' machismo, figured through the physicality of killers enables Slashers to denigrate femininity comprehensively, seeking to place it squarely back under masculine social and sexual control. However, it is important to note the misconception that

the misogyny of Slashers is figured primarily through almost exclusive violence against women - it is very frequently the case that equal amounts of men and women are killed, and often more men are killed than women. It is a false, but common, critical assumption, then, that female deaths are given more screen time than the deaths of males. As we shall see, the elimination of male characters throughout the genre frequently strengthens patriarchy subtly, to an often greater extent than the deaths of females despite the contrary appearing to be the case.

The Final Girl's traditionally talismanic virginity and her essential, undeveloped new-feminine/feminist identity (she is sexually naïve, shy and quiet) allows her survival; typically Fight does nothing more than teach Final Girls a lesson in patriarchal ethics. Killers target them because of their *potential* new femininity which is typically on the verge of development, assisted by symbolic feminist midwives - her existing new feminine friends and peer group, who are inevitably destined for elimination. Laurie, Halloween's Final Girl, is the only character figured as a victim that is not seen by Michael and the audience in a state of undress and/or engaged in sexual activity; her bedroom is childishly decorated and whilst her friends look forward to a night of sex she is cast in the twin role of virgin and nurse/babysitter. We are told that she believes in childish 'superstition' and, unlike her peers, has yet to grow out of it. It is Laurie's submissive acceptance of these roles, and these un-threatening facets of her personality that are vital to her survival.

Newman agrees with Wood that killers are 'the essence of pure evil' (Fear 12: 9), killing only because they were born bad. Tudor claims that in Halloween,

> all three women [victims] are appealingly characterised - there is no sense that their activities are represented as inappropriate or immoral. They are...hardly figures who can be seen as inviting their terrible fates (Tudor 1989: 202).

Jancovich agrees: 'rather than presenting these women's activity as threatening to men, [Slashers] present it as normal teenage behaviour...expected by their male partners' (Jancovich 1992: 106-107). It is my contention that this is not the case: that such behaviour remains unthreatening to the male partners of female victims constitutes the crucial social problem envisaged by killers, and what they seek primarily to correct. The fact that such behaviour is presented as expected by males is precisely the killers' point. Similarly, Tudor's previous statement is quite correct from a reasonable, non-traditionalist perspective - but in the majority of Slashers that is not what we are dealing with.

Jancovich mis-reads the sexual politics surrounding the survival of Final Girls: 'it is not sexually active women who are presented as the threat to men [in Halloween], but the female hero, Laurie' (ibid). In fact it is *both* of these groups, for different socio-sexual reasons. Laurie is clearly figured as virginal (she is so nervous of a proposed date that she begs that it be cancelled rather than place herself in a potentially sexual situation) yet is on the brink of sexual womanhood. Jancovich states that 'she...denies the claim that she is a virgin' (ibid); Laurie does not deny this status, and furthermore, if she were to it is clear from the sexually competitive nature of her peer group that this would be out of embarrassment, having no basis in truth. Furthermore, Jancovich's assertion that the 'radical potential' (ibid: 108) of Halloween may be applied to all Slashers is potentially as offensive, albeit unintentionally so, as the misogyny operating in films such as The New York Ripper, since it implies the political and sexual acceptability of extreme patriarchal ethics, figured in frequently extreme forms.

Halloween, a classic from which other Slashers derive their narrative and shot conventions, does *not* operate to a conservative/traditionalist agenda; rather, its subtle subtextual agenda fused with a complex, intelligent and sustained shot convention (specifically the internal framing of Michael within the shot), renders the opposite true; it exposes rather

than revels in the attempted patriarchal suppression of women. Halloween's agenda is to present a metaphor of post-feminist social and sexual suppression, seen through the eyes of those who advocate patriarchy (here Michael), exposing such values as harmful ideological structures; Newman could not be further from the truth when he claims that Halloween's 'only message is 'Boo!" (Newman 1988: 145). Through the generic convention of the I/eye-camera, audiences view the world literally through ultra-male eyes, delimited through Michael's POV Stedicam shots, to further this critique[12].

Halloween's more balanced view of the gender war is not dependent simply upon Carpenter's technical and narrative superiority and originality (which other film-makers distilled to their constituent parts in order to cash in on its success) but also upon the presidential term under which it was created. As a late 1970s Slasher, Halloween, like The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, does not deal with Reagan's later restructuring of American ideals into white, male machismo. Instead, it explores growing concerns and public feelings regarding cultural shifts in sexual roles without being influenced at a fundamental level by Reagan's conservative, prejudiced and negatively formulated value systems. As such, it establishes its critique early, during the titles. As Michael's theme plays on the soundtrack, the camera zooms into the eye of a Halloween pumpkin. The eye is marked as a symbol of the voyeuristic, objectifying gaze within the text; viewers are carried into the eye/window of the

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[12]It is primarily this convention that lesser and often misogynist Slashers misuse. In Halloween, although audiences are placed with Michael via POV, they cannot identify with him and his actions. This is established through a complex and continual disruption of POV in relation to Michael's gaze, as we shall see with reference to his internal framing. Other Slashers, through various aspects of narrative structure (not least their refusal to disrupt POV) attempt to correlate the response of killers with viewers' own. Though the linkage of audience sympathy with killers through POV convention is at best contentious (see Jancovich 1992 and 1994 and Clover 1992), this and the misogynistic tenancies in 'good' characters and general narratives, for example, in The New York Ripper, appears to constitute directorial intention. Nowell-Smith claims that POV is a means of integrating discourse into a text (Caughie 1981: 235). In most Slashers this discourse is of an extreme, misogynist, didactic nature and is strengthened by audience placement literally within the head that has formulated this discourse diegetically. Halloween's continued disruption and breakage of POV renders the text effectively a discourse on the discourse of misogyny.

soul of a natural, yet also *constructed* (for it has been altered to become a symbol of a cultural event - Halloween) object symbolic of evil. The presence of such pumpkin-symbols indicates Michael's presence in the same area throughout the film.

Audiences recognise their distance from the ideology of the eye/I gaze through the abrupt cutting straight from the pumpkin's eye to Michael's Causal POV, establishing the link between 'the evil' of which Loomis (Michael's psychiatrist) later talks, with the I/POV shot. This sequence, what it implies through the distancing of audiences from POV, and the lack of similar devices in the films which followed Carpenter's text, remains vital to our understanding of the film and the genre that it spawned, and therefore also the Possession genre which challenged subsequent Slasher films' perceptions of the period's shifting gender roles.

In order to explore these generic differences, I will now examine the sexual politics expressed through Slasher texts in relation to the subtly different politics of Halloween, before an examination of the figuration of the same issues in Possession texts, and especially The Exorcist.

Gendered Identities 2:

'You can't kill the Boogeyman!':Slashers

'Well Dad, are you proud of me now? Do I measure up?...I am all man. I raped and killed 'em all, and no-one can stop me 'cause I'm too strong. Too smart. And too good.'
-Don't Answer The 'Phone.

Throughout Halloween's Cause, POV is utilised alongside the privileging of phallic objects in the frame to establish an idealised, symbolic patriarchal dominance of the social landscape and the agents who inhabit it. POV is employed primarily in I-stalking sequences. Sandy Flitterman claims that 'the cinematic apparatus is designed to produce the look and to create in the spectator the sensation that it is she/he who is producing the look' ('Women, Desire, and the Look: Feminism and the Enunciative Apparatus in Cinema' in Ciné-Tracts 5 2: 1 reproduced in Caughie 1981: 243). POV is, then, an extreme form of the aggressive look; its power in Slashers lies precisely in the fact that it creates the sensation that spectators are actively producing it, since, recalling Nowell-Smith, POV is discourse and, through its technical operation, positions viewers ultimately within the space of that discourse's generation (for example inside Michael's head).

Cutting from the I-pumpkin to Michael's POV, Halloween's Cause-sequence establishes Carpenter's critique as Michael murders Judith, his sexually active sister, who instigates sex with her boyfriend and neglects her babysitting/nurse role. Her boyfriend is spared as he dominates her and appears to have used her for his own pleasure without emotional attachment to her, dominating female sexuality on his own terms. Armed with a phallic knife, Michael becomes a symbolic malevolent avenging phallus armed with the *image*

of the phallus[1] and employs POV to focus upon phallic objects which dominate both the frame and the social space through which he moves.

Michael dons a mask, compromising and narrowing POV before killing Judith. Masks deny audiences the faces of killers throughout the genre, transforming them into a symbolic every-male patriarchs[2] and representing formally a patriarchal socio-sexual tunnel vision. The stabbing of Judith is figured as a literal penetration and disempowerment of new-femininity by representatively dominant patriarchy through the ideologically narrowed perspective represented by this compromised/narrowed POV. This is focused through the destruction of an external symbol of femininity - he stabs Judith's breasts (a generic convention), transforming her through objectification into disposable, bloody meat.

Michael's penetration is privileged over its effect on Judith since he directs I at the arcing knife rather its entry into her; for the generic Shape sex equals power, and penetration equals elimination, and, as we shall see, it is characters representative of ideologies that are usually destroyed. More misogynist texts such as The Burning (which actually refers to women as 'prime meat') focus on wounding rather than the political act of infliction, distancing themselves from Halloween's deconstruction of patriarchal ethics through often extreme fetishism of the process of elimination, ignoring Carpenter's critique through a concentration on the results of violence rather than the act.

A reverse crane cut reveals Michael/I gazing out of the screen after the murder - an inversion of POV cleverly mirroring the reverse shot from POV to crane, which effectively

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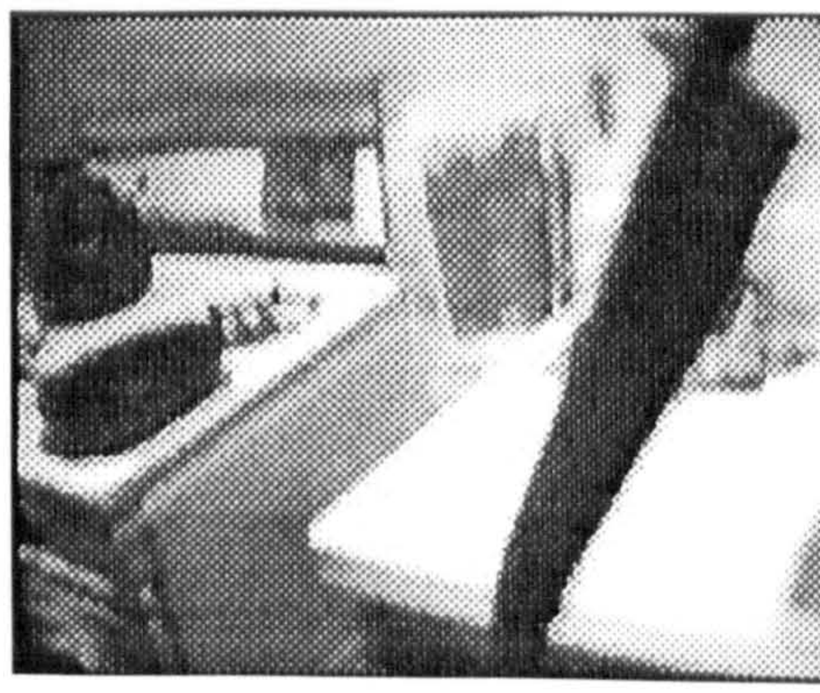
[1]It is rare for Slasher killers to use weapons that are not phallic objects capable of penetration, although limited examples (such as Don't Answer The 'Phone in which simply the actually equally phallic brute strength of the killer is used). Killers must be in immediate physical contact with victims when penetrating them to underline the genre's sexual subtext, and do not, therefore, use more practical weaponry such as guns.

[2]This is explained by Tommy, for whom Laurie acts as babysitter, who states that the Boogeyman is the Boogeyman because he looks like the Boogeyman: as patriarchy personified, his personal features are an irrelevance since he represents extreme ideology rather than personal humanity.

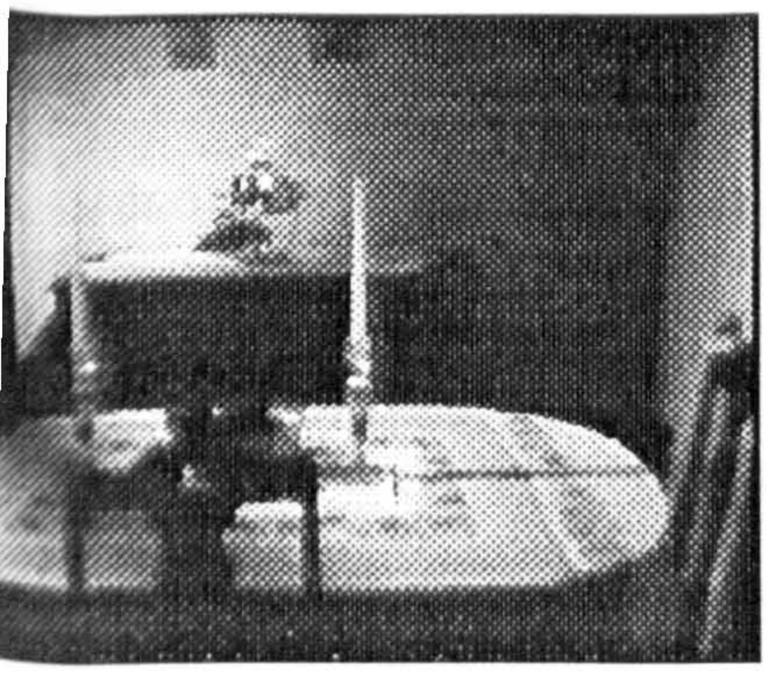
Phallic dominance in Halloween's opening sequence

1. POV Established

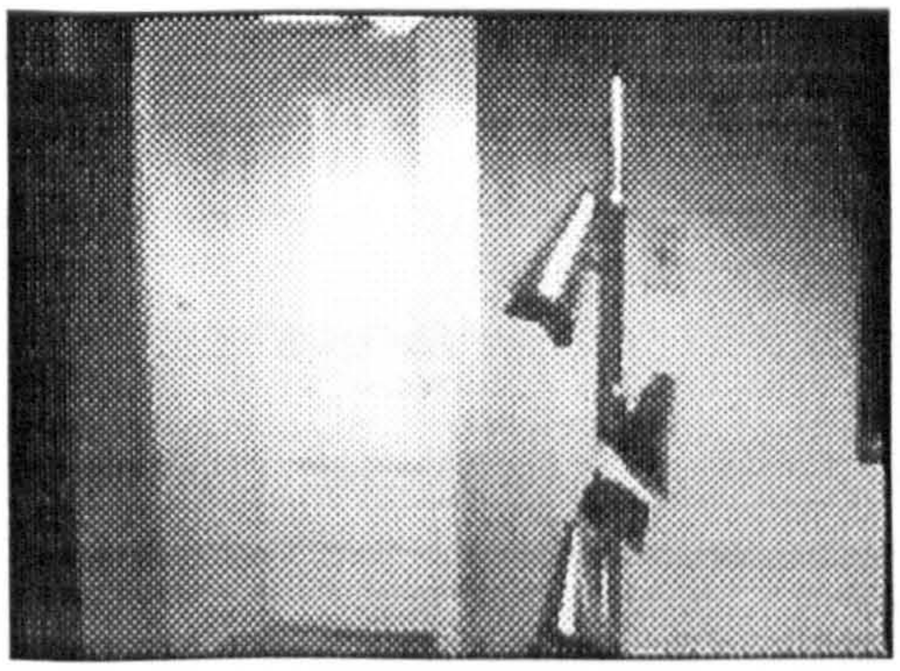
2. Pillars and bannisters



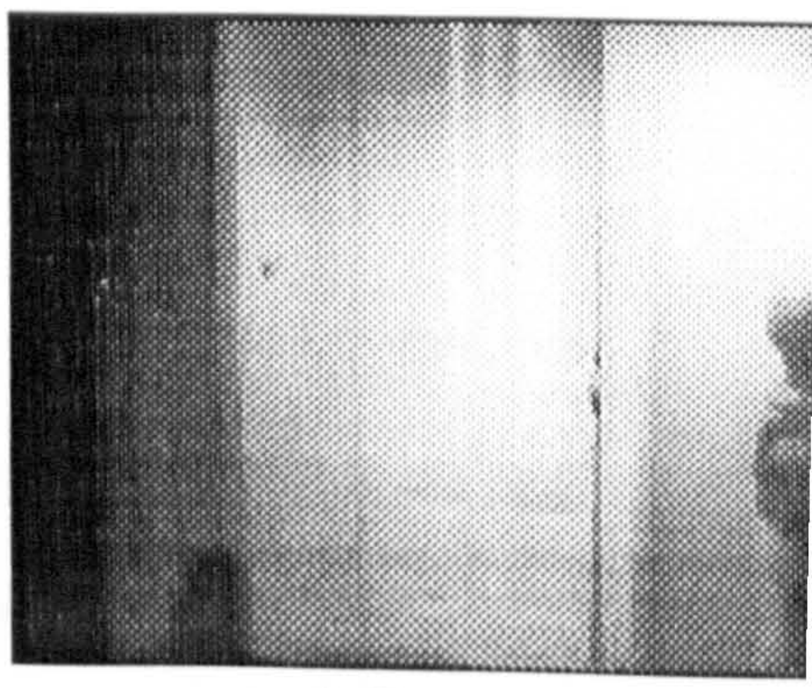
3. Knife



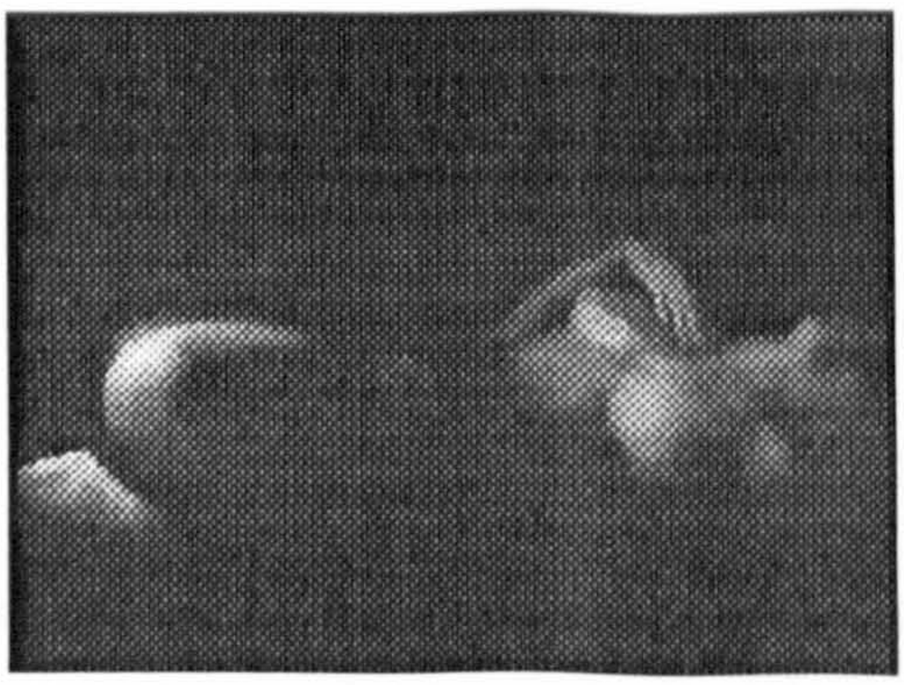
4. Candlesticks



5. Lamp



6. Bannister



7. The penetrated, objectified female

8. POV disrupted and I revealed, wielding the phallus

separates two of the three active Causal looks (camera, audience and Michael, fused to sustain I). Such fusion creates a disjunction of knowledge between audience, characters and subject/I: the audience gazes, not sees (who is 'Michael'?), characters see, not gaze (never commanding the objectifying POV) whilst the subject/I sees *and* gazes. I/Michael remains the only element in this triad of looks and knowledge that understands the who, where, and what of his actions. Tensions underpinning this triad generate suspense throughout the text (when, who, where and why will Michael attack?); the reverse crane cut alleviates Causal tension, providing an answer to a troubling question (who is 'I'?). Causal figuring of Michael through I/POV provides keys to his motivation, whilst the annunciation of suspense and violence through knowledge and look allows the audiences' later association of key shots and conventions with the text's political, socio-sexual theme. It is, then, through such an annunciation that tension and fear is generated in Halloween.

This is underlined during Michael's attack on a car containing a nurse and Loomis, his doctor, during which Michael is internally framed by the car windscreen. Suspense and aggression are figured constantly through such internal frames and through a lack of character and viewer knowledge - like the passengers, audiences do not know where or when Michael will attack. Michael is framed subsequently by the side and rear windows; lack of knowledge therefore articulates suspense through the threat of aggression.

Continual internal framing of Michael distances audiences from his actions; they view a constructed character at two removes: the screen and the internal frame. This counteracts POV convention positioning viewers with killers, further revealing Halloween's *non-*advocation of patriarchy. The nurse survives as she was not objectified by POV, which is not employed during this sequence since suspense and aggression are articulated specifically through its lack. Furthermore, POV remains inoperative as the nurse was clearly subservient

to Loomis during their previous conversation, so does not require objectification and elimination.

It is, however, during Stalk that the aggression of POV comes to the fore as the dominant method of representing stalking. Laura Mulvey argues for a re-assessment of the assaultive masculine look to avoid the objectification of females that POV promotes ('Visual Pleasure And Narrative Cinema' in Screen 16 3: 6-18), stating that the gaze is empowered through the willing voyeurism of viewers and the direct objectification of women that it implies. Stalking killers are without exception voyeurs, and regardless of the often apparent sexual dominance of observed women, males gazing at females without their knowledge renders them passive recipients of the masculine look for its duration. As Flitterman claims,

> in the dominant patriarchal system of representation the active/looking, passive/looked -at split is delineated in terms of sexual difference; men are the active bearers of the look, women are the receivers. Through the look (always aggressive) and the articulation of point-of-view, woman is implicated in a position of passivity (Flitterman [1978] 1981: 245).

Furthermore,

> the strong visual erotic impact of the highly coded image of woman connotes to-be-looked-at-ness. Within the diegesis, the male character bears the look of the spectator; as protagonist he controls the events, as the spectator's surrogate he controls the erotic power of the look. (ibid).

However, once POV is removed textual women are free to re-assume dominance. POV is, therefore, not sufficient to challenge the immediate 'threat' of sexual equality, though is used, due to the erotic control over women it implies and the killers' sex equals death equation, to target potential victims through voyeuristic objectification. It is during Stalk that killers try to

halt female empowerment and male weakening permanently through rendering the offending agents eternal victims through elimination or by teaching them a lesson in patriarchal ethics.

Loomis refers to Michael as 'it'; his refusal to accept Michael as a male cypher underlines his ineffectiveness - a typical post-Fordist authority figure, he is reduced to mumbling prophetic warnings, admitting that he is terrified of Michael, the child with 'the Devil's eyes'[3]. He is of little practical assistance, protecting his weakened authority through a denial of Michael's ultra-masculinity, for which he is later taught a lesson in dominance. Generically, Loomis should be eliminated for his 'feminised' role, but Halloween's atypical agenda allows him to learn his lesson alongside Laurie; by the end of the film he admits that Michael is the 'boogey*man*'.

This atypical agenda is established primarily through Michael's internal framing each time he appears during Stalk , by school and car windows, to the left by a hedge and by Laurie's bedroom window[4]. Each time a shot/reverse-shot occurs between Laurie and Michael, Michael disappears as she attempts to return his look. Michael gazes upon Laurie, but she and the audience are denied potentially objectifying return gazes; reluctance to stabilize as an object of gaze privileges Michael's scopophilic tendencies over the audiences'. Furthermore, Michael's *apparent* POV frequently splits, introducing a part of Michael (the back of his head, a shoulder or a leg) into the frame. It is only later as Michael's ideals are translated into direct violence that he begins to stabilise in the frame.

In seemingly stepping out of his own POV, Michael's movements ensure a different

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[3]In The New York Ripper Peter slices a victim's eye in half, halting potential new-feminine usurpation of the male gaze. The ruined un-gazing eye contrasts with Michael's 'blackest eyes' and Peter's POV, revealing the I/POV to be exclusive male territory.

[4]The dominance of windows (gazing devices) allows the interplay of gaze (Michael) and response (Laurie), conversely framing Laurie from Michael's perspective - when combined with his gaze, a further objectification of her.

audience response to most Slashers: firstly a critical distance is forced upon them, exposing their voyeurism (since horror audiences anticipate violence) through a simultaneous equating of audience gaze with Michael's and audiences' immediate distancing from it. Audiences think they are Michael and are constantly revealed to be simply themselves. Secondly, this establishes Michael as the only character that audiences remain unable to dominate - even when viewers are sure of his position (I), he is literally one step ahead of them.

Slashers not employing this considered and consistent device seek typically to eliminate, in the most graphic ways possible, all women who are sexually active outside of the patriarchally controlling structure of marriage[5], women who are socially empowered, usually either through a powerful job or dominance over men, and the men who allow such women to operate (especially dominated sexual partners), and who are figured as being weak because of their compliance to this. For example, in Visiting Hours (Jean-Claude Lord, 1981) the killer targets a woman who is an investigative reporter and television celebrity at the studio where he polishes the floor. Prostitutes are, therefore, especially targeted since they are not only sexually powerful, but men must pay to access their sexuality, compromising their dominance. So disturbing are such women to dominant masculinity, that when Tatum, the killer of Nightmares In A Damaged Brain, encounters such women (memorably whilst attending a sex-show in which a performer takes control of a representative phallic dildo, therefore distancing her sexual pleasure from 'real' masculinity) he is racked with pain and has a form of epileptic fit.

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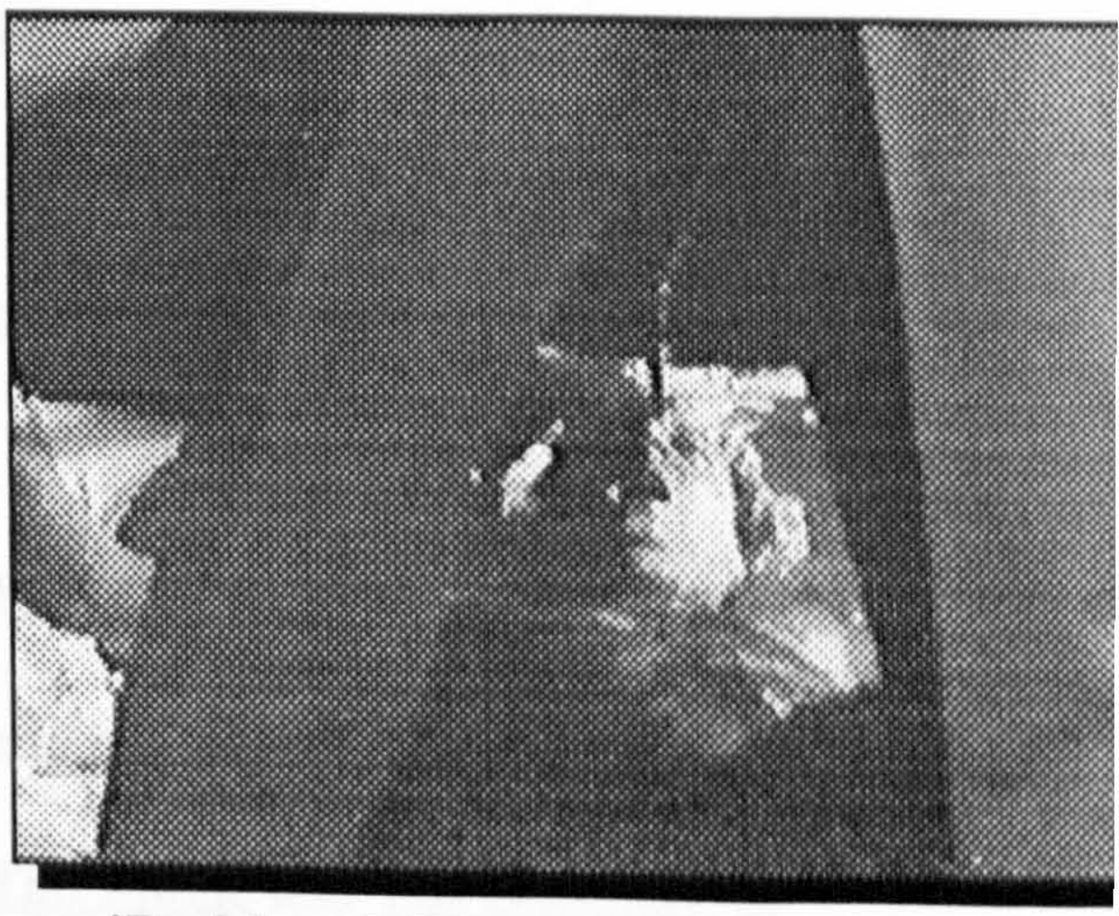
[5]Explaining the generic convention of the murder of those engaged in illicit sexual activity. It may be argued that this also occurs because sex outside of marriage distances sexuality from the act of procreation that patriarchy requires in order to continue to exist, relocating it into the realms of 'wasteful' and 'immoral' pleasure. 'Immoral' or dominant mothers (for example, those in Nightmares In A Damaged Brain or Death Trap) are typically tormented and taught a lesson, but not killed, throughout the genre since to eliminate mothers damages the post-Fordist vision of the family as the basic unit of patriarchal socialisation. An exception occurs in Mutilator, though there the ultra-male has not even been formed when the mother (his wife) dies, and the death is an accident.

Typically, it is prostitutes who do not comply with the demands of their clients that are eliminated first: see the initial murders of Death Trap and The Burning for example. Furthermore, it is rare for prostitutes being controlled by male pimps to be eliminated since they comply to a form of masculine social, economic and sexual rule; the genre usually details the elimination of prostitutes who are seen to work for themselves, as in Maniac, or, occasionally, who work in entirely female-run brothels, as in Death Trap.

Arguably the best Causal example of this is in Nightmares In A Damaged Brain[6], actually revealed at the end of the film, in which Tatum, still a child, axes a highly sexualised dominatrix who verbally and physically dominates his father, who is tied to a bed. Tatum arms himself with the axe (a metaphoric device of traditional masculine control over submissive nature) inside the stereotypically patriarchal sphere of a toolshed, intercut with his father's passive sexual role. Before the axing, Tatum is figured as a child, afterwards an ultra-male, eliminating his father for his 'weak' compliance after raising the phallic axe from between his legs.

Here, the woman is figured in such a way as to represent her as a prostitute (though no direct evidence is given that she is one), and her death is filmed in more sensual terms than the sex which preceded it. Tatum's father is spared the frenzied chopping of the woman, and is eliminated, after signs of hesitation and remorse from Tatum ('Daddy, oh Daddy') with one axe blow, the axe protruding



'Daddy, oh Daddy': the axe positioned between Tatum's legs.

[6]One of the most infamous video nasties, the British version was cut heavily for its release. The uncut Dutch version has scenes in a slightly different order: this is considered the definitive print. Subsequent British critics would be advised, in the words of In The Flesh, to 'try and see the Dutch print instead' (11: 6).

phallically from his head and dominating the frame and the previously compromised sexual arena. In this world, it is harder to kill a male than a female: Tatum closes his eyes. The compromised phallus (father) was here the reason for death, the symbolic phallus (axe) from a patriarchal sphere the method, and the walking phallus/ultra-male the means. Throughout Slashers reason constitutes prior ideological attack on method, 'corrected' by means.

Underlining this, the blood-soaked bed evokes clear, though typically highly exaggerated, hymen imagery since the ultra-male has provided the 'definitive' and final penetration of an empowered female. This is a generic trait, and is repeated in countless texts, for example during the murder of the under-age and sexually powerful Tina in A Nightmare On Elm Street, which also involves penetration by an ultra-male and the production of vast quantities of symbolic hymenal blood. Furthermore, like Tatum's father, Tina's boyfriend, also eliminated for his compliance, is saved the extremity of his partner's death - he is hanged.

Sexuality, subservient to the symbolic phallus.

Because of this focus on representative hymenal blood, it is a further generic trait that the cries of women being murdered by killers are frequently interpreted by others as orgasm (see, for example, Halloween, Mutilator, Don't Answer The 'Phone and The Burning), or murder is presented sexually so as to seem almost pleasurable to the female victim, for example, in The New York Ripper.

Therefore, when Tatum licks the symbolic hymenal blood from his fingers, patriarchy

consumes feminised sexuality and power literally, re-defining it as part of a newly empowered masculine sensibility and, crucially, body. A Nightmare On Elm Street was produced in 1984, the year that Reagan won his second term in office, establishing that the majority of the American public supported his political and ideological stance; this partly explains why the terms of Tatum's attack (in 1981, a year after Reagan's first inauguration) are repeated by Freddy at the start of his second.

Throughout the genre, then, women who challenges male social or sexual status, often even by having high paid jobs, being experts in their field (such as Dr. Gale in Don't Answer The 'Phone) or refusing to comply with patriarchy are either taught a lesson by ultra-males who eliminate their peers, tortured, or usually eliminated themselves, typically during Stalk. The dominance of hymnal imagery throughout the genre evokes comparisons with the inherent reification into sexual product of women through soft-core pornography[7], juxtaposed with death through violent sexual encounters.

The murder of women, figured through the killer's erotic gaze, is delimited through female objectification, always figured in terms of soft-core pornography - dominantly and most noticeably prior to eliminations in The New York Ripper, in which the breasts, legs and genitals of female victims are focused upon, often through soft focus, before eliminations of the most extreme, and sexual kinds:characters have their nipples sliced with razors and are

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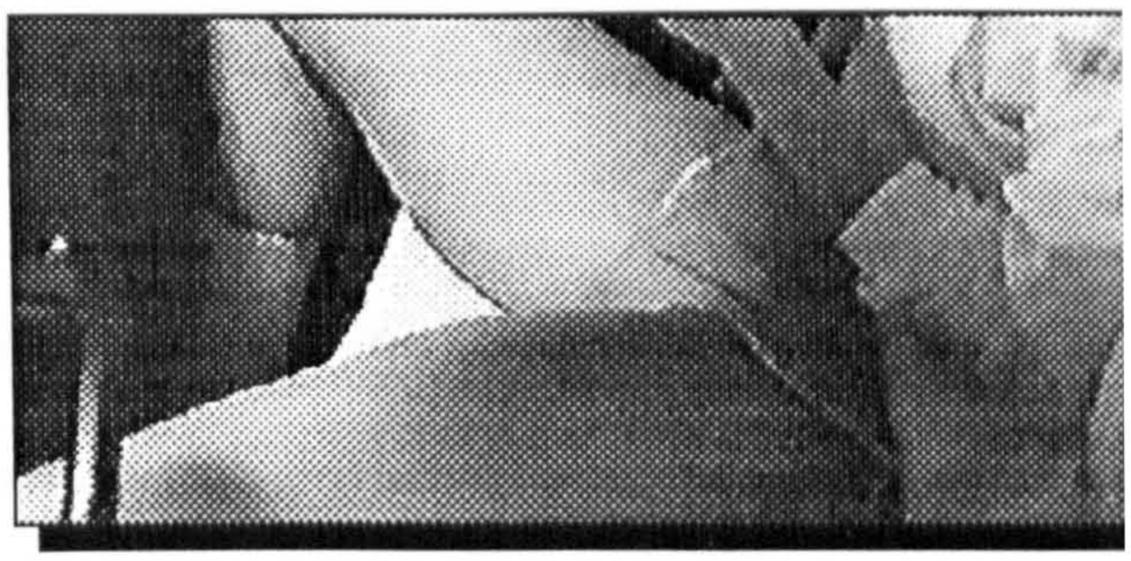
[7]Mainstream hardcore pornography operates to a different criteria; it seeks to objectify both sexes through sexual reification and the translation of sexual activity into product, and is, therefore, more grounded in equality than soft-core; Slashers therefore utilise soft-core style shots during sex scenes (medium close-up, frequent soft focus, romantic music) rather than hardcore shots (extreme close-up, hard-edged focus and frantic music). Men in The New York Ripper therefore talk in the typical language of soft-core pornography whilst sexually assaulting a woman ('oh yes, you'll like it baby'). Connecting perfectly with this extreme Slasher's sexual agenda, the victim *does* admit that she enjoys this attempted rape. It is little surprise to discover that the killer of Don't Answer The 'Phone is a photographer of soft-core pornography, whose work is considered 'very phallic...very classy', and that every cinema seen in the film is showing soft-core porn with titles such as 'Young And Foolish'.

raped with broken bottles and knives, again producing representative hymenal blood. Later, a coroner announces gleefully at one point that a knife was thrust inside a victim's 'joy trail'. The victim was told 'you women should stay home where you belong. You've got the brains of a chicken' before her murder. The coroner and police admire the skill of the killer, calling murder spree 'good news' as it eliminates dominant women, and calling his actions 'good efficient butchery'. Similarly, Williams, the 'hero' later brands the killer 'a son of a bitch' not for his murder spree, but for his taunts that Williams has compromised his male sexual dominance by paying for a 'whore'.



Soft-core imagery in <u>The New York Ripp</u>

Where males are compromised in their dominance (Buck in <u>Death Trap</u> and Glazer in <u>The Burning</u> both feign dominance throughout, through are actually cowardly or are feminised by showing fear, becoming the butt of jokes or, in Glazer's case giving a poor sexual performance but wishing genuinely to please his partner) they are eliminated as poor, partly Carter-like examples of masculinity. For Slashers, the ultimate example of this is often homosexual males. In <u>Stage Fright</u>, therefore, Wallace systematically destroys the cast of a musical about his previous killing-sprees. For the ultra-male Wallace this is a feminisation of his dominance. His fury is enhanced by the fact that a highly camp, gay male dancer is to play him - an unacceptable challenge to male sexual dominance by a figure representing both the antithesis of aggressive masculine power and, for moral patriarchal traditionalists, a character embodying 'perverse', 'immoral' and 'unnatural' sexuality, challenging to the ethic of the heterosexual family unit. Wallace also chainsaws a pregnant woman in half for, it may be argued, working during her pregnancy and being a single mother, since both considerations compromise the patriarchal family unit and the traditional female role of passive 'home-maker'.

Males who are not routinely and totally sexist, dismissive and/or controlling of women are typically eliminated throughout the genre, partly promoting the Reaganite ideal of macho dominance, I would like to claim, to potentially similar males in the audience. Elimination is usually in phallic terms: in My Bloody Valentine for example, compromised males (who wish to attend a Valentine's dance, rendering them romantic and 'soft' instead of aggressively 'macho') and dominant females are eliminated by being impaled on phallic, spurting shower heads, or penetrated with pickaxes and drills by a killer dressed in a full, masculine mining outfit. Underlining this, and hinting at a mass masculine conspiracy to eliminate female dominance, a sexually demanding victim is later trapped below dozens of such outfits which dominate her physically and confound escape, leading to her murder.

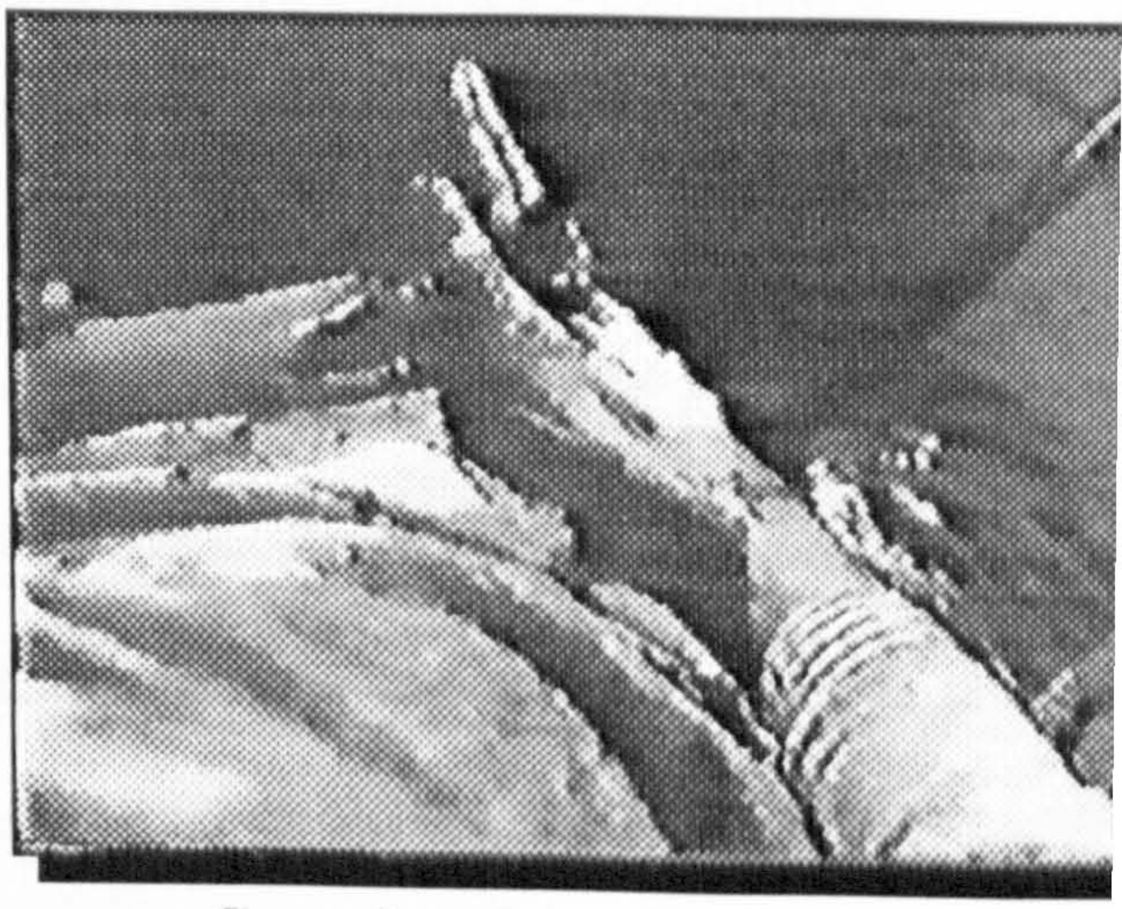
Such compromising is presented as the direct cause of the death of Reaganite machismo: Cause details the deaths of several macho miners because safety regulations were rushed in order that the mine complex (a masculine space) could be converted for a similarly romantic dance. Furthermore, any example of female sexual pleasure not involving a male, for example, the hint or actual practise of lesbianism or female bisexuality, is eliminated along with those engaged in such activities throughout the genre.

Dr. Gale accepts her 'wedding bracelets'.

The patriarchally controlling structure of marriage is also often stressed as a means of controlling femininity. In Don't Answer The 'Phone, for example, Dr. Gale, is tied to a chair by the killer. He gags her (he likes 'women silent') and calls the binding rope 'man's wedding bracelets'. Marriage, traditionally figured through

moral and sexual restraint (monogamy) is symbolised in the wedding ring (here becoming literal binds) and the dissolution of female identity through the loss of name[8]. This representative marriage gives the killer 'great happiness'; if Gale resists he will 'tear [her] tit off', once again destroying an outward symbol of female sexuality. Gale survives because ultimately the 'threat' that she poses to masculinity is eliminated: she is bullied into a compliant role in the investigation by the hero, who also controls her through their sexual relationship in which he is dominant and she concedes that she is a social and sexual failure.

The murder of non-compliant females is often figured as a male sport. For example, Jason wears an ice-hockey mask for most of the Friday The Thirteenth series, and Big (stressing his phallic status) Ed in Mutilator considers Stalk as an extension of hunting. This is used to further degrade the feminine: we are told that Big Ed gutted a pregnant shark, enjoying watching the dying foetuses fall out, underlining his sporting pleasure in the destruction of the female, here constructed as aggressive and destructive. Later, Sue, a dominant woman is raped with a gaffe until it emerges from her abdomen; both the shark and Sue are killed in the same way, with the same instrument, focusing on the female genitals and reproductive system. Typically, as she is eliminated Sue moans in the apparent 'pleasure' of suppression, caressing the bloody gaffe/symbolic phallus in mock ecstasy.



Caressing the gaffe: Mutilator.

Where killers do not react to viewing sexually dominant women during Cause, women

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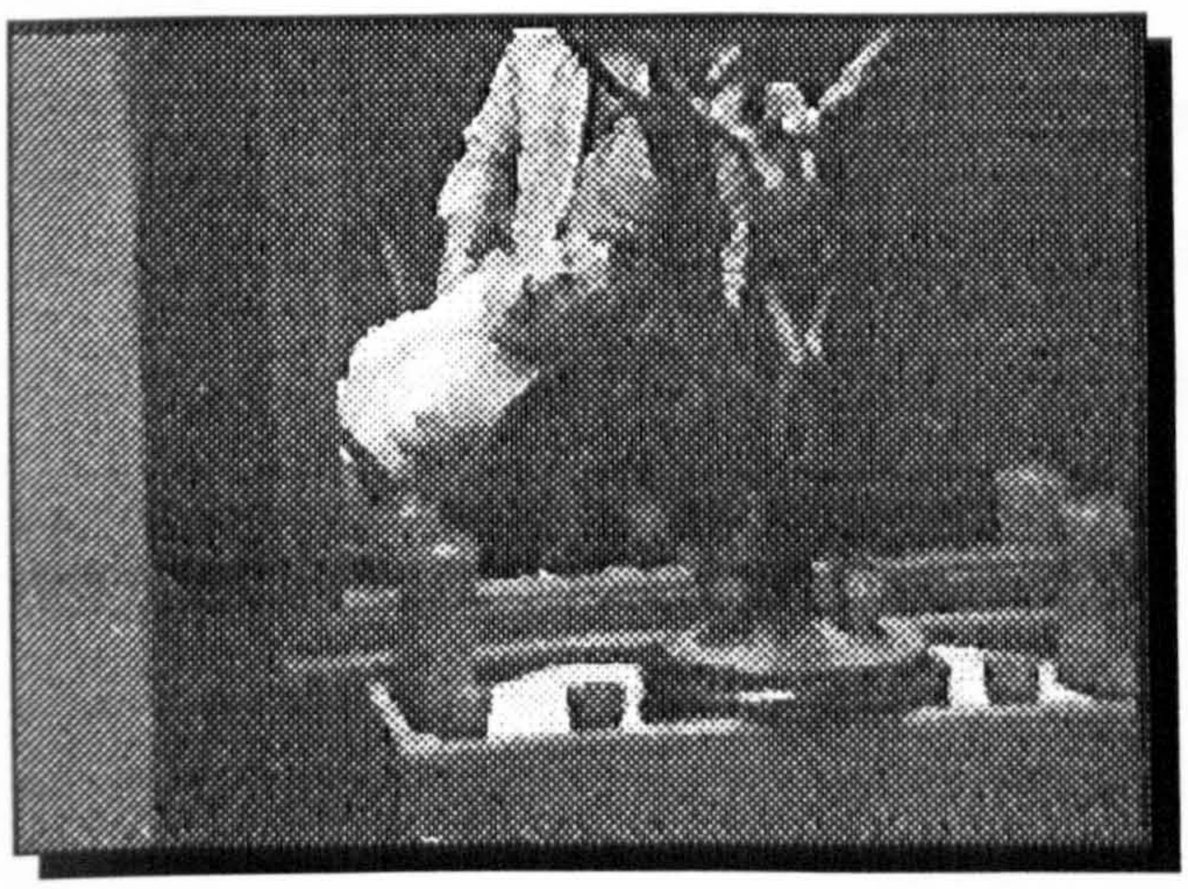
[8]Emphasising this phallicism, ultra-male killers also dominate spaces evoking vagina imagery throughout the genre. These are typically caves (The Burning) or pits and mine shafts (My Bloody Valentine) which killers usually stand astride, wielding phallic weapons in the centre of the frame and trapping victims below.

(usually overly dominant mothers) are often blamed for creating psychopaths[9], and are therefore further blamed for the subsequent deaths of their own sex. Mutilator, for example, blames Ed Junior's mother, who he accidentally kills, for discarding her traditionalist role in the kitchen by dying, and primarily for not fulfilling the role of mother/protector adequately as she allowed Ed to play with a weapon which could potentially hurt *him*. Big Ed becomes a killer not because of grief following his wife's death but because of what it represents - a tearing in the fabric of the patriarchal family and the lack of a subjugated woman to highlight his dominant status. Similarly, it is suggested by a psychiatrist in Don't Answer The 'Phone that the killer has become such because of a dominant mother. To remedy this, the killer often employs hegemonic, traditionalist religious iconography (representing the patriarchal Church) during his suppression of women, even killing before a crucifix - the ultimate socially sanctioned image of the Father and Son.



Sexual suppression and religious iconography: Don't Answer The 'Phone.

Slasher killers are sadists, never sado-masochists. Masochistic tendencies are left to audiences who derive pleasure from viewing killers' sadism. Gaylyn Studlar states that masochism is vital to the 'production of pleasure through a text' (Studlar 1992: 774). That the genre is misogynystically sadistic is clear, since in masochistic texts 'the female is not one of a countless number of discarded objects but an idealised...figure, both dangerous and comforting' (ibid: 775), which is certainly

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[9]An exception to this is Visiting Hours in which the killer's father's misogyny is blamed for instilling such values into his son.

not the case in Slashers. Only compliant females are idolised in Slashers and they are not dangerous, even when apparently fighting back.

Fight does not, as is usually suggested, constitute a display of feminine empowerment leading to the defeat of the killer. Even where Final Girls do eliminate killers, their struggles are figured in terms of patriarchal gender roles which the death of killers do not alter fundamentally. As Clover claims, during Fight POV is frequently re-aligned to the female: Laurie, for example, watches Michael smash into a closet in which she hides. However, the female only *observes* the killer, never *gazes* at him; she does not objectify but rather stares in terror, and her look is passive - one of helpless horror - whilst his is active, and one of socio-sexual positioning and gender definition. The continual resurrection of Michael supports this, since despite her apparent power Laurie cannot actually destroy patriarchy.

Underlining this convention, when A Nightmare On Elm Street's Final Girl, Nancy cannot destroy Freddy, she simply denies the validity and existence of his power over her in the feminist belief that this will destroy him as a figure representative of an ideological structure empowered through mass belief in it. However, feminism is not figured as powerful enough to dispel hegemony: despite vanishing, within seconds Freddy re-appears, taking Nancy, her resurrected mother and friends to their supposed deaths[10].

Nancy denies Freddy's validity.

Furthermore, what appears generically to

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[10]Although Nancy returns in A Nightmare On Elm Street III: Dream Warriors (Chuck Russell, 1987).

be female POV during Fight is frequently not, since viewers are actually often not placed behind the eyes of Final Girls but at a slight physical distance from them, usually to the left or right of their real perspective, and often slightly below, looking up at the looming killer from a position outside of their real eyeline.

When this occurs the female is placed in a child-like position, establishing her and her *apparent*, not actual, gaze as both physically and socially (through the implication of childishness or a literally lower social standing) below the male. Such shots strengthen, rather than diminish patriarchy, as the gaze of the male may be much more favourably compared with the 'gaze' of the female in terms of objectifying dominance. Even when appearing to objectify, therefore, females are objectified. Similarly, females do not use POV to stalk, therefore do not employ voyeurism in its sexual sense, for killers always know that they are being watched by Final Girls as they move to attack them. Denial of true POV therefore underlines the sexual agenda of the genre, not truly allowing females the objectifying gaze that would go some way to equalising the relations between textual males and females.

Flitterman claims that during POV, 'the object being looked at does not know it is being looked at' (Flitterman [1978] 1981: 249), and it is in the knowledge that the objectified is unaware of their objectification that the objectifier's sexual pleasure lies; though Final Girls become aware that they have *been* watched, they are rarely aware of it at the time. Those who are usually become so seconds before they are eliminated, or are killed because of this knowledge as it compromises the voyeur's dominance.

In addition, Final Girls' battles are usually relegated by killers to expression through female *sup*pression and traditionalist gender roles; a heroine's defence within the terms of suppression strengthens her awareness of and dependence on it in order to survive under patriarchy. Essentially, to some extent killers achieve their goals even if eliminated since they

still manage to place the new-feminine back into the metaphoric kitchen. In Death Trap, for example, the Final Girl rescues a previously dominant mother/wife who has been tortured by Judd. The killer's persona is here split between Judd and his pet crocodile which emerges to consume victims. Judd is eaten by the crocodile for his weakness in allowing his victims to escape, but the threat is not over since the crocodile is still free to consume. Patriarchy's 'acceptable' face (Judd) is discarded forever and violent elimination of future new-feminine 'threats' is advocated through the survival of the crocodile - its purely violent face. All surviving former new-females are mentally destroyed hysterical wrecks, and are therefore now harmless. In Intruder the killer remains alive and frames Jennifer, the Final Girl, for the massacre; the film ends with Bill triumphant and Jennifer insane and incarcerated.

The crocodile consumes Judd.

The entire Fight of Halloween is, then, constructed by Michael to trap Laurie in traditionalist-feminine spaces, make her retreat to areas of suppression and fight with symbols of suppression, teaching her to *depend* on suppression to survive. She is forced to return to the sup/re-pressive home, adopting the traditionalist role of protector. Protecting the children, she defends herself with traditionalist, stereotyped female symbols - a knitting needle and a coat hanger, neither of which are powerful enough to eliminate Michael. Such 'female'/'home-maker' objects cannot truly harm him since their status as symbols of female suppression depends upon the continued existence of male suppressors.

Typically, males who survive Fight do so because they learn from killers how to dominate women in the future. Often such males are children, groomed throughout texts by

C.J smiles as he embraces his future role.

killers - who act as ideological father figures - to continue to spread their message of patriarchal dominance. In cases where this occurs and killers are eliminated, it may be argued that they have have sacrificed themselves in order to ensure the longevity of their ideals. In some cases, such as Nightmares In A Damaged Brain, the killer turns out to be literally the father of such children (here C.J), and are usually systematically weakened throughout the film in order that they may be eliminated by their real or ideological sons so that the son may take their role[11]. However, it is more often the case in the genre that killers survive to continue their misogynist mission in the future.

Reagan's ideological precedent is again exposed in the repeated usage of similar motifs and values throughout the genre. Reagan figured his macho policies both an ideal and a political-cultural revolution in the wake of previous flawed leadership; revolutionary change frequently implies bloodshed, especially in the cinematic terms in which Reagan framed his public image and policies. His primary concerns (military build-up, moral conservatism, patriotism, tough anti-Communism and economic deregulation) were constructed in terms of a father and son dynamic, with himself as a father teaching his child (America) to hand his values

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[11]In Nightmares In A Damaged Brain, Tatum cries and apologises to a victim after her death, and appears scared of C.J throughout the film. Tatum is eliminated by his son as he earlier eliminated his father. As patriarchy was strengthened (through this Causal elimination) in the body of Tatum, it is again strengthened through his elimination by C.J. Violent patriarchal dominance is therefore strengthened over three generations by a systematic 'ironing out' of all of the 'weakness' in the examples of masculinity audiences are presented with during the film. Importantly, C.J eliminates Tatum through a symbolic castration, stripping him of his masculine power - he shoots him in the groin. The similarly dominant hero of Don't Answer The 'Phone also eliminates the killer in this way.

down to future generations, especially, as we see through Jeffords, toward the end of his term when Reagan was preparing to hand power to his successor, Bush (Jeffords 1994: ch.3). Many Slashers, therefore convey the message that powerful fathers can spawn more powerful sons[12].

In The Burning there is no Final Girl, but there are two representative sons. Todd (a macho hero) and Alfred (an intellectual wimp, who nevertheless holds considerable power as he also commands POV, using it to objectify the naked women on which he spies) combine to destroy Cropsy, marking them both as future patriarchs. The film suggests that a combination of Todd's machismo and Alfred's intellectualism and his ability to objectify/dominate are the best future tools with which to challenge feminism on its own, academic ground. If this combination does not work, then, the final trope warning establishes, Cropsy's physically suppressive ideology still stalks.

Alfred and Todd combine to put Cropsy behind them

Michael appears to equate Tommy with himself: Michael was a similar age to Tommy at the start, was 'supervised' by Judith as Tommy will be by Laurie, and his life changed on Halloween, as does Tommy's. Tommy, having already learnt his lesson, tells Laurie, 'you can't kill the Boogeyman'/patriarchy. Laurie is clever but not clever enough; realising that to destroy POV is to remove male objectification she stabs at Michael's eye with her coat hanger.

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[12]It may be argued that this is a form of wish fulfilment for those anxious about Reagan's longevity because of his age, or, later in his term, for those who wished Reagan's policies to continue through Bush. From 1980 to late 1983, many Slashers emphasise Reagan's concerns, promoting them as literal truths, but are infused with worries regarding whether such values will continue to be socially dominant because, it may be argued, of concerns about Reagan's age. Repressing (ultra) males spawned during this period indicate the desire for such ideals to continue *physically*, through the bodies of stronger children. From about 1984 to 1990, such repressive males also begin to partly represent a desire for a continuance of the symbolic father's *ideological* policies as Reagan's second term moved towards his stepping down and another (Bush) taking his place, himself growing from Reagan's symbolic son to a 'father' in his own right.

She does not realise that as her tutor he controls her every move; Michael only plays dead. Crucially, Laurie re-arms Michael constantly. Each time he 'dies', she takes his knife and discards it. Not only is she responsible for re-arming him (since the continued suppression of women, which Laurie is actually undergoing, strengthens patriarchy), but phallic power is inoperable in female hands: Laurie attempts to stab Michael with his knife but fails. The surrogate penis cannot assist, or be assumed by, females. In Michael's hands the knife is phallus, in Laurie's only the *representation* of phallus without its suppressive characteristics and power. Laurie survives firstly, for re-assuming the protector/mother role, secondly, for rejecting the symbolic-ideological phallus upon realisation that in female hands it cannot operate (Michael temporarily allows her his knife to make this discovery), thirdly, for returning to and operating within the home (we never see Laurie outside again), fourthly, for realising that objects symbolic of suppression allow her to survive, fifthly, for observing though not gazing at, her attacker, and sixthly for allowing a male - Loomis - to rescue her.

This is furthered by a potential seventh clause: viewers see Michael's face - its deformity reveals further Carpenter's critique of the ugliness of patriarchal suppression of the female, considered, through Michael's representative physiognomy to be fundamentally corrupt when the every-male mask is removed[13]. Loomis shoots Michael who falls from the window, later to vanish, as Laurie admits the existence of patriarchy and its future control over her ('it *was* the Boogeyman', to which Loomis, who has learnt to be more aggressively 'masculine' states, 'as a matter of fact, it was'). Laurie collapses into 'feminine' hysterics as she

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[13]Though other deformed Slasher killers exist, the reason for their deformity is usually detailed in the film (for example, fire in The Burning). Other monsters are made monstrous (in the case of Jason, if we are to believe his cycle's ridiculous premise, presumably because he has been stuck at the bottom of a lake since he was a child). Michael, however, is *naturally* a monster, which is important to Carpenter's critique of a patriarchal system which strives to present itself as natural. Importantly, it appears that he became deformed since his childhood and Cause, during or upon entry to an adult, patriarchal society.

realises the truth of her suppression, the camera cutting out of the house room by room, through Haddenfield until it rests on the Myer's house, accompanied by Michael's breathing. The unasked question 'where does Michael exist?' is answered by the final shot - 'in the home'[14].

When Loomis shoots Michael, he fires directly into the camera; Carpenter cuts to a reverse angle as Michael falls through the window, finally breaking through the internal frames that have framed him, and freeing him from the ideological restraint that such distancing implied. The reverse cut inverts and answers the opening POV sequence, with one important modification. The I/camera is now the *subject* rather than the *object* of attack. POV aggression is temporarily erased through Loomis' aggression towards I. However, this I is too close to Loomis when shot, revealed by Michael's position during the reverse cut; audience gaze is figured as Michael's through I, yet Michael is spatially distanced from the I-study of Loomis as he fires.

The aggression is thus returned against *both* Michael and audience for indulging in voyeurism and attempting the gaze - though as we have seen the text continually ensures actual gaze may never be assumed - through engagement and apparent placing within the text (I)[15]. Audiences are both with and distant from Michael and the ideal that he embodies; they are connected physically with him through what appears to be I *until* this close-distancing, though they have always been alienated ideologically by his sexual-political ideals, internal framing and final I-distance. For the first time in the text aggression is directed against viewers, revealing its critique parallel to Laurie's discovery of her 'lesson' and all that it implies.

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[14]Similarly, The final shot of The New York Ripper is of a wide social arena of continuing patriarchal control (the survivors are as misogynist as the eliminated killer) - the Manhattan skyline.

[15]See Neale 1984.

It is important to realise that this lesson occurs on the eve of Laurie's potential sexual womanhood - the night before her first date has been arranged. This is mirrored by Laurie's development of knowledge regarding patriarchy: earlier she told Tommy that the 'Boogeyman' did not exist; by the end she admits that Michael '*was* the Boogeyman'[16].

However, in shooting the modified I, Loomis is not actually shooting Michael, but the audiences' connection (already partly severed through artificial I positioning too close to Loomis) with him through diegesis - a further reason why Michael survives and audiences continue to be assaulted, the final attack constituting their and Laurie's realisation of the machinations of patriarchy and its inherently destructive capacity, within the social (Haddenfield) and the home (final shot). Furthermore, its unchecked reign ultimately brings even those associated with its ideological basis (audiences, via POV) symbolic pain through Loomis' violence towards them, its extra-textual conspirators.

Slashers were a social symptom of male feelings strong enough to be formalised through the cultural structure of genre, encouraged by Reaganite ideals of machismo, traditional moralism and gender roles, challenging the 'feminisation' of America occurring under the previous decade's presidents; with this in mind it is reassuring that the generic cycle is over. When Bush came to office in 1989 he tempered some of Reagan's more right-wing moral ideals overtly, bringing more compassion back into the political equation despite maintaining a hard, Reaganite line on foreign policy (for example, his invasion of Panama) so as to avoid charges of weakness such as those levelled at Carter and Ford, taking Nixon, the source of much of this criticism, as his mentor and advisor[17].

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[16]In Halloween II it emerges that Laurie is actually Michael's younger sister, who was absent during Judith's death and was subsequently adopted. Michael is protective of his younger sister (a patriarchal role) by revealing the socio-sexual 'errors' of feminism and their consequences for their elder sister.

[17]See Klein 1994 for further evidence.

Under Bush, greater concern was shown to those demonised by Reagan; as Jeffords claims, Bush did not focus on 'evil' groups or institutions, but rather considered that 'evil' is an individual choice (Jeffords 1994: 102). Therefore, groups such as AIDS sufferers, homosexuals, feminists were shown more tolerance; like any other agents, they were increasingly figured as simply individuals who may do good or bad rather than destructive minority groups. Bush's attitude paved the way for the greater discussion of issues, and as Jeffords shows, generally a less reactionary public awareness of them, though still with the hard-bodied approach to those who *directly* threatened the American stability that Reagan advocated. Partly due to this change in attitudes, the Slasher genre began to die out. The few remaining Slashers produced during Bush's term frequently commented upon or parodied the genre - for example, Nightbreed (Clive Barker, 1990).

Barker removes Decker, Nightbreed's Slasher killer, from the centre of its narrative, establishing him as a figure clearly out of social touch rather than reacting to common social values; his ideology is stuck in the early-to-mid 1980s. In order to do this Barker combines the Slasher with a different genre: the 1930s-based Universal Creature Feature. Seemingly neo-demonic monsters, actually the heroes, fight against Decker, whose values threaten to tear their society apart. Decker enlists the help of right-wing reactionaries in the hegemonic police and, through an application of Reaganite values of intolerance, seeks to destroy that which he does not understand and considers immoral but which is actually revealed to be a valid if alternative social group in the same way as other valid groups such as homosexuals or single mothers were similarly represented as monstrous under Reagan. To make this parallel more striking Decker is played by David Cronenberg, many of whose contemporary films also commented upon Reaganite values in the 1980s.

Despite this new level of tolerance, largely continued under Clinton, in winter 1995 the

last film in the Halloween cycle reached number one at the American box-office. This seems an isolated case, and did not regenerate Slashers for the 1990s audience; let us hope that this is the last of the Slasher killers' feigned deaths, and that this time it is *he* who is taught, and *we* who teach.

Gendered Identities 3

'It is warm in the garden'; Possession Films

Possession films are usually interpreted as highly conservative texts in which femininity is literally demonised, and the female body is presented as an object of disgust for audiences. Creed, for example, argues that 'possession becomes the excuse for legitimizing a display of aberrant feminine behaviour' (Creed 1993: 31). Because of such readings, the genre is usually linked closely to Slashers, connected by what is consider to be their essentially shared agenda[1].

However, instead of the phallicism of knives, penetration, thrusting, domination, externality and resurrection/re-erection, possession occurs in a supernatural arena of portals, 'open' minds and bodies, internal invasions, and doorways; furthermore, narratives centre around a body or sometimes bodies that *receive* that which penetrates, rather than concentrating mainly upon the penetrator as in Slashers. The possessed body becomes a colonised space until the entity is typically cast from the body or, rarely, destroys it.

Supernature impregnates the 'open' victim; openness is both spiritual since the entity utilises spiritual weakness such as Regan's anxiety regarding her parent's separation in The Exorcist, and physical through symbolic and actual orifices such as the mouth, eyes and, most frequently, the vagina. Therefore, the possessed is usually female[2], and, crucially, the possessor is nearly always aggressively male. Creed's analysis of The Exorcist focuses on the 'horrific' female body at the expense of a consideration of that which surrounds it, or the horrific and overwhelmingly male influences which invade it. Therefore, she considers Blatty's text to be about 'the foulness of woman...signified by her putrid, filthy body' (Creed 1993: 14);

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[1]It is often the case that 'classic' texts from each genre are compared: often The Exorcist with Halloween. As we have seen, Halloween's agenda is atypical, rendering this linkage even more debatable.

[2]See chapter five of Feminisms (Warhol and Herndl 1991), especially Irigaray 1977 (ibid: 350-356) for a discussion of the female body as defined by and delimited through male experience.

I shall argue exactly the opposite, claiming that despite appearances to the contrary, a directly opposing view of the concerns regarding feminism and gender roles in the 1970s and 1980s to Slashers emerges. In short I would like to claim that if Slashers detail how males react to changes in the traditional perceptions of gender, then Possession films detail female existence within patriarchal structures, figuring them, rather than femininity, as 'evil'.

As Possession imagery opposes that of Slashers, so does the internal construction of its concerns, challenging the latter's socio-sexual politics, and frequently working to many agendas across the genre, differing from text to text though linked by common themes. Typically, Possession texts partly reveal the hidden machinations of the post-Fordist ethic, with especial focus on the destructive control of the diffuse male 'elite' in power over the controlled, metaphorically figured as the invaded[3]. Control is figured as evil; a mentally and physically manipulative, destructive force whose continued existence depends upon the damaging subjugation of those (metaphorically spiritually, literally socially) hierarchically 'below'. Narrative tensions are constructed in terms of black magic (a term that I shall use to encompass old 'truths' both Go[o]d and [D]evil: the acts of both possession and redemption utilise an acknowledgement of supernature largely discredited by modernity) and white science (by which I mean new 'truths' - science, rationality and the 'logical' explanation, diagnosis and treatment of the possessed)[4].

By the conclusion of Possession texts the ineffectuality of white science is typically

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[3]This, it may be argued, has a Biblical precedent usually overlooked by critics. 'The Book Of The Revelation Of St. John The Divine' (hereafter 'Revelation') states that alignment to evil is directly economic: 'no man might buy or sell, save that he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name...and his number is Six hundred threescore *and* six' ('Revelation': 17-18). The power of market ethics is, therefore, central to Satanic influence, and as we shall discover, is directly figured as evil invading forces in Possession texts.

[4]'Black magic' and 'white science' as terms expressive of mutually opposing 'old' and 'new' world structures of belief were introduced in The Serpent And The Rainbow in which white science (a pharmaceutical company) attempts to analyse black magic (voodoo) for commercial gain. I, like Clover, shall adopt the terminology.

revealed; it is partial recourse to good black magic that frees the possessed. White science, a primary construct of post-Fordist rationality, reality and control through the application of 'scientific' non-personal, emotionless and practical control to workforces in order to maintain loyalty, is, therefore criticised throughout the genre. By extension, the post-Fordist ethic which adopts such functionalist logic in relation to its workforce through, for example, short-term contracting, is potentially condemned through each narrative. Rather than being the conservative texts that Clover and Creed consider them to be, most Possession films, as opposed to only some Slashers, therefore have considerable radical potential.

Acknowledging this potential, Steven King states of The Exorcist:

> where it starts in Georgetown is total order. It's civilisation. It's where people know what wine to order. Ellen Burstyn [Chris] is upstairs in bed, and she wakes up and...hears a noise like a lion. You say, 'Oh, dear, something's getting out of order here'. Order presupposes authority, and authority presupposes, sooner or later, that we'll all need hooves (Underwood and Miller 1988: 274).

Order in The Exorcist is, as we shall see, of a very specific nature and, as King has perceived, operates primarily as a critique of both the authority of covert 'experts' and the systems of status-quo that allow their continued operation and potential exploitation of society, which it is in their interests to render 'hooved'.

In such texts, a male story in which men connected to the possessed woman resolve personal crises typically runs parallel to the main story of female invasion. Resolution of these sub-plots usually occurs as men 'save' the female through a form of exorcism (theological in The Exorcist and social/familial in Poltergeist). The form of exorcism frequently mirrors the male problem, and is linked to its resolution. In The Exorcist, Karras, a priest who has lost his

faith, regains it through theological exorcism before his final martyrdom[5], whilst the strength of the family, previously under crisis due to commercial exploitation, triumphs in Poltergeist. It is not always the case that resolution of male crises saves the male physically; Karras does not save his life, but his soul through absolution. Without the invasion of females, male spiritual crises could not be resolved and would, as Clover states, be figured as effeminate, since the 'damsel in distress' element of Possession films diverts attention away from the textual figuring of males' anxieties regarding their various weaknesses.

In common with most critics of horror, Clover considers Possession texts to be deeply sexist, demonising females, placing 'blame' for possession with them for *being* female, displaying masculine revulsion of the female body/sexuality and its inner processes (the ability to house life) and providing a convenient platform from which to solve textual male crises, which she sees as the primary reason for the existence of each text. It is true that 'as its title suggests, The Exorcist is less about the possessed girl than about...Karras' (Clover 1992: 86), but it is certainly *not* the case that the primary narrative focus is 'good' masculinity. Male crises, delimited through female possession reveals fundamental and widespread concerns regarding the post-Fordist ethic and historical events that constitutes the arena in which 'good' and 'evil' struggle for control of the self, personal identity and autonomy. Typically, 'evil' is equated with post-Fordist hegemony, with freedom from it being presented as 'good'[6]. Throughout the genre the resolution of male crises leads to an wider awareness of post-

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[5]Karras summons the demon into himself and jumps from Regan's window, re-affirming his faith through the ultimate Christian sacrifice to save another. Clover entirely misreads this act, claiming that Karras is 'hurled' by 'the devil...through a window to his death' (Clover 1992: 90). Her remaining argument treats Karras' death as supernatural murder. Missing this major point of the film casts doubt on Clover's entire reading of the text, furthered by the fact that despite extensive quotation from the original novel in other areas of her analysis, she ignores the section which outlines Karras' death specifically as suicide.

[6]Although 'good' may appear hegemonic in conservative Possession texts, most famously, and with subtle deviations, in The Exorcist, as we shall see.

Fordist machinations and the possibility of future resistance against them, as we shall see in Poltergeist.

Clover claims that 'satanic possession is gendered feminine even when the portal is a car' (ibid: 72), with reference to Christine (John Carpenter, 1983)[7]. Creed similarly claims that throughout The Exorcist evil and possession are constructed as feminine through a connection with the frightening 'crones' of the Iraq sequence, and the (I would argue incorrectly interpreted) alleged dominance and damagingly oppressive nature of Regan's mother[8], Chris. Creed rather inexplicably states that Regan is figured as inherently evil and that her possession is 'immensely appealing' (Creed 1993: 37). In considering both the possessor and the victim as feminine, it may be argued that Creed and Clover misread the entire genre, considering it in terms of the textual degradation of femininity; this underlines and partly explains Clover's belief that male stories constitute the true heart of Possession films. I would like to claim that it is actually the 'pigeon-holing' of agents into 'appropriate' roles through post-Fordist ethics, here translated generically into gender roles - the imposed boundaries of which collapse during the course of Possession narratives - that constitutes the genre's true heart.

As Clover explains, male crises parallel female ones; both sexes allow something in, which fundamentally changes them. For the female, the change is physical, aggressive and

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[7]Opposing Clover, it is clear that the Christine's 'seduction' of Arnie, 'her' owner, is empowered by patriarchally defined consumer culture controlling agents' perceptions of what is and is not desirable. Despite the car's apparent 'femininity', Christine operates to an aggressively masculine agenda due to 'her' possession by the masculine industrial ethic evident in the exclusively male pre-credits production line. Christine is not the only apparently inanimate object that possesses victims. In the Revenge/Possession hybrid EvilSpeak (Eric Weston, 1982), part of the possessing force is a computer, whilst in 976-Evil (Robert Englund, 1988) it is a telephone.

[8]Creed frequently mis-reads the manifest level of texts, for example claiming that Chris leads Karras to the 'help me' message on Regan's abdomen, attaching great significance to this when in fact it is Sharon, her secretary (who actually says 'I don't want Chris to see this'). Creed frequently calls characters by the wrong name and subsequently, like Jancovich and Clover (who considers the death of Tweety in Poltergeist to occur before the TV conversation which opens the film) often mis-orders events.

presented as masculine. For the male, the change is one of attitude and belief; and is mental, sometimes ideological, non-aggressive and presented as traditionally feminine. Both parties open themselves to new states, though it is men who must learn about themselves through the female crisis, and who are persuaded to develop 'open minds' about potential new realities throughout the genre.

Such realities are political; reflecting the patriarchal basis of post-Fordism and the genre's frequently critical agenda, it is males who must learn to think and operate differently in order to combat the violence and control exerted towards both sexes, but primarily towards post-Fordist women[9]. Such metaphoric violence is made literal through possession. The possessing entity becomes a symbol of post-Fordist control; to combat it, men must alter themselves fundamentally, as representations of a patriarchal system of which they are a part. The subconscious guilt of male agents regarding oppressive hegemony is thus made conscious, developing into crises. Through contact with the physical evidence of harmful control (the possessed), males are 'opened' - as victims were opened previously by physical invasion - to different modes of political and social thought, in essence becoming 'new' ideological men who are willing to consider new hegemonic alternatives radically different from those that preceded their 'change'[10]. Poltergeist's male story is delimited through Steve's desire to keep his increasingly diffuse family together; his mind is subsequently opened to incorporate an awareness of post-Fordist machinations. By the end of the text, as we shall see, his desire is

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[9]Short-term contracting is especially controlling of women, especially those with, or planning to start, families. Expensive child care facilities (where available) and non-stability in the workplace, combined with the outdated but still prevalent 'ideal' of males as 'bread-winners', conspire against women to ensure either their compliance with a male system of management (constituting suppression) or their confinement to the home and family (also suppressive). Either way, the industrial patriarchal hegemonic shapes and controls large elements of female existence.

[10]Although it is typically beyond the scope of the films to define how such alternatives should actually operate.

achieved through a direct rebellion against socio-political ethics[11].

It may be argued that elements of such texts suggest, through ironic commentary, that patriarchal ethics must change from the inside. To this end the female story is usually circular, whilst male stories are linear. For textual females, progression is from a state of normality, to violent change, to eventual normality again, often with no recollection of the central altered state. For textual males, normality (hegemonic existence) moves from crisis to resolution through a new awareness which is critical of the original ideological state. The symbol of the 'evil', controlling system, if not its actual form (for the world in which the survivors emerge has only changed ideologically, not yet practically) is dispelled as males resolve their crises, constructing alternative 'truths' for themselves. That the practical system may change is dependent upon the post-narrative application of these 'truths' to the system of control, for both characters within texts and audiences viewing them.

Despite Clover's reluctance to consider its importance, post-Fordist patriarchal hegemony lurks behind the apparently female story and world (via the inner space) of Possession texts, to a variable degree between films, and connecting to historical events and figures. Often, mirroring the loss of personal stability under post-Fordism, a physical loss usually heralds possession: in The Entity (Sidney J. Furie, 1983) the victim's husband has recently died, in The Exorcist Regan's post-Fordist problematic father is absent, whilst in Poltergeist Tweety, a pet bird, dies - an apparently trivial events, but one of great importance to the subsequently possessed child, Carol-Anne who is also literally possessed by spirits when she is kidnapped by them.

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[11]Other attacks on conservative, traditionalist values exist: we can calculate from information given by Steve that he and Diane were only sixteen and fifteen respectively when Diane was first pregnant, yet the family are figured, before possession to be close, loving, loyal and affluent.

Therefore, in The Fog[12] vengeful spirits, murdered by a town's founding and highly problematic fathers for what is represented as post-Fordist financial gain - in that those who generated the capital are disposable, and those who ultimately control its distribution think nothing of eliminating them, partly representing short-term contracting and instability in the workplace in an extreme form - return to eliminate the future representatives of this destructive patriarchy.

To survive the modern townsfolk must return gold stolen from the dead and allow the deaths of patriarchy's representatives (the descendants of the original murderers), rejecting symbolically the patriarchal order. Stevie, a female DJ positioned literally above the town and its ethics in a lighthouse, comments on the rejection of patriarchy that unfolds below her. Patriarchy is thus seen as destructive ('a travesty'), driven by consumerist greed (consumerism is the first to suffer attack when purchasable commodities are destroyed in stores across the town) and a hidden force of control since a confession of the crime is walled up in a church.

Similarly, the possession elements of Alien are empowered by patriarchal greed; 'the company' for which the crew works has manufactured the situation through covert mission objectives to ensure the possession of a crew member and secure alien specimens to be sold as organic military weapons.

Such hidden forces, seeking to control vital events in the lives of agents reflect, it may be argued, concerns felt regarding similarly destructive recent control over the lives of agents in Vietnam. There

Stevie sees the whole picture, controlling a symbolic phallus, from a symbolic phallus.

[12]A cross-generic hybrid of Possession, Revenge and Slasher texts, with the emphasis on the possession of a town by evil.

patriarchal ruling fathers held court over the lives of their 'children', and here it is figured in directly destructive terms, perhaps also partly feeding from concerns regarding the potentially destructive outcome of Carter's inability to rescue his 'children' held hostage in Iran[13]. Stevie employs her feminine perspective within patriarchy, partly represented by her controlling existence within the phallic lighthouse, to do what Carter could not: she saves her child by guiding rescuers to where he is trapped.

Underlining this critique of hegemonic traditionalist patriarchy (presented as patriarchy's 'day of judgement'), the leader of the murderers was the town priest. Stevie, as a woman and an agent distanced from the ultimately ideological events unfolding beneath her, is literally the only character to see the 'full picture'. She gives a final warning to patriarchs resisting hegemonic change: 'it could come again...look across the water into the darkness. Look for the fog'.

Jancovich condemns The Exorcist as

> pretentious and rather dull...display[ing] a remarkably crude conservatism...[and] particularly disappointing...representation[s] of evil...such as widdling on the floor at parties...[and] a variation of that traditional image of a lack of 'proper parental discipline' - masturbation (Jancovich 1992: 93-94).

The Exorcist may be essentially conservative in that salvation is *apparently* established as residing in the acceptance of hegemonic, patriarchal Church morality, but this conservatism is not 'remarkably crude', in fact constituting a complex critique of the post-Fordist arena in which the text is situated. That the outcome is conservative certainly does not make the film

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[13]The protagonists in the film are similarly held hostage, trapped constantly in enclosed areas.

'dull': a first viewing in the cinema is a highly affecting experience[14], and despite its apparent moral stance, addresses the 'problem' of post-Fordist control through a focus on the resultant breakdown of traditional values, affected by a lack of stability and the de-centralisation of power. Jancovich seems to misread Regan's infamous masturbation scene, which, as we shall see, symbolically emphasises, through its spatial location, the potentially damaging effects of post-Fordism on the (a)sexual (for Regan is still a child) self.

Empowering the possession theme of Poltergeist is a critique of post-Fordist consumerist culture; the entity emerges from desirable products such as televisions, and is dependent upon aggressive, male operated market ethics. Other destructive consumerist objects appear throughout the text; remote control cars and television control pads (constituting post-Fordist metaphors: operators remain distant from effect) cause havoc, toys become possessed and the Freeling's planned luxurious swimming pool is infested with corpses. Notably, when the contractors dig the pool they unearth Tweety's 'coffin' foregrounding the text's later explanation of the hauntings: the Freeling's decentralise Tweety as business ethics decentralised the human corpses.

Furthermore, the Freeling's house was built over a graveyard, relocated minus the bodies ('it's just people') to make way for development - essentially the short-term contracting of residency in burial plots. This is perhaps a metaphor for the struggle of Native Americans and the recognition of ancient land rights, connecting to similar subtexts in films such as The Prophecy (John Frankenheimer, 1979). Financial gain therefore takes precedent over emotion, and post-Fordist personal instability and control extends to death through a patriarchal system of greed. Recognising this, Robbie, the Freeling's son, is remarkably perceptive: identifying

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[14]Leading James Ferman to claim that 'it's a very scary story...[and] has a tremendous power to disturb'; Ferman greatly admires the film ('a classic'), despite its ban on video due to the fact that 'it's terribly persuasively done' (Petley 1991: 14).

the visible product of this ethic as the evil from which to escape, he screams 'the house is coming!' as the family flee.

Earlier, ghosts had stolen Carol-Anne to 'the other side' in revenge for the economic invasion of their rest. 'The Beast' here is twofold: both the demonic entity leading the invasion and the political ethic triggering it. Furthermore, post-Fordism removes individuality: in 'Cuesta Verde' owners 'can't tell one house from the other'. Ultimately, these values, along with much of the estate representing them, consume themselves, imploding in a blaze of redeeming white light. The ultimate results of post-Fordism are made clear: like the corpses the Freelings are left de-centralised and unstable, with no secure future or home[15].

Here Possession is, as Clover states, a female event; adult males are absent from the film's central discussion of the soul. Later a vagina-like chasm controlled by the male 'Beast' attempts to consume Diane (who is semi-naked and 'opened' having endured a supernatural rape) and the children, whilst a painting of an angel representative of Carol-Anne, who has 'passed over' is in the bedroom (an area of procreation) next to a piece of womb-like modern art. Spiritually and physically 'open' females save Carol-Anne, whilst as yet mentally closed men such as Steve and the technicians who assist in the recording of evidence can only watch and shout encouragement. This is delimited through criticism of post-Fordist patriarchy (men fail frequently, especially 'experts' who leave lens-caps on cameras or become too scared to return), and possession and control is powered directly by it. Tellingly, the politicised threat emerges through a television broadcast of the American national anthem, and images of its flag and Capital Hill which are distorted and misshapen, emphasising the distorted, 'evil' and diffuse forces of de-centralised control existing behind post-Fordism's public face. This is

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[15]In Poltergeist II (Brian Gibson, 1986) the Freelings still struggle against de-centralisation: they cannot convince their insurance company that their home is permanently absent.

underlined when a male 'expert' later rips off his face, revealing *its* inner structures.

Poltergeist's attack establishes much of the genre's critique, emerging from behind images of power, government, state and nationalism to control, manipulate, confuse and tear apart personal and familial stability, here through an object indicative of consumerist desire. Exposing a further generic body of concern, that of the response to changing gender roles that the genre draws upon in opposing terms to Slashers, Steve reads a book about Reagan's policies and ideals. As the hauntings increase, their post-Fordist basis and agenda drives the family apart, rendering it unstable until all three children are missing from the familial home. Though on a superficial level there appears to be many differences between Poltergeist and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, it may be argued that this common critique unites Hooper's two most successful films.

The Exorcist contrasts strongly with the overtly radical nature of Rosemary's Baby and The Omen, texts which are typically linked in canonical analysis. Through its subtextual critique of the post-Fordist decentralisation of power and its subsequent lack of personal and economic stability, The Exorcist blurs traditional distinctions between good and evil, revealing a society on the point of collapse, morally corrupt and open at all levels to the forces of evil. Rather than constituting simply a conservative world view as Jancovich claims, this is linked to the socio-economic 'universe' encompassed by the narrative. A message of the text is that the invasion of 'evil' forces (the invading demon/s, identified in the novel as Pazuzu, a Mesopotamian deity with a serpent-penis) into victims' bodies, lives and wider society is dependent upon personal situations (unemployment, economic instability and agents' unthinking acceptance of hegemony), in turn fashioned by political systems placing them within those roles.

The blurring of good and evil is immediately evident in the opening 'Northern Iraq'

section of The Exorcist; the society depicted is sinister and patriarchal at every level. An archaeological dig reveals demonic artifacts concealed beneath the surface of society; metaphoric evil lurks in the corrupt foundations of society, unnoticed by agents operating above. This constitutes an ironic reversal of post-Fordist hierarchy (the political is commonly considered the 'top' level of the social, agents operating below it), mirroring the gender-role reversal (Regan/masculine, Karras/feminine) which occurs later. The symbols of political hegemony (demonic artifacts) exists beneath agents' conscious collective experience of social life, operating in the 'background' in a similar manner to Althussarian Ideological State Apparatuses or the covert operations of post-Fordism. The hierarchical inversion implies the hidden, potentially radical though limited critique evident within the ultimately conservative frame of the text.

'Good' is figured here as physically corrupt since Merrin, the exorcist, is dangerously ill, and also traditionally spiritually corrupt as Karras, the hero, struggles with his faith and potential homosexuality; such a blurring or 'good' and 'bad' is delimited through the Iraq setting. Iraq is constructed as a series of contrasts: blinding desert light and open spaces oppose dark, cramped alleyways, whilst a statue of Pazuzu dominates a landscape where even peripheral figures such as blacksmiths are sinister. The blacksmith is also blind. Blindness in Possession texts frequently marks characters associated with evil, who have experienced evil and/or who have accessed forbidden knowledge. Here blindness comes of existence within the 'evil'/blurred social.

Later, Merrin is almost killed by a sinister black carriage occupied by an ancient crone, her toothless grin evoking that of Pazuzu: a male-female parallel that will later be underlined by Pazuzu's connection with Regan. Horror exists around every corner of this worl and not simply, as Creed argues, in the exclusive context of femininity. Here reality itself is corrupt:

even clocks seem possessed. Merrin is out of his depth, religion, influence and health; as a figure existing within a threatening social arena, he becomes a temporary metaphor for Western existence under post-Fordism, and, by the text's conclusion, Friedkin's suggested route of escape from it.

Overlapping sound and the image of the blazing sun link a spatial cut from Iraq to Washington in the early 1970s, connecting the overt distortions of good, evil and 'normality' in the opening sequence to the constructed reality of American hegemony. As King establishes, during this period:

> the youth quake of the sixties was still going on. Kids were...saying...words at the supper table that they never learned from their parents...parents were finding things in bureau drawers that didn't look like Herbert Tareytons. And in the midst of all this comes the story of this pretty...fourteen-year-old girl...who turns into a harridan....it was very comforting [for parents] to understand that what happened to their children wasn't their fault (Underwood and Miller 1988: 21)[16].

King cites the interpretation of the threat as external to familial responsibility in the common perception, linking it the political and sexual awakening of the 1960s, extended into the 1970s. The possessor is thus metaphorically equated with the framing political system; the existence of Regan within the physical centre of government (Washington) in the location, and during the period, of Watergate, making clear its historically empowered critique of post-Fordism as an evil controlling force.

To underline the point, prior to Regan's possession, Chris, an actress, receives an invitation to a private social gathering with the president at the White House. For

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[16]Skal interprets the film as a conservative reaction against the perceived moral decline of the 1960s and '70s, reading Regan as a metaphor for 'filthy-mouthed children...taking personality-transforming drugs, violently acting out, and generally making life unpleasant for their elders' (Skal 1993: 295).

contemporary Americans, Nixon's crisis similarly blurred concepts of good and evil[17]. Nixon admitted that Watergate had placed 'a strain...on the American people' (Blum 1991: 451), and Blum records that in the public perception, Nixon, and, it may be claimed, by extension, the American hegemony that he represented and in many ways defined, 'seemed both crooked and mean' (ibid: 462).

Furthermore, Watergate was a crisis which came after, and was in many ways the ultimate expression of, a period in which America's view of itself was challenged to an unprecedented degree. This period encompassed:

> racial conflict over civil rights, nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union, war in Vietnam, angry protest against that war, three devastating assassinations, riots in the cities, violence on the campuses, crisis over the Constitution (ibid: 475).

As a direct result, 'the confidence of the New Frontier and the bright promise of the Great Society had faded; the liberal spirit was spent' (ibid). Patterson cites two important examples of contemporary public opinion, the first from a teacher:

> after Watergate its crazy to have trust in politicians. I'm totally cynical, sceptical. Nixon said he was the sovereign!...I was indignant. Someone should have told him that this is a democracy, not a monarchy (Patterson 1996: 782).

The second statement is even more telling:

> Sometimes you get the feeling nothing has gone right since John Kennedy died. We've had the Vietnam war, all the rioting....Before then you were used to America winning everything, but now you sometimes think our day may be over (ibid: 783).

Drawing upon such concerns, The Exorcist's blurring of good and evil mirrors the post-

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[17]In 'mix[ing] lies with the truth', Pazuzu may be read as a hyperbolic symbol of the post-Watergate public perception of Nixon and his administration, for he employed the same methods during his cover-up of the crisis, and was considered to be a 'bald li[ar]' (Blum 1991: 463).

Watergate shattered belief in the values of 'right' and 'wrong' as self-contained, mutually exclusive, hegemonically defined polemical states. The Exorcist subsequently details the struggle between 'good' (Karras/Merrin/the Church) and 'bad' (demonic, metaphorically controlling-political) patriarchy. Its apparently conservative narrative reflects Blum's assertion that during the period, liberalism was compromised and exhausted.

The shaken belief in the American political system during this period mirrors the personal effects of post-Fordism; power was questioned, temporarily usurped from its traditional home (the Whitehouse) and became de-centralised and anxieties regarding a loss of social control were surely rife. If the demon is a metaphor not only for general political control but also, in part, for a particular series of events which changed belief in hegemonic systems fundamentally, then the violent control over the textual self (Regan) develops a new dimension. The possession is patriarchal, aggressive, masculine[18], dominating and controlling. Like post-Fordism, it eliminates personal autonomy and thought. The demon presents itself as the antithesis of the 'ideal' American family/society, employing obscenity to shock and undermine the personal convictions of others.

Regan's prediction that an astronaut at Chris' party will 'die up there' is a clear reference to the near fatal Apollo Thirteen mission of 1970, whilst the opening sequence evokes contemporary tensions in the Middle East, directing analysis away from the internalised struggle that Clover and Creed consider to be the crucial site of 'meaning'. Regan's unstable family life and Chris' decentralisation (she moves house constantly) also constitute evidence of a post-Fordist lack of personal stability. The film is not as polemic in its pitching of good (priests) versus evil (demons) as many critics, for example Jancovich, would have us believe;

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[18]Creed and Clover, in gendering Pazuzu female, ignore the fact that his statue, seen in Iraq and on Regan's bed, has an erection, is called 'he' by Regan and initially presents himself as the masculine 'Captain Howdy'. Similarly The Entity is a supernatural rapist, as is Poltergeist's 'Beast'.

through the blurring of good and evil the Church does not emerge with the credibility that many argue renders the text conservative to a damaging degree. Furthermore, the text's naturalist style collapses temporarily and slow-motion is employed to render the appearance of two nuns sinister, evoking images of ghosts, and also the disturbing Iraqi crone. Throughout the genre, good, delimited through the modern world, is presented as being sinister.

Not only does the Church fail to employ adequate methods to save Regan since it supplies one priest who has lost his faith and another too frail to survive, but it is not prepared to learn from the situation, failing to document this event of immense theological magnitude officially. Crucially, and what critics always miss, the exorcism fails. The ritual is not powerful enough to remove the demon; the exertion kills Merrin and Karras demands his own possession after rejecting Church ritual and literally beating the evil out of Regan. This is *exactly* what Pazuzu wanted; he desired an exorcism since it will 'bring [him and Karras] together'. Perhaps recognising this manipulation, and in order to save Regan as the demon, now possessing Karras, moves to strangle her, Karras hurls himself to his death in a literal leap of faith. This is his salvation since he is able to make the ultimate sacrifice to save another; a personal advancement divorced from contact with the hegemonic structure of the Church.

Karras is freed from this organisation paradoxically through a regained personal autonomy, the surviving remnants of which allow his suicide, grounded in faith; ultimately Pazuzu, stronger than the Church, was not stronger than Karras whose renewed faith and autonomy allowed his entrapment of Pazuzu and Karras' absolution before death. Crucially, Karras rediscovers his faith not through the Church, which surrounded him even while he lost it, but through Pazuzu: in witnessing direct evidence of the existence of evil, Karras realises that this logically proves the existence of a higher power of good. To underline this apparent paradox, Karras' salvation lies in the Church's most vilified sin: suicide. The film does *not*

present the Church as flawless. It may be argued that the text is here reflecting increasing public opinion regarding projected preferred resolutions of the ongoing Watergate crisis[19], where, like for Karras, salvation seemed to lie in Nixon jumping before he was pushed. As Karras leapt from a physically high position, so too did Nixon from a politically high one[20].

If Pazuzu constitutes a subtextual symbol of both post-Fordism and elements of Watergate concerns, then the forces of good, I would like to suggest, are similarly representative of both an individual (Kennedy) and a series of political ideals that he represented: Fordism. Although Fordism as a controlling system caused, during its own operation, anxiety regarding the removal of autonomy from agents, such anxieties operated differently to those rife under post-Fordism. At least, for Fordist agents, control was centralised, contracting long-term and consequently work and the family stable and secure, though controlled by a powerfully patriarchal series of industrial ethics. It may be argued that from a post-Fordist perspective, where rigid control is still operable, but diffuse in its organisation, utilising the threat of unemployment and inter-personal instability, Fordism, with hindsight, appeared, if not the better, then the more secure system.

Post-Nixon America looked to Kennedy and Fordism with rose-tinted nostalgia; Merrin, and especially Karras, may also be read as representations of such nostalgia, and furthermore in Karras' case the suggested solution to the Watergate crisis crucially through Fordism's re-centralisation of control. This allows Karras' previously diffuse (post-Fordist) belief system to solidify in order that he may save Regan and the invaded America that she

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[19]See Blum 1991 for further and related discussion.

[20]I do not argue here that Karras represents Nixon, but rather that he is used dualistically to detail a solution to the Watergate crisis. Though beyond the scope of the text to realise it at that period in history, the act of leaping that the film suggests proved ultimately to be Nixon's salvation, since Ford almost immediately pardoned him as Karras is pardoned through the Last Rites after *his* leap.

partly represents. Clover, therefore, could not be further from the truth when she states that within the text women and priests, really cyphers for opposing systems, 'are functionally one and the same' (Clover 1992: 74).

The conservative elements of The Exorcist promote a return to traditional values, typically interpreted by critics as constituting an acceptance of Church, hegemonic, patriarchal morality rather than pre-Watergate Fordist value structures. Kennedy won office, albeit on the narrowest of margins, on promises of fair play and equal opportunities for all. He came to personify hope and, especially after his assassination on November 22nd, 1963, innocence[21]. It may be claimed that a decade after his murder, in light of the corruption of Watergate (spectacularly exposed by John Dean[22]) Nixon was contrasted with the 'innocence' of Kennedy, who, perhaps due to his views on Cuba, became a martyr for his beliefs at the hands of the Communist-influenced Oswald, or, if we are to believe conspiracy theorists, the FBI, CIA, Mafia and the Cubans operating together. Similarly, Karras is martyred for his regained belief, also becoming a symbol of hope through his faith, rediscovered through an ultimate adherence to a series of previously dominant social and moral 'laws' - here representative of Fordism.

It could be argued that martyrdom strengthens faith in the cause died for; that a person died for his/her beliefs, furthermore, establishes frequently the perceived 'truth' of that belief through the enormity of the sacrifice for it. Hence the widespread use of Saints by the Church to strengthen belief in its doctrines. The most prevalent and powerful example is Christ;

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[21]This has so permeated American consciousness that it has invaded popular culture through a multitude of films such as JFK (Oliver Stone, 1992) and even musical theatre in Assassins (Steve Sondheim and John Weidman, 1990). Assassins details the public perception of Kennedy's death in 'You Can Close The New York Stock Exchange', sung to Oswald: 'The world will weep/Grief...beyond imagining/Despair/The death of innocence and hope'. For further evidence, see Steigerwald 1995 and Farber 1994.

[22]A prior senior presidential assistant who revealed to Congress Nixon's offer of presidential clemency and reduced sentencing to those implicated in the crisis in return for their silence.

popular verses on Christian gift-cards reflect this: 'I asked Jesus/"How much do you love me?"/"This much", He answered, and/He stretched out His arms and died' (Franks 1991).

Karras' death therefore strengthens faith not only in the existence of God, and, though compromised, to a greater or lesser degree the institutions that represent Him, but also in the previous economic system that Karras ultimately represents. The Exorcist is not simply a traditionalist battle between 'good' and 'evil', morality and immorality or, as Clover and Creed would claim, between competing gendered agencies for control over the female body, but a nostalgic demand for political-social stability, delimited through a confrontation between the symbolic representations of two controlling economic systems and the narrative presentation of primary political figures (Nixon/Kennedy) suggestive of these structures.

Similar agendas of patriarchal and hegemonic criticism inform texts across the genre, differing in the extent and focus of this subtext from film to film. Rosemary's Baby, more overly radical than The Exorcist, is, this respect, closely linked to The Omen[23]; a constant generic trait though is the focusing of these issues through gendered identities and symbols, specifically sustained vagina imagery, open to receive male control. Similarly Poltergeist contains hidden vaginal portals through which Carol-Anne is conveyed, and from which, guided by a spiritual midwife, she is 'reborn' covered in amniotic slime. In Don't Look Now (Nicholas Roeg, 1973), females at a seance are asked if their legs are crossed, hinting at easier contact through openness, whilst Christine, a car gendered female is, as Clover claims, apparently possessed from below during the opening sequence.

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[23]The Omen depicts the destruction of the patriarchal symbolic order gleefully. Patriarchy constitutes the cause and effect of Armageddon; at every level Damien, the anti-Christ, is protected by hegemonic structures, dominantly a family headed by an ambassador (the Thorns) and the police, who kill Thorn as he attempts to destroy Damien. Ultimately the president adopts the anti-Christ, unwittingly raising him to destroy the world through political ethics. The male story is a complex discovery plot of the truth regarding Damien and the post-Fordist destructive patriarchal control that he embodies.

Underlining this convention, Rosemary's Baby's possession occurs during a Satanic rape, and rape by possessed trees heralds the initial possession of The Evil Dead, continuing, as in Prince Of Darkness (John Carpenter, 1987), through AIDS-like contact with bodily secretions. Rosemary is forced to take 'vitamin[s]...[on] the first day of [her] period'. Menstruation, as in Carrie therefore opens Rosemary, via the vagina, to evil forces. Hence Carrie's classmate's cries to 'plug it up' and to remain closed to the influence of evil through the 'closure' of internal space during her first menstruation.

In Possessed (aka Manhattan Baby, Lucio Fulci, 1983), after being photographed (constructed as an objectified/controlled image), a vaginal cavity opens beneath Suzie's open legs and possession begins. The demon exists in a hidden room which was 'erected' to house him, with a warning vaginal symbol at its entrance. Here, and typically, evil is figured as phallic (Biblical serpents) emerging from a vaginally-symbol pit/tomb and entering and dominating victims. A vaginal pit conceals deadly phallic stakes combining a symbol of patriarchal control with clearly evoked vagina dentata imagery - a further generic convention.

The literal womb of Rosemary's Baby becomes symbolic in The Exorcist, where Regan's bedroom represents the reproductive inner space, which Pazuzu penetrates as a 'draught'[24] through the always vaginally open window, impregnating it with evil and causing the generation of a demonic child. The room becomes representative of the post-Fordist arena in which the political ethic (Pazuzu - diffuse through his claims that he is 'legion', which we are given direct evidence of later since he appears to be a composite entity comprising of many demonic personalities) operates. Regan's subsequent taboo-shattering crude and violent sexuality reflects the publicly perceived lack of personal stability and the breakdown of value

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[24]As Clover demonstrates, wind is figured culturally as a possessing force: when, for example, people sneeze, they denounce the Satanic influence associated with it ('God bless you').

structures that this symbolic ethic heralds. Sexuality is presented as destructive not because of conservative morality as Jancovich claims, but instead to expose that autonomous personal (as opposed to dictated) pleasure potentially challenges post-Fordist control; this is delimited spatially.

Regan's masturbation in the bedroom is, therefore, bloody and damaging, oral sex is incestuous and violent, sexual expression is crude, hints of homosexuality lead to death and even possible sexual relationships are destroyed, since Pazuzu disposes of Burke, Chris' potential partner. Those who enter this space often die; Karras, in hosting Pazuzu and exiting the symbolic womb plays midwife to the demon. The demon is symbolically reborn into the outside world (though, we may assume, remains trapped in Karras' body as the Last Rites are administered[25]), exposing the circular, self-generating power and growth of post-Fordism.

Vaginas and mouths are linked throughout the genre, often through Dentata imagery[26]: Prince Of Darkness spreads possession orally, whilst in Poltergeist II Steve becomes possessed after swallowing a demonic, phallic worm. Non-Possession films employing possession elements such as Alien[27] and Shivers possess violently by the mouth and vagina respectively.

Old Testament imagery, expressed through the 'Book Of Genesis' and expanded by

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[25]The logic of The Exorcist is destroyed in The Exorcist III (William Peter Blatty, 1990) in which it is revealed that an entity transferred from Karras to a serial killer at the time of Karras' apparent death. In this film, Karras becomes 'Patient X' despite this making little sense in the context of the original.

[26]Foregrounded by Freud's assertion that 'hysterical headaches rest upon an analogy in fantasy which equates the top with the bottom parts of the body...lips and labia - mouth = vagina' (Masson 1985: 340). Possession is frequently interpreted by 'experts' as a form of hysterical headache (cf, The Exorcist). See Clover for more detailed analysis of womb and phallus imagery in Possession texts.

[27]In which the entire text revolves around violent phallic eruptions through penis-like Chest-Bursters and the Face-Hugger which inserts a surrogate penis into its victim to impregnate them, and vaginal housings since the alien ship is entered through clearly vaginal portals and houses Face-Hugger eggs, as impregnated bodies later house Chest-Bursters.

John Milton in Paradise Lost (Milton [1667] 1966) surface to provide meanings throughout the genre. Eve, to all intents and purposes, was not only the first woman, but also the first *possessed* woman, tempted by a clearly phallic Serpent which, since Paradise Lost, has commonly been interpreted as Satan. The Serpent/Satan mixes lies with the truth as in The Exorcist, using the female body as a receptacle through which to introduce evil into the world. Setting the generic precedent, the serpent utilises Eve's mouth, symbolically linked to the vagina, and literally linked through God's subsequent punishment of her ('I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception...thou shalt bring forth children' ['Genesis 3: 16]). Punishing patriarchal control is stressed: 'thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee' (ibid). Possession texts unconsciously utilise these precedents in order to question general patriarchy, delimiting it through socially operable political structures of control and extending the hegemony of Biblical patriarchy (the basis of all Western, Christian patriarchy) to a critique of political hegemony.

Such a social focus is foregrounded by and through popular conceptions of Eden and its social values. Eden in the Bible and Milton is paradisiacal - the original Utopia. It operates within literature - dominantly through Milton - as a metaphor for 'perfect' society, as God intended it before the Fall. Satan considers Eden as metaphorically social, corruption of which will by extension enable him to corrupt all of humankind: 'Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps/Our first eruption' (Milton [1667] 1966 I: 655-656). However, since the Fall, through Eve, the social itself is corrupted through the agents existing within it (initially Adam and Eve), resulting in their and our expulsion from the garden: 'The world was all before them...They hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,/Through Eden took their solitary way' (Milton [1667] 1966 XII: 646-649), and 'Therefore the Lord God sent (Adam and Eve) forth from the garden of Eden' (Genesis 3: 23). The corruption of humans is analogous with

that of society; through the entry of individual humans (initially Eve), society as a whole may be defiled.

Throughout the genre, therefore, a primary objective of demonic attacks is to undermine the faith of all those surrounding the victim, in order to spread chaos and despair throughout society. The Evil Dead thus delimits its initial attack through nature (representative of Eden corrupted), whilst generic convention demands the possession of Eve-cyphers through orifices representative of the vagina/mouth, as Eve was initially 'possessed'. The female body, long equated with the natural in literature, becomes a representative garden to be invaded; through invasion of the *micro*-garden (the feminine body, existing within the *macro*-garden of wider society) evil exerts cultural influence.

Connecting to this, during possession, Regan speaks backwards. Karras' reversed diegetic tape does not provide viewers with the entire message. By reversing the film's soundtrack, phrases emerge that are absent from the evidence that Karras presents diegetically, dominantly a horrific voice that screams 'It is warm in the garden!'[28]. Here again, though subtextually, the mouth becomes a portal for the discovery of hidden knowledge. Regan, representing the symbolic garden, is a comfortable, warm place to exist; by comparison, the final circle of Dante's Inferno (Alighieri [1309] 1971) in contrast, is a frozen wasteland in which traitors, dominantly Satan ('king of the vast empire of all grief/stuck out with half his chest above the ice' [ibid XXXIV: 28-29]) are housed. For invading forces, existence within the possessed constitutes a comfortable alternative to Hell, described in directly opposing terms to this classical figuration of it, whilst invasion of the micro-social is generically the dominant means of corrupting the macro-social.

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[28]Poltergeist II similarly figures innocence; Diane remembers walking 'in the garden' on a sunny day with her now dead mother, symbol of unity and hope in the text.

The symbolic representation of demonic forces as post-Fordist controlling forces[29] therefore operates within Possession texts as the reality operates outside of them: control of the self is, in both cases, absolute - leading to a loss of individual personal autonomy - and operable throughout the social. Effects on the micro (victim) *and* symbolic macro (characters surrounding the victim), and the wider consequences of supernatural experiences on the textual universe are linked intimately. For example, in The Exorcist, traditional values are regained and a specific form of patriarchy is taught a lesson, opposing the lesson that patriarchy teaches through Slasher killers, when the Church once again accepts possession as a real event.

The masculinity of the possessor and the femininity of the possessed are thus assured through textual dependence on phallic intrusion and literal or symbolic vaginal entry, independent of the actual sex of the victim (though males are possessed far less frequently than females). This reflects literary conventions and transforms the possessed into personified controlling male aggression. Possessed females speak in male or other-worldly voices that are a hybrid of male and female, underlining the fact that masculine demons and female victims have merged[30], and adopt masculine personas. During Poltergeist II's male story Steve finally becomes 'open' to difference, taught by Taylor, a Native American male already opened (he sits upon a phallic precipice and allows a self-invasion by 'good' spirits); the opened state implies symbolic freedom from the totalising doctrines of patriarchal control, renewed autonomy and personal harmony. This is figured as a re-centralisation of the self and, as a

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[29]The diffuse nature of such control is emphasised through generic convention: it is rare for single spirits to invade victims. In The Exorcist, Poltergeist, Demons, Demons II (Lamberto Bava, 1986), and The Evil Dead trilogy, amongst many others, evil spirits invade en masse, and are denied individual personalities.

[30]Therefore not, as Creed claims in the case of The Exorcist, marking the invading force as female. Mercedes McCambridge, who provided Pazuzu's voice has stated that she considered the character to be masculine, playing her role as such (Clive Barker's A-Z Of Horror, episode 2).

result, the family and by extension, society. True 'power and knowledge' here also enters through the throat, symbolising vaginal, though not necessarily effeminate, openness.

This alternative masculinity does not involve dominance but oneness with nature and equality is stressed, directly opposing Kane's (the composite face of the text's legion) attempts to remake Steve as a dominant, controlling patriarch and attempted rapist. Taylor's mystical spear is thus both phallic/phallus and nature/natural (symbolically feminine) combined, carved and decorated with feathers, herbs and bones. Opposing this is the post-Fordist cypher: the patriarchal, hegemonic *Reverend* Kane, whose de-centralised control (frequently invisible, his soul is far distant from his body) influences every aspect of the Freeling's lives.

Controlling the morals, belief, work, leisure, life and death of his followers (in life he was the leader of a suicide cult), Kane epitomises the ethical system that must be destroyed through an 'opening up' and restructuring of the gender roles that it defines. Throughout Possession texts of the 1980s, elements of Reaganite macho ideals and policy are presented as 'evil' combated by 'good' figures with more balanced views of gender politics than Reagan held.

For these reasons, most possessors in the 1980s invade victims using Reaganite strong-arm tactics instead of the more subtle entry of victims in previous decades (for example, in The Exorcist). Often, the act of invasion, as distinct from its aftermath, has the appearance of a fully fledged battle with invading forces laying seige to potential victims and assaulting them with every psychological and physical weapon at their disposal, partly evoking the strategies employed by the Americans in Grenada.

The final supernatural attack of The Boogeyman (Ulli Lommel, 1980), for example, places a house under siege in the year in which Reagan strengthened his own aggressive image

through the resolution of the Iran hostage affair. We first encounter the Boogeyman whilst he is still alive and engaged in sadistic sex. Though we do not see the actual act, he again dominates through penetration. Here, then, possession is centred around a vaginal well, the presence of which opens victims to possession[31]. Evil is temporarily defeated when masculine control is compromised: the smashed mirror from which supernature emerged, and which was re-constructed by a male, is thrown into the well and overwhelmed by its physicality since evil has not penetrated it intentionally, but rather is trapped there when patriarchy's reflected face is shattered. A surviving fragment of the mirror, still operable in the patriarchal world above, points to the future re-emergence of masculine control, rendered diffuse through its decentralisation from the shattered whole. In the words of the film, these are 'nothing but ordinary [critical] reflections' of the ethical control surrounding the text.

Armed for battle: The Evil Dead.

Following this, throughout the genre traditional masculine actions herald evil[32]. Therefore, *non*-patriarchy is set against the Kane-ethic (the attacks of which operate through destructive phallic symbols - deadly cables, worms, wire and chainsaws) at every level in Poltergeist II: Kane's control over Carol-Anne is defeated by the newly opened Steve, Taylor, Diane (who fights Kane on 'the other side') and the spirit of Diane's mother - the loss element

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[31]A similarly vaginal well is evident in The Amityville Horror (Stuart Rosenberg, 1979).

[32]For example, Poltergeist II's Robbie is attacked whilst having his first shave.

of the text - who ultimately rescues Carol-Anne. The family is born again as the newly (equality) gendered Steve pulls his family from the influence of Kane/post-Fordism with Taylor's spear of gender balance, which is also employed to finally defeat Kane when it is hurled at him.

The repressive qualities of hegemonic structures are cited throughout the genre as the partial cause of possession - for example, Catholic morality in Rosemary's Baby[33]. Post-Fordist fathers are often literally Satanic, as in Polanski's text, where evil will ultimately control all agents through the anti-Christ's new world order. Rosemary is surrounded by post-Fordist 'experts' who control her every move, and who are de-centralised to the extent that audiences cannot identify who is and who is not a coven member. Drawing, it may be argued, on contemporary Thalidomide fears[34], Rosemary's controlled pregnancy is dependent upon untested drugs ('tannis root'), producing an abnormal child . As Jancovich establishes, in the 1960s child-rearing, once considered a natural process, increasingly became subject to pressure to conform to 'expert' advice and control; Rosemary's Baby reacts against this by detailing the birth, under such conditions, of a monster[35], attacking all forms of political, social

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[33]Rosemary's Catholic morality, taught by the patriarchal structures of the Church and her family, cause her to regard motherhood as her highest aspiration and never question it, despite her extreme circumstances. Because of this she refuses to consider the option of an abortion. Church values are therefore directly responsible for empowering Satan, leading the Vatican to ban the film. Viewing of it officially required the subsequent confession and absolution of the viewer in order to cleanse the soul. The Exorcist escaped such a ban because of its apparent advocation of Catholic moral values.

[34]Skal records that during this period 'the nightmare tragedy riveted the world...Thalidomide jolted awake America's deep-seated fascination with freaks...[at this time] it was inevitable that Tod Browning's long-suppressed Freaks would wriggle its way back into the spotlight' and gain a re-release (Skal 1993: 290). Drawing upon these fears, by 1967 both Freaks and the work of photographer Diane Arbus, who essayed human physical deformity, and specifically freaks, were exhibited in America's Museum Of Modern Art.

[35]A shared theme of The Omen, It's Alive (Larry Cohen, 1974) and their sequels, and, amongst others, The Brood. and The Sect (Michael Soavi, 1993). These have their heroines giving birth to evil under the control of an 'expert' coven. Dark Waters (Mariano Baino, 1993) utilises a complex discovery plot in which the heroine discovers that she is the progeny of a Lovecraftian demon, whilst The Good Son (Joseph Ruben, 1993) explores the psyche of an inherently evil and distinctly representative-symbolic controlling male child.

and moral control over the self.

Bourdieu lays the groundwork for such observation by assessing the role of what he terms the new petite bourgeoisie (Bourdieu 1984: 365). He considers that this group, desperate to find acceptance by the bourgeoisie, lacks the social and often academic grounding required for admission into bourgeoisie circles. To combat this they establish themselves as 'experts' in new fields, largely of their own invention, and, because of the new and closed natures of these fields, quickly rise to positions of great authority within them. Bourdieu applies this directly to councillors (typically the new wave of 'expert' sex-councillors), for whom he shows contempt. He claims that they set themselves up as guarantors of the 'correct' lifestyle through the pseudo-scientific knowledge that they sell which, with the passage of time, becomes considered legitimate and 'correct'/truthful by the general populace.

Sex councillors, for example, promote what Bourdieu considers to be a false scientific knowledge by establishing themselves in the common view as the holders of 'legitimate' sexuality. This pseudo-scientific morality is, he argues (ibid: 368), closer to religion than science as definitions of morals and 'norms' are involved: diffuse sexual experts thus structure agents' sexual selves in relation to other people, rendering their most private experiences as effectively in public domain. After birth, post-Fordist experts also impose order through child psychoanalysis, suggested methods of 'effective' child-rearing and so on, generating their own markets which then legitimate them whilst manipulating subtly agents' childhood experiences through the more direct manipulation of their parents.

The subtle control of such largely unseen experts is evident throughout the genre; Rosemary, for example, follows the unquestioned 'taste' and 'expertise' of fashion and style gurus in magazines. A note left by the previous tenant of her apartment states 'I can no longer associate myself': generically the self becomes submerged into a model of often subtle ethical

control, and is manipulated until autonomy is extinguished and victims become merely biological cogs in an ethical machine.

The paranoia and conspiracy elements of Rosemary's Baby specifically and the genre generally were, it may be argued, influenced by the public anxieties regarding the allegations (and subsequent court case headed by New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison) of an assassination conspiracy surrounding Kennedy's death[36]. As would occur with Watergate, hidden organisations, plots and intrigues involving 'experts' and those in political power were cause for much public discussion. Prior to his death Kennedy was himself accused of secret deals with Khrushchev over Cuba; facts often forgotten in his post-assassination icon status. It may be claimed that in pre-Nixon America, agents developed paranoia regarding the apparently hidden 'puppet-masters' governing everyday life, considering assassination theories *and* allegations regarding the Cuban crisis as overt representations of a covert political system of which, at the time, they did not have a conception of as a body of ethics called post-Fordism. Importantly, the post-Fordist system emerged between Kennedy's death and the production of Rosemary's Baby, which, alongside Night Of The Living Dead was amongst the first films to express such concerns.

It may be argued that the alleged Kennedy conspirators were commonly supposed to be seeking personal as well as political advantage through the assassination. Similarly, Rosemary's Baby details a personal and political-social change of status and administration through conspiracy. Its male story details the acting career of Guy, Rosemary's husband; he moves from unknown to a potential star during the film: advancement here is also dependent upon conspiracy (which heralds a new world order as the alleged Kennedy conspirators also

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[36]I do not argue that the theory is correct, but that the *possibility* of its truth was cause for much public concern. A relatively close account of Garrison's argument is presented in Oliver Stone's JFK (1991).

inaugurated a new world order), since Guy is a coven member.

Guy's first break comes when a colleague in a play is struck blind, a common generic device. In Possessed and The Beyond (which directly links possession with business ethics, since a hotel is built over an entrance to Hell) Fulci's protagonists, like many throughout the genre, encounter Satanic forces and are rendered blind; the soul is forever changed, and its traditional window sealed. Furthermore, Rosemary's child is to be born in June 1966 (666), making the anti-Christ thirty-four, the age at which of Christ was crucified, in the year 2000 when the Bible predicts the return of Christ to battle Satan[37].

This gives the repressive, post-Fordist world order a clear head start over Christ; by being effectively born in the year of his death, Christ is symbolically re-born to defeat, and, amending 'Revelation', economic structures will prevail in the ultimate battle for the human soul. This mirrors the political, economic power-base of Damien in the Omen films. Recently, the 'number of the Beast' ('Revelation' 14: 18) has been interpreted as that embossed on credit cards, through which agents structure their economic lives. It may be claimed that the horror of Polanski's text lies in audiences' realisation that much of Rosemary's life has been controlled by the patriarchal coven who have applied subtle post-Fordist expertise to achieve their goals and dominate the world.

Recent Possession texts figure control as more blatantly industrial[38]: here men representative of post-Fordist management sell their souls to the industrial ethic which is presented as a modern emissary of Satan and become consumed and frequently destroyed by its power. For example, in The Mangler (Tobe Hooper, 1994), business-men sacrifice limbs to

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[37]See 'Revelation', especially chapter 20.

[38]Also a regular theme of science-fiction texts such as Robocop (Paul Verhoeven, 1987) which cites a consumer society gone mad as the arena in which political control of the body operates for alleged social gain.

an industrial press in order to be possessed and gain Faustian power; as in Christine the system remains operative at the end of the text, controlling those surrounding it, and constructing a patriarchal power-elite from those who sell their souls to it. Because of the continuance of post-Fordist ethics, it is rare for controlling invading forces in Possession films to actually be destroyed at the end of the text. Though often exorcised, this process simply forces them to leave the bodies of their victims rather than eliminating them.

As in The Mangler, Tetsuo: The Iron Man (Shinya Tsukamoto, 1989) and Tetsuo II detail an industrial world of total bodily and mental control over its subjects, in which the self merges with the mechanical system, initiating all that it subsequently encounters into its control. At the climax of both films, the machine, now composed of many humans, and therefore representing industrialised legion, moves into the city to destroy and engulf resisting humans in much the same way as the sexually possessed do at the end of Shivers.

Such texts continue to oppose Slashers' figuration of patriarchy as an ideal: in Tetsuo II, an aggressive father experiments on his sons to create living weapons, transforming them into walking symbols of industry. In doing so he destroys his family, and ultimately himself. Industry, the film concludes, promotes 'the beauty of destruction'; out of the advocated destruction of the system could come happiness: the spirits of hero, his wife and their son stand amidst the projected post-apocalypse ruins together, with the hope of starting again ('it's so peaceful'). Tetsuo figures destructive industrial patriarchal economics symbolically: for example when the possessed victim's penis becomes an erect drill with which he kills his girlfriend, whilst its sequel displays it literally through its vision of an industrially dependent apocalypse. Both the destructive phallus and the system that it represents are horrific, even to the men that control the system and seek to invade others.

However, Hellbound: Hellraiser II (Tony Randel, 1988) states the economic basis of

possession in perhaps the clearest form. Hell is a heavily industrialised maze complete with building work, cranes and blinking city lights which traps agents within it. Traditional imagery drawn from literature exists alongside the industrial; sinners are punished as described in Dante's Inferno, whilst Leviathan resides at the centre of the maze producing literally 'no light, but rather darkness visible' (Milton [1667] 1966 I: 63). Doors lead to rooms which contain a personal Hell for each victim, who remain decentralised, alienated and dehumanised (their skin is removed and personal features destroyed so that each inhabitant is indistinguishable) existing within an industrial landscape as literally faceless post-Fordist agents. The demons here are Cenobites; Faustian over-reachers become Cenobites through a heavily industrialised possession process which typically involves being encased in razor-wire whilst pumps, drills and electronic saws remove parts of their brains and drain blood. Encased in bio-mechanical flesh, Channard, a new Cenobite, emerges as a controlling patriarch, delimited through his previous social expert position as a doctor. Underlining patriarchy as the textual basis of evil, he is propelled by a huge penis-like appendage fused into his brain. Hell is here almost impossible to escape; social agents carry Hell's portal with them throughout society in the form of a puzzle box which, when solved, allows that person access to an increasingly blurred[39] Heaven or Hell.

Creed and Clover restrict their analysis to textual representations of femininity and the meaning that males derive from them; whilst relevant, this is only an element of the multiple narratives which connect the Possession genre from text to text. As possessing entities wish to focus their control outwards from victims to the society gathering around them, so it is beneficial to focus analysis away from the representative self and towards the similarly

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[39]Since many of those who solve the box actively desire the sensual 'pleasures' of damnation.

representative ethical structures which control and delimit that self in relation to contemporary political-economic structures. It is these politicised masculine symbolic orders that the genre deconstructs through metaphor, and which Clover deems too ambiguous to address (Clover 1992: 113); in attempting such an address it is possible to uncover a comprehensive foil to the misogyny of the Slasher, represented consistently across a body of otherwise often diffuse texts.

When combined with a consideration of Slashers, traces of recent history evident within the texts comprising each genre direct analysts towards the political ethics framing historical events. It is from such a position that we may understand better the connotations of the aggressive bodily control of textual woman by symbolically represented male forces in these generic cycles, since what is figured as a solution to cultural events in Slashers is literally demonised in Possession films.

Afterword

As we have seen through Bourdieu, western arbiters of taste seek to promote a body of 'legitimate' or 'pure' aesthetics in art, resulting in the widespread critical rejection of what is considered as 'facile' - typically popular culture, and often specifically horror. Such continued rejection of the 'facile', often by academics, centres around common perceptions of the 'base' nature of 'objectionable' material. For Bourdieu, what is considered generally as facile is figured as such if it deals primarily in generating an immediate physical response in its consumers. This, it may be argued, is why horror, which attempts to generate specifically physical responses in its audience, is often rejected, in distinctly physical terms, as a form of entertainment that is 'sick', and so beneath serious contemplation.

Responding to this, it may be claimed that although a clear body of intellectual horror does exist (mainly, though not exclusively in the work of those with auteur sensibility), such texts try to distance themselves from the horror tag - for example, as was the case with Adrian Lyne's 1990 film Jacob's Ladder. Therefore, of particular importance to the analysis of horror is Bourdieu's observation that 'what pure taste refuses is...the violence to which the popular spectator consents' (Bourdieu 1984: 488). It is this common response that I hope that I have been able to challenge through this thesis, since I feel that issues of taste do not constitute a sufficiently valid reason to deny the study of what is considered to be controversial.

It seems inappropriate for cultural analysis to operate to standards broadly comparable to Bourdieu's conception of pure taste in its choice of valid subject matter, though the relatively limited serious academic attention given to horror (and, it may be argued, that attention's constant operation from within established, unrepresentative canons) implies that it is doing just that. As an attempt to partly challenge this, I hope that this thesis has gone some way towards establishing that through a consideration of what is figured as repulsive and

frightening, analysts may see revealed elements of the varied social mechanisms that render those images and the issues empowering them as such.

I have argued that the identification of post-Fordist influences and issues within contemporary horror provides the strongest, though not the only, body of tools that analysts may employ when studying the cultural phenomenon of what I have termed negative aesthetics. Through the expansion of such an approach it is also hoped that cultural analysts may challenge the prevalence of psychoanalysis in the limited academic study of horror more comprehensively. In order to do so, it is both desirable and necessary for future analysts to take into account the agendas, cultural preferences and viewpoints of horror fans. As we have discovered, far from being the much maligned and dangerous simpletons that the media portrays them to be, fans are often the agents that have the most interesting perspectives on both their favourite mode and the cultural concerns and anxieties that it draws upon.

Ultimately, the analysis of what a culture defines as horrific, fearful and unacceptable can potentially reveal as much, if not more, about that society as what it defines as beautiful, preferable and valid. This thesis began with the assertion that horror films are typically figured as nightmares which are presented in terms of cultural commodity, since agents must pay to experience them. It may be argued that this effectively strengthens the economic system of which they are a part. As we have discovered, horror films are, therefore, ultimately economic constructs which partly reflect the larger economic and political constructs surrounding their production. I would like to end with the suggestion that whilst horror remains popular and agents within an economic system continue strengthening it to experience representations of their fears *regarding* that system, there is a need for analysts to attempt to understand such horrific portrayals better, in order to locate what they may covertly illustrate.

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[1]Many horror fanzines are published at seemingly random intervals and with no publication (and often little authorship) information. Where possible I have provided contact addresses for fanzines in lieu of bibliographic details which, due to the nature of fanzine publication, are often impossible to locate.

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