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National College of Art and Design  
Faculty of Design: Department of Craft

“The Violence Debate”

by

Sara Hunter

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art  
and Design and Complementary Studies in  
Candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of  
Design, 1999.

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Fig 1 – Man Bites Dog

Man bites Dog

Fig. 1 - Man bites Dog

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Mr. Gerry Walker for the use of his books and for all his help and advise.



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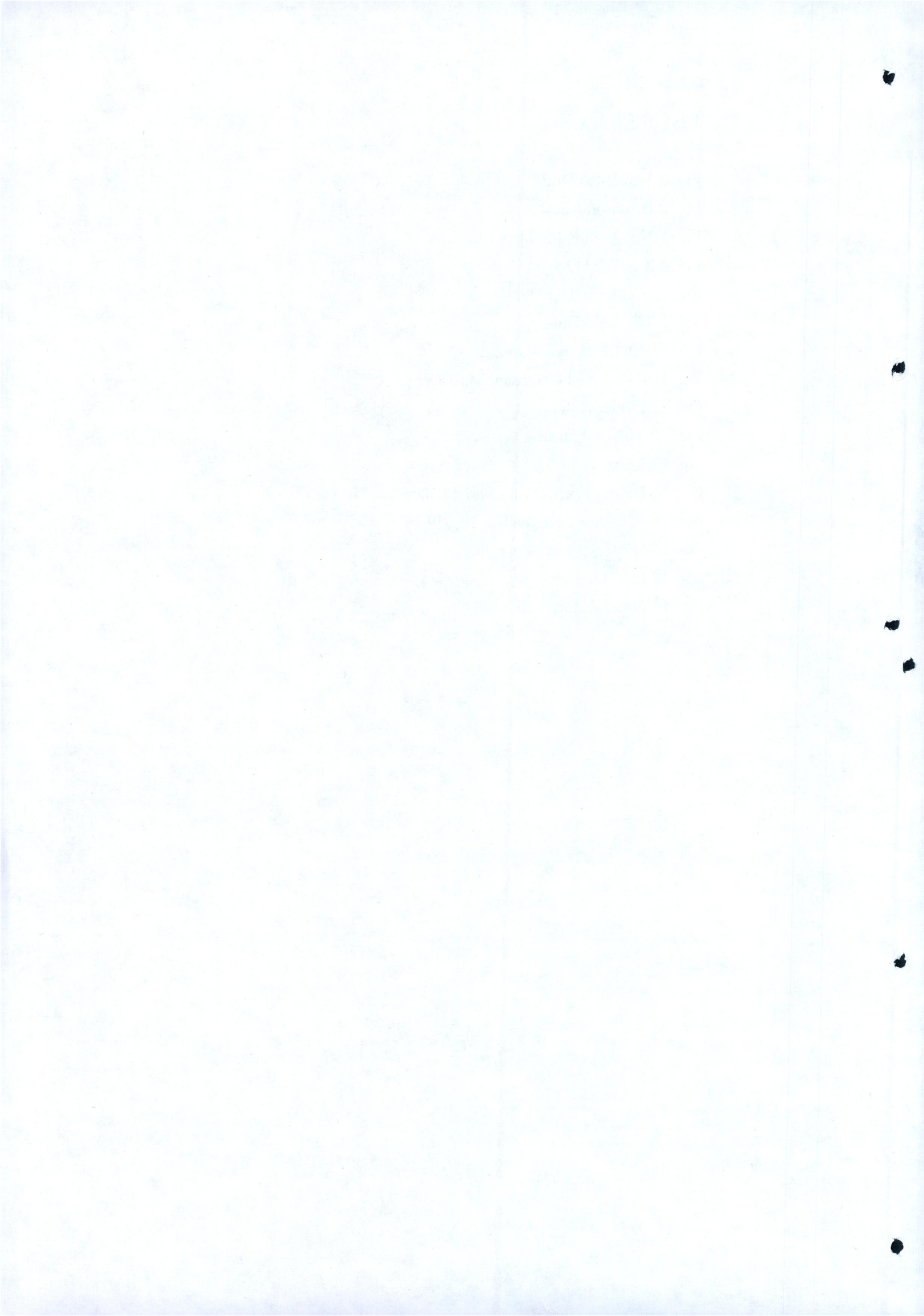
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## **Introduction**

This essay examines the issue of screen violence and its effects on society. Can cinema, television and video be blamed for problems that troubles popular culture today? Are young people as vulnerable to the influence of video as is often claimed.

I will attempt to prove that these claims are unfounded. In chapter 1 I will chart the history of popular entertainment, starting from the 1850's when penny gaff theatres were believed to cause bad behaviour among the working class to present day cinema which has been criticized for its use of extreme violence.

Chapter 2 will look at the issue of copycat crimes, and in particular the murder of Jamie Bulger, committed by two children who the newspapers claimed were influenced by watching the horror movie, Child's Play 3. This case like many others has shown the reluctance of the press to connect copycat crimes with real life violence and not fiction.

In Chapter 3 I will look at three separate studies which have found that adults and children are not incited by fictional violence to commit violent acts. The studies indicate that viewers, young and old find fictional violence entertaining and a safe way of interpreting and discussing violence in a fictional setting. Chapter 3 will also show that environmental factors, and not screen violence is the reason people commit crimes.

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## CHAPTER 1 - The Debate in Context

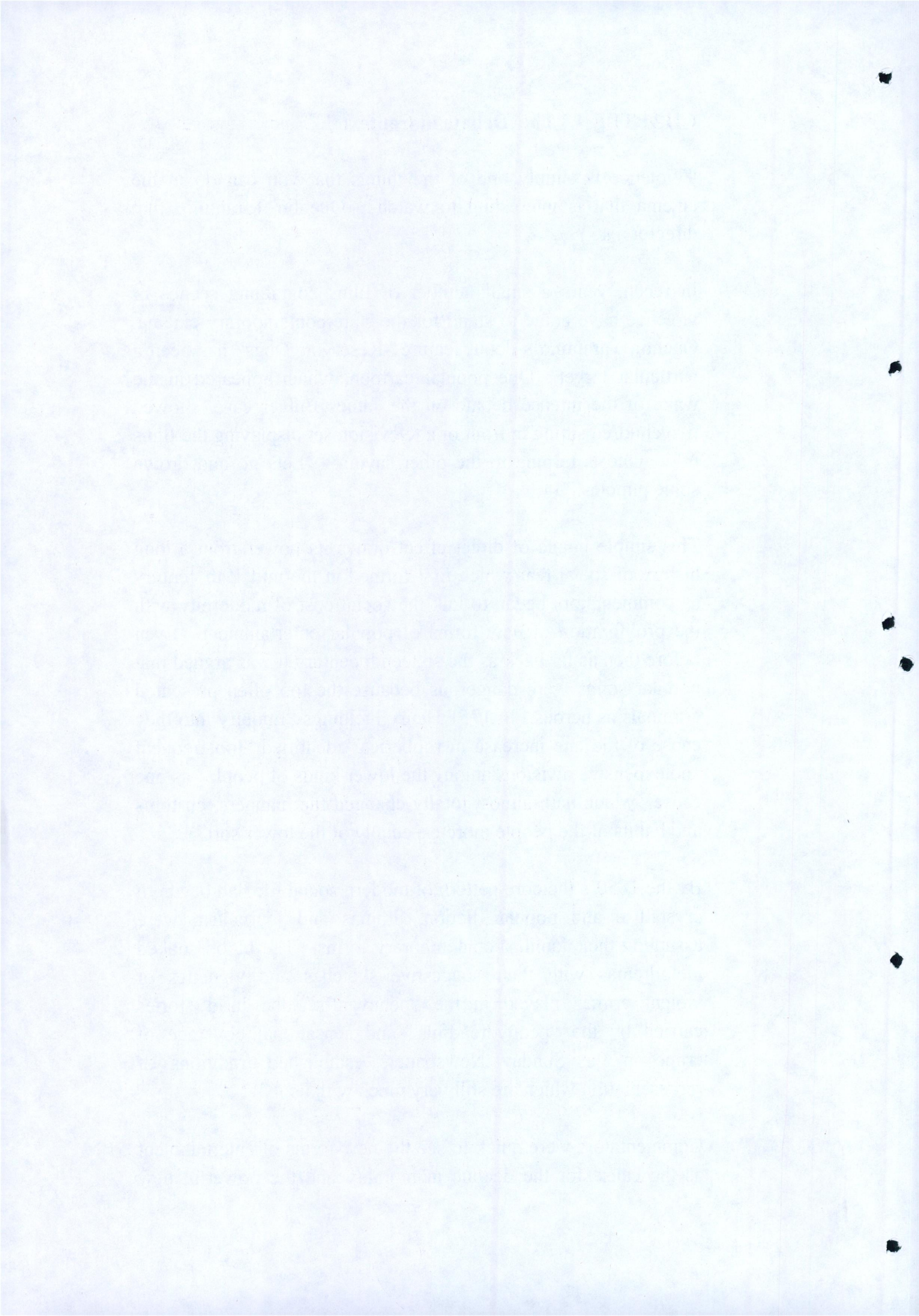
“Violence is simply one of the things that you can do in the cinema that is interesting to watch” Quentin Tarantino, film director (French 1997 page 5)

In recent years a small number of films containing scenes of violence have come to stand for the state contemporary cinema. Quentin Tarantino's debut feature “Reservoir Dogs” has been a particular target. One popular cartoon, which appeared in the wake of the intense debate on the James Bulger case, showed two children sitting in front of a television set displaying the films title. One is turning to the other saying: “Lets go and drown some puppies.”<sup>1</sup>

This simple image of direct effect draws its power from a long history of social fear which first formed in the mid 19th century as commentators began to link the social cost of modernity with the proliferation of new forms of popular entertainment. Even before then as far back as the sixteenth century it was argued that popular songs were dangerous because the too often presented criminals as heroes. In 1751 Henry Fieldings “Enquiry into they cause of the late increase in robberies” identified “too frequent and expensive divisions among the lower kinds of people” as one cause “which hath almost totally changed the manners, customs and habits of the people more especially of the lower sort”.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1850's the core pattern of modern social life had begun to crystallise and popular fiction, dramas and journalism were assuming their familiar contemporary forms. The blood soaked melodramas with their suggestive sketches and vignettes of violent crimes played in the “pennygaffs”, the lurid stories carried by the “pennydreadfuls” and sensational coverage of crime in the Sunday Newspapers established traditions of representation which are still very much with us.

Commentators were quick to see the new forms of entertainment as the cause for the decline in morality and the powerful new



incitement to anti-social behaviour. In the "Edinburgh Review" for 1851 it scorned:

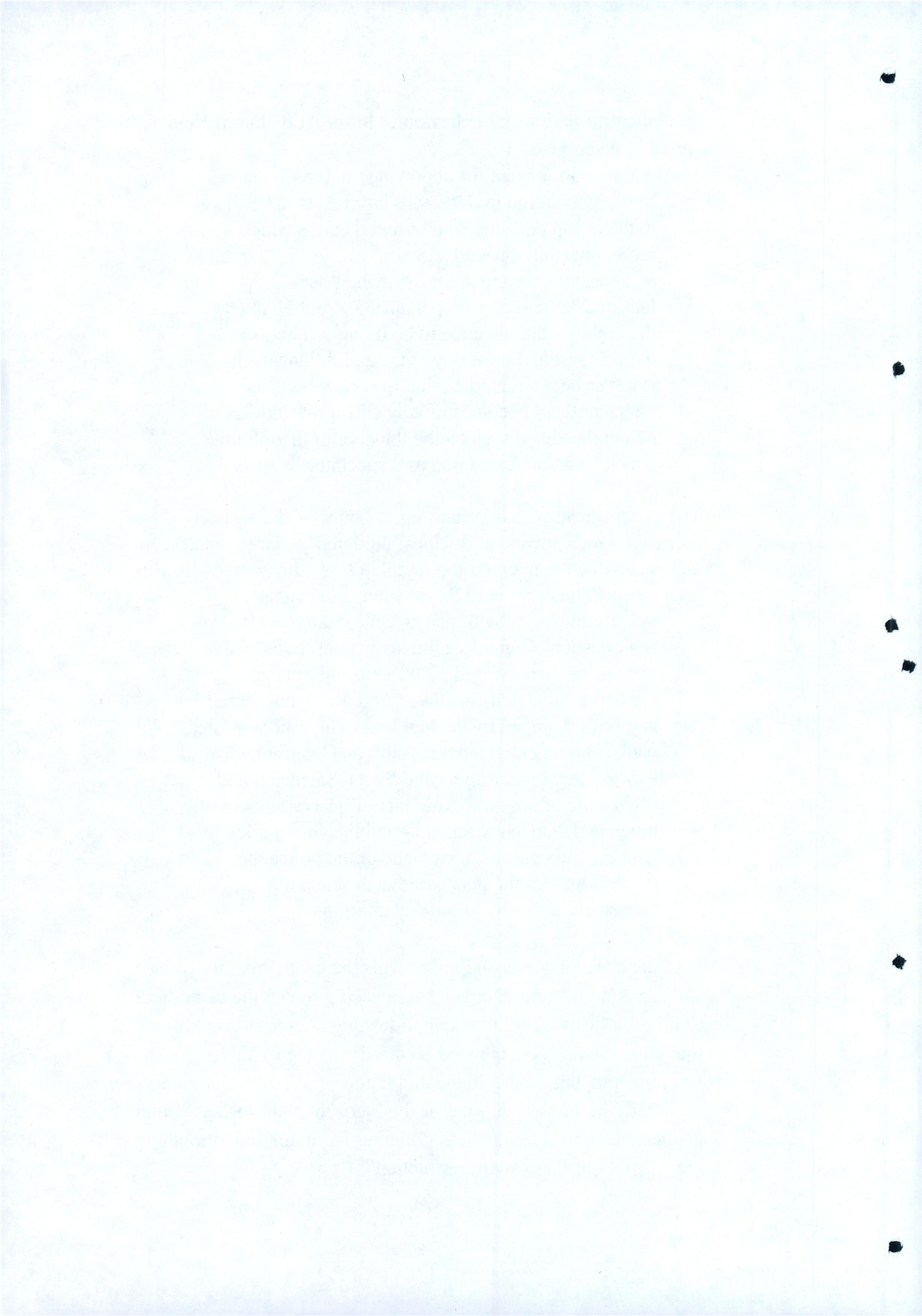
one powerful agent for depraving the boyish classes of our population in our towns as cities is to be found in the cheap concerts, shows and theatres which are so specially opened and arranged for the attraction and ensnaring of the youth ..... when our fear of interference with personal and public liberty allows these shows and theatres to be training schools of the coarsest and most open vice and filthiness - it is not to be wondered at, that the boy who is led on haunt them becomes rapidly corrupted and demoralised and seeks to be the doer of the infinities which have interested him as a spectator. 3

The cheap theatres that sprang up in many of the working class areas of large towns and cities attracted a large adolescent audience which concerned the middle-class. Juvenile crime was on the rise. The Edinburgh Review lamented again

What shall we do with our juvenile delinquents is a question often asked, but as yet unsatisfactorily and variously answered..... prisons multiply and are better regulated. Juvenile Offenders Acts passed and boys whipped by the hundred. The school master walks abroad enlighten our youth on Geography, istory, The Steam Engine and Social Science... and till in spite of all, the vexing fact of a large amount of juvenile delinquency remain - and the young offenders gain ground upon us, the plague of the policeman, the difficulty of the magistrate, a problem to the statesman, a sorrow to the philanthropist. 4

Like the cheap theatres and music halls the penny dreadful comics and the American dime novels were seen in much the same light as a bad influence on the young, a leading Victorian muckraking journalist James Greenwood referred to their publishers as vampires preying on the young and innocent: "be careful parents ... already he may be lurking at this very moment in that young gentleman's private chambers polluting his mind and smoothing the way that leads to swift destruction" 5





In America similar condemnation followed the dime novels. In 1875, the publisher James T Fields visited the adolescent murder Jesse Pomeroy in prison. The case which had involved the killing of children, had received enormous publicity and Fields was concerned to discover what had prompted Pomeroy's actions. As his memoirs record in the course of their conversation's, he asked him what he liked to read,

**Fields:-** "Were there any pictures in these books?"

**Pomeroy:-** "Yes sir, plenty of them, blood and thunder pictures, tomahawking and scalping!"

**Fields:-** Do you think these books were an injury to you, and excited you to commit the act you have done?"

**Pomeroy:-** Yes sir I have thought it all over and it seems to me now they did"

Unfortunately for Fields the reliability of Pomeroy's testimony is immediately undermined by the next statement: "I can't say for certain of course, and perhaps if I should think it again I should say it was something else." 6

The working class teenage boys being a particular focus of respectable fears were highly visible on the streets of towns and cities they regularly featured in the press reports and they figured prominently in the official crime statistics. They were regarded as the biggest threat to social order. Moral entrepreneurs like Freeman from his article "Boy Life" believed the boy's mind is in many respects a blank sheet at fourteen, and the writing that will be engraved upon it is dependent on the influence through which the boy passes. The senses of the adolescent now open at their widest are opened not to art, but to cheap and tawdry pantomimes, his emotions are fed, not with gracious and elevating influence but the unnatural excitements. 7

The Music Halls of the late 1800's were considered breeding grounds for imitative crime. Asking "how far a Music Hall programme may be held to encourage lawlessness", a Boarding School manager writing on "Hooligans and the Halls" in The Times in the late 1890's felt sure that a great majority of Music

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2. The second part of the document is the abstract of the paper. It provides a brief summary of the main findings and conclusions of the study.

3. The third part of the document is the introduction. It sets the context for the study and outlines the objectives and scope of the research.

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11. The eleventh part of the document is the acknowledgments. It expresses gratitude to the individuals and organizations that provided support and assistance during the research process.

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Halls song "Could never have been written if the loafer, the liar, the drunkard, the thief and the sensualist has been regarded as subjects unfit to be glorified in song". This kind of garbage is part and parcel of the repertoire of nearly every Music Hall in the Kingdom." 8

Spicy jokes and suggestive songs so much in favour in the Halls "put, decency and clean living at a discount and glorifying immorality all round". Journalist Charles Russell's from Manchester recounted how "horrible murders and terrible tragedies were re-enacted before the footlights "resulting in many instances of violence on the part of young men in the back sheets of the city." 9

If it is believed that the Music Hall did or did not incite violence on the street, some of the lower class Halls did on occasion show scenes of rowdyism and rough horse play among the audience. Theatre managers complained to the police about the gallery boys who harassed other members of the audience and local shopkeepers outside and also their custom of levying "tax" on theatre goers who occupied the better seats by making them pay a double entry fee. When Robert Blachford described a visit to one of the Halls in the late 1890's he observed that the audience consisted of dockers, costers, labourers and mechanics together with their wives and sweethearts and babies in arms - the lads at the back keeping up a chorus of "chirruping" to interrupt the events on the stage some pelting those in the pits below with orange pips and other missiles, and everyone howling with laughter at the vulgar banter of the crowd. Blachford did not reckon much of the artistic quality of the old-fashioned melodrama which was the main attraction, but "very significant were the marks of popular interests and favour: "When the police arrested the hero in the streets and a rescue was attempted by the denizens of the Boro" the audience became quite excited, many of them stood up, and all fell into the spirit of the scene - sympathy being manifestly against the law".

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Sympathy where not only confined to the state. In January of 1909 at Battersea Music Hall, PC 158 young was called to a disturbance where he was greeted with "Give it to the Copper", and set upon by a gang of young's. <sup>10</sup>

Along with the popularity of the Music Hall, the kinescope or peepshow had a large following. Invented by Thomas R Edison, the creator of the first light bulb and gramophone, the kinescope immediately gained sleazy associations. It was not the content of the short tableaux such as "Beware My Husband Comes" or "What the Butler Saw" that caused the Edwardian church and courts to react so venomously. What gave the peepshows a bad name was the people who used them, the working class. Again it was viewed by the uppercases of society as a novelty that lowered public morality.

With the turn of the century working class people drifted away from the rows of peepshow machines to cram together in makeshift cinemas for the exhibitions of the very first projected films of waves breaking of trains rushing towards them from the new big screen. From its inception, cinema was regarded as a veritable textbook of bad examples to the young, the easily influenced. In 1896, "The Kiss" shown on both sides of the Atlantic became a concern to several critics of the new medium. According to Herbert S. Slone, the Chicago publisher "neither of the participants was physically attractive and the prolonged pasturing on each others lips was hard to bear... magnified to Garantuan proportions and repeated three times over it absolutely disgusting" his conclusion was that there was "a call for police interference" <sup>11</sup>

As the screen sized increased so did the obsession of the film-makers and the audience to see how anything and every thing would look once it was put in front of the cinema. Tom Dewe Mathews in "Censored" describes it as "this innocent curiosity often had grisly results, contemporary taste, as one exhibitor put it ran toward "the hot and strong". Human operation could be seen in all their gory detail as well as attacks



on animals including bulls, foxes and 2 hours killing an elephant. Cinematic curiosity even inspired one film-maker to push a horse over a cliff so that he could photograph the result as the animal was dashed on the rocks below”<sup>12</sup>

It was in this era also that the first snuff movies had their origins real life executions were popular. The beheading of six bandits by the Chinese Army was shown on the same programme as the hanging of cattle rustler in Missouri. The same use of gratuitous violence seeped into the many melodramas of fiction films that started to be produced after the turn of the century. A letter to a 1909 issue of “Cinematography and Lantern Weekly” complained about the threadbare plot of “The Black Hand” (1908)

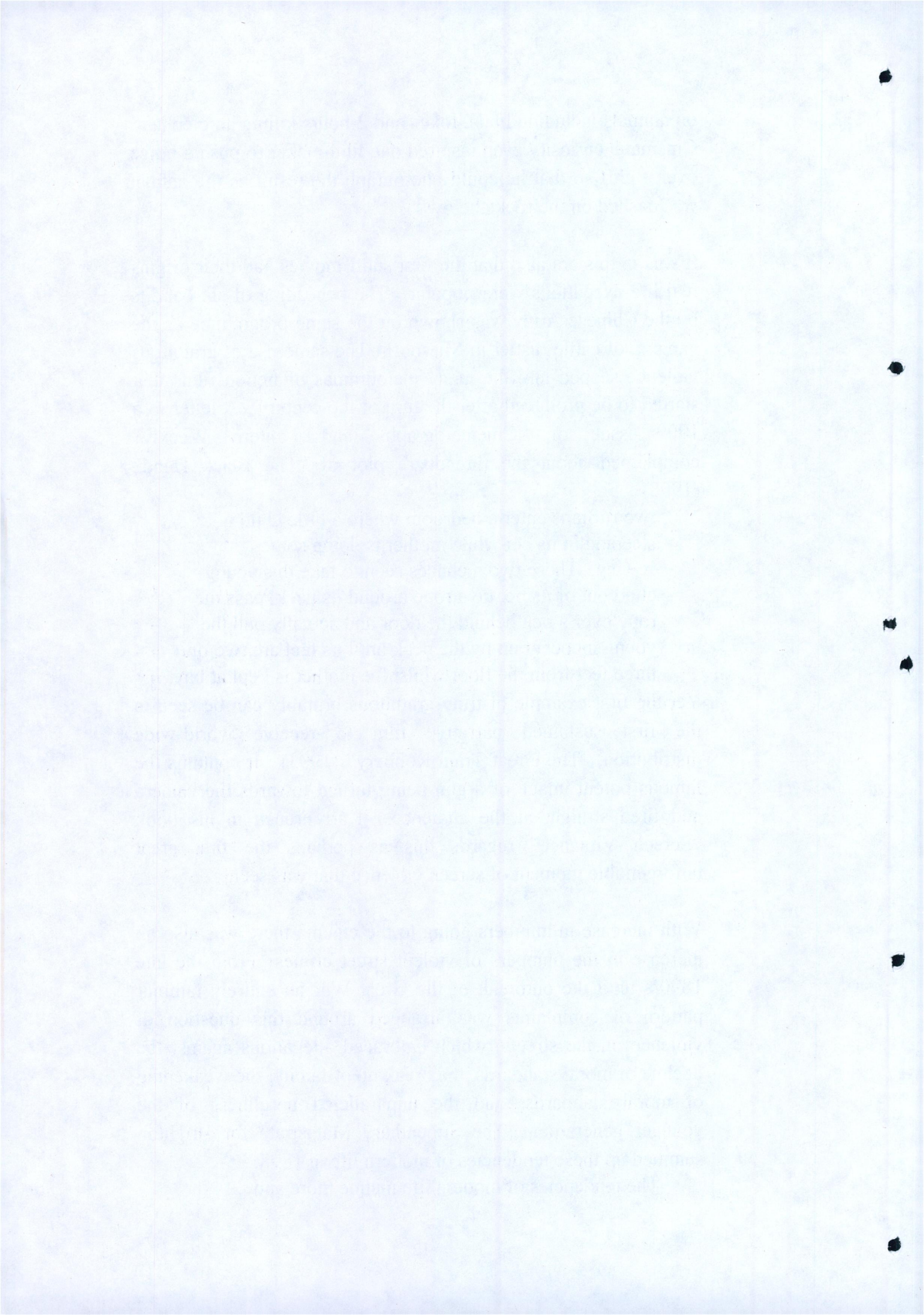
two ruffians enter a bedroom where a little child is sleeping in its cot while mother is doing some sewing. These two menaces seen to take this young child out of its bed, tie a rope around its neck, pass the rope over a peg behind the door and actually pull the young innocent up by the neck until its feet are two or three feet from the floor whilst the mother is kept at bay.<sup>13</sup>

Yet the first example of truly gratuitous brutality can be seen in the first sustained narrative film to receive world-wide distribution, “The Great Train Robbery” (1903). It contains the famous potent image of a gun being turned towards the camera and fired straight at the audience. Karl French in his book “Screen Violence” regards this as perhaps the first great unforgettable moment of screen violence that was seen.

With increase in numbers going to the cinema there was also an increase in the numbers of violent street crimes. From the late 1890’s until the outbreak of the Great War an entirely familiar pattern of complaints was arranged around this question of violence on the streets, which embraced allegations against the decline of moral standards, the break up of family, the weakening of moral standards, and the unparalleled unruliness of the younger generation. The Stipendiary Magistrate for Brighton summed up these tendencies of modern life in 1898.

The tendencies of modern life incline more and





more to ignore or disparage social distinction,  
which formerly did much to encourage respect for  
others and habits of obedience and discipline .....  
the manners of children are deteriorating... the  
child of today is coarser, more vulgar, less refined,  
than there parent were. <sup>14</sup>

By the time that World War I had happened, cinema theatre were in every town and cities. As way to curb juvenile crime, demands were called for to ban children under the age of fourteen from the cinema. Moral reform groups began to put pressure on the government, insisting that cinema was responsible for increase in juvenile crime. In 1917, the National Council of Public Morals formed a commission in which it hoped it would damage the success of the British industry. The NCPM encompassed nearly all the known enemies of early cinema from Purity Leagues and Water Committees to the Ragged School union headed by influential figures like Marie Stope and Sir Robert Baden Powell. The general view expressed in the Commission's report was the cinema was responsible for the increase in juvenile crime. "The cinema is too exciting" said Mrs Vickers, a voluntary worker from Hatton Gardens. Miss Marget Fox of the Head Mistresses Conference was disturbed by the magnitude of faces: "you can see the pores of the skin," she pointed out and when she was asked if it was the very impressiveness of the cinema that aggravates the danger to the child? she replies: "Certainly the better it is the worse it is!". According to the Bishop of Birmingham, another NCPM member the link between delinquency and films was more specific. When he asked a school boy from Bethnal Green what film he liked, he replied "All about thieves another East End Boy said he liked "mysteries, where stolen goods are hidden away in vaults so that the police can't see them". He went on to ask him had these crook films ever made you wish to go and do the same thing?" "Yes" the boy replied. <sup>15</sup>

Tom Dewe Mathews suggests the more likely reason for the increase in juvenile crime was not the cinema but the World War that had affected the family unit. Fathers were away at the front and mothers having to go out to work. There was more

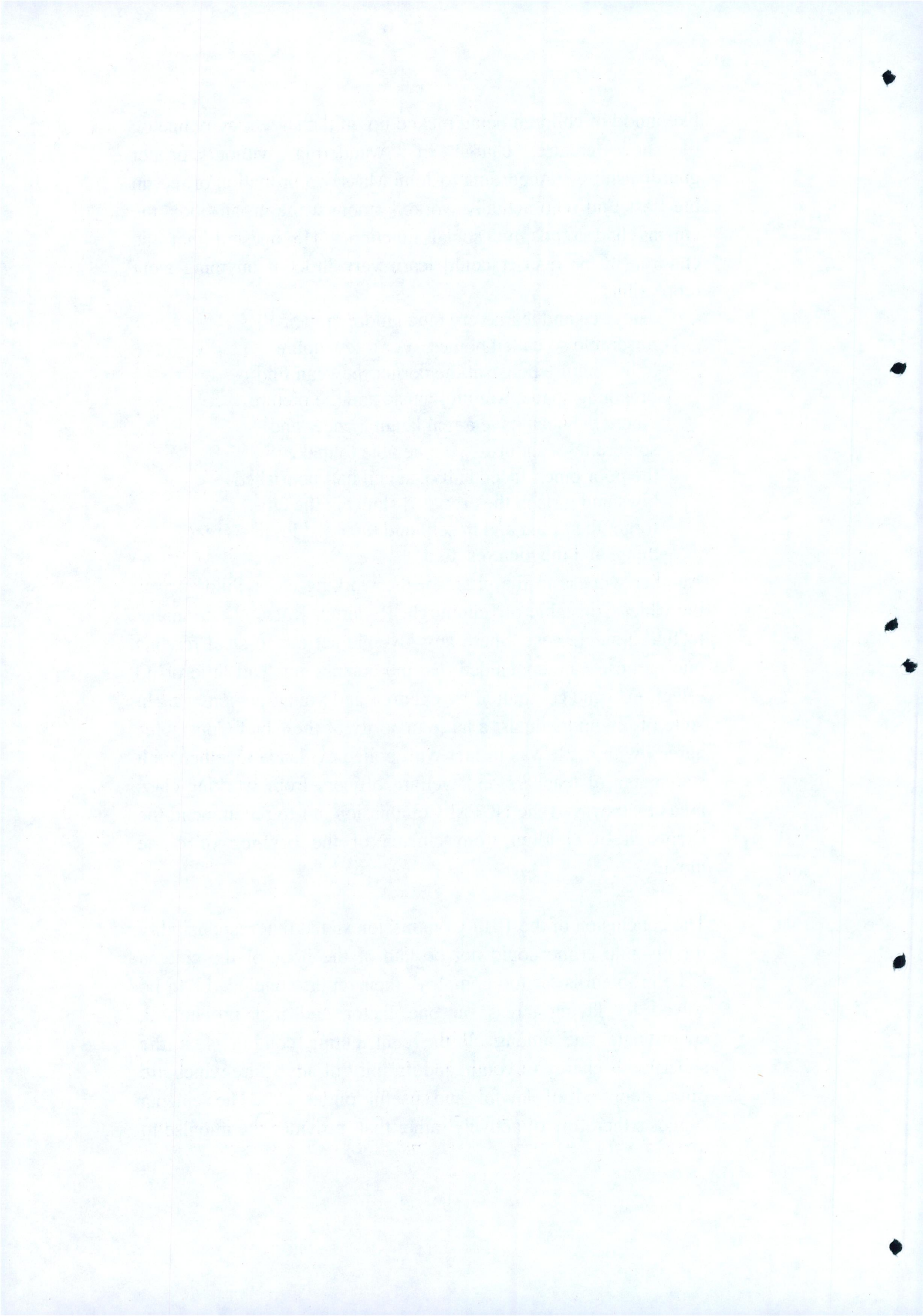


likelihood of children being picked up on the streets by police on the new created charge of "wandering without proper guardianships". According to John Massey a probation officer in the East End who actually worked amongst the urban poor, the cinema had a positive social function. He insisted that the children in his district could learn very little, if anything from crook films.

They see and learn very much more in their miserable so called homes. For a few hours at the picture house at the corner they can find breathing space, warmth, music and the picture where they can have a real laugh a cheer and sometimes a shout .....To be able to make the poor pinch-faced half clad and half nourished boys and girls in the crowded slums in the cities forget their pain and misery and their sad lot in a great thing, and the pictures do it. <sup>16</sup>

Another witness to the plight of the working class children was the Chief Constable of Edinburgh, Roderick Ross, "I am unable to find a single case where any juvenile set out to steal for this one purpose....he concluded that the cinema, has had little or no effect on crime committed by children and young persons. <sup>17</sup> In spite of few individuals, a large majority of the Chief Constables agreed with it. It was in fact with police evidence together with statements of teachers and welfare officers from working-class areas that swayed the NCPM Commission not to recommend the exclusion of children from cinema or the banning of crime movies.

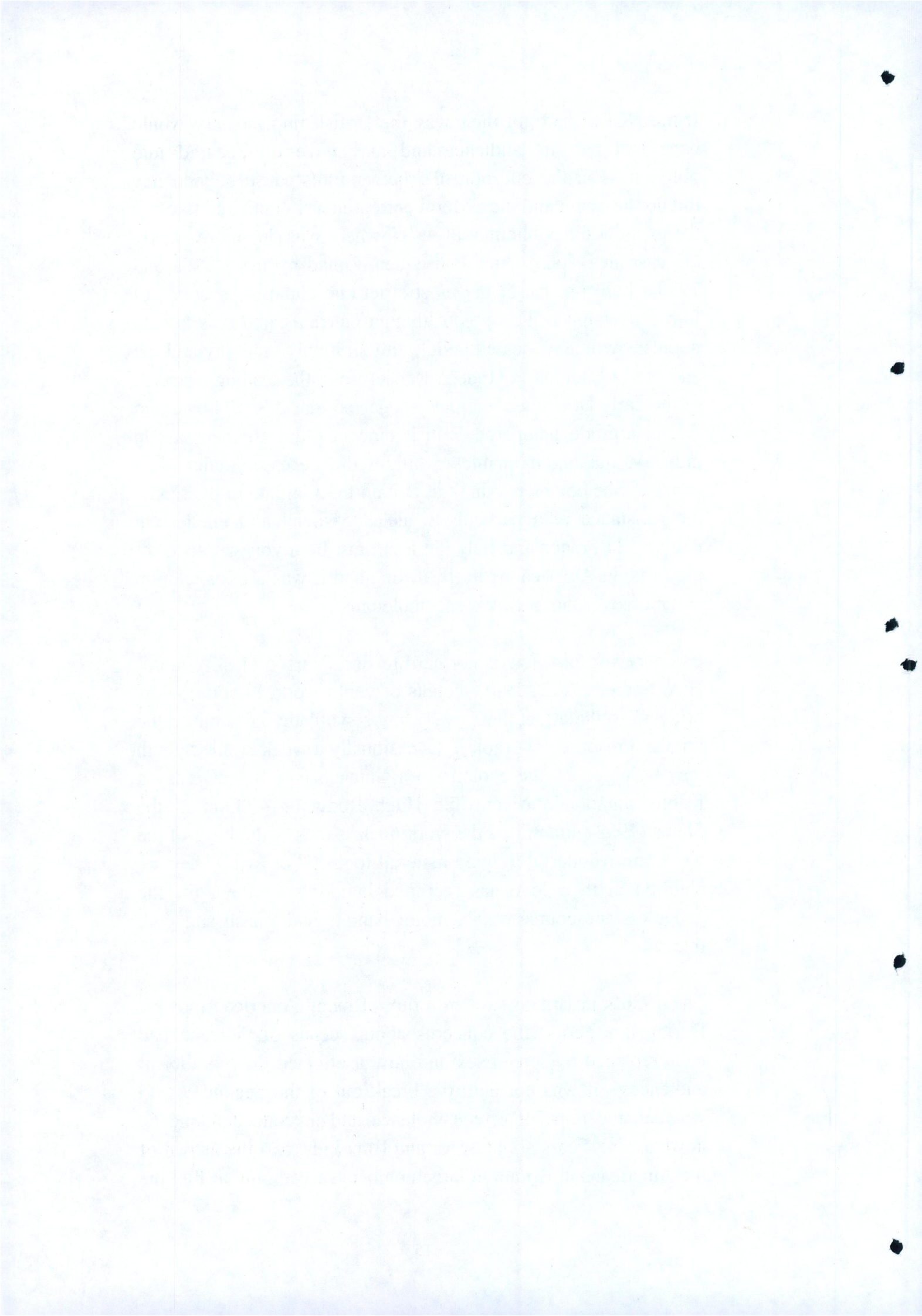
The conclusion of the 1917 Commission stated that responsibility for juvenile crime could not be laid at the door of the cinema "The problem is far too complex" their report concluded, "to be solved by laying stress on one factor and that probably a subordinate one among all the contributing conditions..... the superfluous energy of youth, and its spirit of adventure which are often deprived of lawful and useful outlets .... The cinema suggests therefore of actively rather than provides the impulse to it" <sup>18</sup>



If the NCPM had got their way the British film industry would have lost half its audience and may have disappeared into oblivion. But the question of whether films cause delinquency did not lie down and die. Moral entrepreneurs continued to carry the gauntlet for public morality. Nowhere was this more clearly the case in Britain which consequently, had by the 1920's and 1930's built up one of the most strict and elaborate systems of film censorship in Europe. Although cinema going was hugely popular by then, educated people saw in it only vulgarity and the end of old England. <sup>19</sup> Indeed Rachel Low, the leading historian of the early British cinema, has suggested that this snobbish and fearful attitude hampered British cinema's development as an industry, making it unable to attract the necessary talent and capital. She comments that "in Britain the film has to overcome the resistance of a particularly inelastic social and intellectual pattern. In France and Italy the film must be a younger sister of the arts, in America art itself, in England it was a poor relation and moreover, not a very respectable one. <sup>20</sup>

Evidence for this view is not hard to find Pearson (1983) quotes H.A. Secretan's (3) 1931 accounts of youth work, London below bridges" to the effect that "every boy's sympathy goes out to the lithe and resourceful crook ...Occasionally a weak minded youth may be urged by the exploits to a Chicago gangster of essay a feeble imitation" Meanwhile Hugh Redwood's "God in the Slums (1932) infantilises the workingclass thus: "the boys of the slums are wonderful training material for good or evil. They are children in their love has recruited hundreds of them for the gangs of race course rough, motor bandits and smash and grab thieves. <sup>21</sup>

The 1930's in Britain saw an influx of many American movies. During this period the concerns about scenes of violence had been replaced by screen sex and how it effected the morality of audiences. It was not until the break out of the Second World war that the issue of screen violence and juvenile delinquency arose again. Fears about Spivs and Blitz kids, and the arrival of the Americans in Britain in large numbers served only to fuel the



anti-Americanism which was to become an increasingly prominent feature of attacks on working class popular culture. Thus for e.g. George Orwell in his essay *Raffles and Miss Blandish* comparing English and American crime fiction.

The common people, on the whole are still living in the world of absolute good and evil from the intellectuals have long since escaped. But the popularity of *No Orchids* and the American books and magazines to which it is shows how rapidly the "realism" is gaining round.

He goes on to comment with much alarm in *Miss Chase* books there are no gentlemen and no taboos. Emancipation is complete. Freud and Machiavelli have reached the outer suburbs. Comparing the schoolboy atmosphere of the one book (*Raffles*) with the cruelty and corruption of the others, one is driven to feel that snobbishness, like hypocrisy, is a check upon behaviour whose value from a social point of view has been underrated. <sup>22</sup>

By the late 1940's in spite of the effects of the British Board of Film censors (BBFC) the American style had found its way not only with British crime novels but into British crime films, too such as "Noose", "They Made Me a Fugitive", "Brighton Rock" and "No Orchids for Miss Blandish". These "Spiv" films, with their working class settings, then by this stage a rather unusual in the other overwhelmingly middle class British Cinema, caused concern on the part of society's self appointed moral guardians, including film critics like Fred Maydalany from the Daily Mail. Complaining about the film "They Made Me A Fugitive" (1947).

I deplore the picturesque legend that is being created round that petty criminal fashionably known as the spiv. The Spivs stylised by the writers and characterized by actors seems to be a mixture of delightful Cockney comedian and pathetic victim of social conditions. For myself I find activities of sewer rats - in or out of a sewer - of strictly limited interest. <sup>23</sup>

*Brighton Rock* (1947) also came under much criticism with comments from the press describing it as an example of the



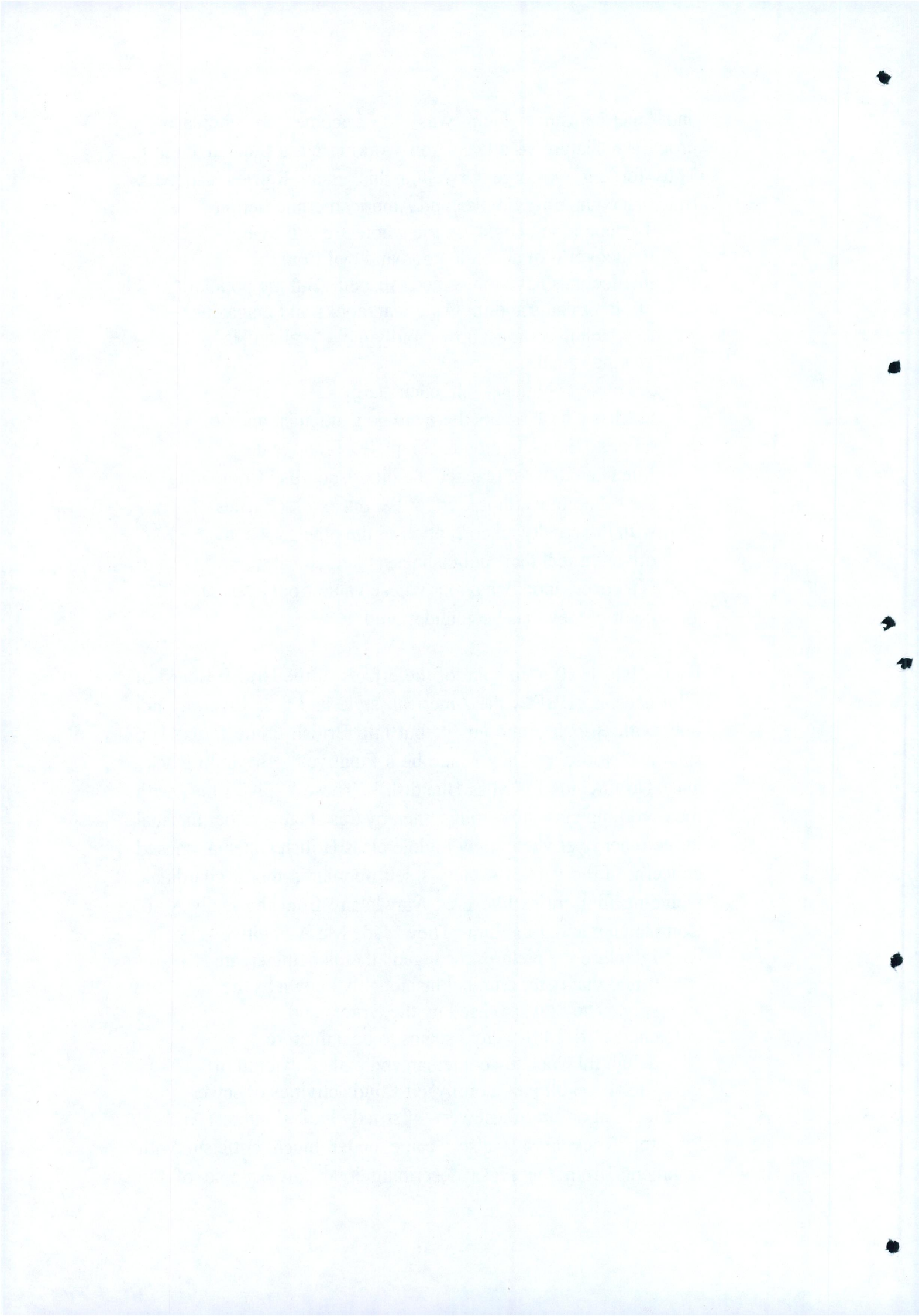




Fig 2 – Brighton Rock





Fig 3 – No Orchids for Miss Blandish



Fig. 3—No Credits for Miss Blandish

sadistic norm of British gangster films “and as false cheap nasty sensationalism”.<sup>24</sup> Yet it was a success in the box office.

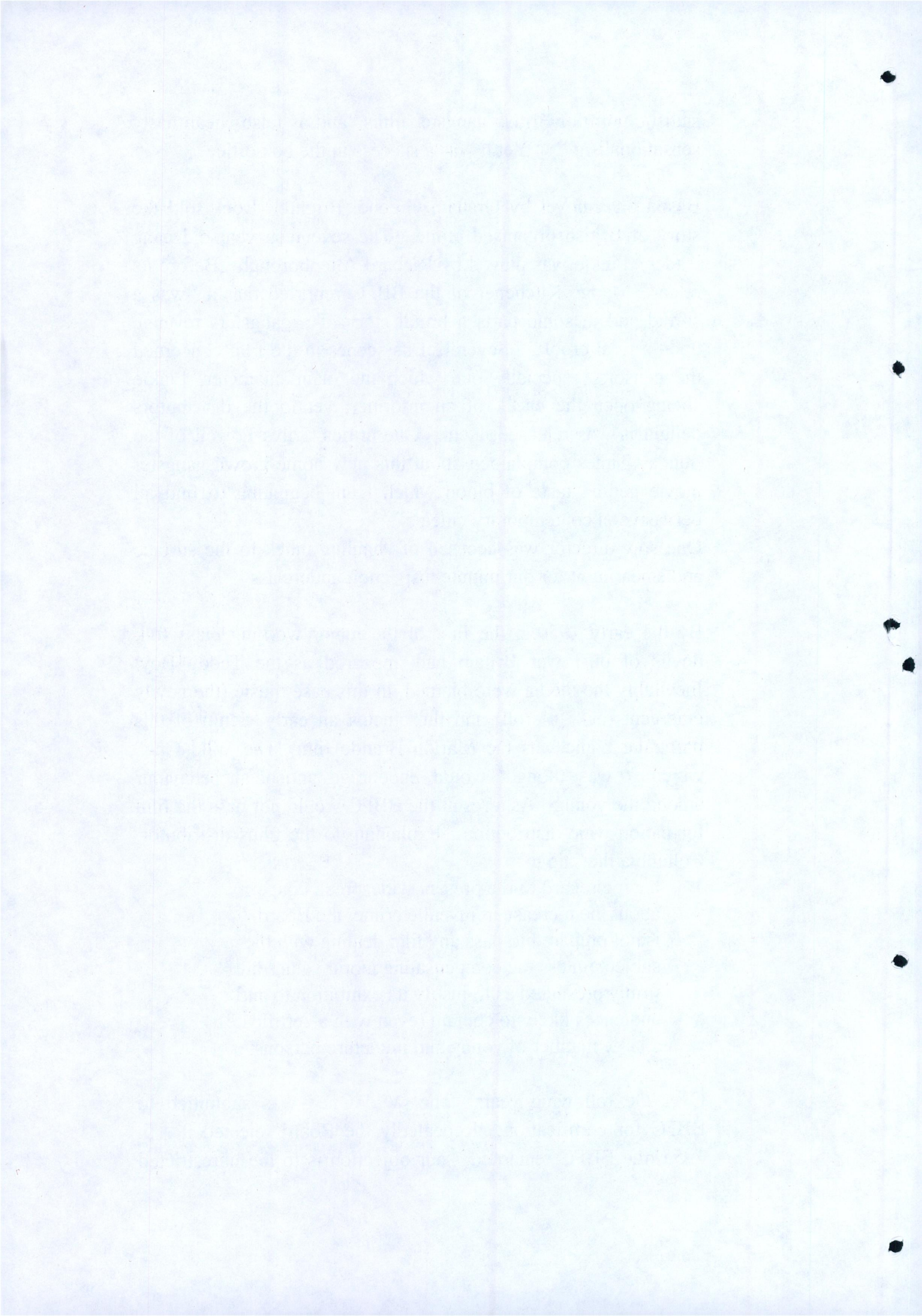
Based on a novel by Graham Greene, Brighton Rock told the story of British organised crime. The seventeen year old gang leader, Pinkie was played by Richard Attenborough. Before its release Madge Kitchener of the BBFC reported that it “was a sordid and in some parts a brutal story of a gangsters revenge upon a rival crook”. Several of its scenes in the film concerned the censors, especially one which the main character, Pinkie slicing open the cheek of an informer, yet to the distributors delight it was released uncut. One critic, Dilys Powell of the Sunday Times complained about this new home-grown gangster movie genre “taste of blood which I am beginning to find all pervasive in contemporary cinema”.

One spiv director was accused of “hauling muck to the surface and smearing it for our minute inspection underclass”.<sup>25</sup>

By the early 1950's, the first of the major working class folk devils of post war Britain had appeared as the Teddy Boy. Inevitably the media were blamed, in this case music (the newly emergent rock 'n' roll) and the cinema an early victim of this particular panic was the Marlon Brando film “The Wild One” which it was thought would encourage antisocial behaviour among the young. As a result the BBFC would not pass the film for nation wide distribution. Explaining to the films distributor, Columbia he said that:

having regard to the present widespread concern about the increase in juvenile crime, the Board is not prepared to pass any film dealing with the subject unless the compensating moral values are firmly presented as to justify its exhibition to and audiences likely to contain (even with a certificate) a large number of young and immature persons.<sup>26</sup>

Over the following years “The Wild One” was submitted to BBFC for certification. Repeatedly the Board rejected it. In 1955, the BBFC remarked, “our objection is to the unrestricted



hooliganism, without the hooliganism there can be no film and with it there can be no certificate”... 27

Again in 1959 the Secretary of the Board of the BBFC, John Trevelyan told Columbia,

There has been a lot of publicity about adolescent gangs in London and elsewhere recently and, while in some ways the present gangs are more vicious than those depicted in the film, the behaviour of Brando and the two gangs to authority and adults generally it is the kind that provides a dangerous example to those wretched young people who take every opportunity of throwing their weight about..... Once again we had made this decision with reluctance because we think it is a splendid picture. I only hope that the time will come, and come soon when we do not have to worry about this kind of thing, but I am afraid that we do have to worry about it now. 28

The time did not come and the film was rejected again, following a riot at Clacton between 2,000 mods and rockers at the March of 1964. For the next two years Columbia received an annual rejection slip, although Trevelyan roused no objections at the time to a television showing since “the young people for whom it might be harmful are generally not frequent television viewers” 29

It was not until 1967 that it was passed, the BBFC explaining that now: “it would no longer be likely be to have its original impact. 30

In fact “The Wild One” did not cause juvenile violence of any kind in the districts where it was allowed to be shown in the mid-fifties. As Tom Dewe Mathews remarked “As with most political bodies, however, when the empirical evidence did not fulfil the argument, the BBFC ignored the evidence, retained their fears and they repeatedly restated the argument. 31

The power of the BBFC’s prophecy was also found wanting in the next film of the fifties to deal with teenage gangs and violence “The Black Board Jungle”. The board were equally



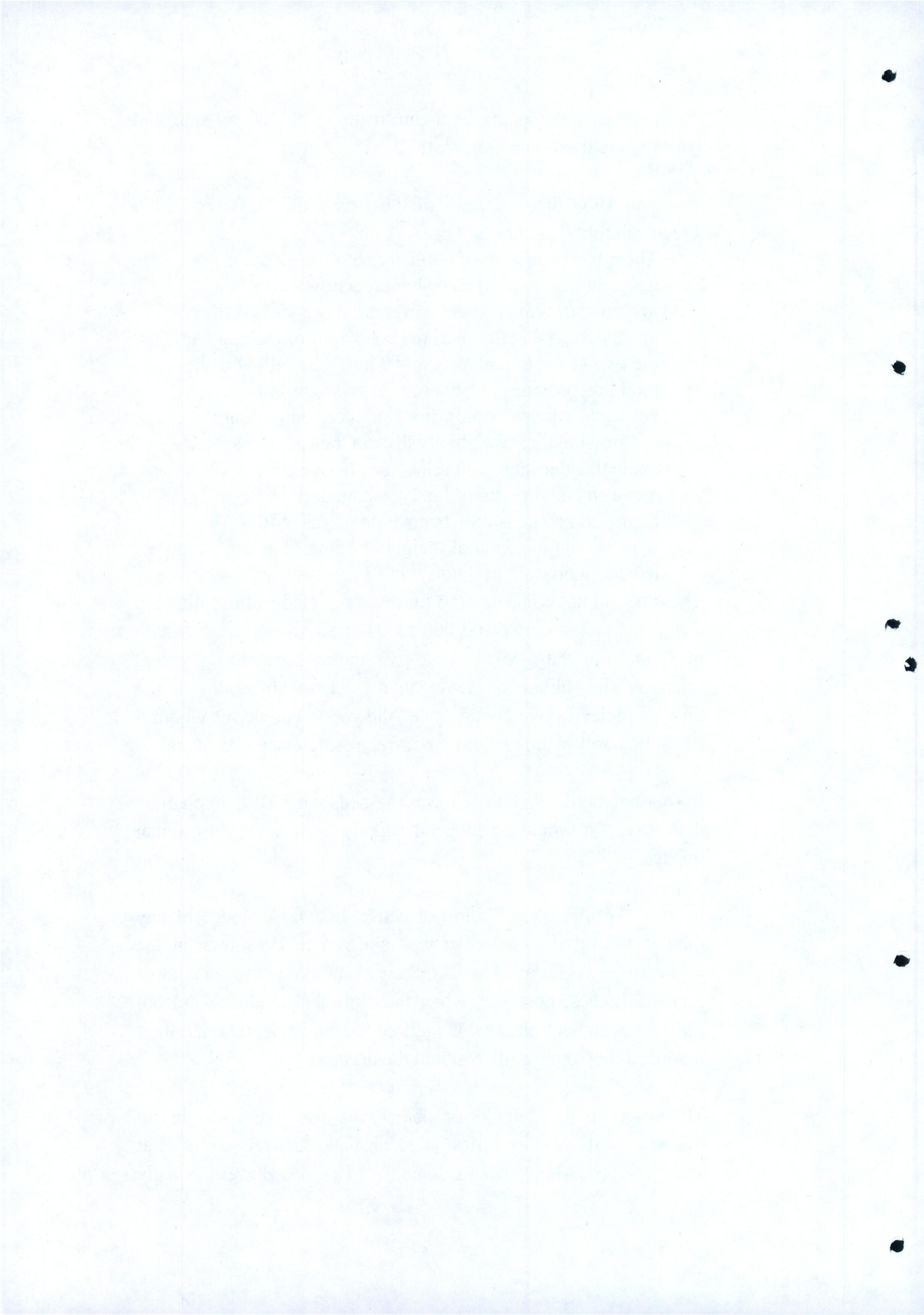




Fig 4 – The Wild One



worried about the potential effects on the young. It was rejected out of hand when it was first submitted, complaining as ... the case of *The Wild One* that the innocence values stressed in the film were not:

Sufficiently strong and powerful to counteract to the harm that may be done by the spectacle of youth out of control... we are quite certain that *Blackboard Jungle*, filled as it is with scenes of unbridled, revolting hooliganism, would, if shown in this country, provoke the strongest criticism from parents and all citizens concerned with the welfare of our young people and would also have the most damaging and harmful effect on such young people <sup>32</sup>

In the event the film was passed with six minutes cut. British teddy boys flocked to the "*The Blackboard Jungle*". The occasional trouble in the audience was not because of the effects of the scenes of "unbridled, revolting hooligans" but because the soundtrack contained Bill Haley's "Rock around the clock" and teenagers, according to Julian Petley "got over excited" because they were "long denied proper access the rock 'n' roll by a censorious and nannyish BBCF. <sup>33</sup>

By the late 1950's fears about disaffected working-class youth, media effects, Americanisation, crime and national decline had become thoroughly sedimented in British "common sense" and had formed pervasive mythology which could routinely be wheeled out to explain each and every new object of panic. By the 1960's the "debilitating mass tread of the day became the television. Now more than ever more people could be exposed the ever increasing amount of screen violence. Real life violence was also rising, especially in 1960's America. With this violence on film became an increasingly complex tool - no longer just used by the bad guys to create an imbalance of justice which will be rectified by the goodguys. Karl French suggest there is "I think a loss of innocence, another and simpler reason why screen violence has become more shocking, visceral and unsettling. <sup>34</sup>

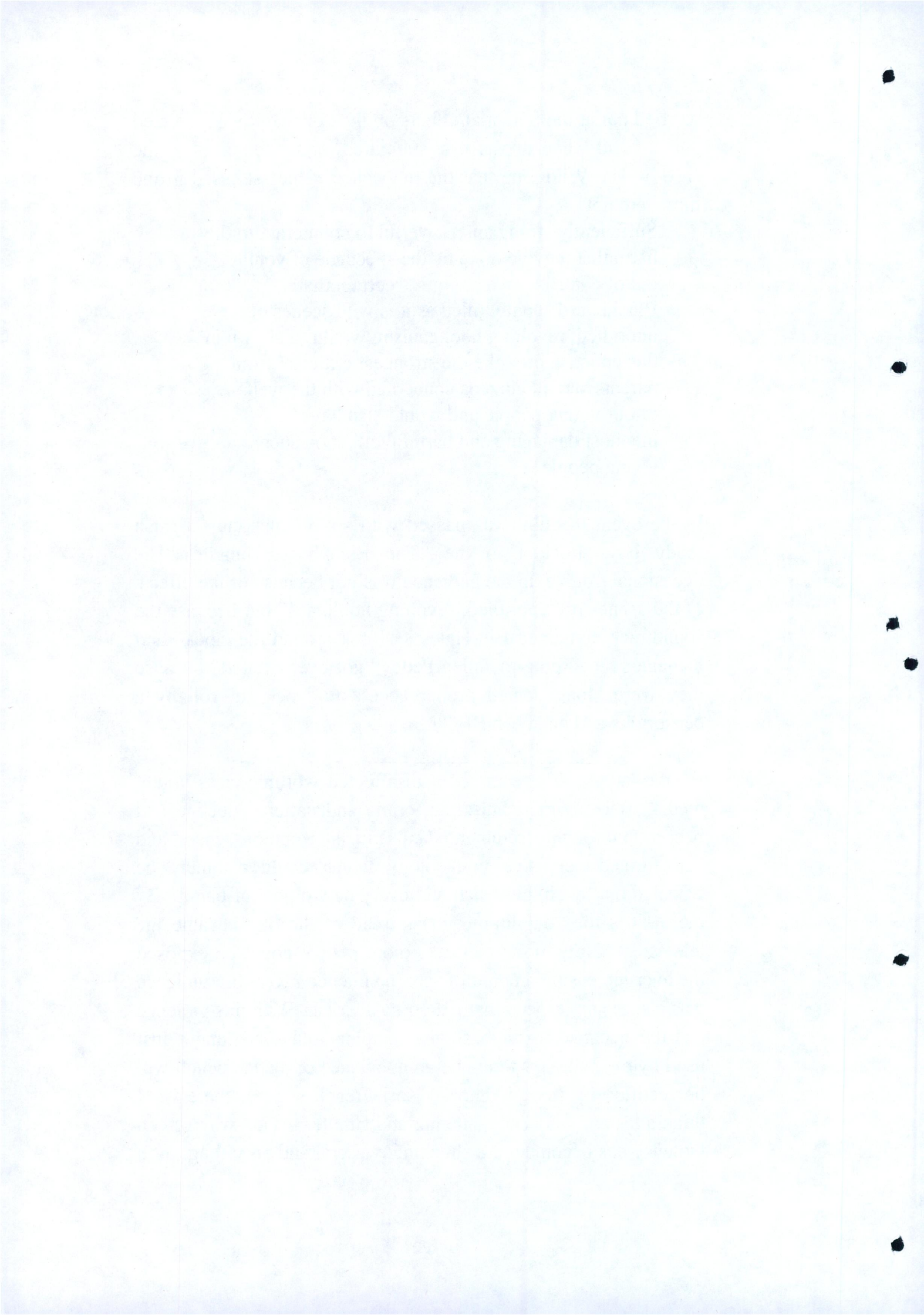




Fig 5 – Bonnie & Clyde



In the cinema, violence started getting more violent after 1966. The year the Hays Production Code was revised. Cinema edged closer to being a directors medium, freer to go where the talent pushed it. The films that marked the escalation were "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967) and "The Wild Bunch" (1968). "Bonnie and Clyde" criticised much in the same way as Oliver Stone's "Natural Born Killer" (1995). It follows the tale of two good-looking young lovers on a killing rampage. At the end both Bonnie and Clyde are savagely tommy gunned to death. Eleanor Ringed described the film as the first "startlingly made perspective on violence and crime and the Americans gangster myth. 35

After it hit the theatres in 1967 it came under much criticism from the press. "The New York Times" were amazed that: "so callous and callow a film should represent (the) country in these critical times. 36

Bosley Crowther, the film critic remarked the film seemed "but another indulgence of a restless and reckless taste and an embarrassing addition to an excess of violence on the screen" 37

Much the same criticism followed the release of "The Wild Bunch" 1968. The tale about cowboys escaping railroad bounty hunters Michael Sragon comments that "The Wild Bunch"'s director Sam Peckinpals "wrenched audiences out of complacency and chopped them into risky blood soaked places"....

College revolutionaries took it as a freakish statement on America's home-grown violence and international adverturism a cowboy version of Norman Mailers "Why Are We In Vietnam?" Pacifist condemned it as a glorification of gunplay" 38

The critics of this new uncompromising use of screen violence believed it encouraged real violence yet Michael Wilmington believes it was the other way round with the speeding up of American culture, Hollywood was merely monitoring society:



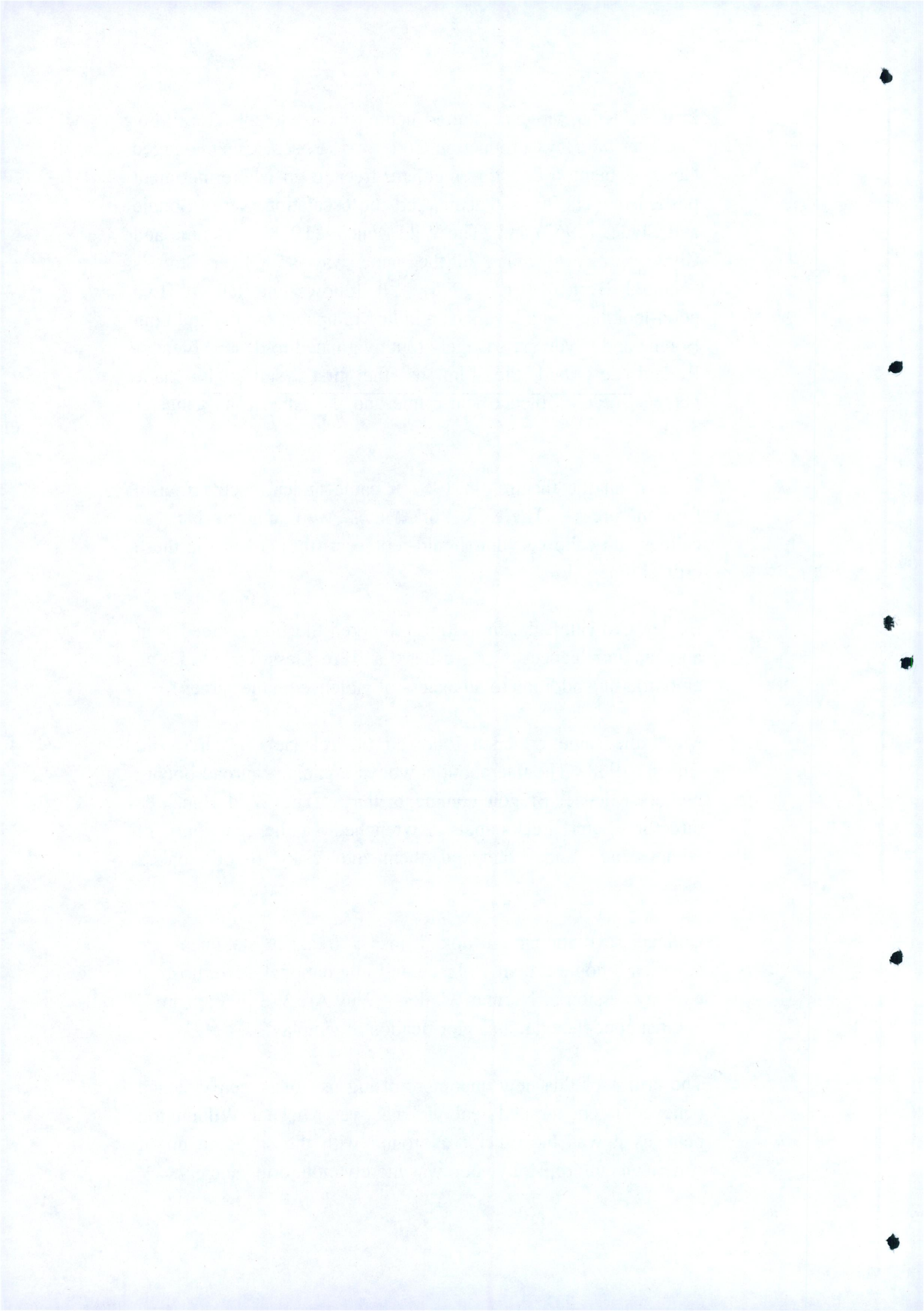




Fig 6 – Wild Bunch



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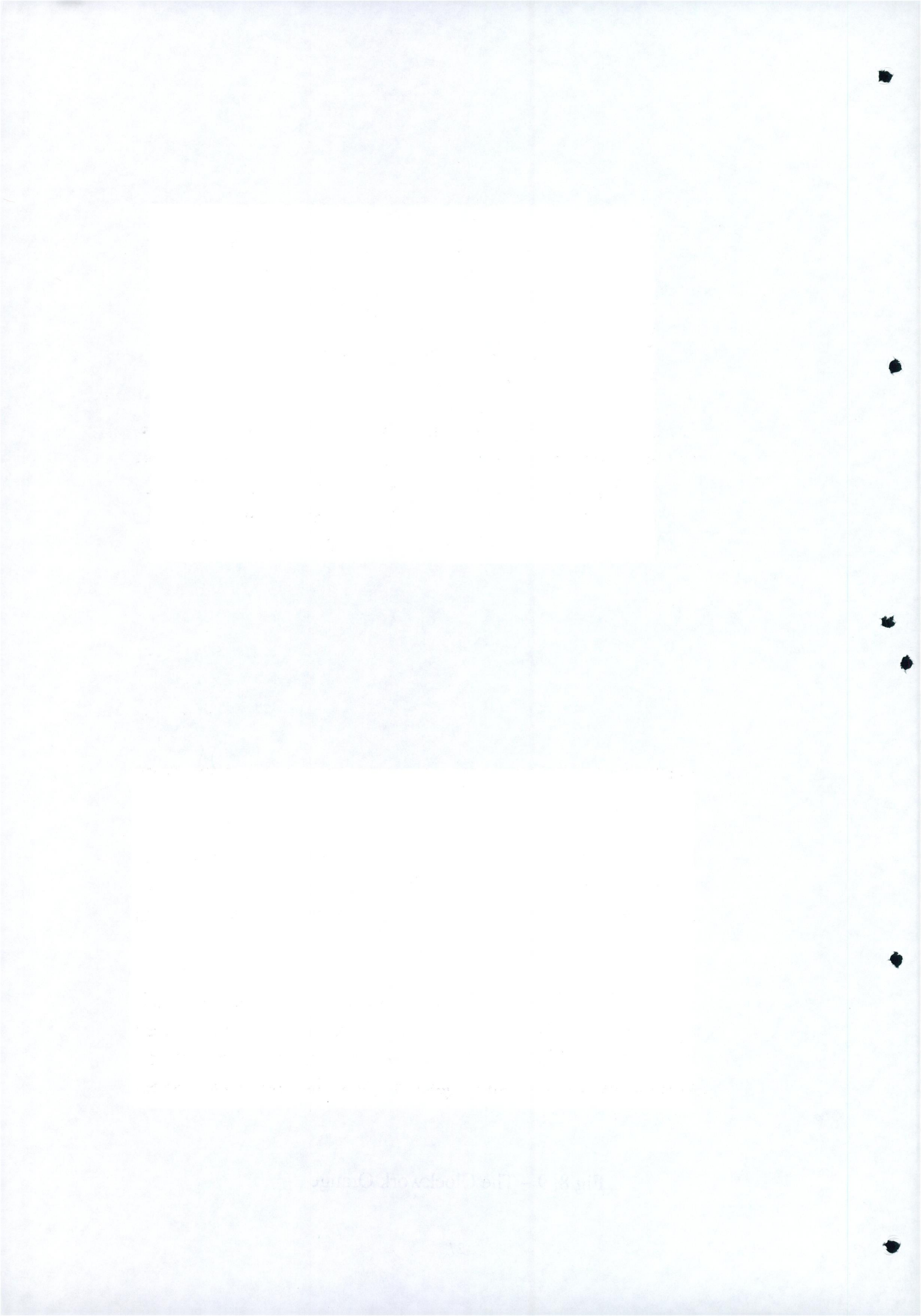


Fig 7 - The Clockwork Orange





Fig 8, 9 – The Clockwork Orange



Is it fair to say that the staggering real life violence of the '60's came, to any substantial degree, from those films (Bonnie Clyde Psycho, Midnight Cowboy and the Wildbunch) and others like them? Didn't it stem instead from the Vietnam War, its T.V. coverage and its street protests, the massive proliferation of firearms, the spread of criminal syndicate and its satellite drug industry, and the crumbling of national morale after the assassinations of four major political leaders (the Kennedy brothers, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X)? 39

The debate about screen violence continued again into the '70's. The ever increasing rate of real violence worried moralists. This time Stanley Kubricks films "A Clock Work Orange" (1972) was blamed for teenage violence. Within weeks of its release the press was full of stories about "copycat crimes" "The Even Press" dug out a former chaplain to Pinewood Studios to denounce this: "celluloid cess pool..... it is the weak impressionable and mature which such a film helps to destroy" 40

In her essay "Time to Face Responsibility" Mary Whitehouse cites the murder of a tramp by a 16 years youth after watching the film. She recalls of a further three murder trials in 1975 which were "triggered off by going to see "A Clockwork Orange" 41

She also suggested that techniques of conditioning used on the character Alex DeLarge in the film "A Clockwork Orange" "were similar to those being used by the American Army to train assassins" 42

Labour M.P. Maurice Edelman claimed that a clockwork cult was taking hold in the nations thoroughfares", "A phallic dress of the droogs with their God pieces will no doubt become as widespread as the sub western gear in the High Street imitated from Western films" 43



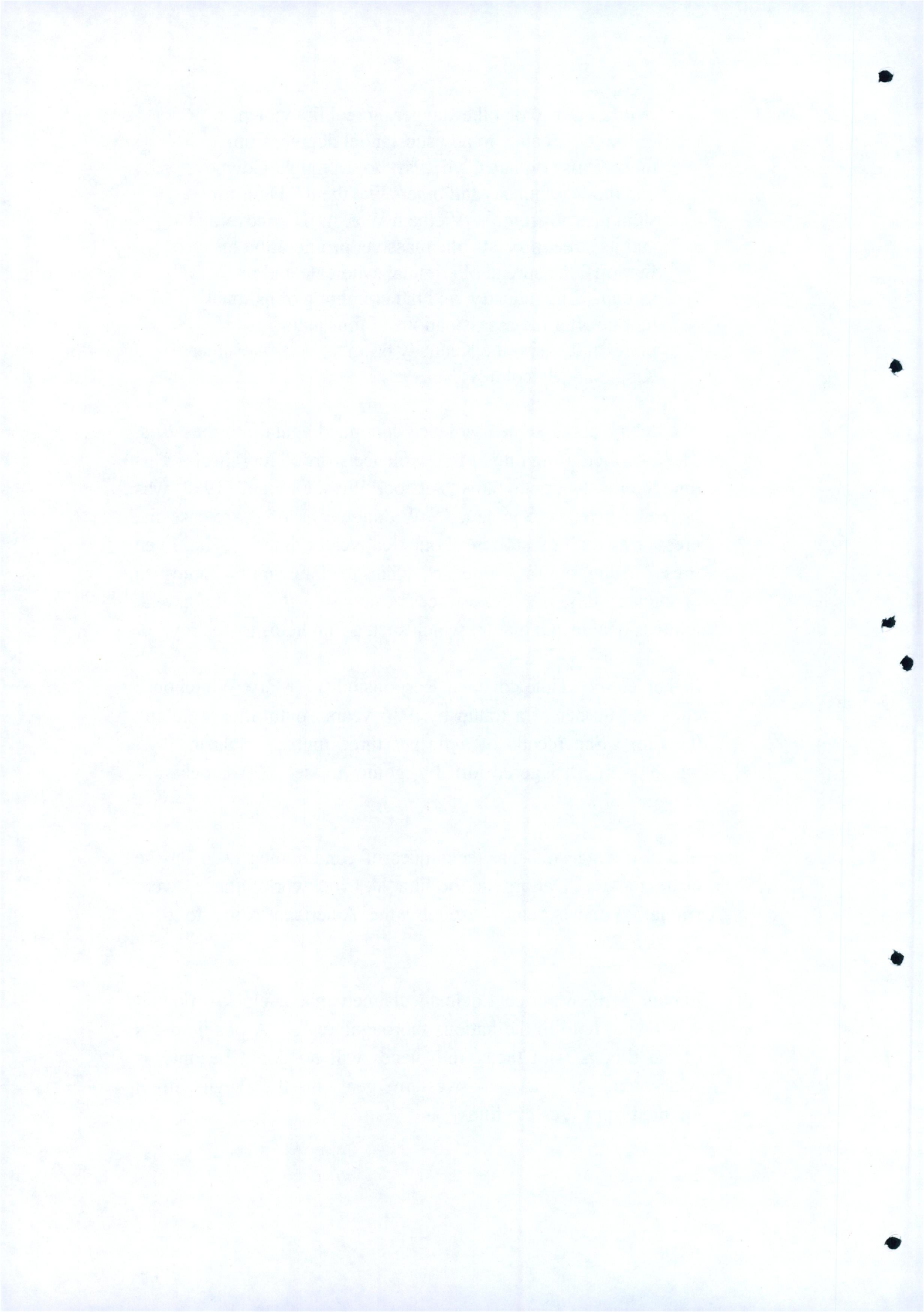




Fig 10 – The Texas Chainsaw Massacre

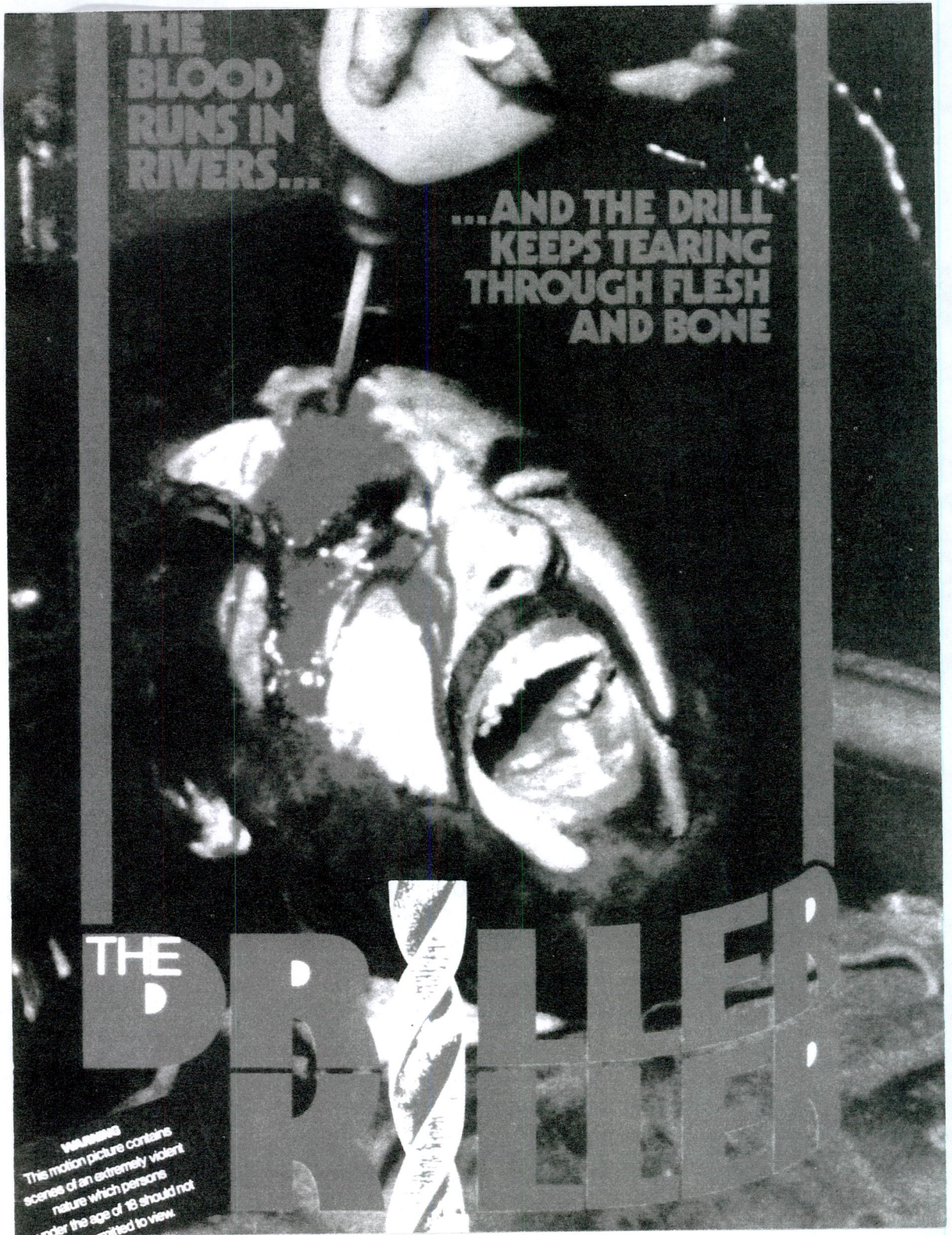


Other films that provoked the moralist about their use of violence were *The Devils*, *Straw Dogs* and the most famously violent film of the 1970's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). James Fierman the Head censor of the BBFC found "It very persuasive all the way, and you do feel you are watching reality. It was banned until it emerged as one of the favourite video nasties of the 1980's.

The emergence of the video in the early 1980's provoked exactly the same response as the birth of the moving pictures at the turn of the century. It was a runaway success, but like film eighty years before, it was viewed with acute suspicion by the political establishment.

From 1980 onwards, the film industry realised that violence sold movies. As a result the horror and action movie began to bring in millions of dollars in box office profits. Audiences saw violence as a form of entertainment in its own right. *The Evil Dead* (1983) was the biggest selling title on the video market. The new medium was perfectly suited to the marketing of horror and action films like *Driller Killer* (1980) *Cannibal Apocalypse* (1980) *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978). The video was caught in legislative vacuum. Unregulated, uncensored videos were freely available to the British public. Films that were banned in the cinema because of their violent content were now available on video. The audience for them were young and therefore the quickest to adapt to a new technology, but, as from time immoral juvenile taste in the early 1980's upset the "ordinary people". As a result concerned politicians requested that video containing any unacceptable amount of violence should be banned to protect the impressionable. In 1984, the Video Recording Act banned many horror films from video distribution. If a video was sold without an approved certificate, the seller of the video would be liable to a £20,000 fine. Many horror films disappeared into oblivion, bankrupting video shops on the way. The Video Recording Act was later revised cutting scenes from film for video use rather than banning them. Altogether as the decade continued the depiction of violence increased. The late 1980's saw a new





THE  
BLOOD  
RUNS IN  
RIVERS...

...AND THE DRILL  
KEEPS TEARING  
THROUGH FLESH  
AND BONE

# THE DRILLER KILLER

**WARNING**  
This motion picture contains  
scenes of an extremely violent  
nature which persons  
under the age of 18 should not  
be admitted to view.

Fig 11 – Driller Killer

Deutscher (190)



Fig 12 – The Evil Dead







Fig 13 - Rambo



Fig. 13 - Rambo

mixture of soft porn and violence in film, - erotic thrillers like Fatal Attraction, 9 1/2 and in 1990 Basic Instinct did well in the box office. Action heroes like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone with their ultra violent films, brought in millions of dollars in ticket sales. Again links were made between fictional and real violence. The press blamed Sylvester Stallone's Rambo Films were blamed for causing the Hungerford Killing in 1987 yet there was never any evidence found to link the films with the filming.

From 1990 to 1995, films like Reservoir Dogs, Pulp Fiction, True Romance, Natural Born Killers, Man Bites Dog, Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer, Killing Zoe were released in Britain. Quentin Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs after its release in 1992 attracted media interest in what began to be described as a new wave of violent movies. This prompted the media to discuss these films as extreme and uncompromising in their depiction of violence on screen. Journalists and film critics highlighted Tarantino's "cinema of viscera". Many film critics praised the films thought provoking representations of violence, compared to the Hollywood action films like Die Hard and Terminator which showed no sophistication in text or incisive and intelligent dialogue.

Poppy Z. Brute in her essay "The Poetry of Violence" remarks that these controversial films have no tidy moral lesson at the end we are allowed to draw our own conclusion ..... the viewer arrives at his own conclusion about death, pain and the visceral soup inside us. It forces him to understand his own feeling about these highly personal matters, rather than reinforcing what society says he should feel (fear, disgust)<sup>44</sup>

Yet the newspapers accused them "bludgeoning us into uncaring submission" for their use of violence. After its general release, Natural Born Killers was described by the Mail, as "one of the most evil films ever made" and the Bristol Evening Post commented "killing for killing sake"<sup>45</sup>





Fig 14 – Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer

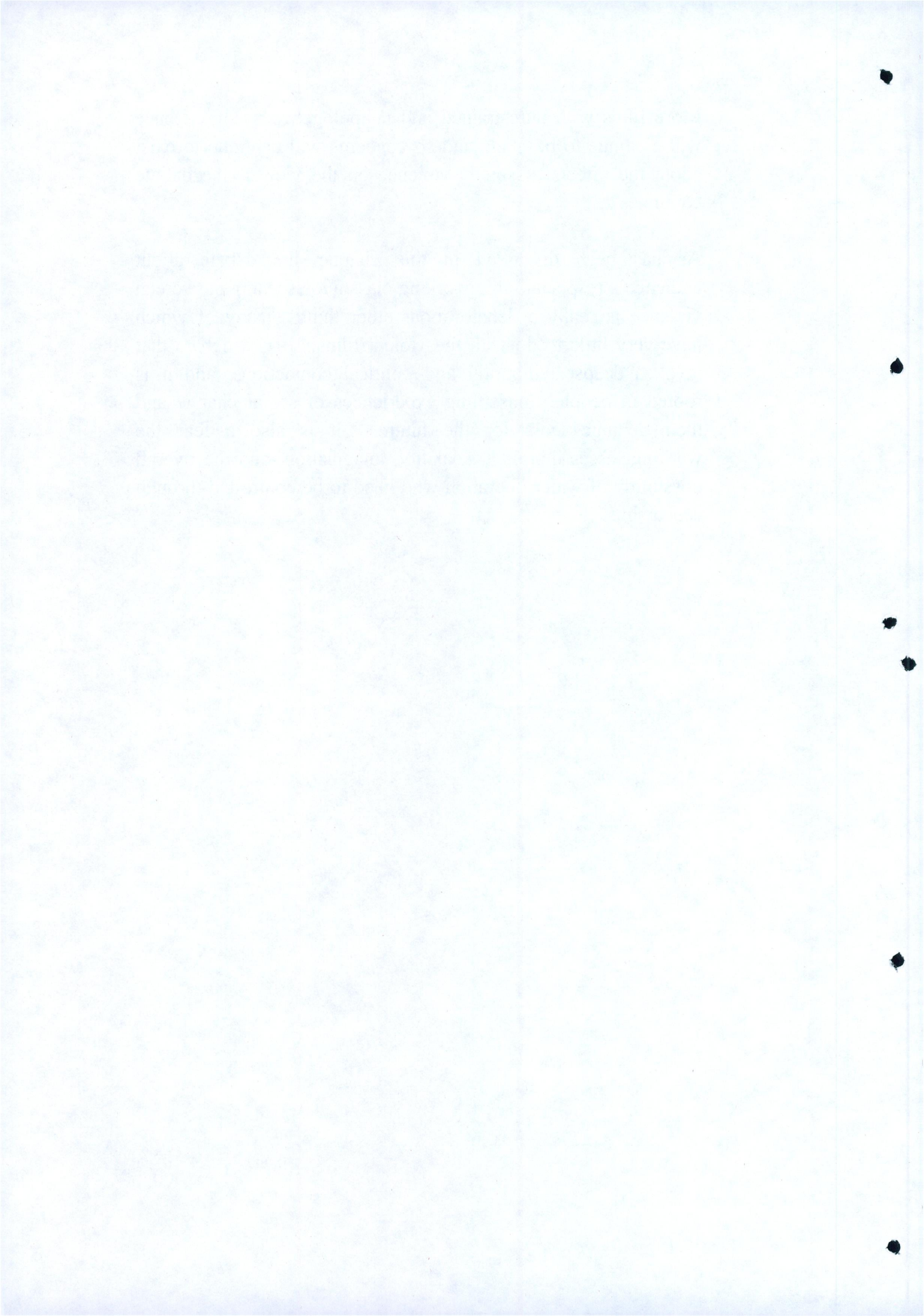
Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer

Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer

More films with unrestrained and unapologetic use of violence will continue to be made and so concerns will continue to exist about the effects of screen violence on the viewer, the debate continues.....

As has been discussed in this chapter the debate about audience's (especially the working class adolescents) and screen violence is really a debate about other things, many of which have very little to do with the violent films. It is a debate that invokes deepseated moral and political convictions, and it is rooted in people's unsettling experiences of social change and their genuine fears for the future. It is also a fear the workingclasses morality, sexuality, imagination, and the overall possibility of wider liberation who need to be controlled through censorship.







## **Brave Roy's cancer is back**

By NICK PARKER  
TV star Roy Castle is battling cancer again — 15 months after he thought he had beaten the killer disease.

The 51-year-old Record Breakers host went for new medical tests after feeling breathless.

His worst fears were confirmed on Tuesday when doctors revealed that cancerous cells had returned to his lungs.

He has been given chemotherapy tablets to



Roy: "I'll beat it" keep the cancer in check while more tests are carried out.

And he has pulled out of a variety show in Blackpool to have "a complete rest."

Non-smoker Roy, who lost his hair during radiotherapy last year, said last night: "I didn't want this to be known too soon because I didn't want cancer sufferers in my position to lose hope."

"I certainly haven't — and I'm determined to fight this disease and beat it again. I will battle it all the way."

His wife Fiona, 53, said at their home in Gerrards Cross, Bucks: "Roy won't have to go back to hospital."

"Doctors said it would do more harm than good if he went through all the treatment again."

"It's obviously a setback."

*Continued on Page Seven*

### **FRENCH REVOLUTION**

Kevin is now the most popular name for baby boys in France, ahead of Pierre or Francois.

## For the sake of ALL our kids...

# BURN YOUR



# VIDEO NASTY

By CHRIS PHARO and ALAN MUIR  
A VIDEO chain boss yesterday torched his entire £10,000 stock of tapes linked to the James Bulger murder.

And last night The Sun launched a nationwide campaign to get all other copies

of Child's Play 3 burned. If you own one yourself, burn it safely. If you have rented one, take it back to the shop and ask the dealer to destroy it.

Last night Liverpool MP David Atton praised The Sun's campaign.

He said burning was the answer to the "gratuitous nastiness" of the video, which may have been seen

by Jon Venables, one of the killers. The boss who burned his Child's Play tapes — including 300 copies of No 3, featuring evil doll Chucky — is Imtiaz Ahmad, 52. He is marketing director of Azad Video, Scotland's biggest chain.

And as the nasties went up in a bonfire at Glasgow he said: "As soon as I saw The Sun report I

ordered the shelves in our 80 stores cleared. I'm not having that kind of stuff in my shops. Child's Play 3 is spine-chilling, really nasty."

Liberal Democrat Mr Alton — MP for Mossley Hill, Liverpool, where the murder happened — said: "This video is a piece of  
*Continued on Page 11*

**PLAY £26,000 SUN BINGO AND £48,000 NOUGHTS AND CROSSES — PAGE 40**

Fig 15 — The Sun, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1993





Fig 16, 17 – Reservoir Dogs

Reservoir Dogs

Marvin

Figure 17 - Reservoir Dogs



Fig 18 – Pulp Fiction





Fig 19 – Natural Born Killers



Fig. 19 - Manual Form K-100

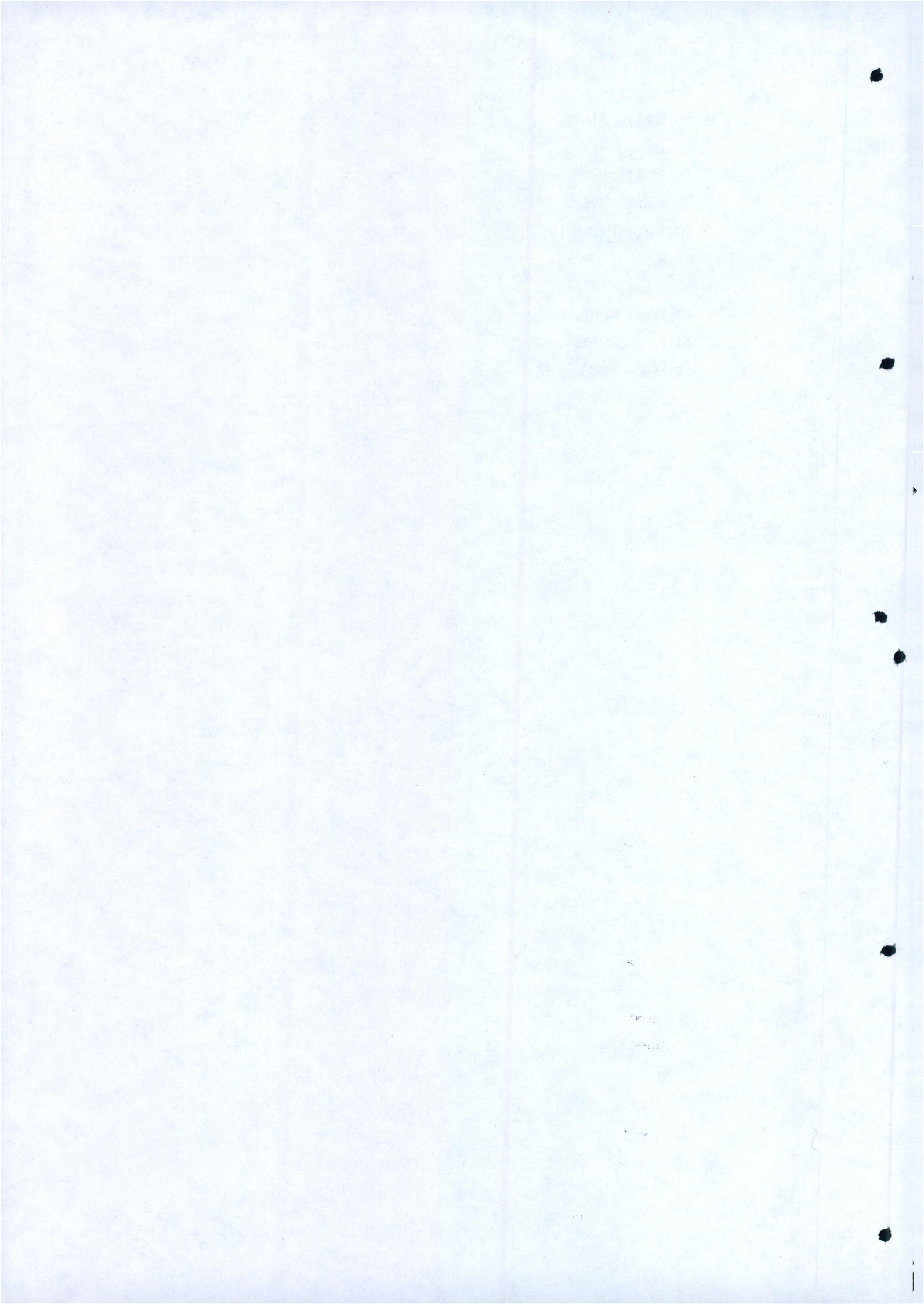
## **Chapter 1**

### **End notes/references**

1. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 67
2. Pearson 1983 pg 186
3. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 68/69
4. Tim O' Sullivan 1997 pg 182
5. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 12
6. Ibid pg 71
7. Ibid pg 79
8. Moonman 1987 pg 32
9. Ibid pg 33
10. Ibid pg 33
11. Dewe Mathews 1994 pg 9
12. Ibid pg 12
13. Ibid pg 13
14. Moonman 1987 pg 31
15. Dewe Mathew 1994 pg 29
16. Ibid pg 29
17. Ibid pg 29
18. Dewe Mathew 1994 pg 29
19. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 88
20. Ibid pg 88
21. Pearson 1983 pg 32
22. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 89
23. Dewe Mathew pg 122
24. Ibid pg 122
25. Ibid pg 122
26. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 90
27. Dewe Mathew 1994 pg 128
28. Ibid pg 130
29. Ibid pg 130
30. Ibid pg 130
31. Ibid pg 131
32. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 90
33. Ibid pg 33
34. French 1994 pg 8
35. Keough 1995 pg 291



36. Ibid pg 318
37. Ibid pg 318
38. Ibid pg 195
39. Ibid pg 298
40. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 92
41. Keough 1995 pg 55
42. Ibid pg 56
43. Dewe Mathews 1995 pg 205
44. French 1994 pg 92
45. Baker 1996 pg 13



## **Chapter 2 - The Debate Enlarged**

According to the American Medical Association, by the time a teenager reached the age of 18, she/he has spent an average of about 13,000 hours in school and 25,000 hours in front of the television set. They also claim that 18,000 hours of this television viewed is dominated by violence. Having finished their primary school education it is reckoned that a child has witnessed over 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television. The National Coalition of Television Violence estimates that children in homes with premium cable channels or a VCR will witness 32,000 murders and 40,000 attempted murders on the screen by the time they are 18 years old. In the inner-city, estimates for media exposure of violence go far beyond this. <sup>1</sup>

What effect, if any has screen violence on its audience. This has been a source of continuous debate from the early days of television and before that popular music, comic books and the Music Halls of the nineteenth century. In all, over 2,500 books and articles have been written on the effects of television and film on viewers behaviour. <sup>2</sup>

Hundreds of studies have been examined, and yet there is as yet no clean-cut agreement on exactly what to conclude from them in terms of linear causes and effects. Many researchers and theorists, however see media violence not as a direct cause necessarily but rather as a perceptual influence and a major environmental factor in developing destructive attitudes and predisposition to violence. <sup>3</sup>

To understand why and how people are violent or become violent, it is important to look at the physical causes Attention Deficit Disorders with Hyperactivity (ADDH or ADHD) for example, is known to predispose people to violent behaviour. The reason this happens is as a result of brain damage which has happened due to oxygen deprivation during birth, and environment factors. ADDH has proven in general to be a fairly

Chapter 1: The History of the United States

The United States has a rich and diverse history, spanning from the early colonial period to the present day. The country's development is marked by significant events, including the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the Great Depression. The nation's growth is also reflected in its expanding territory and the increasing influence of its culture and values on the world stage.

The early years of the United States were characterized by the struggle for independence from British rule. The American Revolution (1775-1783) led to the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the establishment of the new nation. The subsequent years saw the development of a federal government and the expansion of the country's borders.

The Civil War (1861-1865) was a pivotal moment in American history, as it resolved the issue of slavery and preserved the Union. The war led to the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Reconstruction Amendments to the Constitution. The Great Depression (1929-1939) and the subsequent New Deal policies shaped the modern American economy and social structure.

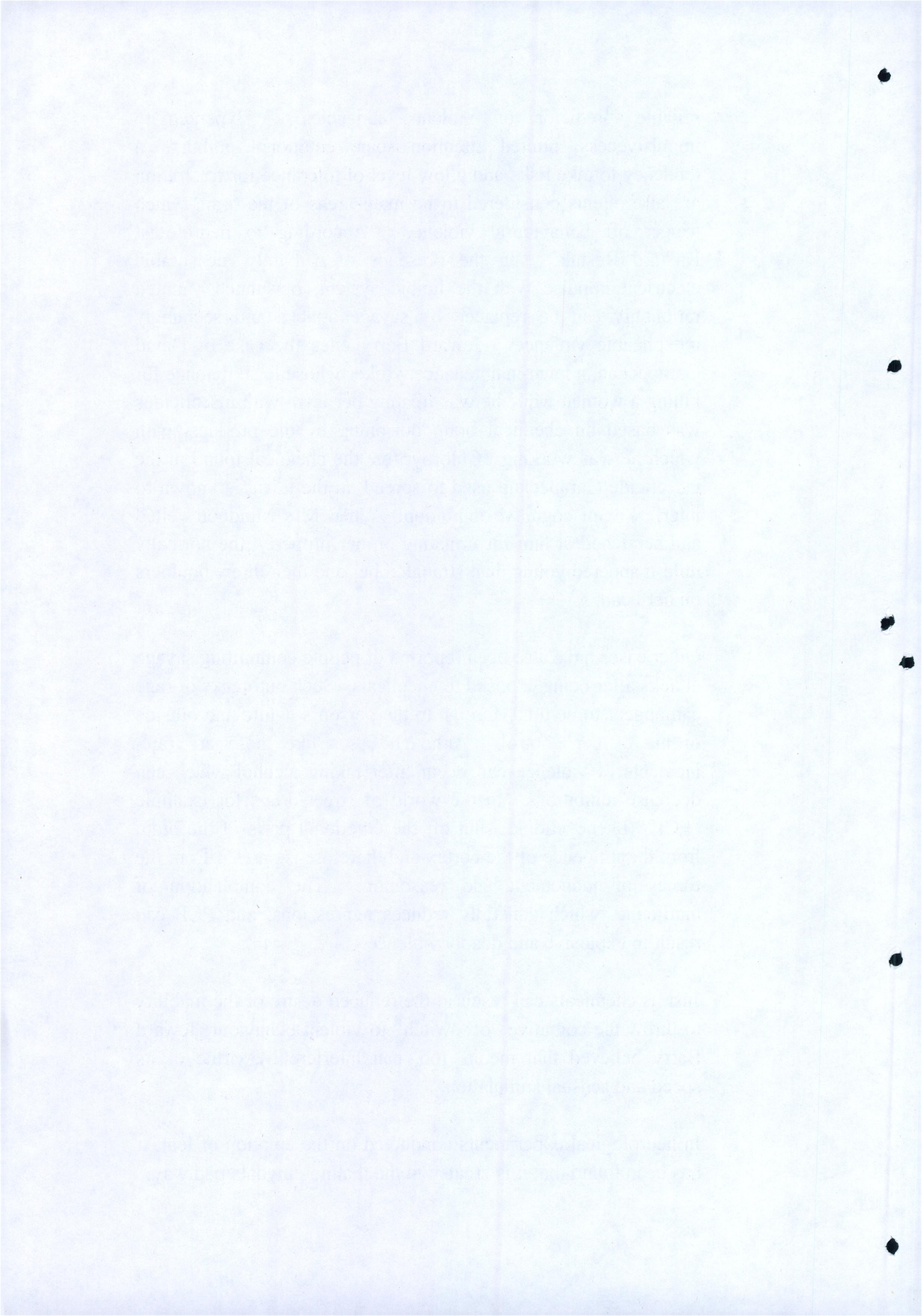
reliable predictor of violent tendencies. Hyperactivity impulsiveness, limited attention span, emotional outburst, a tendency to take risks and a low level of tolerance for frustration are all systems considered to be main areas of the brain which trigger off behavioural violence. According to neurologist Richard Restak: "In the presence of a barely measurable electrical impulse with the limbic system, our much vaunted rationality can be replaced by savage attacks and seemingly inexplicable violence. <sup>4</sup> Jeward Barry cites the case of David Garabekian, a lawn-maintenance worker whose legal defence for killing a woman while he was treating her lawn with insecticides was based on chemical brain poisoning by the products with which he was working. Chlorpyrifos, the chemical found in the insecticide Garabekian used to spread on the lawn, is known to interfere with cognitive inhibition. When Mrs Muldoon yelled and scratched at him for urinating on her property, the normally mild-mannered young man strangled her and then threw boulders on her head. <sup>5</sup>

Other cases have also been reported of people committing savage attacks after being exposed to chemicals. Such outbreaks of rage can appear to be total foreign to the person's nature and outside of his or her control. Although cases like these are rare, incidents of violence can occur after taking alcohol which can decrease inhibitions. In the world of street drugs for example "PCP" (phencyclidine) shut off the emotional parts of the brain from the influence of the cortex and therefore isolates it from the forces of judgement and reasoning. The combination of marijuana, which generally reduces aggressions, and PCP can result in explosive and deadly violence. <sup>6</sup>

Just as chemicals can result in the reduced desire or the inability to throw the cognitive "off switch" to violent behaviour, Jeward Barry believed that media, too, can interfere by virtue of its speed and sensual stimulation.

In neurological experiments conducted on the emotion of fear, it has been found that it is created in the thalmo-amydala pathway.



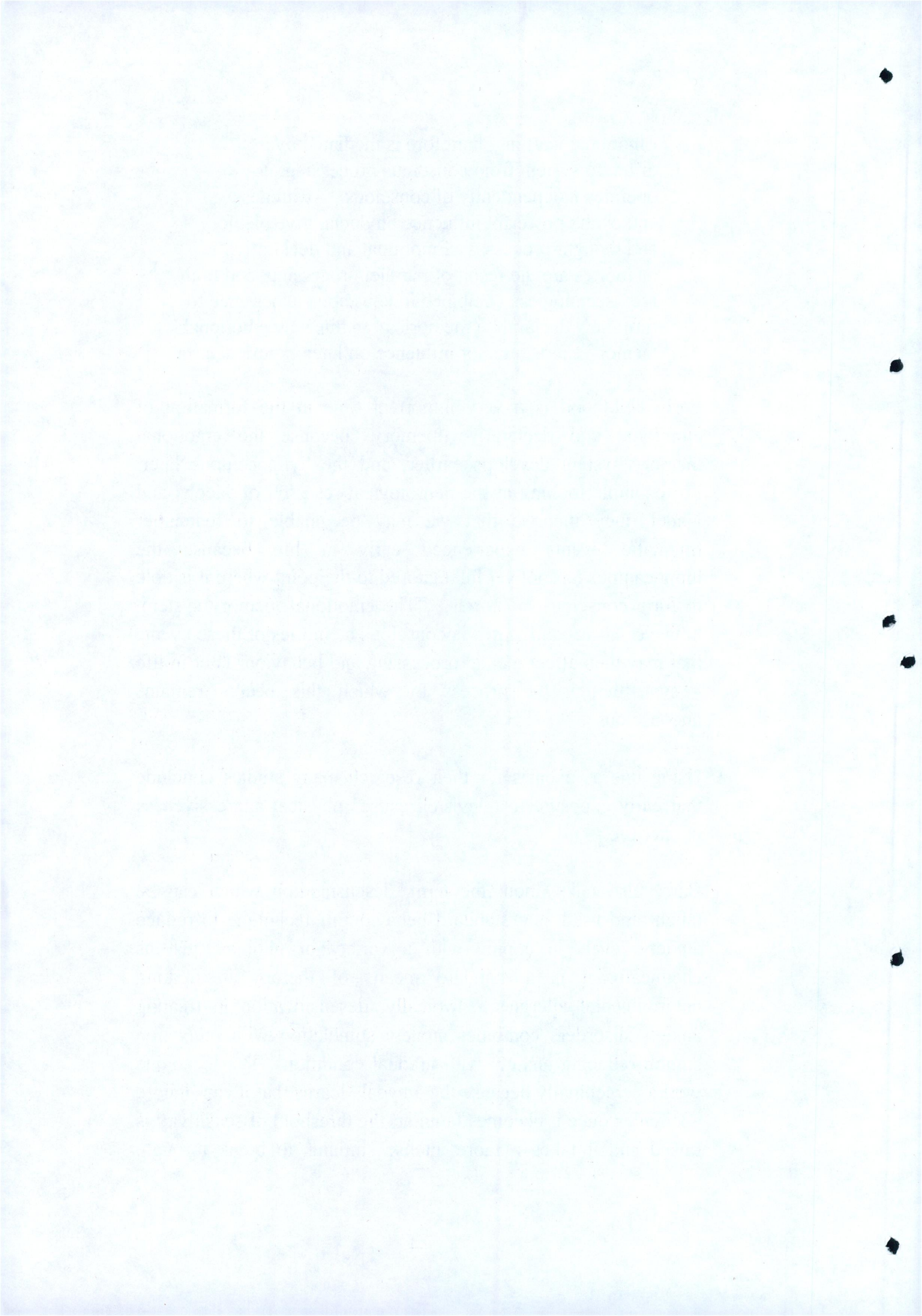


Emotional learning, therefore is mediated by a different system from conscious processing, it operates independently of conscious. Awareness and exerts powerful influence on declarative memory and thought processes. Emotional and declarative memories are the result of parallel processing, and both are seemingly combined in conscious experience to form new declarative memories. In this way emotional memory exerts a major influence on later experience. 7

Early childhood is a very important time in the formation of emotional and declarative memory, because the emotional memory system develops earlier, and the hippocampus later. For example looking at the neurological research of Jacobs and Nadel, they theorise that we may be unable to remember traumatic events experienced early in life because the hippocampus has not yet fully matured to the point where it is able to form conscious memories. "The emotional memory system, however, forms and stores unconscious memories of these events that may then affect mental processing and behaviour later in life - even though the process by which this occurs remains unconscious. 8

Using this as a basis for their research many studies conclude that early exposure to television causes physical aggressiveness in later life.

Barry also talks about the term, desensitization which can be taught and used as a standard behavioural technique to reduce anxiety levels in coping with a variety of phobias, just as chemically it is a standard means of therapy in treating environmental allergies. Typically, desensitization in treating anxiety disorders combines anxiety stimulation with relaxation stimuli reducing anxiety with gradual condition. The technique works perceptually because the amygdala learns that it can ignore a stimulus once it becomes familiar, the threshold of sensitivity is raised and it takes a more intense stimulus to break through.



“What is true of allergies and phobias is apparently true of violence”<sup>9</sup>

Research done by Victor Cline found in a study of a boy aged 5 to 14 that heavy viewers of violence are less affected emotionally by violent sequences than were those with little exposure to violence. John Meek, child psychiatrist explains that desensitisation is a defence mechanism that twins the extraordinary into the ordinary to avoid fear. Continual exposure, however also creates an impression of normalcy: “the more a child accepts violence as normal, the more likely he or she is to use violence as a natural response in situations of fear, frustration, or even anxiety.”<sup>10</sup>

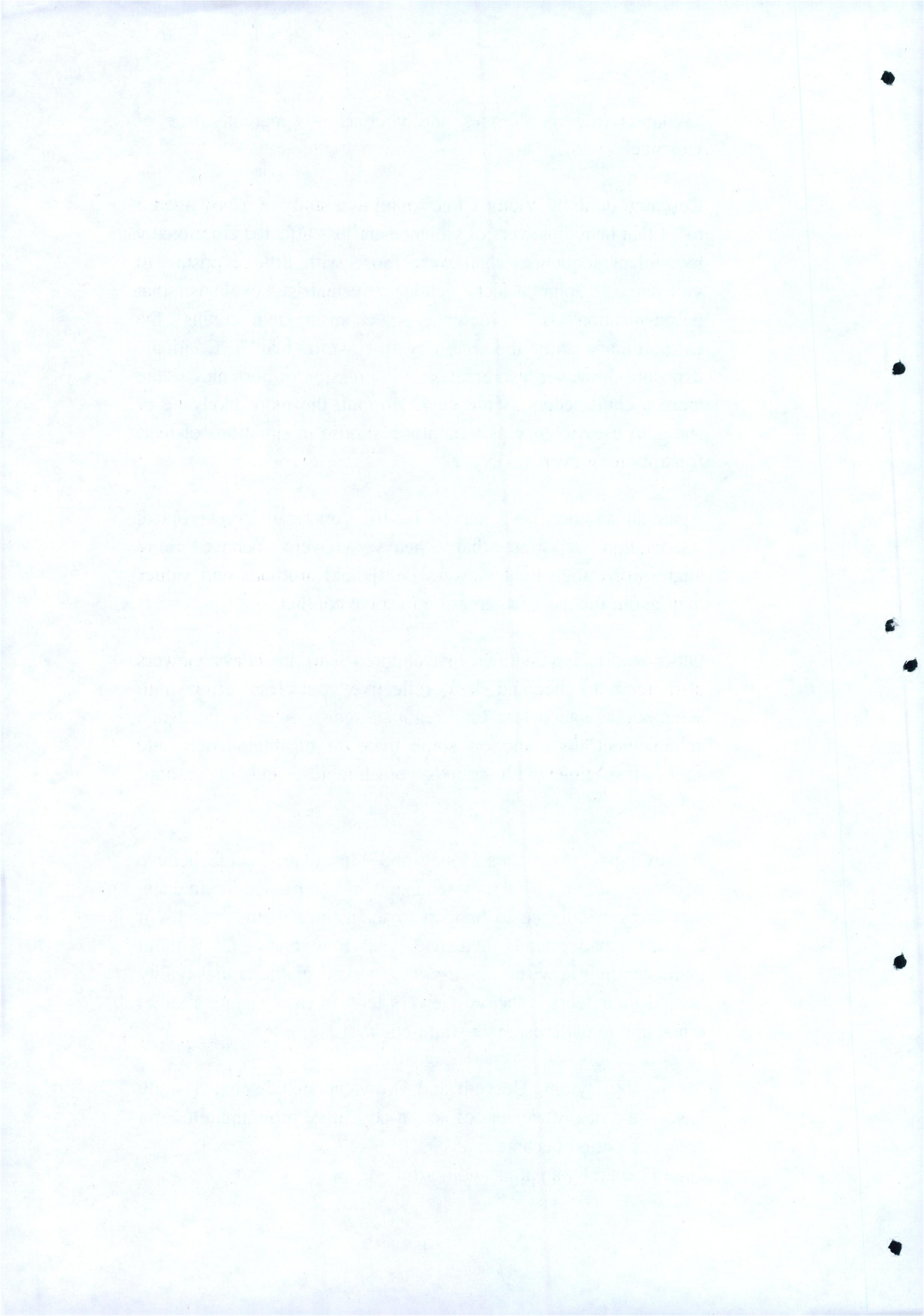
Again in another 1992 survey by the American Psychological Association reported that “heavy viewers behave more aggressively than light viewers [and] hold attitudes and values that favour the use of aggression to solve conflict.”<sup>11</sup>

Other studies have shown that children who are heavy viewers also tend to become less reflective, put less effort into schoolwork, spend less time reading, score lower on academic achievement tests and on some measure of intelligence, and spend less time with friends, on hobbies, and in outdoor activities.

According to researches Honey and Manzolari, people believe what they see and what they see is a world enmeshed in violence, they expect violence to happen to them, arm themselves for it and also inadvertently actualise what they fear - all without understanding how the process has worked or the actual reality behind their fears: “heavy viewers tend to over estimate street crime and to underestimate white-collar crime.”<sup>12</sup>

Studies by Byrant, Corveth and Brown, conclude that a study based on a heavy viewers of action-adventure programme over a six week period became:

“more generally anxious and fearful”<sup>13</sup>



Using this collective data, Barry uses the action packed attention getter film "Under Siege" (1990) as an example of the unnessary, imitative use of violence as a form of entertainment. In "his" opinion the film has no plot other that the take over of a ship by extortionist and the retaking of the ship by the hero. The hero, Steven Seagal: "perpetrates every possible kind of violence on people and things" <sup>14</sup>

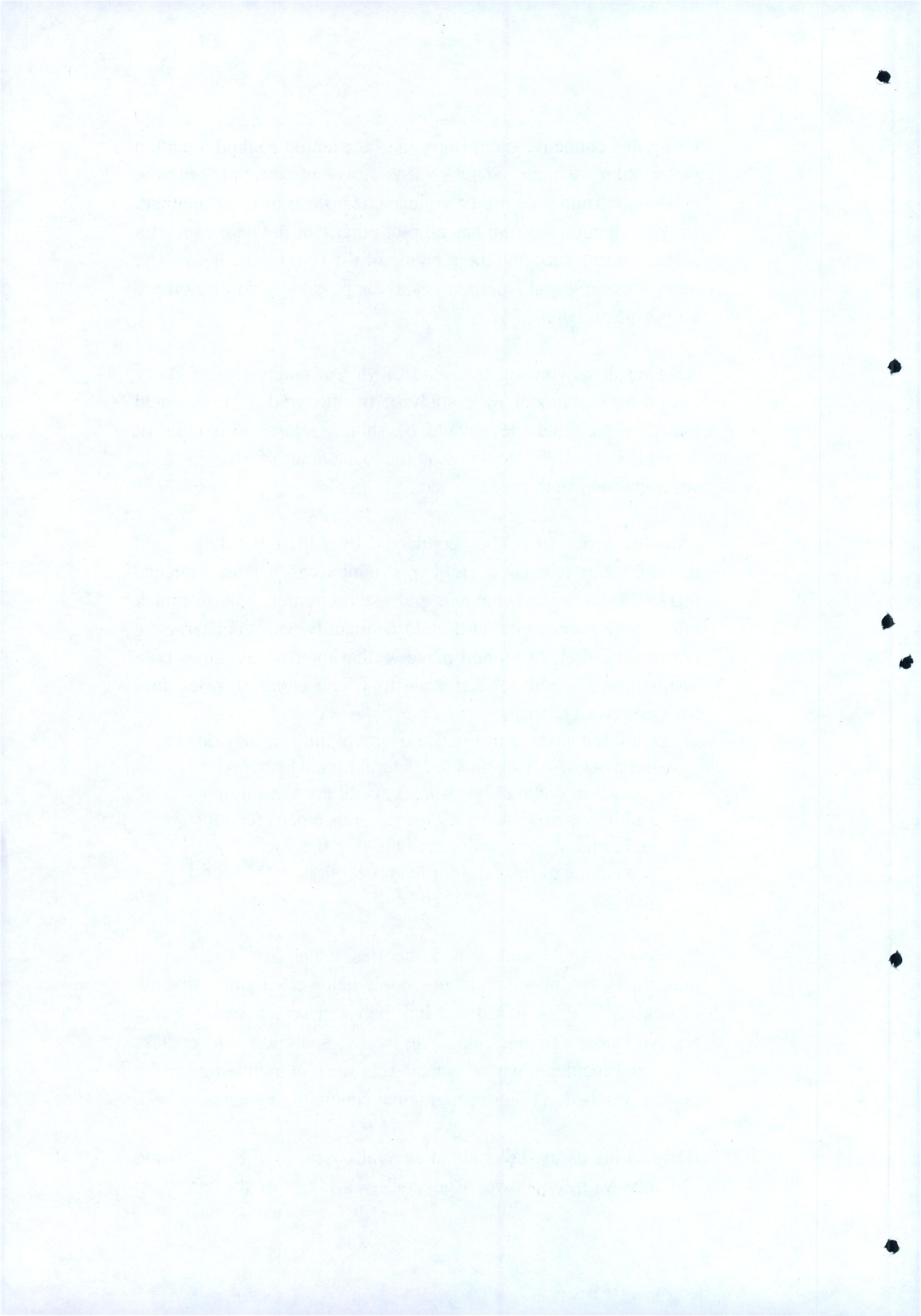
As a result of viewing this kind of violent entertainment Barry cites a 1993 national wide study of twelfth grade, "35% stated that they assumed they would be shot..." Barry also talks of another study 1992 looking at the behaviour of student from seventh to eleventh grade.

Another series of studies conducted by Albert Bandura found that film and television children's inhibitions against violence increase aggressive behaviour and teach children how to attack others. He concluded that if children identify with the characters portrayed on television and perceive that their behaviour is both justified and effective. Referring to young children, researcher M. Centerwall remarks,

Children have an instinctive desire to imitate, they do not possess our instinct for determining whether a behaviour ought to be imitate... Until the ages 3 or 4 children are unable to tell the difference between fact and fantasy, even with coaching. For them television is a source of factual information about how the world works. <sup>15</sup>

In view of such studies and theories which has been much published over the years, many people believe without a shadow of doubt that there is a direct link between screen violence and real violence. To back up their work researchers cite endless cases and incidents where violent acts were committed after the person watched a film or programme containing violence.

Barry in his essay, talks about several cases. In 1994, Norway, "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" was taken of the air when



three young children stoned and kicked their five year old playmate leaving her to freeze to death after allegedly mimicking what they had seen alone in the children's programme. Following this incident and a number of complaints by mothers claiming their children became aggressive after watching the programme, Mighty Morphin was taken off both a New Zealand and Canadian channel.

Again 1995, the same programme was blamed for another incident where a two year old boy from Mississippi bled to death after his play companion poked him in the stomach with a pipe wrench as they acted swordplay they had seen on the programme.

In 1993, this time in the Philippines a seven year old boy shot a maid in the head after she changed the channel while he was watching "Robocop" on the television.

In France, three 10 year old boys killed a homeless man with a wooden beam. No individual film or programme was blamed but instead there was a generalised assumption that the boys "play-acted out what they had often seen their media heroes do - Bruce Lee, Jean-Claude Van Damme and Rocky... after murdering the man unaffected they simply went home to watch television. 17

Probably the most published case of an alleged connection between screen violence and real violence involving children has been the killing of Jamie Bulger by two 10 year old boys. In Liverpool 1993, the body of two year old Jamie Bulger was found on a railway track where he had been brought after he was abducted and relentlessly beaten and tortured. In the aftermath of the murder, addressing the court after he had sentenced the two 10 year old boys to be detained for an indefinite period, Judge Michael Morland said:

How it came about that two normal boys of average intelligence committed this terrible crime is very hard to comprehend. It is not for me to pass judgement on their upbringing, but I suspect that exposure to violent videos/films may be an explanation. 18



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Even though no police evidence was found that either children had ever viewed violent videos what was found circumstantial was sufficient enough to fall like a spark in the powder barrel of public morality. It was a violent Hollywood film called Child's Play III, third in a horror series in which "Chucky" a toddler sized mannequin possessed by the soul of a killer, terrorises others before the child hero of the film destroys him. The resemblance between it and the Bulger crime was only faintly coincidental but it provided a powerful spring board for the media's repeated anti-video stance. The Times of January 2nd 1994 scorned, "The role which one particularly notorious film - Child's Play III- played in the Bulger Trial brought urgency in what had been an academic debate about the effects of screen brutality... But even if Child's Play III was guilty only by association with the case, the episode left a deep sense of disquiet" the article concludes:

"What kind of urban culture allowed such material to free circulate in the homes of young children?"<sup>19</sup>

Commenting on this article, film critic Alexander Walker (1997) disagrees:

The sole person responsible for such "associations" had been the judge in the case. The deep sense of disquiet was surely caused by the crime itself, not by a film that played no part in it, whose content bore only slight resemblance to it and which neither child convicted of the crime had ever laid there eyes on.<sup>20</sup>

Again in the Independent of March 20th 1994 it demanded: "We must project young minds". On the front page of The Sun of November 23 1993, a picture of two video (Child's Play III) are shown being burnt in a dustbin with the heading, "BURN YOUR VIDEO NASTY .... for the sake of all our kids". The article quiet blatantly said:

A video chain boss yesterday torched his entire £10,000 stock of tapes linked to the Jamie Bulger murder.... And last night The Sun launched a

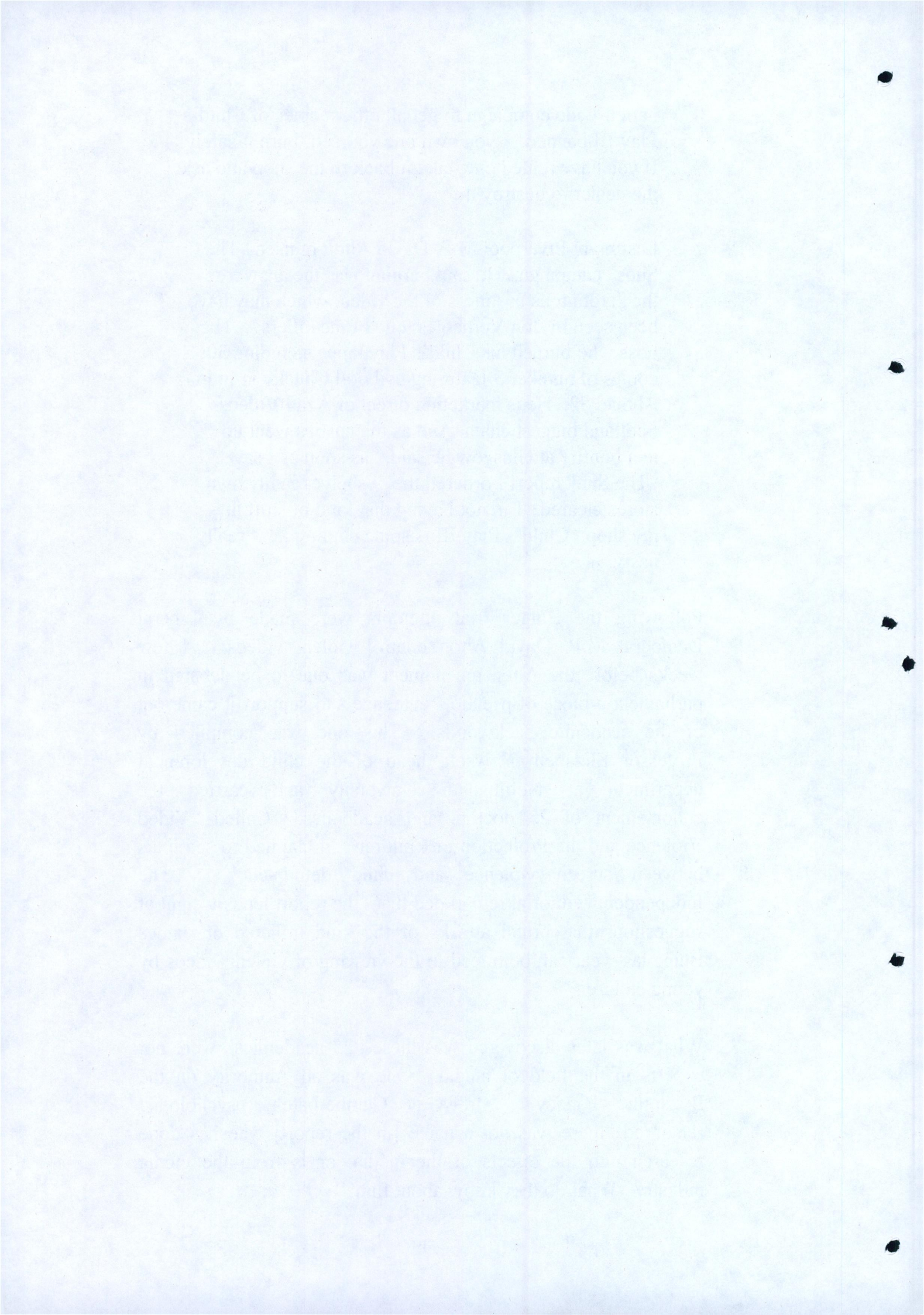


nation-wide campaign to get all other copies of Child's Play III banned. If you own one yourself, burn it safely, If you have rented one, take it back to the shop and ask the dealer to destroy it.

Last night Liverpool M.P. David Alton praised "The Suns" campaign. He said burning was the answer to the "gratuitous nastiness of the video, which may have been seen by Jon Vernables, one of the killers ....The boss who burned his Child's Play tapes including 300 copies of number 3 featuring evil doll Chucky in Imitiaz Ahmad 52. He is marketing direct of Azad Videos, Scotland biggest chain. And as the nasties went up in a bonfire at Glasgow he said, "as soon as I saw "The Sun" report I ordered the shelves in my own stores cleared. I'm not having that kind of stuff in my shop. Child's Play III is spine chilling ..... really nasty. 21

Following the Bulger trial attempts were made by Liberal Democrat M.P. David Alton control violent videos. A few weeks before the Alton amendment was due to be debated in parliament a piece of pseudo - evidence - to support it came out of the academic backwoods. This one was compiled by Professor Elizabeth Newson, head of the child development department at Nottingham University and carried the endorsement of 25 doctors and academics. Called "Video Violence and the Protection of Children" ,it claimed to see links between screen violence and child delinquency. "The Independent" editorial remarked that "the report lends weight at suggestions that brutal attacks of the kind inflicted on James Bulge last year can be traced to the viewing of violent videos by young children" 23

What was later discovered was these "25 academics" were not experts in the field of media. One was an Authority on the Byzantine Papacy. Dr. Guy Cumberbatch, psychologist remarked "there was not a name [in the report] who has done research into the effects of the media, or is from the media industry. What do they know about film?" 24



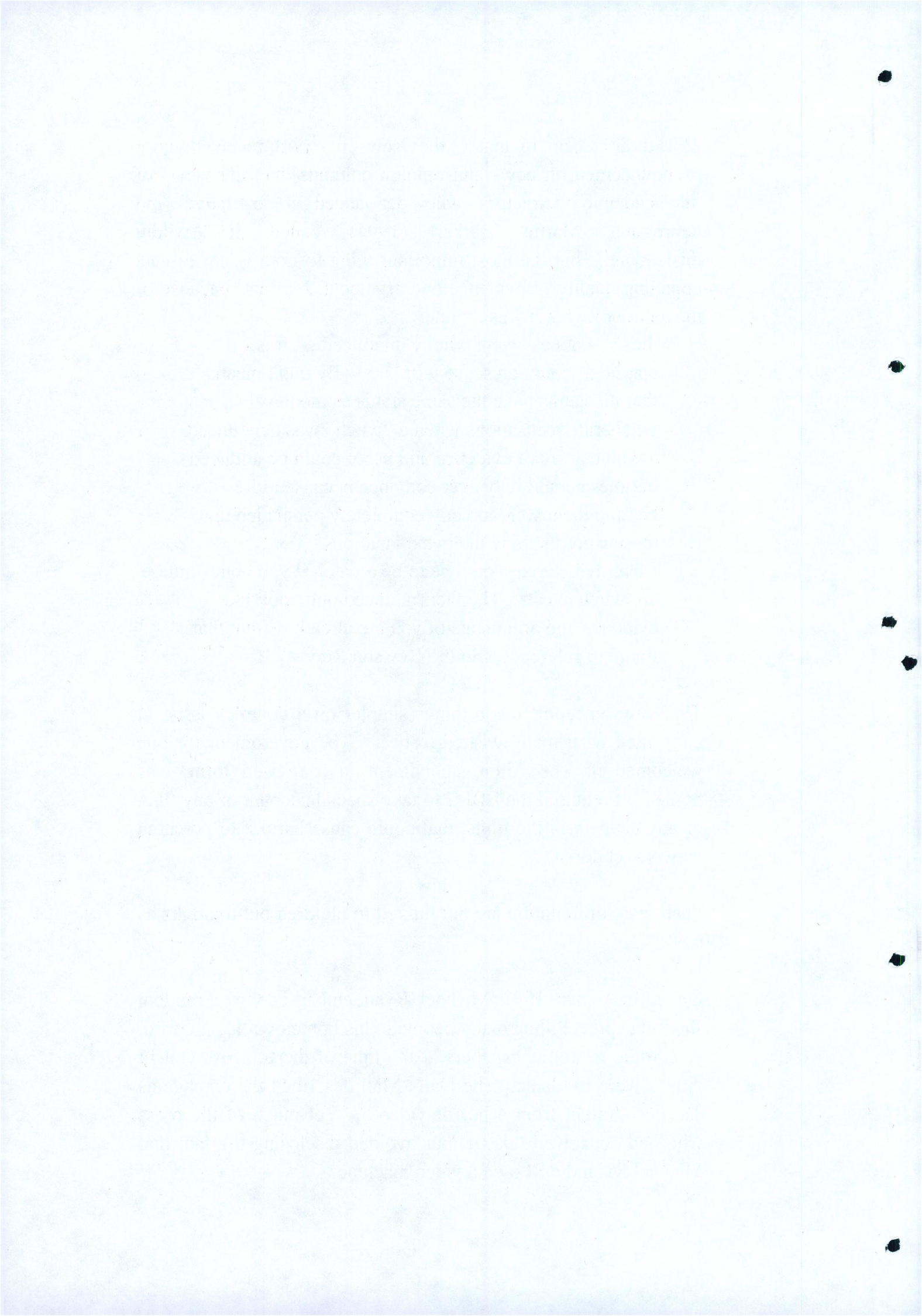
This didn't seem to matter, the Newsom report received more pronouncement in news and opinion columns than the views of its academic detractors who denounced it as naive and depressing. Martin Barker (1997) called it "wildly misleading....but the most important thing to note is not just its appalling quality of evidence and argument, but that, because of the nature of what it was arguing

those weaknesses went wholly unnoticed..... it is classic of common sense writ large" By this I mean that its claims have the same status as medieval witchcraft accusations when a "witch" was denounced, a whole array of evidence and proof could be adduced but these could only ever convince because those hearing them were already completely persuaded that these were the only likely explanations. You can only believe some one to be a witch if you believe there are witch events. The facts adduced only look like evidence and arguments of you are already within that frame of reference. So the Newsom Report" 25

The Newsom report made things simpler on a complex issue, it confirmed what many wished to hear. The government for one welcomed it. The Alton amendment in a revised form, was passed. It required the BBFC to take special account of any film, or any element in the films, that could cause harm... to potential viewers (children).

Such fears of imitation are not limited to children but to adults as well.

On 20th August 1987 Michael Ryan embarked on a random shooting spree, killing many people in his hometown Hungerford. According to the newspapers at the time of the tragedy, violent videos were to blame. The Daily Mail described the carnage as "scenes straight from a horror video" 26 Yet much of the press who had conceived this rumour avoided disclosing the fact that Michael Ryan didn't own a video machine.



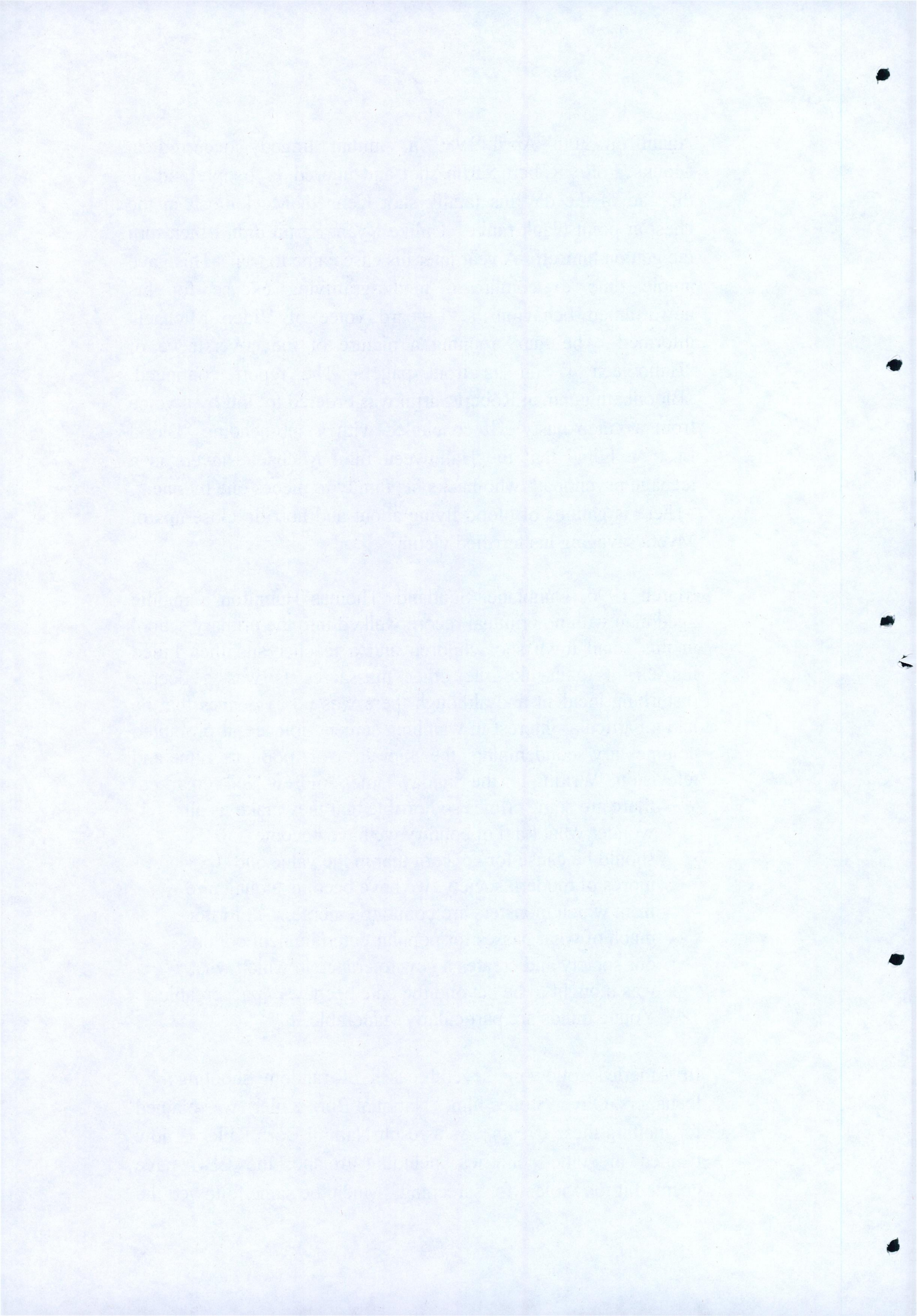
Again on 30th April 1989 a similiar tragedy occurred in Monkseaton. Robert Sartin shot and injured 17 people and by the end of the day his fatally shot Kenneth Mackintosh in the chest at point blank range. Unlike Ryan, Sartin didn't then turn the gun on himself. A year later his case came to trial. This gave ample time to conjure a media-gratifying excuse for his unwarranted behaviour. "I heard voice of Video Michael" informed "The Sun" running a picture of the coversleeve of "Halloween 4" on its front page. The report continued, "Bloodbath gunman Robert Sartin was ordered to kill by a voice from a video nasty". It concluded with a sub-heading "Blood Lust on Film" that the Halloween film, Michael Myers is a teenage psychopath who hacks his family to pieces one by one.... "There is gallons of blood flying about and horrific close-ups of Myers savaging his terrified victim" <sup>27</sup>

March 1996, Dunblane, Scotland, Thomas Hamilton a middle aged man with no criminal record walked into the primary school in this small town shot children and a teacher and then killed himself. Again like the other massacres is was a deeply disturbing incident and although there was no evidences that he had a particular interest in watching screen violence, it prompted commentary condemning the morality of popular film and television. Writing for the Sunday Times Andrew Neil remarked:

there are some crimes so horrible that they make us all wonder what kind of country we have become.... It should be cause for concern that in the value and mores of modern society, we have become a quagmire from which monsters are bound to emerge..... for too much of what passes for popular entertainment pollutes our society and creates a new tolerance in which what was thought to be beyond the pale becomes acceptable. Young minds are particularly vulnerable. <sup>28</sup>

In America following several cases of random shootings by teenagers, Oliver Stones film, "National Born Killer" was blamed for inciting these events. As a result Natural Born Killer is now banned in some countries including Ireland, the BBC have deemed it too violent for screening. Much the same followed the





release in 1972 of Stanley Kubrick's film "A Clock Work Orange", Mary Whitehouse remarked that it "perpetrates violence in the ugliest form" <sup>29</sup>

It too was linked to cases of violence. During the trial of sixteen year old Richard Palmer who killed a tramp with a brick, the prosecuting counsel spoke of the callous comparison between the case and the Clock Work Orange" " in the film, the gang, following the attack on the old man, were quoted as saying "then we went on our way", Palmer after his attack on the old man, told police when I got home I noticed I had some blood on my trousers then I went to bed. <sup>30</sup>

Ever since the mid 19th century with the introduction of penny dreadful music halls to working class areas there has been alleged copycat crimes and with this calls for stricter forms of censorship and control, and a need to protect children. Yet underneath this need to protect the innocent mind there is the need to control the underclass, the redundant population, the relative surplus, the residuum, the social problem group, the dangerous classes, the undeserving poor. Looking at the history of middle-class disapproval of working-class class culture, Geoffrey Pearson concludes that

popular entertainment of all kinds have been blamed for dragging down public morals in a gathering pattern of accusation which remains essentially the same even though it is attached to radically different forms of amusement, pre-modern feasts and festivals, eighteenth century theatre and bawdy houses, mid nineteenth century penny gaffs, Music Halls of the Gay Nineties, the first flickering of danger signs from the silent movies, the Hollywood pictures palaces between the wars, and then television viewing in our own historical time. Each, in its own time, has been accused of encouraging a moral debauch, each has been said to encourage imitative crime among the young" <sup>31</sup>

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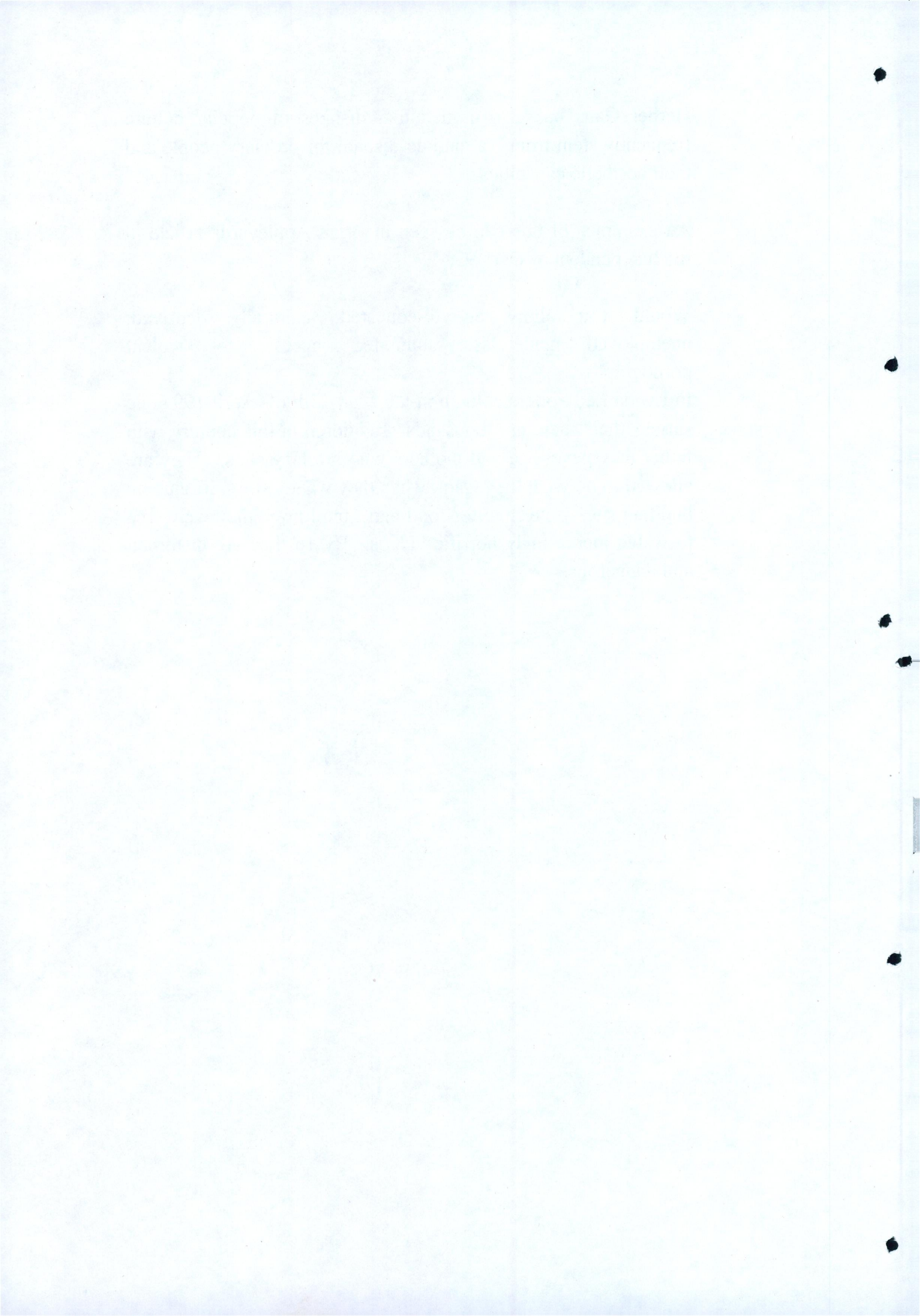
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Herber Gans has also argued that dislikes of popular culture frequently stem from “ a marked disdain for ordinary people and their aesthetic capacities.

An example of this can be seen in Brian Appleyards article in the Independent of Dec '93.

Would you allow an ill-educated, culturally deprived, unemployed underclass unlimited access to violent pornography?”<sup>32</sup>

In Lynda Lee Potters column in the Mail 13th of April 1994 she shrieks that “there are thousands of children in this country with father they never see and mothers who are lazy sluts. They are allowed to do what they want, when they want. The sniff glue on building sites scavenge for food and , until now, they were free to watch increasingly horrific videos. By 16 they are disturbed and dangerous.



**Chapter 2**  
**End notes/References**

1. Barry 1993 pg 301
2. Ibid pg 302
3. Ibid pg 302
4. Ibid pg 303
5. Ibid pg 303
6. Ibid pg 304
7. Ibid pg 304
8. Ibid pg 305
9. Ibid pg 305
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15. Ibid pg 313
16. Ibid pg 308
17. French 1997 pg 92
18. Ibid pg 94
19. Ibid pg 94
20. Ibid pg 94
21. Dewe Mathews 1994 pg 281
22. French 1997 pg 100
23. Ibid 1997 pg 100
24. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 12
25. Keresken/Slater 1994 pg 305
26. Ibid pg 306
27. Baker /Petley pg 67
28. French 1997 pg 54
29. Ibid pg 55
30. Pearson 1983 pg 208
31. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 87/88
32. Ibid 1997 pg 98



### **Chapter 3 - The Debate Resolved?**

In this chapter, the process of viewing violence will be explored. At a time when politicians and the media police viewing habits, it is important to ask the basic question why do we choose to watch violent movies? If these movies are brutalising and violent, why do people consider them entertaining?

A study conducted by writer and academic, Annette Hill has found that men and women respond to violent movies in dynamic and complex ways and that they are not dangerous and unhealthy, but instead present a safe environment in which to explore issue of violence.

Following concerns about the effects of television and violence on children after the murder of Jamie Bulger, so called video nasties, like Child's Play III were called for to be banned. Studies emerged to show that screen violence caused children to behave aggressively because of their inability to distinguish between fiction and reality. David Buckingham a lecturer in Media Studies found that children are not passive but active reader of television and indeed have a sophisticated understanding of many conventions of screen violence. In the last part of this chapter a study conducted Tony Charlton psychologist, on the children of a small island, St. Helena's has shown positive benefits from televisions viewing.

Violence is something that is very fundamental to the art of story telling, it is important in order to establish drama. Without violence drama cannot work. If it were not for violence - that is savage conflict, both physical and psychological - there would be no cinema.

In the movies, as director John Huston was once quoted as saying: "If you do it right, the thing happens, right there on the screen and more often than not "the thing" that happens is ugly or explosive or mean".<sup>1</sup>



The first part of the report deals with the general situation in the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first dealing with the general situation and the second with the progress of the work.

The second part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first dealing with the results of the work and the second with the conclusions drawn from the work.

The third part of the report deals with the conclusions drawn from the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first dealing with the conclusions drawn from the work and the second with the recommendations made.

The fourth part of the report deals with the recommendations made. It is divided into two main sections: the first dealing with the recommendations made and the second with the conclusions drawn from the work.

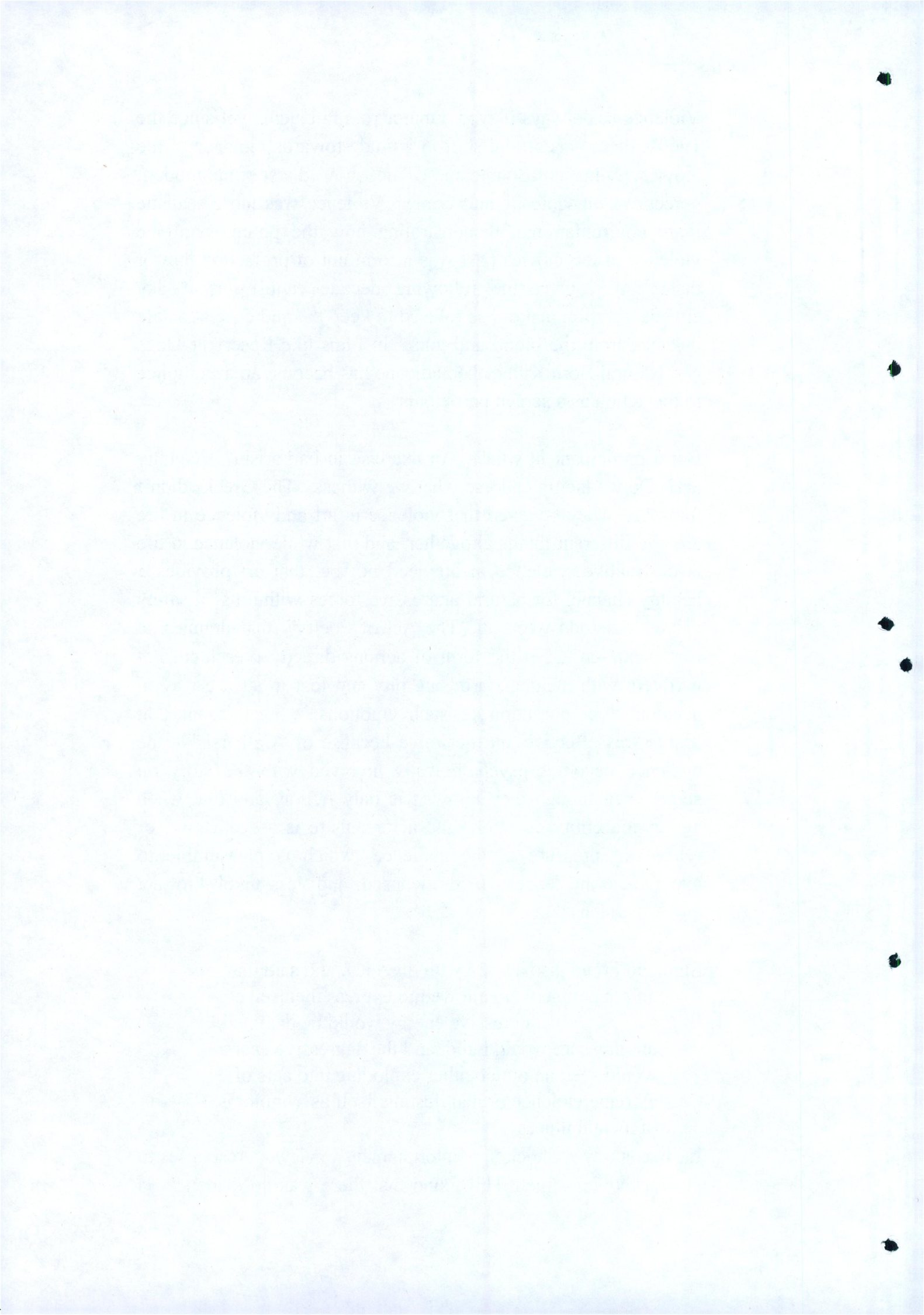
The fifth part of the report deals with the conclusions drawn from the work. It is divided into two main sections: the first dealing with the conclusions drawn from the work and the second with the recommendations made.

Violence has always played a major role in cinema yet since the 1960's there was a tidal shift in attitude towards violence in the movies. Films like *Bonnie and Clyde*, showed a startling modern perceptiveness on violence and crime. Violence was more realistic more confrontational, demonstrating how the polite, symbolic violence of the movies past was a form not of protection, but of dishonesty. Over the following decades until present day cinema, the film maker has refused to keep the audience at a safe distance from the blood and guts. In films like *Reservoir Dogs* and *Natural Born Killer*, the audience has become an accomplice to the action as a screen participant.

But a participant in what? An exercise in barbarism? A guilty act? Do we tacitly endorse what we witness. The Greeks didn't think so. They believed that violence in art and violence in life are two different things altogether, and that while violence in life is destructive, violence in art need not be, that art provides a healthy channel for natural aggressive forces within us a safety valve. Aristotle wrote in "The Act of Poetry", that drama is a representation .... in the form of actions directly presented, not narrated: with incidents arousing pity and fear in such a way to accomplish a purgation of such emotions.<sup>2</sup> This meant that drama was effective and desirable because of "Catharsis" - the audience becomes psychologically involved with the story on stage, even though they know it is only fiction, and that when aggression climaxes among the actors, there is a "catharsis" or release of pressure in the audience, which is pleasurable to experience and leaves them cleansed and less likely to act violently themselves.

Sigmund Freud also agreed with this idea, and said that:  
unless people were allowed to express themselves aggressively, aggressive energy would be dammed up, pressure would build, and the aggressive energy would seek an outlet either exploding into acts of extreme violence or manifesting itself as symptoms of mental illness. <sup>3</sup>

In her study "Shocking Entertainment", viewer response to violent movies, Anent Hill found that there was no evidence on



catharsis which suggests that the viewer of violent movies are passive.

What she found was that there evidence to suggest is that the viewer is active, and is able to differentiate between fictional violence and real violence in a way that indicates real violence is perceived as disturbing and abhorrent.

Constructing her study Hill interviewed over seventy regular movie goers and asked them to watch eight films which were considered to be extremely violent films. The films were Reservoir Dogs (1992) Pulp Fiction (1994) True Romance(1993) Natural Born Killers (1994) Man Bites Dog (1992) Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer (1990) Bad Lieutenant (1992) and Killing Zoe (1994). Noting the participants reaction to what they saw, Hill discovered that they found the films interesting, entertaining and not dangerous and unhealthy, but instead a safe environment in which to explore issues of violence:

The movies contain intelligent dialogue and direction. It is precisely these factor which draw movie goers to see these films and make up their own minds about movies which are perceived as dangerous and unhealthy by moral watchdogs in media and government. 4

Hill found the reason that both men and women find these films entertaining is because of their realistic and thoughtful representations of violence which is intellectually satisfying and demanding of concentration. While viewing the violence in these films physical and emotional responses vary form person to person. Responses may vary, anger, fear, excitement, disgust. There is no one response to viewing violence. Anticipation heightens response, increases excitement and emphasises the significance of preparation. The viewer anticipates the worst that can happen and prepare themselves for just such an imaginary event. This response of anticipation and preparation is essential to the enjoyment of viewing violent movies.



Watching fictional violence in a violent film, viewers have the choice to engage or not engage with the character a participant in Hill's study commented when watching the film, *Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer*:

I identify with Henry because I see an amazingly violent film, and I want to be in that situation for an hour and a half, and then I get out of the cinema and its all out of the window. My personal life is non-violent. That's why I identify with Henry, me and Henry both need our dose of violence but we don't need to bring it home. <sup>5</sup>

Another key factor is why people choose to watch violent movies is testing boundaries. Viewer test their own boundaries while viewing violence because it is a safe way of interpreting violence in a fictional setting. Active consumers of violent movies do not find real violence in any way entertaining, and they differentiate between real violence and fictional violence. Real violence is intense and shocking - having a lasting impact, an impact fictional violence does not possess.

Real violence has a much more lasting impact. These are real people, that could have been a friend of mine, this could have been someone from the family, you know. I was thinking of some news footage of a massacre in Rwanda. That was much more shocking than these films Real violence is really disturbing and frightening, fictional violence is raw. <sup>6</sup>

While people find real violent disturbing and frightening, fictional violence is entertaining because it is a safe way of understanding violence, without having to experience it is real life. Viewers can feel safe to experience a range of complex and sophisticated response to violence, they would not be able to do this in any comparable way in real life hence, they go to the movies. Hill concludes her study saying that understanding violence and the ranges of response available is central to the reasons why people choose to watch violent movies.



Violence is something all viewers I spoke to feared and abhorred, but did not mean they eschewed all aspects of violence. It is real violence which is to be avoided, not fictional violence. Consequently, violent movies act as a safe way of exploring the issue of violence and provide a forum for complexities of response. <sup>7</sup>

As chapter one has shown, concerns about the effects of screen violence have on children has been a recurrent theme of public debate since the turn of the century. It has been long believed that children copy what they see on television because they lack the experience and the intellectual capacities that might enable them to see through the illusion of reality which the medium provides. They take what they watch as an accurate reflection of the world.

Through his research in this area, David Buckingham, a lecturer in media studies at the University of London Institute of Education believes that children actually are not fooled by fictional portrayals of violence. In an attempt to throw new light on the the issue, Buckingham interviewed 72 children aged six to 15 about their television viewing. The children displayed a knowledgeable insight of many of the conventions of television. Even the very youngest subjects knew that the families in "The Cosby Show" or "Roseanne" are not "real" and were able to recognise that programmes, obeyed certain rules whereby things are played for laugh or conflicts are easily resolved.

Yet their interpretation of how realistic such programmes are also depended how they compared to their own family lives.

A key factor to emerge was the way they reacted differently to fact and fiction, children learn to make fine distinctions between what they perceive to be realistic and not realistic. <sup>8</sup>

Buckingham discovered that news and documentary programmes often produced more profound reactions while they generally learn to cope with fictional material - either by developing their



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2. The second part of the document outlines the specific procedures for recording transactions. It details the steps involved in the accounting cycle, from identifying the transaction to posting it to the general ledger and finally preparing the financial statements.

3. The third part of the document discusses the role of internal controls in ensuring the accuracy of financial records. It describes various control mechanisms, such as segregation of duties, authorization requirements, and regular reconciliations, which are designed to minimize the risk of errors and misstatements.

4. The fourth part of the document addresses the importance of transparency and accountability in financial reporting. It stresses that financial statements should be prepared in accordance with established accounting standards and should be subject to independent audit to ensure their reliability.

5. The fifth and final part of the document provides a summary of the key points discussed and offers concluding remarks on the overall importance of sound financial practices. It reiterates that a strong foundation in accounting principles and procedures is crucial for the success of any organization.

knowledge of the genre, or simply be deciding to avoid it they often find it much harder to distance themselves from non-fictional material:

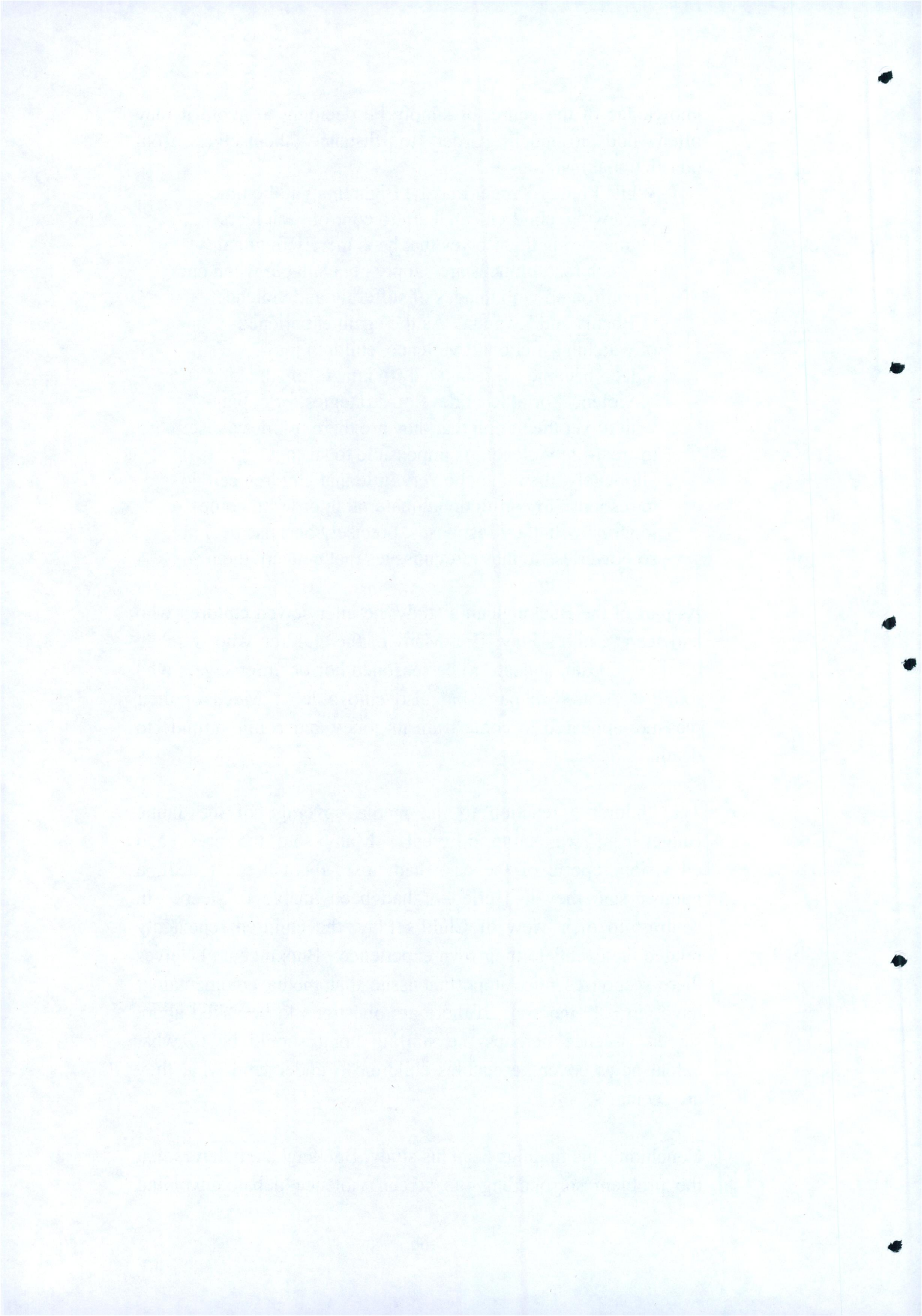
While Freddy Kruger may be frightening at the time of viewing, children can learn to control such fears by reassuring themselves that he is merely fictional; yet such reassurances are simply not available when one is confronted with images of suffering and violence in Bosnia and Rwanda. As they gain experience of watching 'fictional' violence, children may indeed become 'desensitized' to images of 'the kind' of violence, or at least develop strategies for coping with it; yet the notion that they are there by 'desensitized' to 'real-life violence' is impossible to sustain.

Ultimately, there may be very little that children can do in response to non-fictional material in order to come to terms with their responses, precisely because they are so powerless to interfere in issues that concern them. 9

As part of the Buckingham's study, he interviewed children who had seen "Child's Play III". Many of the children who watched the 18 rated film appeared to be seasoned horror film viewers who found it "scary" in parts but also enjoyable. Much of their pleasure appeared to come from its jokey and comic attitude to death.

The children's reaction to the media coverage of the Jamie Bulger case was quite different. Many said the press and television reports of the case had upset them a great deal; a number said they had cried or had been unable to sleep. In contrast to their view of Child's Play, the children repeatedly related the events to their own experience. Buckingham believes these responses raise an important issue that media commentators have virtually ignored. If there are questions to be asked about screen violence perhaps the starting point should be to what extent news coverage enables children to understand what they are seeing.

Concluding his findings from his study, Buckingham believes that the problem surrounding the screen violence debate involving



children can not be solved by increasing censorship but can be by a positive educational strategy for both parents and their children; Media studies could be part of English lesson. English is the subject most concerned with culture. At the moment it narrows culture down to books which is unrealistic:

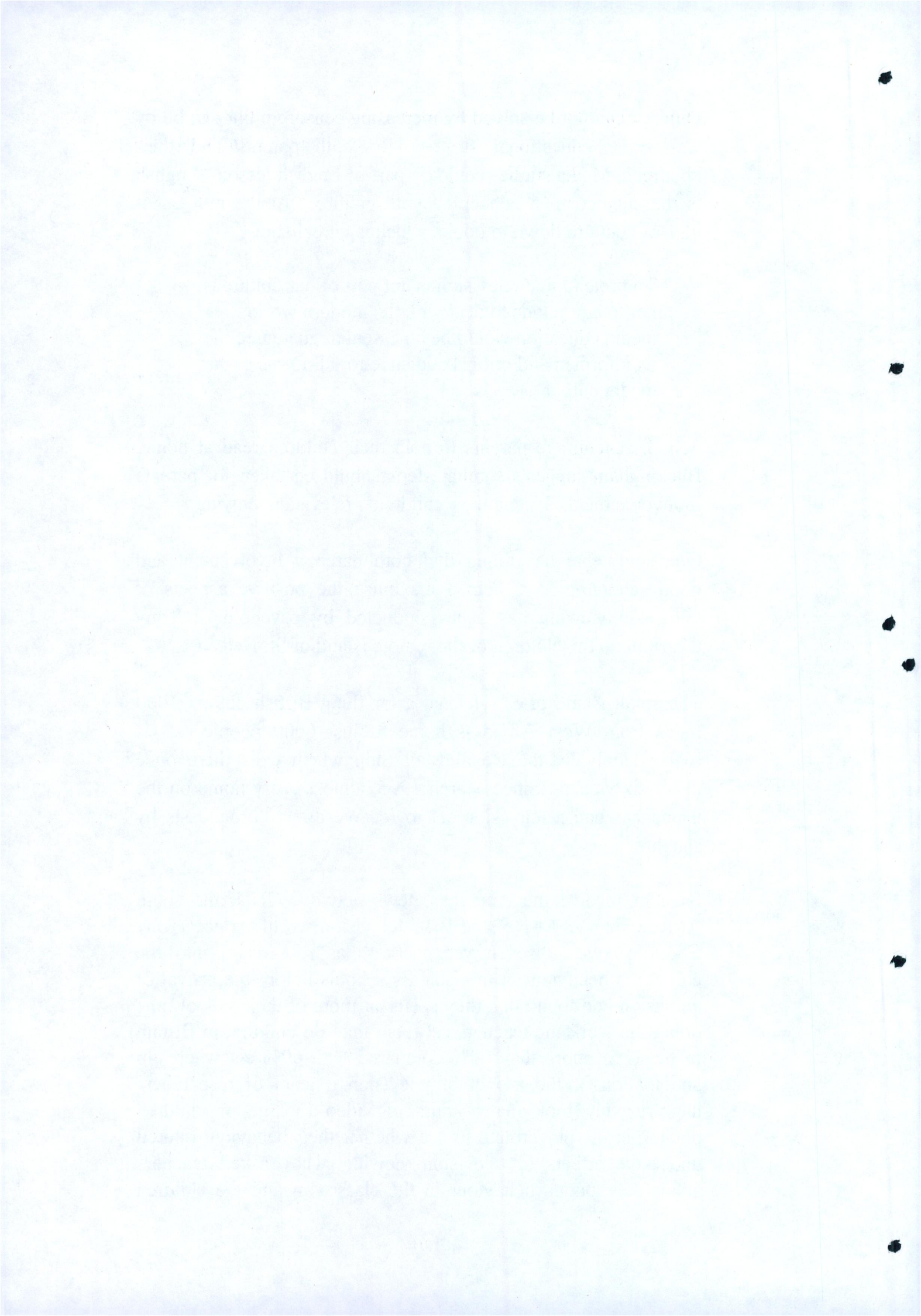
To pretend that television is not part of our culture is not to equip kids to deal with the modern world .... media education would be an essential guarantee of an informed and critical audience for all forms of media output. 10

Schools encourage parents to help their children read at home, Buckingham suggests similar steps should be taken for parents to involve themselves in their children's television viewing.

One study that has found that both parental involvement and good schooling have helped maximise the positive aspects of television viewing has been conducted by psychologist Tony Charlton on the children of the remote island of St. Helena.

The small island of St. Helena, a far flung British colony 1000 miles from West Africa is home to just 6000 people. It is reached only by the Royal Mail Ship which calls there once every six weeks. Since March 1995, almost every home on the island has had a television set to receive direct broadcasts by satellite.

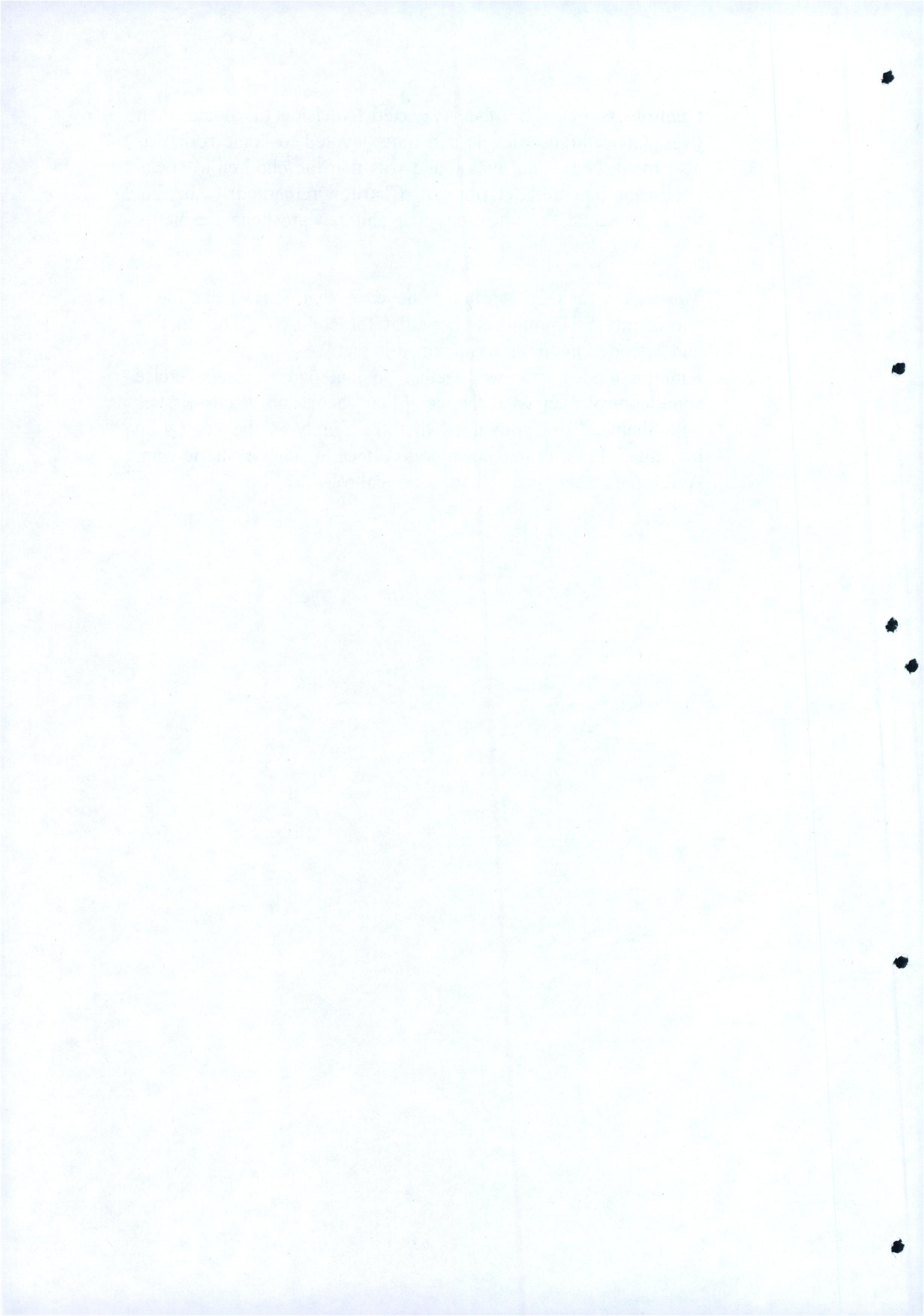
Islanders receive the American news network CNN, the South African channel M-Net and BBC television world service. Tony Charlton, over a seven year period has researched into the children's behaviour at the island's schools before the arrival of television and found that they spent far more of their school time doing the work the teachers set them than do children in Britain or the U.S., more than 90% compared with 60% elsewhere. In anticipation of the arrival of television a team of researchers unobtrusively took many hours of video footage of children playing in the playground to see whether their behaviour altered under the effects of television viewing. They asked teachers about their pupils' behaviour in the classroom and the children



themselves about how they expected television to change their lives. Concentration levels and time devoted to homework was also monitored. What was found was that the children's social behaviour had not deteriorated, Charlton remarked; "In fact there are tentative indications that children are behaving better now than before." <sup>11</sup>

The reason for this Charlton believed is that St. Helens has a particularly favourable environment for children. "The nuclear and extended family have remained intact." <sup>12</sup>

Families tended to view together so that parents can exercise some control over what their children watch and discuss issues with them. "I'm convinced that the family is the central in helping children to maximise good effects of television viewing. And I think schools also have a critical role." <sup>13</sup>

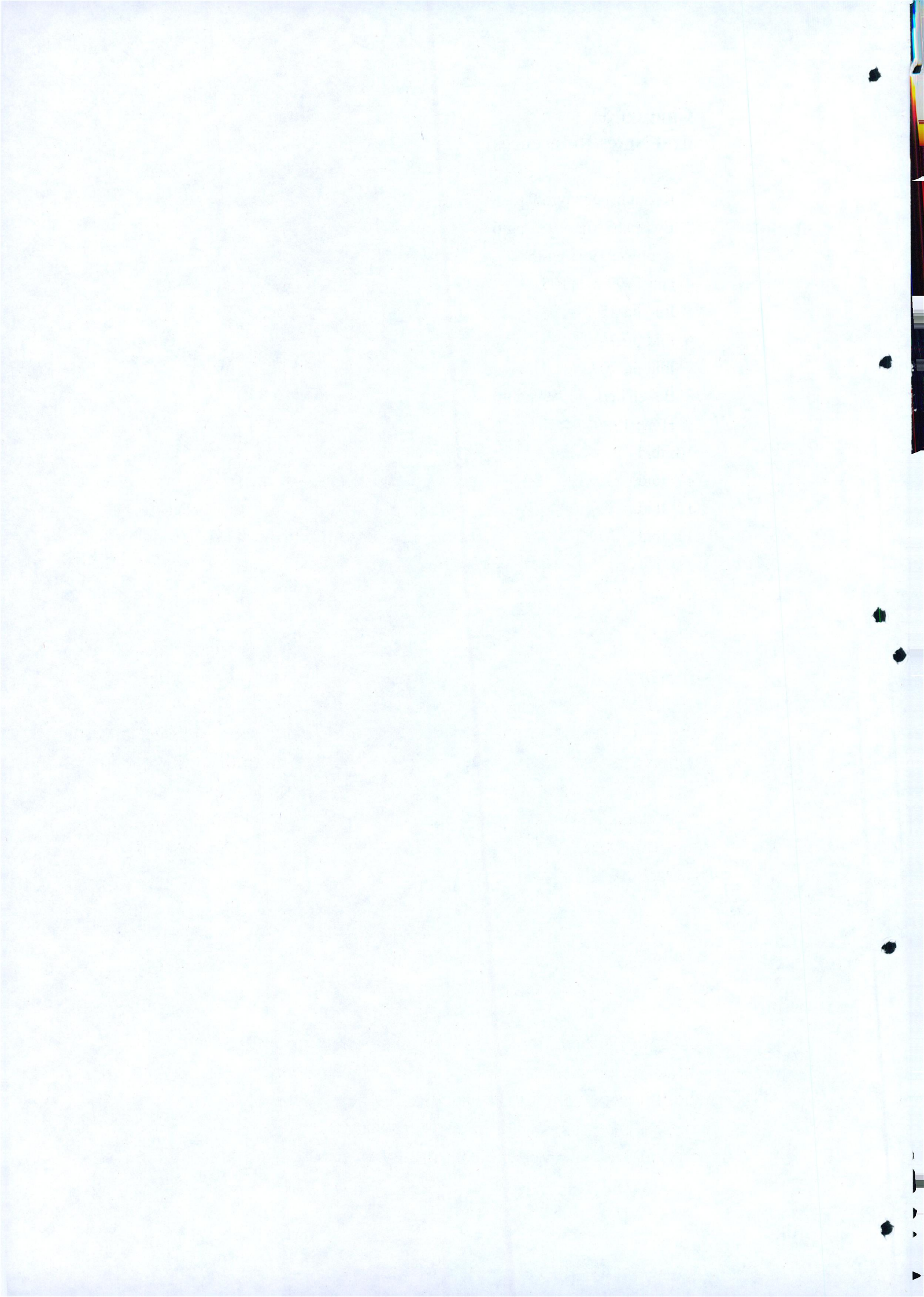


### **Chapter 3**

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1. Keough 1995 pg 293
2. Eysench, Nias 1987 pg 62
3. Aronson 1995 pg258
4. Hill 1997 pg 1105
5. Ibid pg 45
6. Ibid pg 76
7. Ibid pg 107
8. Baker/Petley 1997 pg 40
9. Hone 1996
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. Ibid





## Conclusion

This essay has attempted to demonstrate, across a wide time-scale and range of media, the remarkable prevalence and persistence of certain quite specific, especially the working classes adolescent. We started off in the mid 1850's and ended up in 1994, though, yet readers of some of the present day articles and attitudes discussed may have thought they were from the last century. Unfortunately little has changed in the way of attitudes, both to popular culture and to the working class.

The reason for this is the violence debate invokes deep-seated moral and political convictions which is rooted in people's fear of social change and their genuine fears for the future. The violence debate acts as a cipher for some very diverse, but none the less fundamental, anxieties - about the decline of the family and of organised religion, about the changing nature of literacy and popular culture.

This essay shows that neuter censorship nor blind denial of a forever changing culture are any kind of answer. Censorship violates the right to form or own decisions as adults and those who impose it have more to gain than the moral improvement of society cinema mirrors the violence, desire and conflict at the heart of own culture, how much simpler to condemn the reflection than try to solve the problem caused by mass unemployment, poor education, decay of communal life and the evaporation of hope.

One thing is for certain; as films continue to strive for more shocking and visceral ways to depict violence, the debate over its effects is likely to receive an extended.

Before I started my thesis, on the violence debate I had not made up my mind whether I would agree or disagree with the belief that screen violence causes violence. Today on completing it, I have reached the firm conclusion that screen violence does not cause real violence. The reason why people act violently are



vast and complex and to suggest that watching a violent film incites dismisses many other possible causes. Screen violence allows the viewer to experience fear, disgust and excitement in a safe environment. Real violence incites real violence.

Sara Hunter  
February 1999



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1. The first part of the document is a letter from the author to the editor of the journal. The letter discusses the author's interest in the topic and the reasons for writing the paper.

2. The second part of the document is the abstract of the paper. It provides a brief summary of the main findings and conclusions of the study.

3. The third part of the document is the introduction. It sets the context for the study and outlines the objectives and scope of the research.

4. The fourth part of the document is the literature review. It discusses the existing research on the topic and identifies the gaps that the current study aims to address.

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