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**Watching Men: Masculinity and Surveillance
in the American Serial Killer Film 1978 – 2008**

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the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Theatre, Film and Television Studies
School of Culture and Creative Arts
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Abstract

Masculinity and Surveillance in the American Serial Killer Film

This thesis explores the depiction of masculinity in the American serial killer film with a particular focus on the articulation of surveillance. I trace shifts and trends in films made between 1978 and 2008. Drawing on existing analyses of the serial killer panic, I argue that cinema swiftly assimilated FBI rhetoric which influenced the development of the serial killer as a cultural figure. In particular, I highlight the profiler as a crucial element of serial killer discourse. This thesis tracks the development of this figure within American cinema, investigates the influence of this character on portrayals of the serial killer, and argues that the killer and profiler are constructed as opposing agents of surveillance.

Using a chronological approach, I investigate the films shaped by this historical moment, splitting them into time-specific cycles in order to understand the cultural shifts affecting their development. I argue that a fascination with surveillance is a factor in the continuing power of the serial killer, exploring the different ways in which surveillance is thematised in the films. Highlighting the gendered nature of surveillance, I contend that the films support gender norms, with the killer often functioning as a violent example of the suppression of non-normative expressions of gendered identity. Including discussions of both mainstream and niche films, I show that the serial killer is distanced from normative masculinity in ways which allude to the Gothic and to gender, class and race prejudice, constructing the status of the serial killer as a special, inscrutable individual removed from power structures. The thesis argues that cinematic representations have embraced certain elements of FBI rhetoric, emphasising the exceptional surveillance skills of the profiler. As a result, the serial killer is frequently depicted as an extraordinary figure requiring elite expertise. I consider the ramifications of these portrayals and discuss the moments at which patriarchal power structures underlying this form of violence are both concealed and exposed.

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This thesis is dedicated to John T C Grant.

Author's Declaration

This thesis represents the original work of Jennifer Reburn, unless otherwise stated in the text. The research upon which it is based was carried out in Theatre, Film and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Dr Karen Boyle and Dr Ian Garwood during the period of October 2005 to September 2011.

Introduction

Masculinity, surveillance and the serial killer

Near the beginning of the seventh *Saw* film, *Saw 3D* (Kevin Greutert, 2010), shoppers gather round a shop window display in which three people are restrained. As a circular saw revs up and slices towards the victims, onlookers hold their mobile telephones aloft to record events; only a few call the police. One woman futilely slams her bag against the window as the victims scream; the crowd flinches as blood splatters onto the window. As intestines hit the floor, police officers arrive, forcing their way through a sea of transfixed citizens aiming their camera phones at the bloody display.

The public staging of the killings, helplessness of the highly visible victims, concealment of the killer and powerlessness of the watching, filming crowd highlights the self-conscious articulation of surveillance concepts in the knowingly-titled *Saw* franchise. While the manipulation of space and surveillance is particularly overt in these films, these ideas can be traced back to the 1888 Jack the Ripper case, in which the murderer of vulnerable women was represented as an almost omniscient, intriguing folk hero (Walkowitz, 1982). Many of the familiar aspects of serial killer mythology evident in the *Saw 3D* sequence - the valorisation of the theatrical, powerful yet invisible killer, the rendering of publicly displayed victims as anonymous and interchangeable, the panic and enthrallment provoked in the community - are evident in discourse surrounding the 1888 murders which continue to inspire fascination over a century later.

This thesis sprung from my interest in the continual reworking of the Ripper narrative and in particular the explosion of fascination with the serial killer figure evident in American culture throughout the 1980s and 1990s. I wondered why the ideas around the Ripper should persist despite considerable temporal and geographical distance. Recognising the near-simultaneous appearance of two celebrated yet very different cinematic killers - Henry (Michael Rooker) in the low budget, controversial *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (John McNaughton, 1986) and Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) in the glossy, mainstream, award-winning *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) - consolidated my desire to understand this figure and the reasons behind these contrasting

portrayals.¹ Further research indicated that these two films stem from a social panic in America in the 1980s in which the serial killer became a national figure of fear through which the FBI argued for greater resources (Jenkins, 1994; Schmid, 2005; Seltzer, 1998; Tithecott, 1997). It quickly became apparent that a blurring of fact and fiction is prevalent in both popular and academic approaches to the serial killer. In order to manage this issue, I have followed the method outlined by Cameron and Frazer, who acknowledge the constructedness of the serial killer figure. Although instances of repeat killing do occur in the real world, the term ‘serial killer’ is a discursive category informed less by real events than by a number of codes and conventions through which we understand this type of crime. In emphasising the mediated nature of texts associated with the serial killer, Cameron and Frazer affirm that all accounts surrounding real killers, from journalistic and true crime literature to police and psychiatric records and statements made by the killers themselves, “are not the ‘truth’; they are yet more constructed texts (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: xii). An example of the productive nature of serial killer discourse is the internationally recognised figure of Jack the Ripper. While the 1888 Whitechapel murders did happen, ‘Jack’ is a fictional invention which nevertheless continues to provide a framework for contemporary crimes (Boyle, 2005; Caputi, 1988). The acknowledgment that there is no pure, unmediated source of information, and that all accounts of serial killing are informed by existing discourse, prompts questions regarding the kinds of discourse which develops around this type of violence and the ideologies they promote.

In an effort to understand these ideological biases, I examined feminist responses to the serial killer which highlight the coding of this figure as gender and racially neutral, despite the overwhelmingly white and male status of both real and fictional killers (Boyle, 2005; Cameron and Frazer, 1987). Bringing these two concepts together, I began to understand the ways in which the serial killer is defined as the Other, distancing normative masculinity from the killer’s violence. Yet this Otherness is complicated by a motif running through much of serial killer discourse: the eerie doubling of the killer and investigator. This concept has been examined in existing literature (Rehling, 2009; Simpson, 2000), but this work fails to explain why modern articulations of the serial killer, which offer psychiatric, criminological and technological surveillance as ways to explain and catch the killer, should remain so tied to Gothic ideas such as the doppelgänger. Additionally, despite the FBI’s influence on serial killer discourse, the bureaucracy of the FBI is often criticised in cinematic representations; frequently, it is an individual agent, or even an investigating

¹ The US theatrical release of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* was delayed until 1990 due to issues over its violent content (Kimber, 2011).

figure unaffiliated with law enforcement, who identifies the killer. This discrepancy is unexplored in academic responses to the serial killer film. There is also a tendency to limit studies of the development of films featuring the serial killer/investigator double to 1991 onwards, with *The Silence of the Lambs* referenced as the beginning of this trend; only the earlier *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986), perhaps not coincidentally also based on a Thomas Harris novel, is also subject to significant scholarly scrutiny. Yet films from the late 1970s and 1980s share important themes with post-1991 films. Several of these earlier films have been studied in some depth as individual movies, but what is lacking is a sustained analysis which takes account of historical shifts and trends. Work on the serial killer film usually groups the films by topic or genre rather than date of release, limiting opportunities to understand the reasons behind specific developments. This thesis, then, emerged from an interest in depictions of masculinity, with a particular concern with the ways in which other aspects of identity - most importantly race and class - intersect with masculinity, and a related desire to investigate the impact of FBI efforts to establish control over the figure of the serial killer

My investigation of the key trends and themes of the serial killer film focuses on three key questions. Firstly, what is the relationship between the FBI's use of the serial killer and cinematic representations of this figure? Some of the most familiar images of the serial killer involve the tracking of the killer by the FBI, yet, as my comments above indicate, there is no straightforward correlation between the FBI's representation of real serial killer cases and fictional/fictionalised narratives. In particular, the profiler figure, the investigator charged with identifying and capturing active serial killers, is a significant character in many serial killer films, yet major differences are detectable between the FBI's definition of the profiler and cinematic versions of the character. Some of these - working alone rather than within a group, for example - can be related to conventions of popular cinema and contemporaneous biases towards lone heroes. Additionally, the tendency of cinematic profilers to rely on intuition over the bureaucratic practices of profiling established and heavily publicised by the FBI suggests that the modern, technologically advanced surveillance of the FBI is assimilated into older ideas relating to the Gothic double. Both the FBI profiler and the cinematic profiler are closely associated with surveillance, but this relationship takes quite different forms, with profiler terminology and procedures developed by the FBI given far less significance in films than in journalistic and true crime representations. The thesis explores cinematic depictions of the profiler while also considering those films in which no profiler appears.

Secondly, I explore how gender and related aspects of identity relate to the representation of the serial killer and profiler. The profiler's state-sanctioned role as the defender of the community against the perverse threat of the serial killer offers an insight into the type of person entrusted with such a role. However, as I have indicated, the profiler is rarely a straightforwardly heroic figure, with connections to the killer often suggested. State-sanctioned surveillance is thus linked to the sinister voyeurism of the killer. Additionally, the significance of the profiler figure is potentially complicated by those films which do not depict a profiler. Existing work has established that gendered, racial and class power structures are often maintained by popular culture (Dyer, 2002). The serial killer film has been critiqued as bolstering patriarchy, yet in some ways highlights the whiteness and maleness of serial violence (Rehling, 2009). Can these different positions be reconciled, and how does an emphasis on surveillance themes influence these readings? Why, despite their obvious differences, are the killers (and those searching for them) of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and *The Silence of the Lambs* linked closely to ideas around sight and surveillance?

My third key question considers the development of these films: what changes are detectable over time, and how do historical and industrial shifts influence the serial killer film? What relationship can be detected between the 1980s detective thriller featuring a serial killer - *Manhunter* or *The First Deadly Sin* (Brian G Hutton, 1980) - and the 2000s torture porn *Saw* franchise? What changes are apparent as technological advances and historical events modify the role of surveillance in everyday life and popular culture?

In exploring these issues, I take account of various bodies of literature. Studies of masculinity since the 1970s have made significant advances, with essentialist notions rejected and plural masculinities investigated in an effort to decentralise masculinity as a dominant identity (Baker, 2006; Segal, 1990; Tolson, 1987). I engage with feminist responses to serial killer discourse, recognising the strategies used to both distance the killer from normative masculinity and maintain surveillance of particular groups using the serial killer threat (Boyle, 2005; Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Caputi, 1990; Walkowitz, 1982; Ward Jouve, 1986). These two bodies of work often overlap - most obviously in the use of frontier rhetoric to theorise depictions of screen masculinity and which I use here to understand both the glorification of the independent male hero and the romanticisation of the serial killer (Jeffords, 1993; Slotkin, 1973; Tasker: 1995).

Surveillance theories have also become an increasingly important topic in recent years, with 9/11 putting renewed emphasis on an already controversial field, extending from debates over the implicitly patriarchal surveillance gaze to the proliferation of CCTV cameras and dataveillance (Bartky, 2003; Foucault, 1991; Levin, 2002; Lyon, 2006; Weibel, 2002). Taking Foucault's conception of the panopticon as a model, I focus on the depiction of sight and the establishment of power through the look, engage with the concept of panoptical surveillance as a way of understanding institutionalised surveillance, and discuss the killer's own application of surveillance, both visual and his quasi-panoptical scrutiny of the population.

Using existing work on the portrayal of sight in the horror/thriller narrative (Badley, 1995; Clover, 1992), the figure of the serial killer in popular culture (Jenkins, 1994; Seltzer, 1998; Tithecott, 1997), and surveillance theory (Foucault, 1991; Lyon, 2006), as well as original research via textual analysis, this thesis explores how contemporary concerns regarding the serial killer and surveillance have coincided. Recognising the upsurge in anxieties relating to the ubiquity of surveillance and its potential misuse, I suggest that these fears find an outlet in the serial killer film, which also offers fantasies of transcendence and control through surveillance.

My focus on Foucauldian concepts of surveillance is a fairly novel approach for an investigation of films more often interrogated within a psychoanalytic framework. These films emphasise vision, violence and gender, and several have already been subject to psychoanalytic-based readings (Badley, 1995; Fischer and Landy, 1987; Schneider, 2004).² However, my interest in the serial killer figure has led me to a body of literature which has not been incorporated into film studies to the same extent as psychoanalytic theory. This writing highlights the discursive nature of the serial killer, acknowledging the status of the figure as a real-world phenomenon which is only accessible through representation. In particular, the work of Deborah Cameron and Elizabeth Frazer (1987), Jane Caputi (1988) and Mark Seltzer (1998) offers a framework for comprehending film as one aspect of this discourse. This approach offers a way in which to connect cinematic portrayals of the serial killer to other representations of this figure. This tactic is particularly useful in dealing with the profiler figure, as this character is significant in cinematic and fictional

² Most notably, a number of authors have explored from a feminist, psychoanalytic perspective the self-conscious allusions to sight and voyeurism in *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, 1960), in which a killer films his murders (Clover, 1992; Williams, 1984). With its focus on a killer traumatised by the intrusive monitoring of his psychiatrist father, *Peeping Tom* would be an interesting film to consider within the model used here. However, it emerges from a different context than the cycles I explore in this thesis.

narratives as well as real world-based accounts. Furthermore, Foucault's work offers constructive insights for this area of study, including a template for the serial killer figure in the nineteenth century dangerous individual and a model for surveillance cultures in the panopticon. These aspects allow me to explore the films primarily as *serial killer* narratives, and to focus on the concept of the killer as an agent of surveillance, without losing sight of the aspects specific to their cinematic form.

Although I discuss my selection of films in greater detail in chapter two, it is worth reviewing my criteria before I outline the structure of the thesis in the next section. The time period under analysis begins in 1978, in order to trace the influence of the FBI's control of the serial killer problem which became apparent at this point, and ends in 2008, by which time a number of significant changes are evident. The thirty-year period provides a manageable quantity of films whilst allowing for enough time and space to investigate the films thoroughly. The number of films featuring a serial killer between 1978 and 2008 is substantial so I have focused on four groupings, aiming to understand their development and the ways in which they articulate the key themes of masculinity and surveillance. Rather than approaching these categories as genres, I have instead defined these four bodies of films as cycles, in order to take account of the time-specific nature of the trends I discuss. Although the serial killer film has been referred to as a sub-genre of the thriller or horror genre, or even a cohesive genre itself, the character is not limited to a specific genre. Furthermore, genres are not temporally specific, though their popularity can rise and wane through time (Place, 1998: 50). Another potential term which would suggest these films' appearance at a particular historical moment is 'movement', which "indicates a similarly homogenous cultural attitude, and is only possible within an isolated time period, in a particular time period, and in a particular place" (Place, 1998: 50). However, this term is also indicative of analogous visual styles, such as that associated with film noir (Place, 1998: 50; Read: 2000: 242). Each grouping discussed here, in contrast, is connected by similar narrative structures and character depictions rather than visual modes.

My use of the term cycle is aligned with that of Steve Neale and Jacinda Read, both of whom highlight the historical specificity of this label. Neale states that 'cycle' normally refers to "groups of films made within a specific and limited time-span" (2000: 9). Examples range from the screwball cycle of the 1930s (2000: 70) to the "pro-Indian westerns" of the late 1960s (2000: 156). Read uses the term to define the rape-revenge films she traces from 1970s low-budget horror to 1990s neo-noir which lack coherent iconography: these films share a "narrative structure which [...] has produced a historically

specific but generically diverse cycle of films” (Read, 2000: 241). Neale’s use of the term is somewhat tighter than Read’s, the screwball and pro-Indian western being limited to a decade or even just a few years. Yet the sense of a particular set of conventions building quickly into a body of similar films before petering out is apparent in the work of both Neale and Read, making the cycle the most appropriate model for my analyses here. Comprehending a body of films as a cycle suggests a sense of trajectory, allowing me to acknowledge the different functions these films perform while recognising both the historical specificity of their developments and their evolution as discrete groups.

Although several individual films have been subject to scholarly attention, only two of the cycles discussed here have been examined in significant detail. The first cycle, beginning in 1978 and petering out in the 2000s, dominates the first two decades under investigation. I have defined this cycle as the profiler film due to its focus on a profiler figure as a protagonist searching for the killer, and have isolated various trends shaping its development. The profiler film incorporates elements of various genres, particularly the thriller and horror genres, and has been variously described as a police procedural, psychological thriller and detective film. I demonstrate that despite generic differences, the profiler film is a coherent cycle connected by similar narratives and characterisations. The next cycle, the portrait film, has not been explored academically; they are a fairly small body of films appealing to a niche audience and reject profiler conventions. The remaining cycles also rework these traditions. The protagonist-killer film undermines the authority of the profiler figure, retaining the goal-oriented thriller structure of the profiler film but frequently depicting the killer as victorious and as skilled a profiler as his nemesis. While little work is available on the protagonist-killer film and this thesis represents the first identification of the cycle, there is a significant amount of journalistic and academic material available on the final cycle, the torture porn film, which frequently depicts a serial killer. Like the protagonist-killer film with which it coincides, the torture porn film often portrays a successful killer able to outwit the profiler.

Torture porn is the only cycle to have been previously recognised as a coherent body of films. Originally defined by a journalist in order to censure the level and type of violence depicted in these films (Edelstein, 2006), the term has entered academic usage (Boyle , 2009; Huntley, 2007; Lockwood, 2009; Murray, 2008; Tziallas, 2010) and I employ it here as my understanding of this group of films concurs with the definition articulated in existing scholarly literature. However, while the terms profiler, portrait and protagonist-killer refer to the narrative conventions demonstrated by the respective films, the label

torture porn suggests moral and aesthetic judgments which relate to ideas of taste and assumptions around the kinds of audiences drawn to these films and the pleasures they derive from them. It is inappropriate to ignore torture porn's original context, particularly as many academic responses refer to these films' controversial depiction of violence. Accordingly, I discuss the term in chapter six, at which point I consider the significance of the 'social commentary' defence frequently cited in literature investigating torture porn. My positioning of torture porn within a wider analysis of serial killer cinema offers a new perspective of this trend which takes account of its connections to the other cycles.

Each of these cycles articulates the key themes of masculinity and surveillance. In the profiler film, the profiler and killer are depicted as opposing agents of surveillance. Existing work notes the diversity of racial and gender identities which populate the profiler role, and argues that shifting portrayals of this gifted individual negotiate cultural changes (Rehling, 2009). The portrait film, which refers explicitly to real instances of serial killing, conversely portrays the killer without any reassuringly capable profiler, presenting a world in which surveillance is disturbingly absent, while the protagonist-killer and torture porn films both tend to depict a profiler who fails to catch the killer. In these later cycles, the killer frequently inhabits the role of profiler, complicating the depiction of surveillance.

My focus on masculinity is deeply intertwined with the surveillance theme as, although debates around cinematic portrayals of masculinity have proliferated over the last few decades, there is little writing connecting this work to the growing discussions around surveillance. I therefore direct my attention towards understanding the depiction of power through surveillance, with a particular focus on the gendering of power and surveillance skills. Although I am conscious of the patriarchal power structures inherent in the society (and the industry) from which the films stem, I am also aware that some of the films offer alternative visions of gender and am careful to consider the extent to which they may reveal rather than mimic existing inequalities.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is ordered chronologically in order to trace the development of these films and examine their historical influences. The first chapter reviews relevant literature: feminist analyses of the serial killer figure, work tackling the cultural meaning of the serial killer, screen gender studies and responses to surveillance theory. It asserts the constructedness of

the serial killer figure, explores the specific meanings and uses of this figure in national and temporal contexts, and examines the different ways in which I use the term surveillance.

Chapter two provides an overview of the films on which I focus. Beginning with an explanation of my criteria for inclusion, the chapter defines the bodies of films I have identified. I account for my specialised use of the term profiler and set out the conventions and trends which are explored in greater detail in the analysis chapters. I discuss several related trends, such as the growth of the forensic drama, torture porn and the found footage film, which have influenced (and been influenced by) the films studied here. This chapter makes reference to table one, which illustrates major conventions and shifts by listing the films chronologically and indicating their settings, the gender, race and class of killers, profilers and victims, and the killer's motive and method of killing.

The remaining chapters examine four significant developments in the serial killer film. Each chapter begins with a discussion of historical and industrial trends influencing the films under investigation before embarking on textual analysis of one or two films which are representative of the shifts explored.

These analysis chapters can be grouped into two sections, with chapters three and four focusing on the growth of the profiler film, and chapters five and six tracing the developments as this cycle fades. Chapter three focuses on the first decade of the profiler film, using the 1980s films to establish my understanding of the profiler figure in film as a particularly gifted agent of surveillance. In these early films, the profiler is usually a white man whose relationship with the killer exposes their troubling similarities. This chapter explores the extent to which the films position white masculinity as inherently violent, and the ways in which the films ultimately recuperate normative masculinity. The profiler is positioned as an agent of surveillance, often working from within or alongside an institution which monitors the population, but when traditional surveillance methods fail, he resorts to intuition and instinct. The chapter argues that the 1980s profiler film is influenced by the serial killer 'panic' which developed in America during the decade, yet does not locate law enforcement as a defence, instead depicting the lone profiler as the only protection from the killer. The chapter contends that the 1980s profiler film positions the killer and profiler as opposing agents of surveillance, connecting the specific skills of the killer and those who combat him to visual and panoptical surveillance.

Chapter four follows the profiler film into the 1990s, finding that while the 1980s model is still prevalent in this later decade, a new type appears as the role is opened up to women and non-white men. As others have argued, these new profilers are notable for their distance from aggression and violence, acknowledging to a limited extent the whiteness and maleness of serial violence (Dyer, 1999; Rehling, 2009). The surveillance skills of these profilers are enhanced by a new focus on visual surveillance through the extensive depiction of the crime scene. At the same time, the films portray increasingly intelligent and sometimes victorious killers. This chapter also notes the influence on casting, marketing and aesthetics of the bigger budgets behind the 1990s films in the wake of the success of *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Chapter five shifts attention from the profiler movie to the portrait film, a new grouping I have identified which is harder to position generically and which has not been studied before. I define this group, explore its developments and influences and argue that although it is much smaller in terms of both numbers and impact it offers a new way of understanding the profiler film by avoiding many of the profiler's conventions, often announcing its difference in its marketing. The portrait film's existence points to a desire to explore the serial killer figure without the reassuringly pleasurable patterns of the goal-orientated investigative profiler film (Dyer, 1997). These films demonstrate disorientating, defamiliarising techniques quite different from mainstream film. I suggest that these movies critique conventional representations of violence, both in the profiler film and in wider cinema. I also consider how these films articulate my key themes, questioning whether their formal innovations are reflected in their attitudes to gender.

The final chapter studies developments in the 2000s, finding that two main shifts alter the serial killer film quite significantly. The protagonist-killer cycle depicts the killer as the main character in mainstream, medium to high budget releases. The killer is skilled in profiling and surveillance, reinforcing the concept of surveillance as offering authority while shifting the role of investigator from law abiding characters to the serial killer. Meanwhile, the growth of torture porn similarly positions the killer as superior to the profiler, yet narratively and aesthetically is located within the horror genre. This chapter examines these developments, focusing on aspects these films share but also acknowledging their opposing generic positionings. I find that these two groups of films indicate contemporary concerns with the ubiquity of surveillance while suggesting that the exaggerated omnipotence of the killer reveals that this figure is now a relatively 'safe' fear,

a development that can be traced to historical events such as the terrorism threat, the familiarity of the figure and the exhaustion of the profiler film.

In systematising groups of films, I focus on historical shifts during a time period which saw developments significant to my key themes. My work here offers an interpretation of the 1980s serial killer films which has been lacking in comparison to the material available on the 1990s films. By understanding these films as a coherent cycle, the success of the serial killer thriller in the 1990s can be contextualised. My study of the 1980s films also offers analysis of a depiction of masculinity which has links to, but does not entirely fit, the existing models of 1980s screen masculinity such as the action hero, the beleaguered yuppie and the neo-noir victim (Gates, 2006; Grant, 2004; Jeffords, 1994). Similarly, the portrait film offers an intriguing alternative to the mainstream profiler film which flags up the extent to which the serial killer figure has become relatively anodyne. The portrait cycle's delineation of real killers who lack the intelligence and charisma of contemporaneous profiler film antagonists exposes the fantastical attributes of the profiler film killers and suggests a desire to view alternative depictions.

The historicising of the serial killer film is useful in developing an understanding of the portrait cycle as one form of the post-profiler film. It is not just relevant social and cultural shifts which can explain certain changes; it is also important to consider the effect of industrial developments such as the subversion of familiar conventions. The characterisation of the killer as an expert profiler, for example, is evident in earlier serial killer discourse but its resurgence in the 2000s is likely to be related to efforts to provide a 'twist' on established traditions. Similarly, the merging of horror and profiler conventions in torture porn may be designed to spice up a familiar formula with new, controversial aesthetic and generic motifs.

The most significant aspect of my work here, though, is my repositioning of surveillance themes within a context which recognises the different races, genders and class origins of characters featured in the films. Taking Rehling's emphasis on the whiteness and maleness of serial killing as a starting point, I demonstrate the continued privileging of white, heterosexual, middle class masculinity while showing that some oppositional reading is possible. *Saw 3D* does not highlight the gender, class or racial status of any character. The focus is very much on the spectacle of surveillance and violence, with the killer's selection of victims related to his moralistic codes. His scrutinising of society and his manipulation of novice killers who appear throughout the franchise is linked neither to his gender nor to

the associated aspects of his identity which allow him to monitor and punish others in this way. That a white, wealthy doctor is revealed to be a novice killer in *Saw 3D* alludes to ideas around power and the monitoring of the body yet this murderer's profession, class and gender are distanced from his violent disciplining of victims. I argue that while these films offer us both the pleasurable and the anxiety-provoking experiences associated with surveillance, they rely on various strategies to protect the privileged status of their killers from scrutiny.

Chapter One

Literature Review: Scrutinising the Serial Killer

Introduction

The last few decades have seen major developments in key areas relating to this thesis. The serial killer's strikingly abundant presence in Western culture has been examined from various perspectives. Meanwhile, masculinity has become an increasingly debated concept and historical events have imparted a new relevance to issues surrounding surveillance. This chapter explores this existing material, beginning with a discussion of academic responses to the serial killer figure in which I pay particular attention to gender. I then consider how this work relates to wider issues around cinematic depictions of masculinity, before ending this chapter with a section exploring academic responses to surveillance themes.

The majority of my sources are examples of academic work; however, it is the nature of my object of study that other sources are also relevant. While I ground my argument in critically acknowledged material, I also refer to popular work – true crime literature, journalism, web forums – to provide context. However, non-academic work is identified as such throughout and this material is not given the intellectual weight of academic sources.

Another point to make clear is my response to the overlap in representation between 'real' and fictional killers. As the next section notes, the boundaries between reality and fiction are porous in serial killer discourse; it is this coding of both real and fictitious cases within existing narratives which helps afford the figure such power (Boyle, 2005; Caputi, 1990; Walkowitz, 1982). Therefore, and again following earlier writers, I refer to both real and fictional killers while indicating the factual basis or otherwise of each example, in order to acknowledge that even real instances of repeat murder are only available to us through representation. Additionally, although my topic of investigation is serial killer *film*, cinema can never be isolated from wider culture. Socio-historical context is particularly relevant in discussions of popular cinema, a category into which many of the films examined here fall (Rehling 2009: 13). My argument relies on an understanding of the serial killer as a cultural construction, highlighting the intersection of cinema, different media and 'reality'.

My aim is also to understand the serial killer film through the defining of several temporally-specific cycles, which I outline in the next chapter. This chapter concentrates on wider cultural concepts of the serial killer, with the next chapter providing greater focus on cinematic representations. Additionally, although I highlight the concept of the serial killer as an American phenomenon, my references to serial killer discourse include British examples, as a number of important feminist responses focus on British killers.

The Serial Killer

This section explores three main debates around the serial killer, beginning with the constructed nature of this figure before working through the ways in which the killer is related to ideas of self-creation and transcendence. I then consider the developments of the last three decades, on which the thesis focuses. This time period has seen a vast increase in the presence of the serial killer in culture, in particular the FBI taking ownership of the threat and countering it with the profiler. A great deal of critical work focuses on the FBI's construction of the killer, identifying the different ideological uses of the serial killer and the power structures concealed by dominant representations, many of which refer to narratives which grew around the mythical figure of Jack the Ripper. Throughout this section I consider how this work investigates power structures, paying particular attention to gender, race and class issues which are picked up in the next section, on cinematic masculinity.

The Serial Killer as Discursive Category

Academic positioning of the serial killer as a discursive category removes this figure from the essentialist context insisted upon in true crime literature and fictional representations. Our understanding of repeat murderers is bound by existing discourse, for which the unidentified, internationally famous Jack the Ripper serves as a "prototype" (Walkowitz, 1982; Ward Jouve, 1986). As I have stressed, although the 1888 murders were real, 'Jack' is a fictional invention, and the mythical status of this figure underlines our inability to understand the serial killer other than through discourse. All the material relating to serial murder, including the murderer's own account, are constructed texts which are developed within existing representation (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: xii). Each new example is inserted into existing discourse, flattening out differences between each case and providing

a ready-made formula for understanding new incidents of serial murder. Various pre-existing motifs are mobilised to offer frameworks within which we understand each new instance of serial murder, each one tending to focus on the murderer as object of interest (Knox, 1998: 52). Meaning is often constructed through a tracing of the killer's life story in an attempt to explain the crime through his pathology; frequently, this process involves analysis of the killer's own representation of his crimes, offering him "authorial status" (Knox, 1998: 59). Our dependence on discourse is apparent from the immediate 'narrativisation' of the Ripper murders, in which the growing mass media can be seen to communicate details of the murders through Gothic and melodramatic conventions which blur fact and fiction (Walkowitz, 1982: 546).

The continuing mystery of Jack the Ripper's identity has helped ensure that the 1888 crimes remain archetypal. The impossibility of decisively identifying the killer ensures the maintenance of a commercial industry including true literature, websites, documentaries, tourist walks and souvenirs in modern Whitechapel as well as fictionalised versions of the crimes in various media (Boyle, 2005; Harrison, 1999; Jakubowski and Braund, 1999). Without a known name and body, the Ripper is open to re-interpretation and, more significantly, as a category for future crimes. In modern culture, the Ripper exists outwith his historical context, taking on a mythic status which is reinforced with every fictional reworking of the murders (Caputi, 1990; Walkowitz, 1982). It is interesting that despite strong associations between the Ripper and a foggy, atmospheric Whitechapel, he is often removed from this historical context either by being recast as a time traveller or by 'inspiring' later killers. His status not as an individual but as "an outline, a repository, a *type*" (Caputi, 1988: 14; Caputi's emphasis) illustrates the mythic nature of the serial killer which conceals historical particularities (Walkowitz, 1982) and power structures which influence the form violence takes (Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Caputi, 1990).

The recurrence of this 'type' is evident in the use of 'Ripper' to describe later real killers, even after their identity is established. The crimes eventually attributed to Peter Sutcliffe were quickly identified as the responsibility of the 'Yorkshire Ripper', and remain known by that nickname: thirty years later, news stories detailing his efforts to appeal his sentence still refer to Sutcliffe in this way ("Yorkshire Ripper Loses Appeal Over 'Whole Life' Term", BBC News, 2011). While there are undoubtedly similarities between the 1888 Whitechapel murders and those in 1970s Yorkshire (the apparent targeting of prostitutes, the sense of community panic, the mutilation of bodies), the overt linking of these killers suggests a need to contain new crimes within existing models. This convention is further

demonstrated by the news coverage of the Stephen Griffiths murders in Bradford in 2010, which repeatedly refers to Griffiths' similarity to, and alleged fascination with, Sutcliffe. The day after Griffiths' arrest, tabloid newspaper *The Sun* cites his university research of serial killers before claiming that one victim was killed "outside the home of the Yorkshire Ripper". Subtitled "New Yorkshire Ripper", the story features a map pinpointing the last known locations of Griffiths' (then alleged) victims as well as the murder sites of several of Sutcliffe's victims. The homes of Sutcliffe and Griffiths are also marked to highlight their proximity ("deep in the heartland of Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe"), and a paragraph inset within the main story describes the Yorkshire Ripper case and pictures Sutcliffe and three of his victims (Taylor, 2010).

The article frames the new crimes within the well-known Yorkshire Ripper case, detailing aspects unique to Griffiths' crimes while contextualising this information through reference to Sutcliffe. It follows convention in concealing certain aspects of the crime. Like Sutcliffe, Griffiths is positioned as an anomaly, an aberrant individual who offers an interesting psychiatric case study but whose acts reveal nothing about 'normal' men or attitudes to gender. That both killers are men who attacked prostitutes remains unspoken, as if this connection does not require explanation. The targeting of female prostitutes links both later killers to Jack the Ripper yet this fact is presented as typical rather than revealing of any gendered hierarchy. The coverage follows convention by naturalising male aggression, implicitly affirming the status of the prostitute as the site of sex and sin while ignoring patriarchal structures which form the foundation of prostitution, and by distancing the killer from normative masculinity by emphasising the bizarre and disturbing aspects of this particular crime (Boyle, 2005; Tatar, 1995: 39; Ward Jouve, 1986).

The discursive nature of serial killing is illustrated by Griffiths' highly publicised first court appearance, at which he gave his name as "the crossbow cannibal", the nickname invented by tabloid newspapers to describe him. Throughout the coverage, the media repeatedly underlines the killer's aberrance - which makes him all the more suited to the familiar category of serial killer - by describing him as obsessed with and 'inspired' by earlier killers. In an article focusing on Griffiths' use of his media nickname, his self-identification with the lurid tabloid phrase in the formal setting of the court is linked to his study of killers: "when the criminology student was asked to confirm his name he said 'the crossbow cannibal'" ("The Crossbow Cannibal", *The Sun*, 2010). The discursive nature of the category serial killer, then, opens up the typology to individuals, offering an identity

to adopt (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: xiii; Seltzer, 1998: 4). In Griffith's case, his framing of his own crimes within their media representation is startlingly swift.

The self-consciousness of this phenomenon is noted by tabloid articles relating the Griffiths story in a way which pathologizes the killer, attributing his crimes to individual aberration. References to a "bizarre website" on which Griffiths uses the name "Ven Pariah" and claims to be part demon refer to the outsider status and splitting of identity familiar in serial killer discourse. Again, his interest in serial killing is offered as proof of his pathology. His academic interests are juxtaposed with his adoption of an internet "doppelgänger" - the "university researcher's sinister alter ego" (Taylor, 2010: 5) - which is removed from its web context (pseudonyms are common online) and positioned within a tradition of internal doubling stemming from the Gothic tradition which provided a way for Victorian Britain to understand the crimes attributed to Jack the Ripper (Schmid, 2005; Tithecott, 1997; Walkowitz, 1982). In the context suggested by media reaction to Griffiths' 'doppelgänger', serial killing appears to be a way to create a new identity, and this idea is itself familiar from other examples of serial killer discourse.

The Serial Killer and Selfhood

Debates are ongoing as to the exact nature of this self-creation/identification. The concept of killing for celebrity has been advanced by fictional texts (the films *The January Man* (Pat O'Connor, 1989), *The Mean Season* (Philip Borsos, 1985) and *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994)) and in journalistic responses to real serial killers, particularly in cases in which the killer apparently communicates with the press - another phenomenon traceable to the original Ripper. These narratives hint at the constructedness of the serial killer by suggesting that individual killers follow existing formulae; the transformative potential of serial murder is itself a familiar element of serial killer narratives.

An example of this phenomenon is the case of Dennis Rader, a killer active in Wichita between 1974 and 1991. His murders were accompanied by letters to media outlets in which he identified himself as 'BTK', complained of a lack of publicity and referred to his research of his own 'type'. His own behaviour was apparently regulated by this research. In a letter he sent to a television news programme while still at large, he states: "since sex

criminals do not change their M.O. or by nature cannot do so, I will not change mine”.³ Rader’s crimes have been described as “rhetorically based acts” (Gibson, 2006: 2), his ability as a “successful media relations practitioner” inextricable from his murders (Gibson, 2006: 9). Journalistic articles position Rader with other killers who “gave themselves a nickname and had the same exhibitionist craving for publicity” (Morris, 2005: 2). While there is evidence that some real killers enjoy their fame, it is impossible to determine whether celebrity is a defining factor, despite the longevity of the concept of the fame-obsessed killer - from Jack the Ripper in Victorian London to Peter Kürten in Weimar Germany and beyond (Schmid, 2005; Tatar, 1995). What is important to this thesis is that this concept runs through serial killer discourse, reinforcing the connection between serial killing and the establishment of a new identity.

The concept of personal transcendence and transformation through murder is evident in the focus on the killer in the vast majority of serial killer discourse; in true crime, journalism and fictional representations, victims remain unremarkable. Dyer attributes this focus on the killer to various factors: a desire to avoid acknowledging the suffering of victims in order to enjoy the “entertainment” of real and fictitious serial killer narratives; the fact they only attract interest through their deaths, making their lives relatively insignificant; victims often come from marginalised segments of society (prostitutes, runaways) who rarely draw interest and in any case the defining element of these narratives is their *seriality*, making individual victims less relevant (Dyer, 2002: 115-6). Understanding this seriality as an example of pathological collection, Knox argues that the victims are “abstracted” from their domestic and familial environment, “removed from the utility of work and the context of sociality” (Knox, 2003: 290). Since serial killing is understood as the killing of strangers by an irrational ‘motiveless’ murderer, traditional methods of detection which link the victim and killer via motive and personal or professional relationships are unhelpful (Stratton, 1996: 85).

Instead, attention focuses on the shared aspect of the victims which gives their deaths meaning to their killer and to wider society: “the collector simultaneously transforms himself from a killer into [...] a *serial* killer, someone with whom the names, the identities, and even the physical relics of the victims will always be associated” (Knox, 2003: 299).⁴

³ Rader’s efforts to understand his crimes within existing criminological frameworks is also apparent in his trial allocation, during which he refers to theories regarding sexually motivated murders while describing his own killings. The documentary film *I Survived BTK* (Marc Levitz, 2010) includes excerpts of this allocation.

⁴ That serial killing is somehow different from single murders is apparent from fictional stories in which one individual killing is ‘hidden’ within a faked series. Television detective series *The Mentalist* (CBS, 2008 - ;

The significance of this concept is evident in the array of fact-based and fictional material which highlights the transformative potential of serial killing, from the popular idea of the killer as artist (Schneider, 2004: 113; Tatar, 1995: 4) to self-conscious efforts to forge an identity through killing evident in the communication with the media from killers/hoaxers identifying with killers, from Jack the Ripper to Dennis Rader. Additionally, an emphasis on the transformative potential of serial killing focuses attention on the killer, and in particular on the significance of the most violent examples: mutilation, decapitation, necrophilia and cannibalism all reinforce the killer's ultimate, fatal control of his victims (Knox, 2003: 295). The killer is the defining factor, his crimes understood as examples of psychological deviancy or romanticised rebellion, both of which distance the killer from the overwhelmingly male origins of serial killing (Cameron and Frazer, 1987).

Cameron and Frazer argue against focusing on misogyny, particularly as not all victims are women. Instead, they suggest that a variety of cultural representations construct murder as "an act of self-affirmation" in which the male killer targets those he desires (1987: 166-7). The construction of gender in Western culture ensures that masculinity is central: "subjectivity is at the heart of men's existence, whereas women's subject status is constantly being negated" (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: 168). Dyer points out that while gay killers are known to target men, there are no accounts of lesbian killers targeting women, suggesting that sexually motivated crimes are a masculine phenomenon (Dyer, 2002: 114). This asymmetry regarding gender and subjectivity explains why perpetrators of violence are overwhelmingly male and makes overt the cultural associations between murder and the figure of the (male) romanticised rebel which goes some way to explaining fascination with the serial killer. Associated ideas of transgression and transcendence, and the notion of murder as freeing and natural, at least to the killer, goes back as far as the eighteenth century (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: 67). Evidence of the aggrandisement and glorification of the serial killer is provided by reactions to recent real killers, who often enjoy a "folk hero status" (Boyle, 2005: 62). In particular, the contemporary (and continuing) celebration of the rapist and murderer Ted Bundy alludes to admired mythic (and male) figures associated with populist revolt and the defiance of authoritarian legal and social codes, such as Robin Hood and Billy the Kid (Caputi, 1990: 5). Later chapters in this thesis will show that cinematic representations also tap into this idea of the (anti-) heroic, admirably individualistic killer.

series one, episode one: "Pilot") and *Castle* (ABC, 2009 - ; series one, episode one: "Flowers for Your Grave") both depict a discrete murder with a 'traditional' motive (greed in both cases) disguised as part of a series, drawing attention away from the real culprit and motive.

Describing the serial killer as an idealisation of “radical selfhood”, a “continuation of the male heroes and antiheroes of, say, the western, of the road movie, of the Gothic, of chivalry”, Tithecott shows the killer to be bound up with gendered narratives of isolation, rebellion and self-invention (1997: 174). These ideas recur in the accounts of real killers, from the self-aggrandising of Griffiths and Rader to the British murderer Ian Brady’s romanticisation of other killers. Writing on the execution of Carl Panzram, who himself wrote about his killings (Gaddis and Long, 2002), Brady constructs Panzram as a radical with a venerable disregard for social convention and concerns: “I laugh with delight even now at Panzram’s magnificent final performance on earth, full of tremendous insolence and spirit.” Panzram’s death is given a quasi-mystical dimension: “the world became a duller place. A great spirit had flown. A star had been extinguished. The air seemed subdued” (Brady, 2001: 252). This emphasis on transcendence and identity is frequently linked to aspects of modern life such as the anonymity of the city, alienation and the objectification of individuals in a society focused on mass consumption (Dyer, 1997; Newitz, 1999). Seltzer links the serial killer to shifts in understandings of identity resulting from the technologization of society, or “machine culture”. The serial killer, he argues, experiences identity, “his own and others, as a matter of numbers, kinds, types and as a matter of simulation and likeness” (1998: 4). Threatened by a sense of emptiness and blankness of the self, the killer “copies and simulates others” (1998: 20, fulfilling the stereotype of the “abnormally normal” killer who blends in to society (1998: 106).

This ability to disappear into the crowd is related by Nicola Rehling to the white male killer’s racial and gender status which, she contends, enjoys a neutral status as entirely “ordinary” but is also “haunted by the anxiety that it is a vacuous identity” (2009: 1). This neutrality helps the white male killer to escape detection but is also responsible for “a rather depleted, empty identity which, in the serial killer, produces a chain of violent acts intent on attaining a form of subjectivity” (2009: 227). Again, serial killing is closely intertwined with anxieties around the self, and the recognition of this form of violence as an overwhelmingly white male crime reveals the racial and gender power structures which are concealed in popular accounts of the serial killer. This issue is particularly relevant to the later section on surveillance; first, it is necessary to discuss developments since the 1970s which have hugely influenced the construction of the serial killer.

Profiling

While the serial killer figure is defined in popular media as a threat specific to the Twentieth Century, academic responses argue it is not the act but the *meaning* of serial killing which has changed.⁵ Certain aspects - lack of motive, targeting of strangers, extreme violence - are highlighted, while others - most notably the gender asymmetry between victim and killer - are concealed in ways which reinforce dominant ideologies (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: 156). Since the mid-1970s, the serial killer figure has been constructed as a problem peculiar to American society, despite international examples of the phenomenon (Jenkins, 1994; Tithecott, 1997). Jenkins identifies a nationwide panic in response to several high-profile serial killer cases in the late 1970s to mid 1980s which has contributed towards a particular understanding of the serial killer. Since these instances came to light during a political swing to the right in favour of Ronald Reagan, who advocated tough law and order policies, the serial killer was useful in establishing support for neo-conservative values (1994: 4).

Schmid uses the term “multiaccentuality” to describe the way in which the serial killer figure offers diverse ideological meanings which adapt over time (2005: 6). This multiaccentuality permits the killer to be used by diverse groups as an example of a troubling, new, mobile, difficult to detect and widespread threat; throughout the 1980s, this threat reinforced support for significant funding increases and wider jurisdictional powers for the FBI (Jenkins 1994, Tithecott, 1997). At the same time, this apparently new, specifically American, threat is evoked through references to the Gothic which remain an important context within which the serial killer is understood, demonstrating the comprehension of events within existing representation, particularly when distancing a threat by marking it as Other (Schmid, 2005: 6-7).

A significant influence on the serial killer figure is the positioning of profiling as the only response to the danger. Robert Ressler, the FBI agent credited with coining the term ‘serial killer’ and developing techniques to contain the threat, defines profiling as a way of recognising the “different breed” of violent criminals who are distanced from those with comprehensible motives (1992: 45). He stresses the originality and scientific methods of his research (interviews with convicted killers are used to develop methods for catching

⁵ Big budget Jack the Ripper re-telling *From Hell* (Hughes Brothers, 2001) highlights the serial killer/modernity connection in its trailer, which ends with the Ripper warning “One day, people will look back and say I gave birth to the Twentieth Century”.

others). He describes new terminology designed to categorise behaviour and the development of procedures and computer databases such as ViCAP - the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, designed to connect geographically distant crimes committed by the same 'roaming' killer – as essential weapons against the serial killer.

Although Ressler highlights the physical and emotional dangers of the work, profiling is highly administrative, with a vast amount of information (increasing with the discovery of each victim) examined to define the crimes within pre-existing categories of killers. Some accounts of profiling appear more concerned with information management: another former profiler describes "problems with collecting, storing, analyzing and prioritising incoming information" as the major difficulty in serial killer investigations (Keppel, 2003: 3). Stratton argues that this approach highlights the unique aspect of serial killing: the lack of relationship between killer and victim (1996: 85-7). Investigators focus on links between victims, reducing them to items within the killer's series, rather than on the personal and professional history of the victim, which would normally offer clues and possible motives in a case of 'individual' murder.

Despite its influence on serial killer discourse and its implementation in non-serial cases, profiling has been attacked for relying on the clichéd, potentially biased accounts of incarcerated killers (who are not a representative sample since there is no way of knowing how many others remain uncaught) and offering categories which are vague or contradictory. Over-reliance on profiling has been acknowledged as a cause of several well-known investigative failures, most notably the mis-identification of an innocent security guard as the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bomber (Jenkins, 1994; Seltzer, 1998; Simpson, 2000; Tithecott, 1997). Yet it remains a prominent aspect of serial killer mythology, and is often applied anachronistically to historical cases - most notably that of Jack the Ripper, in both the fiction film *From Hell* and the crime fiction writer Patricia Cornwell's investigation of the murders (2002). Each of these texts references behavioural categories established by FBI profilers nearly a century after the Ripper crimes but takes no account of geographic and historical differences between Victorian London and late Twentieth Century America; making the killer somehow timeless.

Yet it is not the quasi-scientific method of profiling which has influenced cultural constructions so much as the figure of the profiler, usually depicted within the Gothic tradition of the doubled detective/criminal (Simpson, 2000: 87). The isolated investigator haunted by his/her association with the killer is one of the most familiar serial killer

narrative tropes. Chapter two argues that the profiler is particularly important in cinematic representations, yet real profilers are often constructed in similar ways. Writing about Dennis Rader, with whose case he was involved for only a short time, former FBI agent John Douglas parallels himself with the killer. He describes the “jolt of electricity” he felt on first hearing the nickname BTK and hints at a fated linking with Rader: “little did I realise how far my search for answers would take me and how entwined my life would become with this violent, elusive killer” (Douglas and Dodd, 2007:1). Douglas discovers that before his capture, Rader read one of his books which offered a profile of the BTK suspect; after his arrest, Rader offers a written critique of the piece, constructing them as equal authorities. In a later interview, Rader reacts to Douglas’ analysis “as if I’d held up a mirror in front of his face” (2007: 308), implicitly alluding to Gothic doubling common to serial killer narratives (Halberstam: 1995) and bolstering the special status of the profiler. Critiques of the profiler figure trace its origins to the FBI’s manipulation of serial killer cases (Jenkins, 1994: 215; Schmid, 2005: 72). In particular, the highly publicised research carried out at Quantico by Thomas Harris in preparation for his *Lecter* novels lends authenticity to his Gothic narratives of irremediably evil killers and uniquely talented profilers; these novels and their cinematic adaptations have been particularly influential in popular representations of real cases (Schmid, 2005: 91; Selzter, 1998: 16). Tithecott argues that the FBI ensures the “mystification of the serial killer is accompanied by mystification of his ‘rivals’, elite members of the FBI whose job it is to track him down” (1997: 29). FBI profilers are positioned as outside traditional law enforcement and psychiatry, and therefore are “viewed neither as ‘just cops’ nor as ivory-tower intellectuals” (Jenkins, 1994: 215). The qualities attributed to the killer must be matched in the profiler, whose “special vision” negates the need for language since the individual they seek is “pure in his transcendence of normal thinking, normal language, normal people” (Tithecott, 1997: 30).

There is a tension here between the administrative practices of profiling - the categorising of behavioural characteristics, the sorting, storing and retrieval of evidence, the development of nationwide software programs to link killings - and the mystical profiler whose methods are critiqued as being closer to shamanism than detection. Jenkins relates to frontier rhetoric the common trope of the profiler consulting captive killers: they “gain wisdom by venturing into the cells of multiple killers” in an act of “border crossing” which echoes mythic American ideas of an outsider protecting the community from savagery (Jenkins, 1994: 110). As Simpson argues, fictional depictions tend to highlight the maverick status of the profiler, appealing to fascination with American individualism

through the depiction of FBI procedure as cumbersome and ineffectual (Simpson, 2000: 73). This trend is particularly noteworthy in many of the films defined in the next chapter: I have called this cycle the profiler film in order to highlight the importance of the mythic profiler to these narratives. The nonconformist profiler stymied by bureaucracy is apparent in the accounts of real profilers. Ressler repeatedly criticises existing procedures at the FBI, positioning his department as revolutionary in contrast with sceptical, intransigent bosses (Ressler, 1992).

The profiler, both real and fictional, is isolated from wider law enforcement communities, displaying unique capabilities and in so doing echoing the lone hero of the Western. This construction has narrative as well as ideological ends: Hollywood fiction film is traditionally focused around one protagonist, while Ressler's distancing of himself from the FBI provides a theme which encourages the reader to focus on his struggles with authority over many years and different cases. The profiler figure, then, reaffirms many of the established aspects of serial killer discourse, while offering a new level of authority through the FBI's ownership of the serial killer problem. Patriarchal power structures remain concealed by the coding of the serial killer as gender neutral, while the FBI's focus on capture over treatment, along with the right-wing political context of 1980s America, constructs the killer as evil rather than ill (Jenkins, 1994). The crimes remain distanced from normative masculinity and the gender, racial and class hierarchies which determine the form the killer's violence takes are obscured.

The rest of this chapter works through these points in relation to my key themes of masculinity and surveillance. The next section examines the relevant debates relating to cinematic depictions of masculinity, before I conclude the chapter with an analysis of theories of surveillance.

Masculinity and Cinema

As the previous section demonstrates, academic responses to serial killer discourse often critique the obscuring of power structures behind gender neutral terminology and essentialist models of gender and violence. Normative masculinity is dissociated from violence through the construction of the killer as either an aberrant individual or an irredeemably evil force (Cameron and Frazer, 1987; Caputi, 1988). While gender is central to these arguments, other hierarchies have also been perpetuated in representations of the

serial killer. Class and race are also mobilised in serial killer discourse, demonstrating the way in which gender works with other aspects of identity. Wider discussions of masculinity echo this focus on the relationship between different articulations of identity. This section explores key points relating to gender in the serial killer film, starting with a discussion of cinematic depictions of masculinity before studying the ways in which the serial killer relates to gender, class and race.

Cinematic Masculinities

Since the 1970s, studies of masculinity from both wider sociological and more specific cinematic perspectives have emphasised its variations according to place, time and other aspects of identity, its constructedness, and its status in representation as a site of constant re-negotiation. Earlier concepts of masculinity as a stable, fundamental identity against which others are defined have been reworked, subjecting masculinity to the same critique as other identities (Bruzzi, 2005: 162; Dyer, 2002: 1; Gates, 2006: 27; Segal, 1990: ix; Tolson, 1987: 13). Masculinity has historically escaped study because of its ubiquity; it is “taken for granted” and seen as “everyday” (Tolson, 1987: 7). Modifying understandings of masculinity has exposed “the different expressions of masculinity within and between different cultures” and shown that in the West, masculinity “is the dominant, prestigious form of gender identity” (Tolson, 1987: 12). The shift from a universal masculinity to an emphasis on plural masculinities is qualified with the acknowledgment of a hegemonic masculinity which hierarchises masculinities (Baker, 2006: viii). Class, sexuality and race structure masculine identities, ranking men according to cultural and economic status, but this positioning is obscured through a binary opposition with femininity (Segal, 1990: x-xi). Reappraisals of masculinity/ies have shown that it is closely linked to the world of work, which distances men from the traditionally feminine domestic sphere while further hierarchising men by occupation and within individual workplaces (Tolson, 1987: 13).

At the same time as masculinity has come under scrutiny within the academic field, historical shifts have exposed its precarious status. Developments in the West - gains by the feminist and civil rights movements, increased commodity culture and consumerism, economic problems and technological advances which undermine men’s physical superiority - have contributed to the instability and insecurity of masculinity (Baker, 2006; Segal, 1990; Tolson, 1987). The dominant image of American masculinity - the white, professional, middle class, early middle-aged heterosexual - is understood to have suffered

a crisis which is articulated by anti-feminist rhetoric and various other backlash strategies. These position the straight white middle class male as victimised by the gains made by those of marginalised identities (Faludi, 1991; Rehling, 2009; Traube, 1992).

An important response to the sense of disenfranchisement experienced by white men is the reiteration of frontier myths which highlight qualities traditionally associated with masculinity such as physical strength and endurance, individualism and self-reliance. Studies of American cinematic masculinity argue that in times of perceived masculine 'crisis', a recuperated masculinity is linked to violence in a way which alludes to nation-specific ideas of the taming of the American West (Baker, 2006; Slotkin, 1973; Traube, 1992). The excluded, maverick, violent male hero is ubiquitous in Hollywood narratives which often depict the protagonist as excluded from the community his violence protects (Baker, 2006: 98; Gates, 2006: 34). The dominance of frontier rhetoric is evident in depictions of the detective in American fiction: like the western hero, the detective is caught between conforming to the conventions of the community and maintaining his individuality (Gates, 2006: 35).

Noting the "populist appeal" of the maverick hero who is excluded from potentially corrupt state institutions and restrictive social and legal codes, Tasker argues that this figure is romanticised by being "outside, if not actually opposed to, the mainstream" (1995: 104-5). This point supports the argument advanced in the previous section regarding the (self) distancing of the profiler from the FBI. Focus on the administrative, technological methods introduced by the organisation to deal with the serial killer threat would likely have diminished popular support, particularly during the Reagan administration when distrust of state institutions and technology was evident in the most popular action movies (Jeffords, 1994: 19; Tasker, 1995: 62). Instead, the intuitive talents of individual profilers are embellished, a strategy which explains the construction of the FBI as an inefficient bureaucracy hampering the self-motivated profiler in the biographies discussed above. As later chapters demonstrate, this representation of the profiler as the uniquely skilled equal of the serial killer is also hugely popular in film. Yet frontier rhetoric does not only contribute to the construction of the profiler; it also helps to account for the portrayal of the killer as a folkloric anti-hero.

Masculinity and the Serial Killer

As indicated above, the serial killer is commonly understood as aiming to achieve transcendence and transformation, yet it is persistently implied that only men can access the dominant position of subject that would allow this (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: 62). Female killers are caught within a gendered essentialist double standard which insists on the natural gentleness of femininity and depicts the female murderer as either influenced by a dominating male killer or transgressing her gender in choosing destruction over creation (Birch, 1993: 33; Cameron and Frazer, 1987: 145-6; Knox, 2001: 12). Yet while entire books and television series are dedicated to the phenomenon of female killers (a theme referenced in their titles), male violence remains concealed behind gender neutral terms and its gendered origins escape scrutiny.⁶

Study of popular, legal and psychiatric responses reveal further effacement of the power structures which dictate the demographics of serial killing. Media reaction to the cases of both Jack the Ripper and Peter Sutcliffe position female victims as responsible for their own deaths - walking alone in (male) public spaces, offering sex for money - with no analysis of the social and economic factors contributing to the existence of prostitution. Nor is there any effort to consider the cultural meanings associated with prostitution, despite the shift in public and police concern when Sutcliffe began to target women who were not prostitutes (Ward Jouve, 1986; Walkowitz, 1982). His violence is instead reduced to a simple 'mad or bad' dichotomy: he is either an example of aberrant psychology requiring psychiatric but not sociological study, or he is motivated by extreme but biological sexual urges - a "product of nature not society" (Hollway, 1981: 37). Both explanations distance the killer from normative masculinity while concealing parallels between Sutcliffe's perception of prostitutes and that of wider society which remained unconcerned until he killed a 'respectable' woman (Ward Jouve, 1986: 34).

This distancing is often achieved by locating violence within a specific class or pathology. The killer is thus understood as an example of the dangerous underclass or idiosyncratic psychological dysfunction. In particular, the notion of the 'white trash' killer alludes to assumptions about the "innate, primal aggression" of the "abusive hypermasculinity of the

⁶ British documentary series *Martina Cole's Lady Killers* (ITV, 2008) focuses on female murderers. Crime fiction author Cole approaches this concept as an inexplicable phenomenon, repeating the phrase "women should be mothers, not murderers" without explanation as to why men who kill are not subject to similar gendered expectations.

white working class male” (Rehling, 2009: 231). Similarly, the “sexually deviant” killer is othered through an emphasis on his gender indeterminacy, with references to overbearing mothers and phallic lack stressing the killer’s inability to achieve a stable, normative masculine subjectivity (Rehling, 2009: 227-8). These two categories echo the ‘mad or bad’ dichotomy discussed above: the naturally violent men of the underclass reveal their native brutality (‘bad’), while the psychologically abnormal are explained through their madness.

More complicated is the popular idea of the ‘abnormally normal’ serial killer. This concept is common to fictional and journalistic representations, as well as being stressed in accounts by psychiatrists and law enforcement officials (Seltzer, 1998: 9-10). It is a familiar aspect of media reports that the killer’s brutality is unnoticed by relatives and acquaintances. The surface banality of the British serial killer Fred West is highlighted in an article which juxtaposes a prosecutor’s description of West as “the very epitome of evil” with a neighbour’s insistence that he was “quite a completely ordinary handyman [...] if you passed him on the street, you wouldn’t give him a second glance” (Morris, 2006: 1). Ted Bundy’s infamy focuses on the gap between his “dark-haired and handsome [and] likeable” appearance and his sexually sadistic crimes (Donnelley, 2009: 406). A biography of British killer Dennis Nilsen opens with a description of the “peaceful, thoughtless routine” of his home area which mirrors his own banality (Masters, 1985: 3). Nilsen’s self-description as the ‘monochrome man’ supports Seltzer’s argument that these individuals are not merely faking normality to escape detection but experience their own identity as a failure of self-definition (Seltzer, 1998: 9).

This instability of identity alludes to Gothic tropes which structure our comprehension of the serial killer. Robert Louis Stevenson’s 1886 novella *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* has been associated with serial killing since a London stage adaptation coincided with the crimes attributed to Jack the Ripper (Cettl, 2003: 11). The notion of the ‘split personality’ murderer is particularly prevalent in film but is also used by real killers who, according to psychiatrists, neither exhibit nor consciously assume the symptoms of genuine dissociative identity disorder but instead use the culturally familiar idea of internal doubling to understand and describe their actions. The Chicago killer John Wayne Gacy discussed his “two distinct characters” (Morrison, 2004: 92) while Stephen Griffiths claimed to be “part demon”. Seltzer describes phrases such as “the Other Guy tilt to his personality” and “depersonalisation” as indicative of this concept (1998: 139) and relates it to the blurring of the public/private divide which results in difficulty in maintaining distance between the

self and the other, an anxiety externalised in the literal ripping open of the interiorities of others (1998: 138-9) and experienced as a lack of self-distinction.

Rehling's response to Seltzer's analysis of the "abnormally normal" killer insists on the gendered and racial specificity of the (American cinematic) serial killer. Arguing that the privileged universal status bestowed on white, heterosexual, middle class masculinity in the West is "inextricable" from the killer's sense of emptiness (2009: 241), she describes the killer as both "Everyman and no man" (2009: 243). The figure of the straight white man occupies the odd dichotomy of acting as a universal identity - an 'everyman' figure - while also experiencing "a profound *absence* of identity" (2009: 1; Rehling's emphasis). This paradox is evident in the adoption of marginalisation and "victim status" by white men, apparent in the 1990s trend for men's movements and masculine crisis films such as *Falling Down* (Joel Schumacher, 1993) as well as the appearance of 'hypernormative' masculinity in science fiction and serial killer narratives (2009: 2). His anonymity results from his unremarkable identity status and provokes the need for self-definition, inciting the transformative efforts of the serial killer which are amplified through the celebrity achieved. Rehling notes that few films make this connection explicit, and even in those she does cite, such as *Copycat* (Jon Amiel, 1995) and *Seven* (David Fincher, 1995), the link between white men and violence is not pursued.

Relating the Gothic detective/killer doubling to this modern interpretation, Rehling argues that this older motif, which sees the hero/ine's repressed desires and anxieties represented in the other, is reworked in the serial killer film, linking the white male investigator to the killer's violence. The similarities between detective and killer are highlighted, underlining the problems experienced by straight white men in establishing a stable identity, and in negotiating concerns about complicity in patriarchal violence (2009: 234-6). Mainstream films do not explore this potential culpability in depth: usually, the detective is eventually recuperated through rehabilitative violence which destroys the uncannily similar killer (Rehling, 2009: 234). My analyses suggest these hyper-normative killers are usually depicted as ultimately irrational, limiting their subversive potential. However, the association between a traditionally heroic protagonist and a violent criminal, however limited, is surprising, particularly as some of these films emerge from a period of Hollywood cinema which is regarded as particularly neo-conservative (Faludi, 1991).

A small but significant number of films which depict an investigator who is not a white male offers further insight into the gender and racial connotations of serial violence. These

women and non-white men “occupy positions of symbolic and moral authority” and establish a distance from the killer through their associations with oppressed, politicised identities (Rehling: 2009, 236-7). Additionally, Gates suggests that the otherness of these investigators offer special advantages: the female and/or black detective’s outsider status alludes to the distinctive abilities of the frontier hero, the protagonist who is distanced from the potential corruption of institutions (2006: 190). Similarly, the female detective’s traditional empathy with the victim, in contrast to the male investigator’s identification with the killer, further distances her from patriarchal violence, as does her isolation within the institutions she must outmanoeuvre in order to catch the killer (Boyle, 2005: 135; Gates, 2006: 232). These other investigators adopt the positive associations of the outsider - its history in American culture from the cowboy to the tough noir detective - while refuting its links to patriarchal oppression, though it has been argued that these narratives incorporate these identities into repressive patriarchal institutions (Young, 1991).

The killer and the profiler function, I argue in the thesis, as opposing agents of surveillance. Shifting attitudes to the serial killer and to surveillance can be traced in the ways in which these films develop over time. In the remaining section of this literature review I work through the major issues surrounding surveillance.

Surveillance

This section discusses three main issues around surveillance. Firstly, I suggest that the serial killer film’s privileging of sight follows Western cultural ideas which gender vision. Secondly, I explore Foucault’s panopticon concept which dominates surveillance work, with a particular focus on the construction of the serial killer as a figure of disciplinary power. Thirdly, the figure of the profiler is positioned as possessing a special kind of knowledge which links to a mystical, fantastical form of surveillance.

Sight and Power

The significance of sight in the horror film has been highlighted in academic work, most notably by Carol Clover. From images on advertising posters to sight metaphors and the shaky, killer-perspective “I-camera”, horror is self-conscious about its emphasis on this sense (1992: 24). While Clover’s argument centres on spectatorship in horror cinema, I

focus more on thematic points and not all of the films are straightforwardly horror.

However, Clover's work on shifting power relations around looking and being watched is particularly useful. Despite arguing for a less essentialist interpretation of Laura Mulvey's gendering of the gaze, Clover finds that assaultive gazing is most commonly gendered male; when female looking is coded as dangerous, this power is denoted as unnatural (Clover, 1992: 184).

The special status of the visual sense is evident in the commonplace interchanging of the verb 'see' with 'know', collapsing sight with reasoning and cognitive understanding. The privileging of sight as "a supreme object of control" with "masculine connotations" has been traced as far back as Fourteenth Century Christian art which portrays God as an eye. More recently, this same idea has positioned governmental surveillance within this same concept of "hegemonic vision" (Schmidt-Burkhardt, 2002: 18-19). As vision becomes increasingly mechanised, divine sight has been overtaken by electronic modes of looking, with technological developments from satellites and microscopes to computers and cameras further binding the human experience to sight (Schmidt-Burkhardt, 2002: 31).

This idea of sight as increasingly powerful suggests omniscience and omnipresence. Following Cameron and Frazer's argument, this level of power would only be open to men since only they are offered the possibility of subjectivity. This reading is supported by Clover's work on the representation of the phallic gaze in horror, and also by examples of horror film posters which position the sight of female characters as limited and fearful, while the male gaze is predatory and sinister (Figures 1.1 and 2.2).



Figure 1.1: Female sight is restricted and linked to the supernatural through the eerily whitened (apparently blind) eyes in a mask-like, ghostly face.



Figure 1.2: The cover of a serial killer-themed DVD box set, each killer staring threateningly at the viewer.

While sight is important in other types of horror and beyond, I argue throughout this thesis that vision is particularly crucial in the serial killer film. Most obviously, cinema allows us to watch (and watch with) the voyeuristic killer, and a number of films have used fictional killers' obsessions with possessing their victims through the camera to suggest audience complicity (Clover, 1992; Badley, 1995). Most of the films discussed here hierarchise vision according to patriarchal structures, with men enjoying greater power which is often enhanced by institutionalised surveillance. Hierarchised vision is also significant in more general discourse relating to murder, and is suggested by Cameron and Frazer's work on the British serial killer Dennis Nilsen, who took photographs of himself with his victims. Nilsen's gaze at these victims affirms his subjectivity, reinforcing his power over the dead not only through the killing but through his production of the pictures which "presuppose a social relationship, namely that between murderer and murdered, producer and produced, subject and object". Nilsen's fascination with being "Master of all one surveys" stresses the vulnerability and manipulability of those caught within his gaze (Cameron and Frazer, 1987: 154-5). The serial killer/victim relationship is one in which the killer violently places his victims within the context of his series; this analysis stresses the importance of sight in this concept. The idea of the serial killer as artist, discussed in the next chapter, demonstrates this stress on the visual in suggesting the killer's power.

Studies of cinematic depictions of surveillance highlight the linking of sight and violence. Popular cinema, particularly since the 1990s, celebrates the spectacle of surveillance and its associations with suspense and violence: "the surveillance sequence prepares the viewer for some subsequent violence or potential for violence" (Turner, 1998: 97). Connections between surveillance and violence are depicted uncritically in late 20th Century cinema, unlike the paranoid narratives of the 1970s which overtly reference contemporary concerns (Turner, 1998: 97). Instead, there is a focus on the pleasures of surveillance, with exciting action set pieces cued by familiar surveillance-suggesting codes (grainy CCTV footage, blurry night vision, omniscient satellite images) which increase tension and promise visual spectacle while failing to interrogate the disregard for civil liberties suggested by such technological abilities. Writing in 1998, Turner alludes to films such as *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1998) and *Gattaca* (Andrew M. Niccol, 1997) as examples of this emphasis on the spectacle and narrative suspense offered by surveillance sequences, but later films such as *The Bourne Identity* (Doug Liman 2002), *Disturbia* (DJ Caruso, 2007) and the television series *24* (Fox, 2001 - 2010) also highlight a fascination with impressive technologies of surveillance while evading questions over access to this power. Chapter six suggests that torture porn's depiction of technologies of surveillance similarly portray

depoliticised surveillance. Historical events - most obviously the 9/11 attacks of 2001 - have made criticism of government/law enforcement surveillance more difficult, particularly given the war rhetoric used by the Bush administration in the years following the attacks. These depictions of spectacles of surveillance tend therefore to suggest corruption is limited to a few individuals in positions of authority which allow them to misuse surveillance, while evading wider concerns.

Interestingly, critiques of the relationship between sight and power can be traced in found footage mock documentaries in which the holder of the camera is dragged into events as a victim (*The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez, 1999)), culprit (*The Last Broadcast* (Stefan Avalos, Lance Weiler, 1998)) or both (*Cannibal Holocaust* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980)). The vulnerability of the holder of the gaze is suggested in *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008), while his/her complicity is implied in *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* (Scott Glosserman, 2006) and *Man Bites Dog* (Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde, 1992), both of which centre on a film crew following a serial killer. These lower budget films use surveillance sequences - in these cases the shaky, limited perspective of one handheld camera - to cue narrative suspense, but while they highlight the “invasive” nature of the camera (Jackson, 2002: 42), wider issues are not examined. Their analysis is limited to the activities of the (fictional) camera and film-makers, while institutional surveillance escapes scrutiny.

Panoptical Surveillance

Foucault’s work on the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham’s never-constructed design for a prison, is frequently used in scholarly analyses of surveillance. Using Foucault’s model, this section argues that the serial killer can be understood as a figure of panoptical surveillance, and this surveillance is often gendered.

The panopticon was intended to create a prison environment in which one unseen guard monitors every convict. Each individual is always potentially visible to supervision but as the individual cannot tell when s/he is being watched, this surveillance is internalised. The main effect of the panopticon is thus “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1991: 200-1). This surveillance is not repressive as it is built into the social order and has positive features such as increased efficiency and other improvements which benefit society (1991:

210). The individual is arranged into classifications and hierarchies according to a norm (1991: 223). Rather than oppress the population as a mass, then, the panoptical society exists as one example of a disciplinary power within which identity is constructed, combining “hierarchical surveillance and normalising judgement” in order to “constitute the individual as effect and object of power” (1991: 192). Modes of behaviour are not consciously observed; since surveillance is internalised, behaving within culturally defined norms appears natural and instinctive.

Foucault’s model offers a way in which to understand the state’s efforts to control identity: in the West, a state identity is imposed on each individual, with administrative systems integrating data on each citizen into accumulative bureaucratic systems. These are incorporated into the planning of state institutions and allow the state to control the population. Technological advances have seen an increasing level of surveillance: Jewkes finds that computers extend the “disciplinary gaze” and electronic databases now monitor and control the human body (2004: 174-5). The electronic tagging of offenders and hospital patients and biometric practices such as DNA swabbing, retina identification and palm scans suggest that “one is no longer identified by what one has [...] or by what one knows [...] but by what one *is*” (2004: 178; Jewkes emphasis). These bureaucratic systems, I argue in the next section, are recognisable in the management of information and the creation of categories which order serial killers in FBI profiling. Before discussing surveillance in relation to the serial killer, however, I want to consider the power structures which Foucault’s interpretation obscures.

Throughout this thesis I acknowledge the various hierarchies concealed by the neutral (in terms of class, race and gender) terms in which we understand the serial killer. Sandra Lee Bartky offers a reading of panoptical surveillance which critiques Foucault’s failure to take account of the patriarchal society in which this surveillance operates. Bartky argues that surveillance, and the internalised self-surveillance prompted by potentially constant observation, is covertly coded as a masculine gaze, regardless of the gender of the individual: “a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgement” (2003: 34). This surveillance can be experienced as ‘positive’ as women who adhere to a particular ‘feminine’ role benefit economically, professionally and socially, although it ultimately limits women within culturally determined modes of behaviour and appearance.

In analysing women as constantly monitored by their own efforts to maintain a particular ideal of femininity, Bartky hints at a similar process in terms of masculinity. Since the 1970s, interventions in studies of masculinity have defined this identity as a construction which is popularly understood as an essentialist, stable, universal subject. The experience of masculinity, these writers argue, is very different from the idealised, coherent, consistent paradigm maintained by cultural and social discourses (Gates, 2006; Segal, 1990; Tolson, 1987). The “panoptical male connoisseur” who enforces the behaviour of women can also be said to impose a standardised ideal of masculinity on men who in reality experience their gender in a variety of different ways. It can be argued, then, that men are also unconsciously adhering to gendered standards of behaviour.

This concept of panoptical surveillance regulating gender norms has particular significance for studies of the serial killer. While popular culture positions the killer as epitomising certain masculine ideals - the rebel, the frontier hero, the romanticised outsider - feminist responses have argued that the killer conversely demonstrates a failing masculinity which must be bolstered through violence. In particular, the interpretation of Peter Sutcliffe as compensating for his own sense of inferiority in a family and community which celebrated strong, tough masculine ideals repositions his crimes. Instead of being understood as isolated aberrance, they can instead be seen as motivated by an inability to correspond to gender roles. His extreme violence committed against women who are constructed as the site of sex and sin suggests a hatred of femininity which exposes his own sense of masculine insecurity (Ward Jouve, 1986).

Although both men and women are subject to surveillance, feminist analyses suggest that women have more at stake in a society in which this surveillance is determined by patriarchy. It is not difficult to see a connection between the monitoring of female demeanour and enduring myths regarding women who do not conform to these standards being more likely targets of sexual assault. The idea of women who act or dress ‘immodestly’ being somehow more prone to sexual harassment or attack suggests that the panoptical surveillance described as internalised by Foucault can also be detected in misogynistic violence, with those who fail to adhere to patriarchal conventions exposed to violent correction.

Implicit approval of the serial killer’s corrective violence is most apparent in cases in which prostitutes appear to constitute the killer’s target demographic. Various theories within ‘Ripperology’ position the killer as punishing his victims for leading men astray,

spreading sexual diseases and ‘flaunting’ their sexuality (Cornwell, 2002; Fido, 1999; Harrison, 1999). What is most striking about these ideas is their acceptance as valid potential explanations for the killings. The construction of prostitutes as the site of sexuality, sin, immorality and disease ignores the gender asymmetry which ensures female prostitutes are subject to greater contempt than men who pay for sex, while positioning prostitution as a lifestyle choice and overlooking the misogynistic nature of violence against prostitutes. These theories construct male loathing of prostitutes as in some way understandable, implicitly condoning misogynistic violence. The 1888 Whitechapel victims were positioned as contributing to their own deaths through their behaviour (especially in their contemporary newspaper representations as drunken prostitutes) and their presence in male space. Jack the Ripper’s continued celebrity is accompanied by a “‘moral’ message” which warns “the city is a dangerous place for women, when they transgress the narrow boundaries of home and hearth and dare to enter public space” (Walkowitz, 1982: 544).

The Sutcliffe case is similarly revealing of male attitudes to women outwith patriarchal surveillance. Feminist analyses have examined the reaction of the police and media to the crimes, much of which failed to acknowledge the killer’s misogyny but instead positioned the crimes as the fault of *women* who failed to fulfil gender norms. The tacit approval of Sutcliffe’s attitude to women is evident in journalistic and true crime accounts of the case, and also in police and judicial reactions to the murders. The demarcation between ‘respectable’ women and prostitutes is reiterated in news articles and court prosecution statements (Hollway, 1981: 37; Ward Jouve, 1986: 169). The apparent identification felt by other men towards the killer (evident in hoax confessions and vocalised support in football crowd chanting before his arrest, sympathy for Sutcliffe and antipathy towards his female relatives afterwards, and comments made by prosecution lawyers at his trial) also points to social approval of his violence (Hollway, 1981: 37-9; Ward Jouve, 1986: 8-10).

It is not just the Sutcliffe case which exposes this coinciding of the misogyny of the serial killer with that of wider society. Writing on Henry Lee Lucas, the basis for the film *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, Caputi notes the gendered surveillance suggested by his comments to television journalist Sylvia Chase in 1984.⁷ Lucas describes his stalking of solitary women in public spaces, stating that a lone woman “‘ain’t safe at all’”. When

⁷ That Lucas’ crimes are now known to have been vastly exaggerated does not detract from his status as an important element of the 1980s panic and a crucial figure in serial killer *discourse*, if not a particularly prodigious serial killer.

Chase expresses fear, noting that she frequently travels alone, Lucas emphasises her vulnerability: “‘What if somebody like me be out there?’” Caputi highlights the misogynistic insinuations of Lucas’ warning: women are cautioned about being in public spaces without male protection/control, with the serial killer acting as the ultimate deterrent against escaping patriarchal surveillance (Caputi, 1988: 118).

A more recent example demonstrates that this portrayal of the serial killer as an agent of gendered disciplinary power is not limited to the 1980s serial killer panic. In an article discussing the murders of young women and teenage girls along the I-46 highway in Texas, the writer’s gender becomes evident in the final paragraph. After several pages of objective reporting, Christine Toomey describes her reluctance to leave a restaurant at which one victim was last seen when she notices a man who “keeps looking in my direction” leaving at the same time: “suddenly suspicious”, Toomey chats to a waiter until she sees the man drive away. She ends the piece with a comment which illustrates her monitoring of her own behaviour but fails to acknowledge the *gendered* internalisation of this monitoring: “It is not something I would have done before driving along the I-45” (Toomey, 1999: 58). Toomey’s unconscious locating of danger within the highway, rather than the male killer, underscores a failure to recognise the killer as a gendered threat. Her feeling of vulnerability in response to a man watching her and her desire to remain in the safe environment of the restaurant reveals that despite equality under the law, economic independence and a middle class status suggested by her journalist profession, Toomey remains subject to patriarchal supervision.

The link between the serial killer and monitoring of those marginalised within patriarchy is also apparent in the self-representation of real killers. The impersonation of police officers by killers such as Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy and Kenneth Bianchi helped them to abduct victims, but Bianchi’s apparently genuine aspiration to hold a position of authority suggests their mimicking of the representatives of law and order does not just simplify their kidnappings. Bundy was famously a law student and had some political ambition (Fuchs, 2002: 50); Gacy was “regarded as a pillar of the local community” who organised neighbourhood events (Wilson, 1995: 349); Bianchi worked for a security company after his police job application was rejected (‘Kenneth Bianchi: The Hillside Strangler’, *Crime and Investigation*, no date). The ambition to hold officially-sanctioned roles which offer power and respect indicates a desire for definition, which concurs with Seltzer’s and Rehling’s assessment of the killer as experiencing a lack of self-distinction, and a need to fulfil the traits associated with traditional masculinity, supporting the interpretation of

serial killing as reinforcing the gender identity of the killer (Ward Jouve, 1986). It also suggests they identify with the disciplinary power demonstrated by Lucas' warning to Sylvia Chase.

Fictional representations often suggest this self-appointed monitoring role is implicitly accepted. *A Study in Terror* (James Hill, 1965), which depicts Sherlock Holmes (Christopher Plummer) seeking Jack the Ripper, frames the murders within vigilantism. Pathologist Dr Murray (Anthony Quayle) argues the Ripper's motive is: "the punishment of Whitechapel, as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah". Ultimately, Holmes explains the killer is a mentally unstable member of the aristocracy whose brother has married a prostitute and who tries to kill his sister-in-law by "a process of elimination. He searched for her with his knife from one prostitute to the next". Both motives naturalise the idea of the prostitute as an obvious, even acceptable victim; while the murders are not openly condoned, both explanations fail to account for the focus on female (and hugely disadvantaged) victims. Both theories position women as symbolising sin and sexuality. The film also refers to the persistent idea that the Ripper demonstrated professional medical knowledge (it is the killer's ability to pack surgical instruments into their correct niches which alerts Holmes to his identity). This concept stresses the surveillance role of the killer, his regulation of prostitutes mirroring his more socially acceptable occupation, particularly given the idea of the prostitute as 'disease-spreading'. The serial killer doctor remains a powerful idea, most obviously in the *Lecter* novels and films, linking not only to anxieties regarding the power enjoyed by doctors over physical and mental well-being, but also to the monitoring, corrective associations of both figures. More recently, the first episode of *Dexter* (Showtime, CBS, 2006 -) (episode one 'Dexter', first broadcast 1st October 2006), in which the killer targets criminals who have escaped judicial punishment, alludes to this connection by depicting a victim as "the patient at an operation with Dexter as the surgeon, associating what he does as a medical action - like a doctor curing the social body" (Paterson, 2010: 47). That the murderous Dexter works in law enforcement - specialising in the study of crime scene blood spatter - further links him to both scientific and judicial surveillance.

The construction of the serial killer as an agent of surveillance whose methods are extreme but whose ideology corresponds to that of wider society explains his paradoxical status as both an aberration distanced from normative masculinity and a fascinating folk hero. It also offers another reason for the focus on white male killers. The authority associated with surveillance is rarely open to women and non-white men. Female killers tend to be subject

to greater contempt, partly because they are understood to target ‘innocents’ they are expected to care for (usually children and hospital patients). The valorisation of the (male) maverick ensures that the suffering of individual victims is obscured; they are portrayed as interchangeable and anonymous, reinforcing the focus on the killer (Boyle, 2005: xvi). Other Western biases are also significant: the depiction of many serial killers as cold, dispassionate, cerebral, methodical and ordered alludes to cultural ideas of whiteness in which “the white investment in mind over matter and purity [is] taken to its logical conclusion”. White killers who do not meet these expectations are dismissed as members of the ‘white trash’ underclass, while middle class killers’ very ‘ordinariness’ is seen as symptomatic of their pathology (Dyer, 2002: 112). Additionally, the heroic status afforded the serial killer is one rarely filled by women and ethnic minorities, again limiting this role to white men (Boyle, 2005: 62).

The depiction of the serial killer as a figure of disciplinary power obscures the gender, racial and class biases which determine the demographics of violence. Rehling states that the universal status of white masculinity promotes this effacement, as its status as “the default subjectivity” ensures that serial killing is linked not to white men but to “broader concerns about postmodern culture and society” (2009: 245). Additionally, white men are implicitly expected to adopt roles of authority and power, naturalising the killer’s monitoring of certain groups (especially prostitutes) and his possession of victims as they become assimilated into his own identity. The killer’s objectification of victims as they are violently abstracted into his series has dark echoes with Foucault’s panopticon model. The “dissolution of the victim as subject” (Knox, 2003: 293) clearly goes further than state panoptical surveillance, which controls individuals through codifying rather than destroying their identity, but the parallel highlights the killer’s place in machine culture discussed by Seltzer and also indicates again that this role is linked to identity hierarchies. The next section explores the ways in which surveillance is mobilised to contain the threat of the killer in ways which reinforce the power structures I have examined here.

Profiling and Surveillance

The link between the serial killer and sanctioned authorities discussed in the previous section is also evident in the use of the serial killer hazard to impose surveillance on marginalised groups. Jack the Ripper again serves as an example: night patrols organised by (male) citizens in Whitechapel are “evidence of self-protection, but they also

constituted surveillance of the unrespectable poor, and of lowlife women in particular” (Walkowitz, 1982: 557). Similarly, following Peter Sutcliffe’s attack on a woman not associated with prostitution, university authorities advised female students not to go out at night, and “everywhere men saw their women home” (Ward Jouve, 1986: 9). The specific threat of an active serial killer - he will inevitably strike again, he could be ‘anyone’ - reinforces traditional ideas of defenceless women who must be restricted to safe domestic spaces and powerful men who are able to defend themselves in the dangerous public sphere (Caputi, 1988; Tatar: 1995, 24). The repressiveness of the killer overlaps with that of the authorities and of patriarchy.

I have noted that the serial killer gained particular prominence in America in the late 1970s and 1980s, when a panic developed which exaggerated the threat of the killer and led to demands for greater judicial surveillance (Jenkins, 1994; Tithecott, 1997). An important result of this panic was the FBI’s control of the problem, with the development of the Behavioural Sciences Unit, specially designed computer databases and quasi-psychological theories continuing to exert a powerful influence over popular understandings of the serial killer (Jenkins, 1994: 55; Schmid, 2005: 88; Seltzer, 1998: 16). Several writers have related the FBI’s ownership of the serial killer problem to the “‘psychiatrization’ of criminal danger” developed by Foucault in reference to the “dangerous individual” panic of the Nineteenth Century (Foucault, 1994: 179; Schmid 2005: 201, Seltzer, 1998: 3; Tatar 1995: 26). The ‘dangerous individual’ concept describes a phenomenon in which unrelated people committed inexplicable, unmotivated acts of extreme violence with no explanation and with no previous sign of aggression or insanity. The parallels with the serial killer are clear: motivelessness, outward normality and ‘overkill’ are defining factors in popular notions of the serial killer. Foucault argues that the then new field of psychiatry intervened to deal with the dangerous individual, consolidating the idea of a group of people who pose a particular threat and require surveillance by specially trained experts (1994: 178-9). Similarly, the FBI has created an exclusive response to the serial killer, positioning its staff, software and procedures as the only defence against the killer. The creation of the FBI’s Behavioural Sciences Unit, now called the Behavioural Analysis Unit, was central to the FBI’s ownership of the serial killer problem, its agents positioned as specially gifted and trained (Tithecott, 1997: 19-22).

A crucial element of this specialised solution is profiling, which remains significant in serial killer discourse despite criticism regarding its effectiveness (Seltzer, 1998: 13; Simpson, 2000: 214). Profiling aims to study aspects of the crime - the type of victim,

location and method of killing - in order to identify behavioural characteristics of the killer (Keppel and Birnes, 2003: 99). Study of crime scenes and forensic reports is used to categorise the killer into pre-determined groupings. The profiler “looks for patterns in the crimes and tries to come up with the characteristics of the likely offender. It’s fact-based and uses analytical and logical thinking processes” (Ressler, 1992: 218). Despite this emphasis on logic, profiling is also tied to less concrete, semi-mystical associations in journalistic accounts, profiler biographies and fictional representations. Attention shifts from logic to empathy as profilers describe their efforts to ‘understand’ the killer. Ressler relates the development of profiling in almost revelatory terms: “I and everyone else [...] had been on the outside of a killer’s mind, looking in; now I was gaining a unique perspective, from the inside of that mind, looking out” (1992: 64). Seltzer points out that another term for profiler, “mindhunter”, epitomises the way in which the profiler “works by simulation [...] identifying himself with the killer” (1998: 16). The prominence of empathy and understanding in profiler narratives is apparent in fictional versions: the first season of *Criminal Minds* (CBS, 2005 -), which follows the investigations of a Behavioural Sciences Unit-based FBI team, is advertised with the tagline “The way to a criminal is through his mind” and despite following a highly successful forensic drama trend, the focus is on mental rather than physical analysis. Traditional detection is less important than insight, shifting attention from the bureaucratic FBI to a few extraordinary individuals. Criticism of the FBI’s slow administrative procedures is evident in the biographies of former profilers who depict themselves as “maverick[s] doing [their] best to fight crime within the constraints posed by a bureaucratic, hidebound organisation” (Schmid, 2005: 95).

This focus on a talented, exceptional individual combating the killer alludes to a number of narratives which this chapter has already discussed in relation to the serial killer. Gothic associations are evident in the depiction of “individual profilers whose connection with their intuitive selves verges on the extrasensory or supernatural” (Simpson, 2000: 72), and in the portrayal of the killer/profiler relationship as a “dark bildungsroman. The killer practices and learns his craft, while the detective masters the art of sign-reading” (Simpson, 2000: 97). Western-style “border crossing” is suggested in the meeting of educated profiler and savage killer (Jenkins, 1994: 110). The idealised American individual is repeatedly referenced in depictions of the killer, as I noted above; it also recurs in representations of the profiler, particularly in distancing the art of profiling from the bureaucracy of the FBI. The traditional American distrust of administrative institutions helps to explain this disavowal, particularly as profiling developed in the 1980s, when the

lone male hero's battle against governmental and judicial bureaucracy was a particularly vivid theme (Jeffords, 1994; Tasker, 1995). The popular idea of the loner who saves society but remains outside it is a structuring premise of the profiler film: the profiler requires isolation and only begins to understand the killer when distanced from the law and order institutions usually entrusted with defending the community.

The heroic outsider is usually male, and this bias is reflected in depictions of the profiler. Tithecott argues that the serial killer/profiler relationship "is the story of individualised male figures whose rivalry exists in a heroic world transcending society and all things domestic" (1997: 113). The merging of the Gothic and Western traditions makes the profiler a particularly effective figure through the allusions to familiar motifs. As Tithecott's analysis suggests, these familiar motifs disguise power structures: the emphasis on 'masculine' rivalry over 'feminine' social institutions taps into contemporary suspicion of bureaucracy but also emerges from the older traditions I have discussed. Although the world of serial killing and its detection is commonly portrayed as only open to men, however, my analysis of the profiler film argues that cinematic representations offer a softer, more sensitive version of masculinity than Tithecott's reading suggests. The emphasis on empathy in particular distances the profiler films from contemporaneous depictions of masculinity, such as that in the action film or neo-noir.

Profiling, then, may be designed around the study of crime scenes and the categorisation of behaviour, but it is understood in popular culture as semi-mystical and instinctive, using the familiar Gothic trope of the double and the concept of the rebellious outsider to link killer and profiler. In the next chapter I further define the cinematic profiler, using the term's associations with the empathetic, extraordinary individual to argue that the profiler matches the killer's skill in surveillance.

This chapter has demonstrated the accumulation of cultural myths and narratives which have been assimilated into the serial killer figure. It is clear that the serial killer has been strongly associated with surveillance in a variety of ways since the recognition of the repeat killer at the end of the nineteenth century. Recent technological advances have provoked anxieties regarding surveillance, and my analysis chapters trace the articulation of these concerns in serial killer films. As I have argued, surveillance is subject to gender, race and class biases, yet these are typically obscured. The fact that surveillance and its related power is available only to white men is never overt but is implied through the positioning of white men in the role of serial killer and profiler. The next chapter considers

this idea in relation to cinematic representations, summarising the conventions and trends of the films discussed in the analysis chapters.

Chapter Two

The American Serial Killer Film, 1978 - 2008

Introduction

A major objective of this thesis is to systematise the serial killer film. This chapter defines the categories into which I have grouped relevant films, outlining the major conventions and trends which are explored in the analysis chapters. First, the criteria for inclusion are discussed. I describe the selection of texts and the temporal and national boundaries to which I decided to adhere at the beginning of this project. I then define key terms and developments and provide some context for the groupings into which I have divided the eighty-three films, dealing with them chronologically. Seventeen films make up the 1980s profiler cycle (which begins in 1978 and ends in 1990); four are defined as pre-2000s portrait films (1985 to 1996); the 1990s profiler cycle has thirty-one (beginning in 1991 and ending in 2004), the 2000s coherent portrait movie encompasses seven films (2000 to 2007), the 2000s chaotic portrait film comprises nine examples (2005 to 2008), the 2000s protagonist killer cycle incorporates eight films (2001 to 2008), and seven examples make up the 2000s torture porn movie (2004 to 2008). It is clear from the names of these groupings that I highlight the time period (roughly periodised within decades) and the positioning of the killer within the narrative in my categorisation of these films. My analysis chapters use these groupings to trace shifts relating to masculinity, surveillance and the serial killer.

These groupings are designed to allow me to investigate my key themes of masculinity and surveillance. Chapter one argues that the figure of the profiler offers a particularly interesting focus on surveillance. Examining the type of character - gender, race, class - in this position of authority offers an insight into the identities trusted with institutional power. Conversely, law enforcement surveillance is notably absent in the portrait movie. The protagonist-killer cycle subverts the conventions of the profiler film, depicting a killer whose surveillance skills are superior to that of the profiler. Similar destabilisations in the torture porn film are enhanced by the killer's access to sophisticated technologies of surveillance. This shift in focus from profiler to killer reinforces the idea prominent in reactions to serial killer films that the killer and those who search for him have much in common: in tracking the development of these particular cycles, I show that masculinity is

heavily associated with surveillance, and the power to scrutinise space and individuals is usually limited to white men.

Defining the Serial Killer Film

A vast amount of films feature a serial killer character. Additionally, the term serial killer is itself the subject of debate, as straightforward definitions based on the number of victims fail to take into account the particular cultural meanings of the term. It has become apparent during my research that bibliographies, databases and genre studies exhibit wide and sometimes contrasting definitions of the serial killer film. The number of serial killer films listed in these sources - over one thousand are included in the *Internet Movie Database*'s keyword search results, for example, and this number grows by the week - makes careful selection necessary.

The FBI defines serial murder as: "a series of three or more killings [...] having common characteristics such as to suggest the reasonable possibility that the crime were committed by the same actor or actors" (Morton and Hiltz, 2008: 8). However, popular comprehensions of the term tend to include examples such as Ed Gein, who killed two women but is regarded as an archetypal American serial killer. Gein is commonly referred to as a serial killer in true crime literature, profiler biographies and academic responses (Donnelley, 2009; Fuchs, 2002; Morrison, 2004; Schechter, 1989), particularly as his story is renowned for inspiring the novels *Psycho* (Bloch, 1997, first published 1959) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (Harris, 1988) and their film adaptations, as well as the slasher film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974). It is not the number of victims but other aspects associated with Gein - his allegedly domineering mother, his post-mortem mutilations, his innocent demeanour - which have contributed to his prototypical position in American serial killers.

Relying purely on numbers, then, is problematic in defining the serial killer. As an alternative, Seltzer's point regarding the 'cooling-off period' is useful in developing a working definition which will take account of the discursive meaning of the serial killer category. Seltzer argues this gap between killings is a major factor in popular and official definitions (1998: 9). In being distinguished from a spree killer (an individual who 'snaps', kills a number of people in a short space of time, and commits suicide), the serial killer's actions cannot be explained through sudden, unexpected insanity. The sense of regularity

and instalments suggested by the word 'serial' is particularly crucial to serial killer discourse, as Seltzer demonstrates.

Taking into account the constructedness of the term serial killer established in the previous chapter, I have avoided an absolute definition of this figure but instead have selected films which highlight the seriality of the killings they depict. The term 'serial killer' is not used in all of them (some predate the early 1980s assimilation of the phrase into popular discourse); instead, I have identified these films as featuring a repeat killer whose murders are punctuated by gaps and whose crimes share common elements which link them as a series. Each film does, moreover, allude to the popular idea of the serial killer both within the narrative and in extra-textual material. I have also restricted my body of films to those featuring serial killing as a major storyline - films such as *Heat* (Michael Mann, 1996) and *Con Air* (Simon West, 1997), which feature killers in periphery roles, are not included.

My focus on American films acknowledges the national specificity of the serial killer figure. Although serial killing is not unique to America, it has been constructed as a peculiarly American crime, as the previous chapter argues. A desire to 'Americanise' the problem is apparent in the documentary *H H Holmes: America's First Serial Killer* (John Borowski, 2004), in which the near-simultaneity of the crimes of Holmes and those attributed to Jack the Ripper is stressed. A retired FBI profiler, Thomas Cronin, suggests that the news of the 1888 Whitechapel murders would have caused Americans reading about the Whitechapel killings to feel relieved that nothing similar could happen in the United States, perhaps prompting Holmes, believed to have begun his murders the same year, to inwardly gloat: "you ain't seen nothing yet". Cronin's imagined response of Holmes to the Ripper murders suggests a competitive element to serial killing, mocked in comedies such as *Man Bites Dog* and *The Frighteners* (Peter Jackson, 1996). The documentary also focuses on Holmes' entrepreneurship, which overlapped with his killing methods (he gained financially from some deaths, and most of his victims died within his hotel, linking his economic needs to his secret desires). This idea of Holmes as a self-made man brings together ideas around both the serial killer and American national identity in highlighting individualism and self-reliance (Schmid, 2005; Seltzer, 1998), making the serial killer particularly significant to American culture.

Deciding on a start and end point is also important, and here I have determined that a start date of 1978 takes account of the serial killer panic and resulting FBI-dominated constructions of the killer. A thirty year period offers a selection of films diverse and

numerous enough to provide useful research material, particularly as these three decades have seen significant developments in debates around masculinity, surveillance and the serial killer. While studying the films, I paid particular attention to shifts and developments with the aim of dividing them and ascribing particular attributes according to decade, as is typical of historically-based analysis (Bruzzi, 2005: ix).

Using databases and bibliographies such as *Internet Movie Database* and *Time Out Film Guide* (Pym, 2008), I searched for relevant films while attempting to overcome the high/low art divide which is particularly common in horror film debates (Clover, 1992). I used Seltzer's "cooling-off" period as the basic criteria for inclusion rather than industrial and exhibition contexts (though these contexts are taken into account in my analyses). Only fiction films have been included (though many of these are based on true events) since a sufficient investigation of documentary film would be impossible within the word limit. Although I examine other aspects of serial killer discourse - true crime literature, journalism, televisual representations - my analysis is limited to film (released theatrically or straight to VHS/DVD, given the common overlaps in these areas) in order to control the scope of the project. It would be impossible to consider aspects particular to television within the time and space available. I have found my themes to be more significant in the films selected than in other films or material from other media, although I believe the conclusions I have reached could be extrapolated to other texts.

Firstly, a cycle of films, which I have called the profiler cycle, develops between 1978 and 2004. These films highlight the Gothic/frontier rhetoric-infused killer/profiler double, depicting the profiler as a special individual uniquely qualified to tackle the killer but endangered by this gift. There are significant shifts in the profiler film of the 1990s, with greater emphasis on the crime scene, the introduction of less isolated profilers and the depiction of exaggeratedly evil, powerful and omnipotent killers. Additionally, the number of profiler films increases, as do their budgets and expectations of success in response to the commercial and critical hits of the early 1990s. As the profiler film winds down around 2000, reactions to their saturation become evident in the torture porn film and protagonist-killer films, which rework the by-now familiar profiler formula to extend its viability, and in the portrait film, which resists the established formula of the profiler film.

These categories - the profiler film, the portrait cycle, the protagonist-killer movie and the torture porn film - shape the thesis. In focusing on these groups, I have excluded some films which would be interesting in the context of my argument. Limited time and space

mean that I cannot account for every American film featuring a serial killer made between 1978 and 2008. For example, *White of the Eye* (Donald Cammell, 1987) registers the importance of sight in its title, while *Summer of Sam* (Spike Lee, 1999), *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000) and *Zodiac* (David Fincher, 2007) offer interesting representations of masculinity. However, these films do not emerge from the trends I have defined, and my aim here is to understand the serial killer film as a set of phases in order to track their historical and cultural influences (I refer to other films when I feel they have shaped the developments I discuss). Maintaining firm boundaries ensures that my work on these categories does not become so generalised as to be meaningless. Additionally, certain significant films which do constitute a recognisable grouping are excluded, such as the slasher film. While I note the interesting interplay with slasher development - the profiler film becomes increasingly successful as the slasher reaches saturation point - there is already an important body of work investigating the slasher film as a series (Clover, 1992; Dika, 1990).

I have also restricted my research to films featuring male killers, having found that female killers are treated quite differently in fictional and journalistic representations. Femininity is scrutinised in a way masculinity is not (Birch, 1993; Cameron and Frazer, 1987). True crime literature tends to identify female killers as particularly intriguing, noting its rarity while referring to misogynistic stereotypes and depicting female violence as a transgression of femininity (Birch, 1993; Dunning, 1983; Kelleher and Kelleher, 1998; Wilson, 1995). Conversely, male violence is concealed within gender neutral terminology, as I discussed in the literature review. Cinematic representations often use the figure of the femme fatale to delineate the female killer (Holmlund, 1993: 130). It would not be possible to explore this very different killer in the available space, as the female killer's femininity is subject to surveillance, while the male killer's neutral, universal status protects masculinity from similar scrutiny (Rehling, 2007). As the appendix indicates, four of the films do feature female killers, but only as subsidiaries to the dominant male killer, and in order to provide a twist which stresses the masculine dominance of the killer.

An important aspect of this thesis concerns the status of a *normative* masculinity which is hierarchised over other masculinities. As my analyses will show, masculinity is interwoven with other identities, most significantly those of class and racial origin. In American cinema, normative masculinity tends to refer to white, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual men. The fact that these other aspects must be overtly stated as indicators of 'normality' supports Dyer and Rehling's stress on normative masculinity as neutral and

invisible by virtue of its omniscience (Dyer, 2002; Rehling, 2009). Work on masculinity cannot ignore the associated racial, gendered and sexual identities interlinked with maleness. While I focus on masculinity, I also take account of the other aspects of identity where they are important. Although class origins of the killers vary, as table one demonstrates, their racial origins rarely do so. The varying of class origins often reflects the way in which the killer is depicted, with middle class killers frequently portrayed more sympathetically than those affiliated with the working class. Apart from two instances, the killer is always white, and in the two exceptions, the black killer's atypicality is underlined (he is a ghost in *Candyman* (Bernard Rose, 1992) and his race provides a twist in *Switchback* (Jeb Stuart, 1997)).⁸

The remainder of this chapter will outline the conventions of the categories I investigate in this thesis, before the analysis chapters explore these trends in relation to the themes I have identified. I have identified four cycles from the films included here. The first, the profiler film, develops between the late 1970s and the late 2000s. Significant shifts within this cycle have prompted me to split this cycle into two groupings: the 1980s and the 1990s movies. Additionally, I have isolated the portrait cycle, torture porn films and protagonist-killer films as smaller but important cycles.

The Profiler Cycle

Of the eighty-three films I have selected, forty-eight can be described as profiler narratives. Seventeen are produced between 1978 and 1991, an average of just over one a year, before the number jumps to twenty-four from 1991 to 2000. From 2001 to 2008, seven profiler films are released, evidence of the cycle's exhaustion as the torture porn and protagonist-killer films succeed and subvert the undiluted profiler film. To simplify my categories I will refer to the seven later profiler films as 1990s films as they continue to demonstrate the key trends of this decade despite appearing a few years later. While there is a significant body of work on several of the profiler films, I have not found a study which follows the development of this cycle in depth - they are either treated individually or subsumed into wider groupings.

⁸ In an interview accompanying the *Switchback* DVD, Danny Glover, who plays the killer, states that although he was originally approached to play another character he asked to play the murderer, suggesting that the killer may have been written as white.

The profiler film follows conventions typical of the thriller, detective film and police procedural. A cause and effect narrative structure highlights tension and suspense. We follow events with the profiler protagonist, and although scenes featuring the killer before he is identified vary from glimpses (*The Dead Zone* (David Cronenberg, 1983); *Tightrope* (Richard Tuggle 1984)) to significant subplots (*Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986)), we usually learn the identity of the killer along with the profiler. Dyer points out that the serial nature of the crime ensures that once apparently motiveless murders are linked together as part of a 'pattern', future deaths are guaranteed until the killer is found. Specific time between the killings, or between the abduction and killing of each victim, increases tension. Traditional law enforcement is incapable of comprehending this type of crime, isolating the profiler as the only person capable of tackling the killer. A clearly defined aim (to catch the killer) is stated; minor goals are achieved along the way (determining the killer's pattern, working out clues); obstacles slow progress to provide more tension (another abduction, the distrust of other law enforcement officials); and finally the profiler finds the killer and usually saves his latest victim. While there are variations to this model, as is typical of any cycle, the profiler films tend to follow this basic and very familiar formula.

As I discussed in the literature review, the profiler is a special individual with an instinctive talent for understanding the killer. S/he is not always a law enforcement professional but does demonstrate skills which allude to surveillance, to a special ability to see more than others, and to interpret clues imaginatively. S/he is often a police officer or FBI agent but can also be a photographer, journalist, psychic, academic, psychologist or pathologist. Each of these activities relate in some way to monitoring and observation, tapping into the notion of the expert in surveillance who combats the killer through matching his ability to survey society. The depiction of a detective figure as the possessor of a special way of seeing is not new; two early fictional detectives, Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin and Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes, both display an extraordinary talent for observation (Gates, 2006: 56; Summerscale, 2008: 276). In many ways the profiler is a return to these pre-professional/bureaucratic detectives, as s/he works outside the administrative, state-sanctioned judicial authorities associated with 20th/21st Century detection and relies on intuition and instinct.

The depiction of the profiler as exhibiting abilities which go beyond traditional detection is a defining feature of this figure. The FBI's construction of profiling as mobilising innovative, specially devised methods to tackle a new and strange threat, which is

discussed in the previous chapter, is influential here. Thomas Harris' well-publicised research at the FBI's Behavioural Sciences Unit is especially illustrative of this connection, particularly as his books emphasise vision and his protagonists' talent for seeing, and his books and their film adaptations have further shaped later films. The first film character to be overtly identified as a profiler is Will Graham (William Petersen) in 1986's *Manhunter*, based on Harris' first Lecter novel *Red Dragon* (1981). Retired from the Behavioural Sciences Unit after a breakdown following an attack by the now captured killer Hannibal Lecter (Brian Cox), Graham is asked to consult on a particularly vicious (he kills entire families) and elusive killer (leaving little forensic evidence, killing without apparent motive). Graham's isolation, seemingly a consequence of his skills and one shared by other fictional profilers (and, as I argued in the previous chapter, suggested by some true crime depictions of real profilers), is only highlighted by his return to his former Unit. His colleagues are equally impressed and alarmed by his ability to identify and interpret clues they miss and to think as the killer does. The film repeatedly links Graham's special skills to sight and surveillance as he studies the crime scenes and evidence with his own eyes rather than scientific tools and finally recognises how to catch the killer as he watches the same home movies which have inspired the voyeuristic killer (Badley, 1995: 148).

Yet the profiler film's 1978 start point precedes by a few years the circulation in popular culture of the FBI-defined profiler concept, suggesting that other factors are at work. My use of the term profiler to describe this figure even when to do so is anachronistic is aimed at highlighting the way in which the specific needs of the FBI and various cultural developments converge to construct this character. Pre-*Manhunter* profilers demonstrate, like Will Graham, a special talent for recognising and interpreting clues which is linked to sight, an affinity for monitoring those around them, an eerie doubling with the killer and a resulting sense of isolation and alienation from the rest of society.

Cinematic depictions of the profiler differ from the real FBI's portrayal of this process by emphasising intuition over bureaucratic systems. Using the term profiler to describe non-FBI affiliated investigatory figures allows me to acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between different branches of serial killer discourse. The FBI profiler works in a team and uses computer databases, crime scene analysis and behavioural categories to identify killers. These methods are quite unlike the empathetic, lone cinematic profiler who rejects bureaucratic procedures. While my definition may seem counterintuitive, I use the term to highlight the way in which the film profiler coincides with popular accounts of the FBI's success, in which individuals are celebrated for their extraordinary skills, bravery and

instinctive affinity with the killers (Jenkins, 1994; Schmid, 2005; Tithecott, 1997).

Accounts by founder profilers Robert Ressler and John Douglas are particularly notable for their celebration of their own maverick tendencies, depicting their struggles against unwieldy and outmoded FBI procedures. Ressler and Douglas both highlight their need to understand the killer over scientific, technical skills (Douglas, 2007; Ressler, 1992). The 1989 television series *Unsub* (Stephen J Cannell Productions, NBC), which follows a team of FBI profilers using administrative profiling (psychological investigation, crime scene analysis) is a rare example of fictional profiling which focuses on the categorisation-based, information management procedures developed by the FBI. Characters often wear lab coats, emphasising the scientific basis of their investigative techniques, study the crime scene to classify the killer and refer to computer databases such as VICAP. The failure of the series (it ran for only eight episodes) indicates that this portrayal of profiling did not respond to popular concerns in the same way as the intuitive profiler.

Critiques of profiling argue that these concepts are heavily mythologised by the FBI. Tales of heroic profilers risking physical and psychological safety are compared to “shamanism” rather than science, with communication with incarcerated killers particularly important (Jenkins, 1994: 110). This promotion of profiling echoes the mythological American hero whose affinity for criminals offers him unique opportunities to catch them yet requires that he remains outside the community he defends (Gates, 2006: 31-4). Ressler and Douglas interviewed incarcerated killers as research for the behavioural categories they developed, and stress the traumatic effects on their mental and physical health. Ressler’s autobiography takes its title from the Friedrich Nietzsche quote warning of the dangers of empathising with evil (Ressler, 1992).⁹ Yet Jenkins argues that the FBI and related media coverage cannot have been entirely responsible for the embedding of the profiler in the public consciousness; other factors must have contributed to this development (1994: 219).

My research indicates that the films I discuss here constitute one of these factors. The FBI’s construction of the profiler throughout the late 1970s and 1980s and the cinematic figure seen battling the serial killer since 1978’s *Eyes of Laura Mars* (Irvin Kershner) converged to add a glamorous spin to the FBI’s profiler figure and a sense of authenticity to the film version which grew closer throughout the 1980s. The early films cannot have aspired to offer a template to the FBI, yet from *Manhunter* onwards many affected a

⁹ Ressler cites the quote at the beginning of the book, framing his experiences as a psychological rites of passage in much the same way as the profiler film: “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.”

legitimacy through references to real cases; Hannibal Lecter author Thomas Harris is commonly referenced as an important figure in these developments (Jenkins, 1994; Schmid, 2005; Seltzer, 1998; Tithecott, 1997).¹⁰ However, the four films pre-dating the 1981 publication of Harris' first Lecter novel, *Red Dragon*, exhibit the aspects which remained definitive: the profiler is a solitary figure of defence against the killer yet is implicated in the killer's violence, and relies on instinct and intuition over traditional detection. In circumventing official procedures, the profilers "embody the contradictory notion of 'authentic' nationalistic American values of individualism", making them outlaws who are "different from their quarry only in degree and manner of transgression" (Simpson, 2000: 85). The films and the FBI both tapped into ideology - American individualism and frontier rhetoric, anti-feminist backlash, distrust of bureaucracy - hugely popular at the time.

These versions of the profiler figure interacted as the serial killer panic developed ensuring that the profiler remained associated with a romanticised idea of individual valour. It is for this reason that I use the term profiler even when it is anachronistic, as the concept exists as a discursive figure in the same way as the serial killer. Even when authenticity is stressed, the profiler does not refer to profiler classifications such as organised or disorganised, but instead suggests a less rational, more mystical effort to think like the killer. This concept of thinking like the killer is a central focus of the profiler film and is one way in which the killer and profiler are uncannily doubled. The films use lighting, dialogue, camera angles and editing to suggest eerie connections between the two characters, implicating the profiler in the killer's violence.

As I have argued, a major influence on these conventions is Gothic fiction, which has shaped serial killer discourse since the figure was recognised (Boyle, 1995; Walkowitz, 1982). The films' emphasis on doubling throughout the cycle and the dark, labyrinthine visuals of many of the later examples of these movies (particularly *Seven* and *The Bone Collector* (Phillip Noyce, 1999) allude to familiar Gothic tropes (Cettl, 2003; Halberstam, 1995). Additionally, the contemporaneous neo-noir cycle which developed in the 1980s and 1990s has been linked to the profiler film, with the "sick psychic connection the killer sets up with the hero" echoing hero/*femme fatale* noir traditions, particularly as both the

¹⁰ The 2003 director's cut of 1986's *Manhunter*, based on Harris' novel *Red Dragon*, features additional references to administrative profiling (the type of offender, rituals), demonstrating an effort to reconcile the 1980s gap between FBI profiling and the cinematic version, despite much-publicised input from the FBI in the writing of the source novel and filming of the movie. It suggests an increase in interest in administrative profiling recognised by the director's cut and evident in television series *Criminal Minds*, which is close to *Unsub* in its depiction of a team of science-focused profilers but has achieved far greater success.

killer and *femme fatale* threaten the normalised heterosexual relationship of the protagonist (Kaplan, 1998: 12). The troubled detective protagonist typical of 1940s noir foreshadows the isolated, alienated profiler and returns in the neo-noir at the same time as the profiler film develops. The noir-influenced visuals of some of the films - *Manhunter*, *Cop* (James B Harris, 1988) and *Sea of Love* (Harold Becker, 1989) in particular - also suggests a connection between these two cycles. *Sea of Love* addresses this link more directly by implying that the *femme fatale*-styled Helen (Ellen Barker) is murdering men she has recently dated, putting Frank (Al Pacino), the detective who falls in love with her, at particular risk; only at the end do we discover her ex-husband is responsible.

Various explanations may account for this parallel. It is possible that the 1980s revival of noir at the same time as the serial killer figure became prevalent in popular culture offered familiar conventions into which the serial killer could be assimilated, containing this violent character within pre-existing narrative traditions. It may also be the case that the cultural conditions which revitalised noir similarly influenced depictions of the serial killer. The reappearance of the *femme fatale* has been attributed to the 1980s anti-feminist backlash; similarly, the profiler film's focus on a struggle between men over (mainly female) passive victims can be related to the marginalisation of women in popular cultural narratives (Faludi, 1991). That these films also frequently allude to familiar misogynistic concepts regarding the killer (Caputi, 1987:64) - blaming an abusive grand/mother in *Eyes of Laura Mars*, *The Dead Zone* (David Cronenberg, 1983) *Manhunter*, *Striking Distance* (Rowdy Herrington, 1993) and *Replicant* (Ringo Lam, 2001) and seductive women in *Cop*, *Sea of Love* and *Twisted* (Philip Kaufman, 2004) - also indicates a noir-like tendency to attribute male violence to manipulative women.

However, the profiler film often downplays sexual motives. Of the forty-eight films, only a third depict killers who appear to be motivated by sexual sadism. As I note in table one, defining motive is difficult as the films do not always explain the killer's reasons. I have therefore summarised the motives suggested by the films, and have found that relatively few link the motive to sexual gratification despite a general understanding of the serial killer as sexually motivated. Cameron and Frazer describe the serial killer as a "variant" on the sexually motivated killer (1987: 156), while the terms serial killer and sex killer are often used interchangeably in true crime literature. I do not believe this discrepancy to be explained by a reticence to depict sexual violence (particularly since many of the victims are young, attractive women, regardless of motive). Rather, it could be argued that the variety of motives (from a desire for fame or transformation to a metaphysical evil) offers

a more ‘interesting’ motive for the profiler to investigate. Rape and sexual assault are coded as somehow expected in these films; it is the absence of obvious sexual injuries which make the killer distinctive and fascinating. In framing serial killing within a puzzle, the films downplay the experiences of the victims while promoting the killer and profiler as intriguing, absorbing characters. The many examples of ‘Ripperology’ which offer elaborate conspiracies illustrate this tendency to suggest patterns, hidden meanings and intellectual interest in otherwise random murders. As well as offering a way of structuring events (the portrait film, examined later in this chapter, demonstrates the inaccessibility and abstruseness of serial killer films which do not adhere to classical narrative traditions), the emphasis on puzzles and the uncovering of meaning offer audiences pleasurable repetition and patterns (Dyer, 1997: 16). It also provides closure as each killer’s motive is explained and the significance of his series revealed, while the power structures which influence the demographics of this form of violence remain obscured (Boyle, 2005: 134).

Another effect of this stress on patterns and meaning is to distance the profiler film from the slasher cycle. The slasher and profiler films both developed throughout the late 1970s and 1980s and exhibit similar influences (the giallo, contemporary concerns regarding violent crime), yet the slasher’s teenage/young adult audience differs from that of the profiler. Casting and marketing of the profiler film suggests it is aimed at a slightly older audience more interested in mystery/thriller than horror conventions. The focus on investigating the killer distinguishes the profiler film from the slasher, a differentiation which was perhaps necessary throughout the 1980s as the slasher enjoyed particular commercial success and cultural saturation yet encountered controversy as a result of its violent and low-art origins. Clover’s description of *Silence of the Lambs* as a “slasher [...] for yuppies”, and her insistence on the exploitation origins of various glossy mainstream hits, underlines the slippage between low and high cultural forms (1992: 232). This obscuring of the profiler film’s affinity to cruder, less sophisticated cultural forms is intensified in the 1990s, when the profiler cycle is increasingly successful as the slasher film fades. Before exploring this development, I discuss the key trends of the 1980s profiler film.

The 1980s Profiler Film

Although I define this first group of films within the decade in which most were produced, they actually span 1978 to 1990. Of the fourteen 1980s profiler films, only one features a

profiler who is not a white male: the first film, *Eyes of Laura Mars*, features a female fashion photographer in the role of profiler. In most other respects, *Eyes of Laura Mars* is quite typical of the first phase of the profiler cycle, and I will use this first film to explore the main aspects of the 1980s films.

Eyes of Laura Mars demonstrates the profiler film's depiction of vision as gendered and potentially threatening. Laura's (Faye Dunaway) art depicts attractive models in violent poses; when her colleagues are targeted by a serial killer, she discovers that her photographs unwittingly mimic the crime scenes of an active killer. She 'sees' the killings as they happen in psychic visions in which she experiences the murderer's acts through his perspective. Clover argues that Laura's status as a "conduit" for the killer reinforces the masculine gendering of the assaultive gaze; the gender twist suggested by the portrayal of an independent, creative woman dealing with violence is undermined, particularly when the killer is revealed to be her lover, a detective traumatised by an abusive mother (1992: 183). Laura's visions are terrifying and unhelpful in identifying the killer (since she 'sees' *with* him, she cannot describe him). Yet the linking of Laura and the killer demonstrates the concept of the profiler and the killer as sharing a special kind of sight which remains important throughout the cycle. Additionally, the characterisation of the killer as a disciplinary force - a detective entrusted to monitor the community who kills individuals involved in violent, sexually suggestive art (most of them female models), his aggression explained by an abusive mother - signals the gendered surveillance suggested here.

Despite the positioning of the film within the horror genre suggested by its supernatural plot and marketing, there is far less violence depicted than in the same year's *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978), and what does occur is obscured by Laura's blurry mediation. Like *Halloween*, *Eyes of Laura Mars* offers the killer's perspective through the first person camera, but these sequences are significantly shorter in the latter, and the shot frequently cuts from the killer's/Laura's hazy point of view to Laura's blind stumbling in a different location. Other profiler films of the 1980s are similarly reticent. Attacks are implied or shown in short, indistinct sequences. There is little depiction of bodies or the crime scene: in *Manhunter*, we watch through the killer's eyes as he walks towards his victims before the scene cuts. We glimpse bodies in *The Dead Zone*, *The Mean Season* and *The Exorcist III* (William Peter Blatty, 1990), but there is little gore depicted until the final fight between killer and profiler.

Throughout the film, the profiler is increasingly isolated from other people and from institutions which would normally control the investigation. The depiction of the profiler's isolation and submersion in the world of the killer ranges from the sanity-questioning Will Graham of *Manhunter* to the eccentric but affable Nick (Kevin Kline) in *The January Man* (Pat O'Connor, 1989). While some profilers do receive limited help from others, this support often reinforces the extraordinariness of the profiler, as these other characters function as spectators to the profiler's work, prompting the audience's reaction. In *Manhunter* and *The Mean Season* the profiler is framed in ways which convey his detachment from other characters. This conspicuousness is particularly evident in *Off Limits* (Christopher Crowe, 1988), in which the profiler is a white army investigator in 1970s Saigon and surrounded by men and women of different races. The film is unusually open in linking him to violence: all the other white men in the film are violent sadists protected by the authority of the invading American army, though ultimately the profiler is redeemed through his discovery of the killer and increasingly close relationships with a white nun and black fellow investigator.

The most consistent elements of the 1980s profiler films are the doubling between killer and (usually white and male) gifted but isolated profiler, the limited gore and violence, and the depiction of profiling in quasi-mystical rather than administrative/detective terms. These traits carry into the 1990s films, which form a far tighter group following massive success in the first few years.

The 1990s Profiler Film

I have identified the beginning of the 1990s films as the 1991 release of *The Silence of the Lambs*, which achieved huge critical and commercial success and has remained an iconic representation of the killer and profiler. Altogether, thirty films make up the 1990s cycle, which lasts until 2004's *Twisted*, making this group of films the largest and longest-lasting of the cycles discussed here. The success of *The Silence of the Lambs* has been related to its release in close proximity to the discovery of the Jeffrey Dahmer murders (Tithecott, 1997), as well as to a generalised shift towards active women in thriller and action films. Additionally, the casting of a woman in a traditionally male role may have increased its crossover appeal and legitimised the portrayal of violence since it is combated by a female protagonist. It also coincided with a number of film and television crime-based narratives featuring women in lead roles typically associated with men, from *Thelma and Louise*

(Ridley Scott, 1991) and *Blue Steel* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1989) to the television drama *Prime Suspect* (Granada Television/ITV Productions, 1991), suggesting a more general cultural shift resulting in greater visibility for women and ethnic minorities in authoritative roles (Gates, 2005: 193).

The Silence of the Lambs is representative of a number of typically 1990s profiler conventions, most notably the casting of a female lead. While the 1980s profilers are distinct from action heroes (focusing on thought and intelligence over physical strength), they are represented almost entirely by white men. The inclusion of other identities may have less to do with the development of the profiler film than with more general contemporaneous changes in attitudes towards the type of people offered lead roles in mainstream Hollywood. Additionally, it could be argued that the profiler's dependence on brain over brawn makes it easier to install women and non-white men into this role. From 1991 to 2004, eleven women appear as profilers, five profilers are black, and seven films feature a variety of races and genders working together to defeat the killer. This signifies an interesting development, particularly as some of these profilers work in interracial/gender teams. Of the thirty-one profiler films released from 1991, twelve do not feature a white male profiler figure (excluding instances in which a killer demonstrates profiling abilities), suggesting a significant, if not overwhelming, development from the almost entirely white, masculine world in which profiling is constructed in the 1980s.

The taking up of the profiler role by those who are traditionally marginalised underlines the outsider status of this position. Rehling suggests that the usually implicit linking of white men and violence is highlighted by the black or female profiler who is associated with moral authority and able to distance themselves from the violence of the white man they seek (Rehling, 2009: 237-8). At the same time as these othered profilers appear, the depiction of the serial killer shifts towards the "extra-ordinary ordinary", where a lack of self-distinction caused by the neutral status of white masculinity leads to violence (2009: 240). The 1990s films also depict increasingly exaggerated killers whose cruelty, physical strength and mental acuity shifts the films towards the fantastical.

Related to this point is a new emphasis on the crime scene, which in the 1990s tends to be elaborate and a key concern for the profiler. From *The Silence of the Lambs* onwards, the crime scene is often gory but impressive. It reinforces the lack of individuality accorded to the victims by depicting them as objects (it is rare to see victims before or during their murder). The study of crime scenes demonstrates the film's assimilation of forensic crime

narratives during a decade of growing interest in forensics (Turnbull 2007, 26). However, the treatment of evidence, detection and the body is very different from that of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (Atlantic Alliance, CBS, 2004 -) as the profiler film treats the body as part of the crime scene. For forensic drama, however, the body *is* the scene, and forensic narratives demonstrate a fascination with the interior of the body (Jermyn 2007, 79; Weissmann and Boyle 2007, 92-3). The profiler film highlights intuition, empathy and innate talent as essential skills in a serial killer case, while forensic drama privileges scientific investigation. Actual BSU-style profiling - the categorisation of killers as dis/organised, estimates of their age and race - are rarely discussed in the profiler film. Instead, it is the profiler's ability to intuit the experience of the killer which is detailed.

As the dissimilarity with forensic drama suggests, this study of the killer is not scientific; instead, it is often linked to art. The profiler's study of the crime scene resembles the work of an art critic rather than that of a scientist or detective. S/he rarely examines fingerprints, DNA evidence or fibre samples. Instead, the scene is meticulously explored visually by both the profiler and the camera. This specifically 1990s idea is foreshadowed in earlier films (most notably in *Eyes of Laura Mars*, in which the killer and fashion photographer profiler unconsciously recreate each other's crime scenes/pictures). However, the 1990s films focus on the crime scene to a far greater extent than most earlier films, suggesting the killer's desire for surveillance. The elaborate staging of murder sites in *Copycat* (Jon Amiel, 1995), *Virtuosity* (Brett Leonard, 1995), *The Bone Collector* and *D-Tox* (Jim Gillespie, 2002) offers insight into the killer's "rigidly-defined aesthetico-moral code" rather than the manner of the deaths (Schneider, 2004: 113). The body is frequently almost incidental as it merges into dark, Gothic and often subterranean spaces (in films featuring less romanticised spaces, such as *Copycat* and *Virtuosity*, the scenes are manipulated by the murderer to resemble the crimes of earlier killers rather than painterly compositions, maintaining the sense of precision and cultural contribution). The carefully rendered crime scenes of *Seven*, in which the killer's "lofty indifference [...] allows him to organise his carnage expressively", are interpreted as "performance art" by both the profiler, whose literary knowledge allows him to recognise the allusions present in the murders, and film critics (Dyer, 1999: 45).

Similarly, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, the "performance-art murder of a guard is set to classical music", further positioning the crime scene as an object of artistic rather than scientific study (Schneider, 2004: 113). Interestingly, while this murder, by the well-educated, highly intelligent and snobbish Lecter (Anthony Hopkins), is portrayed within

these artistic framings, those by the lower class Jame Gumb (Ted Levine) are not depicted in the same way. We see his attack in a more realist fashion, as he abducts and beats a woman, and we study in a more scientific, *CSI*-style way an earlier victim whose body Agent Starling (Jodie Foster) examines. The class difference denoted by these two killers' differing crime scenes suggests that the more 'artistic' killers tend to be linked to economically privileged social classes.

The shift towards artistic allusions in the 1990s films can also be related to the increasingly mainstream positioning of the profiler film. References to high art and literature distance the pattern-obsessed serial killer from the random slasher killer as "they exhibit a high degree of thought, creativity, and skill; they are not mere slashers" (Schneider, 2004: 113). Clover's work on the exploitation origins of glossy blockbusters is relevant here as the killer's artistic construction of the scene, and the profiler's surveillance of this site within cultural terms rather than scientific investigation, consolidates existing ideas relating to the killer as artist in order to dissociate the profiler film from less respected films. Citing high cultural texts, then, distinguishes both the killer and the film from supposedly cruder examples. This hierarchising makes the killer worthy of study on a diegetic level (his privileged class origins make him more interesting and his violence more difficult to explain) and also enhances the aura of sophistication around the film.

Towards the end of the 1990s, profiler film numbers reach three or four a year, but in 2001, the profiler film declines. Although the profiler film crosses genre classifications, its increasing diversity in the first few years of the 2000s suggests that the cycle reaches saturation at the turn of the century. New 'twists' are evident in a number of short-lived trends - trapping a group of profilers in a confined setting with a killer in *D-Tox* and *Mindhunters* (Renny Harlin, 2004), undermining the female profiler by having her fall in love with a killer (*Taking Lives*, D J Caruso, 2004) or fear that she is a murderer herself (*Twisted*) - but these fail to achieve the financial and critical success of earlier films. The drop in interest in the profiler film is also evident in the presence of less high profile actors and directors, and in limited marketing campaigns. Market saturation is one factor in this development, as is the gradual move towards depicting the serial killer as a safer fear as other, more immediate threats take precedence (Schmid, 2005). As the profiler film fades, however, three different cycles appear in reaction to these developments.

The Post-profiler Film

These three cycles have received limited academic attention and only one (torture porn) has been identified previously. They offer a new way of understanding the profiler film as many of their conventions subvert established profiler traditions; however, they are each interesting cycles in their own right, and provide insight into the cultural meanings of the serial killer in the 2000s.

The Portrait Film

I have identified as the portrait film a group of films which appeared in the 1980s (with four films released) but which grew significantly in the 2000s (sixteen released since 2001). These films are low-budget, appeal to niche rather than mainstream markets and focus on real killers. Their factual basis is highlighted in marketing (posters stress the accuracy of the depiction, although they often depart considerably from accepted fact) and positions them in contrast to the fictional and increasingly embellished profiler film. They are overwhelmingly straight-to-DVD releases and their cast and directors are not recognisable to mainstream audiences.

I use the term 'portrait' to both recognise the status of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* as a paradigm and suggest that their distinctive depiction of the killer aims to represent him in an impressionistic, abstract way. The second of the early portrait films, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, is the only one to have attained cultural and scholarly recognition and structures many of the popular responses to the later films, as chapter five illustrates. This film demonstrates the loose narrative structure and absence of motivation which defines the portrait film. The audience is left somewhat adrift, with particularly uneconomic narratives. In insisting on the banality of the killer, the portrait film constructs the figure very differently from the fetishised 'abnormally normal' profiler film killer.

A lack of narrative closure and a reluctance to adhere to classical narrative conventions define the portrait film. The portrait film lacks the reassuring presence of the profiler; there is no figure of authority to identify and contain the killer, who often remains free at the end. The rejection of pleasurable patterns and familiar structures associated with the profiler film (Dyer, 1997: 16) makes these two cycles very different viewing experiences,

and this opposition of the mainstream, relatively comfortable profiler film and the unpredictable portrait has been recognised in academic responses to *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (Bates, 1990; Cettl, 2003). Whereas the profiler films, especially those of the 1990s, offer polished, sophisticated film-making and elaborate, carefully staged and subtly filmed crime scenes, the portrait films often appear amateur. The pace is very slow, with little build-up of tension before murders. Crime scenes are not afforded the significance they represent in profiler films, the narrative often jumps abruptly without establishing shots between scenes, events are rarely explained. Some films - *Dahmer* (David Jacobson, 2002), *BTK* (Michael Feifer, 2008), *Son of Sam* (Ulli Lommel, 2008) - end sharply, suggesting the narrative we have followed is unreliable and non-chronological.

The alienating effects of these films expose the reassurance and safety offered by the familiar profiler conventions. The portrait film does not assimilate the activities of the killer into a logical narrative, a decision which acknowledges the messiness of real crime (and the impossibility of ever knowing the 'true' story) yet also characterises the killer as beyond understanding, a portrayal which further enhances the intriguing fascination of this figure. Unlike true crime literature, which offers claims of authenticity and authority in referring to official accounts (interviews with police officers) and the experiences of real people caught up in the events (surviving victims, bereaved relatives), the portrait film defers indefinitely any hope of understanding the killer and his crimes. Unlike true crime's "forensic realism" (Seltzer, 2007: 41), which highlights place, description of victims, and chronology of events, the portrait film has an ambiguous relationship to the factual events they reference in their titles and marketing.

One feature which does concur with typical serial killer formulae is the depiction of victims as interchangeable and anonymous. While elaborate motives and a desire for patterns are not evident in the portrayal of these killers, who (unlike the profiler killer) are mostly sexually motivated, the focus on the killer means that the experiences of the victim are effaced. Two films - *Dahmer* and *Chicago Massacre: Richard Speck* (Michael Feifer, 2007) - relate events partly through the perspective of a (real) surviving victim, but the audience's privileged knowledge of the events (even if unfamiliar with the real killer, we learn of his violence at the start of the film) is likely to undermine our identification with these characters. In their rejection of profiler conventions, then, the portrait film offers a relatively unusual depiction of the killer which is nevertheless contained within a basic understanding of the killer as aberrant, inexplicable and fascinating.

As table one indicates, the 2000s portrait films are further split into two categories in order to recognise major stylistic differences. The coherent portrait films, lasting from 2000 until 2007, are distinguished by their meandering but not unintelligible plots, relatively traditional cuing of subjective point of view shots, general adherence to the main facts of the case, and obvious efforts to adhere to their period settings. Conversely, the chaotic portrait film (2002 - 2008) presents events non-chronologically, abandoning classical narrative conventions to leave the audience uncertain of events, locations and characters. The anarchic world portrayed in these films is not made comprehensible through the imposition of a traditional narrative. Their distancing devices - unmotivated editing, disconnected shots, lengthy and detached voice-overs - and the apparently very cheap production methods differentiate them from the coherent portrait film, as they make no effort to disguise their low budgets (although the DVD box covers suggest more expensive visuals and greater adherence to the horror genre).

While the entire portrait film cycle only comprises twenty films over twenty-one years, the growth in these films at the beginning of the 2000s (sixteen between 2000 and 2008) suggests this grouping is particularly time-sensitive. Some of the factors which contribute to the end of the profiler cycle initiate the 2000s portrait cycle. The appearance of new threats such as terrorism and school shootings, for example, may make the serial killer a relatively nostalgic anxiety at the turn of the century (Schmid, 2005). Additionally, the success of the profiler film itself along with other 1990s serial killer narratives such as *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994), *Summer of Sam*, Patricia Cornwell's Scarpetta novels and true crime cable television documentaries, may have inspired interest in real killers on whom fiction is based. Their marketing supports this possibility. The first 2000s portrait film, *Ed Gein*, highlights the case's role in popular culture in the poster text, which describes it as: "the true story that inspired *Psycho*... *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*... *Silence of the Lambs*". *Starkweather* is described as "the shocking true story that inspired *True Romance*, *Kalifornia*, *Natural Born Killers*", linking the film to familiar fictional film killers.¹¹ Allusions to authenticity and the promise of revealing the factual roots of popular cinematic killers are significant features of this niche market.

Additionally, it may also be the case that the increasingly exaggerated cinematic serial killers of the late 1990s, whose intelligence, strength and manipulative powers often reach

¹¹ *True Romance* (Tony Scott, 1993) does not feature a serial killer, but its reference here can be explained by its own history as heavily influenced by *Badlands* (Terrence Malick, 1973), itself based on the Starkweather case but less recent and recognisable than the successful, Quentin Tarantino-scripted version.

superhuman proportions, open up a space for more realistic depictions of a popular figure. The portrait films can be understood as both benefiting from and reacting to the saturation of the profiler cycle and chapter five of this thesis explores this category's particular relationship to my key themes.

The Protagonist-Killer Film

Throughout the 1990s, a trend for powerful, intelligent and sometimes victorious killers is detectable. In some cases the killer is particularly skilled at profiling, further underlining its importance in serial killer discourse. Yet while the portrait film subverts this convention by depicting unsuccessful, insecure, more credible characters, eight films released from 2001 present a killer who defeats the profiler and usually has a larger role in the narrative. Additionally, a tonal shift is evident from the relative seriousness of the 1980s and 1990s profiler film to a lighter, semi-comedic, knowing mode of address. I have called this category the protagonist-killer film in recognition of the downgrading of the profiler's status in favour of greater focus on the killer.

These films maintain the crucial elements of the profiler narratives: they are goal-orientated, although it is often the objectives of the killer rather than profiler which are central to the film. Although they do not achieve the same level of commercial and critical success as the peak 1990s films, they are mainstream productions with known stars and theatrical distribution. Patterns and structures remain important both to the structure of the film and the killer. The key differences are the usual failure of the profiler to catch the killer and the equal screen time devoted to the killer and profiler.

The protagonist-killer films focus on serial killing as a vocation rather than pathology, offering him an authority through his expertise in serial killing which is also evident in true crime and journalistic representations (Schmid, 2006: 280). The destabilising of the films' identificatory structures, often through climactic revelatory twists, further enhances the killer's power: we discover we have been unwittingly aligned with the killer in *Frailty* (Bill Paxton, 2001) and *Surveillance* (Jennifer Lynch, 2008). Unlike the 1980s and 1990s films, our sympathies are often split: unreliable narration, blurring of the killer/profiler divide and the depiction of vigilante killers subvert conventions established by twenty years of profiler films. This subversion is quite deliberate, mobilising our expectations of the profiler film before revealing that the killer will escape ((*Hannibal* (Ridley Scott,

2001), *Hannibal Rising* (Peter Webber, 2007), *Mr Brooks* (Bruce A. Evans, 2007)), or, even if caught, is himself an exceptional profiler (*Red Dragon* (Brett Ratner, 2002), *Suspect Zero*). The suppressive narratives of *Frailty*, *Righteous Kill* (Jon Avnet, 2008) and *Surveillance* reveal only at the end that the protagonists are serial killers. With the exception of *Righteous Kill* and *Suspect Zero*, each of these films demonstrate a significantly lighter tone than the profiler movies, using editing, music and casting to reveal the 'twist' in a frivolous rather than shocking manner, closer to the thrilling, mischievous conclusions of *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, 1995) and *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) than the shocking denouement of *Seven*.

While some films depict the killer's outwitting of the profiler (a trait that starts in the 1990s, with the shock endings of *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Copycat* and *Seven*), others depict the killer as usurping this role. Again, this idea extends as far back as the 1980s films, in which the boundary between killer and profiler is always dangerously porous; for Schmid, this idea is encapsulated by "Lecter syndrome" (Schmid, 2005: 280), a phenomenon wherein serial killers are consulted about other killers and which becomes particularly important in the protagonist-killer film. The increase in vigilante-motivated killers is a related way in which the profiler/killer demarcation becomes increasingly blurred, particularly when the killer targets other killers, as in *Frailty*, *Suspect Zero*, *Hannibal Rising* and *Righteous Kill*. Like the similarly themed television series *Dexter*, these films reinforce the killer's associations with surveillance by connecting him to official monitoring authorities.

I have argued that the concept of the serial killer as an agent of surveillance runs throughout serial killer discourse, using the examples of Jack the Ripper and Peter Sutcliffe to suggest that surveillance by the state often coincides with that of the serial killer. In some ways, then, these texts offer the possibility of critiquing similarities between the serial killer and repressive power structures. However, it is more often the case that the killer's targeting of 'bad' individuals instead offers the audience the vicarious thrill of identifying with a serial killer whose damage is perceived as limited as long as they kill criminals. Of the protagonist-killer films, only *Surveillance* depicts 'innocent' victims - in the other films, victims are portrayed as partly culpable for their own fates as they are themselves homicidal, sleazy, rude and/or greedy. These films imply their killers have some kind of moral boundary which protects the innocent, an idea which is not prevalent in the 1980s or 1990s films. Table one demonstrates this shift from victims (usually selected

at random as they fit a certain pattern determined by the killer, to a narrower focus on dislikeable or even murderous individuals.

As well as emphasising the killer's surveillance skills, this shift contributes to a portrayal of the killer which differs quite considerably from earlier depictions. By making his victims less likeable (though they remain relatively unindividualised and interchangeable) and his motives less obscure, the audience is encouraged to empathise with the killer. Unlike the shadowy, peripheral figure of most profiler films, he is usually present throughout the protagonist-killer narrative (even if we do not at first know he is the killer) and we gain greater insight into his experiences. Crucially, this understanding of the killer is less likely to be gained through our alignment with the profiler but rather directly from our own observation of the killer, who is now more able to escape the scrutiny of other characters. Additionally, the depiction of other, more brutal (and often working class) criminals sometimes provides a hierarchy within the film which aligns us with a particular killer. These films feature less emphasis on the crime scene, partly because we now spend more time with the killer and so do not need to investigate him via the scene. Though we do see profilers study scenes, they are not as elaborate as those of the 1990s profiler film; nor do they allude to high art to the same extent. The individuality of victims remains effaced, however, as our experience of events is closer to that of the killer.

The protagonist-killer films have greater continuity with the profiler film than the portrait film since they are glossy, heavily marketed and are designed to attract mainstream audiences. They often self-consciously refer to their subversion of profiler formulae in publicity and casting choices. In their destabilisation of these formulae, they indicate the saturation of the profiler film. However, in many important ways they retain the cultural biases which are evident in the earlier films and reveal that it is the particular inflection of the serial killer which is now open to pastiche and critique, not the ideology it promotes.

Torture Porn

Like the killer-protagonist film, the torture porn film can be interpreted as a response to the exhaustion of the profiler cycle. Torture porn developed as a controversial trend in the 2000s featuring explicit violence against *living* victims, a point emphasised by the journalist who identified it (Edelstein, 2006). Unlike the terms profiler, portrait and protagonist-killer cycles, which I use here for the first time, torture porn already exists as a

concept originated by a journalist, David Edelstein, but incorporated into scholarly analysis (2006). As I have stated, torture porn is imbued with a variety of assumptions relating to taste, quality and value judgements, a point made clear in Edelstein's pejorative use of the word 'porn'. I have given the other cycles names which express the role played by the serial killer in each respective narrative, avoiding the implicit hierarchising of films and audiences which is suggested by torture porn. However, there is a significant overlap between my comprehension of these films and the classifications advanced by Edelstein and the academic writers who follow him in using this term. Not all examples of torture porn depict serial killing but those which do often subvert profiler conventions, making these films particularly important to my efforts to map out the development of the profiler narrative. They also self-consciously articulate ideas relating to surveillance, sight and voyeurism, making them particularly interesting in regard to the themes of the thesis. Thus my use of the term torture porn acknowledges the academic work which has already developed around these films but also seeks to put these movies in context by exploring their relationship to the other cycles I have identified. It is also important to consider that torture porn's usage within popular culture influences the consumption of these films. Although it is not my intention to study audiences within this thesis, retaining the term for academic analysis facilitates awareness of the framing of torture porn films within this trend, prompting questions regarding the ways in which the different cycles are watched and the distinct pleasures they offer.

Like the killer-protagonist film, torture porn depicts powerful killers who often defeat the profiler, and the roles of killer and profiler are murky. While some of these films feature a profiler in a fairly peripheral role, they nevertheless allude to the familiar profiler figure in order to subvert his/her reassuring presence in the serial killer narrative. These films are relatively mainstream, but are aimed at horror fans rather than the more general audiences to whom the protagonist-killer film is promoted. Torture porn posters and advertising specifically refer to horror conventions, while merchandise associated with the *Saw* franchise is available from horror/science fiction shops and websites. The speedy development of *Saw* into a successful franchise (along with comic books, video games, a theme park rollercoaster and the release of the last instalment in 3-D) indicates that these particular films occupy a quite different industrial status than the protagonist-killer film, which does not utilise synergy to the same extent.

A key feature of these films is the level of violence inflicted on conscious victims and the gory, graphic detail in which assaults on the human body are depicted. Yet we rarely see

the killer attack victims himself; he usually forces victims to hurt themselves and each other, often using mechanised instruments of torture rather than implements he himself would have to wield. Most of the *Saw* films distance the killer from the crimes: he manipulates others into violence, often watching from behind two-way mirrors and cameras. *Untraceable* (Gregory Hoblit, 2008) depicts a killer who designs mechanical tortures for victims whose suffering is broadcast live over the internet. In *Scar* (Jed Weintrob, 2007), a killer kidnaps teenagers in pairs and forces them to watch each other's torture (which, in contrast to the other examples, is committed by the killer with relatively simple tools like scalpels and knives); their torment ends only when they tell him to kill their friend, forcing them to be complicit.

The killer's manoeuvring of individuals into the role of killer is not new: forcing people to commit violence against themselves or others is also apparent in *The Exorcist III*, *Seven* and *Fallen*. Torture porn, however, emphasises the killer's ability to remain detached from his crimes, and it is usually technologies of surveillance which enable this distance. As well as incorporating contemporary concerns regarding surveillance, particularly after 9/11 and during a time of rapid technological advances, these films connect the killer's surveillance skills to a dispassionate, depersonalised form of serial killing.

Not all of the films feature a profiler, but it is significant that the two earliest examples - *Saw* and *Saw II* - feature detectives who are doubled with the killer and share his vigilante tendencies. That these two characters fail, and are themselves implicated in the killer's violence, parallels the torture porn cycle with the protagonist-killer film, and demonstrates the interlinking of the fading profiler cycle with the new torture porn film. Additionally, several of the films encourage us to misinterpret information: chronology and our knowledge of characters are manipulated. The revelation at the end of each *Saw* movie is highlighted by climactic 'epiphany' scenes which echo those of the profiler film but which aim to dazzle us with the brilliance of the killer rather than that of the profiler. Like the similar surprise endings in some of the protagonist-killer films, there is something playful in these endings; they feel more like a punch-line than truly sinister.

Although, like the protagonist-killer films, torture porn exhibits a self-consciousness which makes the films a quite different viewing experience from that of the profiler film, these two later cycles approach audience alignment in dissimilar ways. The protagonist-killer movie promotes allegiance with the killer, while torture porn is less focused on one character. Our attention is split between various victims, the killer, and investigatory

characters. Our limited knowledge (and more importantly our *awareness* of the limits to this knowledge) inhibits allegiance with characters, particularly as many are subject to psychological and physical torture from the start of the film. In this way torture porn is close to the slasher film, though without the stabilising presence of the final girl, as we are attentive to the fact that anyone could be killed at any time.

The knowingness of these suppressive narrative helps to conceal the potentially sinister connotations of the killer's victory - a white man imposing disciplinary power over marginalised identities. This again echoes serial killer mythology and while the killer's authority is weakened by the hyperbolic nature of the films this demonstrates that familiar power structures are reinforced in texts which claim to innovate on an aesthetic and formal level. The educated, articulate, wealthy white John Kramer (Tobin Bell) retains power even after his death over the mainly working class characters who attempt to catch him and/or become his victims throughout the *Saw* franchise. His distance from events underlines a sense of vacant neutrality as he coldly watches his mechanised torture devices and manipulated/nurtured killers destroy people. Other characters are notably more passionate, aggressive and impetuous, constructing him as a puppet-master in charge of events; frequent references to his 'games' and the need to follow his rules underline this concept of Kramer as a detached master of ceremonies in a game only he understands.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the main conventions and trends explored in the thesis, offering definitions and context for the analysis chapters. I have emphasised the interlinking of the various categories identified here and highlighted the role of the profiler, a figure which is crucial in the 1980s and 1990s and which is subverted in the 2000s. A shift from relatively 'straight' narratives to more playful, self-conscious films supports my contention that the 2000s films react to the influential profiler films of the previous twenty years. Yet this subversion of generic conventions rarely extends to the ideological biases of the films. In the analysis chapters, therefore, my investigation takes into account the gender, race and class origins of those connected to serial killing, beginning with a study of the 1980s profiler film which established the conventions I have traced here.

One aspect which remains fairly continuous throughout the period of study is the link between surveillance and white, middle class masculinity. Both technological surveillance

and the ability to scrutinise the community are usually associated with men in positions of power, either through their privileged gender, race and class status or their affiliation with state-sanctioned authority. The introduction of female and black profilers signals some acknowledgement of the whiteness and maleness of serial killing but these characters also underline the specialness of the profiler which in turn empowers the killer. Meanwhile, the killer embodies a monitoring status which becomes increasingly evident throughout the 2000s, as the killer is linked to vigilantism and becomes more dominant in the films' narratives. The portrait films underscore links between the male killer and surveillance, depicting voyeuristic killers who are not subject to the scrutiny of a profiler or law enforcement authorities. The distancing effects of these films - the lack of closure, slow pace, resistance to the conventions of goal-orientated narratives - stress their dissimilarity to the profiler film, but often fall back onto familiar concepts which undermine their radical potential (the killer as an example of individual pathology, for example).

Each of the films discussed here share a depoliticised representation of masculinity and surveillance. Power structures relating to gender, class and race remain concealed and the link between surveillance and masculinity is naturalised, evading a critique of the privileged status of straight white middle class masculinity in the West. Despite their different tones and depiction of the killers, the films share a fascination with surveillance which conceals the asymmetries they perpetuate.

Chapter Three

White Masculinity and Surveillance in the 1980s Profiler Film

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the development of the profiler film which, this thesis argues, is a significant cycle throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter explores the profiler film in greater detail, focusing on the seventeen films of the first phase of the cycle, beginning in 1978 and ending in 1990. A definitive aspect of the profiler film is the paralleling of the killer with an investigator who demonstrates an unusually acute and sensitive metaphorical vision. The types of individuals endowed with this power reveal contemporary attitudes to gender, race and class. In the 1980s films, the profiler is usually white, male and in conflict with the institution searching for the killer, positioning the profiler cycle as typical of mainstream Reagan-era Hollywood in depicting white men as heroic figures battling impersonal bureaucracies. The films' depiction of white male protagonists overcoming bureaucratic obstructions is emblematic of the populist frontier rhetoric common in 1980s cinema, but the doubling of profiler and killer complicates this reading as it hints at the potential for non-state sanctioned violence within white masculinity. The killers' serialising of their victims links them to bureaucracies, connecting the serial killer to contemporary anxieties regarding the status of white masculinity in a society increasingly marked by the administrative classification of identity.

The chapter begins by discussing three key aspects of the 1980s profiler film. Firstly, I explore the distinction between the surveillance of the profiler, which I understand to be mainly intuitive, and the administrative surveillance of the killer. Secondly, I argue that the parallels drawn between the killer and profiler depict a homosocial relationship based around their shared surveillance skills. Finally, the third section investigates the portrayal of various forms of surveillance as threatening. In each of these sections I highlight the fact that the vast majority of these extraordinary agents of surveillance - killers and profilers - are white men and consider how existing work on white masculinity's significance in serial killer discourse relates to surveillance. I then study these ideas in greater detail in a case

study focusing on the 1985 profiler film *The Mean Season* (Phillip Borsos, 1985), exploring both the ways in which the film is representative of the first phase of the cycle and the extent to which it deviates from profiler conventions.

There is a gap in the scholarly analysis of these films as they have not been identified as a coherent group in the same way as the 1990s films which followed *The Silence of the Lambs*. While *The Silence of the Lambs* is undoubtedly a key moment in the development of the serial killer figure, with a flurry of films, news articles and documentaries demonstrating a surge of interest, the smaller, lower-key films which preceded this period display important continuities with the later films while also offering insights into masculinity and serial killer discourse specific to the 1980s. They establish the narrative and thematic conventions of the cycle yet lack the stylistic cohesion which followed *The Silence of the Lambs*. This chapter aims to rectify the limitations of existing research of this period which will influence my reading of the more familiar phase of the profiler cycle in chapter four.

A (White) Man's World: the 1980s Profiler

Intuitive and Administrative Profiling

Before discussing the parallels drawn between the profiler and killer in these movies, I want to explore a crucial distinction between the two characters. This section argues that the profiler is associated with instinctive, intuitive methods of detection, while the killer is connected to administrative surveillance. The association between the killer and bureaucratic systems hints at the methodical, ritual nature of serial killing, which has been linked to a specifically white masculinity.

The profiler's rejection of traditional detection methods and institutions is typical of 1980s popular cinema, but also relates to older ideas of American masculinity reworked during the Reagan era and to the concept of the serial killer as an exceptional threat. Scholarly work depicts the 1980s as a time of flux and anxiety in relation to gender, race and sexuality, with white masculinity a topic of particular concern. The political context of Reaganism is linked to the backlash narrative, in which women are excluded from or demonised in popular film (Faludi, 1991), while a reworking of the frontier narrative

retains concerns with the “dehumanising bureaucracy” depicted in the 1970s paranoia films while positioning white men as saviours in the face of these dangers (Jeffords, 1994: 19; Traube, 1992: 23). Anxiety over American white masculinity in an era in which working women, consumerism, technological advances and economic problems undermined traditional gender roles contributes to a sense of the heterosexual white American male under attack. Popular films such as *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987) encapsulate these concerns (Bruzzi, 2005; Gates, 2006; Jeffords, 1994; Rehling, 2009).

The cinematic profiler can be understood as a response to these anxieties. Of the seventeen 1980s profiler films, ten feature profilers who work in law enforcement, yet these characters are unusual, maverick, and specially gifted. Graham’s colleagues in *Manhunter* continually refer to his talent for empathising with serial killers, while the profilers of *Cruising*, *Cop* and *Tightrope* are engulfed by their connection to the killer. Three of the remaining films depict profilers who use clairvoyance to find the killer, three use equally maverick methods (time travel in *Time After Time*, journalistic techniques in *The Mean Season*, priestly wisdom in *Rosary Murders*), while *Angel Heart* depicts a private detective whose distance from state-sanctioned detection is compounded by the discovery that he is a devil-possessed killer. The profiler is more than a detective; success depends on rejecting bureaucratic profiling procedures in favour of a more creative, empathetic, instinctive form of detection.

This turn to less traditional methods stems from the inability of law enforcement to deal with the specific threat of the serial killer. The profiler film offers many instances of failed surveillance: 1970s San Francisco police cannot track a time-travelling Jack the Ripper (*Time After Time*), fingerprint databases fail to identify the killer in *Sea of Love* and *Manhunter*. Instead, the profiler relies on intuition and instinct. The major breakthrough is often depicted as an epiphany, with the profiler spatially and emotionally distanced from others as his/her connection to the killer leads to a sudden, unexpected breakthrough. In *Sea of Love*, Frank sits alone as others dance at a wedding, the pop song performed by the band drowned out by the version of *Sea of Love* which has been found playing at each crime scene and which now runs through his mind. The close-up of his face fixed in intense concentration detaches him from the celebrations. As the lights rise at the end of the song, Frank suddenly looks energised as he explains to his colleague his plan to catch the killer. This idea, it is stressed, is unusual and goes against traditional detection methods; his superior at first denies him permission. Similarly, in *The Rosary Murders*, the profiling priest stumbles on the crucial link connecting victims while looking at children’s

paintings. In *The January Man*, *Cruising*, *Manhunter* and others, limited forensic and witness evidence make traditional detection ineffective, and we watch the profiler gradually withdraw from the world of law enforcement. The notion of an exceptional profiler reinforces the special status of the killer, as the need for special surveillance highlights his extraordinary nature. This concept of the serial killer as a unique occurrence or aberration downplays the gender-specific reality of most serial killing (Cameron and Fraser, 1987: 157; Caputi, 1987: 30). Yet it also links to a specifically 1980s construction of gender by opposing the profiler against the traditional institutions of surveillance, allowing him/her (and, as is evident from table one, it is mainly *him*) to fulfil a populist fantasy of frontier rhetoric and individualism.

The racial, class and gender specificity of the serial killer - overwhelmingly a white male - is particularly significant here. White masculinity's status as a neutral, unmarked identity has been linked both to an ability to escape surveillance and to a sense of this identity as precarious and empty which coincides with the idea of absence and blankness associated with the serial killer (Dyer, 2002; Rehling, 2009). As a structuring norm, it evades the gendered and racial surveillance experienced by women and ethnic minorities (Rehling, 2009: 240). None of the films overtly question the whiteness and maleness of the violence depicted, despite often repeating the familiar idea of the serial killer as a white man. Some killers are coded as other, through their depiction as either working class 'white trash' or sexually deviant, explaining their violence through this otherness (Dyer, 1993: 112; Rehling, 2009: 231). Yet most of the films implicitly allude to the idea that 'normal' white men are culpable in serial violence, a concept which expands on the notion of white masculinity as cerebral, detached, unemotional. Since serial killing is understood as emphasising "rationality, system, order", the repetitive, dispassionate efficiency of the killer seems to epitomise white masculinity (Dyer, 1993: 112).

It is this efficiency and repetition which links the killer to administrative surveillance, particularly as his killings remove his victims from other contexts and violently reclassify them within his series. The victims are abstracted from their social and administrative context; their primary significance is their position within the killer's sequence (Knox, 2003: 290). The victims' loss of individuality is compounded by the attitude of the profiler, who also views the victims as links in a chain regulated by the killer. Each film reinforces the insignificance of the personal lives of the victims who are now defined as one element of the killer's sequence. Narrative and visual conventions highlight the anonymity and interchangeable status of the murdered. Detectives stress the difficulty in solving a crime in

which the killer and victim do not have a personal connection in *Cruising*, *The Dead Zone*, *Tightrope*, *The Mean Season*, *Sea of Love* and *The January Man*. We rarely learn the names of later victims, merely the fact of another death. *The Rosary Murders* features a sequence in which the profiler examines crime scene photographs laid out on an evidence board in a row which echoes the killer's classification. *Relentless* depicts a killer who selects victims from the telephone directory, their name underlined on a page left beside the body. This emphasis on the random nature of the killer's selection parallels him with a ubiquitous example of the administrative organisation of identity: the alphabetised listing of individuals with their telephone numbers. In *The January Man*, the murderer kills according to a variety of systems: killing on dates which are prime numbers, choosing victims whose homes form a map of a constellation and the musical notation of the song *Calendar Girl* (itself a reminder of the arrangement of the year into months). As we see a computer program map out these sequences, the arbitrary nature of the victimology is underlined. This randomness is inconsistent with what we know of the victims - they are all attractive young women - but does appear appropriate when we discover that the killer is not driven by sadistic impulses but kills purely for fame.

This oddly dispassionate motive and the serialising of victims is typical of the killer in these films. The statistical organisation of victims extends the killer's surveillance beyond voyeurism and vigilantism to that suggested by Foucault's panoptical surveillance. The killer is understood as identifying with bureaucratic technologies, incorporating the state's comprehension of individuals as statistics, accounting for the empty repetition of his crimes (Seltzer, 1998: 237). In this way the serial killer echoes the impersonal, systematising bureaucracy of the state, while the neutral status of white masculinity effaces his gender and racial origins. Conversely, the profiler rejects administrative surveillance, relying on insight and empathy. In combating the serialising killer and resisting the dehumanising bureaucracy of traditional detection, the profiler is connected to positive ideas of authenticity which the killer, defined by the empty repetition of his crimes, lacks. This dissimilarity suggests that the profiler is distanced from the killer's aggression; however, as the next section explores, the films link the two figures in various other ways which highlight surveillance.

Seeing Doubles

The doubling of killer and profiler is a convention which has been well explored in academic responses. Considerable debate around this topic concerns the fact that killer and profiler are usually both white men, which “calls into question the detective’s sense of innocence”, denoting “concerns about the difficulty of white male self-distinction” (Rehling, 2009: 136). This section explores the ways in which the 1980s profiler film alludes to surveillance to parallel the killer and profiler while also suggesting a homosocial bond between the pair. The relationship between killer and profiler is a battle between two opposing agents of surveillance, with the killer and profiler’s specialised ability to scrutinise the world usually depicted through sight allusions. Their shared surveillance skills suggest the profiler’s culpability in the crimes.

Whether s/he is a professional or amateur investigator, the profiler in some way monitors the community. Those working within law enforcement are charged with regulating society, their observation of others authorised by the state and assisted by the administrative categorisation of individuals in panopticon-like systems. Psychics also demonstrate an unusual ability to observe others, with the lead characters of *Eyes of Laura Mars*, *The Dead Zone* and *Jack’s Back* experiencing privileged insight. A priest investigates killings in *The Rosary Murders*, alluding to his role as a monitor of his congregation, while *The Mean Season* depicts a journalist whose occupation involves reporting instances of bad behaviour to the public.

These watching, monitoring profilers are paralleled with killers who are often voyeuristic, whose forcing of victims into a series suggests panopticon-like surveillance, and who are frequently depicted in professions which further implicate them in surveillance. The killer is revealed to be a police officer in *Eyes of Laura Mars*, (possibly) *Cruising*, *The Dead Zone* and *Relentless*. A private detective kills in *Angel Heart*. In direct reference to the supposed profession of Jack the Ripper, surgeons kill in *Time After Time* and *Jack’s Back*, adding medical surveillance to the types of monitoring cited in the profiler film. An army officer kills in *Off Limits*, while *Manhunter* features a murderous psychiatrist (again suggesting the medical gaze) and another killer who works with photographs and videos, which allow him to spy on the private domestic moments of strangers. Each of these professions is associated with a special kind of sight, while many - doctors, police, army officers – embody the surveillance of the population.

These films restrict surveillance roles to white men, with the exception of *Eyes of Laura Mars*, in which Laura's artwork offers representations of "male vision" (Fischer and Landy, 1987: 65). The profiler film's portrayal of the killer and profiler tends to position these two figures as particularly powerful because of their privileged accessing of surveillance. White masculinity's neutrality and its mobilisation of patriarchal biases align white men, usually middle class or associated with law enforcement, with power, scrutiny and control of the community. This portrayal of the profiler figure expresses contemporary unease over the role of white men in a society in which their traditionally privileged status appears beleaguered. The male profiler of the 1980s struggles with inept institutions which overlook his unique abilities (or, in *The Dead Zone* and *Manhunter*, use his skills with little concern for the profiler). The exclusion of women from the investigation other than as victims is prominent in most of the films and typical of the 1980s backlash narratives (Faludi, 1991); even supportive female characters require rescue by the end (*Time After Time*, *The January Man*).¹² The profiler's empathy for the killer reinforces the world of violence and its investigation as a male one in which women are limited to the role of victim, alluding to frontier mythology. The 1980s have been identified as a point during which frontier rhetoric was reworked according to the needs of contemporary neo-conservatism (Traube, 1992: 16-7); this political context has also been identified as influential in the development of the serial killer figure in the 1980s (Jenkins, 1994, Tithecott, 1997).

The depiction of serial killing and its investigation as a world open only to white men is evident from the demographics outlined in table one. The mutual dependence of killer and profiler, their visual doubling throughout the films, and their shared insight into violence and aggression hints at the homicidal potential of white masculinity. Normally, the white male detective is dissociated from the killer's violence, and from the erotic potential of their relationship, through a final confrontation during which the profiler usually kills the murderer in an act of state-sanctioned violence, but anxieties regarding white masculinity's links to power and violence, and its lack of self-distinction, remain (Rehling, 2009: 234-6). Even when the profiler is not implicated in overt aggression, he is linked to violence, and this violence often alludes to surveillance. In *Sea of Love*, profiler Keller falls in love with the killer's ex-wife, only later recognising that he shares with the killer a desire to repressively scrutinise her: he admits "she had that nutcase over one shoulder and me over

¹² *Eyes of Laura Mars*' female profiler is an exception to the 1980s male profiler convention, but she requires guidance from men: when she discovers her lover is the killer, she is too shocked to take action until he tells her to kill him. Additionally, her photography links her to patriarchal oppression.

the other". In *The Dead Zone*, Johnny's (Christopher Walken) identification of the killer instigates the murderer's gory suicide. The killer's mother attempts to shoot Johnny, but is herself shot dead and falls to the ground, her outstretched hand directing blame at the blood-spattered Johnny. In *Manhunter*, Graham unwittingly watches the same home movies from which the killer selects his victims; the killer and profiler in *Tightrope* share voyeuristic tendencies; the killer of *The Mean Season* notes that he shares with the journalist profiler a desire to "study" people.

The killer/profiler doubling often takes on aspects of a homosocial bond. *The Mean Season* depicts the killer as almost a love rival to the profiler's girlfriend, while the profiler's growing isolation from his heterosexual partner in *Manhunter*, *Cop* and *The First Deadly Sin* also hints at this idea. Sedgwick's definition of homosociality is useful in understanding the ways in which these films limit the role of women and depict serial killing and its investigation as a masculine field. She argues that patriarchal power is maintained through the management of homosexual desire, which regulates normative sexuality as well as those positioned as deviant, and positions women as an object of exchange to bolster bonds between men (Sedgwick, 1985). In *Sea of Love*, Helen, whose ex-husband kills her prospective lovers, is potentially the object of exchange between the killer and profiler, both of whom profess to love her but aspire to control her; their shared obsession could be read as repressed homosexual desire. It is more usual for the victims to represent this object of exchange: their lifeless bodies are literal objects rendered passive by the killer's violent incorporation of each individual into his series. The profiler's scrutiny of the murders necessitates his/her reading of the victims as part of the series, not individuals, a process which echoes the killer's annihilation of the victims' personal identities. This concept is more fully explored in chapter four, as the elaborate crime scenes of the 1990s films underline this tendency, but the 1980s films establish this treatment of the victims as part of a scene to be unemotionally processed by both the profiler and the killer.

The uncanny doubling of killer and profiler has antecedents in Gothic literature and film noir, both of which demonstrate homoerotic/social aspects (Johnston, 1998; Sedgwick, 1985). The erotic potential of the killer/profiler relationship is particularly clear in Kaplan's reading of the 1980s/90s serial killer film as neo-noir in which the killer replaces the femme fatale, an idea discussed in chapter two (Kaplan, 1998: 12). To read the profiler film along these lines is to understand the profiler as being simultaneously fascinated and threatened by the killer, suggesting that the killer acts as a monitoring figure for the

profiler as well as the victims, a warning against following dark desires. The complicity of the profiler in the killer's acts is quite overt: often, the killer, along with the profiler's lover, friends and colleagues, remark on the closeness of their relationship. The profiler is frequently depicted as struggling against the sense that he is implicated in the killer's violence. In *Manhunter*, Graham's awareness of his own potential for violence causes him to suffer a breakdown; the profilers of *Cop* and *Tightrope* recognise the killer's violent sexuality in themselves. Other profiler films do not depict this possibility so explicitly, but they do position the victim as the point of connection between two eerily similar men. In *The Dead Zone*, *Manhunter*, *Cop*, *Tightrope*, and *Off Limits*, the points at which the killer and profiler are figuratively closest, with the profiler often following the killer's footsteps, is during the profiler's analysis of a corpse. In *The Dead Zone*, the profiler stands over the body of a murdered schoolgirl as he psychically witnesses the killing; in *Manhunter*, he walks through the victims' house, shadowing the killer. The profiler is repeatedly positioned as the only character who understands the killer, linking them as a troubled pair isolated by their special relationship to violence and their unusual status as gifted watchers.

Dangerous Visions

The previous two sections have demonstrated the significance of surveillance in the profiler film and its role in restricting the world of serial killing to white men. Before embarking on a case study to explore these themes, I want to work through the ways in which the profiler film portrays observing others as powerful and potentially sinister, casting both the killer and profiler as dangerous watchers.

The stress on visual surveillance in the profiler film complements its status as a cinematic text. As chapter one explores, cinema often exploits unease over voyeurism, inhibited sight and exposure to unwanted optical scrutiny. The voyeuristic serial killer is easily assimilated into film: various genres take advantage of the audience's limited ability to understand through whose perspective they are viewing events. *Eyes of Laura Mars* takes this idea to its extreme in depicting a character forced to watch violence through anonymous eyes, and other profiler films also conceal the identity of the perpetrator. We see victims during attacks, but not the assailant; when victims are stalked, the murderer's presence is suggested through sinister music, an unsteady camera and eerie dark corridors, concealing the suspect's identity while letting the character and audience know s/he is being watched.

The act of looking is potentially threatening, and being seen potentially exposing, in these films. In *Sea of Love*, a suspect reads the profiler's occupation from his scrutinising gaze: "you've got cop's eyes", she announces, linking his occupation to literal seeing; his eyes make her feel "like I've done something wrong" as she shivers at being caught in his stare. Cinematic convention emphasises the danger of the look. While this thesis does not take a psychoanalytic approach, work on identification has repeatedly examined questions around the look which are useful here. As I have stated, most of the films feature men seeking men, and when this investigation involves optical surveillance, male characters look at other men in an unusually intense way. Although the violent confrontation of these films usually displaces the potential eroticism of looks between men, as is typical of mainstream Hollywood (Neale, 1993: 18), there are nevertheless suggestions of homoerotic connections between killer and profiler. This notion is highlighted by the consummated relationship between the female profiler and male killer in *Eyes of Laura Mars* and the homoerotic implications of *Cruising* and *Sea of Love* (Cettl, 2003: 105, 398).

The profiler film highlights the danger of optical surveillance in four ways. Firstly, the invasive power of photography is suggested in several movies. In *Eyes of Laura Mars*, the killer punishes those involved with provocative fashion images; recreating Laura's pictures in his crime scenes, he violently echoes her commentary on modern violence. *Manhunter* depicts a killer who selects victims through viewing their home movies which he repeatedly views. *The Mean Season*'s journalist profiler finds news photography assaultive as his colleagues take his picture at vulnerable moments. Chapter one argued that still photography demonstrates the emphasis on the visual in suggesting the killer's power; those caught within the gaze of the camera are passive and submissive, as the use of the verb "capture" implies. The three films cited here - along with a number of later profiler movies, such as *Seven* and *The Watcher* - use photography to highlight the danger inherent in being seen and the power available to those who control vision.

Also significant in connecting sight and power is the depiction of a psychic profiler in *Eyes of Laura Mars*, *The Dead Zone* and *Jack's Back*, all of which portray psychic *visions* in which the profiler finds his/her sight unexpectedly overwhelmed by images of the crime. These experiences are frightening, painful, disorientating and of limited help in catching the killer. The effect of these psychic insights is an intensification of the impact on non-psychic profilers: an uncomfortable awareness of sharing the killer's perspective, a sense that only the profiler is capable of stopping the killer, the isolation of the profiler as other characters become disturbed by his/her link to the murderer. Many of the non-psychic

profilers are understood as ‘almost’ clairvoyant in their understanding of the killer, underlining the intuitiveness of the profiler and stressing the optical nature of the threat.

Thirdly, the profiler film often portrays characters being watched in ‘stalking’ sequences preceding attacks as well as references to seeing and being watched throughout the movies. Stalking sequences in which the audience is forced to view events from the perspective of the killer open most of the 1980s films, including *Eyes of Laura Mars*, *Tightrope*, *Manhunter*, *The January Man* and *Jack’s Back*. A slasher-style shaky camera underlines the fact that we are viewing events from a first-person perspective; at times, the victim stares and screams into the camera/assailant’s face, highlighting their vulnerability. The sharing of the killer’s illicit viewpoint as he spies on potential victims underscores the significance of sight. That these films then link this voyeurism to the profiler’s efforts to catch the killer further parallels the two. This tendency is most apparent in *Manhunter*, in which the opening scene - the killer approaching his sleeping victims filmed entirely from his perspective - is echoed by profiler Graham’s study of the scene, but is also evident in most of the 1980s films, as the profiler’s search often involves finding the next victim, leading him to scrutinise the community in the same way as the killer.

Finally, the profilers and killers share a suspicion and resentment at coming under surveillance themselves. In *Eyes of Laura Mars*, both profiler Laura and the murderous detective react with confusion and disdain to efforts by journalists to record their reaction to Laura’s photographs at her book launch. Johnny rejects efforts to study his psychic ability in *The Dead Zone*, refusing to submit to medical surveillance and escaping scrutiny by leaving his home town; on realising that Johnny has identified him, the killer commits suicide rather than yield to judicial retribution. The profilers of *Manhunter* and *Angel Heart* have been subject to psychiatric intervention, while the refusal to conform to legal and departmental directives puts the profilers of *Cruising*, *Cop*, *Off Limits*, *The January Man* and *Sea of Love* under extra scrutiny from their bosses. The traditions of the Hollywood cop movie are mobilised here to depict the profiler as hindered by unnecessary interference from superiors unable to understand his/her special talent for identifying, and identifying with, the killer. The profiler’s instinctive talents are not compatible with bureaucratic procedures, making him typical of the maverick cop stereotype. Yet the killer/profiler parallels make the profiler a darker version of the individualist detective; whether amateur or professional, the profiler’s resistance to surveillance connects him/her to the killer in a way that implies culpability.

My analysis of *The Mean Season* examines these points in greater detail, focusing on this particular film's implicit portrayal of the world of serial killing as one restricted to white men. Although the media setting enables some references to surveillance to be more overt than other 1980s profiler movies, the film's depiction of gender and race is fairly typical of the first decade of the cycle, making it a useful illustration of the points I have made.

Case study: *The Mean Season*

The Mean Season is in many ways representative of the 1980s profiler film. Disillusioned Miami journalist Malcolm Anderson (Kurt Russell) intends to move to a small Colorado newspaper but is contacted by the 'Numbers Killer', Alan Delour (Richard Jordan), who uses him as a 'conduit' between himself and the public. Malcolm relishes the attention his stories attract, but Delour becomes jealous and exacts revenge, first by enticing Malcolm into a hoax interview and eventually kidnapping his girlfriend Christine (Mariel Hemingway). After Christine is released, Delour breaks into their home and after a fight is shot dead by Malcolm, who reasserts his intention to move to Colorado. This synopsis indicates that the film adheres to the traditional thriller structure of the profiler film, with tension increased by the knowledge that the killer will inevitably strike again. Malcolm is increasingly isolated throughout the film, at odds with the worried Christine and scrutinised by the police and the rest of the media. He is repeatedly paralleled with Delour, their hunger for media recognition leading them both to ignore the suffering of the victims.

There are also several important ways in which the film differs from the 1980s profiler model, but these differences reflect variations rather than deviations. Most significantly, Malcolm is not linked to the killer through a shared aggression, unlike many of the profilers whose ability to understand the killer hints at their own potential violence. They are instead doubled through their shared dependency on the media. Malcolm insists on his journalistic neutrality and is unconcerned about stopping the killer until his own life is threatened. He does not make a conscious effort to empathise with the killer, but his journalistic skills and ambition parallels the pair, to his increasing discomfort. These points relate to the film's specific construction of the media; rather than challenging my definition of the profiler film, they instead rework it to highlight the surveillance role of the media. This analysis focuses on three aspects of the film. Firstly, I explore the ways in which Malcolm's status as a reporter plays with surveillance themes, referring to cinematic stereotypes of the journalist in constructing his homosocial relationship with the killer. I

argue that the media is paralleled with the killer through their objectification of victims and emphasis on seriality, further linking Malcolm and Delour. The second section builds on this assessment of the newspaper's depiction, arguing that visual surveillance is as threatening to the profiler as to the killer: as is common in profiler films, both figures are suspicious of scrutiny. Finally, I examine the racial specificity of the serial killer: although the film ultimately rehabilitates the white male profiler, it hints at a capacity for violence. In the context of the media setting, the profiler's culpability is framed not as an impulse towards aggression but as the ruthless serialisation of victims which mimics that of the killer.

Agents of Surveillance: Serial Media and Murder

Malcolm's profession is not unusual: six 1980s/1990s profilers are associated with writing, and the journalist regularly appears as an investigating character in Hollywood cinema, including earlier serial killer films such as *While the City Sleeps* (Fritz Lang, 1956) (Ness, 1997: 2). The writer, and in particular the reporter, illustrates the way in which the profiler demonstrates a skill or talent which makes him/her particularly suited to tackling the serial killer. It is the duty of the journalist to explain the world to the public, to make information comprehensible. The journalist is an unusual cultural figure, usually presented as a maverick with links to institutional power (a special relationship with the police, as well as the economic and political power available to huge media organisations) and embodying both positive and negative stereotypes. The journalist is often a heroic character, correcting injustices and exposing corruption, but can also be selfish, manipulating events for his/her own professional advancement, a dichotomy traceable throughout Hollywood cinema (Good, 1989; McNair, 2010). 1980s depictions tend to focus on the less savoury aspects of these clichés, reflecting contemporary concerns with the media. The tabloidisation of news, hoax/plagiarism scandals and distrust of institutions have been acknowledged as factors in the portrayal of self-seeking, ruthless reporters (Ehrlich, 2004: 3; Good, 1989, 19).

The Mean Season incorporates these concerns, focusing on 1980s anxieties over sensational reporting while alluding to 'good' journalism through references to the Watergate scandal, regarded as the apex of American reporting (Ehrlich, 2004: 115). Early on in the film, the disillusioned Malcolm jokes that only a story as impressive as Watergate could reignite his interest; the brightly lit newsroom self-consciously echoes the famous set design of *All the President's Men* (Alan J Pakula, 1976); Malcolm's relationship with the

killer is a dark mirroring of the Woodward and Bernstein/Deep Throat connection.¹³ The film stresses the maverick, solitary, instinctive aspects of the journalist. Lacking detective or psychological training, he relies on natural talent and experience; at one point, a psychiatrist assures him that he is “doing the right things, intuitively”. The psychiatrist refuses to offer a profile, but instead shifts authority onto Malcolm, physically leaning towards him and away from the detectives as he instructs him to avoid being judgemental, to “be patient; be a friend”. His advice applies equally to a profiler seeking a killer and a journalist drawing out an uncooperative source, stressing the empathetic, sensitive, perceptive nature of intuitive profiling.

Also typical of depictions of both the journalist and the profiler is Malcolm’s distancing from the newspaper. At the beginning of the film he is argumentative, detached, and plans to leave for a smaller paper in a less violent area. When the newspaper board meet after the first call from the killer, Malcolm’s independence is stressed as he sits apart from the seated board members, away from the central table and at the background of the screen. He is again visually isolated as he watches the police and newspaper bosses agree the details of a deal regarding sharing information: he stands apart from them, moves around as they remain still, and quickly leaves as agreement is reached. His distance from other journalists is made apparent when he leaves the press scrum to accompany detectives into crime scenes. He is not allied with the police, however, arguing over access to his notes; he is warned by a detective that he is “getting into places you don’t belong”. He is increasingly alienated from Christine, repeatedly detached from her through camera angles and editing. As I will demonstrate, each of these points contributes to the sense that he is not aligned with any institution or social group, echoing the maverick, outsider status of the typical profiler which concurs with traditional ideas around frontier rhetoric and a more specifically 1980s vigilantism.

As he becomes isolated from colleagues and friends, he grows closer to the killer, the illicit nature of their telephone calls hinting at a sexual dimension. Tight close-ups of the two during these conversations suggest closeness despite their spatial distance. Malcolm’s emotional response to each development in the case is suggestive of the homosocial bond between killer and profiler; the depiction of the killer as a rival to Christine supports Kaplan’s linking of the profiler film and noir. When the killer first calls, Malcolm is

¹³ As in the case of *All the President’s Men*, verisimilitude is stressed in *The Mean Season*’s publicity material: actors spent time with real journalists; newsroom scenes were filmed at a real newspaper: the source book, *In the Heat of the Summer* (Katzenbach, 1982), was written by a former Miami journalist and based on real interactions between columnist Jimmy Breslin and Son of Sam killer David Berkowitz (Good, 1989: 88).

energetic and motivated for the first time. Faster music, quicker editing and a more mobile camera complement his race to the police after the killer's first call, highlighting his invigorated demeanour after early scenes in which he slumps and gazes into space.

As Malcolm becomes distanced from Christine, visual and verbal allusions are repeatedly made to an affair. While Malcolm waits for the second call from Delour, Christine repeatedly telephones him with messages of affection, leading him to answer Delour's call with an exasperated "Christine, honey". He quickly focuses when the killer speaks. He sits up, turns on the tape recorder and begins to write. When Delour calls him at home, Malcolm is at first shocked by this invasion of personal space and the realisation that the killer has been observing him. This is the first point at which Christine's concerns are apparent and spatial distance between her and Malcolm hint at their impending estrangement. They sit opposite each other, with Malcolm facing Christine's profile, suggesting a disconnection. He types on a computer as she looks through her pupils' work; a child's picture on the wall behind her associates her with maternal stereotypes. She is silent throughout the call, apart from a whispered question about the identity of the caller; afterwards she sits in shock. Malcolm types as she looks on, leaning back, distancing herself. As Delour describes the latest killings, Malcolm turns away from his computer and takes off his glasses as if to concentrate. He listens intently and the camera does not return to Christine until after the end of the call, further distancing her from the two men. She holds back tears as Malcolm scribbles notes. This scene also features the only onscreen death other than the climactic killing of Delour. As Delour describes the killings, we see surreal images of the attack, the impossible, slow motion perspective suggesting the representation is more fantasy than memory. That it may be Malcolm's fantasy is suggested by his move away from the computer as the scene cuts to the murder memory/fantasy; he is left speaking to an abandoned public telephone as the killer drives away.

Malcolm's obsession continues to threaten his relationship, with Christine storming out of a restaurant and, in the next scene, responding to a telephone call from the killer as if speaking to a love rival. Delour's introduction - "I'm Malcolm's friend. You know, the one" - infuriates her and she highlights their intimacy when she mockingly asks Malcolm "do you two ever argue?" Malcolm's appearance - half-naked and wet after showering - hints at a deeper meaning to Delour's statement "this is between Malcolm and me". Allusions to infidelity are underlined in a night-time scene in which Christine and Malcolm sleep in separate rooms, Christine in bed and Malcolm on the living room sofa. His naked

torso is visible as he takes notes, oblivious to the worried-looking Christine who watches from the bedroom door. She turns away as the call continues, enhancing her connection to the most private space of the house as Malcolm's fascination with the killer drives them apart. The next time they talk she suggests a separation, and the filming of this scene suggests she is right to say their separation is "just a formality". They are at opposite sides of the frame during much of this sequence, with a tree in the centre of the screen further distancing them. When they appear in the same frame as Christine walks into the house, she climbs steps which put her considerably higher than him, stressing their remoteness.

Christine's concern at Malcolm's story is evident early on and together with her alignment with the domestic sets up a dichotomy between the exciting world of crime reporting and the safer, banal existence promised by Colorado. She is repeatedly associated with the domestic: she teaches at a primary school; is most often seen at home; their decision to move to Colorado is partly motivated by the fact that her parents live there. She is only once seen in the newsroom: at the very end, she watches as Malcolm types his final story for the *Miami Journal*. For the first time the newsroom is empty and the lights are dimmed, suggesting the space is now more domestic than workplace (Figure 3.1). Malcolm's ambition seems neutralised as he half-jokingly signs his farewell article with the name of the Colorado paper. Non-diegetic romantic music plays as the pair walk out while holding hands. Like the good woman of noir, Christine reminds the protagonist of the importance of values and responsibility, repeatedly reminding Malcolm of the moral issues around the story just as the noir wife or girlfriend rehabilitates the selfish, avaricious noir protagonist (Place, 1998: 60). Ultimately, it is her endangerment which breaks Malcolm's obsession and realigns him within a conventional heterosexual relationship.



Figure 3.1: The newsroom is for the first time softly lit and occupied only by the chastened Malcolm and the domesticating Christine.

Despite their close bond, Malcolm's intuitive ability to understand the killer is little help in catching him. Much of the information Delour provides is false and he is identified not through Malcolm's efforts but by his own design. Malcolm does not experience an epiphany which helps him to find the killer, as most profilers do, but he does experience a moment of insight which allows him to defeat Delour during their final confrontation. Throughout the film, Malcolm tries to distance himself from the killer, insisting he is objectively reporting the story and not as infatuated with the idea of recognition as the fame-obsessed killer. In the penultimate scene, however, as Delour holds Malcolm and Christine hostage in their home, Malcolm admits to his own hunger for acknowledgment to bring down Delour's guard. He argues "I still need a story", and asserting no other journalist can "tell it like I can. He won't understand you like I do". By appealing to their mutual desire for recognition, Malcolm demonstrates his understanding of Delour and acknowledges his own destructive craving for an audience; it also represents his most significant breakthrough, as it distracts the killer allowing Malcolm to disarm him with a suitably sight/media-related camera light.¹⁴

The parallels drawn between Malcolm and Delour through their desire for celebrity are compounded by the emotionless categorisation of victims by both the killer and the press.

¹⁴ Similarly, Jeffries (James Stewart) in *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), another exploration of voyeurism and surveillance, "defends himself using the technology of voyeurism" (Albrechtslund, 2008:135), a possibly deliberate parallel which shows these particular anxieties are not unique to the 1980s.

At the beginning of the film, Malcolm is sickened by his colleagues' disregard for the family of the first victim. The shift in attitudes when we discover that this crime is just the first of a series illustrates Knox's analysis of the serial killer's obliteration of his victim's identities. He objectifies victims, reducing them to their status within his series; they exist only in reference to him, having been abstracted from their social and official identities (2003: 293). Delour's surveillance of his victims extends beyond stalking ("studying their routines") to installing them in his series in a way which mimics the panoptical surveillance by the state described by Foucault. After the first murder, when it is not apparent that Sara Hooks is the victim of a serial killer, the focus of Malcolm's front page article is Sara's family. Malcolm's description of Mrs Hooks' (Joan Murphy) distress is accompanied by a family photograph of Sara. Each following front page, however, focuses on the latest victim's position within the killer's series. They are described by their number within the sequence, just as the killer describes them (he numbers victims in notes at each scene). They are described generically ("teenager", "mother"), just as the killer understands them. Delour selects victims who are a "good likeness" to his previous, ignored series, the main criteria being age and gender - their whiteness is not discussed, possibly because in North America it is assumed. Like the killer, the press assimilates each victim into a predetermined place within the story, accentuating each victims' new status over his/her personal history and identity. Both killer and the media enforce their own, disturbingly similar, surveillance on the population, objectifying the victims and reducing them to statistics. Malcolm's doubling with the killer, together with his role in a newspaper staffed predominantly by white men, hints at the links between the authority conferred by this surveillance and the privileged identity of white masculinity.

Seltzer's machine culture thesis, in which the killer identifies with the technologisation of society and the related serialisation of identity, is useful in understanding the newspaper's depiction of victims as roles in the series (1998). The repetitive mechanics of the printing room, an area depicted in the opening montage and preceding each of the front page images, exemplifies machine culture. The presses are loud, fast and cyclical, recalling the industrial setting at which Delour claims to have witnessed an accident in which a friend's hand was mutilated, and the walking aid to which the 'white trash' Delour applies oil when he meets Malcolm. The paralleling of the killer and the presses is evident from the first scene, in which glimpses of the first killing form part of a montage which links the killer to both the media and Miami's Autumn storms. Clouds speed over a darkening sky, interspersed with shots of a newspaper printing room. The intense rate of the clouds and the presses links the two images. The music at first has a swooping quality, as if mimicking

the wind which spurs the clouds; it shifts towards electronically-based sounds as the printing is seen but continues the existing melody to connect the two spaces. This opening scene links the beginning of the killer's series to the start of Miami's seasonal storms (the next scene opens with a newscaster announcing "the mean season is finally here"), but also associates the mechanical, repetitive newspaper printing with the killer. Each new development in the case - another killing, or a communication from the killer regarding - is followed by the urgent, loud, mechanised presses.

The repetitive and dispassionate machines echo the blankness and detachment of the killer. Delour's killings are impersonal, duplicating a previous series about which we learn little and targeting individuals on the basis of their demographic similarity to earlier victims. We witness two murders, both of them in elliptical, abstract fashion, but never see the killer's reaction. Sara Hooks' death is reduced to an element of the opening montage; the murders of the old couple are described to Malcolm, with accompanying images depicting either Delour's memory or Malcolm's imagination (or a blend of both) showing isolated moments in dreamlike slow motion shots. The lack of sexual assault is noted at the first scene and the only body we do not see - the fourth victim - is the one that has been mutilated. Along with his playing of roles and celebrity-focused motive, the sense of detachment around the killings aligns Delour with the blank machines of the newspaper. This impression of cold, impassive, clinical murder also links to the whiteness of the killer. In connecting the killer to technology used by the media to monitor the community, the film depicts both Delour and the press as instruments of surveillance.

As earlier chapters note, the serial killer has important connections with media representations. Communication from (real or hoax) killers reaches as far back as the Jack the Ripper murders and has been identified as a way for the killer to amplify his power and control the interpretation of his crimes (Guillen, 2002; Gibson, 2006; Tatar, 1995). Several real killers (or those claiming to be killers) have used press communiqués to name themselves (the Zodiac, Son of Sam, BTK), reinforcing the idea that the serial killer seeks attention through his crimes and causing moral panics over media portrayals of violence (Tatar, 1995: 23). These instances of this phenomenon, together with more general concerns about the reporting of violent crime, makes the press/serial killer relationship controversial, and *The Mean Season* engages with this debate.

The complicity of the press in violent crime is repeatedly emphasised. On Malcolm's first scene in the newsroom, his desire to report less disturbing news is underlined by his sullen

expression as he stares at three television screens: two show a news report, the third screens the animated mouse Jerry dynamiting Tom, connecting the representation of real violence to that depicted in cartoons. The detached attitude of those working in the media is highlighted by Bill's noting that "the competition didn't do so well" in its coverage of the first crime, as well as the bartering for information played out by the police and newspaper representatives. Bill insists on the objectivity of the press when he tries to convince Malcolm not to leave Colorado: "we're not the manufacturer, we're retail; news gets made somewhere else, we just sell it", yet this comment disregards the killer's desire for fame which is realised by the reporting of the crimes.

The film is typical of media-related serial killer films in suggesting a moral stance in relation to the fictional characters, but overlooking the voyeurism of both the fictional community consuming these depictions of violence and that of the film's audience. A contemporary review of *The Mean Season* which highlights the depiction of the press as a "weapon" indicates the film's indictment of media sensationalism (Hoberman, 1985, quoted in Ness, 1997: 616). Yet the film effaces its own role in selling violence, playing with the notion of voyeurism but disregarding its propagation of serial killer discourse. The film depicts the events as an individual morality tale, with Malcolm learning the dangers of press sensationalism and hubris in a way typical of 1980s media-set films which echoes the decade-specific mistrust of institutions (Ehrlich, 2004: 161; Good, 1989).

While the film critiques the morally dubious *response* to the killer, no account is taken of the media's contribution to the serial killer construct. Chapter one argued that the term serial killer is a discursive category; while real individuals do kill serially, the concept of the serial killer is defined by its representation. The news media is a crucial element of this representation, and *The Mean Season's* depiction of ruthless reporters manipulating the bereaved and the focus on sales over ethics expresses concerns over sensationalism. However, despite Delour's obsession with celebrity, the film fails to interrogate the killer as a construction, limiting the effectiveness of its appraisal of the press. There is no study of the way in which the killer is incorporated into existing discourse. Although Malcolm mocks reporter clichés when his editor asks him about a follow-up to his story on the first killing, similar clichés - the fame-hunger killer, the suspense-inducing 'instalment' narrative - are offered without irony.¹⁵

¹⁵ Useful comparisons are *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and *Man Bites Dog*, which avoid the tension-building instalment structure of the profiler narrative, instead depicting their killers as targeting victims at random and without anticipatory clues such as ominous music and sinister camerawork. Chapter five

The film also limits its interrogation of the press through linking the killer and the storms. From the opening scene, the killer's violence is depicted as a disturbing but natural phenomenon. It is characteristic of serial killer narratives which depict the killer as an "‘environmental’ hazard [...] a mysterious force of nature" dissociated from socio-economic and cultural causes (Caputi, 1987: 30). Like the mean season, the killer strikes in a series of violent events, building until a final fierce confrontation; both are rare but natural phenomena which do not require analysis. The deteriorating weather parallels Delour's growing violence. The skies darken during the opening scene; the first murder location is very windy. When the "chopped up" victim is found, the increasing violence is expressed through the howling wind. The weather is similarly wild later, when Malcolm and the police search the Everglades for Christine. In the climactic scene, the sound of Delour breaking into the house is mistaken for storm damage, and during Delour's attack the electricity fails. The newspaper front pages position the two news stories side by side, aligning the killer and the storms, but the media's paralleling of the two stories is not critiqued. The juxtaposing of the storms and killings, the simultaneous rumbling of thunder and gunshots, and the concordant unravelling of the killer's mental state and the worsening weather are all techniques applied by the film-makers, not diegetic characters. Instances which may offer a critique of representations of serial killing are superficial, failing to acknowledge the film's own role in this discourse. In emphasising the *Miami Journal's* flattening of the victims into instalments, the film exposes the way in which media depictions portray victims as anonymous and interchangeable; however, the *film* also denies the victims their individuality. We see only one victim alive, and then only in a few shots of the opening montage. The others are glimpsed as unnamed corpses and in family photographs, and we do not see bereaved relatives after the serial nature of the crimes is recognised. The film mimics Malcolm's shift from guilt-ridden to being fascinated by the killer: he is upset at meeting the mother of the first victim, but after being contacted by the killer only each victim's place in the killer's sequence concerns him.

The film uses Malcolm's journalist profession to parallel the pair through their shared fixation with headlines while highlighting the homosocial possibilities of their relationship. The disruption to Malcolm's heterosexual relationship may link to his profession, as he relies on potentially feminine skills - instinct, listening, sympathising with victims' families and witnesses - which most other profilers counteract through more obviously masculine occupations such as that of detective. Malcolm's sudden physical agility while

trying to rescue Christine offsets the homoerotic potential of his relationship with Delour as does the casting of Kurt Russell, a 1980s action star. The next section continues this focus on the doubling of the press and killer, exploring how visual surveillance is constructed as both dangerous and ineffectual, and arguing that the failure of visual surveillance to contain the killer contributes to a sense of him as omnipresent and inescapable.

Visual Surveillance

Ocular monitoring is particularly relevant in serial killer films. The focus on newspaper reporting and celebrity in *The Mean Season* offers a twist to the profiler film's concern with these concepts. Delour seeks to be the object of surveillance within his own terms, desiring to be recognised as a serial killer. He talks of studying his victims, making Malcolm apprehensive when Delour turns his scrutinising eye on him. Yet Malcolm and the newspaper are also agents of surveillance, monitoring the community and interpreting events for their readers. The visual nature of this observation is emphasised by the stress on photography throughout the film: being captured in a still image makes individuals vulnerable, escaping the camera empowers others. By communicating through his voice - telephone calls and recorded tapes - Delour evades visual supervision and suggests that he may be anywhere.

The newspaper functions in a similar way to the inept law enforcement agencies of other profiler films: an organisation which offers the profiler a role in surveillance but which he eventually rejects. The design of the newsroom constructs the newspaper as an institution of surveillance, suggesting unrestricted sight in its bright lights, large elevated windows overlooking urban spaces and open plan organisation. The few doors are glass and as Malcolm prepares stories his editor follows his progress on another computer screen. The film depicts many dangerous spaces - the beach, house and swamp locations of the body finds; Malcolm's home and car, where he is threatened; the trailer park at which he meets the killer; the school from which Christine is kidnapped; the noisy, mechanised printing area. Camera angles, lighting and editing are manipulated to restrict our views at these sites, contributing to a sense of unease which exploits the possibility that the killer may be lurking anywhere. In contrast, the newspaper offices appear to offer unhindered views (Figure 3.2). The evenly spaced strip lights and rows of desks suggest order and regulation.

The camera flows between the desks as if following a grid, hinting at the methodical organisation of this space which implies it is easily monitored.



Figure 3.2: The bright, open-plan newsroom suggests unobstructed sight.

Yet the apparently uninhibited outlooks of the newsroom are deceptive. During telephone calls from the killer, Malcolm is uncomfortable at being watched and photographed. The paralleling of the killer and the press undermines the safety and neutrality of these spaces. It is in the newsroom that Malcolm, surrounded by police officers and journalists, learns that Christine has been kidnapped. His rush out of the building, chased by detectives and obstructed by reporters, demonstrates the isolation and solitariness of the intuitive profiler.

The film's emphasis on still photography parallels the objectifying surveillance of the photographic camera with that of the killer. The objectifying scrutiny of the newspaper is highlighted through the depiction of the photographer Andy (Joe Pantoliano), who accompanies Malcolm. Andy's garish shirts make him conspicuous and link him to the visual; with little dialogue, he is an often silent observer, although he does offer sardonic comments. At the beginning of the film, Andy is sceptical of Malcolm's plans to move, and as Malcolm consoles Mrs Hooks as she waits for her daughter's death to be confirmed, Andy casually watches the two, smoking at the other side of the room. Malcolm is reluctant to intrude on the Hooks' grief, but Andy is cold and professional, reaching for his camera as Mrs Hooks takes the telephone call which tells her Sara is dead. Mrs Hooks is positioned in the foreground of the shot, facing the (non-diegetic) camera. Andy sits in the background some distance from Mrs Hooks, making him a blurry outline and emphasising

his camera which completely obscures his face (Figure 3.3). As Mrs Hooks cries, mournful music underlines her distress, and the diegetic silence is broken only by sobs and the dispassionate clicks of Andy's camera. Malcolm turns to Andy with a look of revulsion as we hear the clicks, and he leaves behind the family snapshot his editor had reminded him to collect. We see Andy lift the picture as the two leave, but in the next scene Malcolm argues it is unnecessary. Later, the snapshot is prominently positioned on the front page, exposing the dead teenager to public scrutiny and reducing her to one still image.



Figure 3.3: Andy's camera intrudes on Mrs Hooks' grief.

This early stress on visual surveillance highlights the vulnerability and danger associated with sight. Malcolm's ethical concerns are expressed through his distaste for the photographing of Mrs Hooks and the printing of her daughter's picture. The mechanical snap of the camera and its masking of most of Andy's face suggest technologisation, linking him to the killer and the press, and reducing him to the unfeeling and mechanical status of the presses which print his pictures. Connecting the presses to ocular scrutiny emphasises the surveillance role of the media, with Andy functioning as its representative. The construction of the camera as threatening is suggested by scenes in which people are shielded from Andy's photography - the baby found at the third crime scene is carried away by a detective, who pulls his jacket over the child to protect it from both the rain and Andy; as they make their way through jostling reporters at the end, Malcolm tries to cover Christine's face. During the final attack, Malcolm blinds Delour with a camera light. Yet this study of the invasive, menacing camera is limited to *diegetic* cameras; when Andy

surreptitiously photographs the grieving mother, he faces her back, but the film camera screens her distress in detail. The film's critique of the dangerous gaze of the camera does not extend to its own apparatus.

Andy often appears when Malcolm is vulnerable to scrutiny. After he receives the first call from the killer, we are surprised to see that Andy has been watching from the other side of the desk. Later, Andy's intrusive picture of Mrs Hooks is mirrored when he photographs Malcolm after the second call from Delour. As Malcolm replaces the receiver he is startled by the flash of the camera in a shot which mimics the position of the characters and their emotions - shock after a disturbing telephone call - of the Mrs Hooks scene. Malcolm has already objected to surveillance in the newsroom: he complains that other reporters are swarming round him as he waits for the call, his telephone is wired to a tape recorder and his editor listens in on the conversation. Additionally, when Malcolm is surrounded by a press scrum, his flustered response is mocked by Andy, whose camera flash is again intrusive. On leaving the second crime scene, Malcolm is more relaxed with the reporters; Andy jumps up onto Malcolm's car to capture a better shot, then down again to get into the car and derisively comments "getting better", acknowledging Malcolm's newly assured demeanour. Andy's physical agility is matched by his ability to jump between visual monitoring of Malcolm and his role as colleague; his aptitude for shifting between these two functions suggests an objectivity and independence conferred by his affiliation with the neutral camera. Our last view of Andy is during Malcolm and Christine's return from the Everglades after she is kidnapped: he ducks under police tape to aggressively photograph the pair.

Andy is also important in the trailer park sequence, his role here underlining the killer's evading of surveillance. Throughout the film, Andy has only a few lines, apart from one scene in which he reads Malcolm's fan mail. He reads the letter which leads Malcolm to Delour's hoax, implying that Andy's focus on the visual is a weakness - this letter and the resulting hoax interview are the only instance of communication from the killer which can be *seen*; elsewhere, he relies on the telephone and tapes. Accompanying Malcolm to the trailer park, Andy's hiding place restricts his view: he tries and fails to take a photograph, and he cannot approach the trailer because it is in the open. Even if he could capture Delour in a still photograph, the killer is heavily disguised.

Delour's evasion of visual surveillance are highlighted by his reliance on his voice. The repeated use of the killer's disembodied voice, together with indistinct shots of his hand

and mouth during the calls, reinforces his status as an omnipresent threat, even in the apparently safe newsroom. Throughout these sequences, repeated shots of the telephone receiver and tape recorder further link him to technologies of duplication and detachment. These communiqués ensure that the killings are understood within terms dictated by the killer and, as the psychiatrist notes, are of little use in finding him. He evades visual scrutiny, and accuses Malcolm of allowing his telephone to be tapped, revealing his wariness of surveillance outside of his control, yet he also desires surveillance in order to achieve the celebrity he craves.

Similarly, Malcolm's attitude to surveillance alternates between fearing scrutiny and basking in the attention. Malcolm's discomfort in front of local news crews turns to delight when he is congratulated by colleagues and interviewed by a major news channel. As the newscaster introduces him, Malcolm adjusts his tie and hair; he is then watched by co-workers on the same three television screens which had earlier juxtaposed news with cartoon violence, indicating his change in attitude as he enjoys his celebrity. Also watching in different locations are Christine, who looks anxious, and the killer, who aims his gun at the screen, indicating that Malcolm's visibility exposes him to danger.

The focus on visual surveillance (we see little of the *written* reporting which impresses Delour) corresponds to both cinematic and serial killer discourse convention; both privilege the gaze in suggesting danger and vulnerability. It constructs the killer as a pervasive, potentially omnipresent threat, as his ability to evade being seen is compounded by the manifestation of his voice in apparently safe spaces (the newsroom, Malcolm's home) and in places made notable by the killer's absence (Delour's home and trailer park after he has abandoned these locations). Delour's use of technologies of surveillance foreshadows the use of hi-tech equipment by the killer of the *Saw* franchise to suggest his omnipresence and ocular scrutiny. *The Mean Season* constructs visual surveillance as limited, intimidating and oppressive. Yet its focus remains on diegetic surveillance throughout the film, evading acknowledgment of its own role in these representations.

Class, Race and Surveillance

Like the other 1980s profiler films, *The Mean Season* demonstrates a tension between suggesting white men are linked to serial violence and depicting the killer as an aberration and thus distancing white masculinity from murder. Although never explicitly discussed in

the film, class and race are both important to this dichotomy. This final section explores the ways in which normative white masculinity evades surveillance and discusses the instances in which it is nevertheless implicitly connected to aggression.

As is common in depictions of serial killing, the killer is assumed to be a white male without analysis of the power structures influencing his status. The unidentified killer is referred to as “he” at the first crime scene, his gender reinforced by Malcolm’s questions regarding sexual assault. When Malcolm tells the detectives of the killer’s communication, he states in an offhand manner that he assumes the killer is white. As this chapter has explored, efforts have been made to explore the links between white masculinity and serial violence, with particular account taken of the invisibility of this status as a perpetrator of violence (Dyer, 1993: 111; Kaplan, 1998: 199; Rehling, 2009: 227). Rehling argues that films featuring white male profilers and killers caught in a double relationship implicitly connect the undistinguished, unmarked status of white masculinity to the pathology of the serial killer, despite ultimately rehabilitating the hero through state-sanctioned violence in order to neutralise the threat of the killer (2009: 234).

Given its setting - which would have been particularly familiar to 1980s audiences thanks to the popular television show *Miami Vice* (NBC, USA Network, 1984 - 1989) (Lewis, 1991) - *The Mean Season* is a peculiarly white film. Taking into account the racial demographics of Miami, it is curious that only two characters are not white.¹⁶ Many of the white men who populate the film are implicitly linked to violence. In keeping with killer/profiler doubling conventions, there is a considerable physical resemblance between Delour and Malcolm. They are a similar body type and height, share short but full dark hair and in the first half of the film, when we only see isolated parts of Delour’s face, shoulder and hand, they are particularly alike. Like other profilers, Malcolm literally follows in the killer’s footsteps, studying his crime scenes. Delour is Malcolm’s “evil twin, his shadow self” (Good, 1989: 92), and the film repeatedly aligns the pair. Both are revitalised by the killings. Both desire recognition but dislike scrutiny. Like many killers in the profiler film, Delour parallels himself with Malcolm: he tells them that they “work well together” and aligns himself with Malcolm through his journalism, telling him “I study people too, just

¹⁶ The 2010 census found that Miami’s population is 68.2% Hispanic or Latino, compared to a 15.1% Hispanic/Latino population for the US, consolidating the city’s status as a major centre for immigration, especially for people from Spanish-speaking countries (US Census Bureau, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=&geo_id; accessed 2/2/11). The more recent television series *Dexter* offers a serial killer narrative within a more realistically diverse portrait of Miami, a representation which potentially highlights the whiteness of the killer but also associates other races with the criminality he proclaims to combat.

like a reporter. Watch their habits, their routines.” However, while this paralleling is typical of the profiler film, *The Mean Season* is relatively unusual in depicting a need for fame rather than homicidal urges as the link between killer and profiler. The violence is fairly restrained (we glimpse a few corpses but the wounds are not seen in detail; the final fight is filmed in dim light) and Malcolm’s complicity stems not from sadistic fascination but arises out of the professional advancement promised by his unique coverage.

The attitude of killer and profiler towards the murdered is particularly significant in paralleling the pair. Both ignore the suffering of victims, with the popular idea of serial killing as a professional vocation undermining Malcolm’s efforts to maintain a professional distance. The incorporation of victims into his series defines the killer, and Malcolm implicitly aspires to a similar role by gaining professional kudos through his reporting. Near the start of the film, while explaining his disenchantment, Malcolm complains that he “doesn’t want to see my name next to dead bodies anymore”, yet Delour encourages the journalist to anticipate the next death and treat the murders as narrative instalments. Malcolm inadvertently connects himself to the killer when he uses ambiguous terms like “deadline”. Both Delour and Malcolm watch Malcolm’s television interviews, paralleling them despite their spatial distance. After the kidnapping of Christine, Malcolm is visually implicated in the killer’s violence when an acquaintance of Delour explains the killer “needed the headlines” as the shot cuts to a close-up of Malcolm’s guilt-ridden face.

However, the film balances Malcolm’s association with violence with a distancing from the killer. After Malcolm and the editor argue over journalistic ethics, the scene cuts to Christine showering. Typical thriller/horror conventions - ominous music, a shaky camera from an unidentified perspective, a naked woman in the shower - suggest she is being stalked. Alerted by a draught, she anxiously calls out, and is scared when the shower curtain is pulled back by a figure both Christine and the audience only identify as Malcolm after she jumps with fear. However, Malcolm’s alignment with the killer is undermined when Christine pulls him into the shower and the two joke as his clothes are soaked. A later scene uses similar music and camerawork to suggest that Malcolm is being stalked as he sits in his car, only for Christine to jump out of the back seat.

When Malcolm meets the disguised Delour, his incompetence with the killer’s weapon of choice distances him from the efficient, brutal killer (he accidentally discharges Hilson’s handgun). Although Malcolm becomes more active after the kidnapping of Christine, she is released by the killer, not rescued by Malcolm. Additionally, his killing of Delour is

depicted as both sanctioned by the state (he and Christine are threatened, with no way to seek official help) and almost accidental (Malcolm hesitates to fire the gun; his surprise when Delour is shot echoes his earlier ineptitude). The threat of the serial killer is such that his death is often endorsed in both real and fictional accounts (Jenkins, 1994), and the ending offers both Hollywood closure and a typically 1980s endorsement of vigilantism (Tithecott, 1997). Through the killing of Delour in a messy, desperate fight, Malcolm reasserts his identity (the next scene informs us he is now heading to Colorado) and assures us that while he is implicated in the killer's violence to some extent, he is eventually rehabilitated through his use of *justified* violence, in contrast to the killer's motivelessness.

The two non-white characters foreshadow the innocent black profiler of later films by being either distanced from or unfairly suspected of violence. Cuban-American detective Ray (Andy Garcia) is usually relaxed and calm, often breaking up arguments between Malcolm and Ray's partner, the burly, aggressive Phil (Richard Bradford). During their disputes, the two white men are often physically separated by Ray, hinting at white masculinity's capacity for violence. The newspaper bosses and police officials who negotiate the terms of Malcolm's relationship with the police are all white men; as they agree their deal, their vocabulary and body language suggest they are businessmen agreeing a contract, effacing the violence to which the contract relates. Their attitude is closer to good-natured competitiveness than objective, professional disinterest, hinting at relationships developed around the investigation of violence. The other non-white character is a Hispanic man who is attacked by the paranoid Malcolm while delivering a newspaper to his house. This scene foreshadows the later trailer park sequence, in which the murders are linked to the white underclass, only for this assumption to be undermined. Additionally, with the exception of a junior colleague of Malcolm's, Christine, and a few little-seen victims and bereaved relatives, the film is predominantly male, and these women are distanced from aggression. Kathy (Rose Portillo) complains of being given soft stories, and the editor refuses to let her work on the murders. Malcolm's middle class milieu goes some way to explaining the whiteness of the film, but this fact in itself reinforces the film's emphasis on the lack of self-distinction of this identity.

Delour's desire for recognition can be interpreted as an effort to attain this distinction. He complains that he is "invisible", failing to acknowledge that this disturbing sense of anonymity arises from the white, male identity which allows him to escape detection. The enigmatic characterisation of Delour - we learn very little about him, and he lacks the context of professional and personal history, remaining as abstracted as his victims -

contributes to a sense of him being knowable only through his crimes. The film's focus on celebrity as a motive suggests an emptiness which relates to both Rehling's work on the blankness of white masculinity and Seltzer's study of machine culture, with which, he argues, the serial killer identifies. The technologies of repetition which constitute machine culture have a particular resonance with the killer. Anxieties associated with the technologisation of the workplace are alluded to in the killer's motive and reflect his sense of indistinction. Delour makes contradictory hints to a factory accident and to war injuries, linking him to concerns around traditional ideas of masculinity in the post-industrial west. His posing as an injured war veteran and as the victim of an industrial accident suggest a connection with specifically male attitudes to work. In this way the film alludes to the concept of the (white male) serial killer as expressing the lack of distinction between individuals and commodities in capitalism, the killer's relentless, repetitive, dispassionate murders signifying their confusion between "living people [and] the inanimate objects they produce and consume as workers" (Newitz, 1999: 71). This disenchantment with mechanised masculine occupations blamed for fragmentation and alienation amongst men (Tolson, 1987: 58) can be connected to Delour's desire to establish a new identity, having found himself unable to construct one through work, a traditional means of founding male identity (Segal, 1990: 94). We never establish the accuracy of these tales yet their appearance within Delour's half-truths implies his pathology has been shaped by these ideas, and his oddly dispassionate killings echo the mechanised production and warfare to which his stories refer.

Delour's emptiness is also suggested by his playing of roles. He disguises himself as both a trustworthy, middle class teacher and a coarse, wounded veteran. This adoption of different identities underlines the chameleonic power of the serial killer, which has been linked to white masculinity's vacancy and lack of authenticity (Dyer, 1993; Rehling, 2009; Seltzer, 1998). Delour's lack of self-distinction, this argument suggests, prompts his adoption of the identity of serial killer, demonstrating a need for this neutral, unmarked identity to be recognised by state surveillance - the police and judicial system - as well as other forms of monitoring, such as the media. As is the case with many cinematic serial killers, Delour's crimes depend on their official recognition. He does not attempt to escape detection, but instead incorporates surveillance into his crimes, emphasising rather than hiding their sequential nature. Delour's literal numbering of his crimes, and desire for fame, demonstrates this yearning for recognition denied the anonymous white male killer.

Additionally, Delour's disguises stress class assumptions. As Delour points out, Christine is comfortable with accepting a stranger's help in fixing her car, as long as he is 'normal', articulate, smart and white. The familiar idea of the killer's "mask of sanity" is referenced here, with our privileged knowledge of Delour's crimes flagging up the inauthentic, performative quality of his friendly façade. Audience knowledge of real killers able to elicit trust from their victims accentuates this notion - viewers of the cinema release may have been familiar with the Ted Bundy case, which was a recurring news story throughout the 1980s as Bundy appealed against his death sentence.¹⁷ Schmid argues that this idea of the hyper-normative killer distances the murderer from normative masculinity as his excessive normality is read as a symptom of his pathology (2005: 216). In this way the killer can be understood as being defined by his unusual relationship to the strategies of surveillance designed to combat the threat he poses. While Delour's outward normality could be interpreted as implicating white masculinity in violence, our awareness of his chameleonic abilities reminds us that he is not like other men. It is notable, however, that in depicting Christine's relaxed acceptance of Delour's help the film hints at the privileged status accorded this type of professional white man.

Our experience of Delour's earlier disguise highlights this focus on the killer's manipulation of assumptions around gender, class, race and violence. When Malcolm receives a letter from someone claiming to know the killer, he finds that the writer, Frank Hilson, is a sweaty, overweight, coarse, unshaven man living in an untidy trailer covered in dirty dishes and empty beer cans (Figure 3.4). Hilson's class inferiority reinforces his distinction from the educated, smartly dressed, articulate Malcolm. As Malcolm enters the trailer, he looks around in astonishment at the flies and soft porn. Hilson asks for payment for the information, talks of allowing his nephew to play with his gun and has a strong accent that aligns him with the underclass. Each element of Hilson's appearance, accommodation, speech and manner associates him with the white trash stereotype, which is frequently offered as a violent figure (Clover, 1992: 124-6). A variety of films have located the killer's violence within an innately aggressive white underclass background, from *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* to *Kalifornia* (Dominic Sena, 1993); these representations absolve white middle class masculinity of culpability (Rehling, 2009: 233). Additionally, Hilson's war injury has left him dependent on a calliper, linking to another long-standing cliché, that of the disabled or disfigured murderer, which extends from

¹⁷ Delour's need to discuss his crimes is particularly resonant of Bundy, perhaps as the most famous 'hyper-normative' killer, able to construct a convincing façade of charm and ordinariness. Bundy remained a familiar cultural figure throughout the 1980s, most notably through his interviews with FBI agents, journalists and various political and religious figures (Schmid, 2005: 216).

Gothic literature to *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008) as well as profiler films *Manhunter*, *Candyman* and *Red Dragon*.



Figure 3.4: Malcolm is out of place in the white trash milieu inhabited by 'Hilson'.

This scene plays with ideas of the serial killer in ways which expose Malcolm's (and possibly the audience's) prejudices. The letter writer may be a hoaxer, a genuine witness or the killer; Hilson's appearance both arouses and diminishes suspicion. He fits the stereotype of the white trash killer but seems too garish, loud and observable - too open to surveillance. It is only when Hilson escapes from Malcolm's visual scrutiny - going into the bathroom area of the trailer - that Malcolm recognises the potential danger and tries to leave. Hilson reappears with a gun, sneaking from behind a curtain in a way which recalls Malcolm's earlier practical joke on Christine, and her reciprocal trick. However, we soon learn that Hilson is indeed the killer, confusing our ideas of what a killer should look and sound like.

Hilson's visibility - his lumpen appearance, brash speech, snorting laugh - contrasts with Malcolm's urbane, sophisticated demeanour, and with the killer's earlier description of himself as invisible and unnoticed. Malcolm's haste to suspect Hilson demonstrates the ways in which class, race and gender traverse identities, playing with the idea of the white underclass as an "aberration in whiteness" (Dyer, 1993: 112). This mobilisation of the white trash stereotype highlights the conspicuousness of this identity, which eventually underlines the anonymous, everyday appearance of the undisguised Delour. The audience

is positioned with Malcolm throughout the scene: we see his distaste which he hides from Hilson; sinister music begins as he becomes fearful and relief when Hilson reveals he is joking. However, these assumptions are undermined when Malcolm later discovers Hilson is the killer, taking advantage of the white trash cliché. This revelation, swiftly followed by Delour's kidnapping of Christine, during which he appears sophisticated and trustworthy (Figure 3.5), forces a reconsideration of the stereotypes to which the trailer park scene appears to pander. Malcolm's discomfort, suspicion and eventual sympathy for the disabled, poor, disadvantaged Hilson makes obvious his middle class background and the class hierarchy which regulates masculinity.



Figure 3.5: In contrast to his white trash persona, Delour is well-groomed and unobtrusive before abducting Christine.

Our observation of Delour is limited - for most of the film he is just a disembodied voice or disguised, or only seen in tight close-ups of his hand and parts of his face. His killings are dispassionate rather than maniacal (four victims are shot, one is described as being “all chopped up”, although there is no discussion of this change in method). Near the end, a witness suggests Delour's claim to be ‘duplicating’ previous crimes is authentic, yet his other claims remain unsubstantiated. We know his white trash persona is merely a performance, suggesting that his friendly teacher guise is also false. In this persona he is considerably less conspicuous - tidier hair, more relaxed, dressed in a suit and tie - than in later scenes in which we see the ‘real’ Delour. His vocabulary and diction suggest he is relatively well educated, while his occasional high-pitched laughter hints at a loss of control. He is most commonly seen in public spaces - using payphones, gazing out of

windows - and in the stormy Everglades. We glimpse him in his home but only from abstract angles; when we do see his house in any detail its emptiness is highlighted by his voice emanating from a recorded tape. This curiously blank space is clean, tidy and suggestive of a middle class status.

Delour's claim to be 'invisible' is supported by the fact that he seems to fit in each of the spaces in which we see him: he convinces Malcolm of his white trash status at the trailer park, does not attract attention at the school and enters and leaves crime scenes unnoticed. Unlike Malcolm, who is warned he is "getting into places you don't belong", Delour moves easily between environments. Malcolm needs assistance in accessing locations - the police take him to the crime scenes, and to the swamp hideout - and it is his special relationship with the killer which allows this privileged access. Additionally, Malcolm is conspicuous in many of the spaces in which he appears: he is stared at by residents of the trailer park, and is the focus of attention in public and in the newsroom.

By maintaining the enigma around Delour while depicting Malcolm as increasingly visible, the film evades the more subversive implications of the doubling between the white hero and the killer. While Malcolm enjoys the recognition that accompanies his unique participation in the serial killer story, he overlooks rather than sadistically enjoys the suffering of the victims. Unlike the killer, Malcolm does not escape surveillance, exhibiting discomfort in front of cameras and crowds at first but eventually savouring the attention. On the three occasions he meets the killer, it is not their similarities but their differences which are apparent. At the trailer park, they appear to be separated by class; at the swamp, Malcolm wears a bulletproof vest and is surrounded by police officers, linking him to the law while Delour is alone. During their final confrontation, Delour's muddy appearance and manic demeanour contrasts with that of the clean, stable Malcolm, whose shooting of Delour represents his violent disavowal of their duality. While the film does implicate white masculinity in violence, it also distances white men from aggression by distancing Malcolm from the killer.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the 1980s produced a body of films which, while stylistically variable, established conventions which would become increasingly familiar throughout the 1990s, when the profiler film became more aesthetically striking, gained bigger

budgets and made a greater cultural impact. Many of the traits of these films can be traced throughout the 1990s. Their establishment in the late 1970s and 1980s suggests that these films are influenced by contemporaneous cultural shifts and historical events, most notably the serial killer panic. In calling them profiler films I have acknowledged the importance of the FBI in the development of the films, but I have also shown that the cinematic profiler is quite different from the administrative, law enforcement profiler.

These profiler films exhibit a variety of influences. Most obviously, the depiction of an isolated, white male protagonist links to the Reagan-era portrayal of white men overcoming bureaucratic obstructions which is also apparent in the contemporaneous action movie; the gender anxieties suggested by the homosocial relationship between killer and profiler echoes the contemporaneous return of noir themes. The serial killer panic of the 1980s, in which the figure was constructed as a new, immediate and sinister threat, is also crucial, particularly given the FBI's manipulation of this menace. As I have argued, however, the FBI is not completely responsible for the construction of the intuitive profiler who is uncannily doubled with the killer; older Gothic and frontier concepts have shaped this figure, a phenomenon which helps to explain the longevity of the profiler figure and its appearance outwith FBI structures.

While the depiction of the killer varies from multiple personality afflicted-detective to demon-possessed resurrected murderer, several important aspects remain fairly consistent throughout the profiler cycle. As my analysis of *The Mean Season* argues, the killer is often associated with administrative bureaucracy and technology, linking his surveillance to that of institutions. This tendency expresses populist distrust of state and commercial institutions, explaining the focus on instinctive profiling over the administrative categorisation propounded by the FBI. The killer is suspicious of scrutiny but paradoxically depends on surveillance - without the police and media to study his crimes, they lack meaning. It is for this reason that the profiler film focuses on killers who flirt with capture through the public nature of their crimes. Bodies are left to be found, not concealed and seriality is emphasised by the killer. Although he may not wish to be captured, he wants his crimes to be acknowledged.

This desire to be the object of surveillance links to the whiteness and maleness of the killer, rarely overtly remarked upon within the film but a crucial element of serial killer mythology. The white male killer's desire for recognition points to white masculinity's anxiety over a lack of self-distinction, while the killer's association with technology and

bureaucracy stress this identity's status as a structuring norm. Although the fact that the killer is normally assumed to be a white man goes unquestioned in most of the films, they do offer an unusual depiction of white masculinity as inherently violent. The films do not overtly link the violence of the killer to his privileged identity status - the fact that he normally kills those of lower social ranking remains concealed - and the profiler's eventual use of violence is sanctioned (defending himself and/or others, neutralising an extraordinary, otherwise unstoppable threat), yet the paralleling of killer and profiler which defines these films offers rare instances of a partial deconstruction of white male privilege. The positioning of the white male hero as the only defence against the threat of the killer is so close to conventional gender roles in popular narratives that it goes unquestioned; the fact that this hero shares the aggression of the threat alludes to the Gothic and frontier rhetoric but also hints at the whiteness and maleness of the violence depicted.

The next chapter traces the progress of the profiler film through the 1990s, examining how major shifts - the introduction of non-white/non-male profilers, the emphasis on the crime scene - relate to my key themes. Using *The Bone Collector* as a case study, I isolate that film's depiction of a killer dependent on surveillance, its manipulation of space and sight, and its privileging of intuitive profiling over conventional detection, elements which are initiated in the 1980s films but are amplified throughout the 1990s.

Chapter Four

Otherness, Urban Space and the Crime Scene in the 1990s Profiler Film

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the profiler conventions established in the 1980s in which a white male serial killer is doubled with a lone white male profiler. This chapter follows the progress of the profiler film through the 1990s, at which time these films became hugely popular and increasingly characterised by elaborate aesthetics. The crime scene is crucial in these films, and while lone white men continue to fill the role of intuitive profiler, this status is also open to other identities, a development which underlines the instinctive, sensitive nature of the profiler. As the depiction of masculinity reacts to historical shifts, technological advances are recognised in the films' emphasis on technological surveillance, with computers, forensic science and communication devices foregrounded diegetically, while bigger budgets permit greater focus on the mapping of space and the crime scene.

The chapter begins by studying the key trends of the 1990s profiler film, arguing that they intensify rather than alter 1980s conventions. The introduction of non-white and female profilers reflects cultural shifts and puts a new focus on the whiteness and maleness of serial killing. The association of the serial killer with institutions and bureaucracy is more obvious when his nemesis is distanced from traditional mechanisms of authority through his/her inability to access white male privilege. The profiler is usually an outsider but when this figure's marginalised status is inscribed on the body his/her isolation is amplified. However, the killer tends to be more intelligent and powerful than the 1980s examples, counteracting the implication of normative masculinity in his violence. The new focus on the scene of the crime highlights the mapping of space, particularly in films in which urban space is a battleground over which the killer and profiler fight.

After discussing these developments, I use *The Bone Collector* (Phillip Noyce, 1999) as a case study to explore how these changes relate to masculinity and surveillance themes. *The Bone Collector* demonstrates the major developments of the 1990s films: a black male

profiler is helped by a white female protégé and a band of loyal colleagues to find an intelligent killer whose carefully staged murders allude to historical and fictional crimes. It epitomises the 1990s emphasis on the vast labyrinthine city. The focus on sight in the 1980s is affiliated here with a stress on space, especially urban space. Repeated overhead shots, the construction of the New York setting and the investigation of evidence which offers clues to the location of the next crime rather than the identity of the killer suggest that the profiler and killer each seek to map the city.

Watching white male violence: the 1990s profiler

Although I use the term ‘1990s profiler film’, these films continue in the 2000s, though without the same commercial and critical success. Twenty-four films meeting this description are released between 1991 and 2001, with a further seven released by 2004. I refer to these as 1990s movies in order to link them to the temporal context which defines the films. Unlike the 1980s films, the 1990s movies have been assessed by a significant amount of scholarly analysis which identifies 1991’s *The Silence of the Lambs* as the initiator of a trend in which terrifying killers are tracked by gifted investigators (Gates, 2006: 159; Newman, 2011: 298). As chapter three demonstrated, however, these conventions are established in the 1980s, although these earlier films achieved neither the commercial and critical success, nor the cultural impact, of *The Silence of the Lambs*. The film’s extraordinary cultural saturation can be attributed to various advantageous circumstances: a general increase in interest in the serial killer which is apparent from the late 1980s, at which point the number of profiler films increases from one to three or four a year; the arrest of Jeffrey Dahmer, whose rumoured cannibalism infamously echoed that of Lecter (Tithecott, 1997:9)¹⁸; the shift to plucky young women in the role of protagonist after a decade focusing on male heroes; greater interest in forensic detection, which often overlaps with profiling. It is possible that the film’s allusions to art and intellectualism distance it from the slasher despite its similarities to that low brow cycle; it offers the pleasures of the slasher to a mainstream, older audience, its higher production values affording it respectability (Clover, 1992: 262; Tasker, 2002: 29). The authenticity suggested by the highly-publicised input of the FBI in the making of the film aids this disassociation from low genres.¹⁹ *The Silence of the Lambs* is cleverly made and marketed,

¹⁸ The film was released in America on 14th February, 1991; Jeffrey Dahmer was arrested on 22nd July 1991, his mutilation and alleged cannibalism of victims immediately making international news.

¹⁹ The special edition DVD features a 1991 documentary with interviews from real profilers who advised the film-makers and reveals the film was partly shot at FBI headquarters and inspired by factual cases.

then, but it also gained from a contemporaneous fascination with the serial killer figure. This section explores how these factors influenced the 1990s films.

Space and the crime scene

A major development is a new focus on the crime scene and the related mapping of space. The depiction of the crime scene as the means by which the killer communicates with the profiler signposts the films' new emphasis on the surveillance of space. This shift illustrates the bigger budgets (evident in overhead shots of the labyrinthine city and ornate crime scenes) of the 1990s films and suggests that the control of space is increasingly significant in the profiler film. While the investigation of the body and scene is not unimportant in earlier films, the 1990s profiler's study of the scene is a crucial element of the investigation, reflecting the simultaneous growth in interest in forensic narratives (Turnbull, 2007: 26). We see relatively little of the crime scene in the 1980s, and the scenes we do see are considerably less elaborate (so little evidence is left in *The Dead Zone* that a psychic is needed; we see the murder scenes of *Manhunter* weeks after the event, with the bodies removed). In the 1990s, more time is spent at each scene, and discussions between the profiler and other investigators explore intricate details.

Mark Seltzer notes that the crime scene functions as the only stable facet of the chameleonic serial killer's identity (Seltzer: 1998, 48). Crime scenes are not merely remnants of the crimes: they are proxies for the killer, and profiling dictates that the scene offers insight into the killer. Warwick understands the crime scene as a semi-mythologised element of serial killer discourse, describing murder scenes as endowed with a special power in both real and fictitious serial killer narratives. The crime scene amplifies the abstraction of the victim discussed in chapter three, positioning the victim as the focus of surveillance designed to investigate the killer: the victim is "retroactively altered by a new identity as a murder victim, and her dead body becomes a new medicalised object" through which the killer is studied. The scene is "more than just a physical map of the interior of the victim's body; it is also a map of the interior of the killer's mind. It is effectively his mind laid out, his work displayed and signed, a text to be read" (Warwick, 2006: 564). It is often not what the killer accidentally leaves behind which is important, but what he has deliberately staged for the profiler. The spaces in which bodies are found are the focus of communication between the killer and the profiler, who acts as semiotician to decode the

meaning of the crimes (Cettl 2003, 29). The scenes are often self-consciously staged to provoke the profiler to engage with the killer in an intellectual game.

The gory mutilation of the police officers in *The Silence of the Lambs*, for example, not only facilitates Lecter's escape (disguising himself as a victim) but also provides clues to another killer: the skinning of one victim and the transfiguration of another in a butterfly-like pose ironise the attempts made by Jame Gumb to achieve transformation through murder (Halberstam 1995, 170). In *Hideaway* (Brett Leonard, 1996), the killer assimilates victims into a sculpture, as if inviting the profiler to interpret his art (the profiler's occupation - antique shop owner - underlining an association between murder and craftsmanship). This theatrical portrayal of crime scenes signals a shift from the 1980s killer - often less in control of his actions - to the disciplined murderer of the 1990s, who is capable of restraint and all the more threatening and inscrutable for that reason. References to Francis Bacon, William Blake, and John Milton are evident in these scenes; the killers "exhibit a high degree of thought, creativity, and skill; they are not mere slashers, which is precisely what distinguishes them from the indiscriminate stalkers of the Jason and Michael mode" (Schneider, 2004: 113). The body is not the focus of scientific investigation, as is the case in forensic drama such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, but part of the stage set by the killer, framing the profiler as an art critic rather than scientist.

Increasing interest in forensic investigation throughout the 1990s is undoubtedly a factor in these depictions. However, the representation of evidence, detection and the body is very different, illustrating the difference between forensic and profiler narratives. The profiler film treats the body as part of the crime scene, often dispensing with the study of the body familiar to *CSI* viewers, in which corpses are examined and cut open. In forensic drama, the body *is* the scene, demonstrating a fascination with the interior of the body (Jermyn 2007, 79; Weissmann and Boyle 2007, 92-3). The profiler film does not highlight painstaking scientific analysis; the focus is on intuition and the celebration of the "neo-Gothic spectacle" of the crime scene (Simpson, 1999: 120). While forensic narratives' protagonists detect evidence unintentionally left, the profiler film reveals the performative nature of the serial killer through the crime scene; he is playing with, rather than trying to escape, surveillance. The length of the post mortem scene of *The Silence of the Lambs* is unusual in the profiler film, and its focus is more on Starling's development as a profiler than pathologist. In keeping with the "low-tech" depiction of Starling's investigation (Tasker, 2002: 42), the study of the body centres on what can be *seen*; there is no cutting, retrieval of fluids or invasion of the body other than the removal of the moth pupa after

Starling spots it in the victim's throat. The evidence noted relates to the visual - nail polish, pierced ears - epitomising the profiler cycle, in which sight and surveillance take precedence over forensic science.

The focus on the profiler's idiosyncratic detection over scientific investigation is also apparent in lengthy, tense, dangerous journeys to the crime scenes. Actual killing is rarely depicted, sanitising the violence: only the aftermath is shown, and even then only in the context of an investigation, the victim reduced to "a text to be read by the detective" (Gates, 2006:166). Yet the profiler is neither safe nor comfortable in these unfamiliar spaces. While all thrillers restrict the visual field (Bonitzer 1981: 59), 1990s profiler films are particularly notable for the way in which they suggest danger and fear (to the characters and audience) through partial vision and a manipulation of space. The circuitous journey to the first corpse in *Seven* emphasises the labyrinthine nature of the detective's quest as they guide their way through the small, dark house by torchlight. Often, we glimpse images of the scene before the full horror is revealed to us, constructing the scene as a puzzle and increasing apprehension. In *The Glimmer Man* and *Virtuosity*, the killers' invasion of the victims' homes makes these domestic spaces frightening, reinforcing the sense of the killer manipulating the crime scene.

Searches of the scene take in the floor, wall, ceilings and other objects, giving them the same importance as the victims. Discussion of 'staged' scenes suggests self-consciousness on the part of the killer. He echoes old crimes in *Copycat* and *Fallen*, but often references to literature and art provide a basis for the 'communication' between killer and profiler. John Doe's stage management in *Seven* suggests he is both a performance artist and preacher, leaving clues to the meaning of his murders for those who see and know enough to understand (Dyer 1999). As crime scenes grow more elaborate and artistic, reflecting the intelligence and grandiosity of the killers for whom they act as proxies, the idea of the killer/profiler relationship as one of game players becomes more apparent; the staging and examination of these spaces assigns the killer and profiler opposing roles in the control of the crime scene space.

It is not only crime scenes which offer spaces for the killer and profiler to survey. The general landscape of many of the 1990s films, particularly those set in urban areas, is monitored and mapped in various ways. Of the thirty-one 1990s films, twenty-four are located in cities, these settings highlighting difficulties in scrutinising heavily populated areas. These cities are often nightmarish, claustrophobic and dystopian, a trend which

Simpson reads as contributing to these films' "apocalyptic millennialism" which positions the serial killer in a suitably hellish, hopeless environment (1999: 120). Since the Whitechapel murders of 1888, serial killing has been understood as a problem of the city, its anonymity facilitating the killer's evasion of capture and contributing to his sense of alienation (Dyer, 1997: 15). Urban space provides unique opportunities for the detective narrative. The city is frequently depicted as an enigma for the detective to decipher (Donald 1999 70); Kaes argues that the early serial killer film *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931) highlights the "anonymity and disintegration of the city's social space" (Kaes, 1993: 108).

The 1990s profiler film exhibits both of these aspects. State surveillance attempts to control and manipulate the population, but fails to control the killer as his crimes remove victims from administrative categorisation and place them in a series which only the profiler can interpret. Busy street scenes highlight the anonymity of the city in which the killer could be anyone: the last shot of *Fallen* suggests the uncaught killer is among the crowd, alluding to fears of obscurity in the modern urban environment. Several 1990s profiler films feature aerial shots of the type described by Donald as "dehumanised geography" - grid-like streets, grand architecture, motorways packed with cars - as well as contrasting street level scenes of chaotic everyday life (Donald, 1999: 69). This paradoxical mix of "abstracted" images of the aspects of the monitoring of the city (the layout of streets and buildings, traffic control) and the unruly lives of individuals who escape close supervision epitomise the representation of the urban in these films.

Technology continually surveys citizens (from CCTV to bureaucratic and criminal databases) yet this monitoring fails to protect victims or catch the killer. In *The Watcher* a killer sends the profiler photographs of intended victims. Despite access to sophisticated surveillance strategies and the media, however, he fails to find victims in time. People rush by as television screens and police officers display pictures of the victim. The profiler's failure leads to his own need for supervision - guilt-ridden, he attends a psychiatrist - and the killer's stalking of him adds another threatening layer of surveillance. Meanwhile, the killer's averageness, specifically his gender and race - Rehling notes that the actor, Keanu Reeves, embodies a blankness which corresponds to the "vacuous, two-dimensional serial killer profile" (2007: 8) - ensures he remains undetected.

Candyman also addresses state surveillance of the city, but in offering a rare example of a black killer focuses on racist housing policies which are revealed as the profiler, student anthropologist Helen (Virginia Madsen), maps Chicago by studying its urban legends.

Donald notes that Helen's studies refer to the "boyish academic enthusiasm for collecting and taxonomising the city", putting her in the (apparently masculinised) role of surveyor of the urban world, yet she becomes fascinated by aspects not manageable by state or academic surveillance as she researches oral myths of a poor black neighbourhood (Donald, 1999: 70). Her research exposes the segregation of the city by class and race but is ridiculed by white, male academics, underlining her rejection of conventional methods of investigation as she learns of the Candyman. Her trust in traditions passed down through the generations by the underprivileged is another example of the profiler's distance from white, male authority, particularly as she works with a black, female colleague. Although the killer is black, his murder by white men who discovered his affair with a white woman (white men monitoring the sexuality of black men and white women) and Helen's recognition of the implicit racism of surveillance of the city ties the serial killer to administrative aspects of panoptical surveillance.

These representations of city spaces highlight the array of conflicting surveillance agendas within urban areas. The administrative monitoring strategies which fail to detect the killer are unseen but ubiquitous, linking them to the killer's ability to watch yet remain invisible. This convergence of state surveillance and the anonymous killer illustrates Kaes' Foucauldian analysis of the monitored city, in which surveillance depends on invisibility; the killer's ability to remain unseen means that he cannot be "registered and regulated" and he remains immune to this scrutiny (Kaes: 1993, 116). The examples discussed here illustrate the linking of white masculinity to violence by connecting implicitly repressive administrative surveillance to the white male serial killer. The next section works through the race and gender issues as they relate to surveillance.

Gender and race

Chapter three argued that the profiler is distinguished by his/her links to sight, and this connection offers authority. The depiction of the profiler as a middle class white man in the majority of the films reveals a bias towards this identity throughout the 1980s. In the 1990s, however, eleven profilers are female and five are black. While this development is not a wholesale shift (most films still feature a white male profiler), several authors have pointed out a coherence in the way in which these profilers are portrayed which links these films as an interesting sub-group.

It has been suggested that the appearance of assertive female leads reflects changes in social conceptions of gender (Gates 2006: 41). Various texts from *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) to *Blue Steel* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1989) highlight the unusual status of a woman who turns against violent men, connecting this struggle to that of the protagonist asserting her own identity in male-dominated society. The 1991 release of *The Silence of the Lambs* coincided with other detective/action genre films and television series which positioned an assertive woman/women in a conventionally 'masculine' role. *The Silence of the Lambs*, then, relates to a broader cultural shift which - to some extent - recognises the gendered aspect of many forms of violence and responds with representations of authoritative, self-assured women. The unconfident, hesitant female lead characters grow increasingly self-assured as the story develops - their progress, and the closure of the narrative, depends on their recognition of their own competence. This linking of personal achievement and narrative closure is particularly appropriate to the profiler film, in which the protagonist's attempts to find the killer is depicted as a rite of passage.

The lone hero's struggle against institutions is familiar in Hollywood cinema, as well as both frontier mythology and crime fiction (Tasker 1995, 2002). The depiction of a female character's fight against male-dominated bureaucracy offers additional obstacles for the protagonist to overcome, consolidating the antagonism between the individual and the institution which is a familiar convention of the profiler film. Several films highlight the particular problems faced by women in the role of profiler, despite their ease in regard to the 'feminine' aspects of this task. Analyses of *The Silence of the Lambs* often discuss the gendered prejudice and harassment faced by Starling (Tasker, 2002); male police officers mock the civilian profiler of *Blink* (Michael Apted, 1995); *In Dreams* (Neil Jordan, 1999) depicts a profiler whose psychic premonitions are dismissed as insanity. The role of profiler, already one which forces its inhabitants to contend with members of bureaucratic institutions who doubt the intuitive skills of the profiler because they differ from 'masculine' detective work, is made more difficult when that role is filled by a woman.

Additionally, the profiler film brings together the surveillance and gender themes in depicting female profilers who are subject to monitoring. In *Candyman*, Helen's research is supervised; the female profilers of *The Silence of the Lambs*, *The Bone Collector* and *Mindhunter* are new to law enforcement and answer to superiors. Claire (Annette Bening) is placed in the care of psychiatrists in *In Dreams*; Catherine's (Jennifer Lopez) experiences within the mind of a comatose killer are monitored by other scientists in *The Cell* (Tarsem Singh, 2000). Detective Jessica Sheppard (Ashley Judd) is suspected of

murdering her lovers in *Twisted* exposing her to the scrutiny of male colleagues who investigate her sexuality. Surveillance of the profiler is an important convention of the profiler film, yet there is stress on this tendency in films featuring female profilers which highlights the perceived need for these women to be supervised (though, as with other profiler films, their defeat of the killer often coincides with a subversion or defeat of this surveillance).

Portraying a woman in a male world of detection, then, enhances the heroic qualities of the lead character by increasing the difficulties and danger she faces in achieving her goals. However, while these films expose misogyny, they also replay familiar attitudes by justifying their heroine's violence, positioning these assertive women as either responding to male aggression, fulfilling the example set by a father or male mentor or defending others in a maternal role (Boyle 2005, 134; Tasker 1998, 102; Tasker 2002, 71). *Blink* and *Candyman* both feature women profilers who only become assertive when their lives are threatened. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Starling's FBI ambition is related to the murder of her police officer father. Claire fails to protect her daughter from the killer of *In Dreams*, but saves another child. These rationalisations distance the female profiler from the inexplicably brutal serial killer. With her concern with violent men linked to previous victimisation or the loss of a father figure rather than a pathology shared with the killer, the female profiler escapes alignment with the killer as her interest in violence is explained while the killer's is excessive and beyond understanding.

While the female protagonist's interest in violent men implies an analysis of the gendered nature of violence, these films often obscure the whiteness and masculinity of the killer. The killer's motivation is rarely overtly sexual and he frequently kills men as well as women. Additionally, the femininity of the female profiler is often downplayed, suggesting that women in traditionally patriarchal roles must adopt a masculine persona. Echoing Carol Clover's final girl thesis (1992), Gates argues that the female detective is often masculinised, with the character's name, appearance and demeanour often suggesting an androgynous or tomboyish persona which sometimes becomes more 'feminine' as she solves the crime (Gates 2006, 234-6). Rehling suggests that although the female profiler is not always masculinised, her placing within positions of traditional authority inhibits any meaningful criticism of patriarchy (Rehling 2007, 10). While individual men are shown to be violent and misogynistic, the institutions and wider power structures to which feminist analyses would trace this individual behaviour remain free from scrutiny. Although female profilers implicitly reinforce the concept of serial killing as a male crime by remaining

distanced from the pathology of the killers they seek, violence remains restricted to individual men, undermining any critique of patriarchy. It is also the case - though not surprising, given Hollywood's reluctance to cast non-white women in starring or heroic roles - that the female profiler is usually white. The profiler film's depiction of other identities extends only so far, limiting the female profiler to examples of mainly white, middle class (or aspiring to middle class) women who usually combat male violence from within traditional patriarchal structures.

Similarly, the depiction of black profilers demonstrates stereotypes common to Hollywood cinema. These portrayals allude to the mystical qualities of profiling through the clichéd figure of the sagacious black man. In *Seven*, the aggression of the white Detective Mills (Brad Pitt) aligns him with the white killer, John Doe (Kevin Spacey), while distancing them both from the calm, introspective, black Detective Somerset (Morgan Freeman) (Dyer 1999: 24). This depiction of the black profiler remains stable throughout the 1990s. Whilst the black profiler film does not explicitly address the race of the characters, it does link to a wider representation of black masculinity evident in Hollywood throughout the 1990s, in which worthy, virtuous, black characters dispense wisdom to whites (Di Piero 1992; Rehling 2007: 10). *The Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994), *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (Robert Redford, 2000) and *The Matrix* (Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski, 1999) demonstrate this trend.

While it may be argued that *Seven* alludes to this figure in order to subvert expectations (Somerset fails to stop the killer completing his series), later black profilers fulfil qualities associated with the wise black man. The similarity between these characters is especially conspicuous as these five roles are filled by two actors - Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington - particularly associated with "worthy" characters (Freeman in *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Deep Impact* (Mimi Leder, 1998), Washington in *Glory* (Edward Zwick, 1989) and *Philadelphia* (Jonathan Demme, 1993)). The similarity between the intuitive profiler and the wise black man partly explains the appearance of the black profiler. While the race of the black detective is rarely referred to explicitly, tacit racial connotations do have meaning in these films (Gates 2006, 189). The status of the black profiler, like that of the female profiler, underlines the outsider positioning of this figure. The struggle against white patriarchal institutions is another obstacle to be crossed as the determined, uniquely gifted profiler attempts to protect the community from the killer.

As well as shifting authority from white men, these films often depict helpers, usually women, who support the profiler, in contrast to earlier films which highlight the profiler's isolation. Crucial scenes in *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Frequency*, *Fallen* and *Replicant* portray a profiler and helper/s relying on intuitive rather than state-sanctioned detection, often solving part of the puzzle through discussions in tightly-shot scenes which stress their physical proximity. An escaped victim helps in *Kiss the Girls*, while an academic contributes in *Fallen*. These helpers encourage the profiler, or are encouraged by the profiler, to abandon traditional modes of surveillance. In portraying teams consisting mainly of women and ethnic minorities rejecting conventional methods of detection these films position the profiler against the serialising administrative surveillance bodies which stymie progress. Rehling argues that the addition of a white woman to help the black profiler enhances a sense of solidarity between two subjugated identities against a violent example of white male oppression (2007:11). However, in a trend which alludes to the mismatched "buddy" film, these two figures never share the same skills and a power relationship is often detectable through the mentoring of one character by another. The white women in these films are often more physical than the older black men who teach them to profile (Gates 2006, 204), although *Virtuosity* and *Fallen* both feature less physically active female helpers whose help is mainly verbal, refuting the idea that the bi-racial profiler film always offers a straightforward gender reversal. Instead, the power relations between black profiler and white student/helper vary between films, indicating the racial and gender representations in these films are more complex than Gates suggests.

As in the 1980s films, white masculinity is associated with sterility and clinical, serialising technology. The casting of black and female actors in the roles of profilers in the 1990s has been described as making "the whiteness of serial killing [...] more visible" (Rehling, 2009: 245). This casting distances these profilers from aggression as they are visually distinguished from violent white men, their racial and gendered status associating them with nonconformity and individualism, distancing them from the anonymous, hyper-normative killer (Rehling 2009: 238). Female profilers are "able to tap into popular feminist discourses" whilst black profilers "occupy positions of symbolic and moral authority" (Rehling, 2007: 10-11). Distinct from the blank, white male killers, these individuals are removed from traditional surveillance and authority by virtue of their non-white male status; they are too visible to be paralleled with anonymous bureaucracy. Additionally, since the profiler's skills involve 'feminine' attributes such as intuition and empathy, the female profilers are particularly suited to their role. Black profilers are also shown to be more "passionate [and] grounded" than their white adversaries, their ethnic

identity suggesting an authenticity lacking in their empty serial killer adversaries (Rehling, 2009: 241). While double relationships are drawn between the killer and the black or female profiler, these parallels do not suggest that the profiler shares the killer's violent tendencies. Frequently, the killer and profiler have a shared history (*Copycat*, *Virtuosity*), similar ideas about the world (*Seven*), or complementary skills (*The Bone Collector*), yet the profiler never demonstrates the killer's capacity for violence. While some films complicate the profiler's mission by showing law enforcement to believe that s/he may be complicit in the crimes, the audience is always certain of the profiler's innocence and shielding from moral contamination - unlike viewers of the earlier *Cruising* or *Tightrope*.

It is interesting that at the same time as the role of profiler is opened up to a wider range of characters, the profiler is shown to be inferior to the intelligent, manipulative killer, suggesting a curious correspondence between the powerful killer and the female/non-white profiler. Apart from the careful staging of the crimes scene discussed above, the extravagant and flamboyant 1990s killer demonstrates an uncanny control over other spaces in the film. This aspect is most evident in *Seven*: Doe "seems invisible and potentially anywhere" (Dyer 1999, 59). This effect is achieved partly through the narrative: his ability to enter private spaces undetected is not explained. The editing and camera position during the chase scene, when Doe races through labyrinthine corridors and streets before attacking Mills from above, reinforces Doe's physical and intellectual talents as he outwits and outfights the muscular detective. This sense of a pervasive, inescapable danger is suggested by other 1990s films. In *Jennifer Eight* (Bruce Robinson, 1992), the killer targets blind women living in a coastal town, where heavy rain, fog and snow obscure the vision of potential victims, the profiler, and the audience. *Fallen* depicts a supernatural killer shifting between bodies through touch; several scenes highlight the specific threat of a killer who hides within others. Again, the killer enjoys anonymity as he watches; we can never be sure whose body he has possessed.

This ability is partly dependent on the anonymity of white masculinity which allows the killer to remain undetected due to his apparent 'normality'. Dyer describes *Seven*'s John Doe's race and gender as offering "the ideal...position of power in everyday life in contemporary society...seeing but unseen, unmarked by particularities of class, race or gender" (Dyer 1999, 44-5). In films which depict the killer before the audience and profiler is aware of his real identity (*Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*), the highlighting of his banality reinforces a sense of shock at discovering his true identity. It reminds us that the killer can be anyone (that 'anyone' is limited to the category of white male remains

implicit) and confronts us with the paradox of the dispassionate, rational individual who erupts into explosive violence (Seltzer 1998, 107). Yet the physically unremarkable killer is inwardly exceptional - witty, cunning, efficient and avoiding attempts to contain him within psychiatric or common sense ideas of insanity through his control over his actions. In comparison with the 1980s killers, the 1990s murderer is an exaggerated, hyperbolised character. The theatricality of Lecter's escape in *The Silence of the Lambs* is quite distinct from his portrayal in *Manhunter* (1986), in which he fails to fulfil a planned attack on the profiler's family. At the end of *The Silence of the Lambs*, a troubled Starling gazes into space after Lecter ends his telephone call before walking casually into the crowd, literally disappearing from our view as his white suit becomes indistinguishable from many others. In *Manhunter*, however, Graham tires of Lecter's taunts some time before the end of the film and puts down the telephone as Lecter rants, his relaxed "Goodbye, Dr Lecter" undermining the killer's power.

When the killer is not outwardly charismatic and witty, his achievements in constructing an elaborate puzzle and outwitting the profiler demonstrate his abilities. We see little of Vassago (Jeremy Sisto) in *Hideaway*, yet his victim-incorporating sculpture and return from the dead ensure that he fascinates the audience and the profiler. The depiction of supernatural killers adds to the mystification of the killer, while in *The Bone Collector* the killer is depicted as a worthy adversary for the profiler despite appearing only as a masked figure until very near the end. Although the profiler remains the protagonist and point of identification for the audience, the killer is an increasingly heroic figure, from the point at which we are invited to laugh at Lecter's darkly comic hint at the fate of his former jailer in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Tasker 2002, 85). Later films depict a victorious killer who remains free (*Candyman*, *Fallen*), inspires others to continue his crimes (*Copycat*, *Sleepstalker*) or completes their series (*Seven*).

This shift towards charismatic, successful and fascinating killers links to earlier representations of murderers. The cultural figure of the serial killer is influenced by the Gothic/Romantic construction of the transgressive deviant who violates social and legal barriers, inspiring fascination and awe (Cameron and Fraser 1987, 36). As Dyer (1997, 1999) suggests, this figure (and those who identify with him) is implicitly classed as male and white, and is usually financially and socially privileged. The serial killer is given heroic qualities, rebelling against society's constrictions in search of freedom and self-actualisation. Allusions to philosophical and existential ideas reinforce the sense of the serial killer's escape from the banality and repression of the everyday through the

objectification of others (Cameron and Fraser 1987, 58-9). The 1990s serial killer film, in its portrayal of the fascinating, brilliant serial killer (and even in the depiction of those killers who are less compelling but display an uncanny ability to control), replays both this idea of the rebellious, liberated nonconformist and the concealed gendered and racial power structures which restrict this role to white men.

While Cameron and Fraser's work shows that this construction of the serial killer is not unusual, the reasons for the emergence of this figure in American cinema at this particular time remains less clear. One explanation is the shift from the 1980s serial killer panic to concerns over other forms of violence in the 1990s. While the Jeffrey Dahmer arrest in 1991 attracted significant media attention, later serial killer cases are overshadowed by different types of threats. Throughout the 1990s, school shootings by students became a prominent cultural issue, turning attention to this variation on the spree killer. The World Trade Centre bombing and the controversial Waco siege in 1993 and the 1995 Oklahoma bombing focused attention on religious cults, gun control, domestic terrorism and the way in which authorities - particularly the FBI, the agency which had promoted the serial killer threat (Jenkins 1994) - dealt with these problems.

In the 1990s the serial killer becomes a 'safer' figure of fear; the killer is still frightening but is more familiar and less immediate than bombings, child-on-child shootings and cults (Schmid, 2005). The very grandness of the charismatic, fascinating, flamboyant cinematic serial killer distances him from the real world, making him a larger than life character. The self-conscious performativity of these killers suggests knowingness, an element already evident in the construction of serial killing as a puzzle or game. The elaborate, clue-packed crime scenes contribute to this sense of the killer as a heroic villain whose crimes offer a vicarious thrill less apparent in earlier profiler films. Simpson argues that 1990s serial killer cinema, most notably *Seven*, *Kalifornia* and *Natural Born Killers* exhibit a "fin-de-siècle mysticism" and "revel in reactionary politics and apocalypse" as a response to millennial fears (1999: 140). He argues that these films portray the killer as a "human but monstrous [...] Other that justifies the most violent and reactionary impulses in the American character" (1999: 119), supporting my reading of the profiler figure as an outsider whose status as the only hope against the serial killer links to long-standing national myths. In amplifying the threat of the killer, the 1990s films heighten the need to combat this danger with increasingly invasive forms of surveillance which are shown to be crucial in light of the killer's ability to outwit existing law enforcement as concern for civil liberties assists the cynical, manipulative serial killer in his efforts to attack society.

While the shift to powerful, intelligent killers and sensitive, diverse profilers has been examined by other writers, their concurrent appearance has not. The inclusion of different identities as profilers points to a shift in cinematic and wider cultural attitudes to gendered and racial identities, yet these profilers are often less successful than their predecessors. Several 1990s profilers fail; those who succeed are faced with an intelligent and intriguing adversary who demonstrates an alarming ability to dominate the world constructed by the film. It is possible that the exaggerated nature of the killer demands a profiler who is not doubled with the killer but instead represents a less sinister figure whose scrutiny of the world is more benign than that of the profiler of the 1980s. While all profilers are distinguished by their rejection of traditional law enforcement methods and surveillance practices, many of the 1990s profilers, especially female and black characters, exhibit an increased resistance to these conventional ideas, using their own techniques from the start of the investigation rather than as a desperate last effort as the investigation stalls. This tendency reinforces the link between white masculinity and administrative surveillance as it suggests those outwith the status of white male are already aware of the limitations of conventional detection. It is also possible that the appearance of black and female characters - identities more often associated with demands for observance of civil rights and due process than that of white masculinity - conceals the right wing implications of these films. Their condoning of unusual or illegal detection methods is tied to marginalised identities, and appears offbeat, creative and necessary rather than an abuse of power.

The relationship between killer and profiler stresses their opposing surveillance strategies in the 1990s films, with many of these films aligning the killer with the repressive scrutiny of state and law enforcement surveillance. The following case study discusses the main developments, tracking the portrayal of surveillance in reference to non-white/female profilers, examining the depiction of urban space and the crime scene, and finally investigating the paralleling of the white male killer and repressive institutions.

Case study: *The Bone Collector*

Released in 1999, towards the end of the period investigated in this chapter, *The Bone Collector* is in many ways a typical example of the 1990s profiler film. It depicts a profiler who is exceptionally talented at understanding the serial killer and who achieves a more stable identity through the solving of the case. At the start of the film, Lincoln Rhyme (Denzel Washington), a forensic specialist paralysed by a crime scene accident, convinces

a friend to help him commit suicide. A new officer, Amelia (Angelina Jolie), is told that although Rhyme was once a “human dynamo”, investigating many crime scenes, writing forensic handbooks and collecting samples for a forensic database, he has withdrawn from the world since the accident. He refuses to work on cases and has cut off contact with relatives. On being asked to help when the body of a rich developer is discovered, he at first declines, but is soon drawn into the case and takes charge of the investigation.

Rhyme displays the instinctive skills of the profiler, positioning himself against the arrogant, bureaucratic Captain Cheney (Michael Rooker). Cheney’s self-interest, obsession with procedure and inability to comprehend Rhyme’s talent embodies the institutional ignorance profilers face. Rhyme tutors Amelia, in whom he has recognised an instinctive talent for forensics, which corresponds to the film’s construction of profiling. Rhyme determines that the killer is using forensic clues to communicate, leaving traces of the location of the next victim at each scene. His identity and motive remain unknown until Richard (Leland Orser), Rhyme’s heart monitor technician, reveals that he is a former forensic specialist who was jailed after Rhyme uncovered his fabrication of evidence to win convictions. Seeking revenge, the killings are to him a game in which he wishes to beat Rhyme. Amelia works out Rhyme is the next target and arrives in time to save him. The transformative experience of the case is suggested by the last scene: Rhyme uses a wheelchair and is romantically involved with Amelia.

The Bone Collector illustrates the main developments of the 1990s film through the depiction of a black profiler and novice female profiler, elaborate crime scenes and a killer who is more closely connected to state-sanctioned surveillance than earlier murderers. The case study first discusses the profilers, arguing that the film depicts the two as both monitored and monitoring and exploring the ways in which their racial and gendered identities are connected to these points. Secondly, I investigate the depiction of the surveillance of space, a theme which is also relevant in the earlier films but which is more pronounced in the 1990s. This film in particular constructs New York as a huge potential crime scene. The final section argues that the aligning of the killer and administrative surveillance is amplified in the 1990s films. In distancing the profiler/s from the killer’s violence, the homosocial relationship of the 1980s films is replaced by the heterosexual romance which develops between Rhyme and Amelia. Instead, Richard is closer to the bureaucratic, interfering police Captain, linking him to administrative surveillance.

The profilers and surveillance

In this section, I work through the ways in which the film characterises its profilers as both monitored and monitoring, while tapping into the relative innocence of their marginalised identities. Amelia and Rhyme are subject to an unusual level of surveillance, raising questions about the depiction of black and female profilers.

Rhyme is not the alienated, troubled profiler of the 1980s films. He is friendly towards his nurse and colleagues, and is closer to the intelligent, articulate, erudite ‘wise black man’, demonstrating the new inclusivity of profiling by sharing his skills and accepting help from a group of trusted friends from a variety of races, genders and occupations. Yet Rhyme has not accepted his disability and seeks to end his life, referring to the constant medical surveillance designed to keep him alive as a factor in his decision. At the start of the film, his control is emphasised, his face filling the frame as he steps into the establishing shot of the riverside. The camera follows him striding past other officers to whom he gives direction; he brings composure and authority onto this chaotic scene. As the tunnel collapses, he wakes and we discover he has been dreaming. He is filmed from above, his vulnerability emphasised as the camera lifts up, away from his face and circles round him. Further shots reveal the equipment keeping him alive and the medical nature of the bed. Filmed from the foot of the bed and then from the side, his static positioning becomes clear (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: Rhyme under medical surveillance.

As he strains to look around, his control of space is limited. Generic computer desktop pictures of nocturnal beach views call attention to attempts to escape the confines of his city home. His long look at the skylight, which we follow as it becomes an idealised view which suggests the fantasised physical and scopic abilities of both Rhyme and the killer, feels like a reluctant acceptance of his limitations. His most comfortable viewing position is up towards the sky, the protective grill of the skylight resembling prison bars. While the medical equipment surrounding the bed ensures Rhyme's survival, it is also a form of surveillance: like the skylight bars, technology designed to protect can also be repressive (though during the final fight Rhyme uses the technology to fend off Richard). Rhyme's distaste for this monitoring is evident from his wish to end his own life and his banter with Thelma (Queen Latifah). In addition, the eventual discovery that the killer has violated Rhyme's home under the guise of maintaining his heart monitor equipment highlights the intrusive nature of medical surveillance.

Rhyme's vulnerability to surveillance is also evident from the camera's manipulation of space in the room in which he is trapped. In early scenes, off-kilter camera angles capture Rhyme's horizontal perspective. Shots of other characters are disorientating, highlighting his restricted movement and vision. They seem to leer over him, the frame is shaky and the high ceiling makes faces dominate the frame as the background seems very far from this central object. Neutral camera angles which are not connected to his perspective are more comfortable and steadier, underlining Rhyme's limitations.

However, as he is drawn into the case, he exercises more control over space and his surroundings. The investigation is centred at his house, a secure and welcoming space. Big windows, high ceilings and carefully positioned light ensure it is bright and spacious. There are few doors; boundaries between rooms are spacious archways. The light brown and beige furnishings and the presence of the protective Thelma suggest this place is immune to the chaos and violence of the city. When evidence enters the home, scientific procedures distance it from its sinister origins and obscure the brutality of the murders (bagged, taken apart, scrutinised under microscopes). Victims are not discussed after the serial nature of the crimes is established: only the Rubens are named and bodies enter the home only in photographic form, objectifying them and reducing the immediacy of the event. The profiler's scrutiny of evidence demonstrates his efforts to impose order and security on chaos and fear. Rhyme's desire for organisation and structure is apparent from his pre-accident 'hobby' - collecting materials for a forensic database - and his interest in New York crime history, which suggests a desire to order space and time.

The setting up of the investigation headquarters privileges Rhyme's vision and constructs his home as a safe, dynamic combination of domestic and work spaces. Camera positions, lighting and mise-en-scène place Rhyme at the centre of this expansive room. White bedding draws attention to the space he inhabits, and the contrast with his dark skin focuses attention on his face. Computer screens and machinery set up around the bed frame him. When his team arrives with equipment and computers, attention is focused on Rhyme, who sits up, controlling the busy officers. Shots from his perspective show that despite his static position he sees most of the room. Questions are addressed to him and he controls where objects are placed. His power as he scrutinises evidence is made clear even though he remains distanced from the actual scene. As he verbally guides Amelia through her examination of the pipe room crime scene, his face takes up most of the screen. In many shots his chin and forehead extend beyond the top and bottom of the frame, further affirming his status as the dominant character in this space. Rhyme sits up straight at this point, contrasting with earlier scenes in which he seems to slouch against his pillows.

These devices link Rhyme's improved mental state to his return to profiling. Like Malcolm in *The Mean Season*, he is revitalised by the search for the killer. What difference, then, is made by Rhyme's race? Like other profilers, Rhyme is paralleled with the killer: they share both forensic skills and a distaste for surveillance. Rhyme recognises early on that clues are left at crime scenes not by accident but to allow him to use his extensive knowledge of New York to work out the next location. As Rhyme points out, these deliberate clues make him complicit in the murders: he must isolate the location in time to save the victim. Additionally, Richard kills only to draw Rhyme into his 'game'. Rhyme and Richard are connected not just by a shared occupation but by their inability to overcome personal trauma: Rhyme wants to escape his disability and years in prison have led to Richard's homicidal revenge, suggesting that both fail to deal with their different forms of incarceration (Cettl 2003, 73). However, Rhyme is typical of the 1990s black profiler in his distancing from Richard's violence, supporting Rehling's argument regarding the innocent black profiler: Rhyme never demonstrates murderous urges and the only life he wishes to end is his own.

Rhyme's race is never mentioned in the film and is downplayed by the fact that we only see his family in the final scene, although Thelma's maternal attitude is typical of Hollywood depictions of black middle-aged women, linking Rhyme to cultural ideas of blackness through their close friendship. Additionally, Cheney's hostile attitude, coupled with Rooker's associations with redneck roles, suggests racism. Rhyme's race is also

interesting in the context of his surveillance skills. The administrative surveillance associated with the killer is coded as white and masculine because of its apparent neutrality and its connection with authority. Although the white male profiler relies on intuitive surveillance, he is still linked to white-dominated bureaucratic surveillance, as is evident in Malcolm's interactions with the detectives and Andy the photographer in *The Mean Season*. Conversely, Rhyme is distanced from oppressive surveillance practices through the depiction of the benevolent, multiracial/gender team which gathers in his home. This site of detection is very different from that represented in contemporaneous films such as *Red Team* and *The Watcher*, in which white men scrutinise the community in a more repressive manner. Rhyme's disability is also significant. If the broken leg of Jeffries in *Rear Window* can be described as "an alibi for watching, since his physical disability deprives him of the ability to act" (Albrechtslund, 2008:134), then Rhyme's catastrophic injuries perhaps mitigate any sinister aspect of his observation. That he is constantly observed by machines which record his vital signs on screens positioned beside the bed further dissociates him from the killer's misuse of surveillance by indicating that Rhyme is caught in a scrutinising gaze, the blank neutrality of which echoes the cold efficiency of the killer who maintains the equipment.

However, this interpretation is complicated by the portrayal of Amelia, who is initially resentful of Rhyme's monitoring presence: she is upset when he investigates her private life and angrily leaves the first crime scene when he tells her to cut off the corpse's hands. Amelia's depiction is typical of the non-white/non-male profiler and her subordinate role to Rhyme suggests a gender hierarchy. The relationship between Rhyme and Amelia is characterised by their shared surveillance and efforts to escape observation. The novice, argumentative Amelia is supervised by the expert but spatially distant Rhyme. Their first joint crime scene analysis, of the pipe room in which Mrs Rubin has been killed, contrasts Amelia's emotional response with that of the professional, objective Rhyme, their distinction highlighting the particular form of scrutiny employed by the profiler. As he talks Amelia through her examination, Rhyme's distance from the actual scene is belied by the smooth editing between the two geographic spaces and the radio contact between him and Amelia. Amelia's apprehension is evident from her anxious expression and shaky voice, yet Rhyme's succinct order as she enters the room indicates his priorities: "tell me what you see". He registers her emotional responses but tries to introduce a more objective vision. When she complains of an "awful smell", he tells her "it means you're close"; when she gasps at seeing the body he reminds her of her professional capacity ("that's your job"); telling her to "walk the grid", he imposes rationality onto the scene.

Rhyme's dispassionate approach is continually linked to vision and spatial organisation: his reminder that crime scenes are three-dimensional positions the investigation within scientific terminology which relates to space and sight. He responds to her distress by telling her to "get your camera"; when she shudders at finding a bloody bone he responds: "photograph it", replacing her emotional response with the neutrality and objectivity of technology. Close-ups of the photographing and bagging of the bone and hair highlight the detached treatment of the evidence. The different emotional states of Rhyme and Amelia correspond to traditional gender associations, as does Amelia's experience within the team. Like other female profilers, Amelia's battle against the killer and police bureaucracy is compounded by her gender; she is the only female officer (other than Thelma and two victims, she is the only female character), heightening her conspicuousness. The first few scenes suggest she is out of place as she watches the sunrise while her boyfriend sleeps in bed. A gender role reversal is implied when it is revealed that the police boots and gun lying on the floor belong to Amelia, not her muscular boyfriend, and by his complaint regarding her casual attitude to their relationship (Gates, 2006: 209). Amelia's interest in crime is 'explained' by her father's police background: the inability of other officers to pronounce her surname suggests she is not ready to take on the patriarchal role suggested by his name and occupation (she is usually referred to as Amelia). She is mentored by a man and is still distressed by her father's death, positioning her within a gendered hierarchy.

Amelia's professional progression and growing confidence are expressed through her greater surveillance skills and control of space. On discovering the first body, she is uncomfortable in this unfamiliar space, relying on a child to guide her, stumbling and expressing shock as she uncovers the corpse's face. When she is sent into a crime scene in a steam pipe room on behalf of Rhyme, he instructs her over a radio as she examines the scene, with other officers listening in from various locations (though he soon trusts her to gather evidence and describe the scene without his prompting). The unpacked boxes in her home suggest a transient nature to her domestic space. It is clear from Amelia's growing confidence in mapping the later crime scenes that she enjoys a new mastery over space. She is careful but not reluctant to enter the slaughterhouse, and she finds the river victims in time to save one. Her success as profiler is confirmed when, losing radio contact with Rhyme, she works out the last clue alone in time to save him in his own domestic space.

Until she aligns herself with the maverick Rhyme by stealing evidence, Rhyme and Amelia are rarely filmed close together. They often appear in the same shot, but are positioned no

closer than Rhyme and other detectives. Amelia remains several inches from Rhyme's bed and looks formal, standing up straight with hands clasped behind her. As Rhyme instructs her before she heads to the pipe room crime scene, a close-up of her face centred in the middle of the frame is angled so that she appears to be looking directly at the camera, suggesting we share Rhyme's perspective. This shot begins as he states her name, prompting her to turn towards him and look directly at Rhyme/the camera. His voice is low and calm as he refers to both their partnership and her intuitive instinct for profiling: "trust me. Just follow those instincts you were born with. I'll be with you, every step of the way". As he talks, a cut to the reverse point of view captures Amelia's perspective, as Rhyme stares into the camera while intoning his instructions. A cut back to Amelia reveals her apprehension, but she nods and walks away. This unusual matching of the characters' viewpoint as one is taught profiling recalls similar sequences in *The Silence of the Lambs*, though clearly Rhyme is less sinister than Lecter. His intense holding of Amelia's attention as he looks at her highlights sight, but the framing keeps the characters apart.

Rhyme and Amelia remain apart until her exile from the police, at which point the shots become "tightly framed, intimate" (Rehling, 2007: 11) in contrast to the earlier distancing of the two characters. Amelia is relaxed in this scene, wearing a loose, light brown top which complements the beiges and browns of Rhyme's home. In previous scenes she wears smart tailored shirts and stands formally. Now, she moves closer to Rhyme, holding evidence close to allow him to smell it. Her abilities are consolidated when she uses Rhyme's intuitive profiling process to work out the last clue in time to save him. As she examines the final scene, she closes her eyes in intense concentration, the camerawork and editing explicitly recalling Rhyme's earlier epiphany, when he recognises the significance of oyster shells found at the first crime scene. A montage of old photographs, maps, close-ups of the evidence and of Rhyme's eyes underscore the intuitive nature of his investigative process. Similarly, Amelia's eyes, along with glimpses of the crime scene and pieces of evidence, form a montage which reveals that Rhyme's home is the next location. One shot of the montage - a shaky tracking shot mimicking the perspective of a person walking into Rhyme's house - is particularly interesting as it not only hints at the revelation Amelia is about to experience, but suggests she grounds herself in Rhyme's environment to investigate the evidence, an idea also evident in her whispered repeating of his name. Her recognition of the threat to Rhyme, then, both suggests her independence - working out the clue alone - and reliance on an older male figure. Together with the depiction of Amelia as a muscular, physically adept woman, this ambiguity hints at the continual negotiation of identities which characterises 1990s cinema (Gates, 2006: 157-8).

However, the aspect which is more evident than race and equally as apparent as gender in distinguishing these two characters is class. Amelia's accent and her father's career suggest a working class New York background. Rhyme, it seems, is from a relatively poor family but aspires to the middle class: he explains that his parents never owned a book, yet he has written twelve. His vast, tasteful apartment, scientific expertise (suggesting a university education) and neutral accent mark him out from the police officers. The only character of equivalent status is Richard, as they share a similar profession and indeterminate accent. Yet Rhyme is distinguished from Richard by his favouring of truth and honesty over the killer's deceit and corruption, which extends to abusing his role as a forensic scientist - his privileged authority in surveillance - to ensure convictions. Additionally, Rhyme's relaxed engagement with the different people who form his team illustrates his egalitarian nature. In contrast, Richard's egotism is apparent during his attack on Rhyme, as he boasts about having "won". Cheney, meanwhile, appears to be, like Rhyme, working class but with a desire to advance his career. His political ambition and inferior detective skills are mocked and his jealousy of Rhyme is obvious - in the opening scene, he assists the able-bodied Rhyme, suggesting that the accident has allowed him to progress faster than Rhyme. His business suit and management-style vocabulary barely disguise a bullying manner. These characterisations shift racial tensions onto a class dynamic; like *The Mean Season*, the film avoids real world issues of racial disharmony affecting the city at the centre of the narrative, replacing racial disparities with economic differences.

Neither Rhyme nor Amelia share a link with the killer as disturbing as that of *The Mean Season*'s Malcolm, and their rejection of official procedures alludes to resistance to white male privilege, distancing them from Richard. Yet the three characters are connected by their intuitive talent for forensic science. The next section explores this fascination in terms of the New York setting and surveillance of the city space, before the last section shows how the film links the killer to white masculinity.

Urban Space and the Crime Scene

A central development in the 1990s films is the surveillance of urban space. Busy city scenes highlight the anonymity of the killer while spectacular, sweeping overhead shots focus on spectacle, tying the film to the 1990s surveillance trend identified by Turner (1998). The city is particularly associated with the serial killer, as metropolitan anonymity and alienation are held responsible for the phenomenon of repetitive killing (Dyer, 1997:

16). Both the city and the serial killer (and surveillance) are understood as collapsing the distinctions of public and private (Selter, 1998; Turner, 1998). The description of the city as allowing “public space to become the stage for private experiences and private spaces to be unfolded onto public experiences” (Molesworth, 1991: 14) parallels the way in which the serial killer’s targeting of strangers, often in public spaces, merges the public and private. *The Bone Collector* pushes this idea to its extreme by portraying New York as one huge crime scene.

The film constructs New York as a chaotic labyrinth over which the profiler and killer attempt to impose control. The opening montage uses blurry lights to suggest traffic speeding through streets and images of old maps and crime scenes to allude to this iconic city. The montage also highlights the importance of visual awareness: one of Rhyme’s book covers, subtitled “old murders of New York”, hints at the role his historical knowledge will play, while one of the newspaper headlines glimpsed refers to Richard’s conviction. The first shot after the montage depicts the familiar New York skyline, entirely still for a moment until Rhyme confidently steps into the shot, the deep focus of the image maintaining an equal focus in both the fore and background of the image, stressing his comfort in this space (Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2: Rhyme steps into a deep focus shot which suggests his mastery of urban space.

The film’s construction of New York shows the mapping of space to be vital. The first death in the film is that of Alan Ruben, whose wealth suggests that his missing wife is being held for ransom and ensures that Rhyme’s expertise is requested. Rather than making any points about the unequal status of murder victims, however, the film connects Ruben’s occupation - a property developer - to the concern with space. The danger of spatial

confusion is emphasised throughout the film, and not only in the obviously unfamiliar and threatening crime scenes. When the Rubens wake up in a taxi being driven through unknown, desolate streets, they panic as they are in “the middle of nowhere”. Their fear and confusion at finding themselves in an alien part of the city, later ironised by the discovery of Ruben’s fame as one who redesigns space (a detective describes him as “Mr re-build New York”), is echoed by the disorientation of the police officers as they search for crime scenes. The pipe room is located in a famous New York building, but its subterranean position means that the officers who rely on their awareness of the spatial organisation of the city need maps and help from the workers who maintain the steam junction. Even these workers are outwitted by the killer, as the sabotaged junction explodes, sending steam up through the streets, disrupting the over/underground boundary.

The dangerous, unfamiliar underground spaces through which Amelia searches - to find the last crime scene, she follows an old subway map - echoes the New York “underground myth” movies of the 1970s and 1980s, in which “the deterioration of the subway came to stand in for the deterioration of the social fabric as a whole” (Pike, 1998: 11). As well as the dank, unknowable tunnels, the killer leaves victims at an abandoned abattoir - referring to machine culture and industrialised killing, like Delour in *The Mean Season* - and under a pier, spaces associated with commerce and transition. Lighting, editing and camera angles stress the hazards of Amelia’s journey through these places. The crime scenes are “the remnants of an urban wasteland” (Cettl, 2003: 72), artefacts of the city of which Rhyme is an expert historian. The killer makes New York strange to those who know it well, the emphasis on strange, dangerous, subterranean spaces making Richard’s final invasion of Rhyme’s light, spacious, elevated home particularly shocking.

The killer’s ability to move through the city without detection is assisted and emphasised by his taxi driver disguise. The Rubens are abducted by a cab driver and this *modus operandi* remains consistent; Ortiz jokes about “psychos from Jersey” driving taxis, reinforcing geographical specificity and the notion of boundaries. The yellow taxi is an iconic symbol of New York; most New York-set films and television programmes use cabs in background shots for verisimilitude. Like the white male, however, their ubiquity lends them anonymity; although two of the abductions are witnessed, the investigation falters because of the difficulty in finding one particular cab among thousands. Like the serial killer, the taxi blends in. The everyday sight of the taxi becomes dangerous: when Amelia runs home from the pipe room crime scene, sinister music and the appearance of a cab

outside her home suggests she may be targeted by the killer.²⁰ The cab's ability to weave undetected through the city indicates the killer's control of urban space.

The suggestion of perfect vision before each killing also constructs the killer as an agent of surveillance. Before the Rubens' abduction, an idealised vision is suggested by a move from Rhyme's point of view as he gazes up at the skylight, through the protective bars above the glass, into a pan across the sky. This shift from Rhyme's perspective denotes frustration at his restricted vision and suggests he is imagining this swoop out of the skylight. A shot of the underside of a huge plane emphasises the impossibility of this viewpoint before we see the Rubens hailing a cab at the airport. Later, just before the abduction of the next victim outside a bar, an overhead shot sweeps over the city. The bright lights of the buildings, heavy rain and labyrinthine streets hint at the chaos below yet this shot indicates another idealised outlook: the bird's eye view and smooth movement makes this perspective impossible for any of the characters. This sequence suggests the idealised view of the killer through the use of music. As the shot passes over buildings, we hear distorted dance music, which is dulled and muffled as if heard from a distance. The next shot pans round a club in which we hear the same music continue seamlessly but now clearly. This shift from distorted to intelligible music suggests the camera's distance from the ground, as if magnifying the killer's ability to scrutinise the city.

The idealisation of these views is highlighted during the search for the last victims, when we witness the limited vision of diegetic helicopters as they search the riverside. The loud helicopters restrict the characters' communication and muffle any cries from the victims. The searchlights illuminate only a small area at a time and pick up little detail from the black water. It is not the helicopters or search teams which find the victims, but Amelia, following Rhyme's analysis of oil from the previous scene, which allows her to isolate an area to search. The ultimate failure of the helicopter search is evident from our over-hearing of a surprised pilot alerting others to Amelia's success as she jumps in the water to rescue the victims, having used her hand-held torch to signal the helicopter (Figure 4.3).

²⁰ The sinister potential of the omnipresent yellow taxi is also evident in the taxi-cab serial killer plot which runs through the fourth season of *CSI: NY* (2004 -), underlining the familiarity of this mode of transport in modern culture. Additionally, the British television modern retelling of Sherlock Holmes, *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010 -), offers a similar danger in the London black cab in the episode 'A Study in Pink.'



Figure 4.3: Amelia struggles to attract the attention of the helicopter at the chaotic pier.

The consistent foreshadowing of each kidnapping with idealised perspectives suggests a fantasy of perfect sight and the transcendence Richard experiences during his crimes. They are not neutral establishing shots but highlight Richard's ability to survey the city, suggesting a particularly 1990s idea of the almost omnipotent serial killer in the urban environment. Together with allusions to Rhyme's awareness of his restricted vision and movement - gazing up at the skylight, watching a falcon resting on his window ledge - these intimations of Richard's superior vision and mastery of space reinforce the struggle between killer and profiler as one which hierarchises spatial and scopic control.

Rhyme's expert knowledge of New York history and crime fiction further highlights the surveillance of the city. Richard leaves evidence alluding to historical murders and old crime novels only Rhyme will recognise to personalise the killings and make Rhyme responsible for the citizens of New York. The symbolic use of the falcon, which enjoys the idealised perspectives fantasised by Rhyme and Richard, is also significant. Early in the film, Rhyme watches a falcon sitting on his windowsill; joking that the bird 'likes cripples', he is told that they nest in the city's old architecture. On the two further occasions we see the falcon, it becomes distressed as Rhyme suffers seizures, expanding their link. With the establishment of an association between the falcon and Rhyme, the bird's enviable control over space and sight highlights Rhyme's limitations.

Depictions of the city as a crime scene are not unique to the 1990s films. 1980's *The First Deadly Sin* depicts a profiler (Frank Sinatra) searching for a vigilante killer (reacting to amorality by carrying out quasi-religious murders) in a New York "besieged by crime, cynicism and suspicion". The detective's wife is seriously ill, "embodying the city's

illness” (Morgan, 2002: 82) echoing the merging of urban and medical surveillance around the paralysed Rhyme. However, this depiction of the city is unusual in the 1980s movies, which do not normally focus on the urban landscape to this extent. Later films (*Copcat*, *Seven*, *Fallen*) construct the city as a potential crime scene, although, like *The First Deadly Sin*, there is a tendency to isolate individual morality and the metaphysical as corrupting these urban areas, not wider social factors such as racism and economic and gender divides. Scrutiny of the city in these films, then, is limited to exposing the problems which can be solved by the profiler, with the skyline shots of 1888 Whitechapel at the beginning and end of Jack the Ripper-based *From Hell* epitomising this tradition. The red-tinged sky at the start suggests an infernal pit; at the end, with the serial killer stopped, the sky is clear, suggesting the threat is terminated, ignoring the vast economic and social imbalances which continue. The surveillance of the city, then, is concerned with isolating the serial killer as the embodiment of urban problems, concealing wider, embedded inequities.

White Men and Administrative Surveillance

This final section argues that despite this construction of the individual serial killer as the focus of violence, some limited critique of white masculinity is apparent, especially as a contrast to the non-aggressive Rhyme and Amelia. Despite the doubling between Rhyme and Richard constructed through their shared idealised perspectives and desire to scrutinise the city yet avoid surveillance of themselves, there is no suggestion that Rhyme shares Richard’s homicidal impulses, in keeping with the black profiler’s distancing from vacuous, violent white masculinity. Richard’s oddly excessive revenge on Rhyme recalls *The Mean Season* in its suggestions of the emptiness of the white male killer. He compares his murders to a game of chess, elevating the crimes to an intellectual battle which only has meaning for him. At the same time, the film repeatedly depicts Richard as anonymous and emptied of identity, not only through his masked appearance during the abductions, but also in his nondescript, friendly medical technician guise. When he is revealed to be the killer, his physical dissimilarity to Rhyme extends beyond their colour: the handsome Rhyme remains calm and articulate, while the bland Richard rambles and repeats himself.

Richard’s ability to escape surveillance suggests a blankness typical of the white male serial killer. Along with his role in various types of surveillance, it links him to panoptical administrative surveillance. Richard has been a forensic technician, scrutinising crime scenes and contributing to official judicial surveillance. His taxi driver persona emphasises

his anonymity and his mapping of space; in his guise as a medical equipment technician he supervises Rhyme's medical surveillance. *The Bone Collector* further implies the potential violence of white masculinity through the characterisations of Rhyme's white male superior, Captain Cheney, who is resentful of Rhyme's skills and objects to his informal team investigating the murders from Rhyme's house. His specific rudeness to Thelma and Amelia suggests he is also racist and misogynistic. Cheney has two narrative functions: an obstacle to Rhyme's investigation and a potential suspect. However, it is not necessary for Cheney to actually be the killer in order for him to represent violent white masculinity. His alignment with conventional, bureaucratic police work is a further example of the association between white masculinity and repetitive technologies. Rhyme's maverick tendencies, his race and disability, his alliance with a variety of different identities who help investigate and his use of intuition and instinct distinguish the profiler from administrative controls personified by Cheney and mirrored by Richard's serialising of victims.

Aggressive, arrogant, career-motivated, concerned about press reaction and disliked by his colleagues, Cheney represents a common feature of the profiler film: the bureaucrat who slavishly sticks to procedure, is ignorant of the value of profiling and lacks the skills to target the serial killer. Casting is particularly effective in constructing Cheney as a white man in a position of authority, paralleled with the killer, in contrast to Rhyme's ethnically and gender diverse team. Michael Rooker is well-known for his lead role in *Henry: Portrait of Serial Killer* and also plays a serial killer in *Sea of Love*.²¹ His appearance in *The Bone Collector* functions as a red herring, as he shows a suspicious desire to take charge of the case, diverting attention from the quiet, friendly, forgettable Richard. It is suggested that the killer may be a police officer, further casting suspicion on Cheney. Towards the end of the film, Cheney angrily drives to Rhyme's house to collect evidence Amelia has stolen. His glower at the building suggests he may be the killer. As Thelma answers the door, she is stabbed by a figure in a light jacket similar to Cheney's; it is a shock when the reverse angle reveals the dead Cheney as the camera follows the feet of the as-yet unidentified killer into Rhyme's house.

Cheney is frequently angry and intimidating, with a harsh voice and hostile body language. He is an inferior detective, chasing an obviously planted fingerprint and risking evidence

²¹ The actor's close association with serial killer roles is evident from the 2009 *Numb3rs* (Scott Free Productions, CBS, 2005 - 11) episode 'Disturbed' in which characters staking out a serial killer discuss Rooker's typecasting.

by sending in an aggressive, SWAT-style unit to crime scenes. In a film which uses many off-kilter camera angles and steadicam shots to evoke Rhyme's mobility problems and the importance of space, the camera work around Cheney is particularly striking. As the team sets up at Rhyme's house, chatting and joking, Thelma answers the door to Cheney, who strides in before announcing his name; her exaggerated gasp indicates his rudeness. As Cheney marches through the house, peering at the officers and equipment, his subordinates acknowledge him with little enthusiasm and continue to work as he surveys them. A long and off-balance tracking shot approximates his perspective as he walks from the door to Rhyme's bed. This shot is noticeably longer and less smooth than others preceding it which relay the urgent but productive movement amongst the officers setting up equipment before Cheney enters.

These elements highlight Cheney's incongruity in this space. He is burlier and taller than others, especially in his buttoned jacket - the others are relatively casual in loose shirts with open collars. Cheney's formal suit suggests a concern with appearance which denotes ambition and a reluctance towards physical work. Cheney obstructs the other officers and is asked to move when he stands in front of Rhyme's monitor. His reference to procedures reveals his distaste for Rhyme's informal working environment. His body language - he clasps and unclasps his hands in an exaggerated fashion, like a politician - and formal, condescending tone ("I'm putting the full resources of my department at your disposal") alienates Rhyme, who is civil but pays him little attention, instead concentrating on the evidence (Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.4: Cheney's clasped hands, formal manner and buttoned suit mark him out as a bureaucrat incongruous in the homely detection space.

Until this point, Cheney's demeanour is irritating but he is only an obstacle in Rhyme's hunt for the killer, a typical ignorant bureaucrat who does not understand profiling. However, a quick cut from a shot of Cheney in the background, whilst Rhyme, in the front of the frame, studies the monitor at the other side of his bed to a tight close-up of Cheney's face makes him seem threatening. As Cheney repeats his insistence that he be kept informed, he looks straight into the camera, allowing us to see him from a perspective that cannot be Rhyme's (in the next shot his face is still turned away). He starts to answer but is distracted, prompting another tight close-up and angry scowl from Cheney. Rhyme does not feel threatened by Cheney, suggesting that this shot offers the audience privileged knowledge and making the audience suspect Cheney; it also increases the distance between these two characters. Looking down slightly at the camera, Cheney's face takes up almost the entire screen and his grim look hints at his psychopathic role in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*.

A similar hint towards the threatening possibilities of white masculinity is made when Amelia searches a labyrinthine book store for a copy of the book the killer mimics. As she walks up the stairs to the dark, messy top floor, sinister music and a shadowy figure behind her suggest danger. We see a man from the waist-down who follows her before asking "can I help you?" Amelia turns around quickly, the shot cutting to her perspective as she does so. A white man's face is tightly framed, recalling the earlier shot of Cheney; his eyes are relatively wide and his expression is neutral. After a few seconds of silence in which we watch his unchanging facial features, the shot cuts back to a wary Amelia as she explains her search. Another cut offers us a much less threatening view of this stranger, as he is now filmed in a more typical shot reverse shot-style angle from behind Amelia, his face is less dominant in the frame and he smiles as he directs her to the book. The scene demonstrates that even when the killer can be 'anyone', the film does implicitly recognise that the anonymous serial killer is likely to be white and male.

Conclusion

This chapter has found that most of the shifts in the 1990s films intensify rather than transform existing aspects of the 1980s movies. The most significant changes are the depiction of black or female profilers who are not entangled in a homosocial bond with the killer but instead tap into the relative innocence of marginalised identities; a new focus on

the crime scene, specifically in urban areas; and a limited critique of serial violence as white and male.

Not all of the films exhibit these changes to the same extent. A few (*Kalifornia*, *Switchback*) set their narratives in rural rather than urban areas, though these portray their rustic locations as similarly threatening (Simpson, 1999). *Sleepstalker*, *Eye of the Killer* and *Frequency* depict crime scenes which are less elaborate than most 1990s movies, although these instances are exceptions. The black/female profiler appears in only a third of the 1990s films, yet has received academic attention as this trend offers insight into all the movies. It indicates an awareness of the misogyny and racism inherent in earlier profiler films, in which white men defend the community from an aberrant killer whose gender and race are not foregrounded by the film. It also suggests that there is something about white masculinity which makes this identity more likely to display aggression; Rehling and Dyer argue associations between white masculinity and the clinical, the empty, the sterile, prompts this connection. None of the non-white/female profiler films unequivocally state that serial violence is an inherently white male activity, yet they do suggest a relationship between their killers and white masculinity. My investigation of surveillance indicates that an association between the killer and administrative bureaucracy suggested by the 1980s films becomes more apparent in these later films, as the killer is increasingly linked to anonymous, middle class white masculinity, rather than white trash or sexual deviancy. These types of killer are more likely to be paralleled with administrative surveillance and the technological surveillance of the city, particularly when contrasted with non-violent black or female profilers.

However, this trend coincides with a newly fallible profiler sometimes defeated by a powerful and often charismatic killer. The relationship between the black/female profiler and the dominant serial killer may be coincidental as different cultural and social developments may have influenced these trends (changes in attitudes to race and gender, the end of the serial killer panic and growth of different perceived threats). It is certainly not the case that black or female profilers fail as their white male counterparts continue to catch their killers: throughout the 1990s, killers are increasingly successful regardless of the race or gender of their adversary. It may be the case, however, that the depiction of marginalised identities compensates for the use of invasive, potentially disturbing tools of surveillance. In portraying these tools as controlled by women and black men in the pursuit of white men who kill without reason, these films justify their application, presenting them as benign and essential and evading concerns about their potential misuse.

The recognition that the killer/profiler relationship can be something other than a disconcerting doppelgänger connection questions the more traditional, homosocial bond associated with these films. However, the fact that this convention remains, and is subverted but not replaced in the post-profiler movies studied in chapter six, suggests that there is something about this concept which is fascinating and pleasurable. The fact that the violent white male profiler remains dominant indicates that our ability to vicariously share in the crimes of the killer, as opposed to step back with the black and female profiler, is a significant aspect of the attraction of the profiler film. Most profilers are still white men, and while some are less isolated and violent than their 1980s counterparts (the father/son profilers of *Frequency* search for a serial killer together, a process which, admittedly, reaffirms the gendering of detection and points to the patriarchal themes discussed in chapter six; *The Glimmer Man* taps into the mystic/environmentalism associations of its star, Steven Seagal) many exhibit the disturbing doublings with their respective killers familiar from the previous decade. In *The Watcher*, Campbell (James Spader) is asked whether he has become dependent on the killer who targets women but also stalks him, sending him photographs of anonymous future victims for him to identify before they are killed. Campbell has the pictures enlarged and then fragmented, closely scrutinising them for any clue as to the identity of the victim. As he examines mutilated photographs his surveillance is at face value more disturbing than the killer's, who befriends these women before flattering them into allowing him to photograph them.

An additional point is the continued emphasis on sight allied to a new stress on spatial control. Killer and profiler are participants in competing surveillance practices, with increased prominence given to the depiction of the crime scene and the mapping of the city. Fantasies of ideal vision and surveillance construct space as something that the serial killer and profiler attempt to dominate. Various devices position this attempt to master space and sight as a game, revealing the new status of the serial killer as a 'safe' fear in 1990s America. The glossy aesthetics, mainstream marketing and exaggeratedly sinister killers of the 1990s films contribute to an idea of the serial killer as comfortably familiar, an idea that is amplified in the 2000s.

The next chapter examines the development of the portrait film throughout the 2000s. The portrait cycle can be understood as a reaction to the profiler film as it subverts most of the conventions I have discussed in these two chapters. It focuses on the killer, not the profiler, avoids traditional thriller traditions, forms a niche market rather than aiming for mainstream distribution and depicts real killers. A study of these very different films

allows me to reassess the conclusions I have reached regarding the profiler film, offering a new perspective on these relatively familiar films.

Chapter 5

Unpleasure and Reality Horror: the Portrait Film

Introduction

Chapters three and four examined the profiler cycle, a body of films which have already received academic attention as well as critical and commercial success. This chapter shifts focus to a far smaller and less familiar group of movies, which I have called the ‘portrait film’. Only one film fitting this description (*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*) has been subject to scholarly investigation. These films are quite different from those I have already studied and from those I examine in the next chapter, their relentless focus on the killer minimising the detection narrative and suspenseful atmosphere which define the profiler film. In portraying real killers in protagonist roles, the portrait film maintains a tension between the mystification of the serial killer familiar in the profiler movies and the representation of the multiple killer as incongruously dull. These films provide a useful insight into the more dominant profiler narrative as their rejection of mainstream conventions reveals the extent to which audiences are accustomed to these traditions. As well as considering the ways in which the portrait film offers a useful counterpoint to the profiler movie, this chapter also explores these films’ specific articulation of the key themes of masculinity and surveillance. Although they pull back from an overt analysis of the relationship between masculinity and violence, the portrait films allude to the ways in which class, racial and gendered power structures allow certain men to escape scrutiny. They do not indict normative masculinity, but offer instances in which the serial killer is shown to take advantages of the privileges afforded this identity.

The chapter begins by considering how to examine a group of films which have not been recognised as a coherent group and which differ quite considerably from the other movies investigated in this thesis. In comparison with the other cycles, the portrait films’ uneconomic narratives, obvious budget constraints and low production values has resulted in their characterisation as instances of ‘bad’ film-making. In failing to adhere to the familiar conventions of the more expensive, polished, accomplished profiler, protagonist-killer and torture porn films, the portrait film prompts questions regarding taste, quality and value judgements, particularly as the portraits often appear to be poorly made rather than deliberate subversions of cinematic standards. Although individual films within the

other cycles vary, each example maintains a sense of professional competency at least in terms of technical aspects such as editing and cinematography. In contrast, the portraits seem conspicuously cheap and amateurish, with poor lighting and sound sometimes inhibiting the spectator's understanding of events and spelling mistakes frequently apparent in their DVD packaging. In failing to exhibit the familiar conventions of classical narrative film-making, the portraits unveil the extent to which these conventions condition our responses. Clover provides a useful model for understanding this relationship in her description of low-brow horror as "the repressed of mainstream film-making" (1992: 20). The distinct industrial contexts of mainstream and exploitation movies strongly influences their marketing, consumption and critical reception, with films featuring similar subject matter received differently depending on their production values; that is, how 'well-made' they appear (Clover, 1992: 115, 153). The portraits, then, offer a distinctive perspective on the other cycles by not complying with a dominant cinematic tradition which presents violence as entertainment. By being less enjoyable to watch, they bring audiences closer to the destruction and suffering from which, in the profiler, protagonist-killer and torture porn cycles, we are distanced by mainstream conventions. Lacking the 'niceties' of the more recognised films, the portraits expose the extent to which assumptions relating to cultural taste are potentially guided by an unwitting predisposition to what is familiar to, and popular with, the widest audience.

In an effort to develop an understanding of these movies in the absence of scholarly and mainstream journalistic responses, I have examined the reactions which are available: those from film fans on websites and forums dedicated to low-budget horror. Although this thesis is not primarily concerned with audience response and spectatorship, the lack of academic material in relation to the portrait film makes journalistic and popular reactions useful. In exploring these websites as well as interviews and DVD commentaries by the film-makers, I have been careful to avoid being led into a particular conception of these films, a potential hazard given the absence of scholarly analyses to balance the available popular material. While study of these websites has allowed me to develop an understanding of these films in the absence of academic responses, this chapter uses, like the rest of the thesis, textual analysis as its primary method. My reading of popular journalistic/fan responses is not an exhaustive survey; instead, they offer an insight into how these films are marketed and consumed which supplements my analysis of the films.

After discussing the development of the portrait film - from four examples in the 1980s and 1990s to a niche market comprising sixteen movies between 2001 and 2008 - I

categorise the cycle into two groups, using representative examples as case studies to explore these classifications. *Ted Bundy* (Matthew Bright, 2002) illustrates the coherent portrait film, maintaining a leisurely pace which distinguishes it from the tightly-plotted, elaborately structured profiler film. *BTK Killer* (Ulli Lommel, 2005) exemplifies the chaotic portrait film, with unmotivated shots, disorientating narrative jumps and sequences emphasising the monotony of the killer's existence. The chaotic portrait film subverts many mainstream cinematic conventions, offering an opportunity to consider the ways in which these traditions contribute to a particular representation of the serial killer. The coherent films are less radical but still provide a depiction of the serial killer quite different from that of the profiler film. A sense of flatness, instability and opacity pervades these films: the endings lack closure, the protagonists are inaccessible, and violence appears to just happen; it is not forecasted by cinematic convention. This chapter considers these differences and their effects.

The Portrait Film

Defining and Exploring the Portrait Film

I have defined the portrait film as a feature film released theatrically or straight to VHS/DVD which focuses on a real serial killer.²² The killer is the protagonist, has the most screen time and is the most proactive character. The films sometimes suggest factors which have contributed to the killer's crimes, most frequently in the form of flashbacks to childhood abuse, but do not offer concrete explanations for his violence.

Few characters are aware of the killer's violent tendencies (unless they become victims), offering the audience an unusual level of insight. The few police officers and psychiatrists who appear in the portrait film lack the skills of the profiler; the audience is alone in recognising the danger of the killer. This close proximity to the killer without the relatively safe filter of the profiler makes these films a disturbing viewing experience, and the stressing of authenticity in publicity suggests that the gruelling nature of the films, as well as the opportunity to study a 'real' killer, is one element of the portrait's appeal. *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* contrasts its factual basis with the fictional world of the slasher

²² Three of the films focus on individuals more appropriately termed spree killers, yet their crimes are re-categorised in publicity to provide a marketing hook, indicating the slackness of these classifications.

by referring to two popular horror characters in its poster: “He’s not Freddy, he’s not Jason... He’s real”. *Confessions of a Serial Killer* (Mark Blair, 1985) invites us to “Step inside the mind of a serial killer”, alluding to the FBI-inspired concept of investigating the crimes through a study of the killer’s psychology. The portrait films are not cinematic versions of true crime, their intense focus on the killer being only the most obvious distinction between the two types of narrative - true crime tends to frame events within a criminal justice perspective (Schmid, 2005: 297). However, both portrait films and true crime novels suggest the possibility of understanding the motiveless, bizarre violence of the serial killer by scrutinising his past (Knox describes true crime literature as “murder foretold through the unravelling of the murderer’s developing psychosis” (1998: 8)). When the killer’s history appears devoid of early warnings of his aggression, this fact in itself becomes symptomatic of the serial killer. Apparent ordinariness is recast as evidence of the “mask of sanity”, allowing true crime, and the portrait film, to represent banal, everyday episodes as ominous and anticipating the killer’s future acts (Schmid, 2005: 177).

The portrait films highlight the banality of the killers by stressing their mundane and monotonous existences. They are not the charismatic, intelligent criminals of the 1990s profiler movies, and are disinterested in the patterns and allusions to high art which obsess the profiler film killer. The portrait film’s elliptical narratives and the impression of a quasi-documentary, found footage status links them to exploitation and low horror, further removing them from the more mainstream context of the profiler film. Yet the portrait film is not only significant because of its exposure through contrast to the reassuring, familiar conventions of the profiler film. Its representation of the serial killer is unusual beyond cinematic contexts. Law enforcement-focused authors of true crime and ‘talking head’ profilers and psychiatrists who appear in television documentaries provide a framing commentary for these cases, offering some form of closure and containment which usually fall back on familiar ideas - the mask of sanity, psychopathy as an answer in itself. First-person accounts from the killer’s point of view also betray efforts to correspond to existing ideas around the serial killer.²³ In imagining events from the killer’s viewpoint, the portrait film constitutes an unusual exploration of the serial killer figure. This depiction of the killer may be no more an accurate portrayal than any other version, yet it is not the veracity of this representation which I wish to investigate. The development of these films, in which historical precision is subservient to impressionistic, oblique re-imaginings of real events,

²³ The limited amount of first-person accounts curbs the available academic work on the phenomenon of killers who write publicly about their crimes, but these texts (Brady, 2001; Panzram, 1970) demonstrate a tendency for the killer to understand his crimes through existing narratives (Cameron and Fraser, 1987; Knox, 2001).

suggests a desire to explore events from a perspective which is in some ways illicit and forbidden as it lacks the legitimising presence of an investigatory narrative.

These films do not present the story as chronological, cause and effect narrative typical of television dramatisations of the same cases such as *The Deliberate Stranger* (NBC, 1986), about Ted Bundy, and *To Catch a Killer* (Creative Entertainment Group, 1992), about John Wayne Gacy. Nor do they use the police investigation to structure an economic narrative. Events are organised loosely, without the adherence to economy or motivation typical of classical narratives. Equal cinematic time is devoted to ordinary events - the killer at work, with his family or friends - and the murders, suggesting that gore and violence are not the main priorities of the films or their audience. While the marketing and reception of most profiler films highlight their thriller elements, the portraits are distinct in their avoidance of generic conventions, particularly that of suspense. The profiler film highlights a need to discern patterns in serial killings, a convention which amplifies tension (the killings will continue until the meaning behind the pattern is revealed) while fulfilling a pleasurable sense of symmetry (Dyer, 1997). These factors are crucial in the profiler film: the films abide by classical narrative conventions in their depiction of cause and effect-based narrative progression and closure (Thompson, 1999). Dramatisations of real events also often structure events and employ particular devices (suspenseful music and editing, for example), to create tension. When Bundy's girlfriend calls police to raise her suspicions in *The Deliberate Stranger*, we experience a charged sense of suspense as the officer who answers her call puts her on hold and she hesitates before replacing the telephone receiver. The feeling of our emotions being roused as we will her to offer Bundy's name to the officer is similar to that experienced during the chase scene in *The Mean Season*: the apprehension and heightened drama is pleasurable as it fulfils familiar conventions which prompt us to experience the emotions of fictional or fictionalised characters in a safe way.

Similarly, the true events recounted in *Zodiac* (David Fincher, 2007) are depicted using traditional devices which compensate for reality's failure to adhere to Hollywood convention. Focusing events on one character (although there are several plot strands, unlike the profiler film, most of our attention is centred on Graysmith (Jack Gyllenhaal), a cartoonist whose obsession with the case echoes the experiences of a typical profiler protagonist) allows events spread over years to be told lucidly. Our emotions rise and fall with Graysmith's, as we experience his fascination with the puzzles sent by the killer, his fear as he suspects he has been led to the killer, his disappointment when clues lead nowhere. Although the killer remains uncaught, the film offers closure by suggesting that

Graysmith has identified him and has moved on from his destructive obsession (his wife leaves him during the film, but we discover at the end he remains on good terms with his children). Real events are manipulated to fulfil our craving for suspense, excitement and catharsis, making *Zodiac* an interesting offshoot of the profiler movie which underlines the endurance of this model. In contrast, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* appears to “deliberately work against the desire to savour structures” (Dyer, 1997: 16). Journalistic and academic responses to other portrait films highlight the lack of motive attributed to the killer, a flatness of tone, minimal plot development, the banality of the killer, and docu-drama/semi-documentary approach (Binion, 2008; Cettl, 2003; Chong, 2004).

I considered a number of different models to structure my investigation of these films, from trauma cinema to docu-drama to paracinema. Each of these approaches offer useful frameworks for a study of the portraits. In her examination of trauma cinema, in which traumatic events are explored “in a non-realist mode characterised by disturbance and fragmentation of the films’ narrative and stylistic regimes” (2005: 19), Janet Walker focuses on these movies’ acknowledgment of the subjective and “friable” nature of memory (2005: xviii). Similarly, the chaotic portraits, and to a lesser extent some of the coherent films, present an unreliable narrative which evokes the impossibility of understanding events in which most of the most immediate participants are dead. A sense of disorientation, fragmented editing, moral ambiguity and extreme camera angles also link the portraits to trauma cinema. However, not all of the portraits exhibit these departures from the realist mode to the same extent; in some of the films, unusual devices puncture an otherwise traditional narrative rather than constitute a deviation from convention lasting the entire movie. Despite its “raw, actuality style”, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* is “firmly within the conventions of fictional realism” (Hallam and Marshment, 2000: 234), as are most of the coherent films examined here.

Paracinema’s potential contributions would also be limited to the most extreme and unusual of the portraits. In attempting to “valorise all forms of cinematic ‘trash’” (Sconce, 2008:101), paracinema refuses the lowbrow/high art split which characterises profiler/portrait relationship. The profiler films have received academic recognition, mainstream popularity and, in a few cases, success which suggests artistic recognition (*The Silence of the Lambs*’ Oscar wins, for example). The portraits, with the exception of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, are only discussed on niche websites focusing on low-budget horror and exploitation, and are usually limited to small-scale DVD releases. Like the various subgenres associated with paracinema (the mondo film, exploitation cinema,

splatter-punk), the portraits often offer ‘bad’ acting, scriptwriting and aesthetics, and are associated with the illicit and transgressive (Rice, 1986; Scone, 2008; Vale and Juno, 1986). Additionally, some of these ‘bad’ qualities can be interpreted as the deliberate subversion of realist horror devices, through which the film addresses “its own methods of construction”, a typical mondo film response (Jackson, 2002: 32-3). A paracinematic approach, however, while usefully confronting the gendered, cultural and economic elites which hierarchise texts, is more appropriate to the examination of the chaotic than the coherent portraits, as the coherent films do not embrace the ‘trash’ elements of the chaotic movies. Furthermore, paracinematic response seeks to engage ironically with and celebrate the excess of films rejected by mainstream audiences and critics. My focus here is less on arguing for scholarly recognition for these films than on considering the ways in which they offer an unusual insight into the key themes explored in this thesis, an objective that relies on the more traditional method of textual analysis than seeking new ways of viewing overlooked movies.

A third possible framework focuses on the factual basis of the portraits. Reading these films as docudramas takes account of the use of real events, referred to explicitly in both the coherent and chaotic films through preceding or closing captions, as well as authentic news footage and newspaper headlines and, in the case of *Green River Killer*, audio excerpts of the real killer’s confession. Lipkin defines docudrama as combining “indexical roots” with “melodramatic coding”, as well as a sense that “its story *should* be told” (2002: 1). An element of persuasion is apparent in the docudrama, with its structure and devices contributing to a particular sense of how the story should be understood (2002: 4). Yet the portraits’ accuracy in terms of both historical context and the particular events being recounted is often wanting (sometimes even the method of killing is inaccurate), while the sense of dislocation promoted by the films undermines any melodramatic potential. There is often an impression of the story not being told but just happening, no feeling of a specific perspective being shared or argument put forward. This sensation is induced by both the coherent and the chaotic films, distancing both types from the docudrama.

Having considered but dismissed these various options, I have selected as a framework for my study of the portrait films two analyses of films which share important commonalities with the portrait. Firstly, Martin Rubin’s work on five films, beginning with *The Honeymoon Killers* (Leonard Kastle, 1969), ending with *Murder One* (Graeme Campbell, 1988), and including *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, offers a useful analysis of a small body of films which represent violence in ways which differ from conventional

mainstream cinema (1999). There is some overlap between Rubin's study and my work here, particularly regarding the sense that events are 'just happening', and the insight this impression offers to the examination of more conventional texts. Secondly, Catherine Wheatley's use of the notion of 'unpleasure' to explore the films of Michael Haneke provides a constructive supplement to Rubin's work (2009). While the semi-exploitation films to which Rubin refers are closer to the portraits than Haneke's arthouse, controversial but critically acknowledged movies, Wheatley's focus on the self-reflexive techniques which make the spectator aware of his/her complicity in the violent events echo Rubin's reading of low budget, marginal films as offering unusual depictions of violence.

Rubin's five films extend across a nineteen year period, making them too disparate to be termed a cycle, yet he argues they share "similar stylistic and structural devices [used] to present their story, position the spectator, and position themselves in relation to other films" (1999: 51). Many of these elements link them to my definition of the portrait film: they highlight their factual basis through captions but fail to present their story accurately. They lack the "normalising influence of conventional expressive realism", often maintaining a "rigorous denial of emphasis". Depictions of violence are neither salacious nor restrained; murders are messy but there is no tension-inducing ominous music or carefully-judged close-ups or cuts, as would be expected in a mainstream movie (1999: 51). Both *The Mean Season* and *The Bone Collector* provide numerous examples of conventional Hollywood thriller conventions. Delour's kidnapping of Christine in *The Mean Season* maximises suspense: cuts from the disarmingly benign Delour as he befriends Christine to Malcolm's desperate race to save her uses music and fast editing to make us worry for Christine and hope Malcolm will reach the school in time. Similarly, each kidnapping in *The Bone Collector*, along with the climactic attack on Rhyme (even the sense that this scene is climactic is developed through adherence to realist Hollywood devices), emphasises the danger faced by the victims and the fact that we should fear for them. Conversely, the films examined by Rubin, like the portraits, deny us these familiar methods of reading the films. Although the profiler movies cause us to experience fear and tension, this familiarity makes these emotions manageable and pleasurable, reassuring us that nothing will happen which is too far out of a comfort zone developed through viewing numerous films which adhere to these traditions.

The portraits' departure from this reassuring, satisfying mode of viewing can be understood within the "unpleasure" concept used by Wheatley to understand Haneke's work. Wheatley argues that Haneke's cinema provokes "negative emotions" (discomfort,

anger, guilt) to induce the viewer to consider the film as something other than immersive entertainment: “as unpleasure calls attention to itself in a way that pleasure does not, it prompts the viewer to question what it is in the film that causes this feeling, and hence forces them to engage rationally with the image in the screen” (2009:78). Wheatley adopts the idea of unpleasure from Peter Wollen’s politicised call for attacking consumer culture through “provocation, aiming to dissatisfy and hence change the spectator” (2002: 79). The frustration of suspense, breaking of cinematic narrative and aesthetic ‘rules’ and an emphasis on the consequences of violence contribute to the exposure of devices of manipulation which reveals the “inherent falsity” of the medium and exposes the “ethical void at the heart of [mainstream cinema’s] narrative structures and forms” (2009: 87). Like the portraits, which depict events typical of the traditional ‘thriller’ in unusual ways which encourage us to question more conventional representations, Haneke’s films prevent us from ‘forgetting’ ourselves as we normally do when watching a ‘well made’ film; they encourage a moral awareness which is normally negated by the classical techniques of *The Mean Season* and *The Bone Collector*.

Wheatley cites Haneke’s politicised statements regarding his intentions as a film-maker. Together with the art-house status of his films, Haneke’s comments reinforce the idea that aspects of his films which may otherwise be interpreted as ‘bad’ or ‘amateur’ are understood as planned contributions to the ideological meaning of his work. However, with the exception of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, the portrait films are addressed as poor rather than radical film-making. The films of Ulli Lommel are described as critiques of modern cinema on Lommel’s website, a point explored later, but journalistic and audience reactions position the films as accidental, rather than deliberate, instances of ‘unpleasure’. In using the work of Rubin and Wheatley as models for investigating the portraits, I neither hope to rehabilitate these films as politicised texts, nor suggest they unintentionally fulfil Wollen’s call for dissatisfying the spectator. Instead, I use this existing work to support my contention that, regardless of the film-makers’ intentions, the portraits’ unusual representation of their violent protagonists balance conventional concepts of the serial killer with atypical acknowledgments of the power structures behind this violence. As well as this academic work, I have explored popular reactions to the portrait films. The responses I have examined demonstrate that these films are reaching audiences, however small in comparison with the profiler films. These films rarely reach (and, their limited marketing and distribution indicates, are not intended to reach) the mainstream audiences targeted by the profilers. My research demonstrates that the portrait film demographic constitutes a niche audience familiar with (and sometimes dismissive of) the more

conventional, popular films which have so far comprised the focus of the thesis. The reactions can be split into two groups: firstly, those who I believe form the ‘intended’ audience, horror fans who contribute reviews and comments to the websites *Ohmygore.com*, *Horrorview.com*, *dreadcentral.com* and *28 Days Later Analysis*, which I examined after being referred to these sites by quotations on DVD box covers.²⁴ Secondly, there are mainstream audiences who have watched these films almost by accident, with different expectations than horror fans. User comments on the mainstream site *Internet Movie Database* offer an idea of how these films are received by a wider range of viewers, which confirm my conclusions regarding the portrait film’s status as an alternative to the glossier, mainstream profiler film.

Many user comments on *imdb.com* demonstrate an assumption that these films aim for accuracy but fail. An implicit hierarchy is evident in these responses: factual inaccuracy is more easily accepted in films which demonstrate professional standard aesthetics and are closer to conventional realism. Responses to films which feature less effective acting and aesthetics critique factual inaccuracies as poor film-making rather than an artistic choice or dramatic licence. For example, a comment on *Speck* is headed: “Speck was no philosopher, movie lacks accuracy” (glenn-adams-1, <http://uk.imdb.com/title/tt0321505/usersomments?c=1>, 22/3/07; accessed 13/6/10). Many refer to documentaries and books about the real case, often relating specific examples of inaccuracies, and describe their unrealised expectation of a “semi documentary film” (filmreaver, <http://uk.imdb.com/title/tt0472099/usercomments>, 21/1/06; accessed 13/6/10). A review of Michael Feifer’s *Bundy: A Legacy of Evil* refers to the director’s “cranking out” of “low budget horror movies about the exploits of real-life serial killers with mixed results and not a lot of concern with getting the facts straight” (The Foywonder, <http://www.dreadcentral.com/reviews/bundy-a-legacy-evil-2009>, no date; 13/6/10). The review notes that Bundy charmed his victims, yet “Feifer shows little interest in that side of Bundy’s persona”. A review of *Ed Gein: Butcher of Plainfield* opens with a *Wikipedia* excerpt before stating “the above is about as much reality as you’ll get when pertaining [sic] to [the film’s] telling of this tale” (Uncle Creepy, <http://dreadcentral.com/reviews/ed-gein-the-buther-plainfield-dvd>, 29/3/07; accessed 13/6/10). These responses indicate the

²⁴ Despite the dangers in claiming to have isolated an ‘intended’ audience, I use this term to indicate a certain group of individuals whose responses comprise the main reactions to these films, evident in their use as publicity quotations in the films’ marketing. Further analysis of the portrait niche audience - age, gender, class, race, familiarity with the specific serial killer stories related in each film - would offer greater insight particularly if similar studies could be performed on profiler film viewers. For the purposes of this thesis however, this demographical data must remain unexplored.

significance of the ‘believability’ of a film, a sense that “a ‘good’ movie is identified with verisimilitude - if we do not ‘believe’ then the movie was ‘bad’” (Spainhower, 1986: 175).

In contrast, *The Hillside Strangler* is praised for high production values and convincing period detail; while references are made to “a deliberate will to show the facts like they’re supposed to have happened”, the critical judgement of the film focuses on its cinematic qualities rather than factual fidelity (Remy, *Ohmygore*, no date; accessed 13/6/10).

Contrasting responses to films based on their critical status are particularly evident in reactions to *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, which describe the film’s deviance from fact as a cinematic choice rather than slapdash work. The film is “rooted in reality [...] loosely based” on Henry Lee Lucas (Cap’n Kunz, *Horrorview.com*, no date; accessed 10/6/10). The variety of attitudes to this film - from its characterisation as low-brow horror to respected psychological study (Bates, 1990) - highlight the difficulty in discussing films which do not adhere to mainstream (or, alternatively, accepted arthouse) conventions. Yet as Rubin and Wheatley both argue, movies which reject or subvert traditional ways of representing violence allow us to reflect on these traditions. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the ‘unpleasurable’ aspects of the portraits, considering the ways in which they offer alternative depictions of the heavily represented serial killer.

Development of the niche

The progress of the portrait film offers an interesting insight into contemporaneous attitudes to the serial killer. The first portrait movie - *Confessions of a Serial Killer* - appears in 1985, during a decade in which the serial killer was constructed as a cultural figure of fear (Jenkins, 1994). Throughout the 1980s, around one profiler film was released each year. The slasher film was the dominant horror genre and arguably the foremost serial killer narrative. While some aspects of the early portraits - synthesiser music, point of view shots from the perspective of the killer - bear similarity to slashers, the portrait film differs in its positioning of the killer as the protagonist. The flatness of tone constructs the portrait film in opposition to the slasher, while posters and onscreen text highlight the factual basis of the stories. The 1980s serial killer panic is evident in the infotainment documentaries which circulated stories of real killers (Simpson, 2003: 103); these allusions to authenticity frame the films within this discourse, particularly through marketing.

The low budgets of the four portrait films released between 1985 and 1996 are apparent from their production values, casting, marketing and aesthetics. After these isolated releases, 2000 sees the beginning of a surge in portrait films. The sixteen films made between 2000 and 2008 indicate their factual basis in their titles, which identifies the killer by either his real name or media nickname. They are listed here under the two groupings I have developed to explore these films:

Coherent

Ed Gein (2000)
Dahmer (2002)
Ted Bundy (2002)
Gacy (2003)
Starkweather (2004)
The Hillside Strangler (2004)
The Gray Man (2007)

Chaotic

Speck (2002)
BTK Killer (2005)
Green River Killer (2005)
Chicago Massacre: Richard Speck (2007)
Ed Gein: Butcher of Plainfield (2007)
Baseline Killer (2008)
BTK (2008)
Bundy: A Legacy of Evil (2008)
Son of Sam (2008)

These sixteen films constitute the bulk of the portrait film cycle and are the focus of this chapter. Although the earlier films are important predecessors, particularly as many of the later films are compared to *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* in reviews and publicity, they are too aesthetically and temporally disparate to form a coherent cycle. The 2000s portrait films remain low-budget, though some display higher production values than their 1980s predecessors, most obviously in the period settings of *Ed Gein*, *The Hillside Strangler* and *The Gray Man*. The aesthetics of some of the later films - the sumptuous lighting and 1930s decor of *The Gray Man* and the orange tinge in the fantasy sequences of *BTK* - suggest more time and money are available. This shift can be attributed to a general decrease in technical costs as film equipment became cheaper and to the developing web market which offers greater opportunities for marketing and distribution, with specialist sites such as those I have discussed publicising these niche films to receptive audiences.

The later films promote their authenticity through publicity and the use of the killer's names in their titles, suggesting it is expected that we will recognise these criminals and distinguishing them from fictional profiler films. The timing of the early portraits in the late 1980s and 1990s can be credited to both the saturation news coverage of real killers on

whom they are based and the increasing commercial success of the profiler films. The surge of a closely connected (temporally and aesthetically) group of portraits throughout the 2000s coincides with a variety of shifts in the profiler film, especially the end of the tight serial killer/profiler double profiler films of the 1980s and 1990s discussed in the previous two chapters. As I will explore in chapter six, the 2000s sees the profiler figure become subordinate to the killer in films like *Hannibal*, *Mr Brooks* and the *Saw* franchise. The exhaustion of the profiler model is a contributory factor in the development of the portrait film, as is increasing interest in true crime, as manifested by the growth of re-enactment forensic documentaries and websites.

In watching these films as a group an idea builds of the serial killer as an abstract figure rather than a discrete individual, a pathology rather than a personality. Their niche positioning underlines the construction of the killer as a type of person. This niche status is evident in website reception. Reviews talk of the DVD market being “flooded with horror fare based on real-life maniacs” (no author, <http://shocktillyoudrop.co./news/topnews.php?id=12912>, 22/11/09), and frame their response within the cycle: “[*Gacy*] follows two other well produced, well written serial killer biopics” (Big McLargehuge, <http://www.horrorview.ocm/movie-reviews/gacy>, no date; accessed 10/6/10). The reception of these films as part of a distinguishable sub-genre is reflected in the overlapping of writers, directors and production companies. Since 2005, two writer/directors - Michael Feifer and Ulli Lommel - have developed two separate franchise-style series of films which I explore in my last case study. There are also links between the other films. Three are directed by Chuck Parello (*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer, Part 2; Ed Gein; The Hillside Strangler*), four are written by Stephen Johnston (*Ed Gein, Ted Bundy, Starkweather, The Hillside Strangler*), and several variations are available together as DVD box sets.²⁵ Most are distributed through Lions Gate Home Entertainment, further connecting them as the same pre-title sequences precede many of the films. These overlaps account for the films’ similarities and demonstrate that a niche market exists. The enduring conventions - an emphasis on the experience of the killer, absence of state surveillance, impressionistic style, meandering pace - must offer something beyond mere curiosity value to audiences who watch these films.

²⁵ *Dahmer, Ed Gein* and *Ted Bundy* were released together in a boxset in 2003, the cover depicting close-ups of each protagonists’ eyes in a series of grungy, highly saturated images linking the three disparate individuals. The Ulli Lommel boxset - (*BTK Killer, Green River Killer, Zodiac Killer*) reinforces the sense of Lommel as a portrait film auteur.

In selecting the term ‘portrait’ to describe these films, I am acknowledging the significance of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* in their development, and seeking to evoke their distinctive depiction of the killer. Portraits aim to represent the personality as well as the physical likeness of the subject, and the term suggests a desire to probe the subject in a more impressionistic, abstract way than true crime, which takes a more linear, ‘faithful’ attitude to established facts. Although their low budgets, aimless narratives and incongruous depictions of violence limit their commercial possibilities, this very rawness and abruptness may explain their appeal to certain audiences. They contrast the slicker, glossier 1990s profiler film, particularly in their depiction of the aimless killer who drifts along, killing spontaneously rather than as part of a great plan. The focus on the banal elements of the killer’s life and the often grainy film quality connote authenticity and a departure from glossy, mainstream films. Like exploitation movies, the portrait film is defined by its opposition to more conservative, conventional texts. Odd tonal choices and jumps from farce to horror resemble earlier independent horror films such as *Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972). Their distance from mainstream Hollywood representation suggests that these films are likely to be viewed by those with a pre-existing interest in the serial killer, rather than audiences drawn to bigger budget, thriller-style narratives with known actors. The cruder aspects of the portrait film, then, may be part of its appeal.

Watching white male violence

Despite these aspects which distance the portraits from mainstream representations of violence, the films do allude to horror conventions, particularly in their references to vision. The previous chapters discuss the importance of sight in the serial killer film, and the portrait film also stresses the danger and vulnerability of the look. Most publicity images highlight the eyes of the killer as he stares at the viewer, often gazing over the bodies of victims, although the extreme close-up of a wide eye on the cover of the Ulli Lommel ‘serial killer box set’ does not reveal whether this eye belongs to a killer or victim (Figure 5.1). *Ted Bundy*’s poster suggests the killer evades sight by positioning the lower half of his face as the background to a surreal image of a woman racing through a hellish wasteland; the image is cropped at the bridge of his nose, concealing his eyes (Figure 5.2). These publicity images emphasise the significance of sight in horror (Clover, 1992; 166) and the more specific meaningfulness of surveillance in the portrait film.



Figure 5.1: The Ulli Lommel “Serial Killer Box” highlights sight.

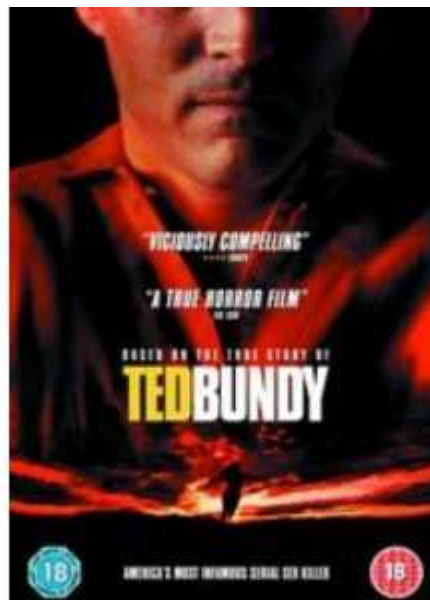


Figure 5.2: Ted Bundy dominates a nightmarish landscape.

The depiction of the killer in the portrait film is in many ways typical of wider serial killer discourse in highlighting the outward blandness and normality of the killer. True crime literature and documentaries juxtapose shocking headlines and pictures of victims with the killer's unexceptional, often friendly face; surrounding text or a voice-over highlights the ordinariness of the killer, reasoning that the threat posed by these individuals is heightened by the impossibility of reading their evil and otherness on their bodies (Simpson, 2003: 111). The portrait film adheres to the concept of the inconspicuous, bland killer by casting unknown actors with everyday, rather than overtly attractive or fearful, appearances. This masking of their deviancy constructs the killer as evading surveillance, highlighting their

notorious ability to ‘blend in’: we witness the shift from a ‘normal’ demeanour to unrestrained aggression. The promise of insight suggested by their titles and posters is never fulfilled and although our unusual view of the killer allows us to recognise his normality as a performance we never really understand his motivation. We recognise the performative aspects of his personality but gain no comprehension of the reasons behind it, reinforcing the inscrutability of the killer.

In focusing on the individual abnormality of the killer, the portrait film is typical of a wider tendency to construct as gender neutral this overwhelmingly male activity (Cameron and Fraser, 1987; Caputi, 1988). The killers are white, but they are not representative of white masculinity; they are outsiders, their isolation from wider society maintaining a distance between their aggression and normative masculinity. The portrait film also exhibits misogynistic aspects typical of serial killer narratives, such as the targeting by the white male killer of women or “socially inferior” men without critiquing the power structures which underlie these demographics (Dyer, 1997: 16). The killer’s crimes are often indirectly blamed on women: abusive mothers (*Confessions of a Serial Killer*, *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, *Ed Gein*) or demanding wives or girlfriends trigger the killer’s rage (*Ted Bundy*, *The Hillside Strangler*, *Bundy: A Legacy of Evil*). Additionally, “sadistic visual pleasure” is generated by scenes in which the camera adopts the killer’s point of view by aggressively bearing down on cowering victims (Dyer, 1997: 17). Like the killer, we only see victims in relationship to him; each film depicts two or three murders in detail as representative of the killer’s many other crimes. Montage sequences in *Dahmer*, *The Hillside Strangler* and *Ted Bundy* construct the victims as anonymous and interchangeable; they are rarely named and the number of victims is ambiguous. The onscreen text at the end of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, *Gacy*, *Dahmer*, and *Ted Bundy* highlights uncertainty on this point by suggesting they may be guilty of many more crimes, adding to the killer’s mystique (Boyle, 2005: 66).

Yet while these films depict the killer as the intriguing centre of the narrative, they also portray the killer as an example of failed masculinity, rather than the intelligent, charismatic figure familiar from many profiler films. They are not the exotic, fascinating “superstar” killers of *The Silence of the Lambs* (Rubin, 1999: 41). Most of the killers are inarticulate, socially awkward and often unattractive. While this representation undermines the concept of the killer as a romanticised, heroic figure, it also distinguishes these men from ‘normal’ (white, heterosexual, middle class) masculinity. The depiction of “white trash” serial killers - the mumbling, unshaven murderers of *Confessions of a Serial Killer*,

Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer, *Ed Gein* and *Gacy* - locates their violence within class, demonising white working class men (Rehling, 2007). Interestingly, DVDs of these white trash portrait films often feature trailers for 'redneck horror', framing this class-based explanation of violent masculinity within an existing tradition (Clover, 1992).

In films which depict two murderers, class distinctions are highlighted through the construction of the more violent killer as less intelligent, distancing the most deviant killers from normative masculinity. In two films portraying Henry Lee Lucas and Otis Toole (*Confessions of a Serial Killer* and *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*), Toole is animalistic, slow-witted, vulgar and impulsive, differentiating him from Lucas, who is equally brutal but exhibits cunning and logic. These characterisations link the impetuous, gratuitous violence exhibited by the Toole character to his low intelligence and sleazy behaviour - markers of his lower class in relation to the working class but more rational, polite Lucas. In *The Hillside Strangler*, male violence is displaced onto racial distinctions through stereotyping which depicts the Italian American as "shorthand for the most unsalvageable and unpalatable brand of humanity" (Bruzzi, 2005: 105). The most violent, misogynistic and dominant of the two killers portrayed here is also the most stereotypically Italian American: he has darker skin, a stronger accent and uses Italian slang, corresponding to his characterisation as the most brutal and culpable of the pair.

As well as this mobilisation of class and racial bias, other factors reinforce their aberrance - they often suffer delusions, or their ability to conceal their violence itself indicates aberrance. Hyper-normality becomes symptomatic of pathology (Schmid, 2005). These characterisations isolate the killer from social power structures; they emphasise the otherness and individualistic nature of the killer, negating social and cultural analysis (Cameron and Fraser, 1987: 67). Yet while the privileges afforded white masculinity are not thoroughly interrogated in any of the portrait movies, most allude to a limited extent to the killer's reliance on his status as a white male in evading detection. Previous chapters have cited work by Dyer and Rehling which argues that the pervasiveness of white masculinity ensures that this identity eludes attention as a source of violence (Dyer, 1999; Rehling, 2007). The portrait films relate the killer's ability to watch and stalk undetected to his unique capabilities and deviancy, but also hint that his violence is motivated by an awareness of his failure to fulfil expectations around American white masculinity.

Scenes in which we witness the killer following and watching victims recur throughout the portrait cycle. We often share the killer's visual point of view and know he plans to attack

people who are unaware he is watching them. In positioning the audience with the killer both visually and in terms of knowledge, the films downplay the suffering of the victims; our interest, if not our sympathy, lies with the killer. We see the victims in the same way as the killer: anonymous, interchangeable, marginalised in the story of the serial killer.

Knox's understanding of the transformation of the victim - abstracting individuals from their personal context and forcing them violently into the killer's series - encapsulates the denial of the victims' identities (Knox, 2003). The portrait film's depiction of victims - a focus on one or two killings as representative of the entire series, montage scenes depicting innumerable, nameless victims often glimpsed simply as parts of bodies - underline their insignificance, without the profiler whose investigations legitimate the objectification of the victims as part of a puzzle.

As in the profiler film, the killer is presented as an agent of surveillance, but here the killer's adoption of authoritative guises is related to his performance of identity as well as an abduction technique. These killers frequently adopt a scrutinising role: he pretends to be a police officer (*Ted Bundy*, *Bundy: A Legacy of Evil*, *The Hillside Strangler*, *Gacy*) or takes advantage of his genuine position as a compliance officer (*BTK Killer* and *BTK*). This trait suggests a desire to assume authority and exert influence over the wider population as well as victims. While he often adopts a role associated with judicial authority, the killer simultaneously evades genuine police attention. The lack of law enforcement surveillance is a defining feature of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*: a television blares the police message "calling all cars" in front of an undiscovered victim; Henry drives on after dumping Becky's body; we hear no media reports of the murders (Bates, 1990: 3). An escaping victim is returned by the police to his killer in *Dahmer* and *The Secret Life of Jeffrey Dahmer*, both of which allude to the killer's eventual capture only through onscreen captions. It is only near the end of *Ed Gein* and *The Hillside Strangler* that we see detectives work on solving the murders. Attempts to solve murders are depicted throughout *Gacy*, *Ed Gein: Butcher of Plainfield* and *The Gray Man* but our focus remains on the killer; the police are subsidiary characters.²⁶

When the killer *is* caught, he continues to elude understanding. *Green River Killer* intercuts dramatised scenes with excerpts from police interviews with the real killer, Gary Ridgway, a distancing technique similar to the use of the incarcerated killer's monologue which runs through the credits of *Ed Gein*. In both cases, the killer has been identified but

²⁶ It is notable that the portraits offer rare depictions of real mistakes and negligence by law enforcement, most obviously the release of an escaped, injured victim back the care of Dahmer, who killed him.

his motivations continue to evade judicial and psychiatric understanding. In particular, the unemotional, impassive demeanour of both the actor playing Gein (Steve Railsback) and the real Ridgway belies their violence, suggesting that neither the police interviewing Ridgway nor the psychiatrists treating Gein are able to properly scrutinise their deviancy. This inability to examine the killer's pathology echoes the familiar depiction of the killer as a split, Jekyll and Hyde character who masks his true nature. The portrait film shows us 'both sides' of the killer by juxtaposing his violence with examples of his ordinariness repeatedly stressing his effortless slide between monstrosity and normality. In drawing attention to the killer's ease at maintaining a façade, the films allude to the concept of the "abnormally normal" killer. The average, anonymous serial killer who performs normality to camouflage his "non-personality" is a dominant figure in serial killer mythology (Seltzer, 1998: 10-12). In depicting the killer's sharp shifts from friendly neighbour or father to killer, these scenes distance him from us, constructing him as an unknowable other through this capability for regulating his own behaviour. As my case studies demonstrate, both types of portrait film emphasise this sense of incomprehensibility, removing the killer from his cultural context.

My study of the portrait film's main corpus (2000 - 2008) identifies two types of portrait film. I have termed these the coherent portrait film, in which the narratives are meandering but ultimately intelligible, and the chaotic film, in which disconcerting editing, disconnected shots and unmotivated sequences create a sense of anarchy. My case studies explore these two groupings, using Rubin and Wheatley's work to suggest that the films offer insight into the conventions followed by genre films and the impact of rejecting these traditions. I consider the extent to which these movies offer an unusual representation of the serial killer figure, minimising its Gothic associations and rejecting many of the familiar, reassuring conventions which legitimate our interest in the killer and make our experience of viewing their activities a satisfying one. While arguing that in many ways these movies reinforce traditional ideas around gender and the serial killer, I highlight the instances in which alternative concepts are perceptible.

Case studies

The Coherent Portrait Film

I have defined seven portrait narratives as coherent films. Although these films lack the tightly plotted, goal-orientated narratives of the profiler film, it is not difficult to follow events. Those that feature flashbacks and fantasy/dream sequences (*Ed Gein*, *Dahmer*, *Gacy*) signal their status (tight close-ups on the killer's face as he gazes into the distance). The coherent portrait film tends to follow known facts: locations, type of victims, method of killing, and persona of the killer rarely deviate from accepted accounts. Actors resemble the killer, period settings are carefully designed, and other aesthetic choices - lighting, camerawork, special effects - suggest attempts to conceal the low budget.

The small number of these films and the short time period within which they are made means it is difficult to trace definite trends; however, it is clear that the killers are filmed in order of notoriety, showing that their marketing relies on their recognition. The name of the first film, *Ed Gein*, is immediately recognisable to those with an interest in serial killers and/or horror cinema. Those unfamiliar with his name may recognise his cultural significance on learning from the DVD cover that his is "The true story that inspired *Psycho*... *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*... *The Silence of the Lambs*" - three horror movies recognised outwith horror fandom. The following films - *Dahmer*, *Ted Bundy*, *Gacy* - are starkly titled with the names of three killers who have also transcended true crime/horror barriers. Like *Ed Gein*, *Starkweather*'s marketing refers to earlier films 'inspired' by this story (*Badlands*, *Natural Born Killers*) to market this less familiar killer; *The Hillside Strangler* and *The Gray Man* arguably tap into a market primed by earlier films and so do not need to compensate for the relative obscurity of their main characters.

In order to explore the coherent portrait film's articulation of the masculinity and surveillance themes, I use 2002's *Ted Bundy*, which fulfils the criteria of this type of film but which is particularly notable for its depiction of Bundy's performance of normality. This concept is important in the cultural construction of the Bundy figure: books, documentaries and the television drama *The Deliberate Stranger* highlight his charm and outward normality (Donnelley, 2009; Fuchs, 2002; Rule, 1980). *Ted Bundy* highlights the incongruity of his violence and ordinary demeanour, depicts his evading of state

surveillance while demonstrating an ability to act as a monitoring agent and ultimately implies that he escapes scrutiny and remains an enigma. In these ways the film is generally representative of the coherent portrait film.

However, *Ted Bundy* also differs from many of the portrait films. It was released theatrically. Its narrative is the most linear of the films: it begins just before Bundy's first attack and ends with his execution, without flashbacks to disrupt temporal continuity. It focuses on a middle-class killer, underlining a specific idea of 'normality' constructed in Western culture. This divergence from the mostly working class killers depicted in the portrait film underlines the particular cultural significance of Bundy: accounts of his crimes highlight the clash between his lower middle class background and his violence (Donnelley, 2009). In alluding to his privileged status and his lack of fulfilment and anxiety in relation to this status, *Ted Bundy* maintains a tension between the appearance of normative masculinity and internal aggression which implies connections between these two usually isolated ideas.

Ted Bundy: narrative

Like the other portrait films, *Ted Bundy* exhibits a meandering pace. There is a sense of drifting through events, a sluggish style which has been noted in popular reviews – *The Hillside Strangler* is "a bit slow" (Remy, <http://english.ohmygore.com/review-hillside-strangler-the-178.html>, no date); while *Ted Bundy* has "no real story arc" (Annoyed Grunt, <http://www.horrorview.com/movie-reviews/ted-bundy>, no date).²⁷ Each portrait film shares this convention, suggesting it may be a way of highlighting the violence we are watching. *Ted Bundy*'s lack of thriller conventions - an investigatory structure driven by a detective protagonist, rapid editing, time limits within the narrative – highlights the fact that this violence is usually contained by these conventions. This recognition may not amount to the sense of complicity promoted by Haneke's films, but it goes some way towards subverting the traditions of the profiler film and other Hollywood movies.

Ted Bundy suggests some cause and effect linking between incidents. His first act of violence is motivated by an interruption of his spying on a woman; after driving away he assaults a woman walking alone. Shortly afterwards, his relationship with his girlfriend

²⁷ Interestingly, this anti-thriller structure is celebrated in *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (Bates, 1990), indicating the influence of critical reception in interpreting films.

Lee (Botti Ann Bliss) becomes abusive and his behaviour increasingly violent, his intensifying brutality following the stereotypical trajectory of the escalating serial killer. However, the film seems unprepared for his violence. When he steps out of his car to carry out his first attack, we are aware of his intentions: we watch his victim through the car window along with him, see the aggressive expression on his face and notice that he takes an improvised weapon from the car. However, despite the significance of this first assault, there is no music to emphasise tension. There is little anticipation of the attack (twenty seconds between his first sight of her and exiting his car). We see the attack in a wide shot, with the camera only starting to zoom in slowly as the woman falls to the ground; despite earlier relatively short shots as he watches her there is no cut from the point at which he steps out of his car to his final punch (Figure 5.3). There is a sense of being unprepared for the violence, with the camera unable to position itself to capture the attack in more detail.



Figure 5.3: Despite its narrative significance, Bundy's first attack is filmed from a distance.

Similar scenes in profiler films feature snappier editing and camerawork, and offer point of view shots from the perspective of the attacker and the victim as well as shots which focus our attention on the victim's shock, the weapon or the killer's strength. The kidnapping of Catherine (Brooke Smith) in *The Silence of the Lambs*, for example, creates suspense by slowing the event: we see Jame Gumb watching Catherine as she drives, exits her car and walks to her building before she notices Gumb, and helps him lift a sofa into his van. The protracted nature of the scene encourages us to experience "the pleasure of thrill" (Wheatley, 2009: 84), as we await Gumb's attack. The portrait method of narration,

however, is potentially more shocking as it defies the familiar sensationalised thriller conventions with which we are familiar. Rubin's description of the unusual depictions of violence in *The Honeymoon Killers* echoes *Ted Bundy's* portrayal of the attacks: he notes a "denial of emphasis" and "studied dissociation [and] numbness" which is also perceptible in the abrupt, detached rendering of Bundy's first attack (1991: 51). For Rubin, this refusal to adhere to traditional realism signals a "crisis of conventional means of expressivity", indicating the violence cannot be represented by traditional means (1999: 51).

Familiarity with these conventions - most obviously the killer/profiler doubling, patterns and tight plotting - makes their absence a jolting experience. Bundy's attacks are arbitrary, rejecting patterns which would lend his crimes symmetry and significance. Compared to the intricate designs of the profiler killer/film, *Ted Bundy* is a haphazard recounting of events, with no commentary or critique of the killer's behaviour. There is minimal narrative drive and little sense of the logical progression associated with most film narratives (Branigan, 1984: 174).

This distancing between the film and audience is further achieved by the use of photographs of the real Bundy to bookend the film and historical news footage throughout. The unobtrusive direction and editing hints at found footage or CCTV-style narration, creating a sense of authenticity and verisimilitude which, paradoxically, ultimately distances us from Bundy. The imposition of images of the real killer reminds us of the actor status of Michael Reilly Burke, while the different visual quality of the film and the news footage highlights their different contexts. These aspects are fairly typical of the coherent portrait film - most use contemporary news footage along with inconspicuous direction - but in reference to Bundy they serve to highlight the performative aspects of this particular killer.

Performance and the White Middle Class Serial Killer

Ted Bundy stresses the defining elements of his story - his reputed intelligence, attractiveness and charisma - setting up a dichotomy between aspects valued by society and those designated as deviant and anomalous. The tendency in other films to displace male violence onto class and race underlines the difficulty in reconciling Bundy's acts with his privileged WASP background. This apparent incongruity has been related to the interpretation of Bundy's very 'normality' as symptomatic of his pathology, and to wider

ideas regarding the emptiness of white masculinity (Dyer, 1999; Rehling, 2007; Schmid, 2005). The film illustrates Rehling's analysis of the "abnormally normal" white male killer who demonstrates a disturbing ability to 'blend in' and whose ordinariness makes him "uncannily familiar" (Rehling, 2007: 13; Seltzer, 1998). We witness Bundy using his charm to manipulate Lee and his victims. Suspicion is counteracted by his warm smile and wholesomeness, and by his dissimilarity to ideas of how sex attackers look and act.

The idea that sex killers are unattractive and lack social skills, used to explain their violence and distinguish them from 'normal' men, is implied in the film's focus on Bundy's unique status. The DVD tagline - "Not all serial killers fit the profile" - highlights the perception of the violent white middle class male as unusual. At a party shortly after the start of the killings, Bundy confidently discusses the murders, smiling as one person remarks: "I can't wait to see what the son of a bitch looks like". The scene exemplifies the ability of the white male killer to evade detection. Although the partygoers joke that Bundy may be the 'Ted killer', their humorous tone demonstrates the incongruity of this suggestion. A quick cut to Bundy's next crime - he carries a sobbing victim into woods - underlines the irony. Bundy's relaxed manner illustrates his confidence in evading detection: he knows that others expect to recognise deviance and this misapprehension protects him. However, the film does not interrogate the status of white masculinity in Western culture; instead, Bundy is depicted as an anomaly whose crimes and attitude to women are only partially connected to wider patriarchal structures. Although his neutral racial, gender and class status enables him to carry out his crimes, Bundy's anxiety regarding his identity is suggested as a potential factor in his pathology. He frequently complains about his family background and is embarrassed by his illegitimacy. He vents frustration on a bound young woman, telling her that "women like you" are uninterested in him because he does not come from a "good family", but during his crimes: "I'm in charge, I'm in control". The camera movement during this scene - it slowly moves up and over the two characters as Bundy undresses and screams at his terrified victim - emphasises his power at this point, demonstrating that the direction is not always unobtrusive (although there are no close-ups or cuts, an unusual choice for an assault scene) (Figure: 5.4).

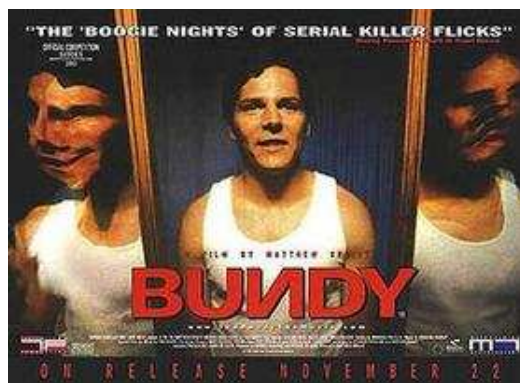


Figure 5.4: Bundy is “in control” as he exercises his power over a screaming, bound woman.

Although Bundy reveals his insecurities regarding middle class white masculinity, the film only hints that this identity is related to his violence, instead affirming his status as an anomaly through his bizarre behaviour. His claim to be a police officer reveals a need to adopt authoritative roles, reflecting a desire to exert control. This disguise connects his aggression to state-sanctioned surveillance, particularly as he manipulates a victim by referring to his police officer status. It also supports Rehling’s argument regarding the unremarkable white male’s need to appear exceptional, linking the killer’s violence to the identity status which protects him from exposure (2007). Equally, though, Bundy’s aberrance - applying make-up to a decapitated head, mimicking victims’ screams - marks him as deviant, thus rendering him other.

An early scene demonstrates Bundy’s conscious construction of an identity. Wearing a white vest which reveals his muscular body, Bundy stands in front of two mirrors positioned on either side of him which offer us three views; he looks straight ahead, into the camera, suggesting the camera is aligned with a mirror positioned opposite him. As he grins and talks to the mirror/camera/audience, we also see side views reflected in the other mirrors; he is literally presented to us divided (Branigan 1984: 128). A curtain hangs behind him, making his body the only object on screen and suggesting he is self-consciously hidden from the outside world. The static camera and Bundy’s intense stare reinforces the feeling that we are transfixed by the killer as he gazes at us. This idea is

complicated, however, by our knowledge that he is staring at himself, alluding to the double/split self concept. One poster uses this shot to reference the idea of the divided killer: in the middle image, Bundy gazes forward, but the mirror images on either side are distorted (Figure 5.5). This image alludes to *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, which also highlights a significant mirror shot in publicity (Figure: 5.6). *Ted Bundy*'s appropriation of this shot ironizes the Bundy persona and links his performativity to class. Henry's gaze is disturbing; he glowers with his head slightly bowed and in shadow. The camera's side angle positions us behind him, partly obscuring him. The electric light and dingy tiling hint at his working class status. In contrast, Bundy confidently smiles at the mirror/camera, his head raised as if posing for a photograph. We can guess from his tidy hair and the curtained background that he is wealthier than Henry, his vest an undergarment rather than outer clothing. The middle image is unthreatening; only the distorted side mirrors indicate danger. Whereas we can guess immediately that the subject of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* is dangerous, our eyes are drawn to the middle image of the apparently safe, trustworthy Bundy before the side views suggest a darker trait.



Figures 5.5 and 5.6: *Ted Bundy* appropriates the famous mirror shot of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*.

Bundy's bizarre behaviour emphasises his inscrutability and performing of identity. As he looks into the mirror, Bundy practices smiling before rehearsing introductions, repeating "Hi there, my name's Ted" in various ways. He whispers, grunts and snorts. After a short pause during which he remains still and silent, Bundy adopts a 'normal' performance style as he again introduces himself, now focusing on his imaginary audience (and us) with apparent sincerity. After this last introduction, the camera holds on Bundy as he continues to gaze at himself. This scene alludes to popular ideas regarding the serial killer (doubling/split self, a bestial inner self concealed by apparent normality) and also to

notions specific to Bundy. The audience's likely pre-existing knowledge of the 'charming' Bundy underlines the significance of this scene in constructing Bundy as accomplished in regulating his conduct.

Repeated cuts between the 'public' Bundy and his private crimes promote fascination at his balancing of these two distinct roles. Two attacks bookend a domestic scene with Lee's daughter Julie (Steffani Brass) in which Ted's fatherly demeanour is highlighted. Ted starts a conversation with a cheerleader, using her naivety and desire for adult attention to manipulate her. He is apologetic when she is offended by his reference to her youth, and adopts a paternalistic role when he says he is too old for her. His assumption of a fatherly demeanour - feigning embarrassment at being attracted to "a kid", expressing apparently sincere regret at offending her, standing tall as she looks up to him, her pompoms and pigtails highlighting her youth - is belied when he beats her to the ground (Figure: 5.7).



Figure 5.7: Retaining the sense of unobtrusive direction, the film nevertheless emphasises Bundy's height comparison to a pig-tailed teenage victim.

As he stands over her, we hear non-diegetic muzak-style bells which carry over into the next scene as *Jingle Bells* accompanies a cosy image of Julie excitedly unwrapping presents as Lee and Bundy look on. Bundy's behaviour is again paternal: he sits behind Julie, handing her presents while smiling at Lee. He reciprocates when Julie hugs and kisses him. The Christmas muzak continues into the next scene, in which we see Bundy feign illness to attract the attention of a young woman before he pins her to the ground. As well as connecting these scenes, the muzak conveys an artificial atmosphere which links to

the sense of performance. The juxtaposition highlights Bundy's reputed ability to perform roles, and the linking of the cheerleader attack to his fatherly affection towards Julie indicates that Bundy's self-regulation is self-conscious rather than internalised. It also hints at the special status not only of white middle class masculinity but also that of an idealised benevolent paternalism. Bundy's protective, fatherly persona alludes to archetypal ideas regarding the role of older men in protecting young women, ideas Bundy undermines (Bruzzi, 2005).

For Bundy, this paternal role is one more performance. Like his claim to be a police officer and his desire to be elected state Governor, his use of patriarchal stereotypes alludes to authoritative powers which are also suggested by his chosen subjects of study - law and psychology both allow him to scrutinise others. In regulating his own behaviour, Bundy exploits cultural prejudices regarding gender and authority which allows him to evade state surveillance and the suspicions of his victims.²⁸ In these ways the depiction of Bundy is similar to that of the profiler film killers whose 'blending in' depends on their feigning of behaviour expected from white men. The film does not explicitly address these cultural biases - some viewers may dismiss the young, female victims who believe Bundy's police officer persona as gullible rather than adhering to gender roles in accepting male authority - but it does confront the audience with a view of serial killing quite different from mainstream examples. The absence of investigatory figures for most of the narrative shifts focus from the profiler-style investigation framework which legitimises the screening of violence in these other films. As Turner argues, depictions of surveillance promote suspense and offer spectacle (1998). While Turner refers to the 1990s action movie trend in his analysis, portrayals of even low-tech 1970s-style detection would swing the audience's attention towards the detection of the killer, disrupting the sluggish pace and introducing more conventional suspense elements. That *Ted Bundy* focuses so relentlessly on Bundy's time out of prison, despite his infamous court case and interviews while incarcerated, indicates a deliberate choice to depict the killer as outwith state surveillance.²⁹

²⁸ My analysis of *Mr Brooks* (chapter six) also explores the status of white middle class fathers.

²⁹ Bundy defended himself at trial and was interviewed by various people, including FBI profilers, while awaiting execution. Both aspects would provide dramatic events and could be filmed cheaply, making their absence interesting. Bundy's interviews with profiler Robert Keppel have been filmed as *The Riverman* (Bill Eagles, 2004).

State Surveillance

The characterisation of the state surveillance which *is* apparent in *Ted Bundy* highlights a failure to recognise the danger posed by the killer. The killer's freedom to kill without detection a profiler, or more traditional forms of surveillance such as the detectives in *The Hunt for the BTK Strangler* (Stephen T. Kay, 2005), magnifies the danger he represents. We see Bundy shoplifting, spying on women and carrying a body in front of witnesses, yet he escapes detection for most of the film, and this ability is celebrated. When he leaves for Utah, his departure is juxtaposed with images of police examining a crime scene. The significance of their discovery is evident from their technology and paraphernalia (large lights, crime tape) - elements which position the scene as a spectacle. Our privileged knowledge is underlined by the authoritative high angle of the shot looking down on officers as they search the woods; the camera's gaze seems to embody greater knowledge and power than the police. Jazzy saxophone music begins, as if mocking the naivety of the officers as the shot cuts to a sunny open highway down which drives Bundy's distinctive yellow car. Onscreen text reveals he is now in Salt Lake City; almost immediately, he picks up a hitchhiker and a montage of attacks begins.

Specific examples of Bundy's evasion of surveillance during this montage include repeated shots of a map on which Bundy's attacks are marked with red blotches which resemble bloodstains. Superimposed images of Bundy's attacks link his private violence to effects on the wider world as, with each blow of his fist, another red blotch appears on the map (Figure 5.8). While the victims are innumerable and nameless, the cartoon-like marking of murders on the map - an official method of controlling space - ironizes police attempts to track the crimes. The representation of victims on the map alludes to the concept of the transformation of each victim into a component of a series and to attempts by investigators to track this series - pins on a map are familiar in police procedurals. Although Bundy's crimes are recorded on the map, they do not identify the perpetrator and so symbolise a failure of judicial surveillance. They also suggest that the killer's crimes are countless - an idea promoted by the real Bundy which has gained prominence in popular accounts (Donnelley, 2009) - since it seems they can only be depicted in this way.



Figure 5.8: A photograph of the real Bundy is superimposed over a ghoulish visual representation of his crimes, red blotches indicating attacks.

The montage scene depicts the killer as beyond detection. The main melody suggests elation which ties into the scene's allusion to the road movie and to the American concept of the roaming killer: as he drives along empty, sunny highways, Bundy's freedom is emphasised (Figure 5.9). We see a likely victim in the first shot of the montage, as a slim young woman in tight-fitting shorts hitchhikes at the roadside as Bundy's car approaches. There is no critique of the gendering of the freedom depicted here, although our knowledge of Bundy signals the danger faced by the hitchhiker. A lively counter rhythm coincides with specific images alluding to his success at evading detection, as if Bundy is revelling in his dodging of suspicion: a headline describing "baffled" police, sketches with only a vague resemblance to him, a wide shot of Salt Lake City which zooms out from the mountains, revealing the expanse in which Bundy is able to select victims.



Figure 5.9: Bundy's move to Utah is playfully represented through the iconography of the American road movie.

The depiction of Bundy's eventual arrest adheres closely to factual events (his attack tools were discovered when he was stopped for careless driving) but the brevity of the interview sequence downplays the influence of the police. We witness his dismay at being unable to charm the officers, and close-ups of his fidgeting hands and sombre music express his anxiety. However, the casting of Tom Savini – a famous special effects artist who often takes cameo roles in horror films, and would likely be recognised by some viewers (Jancovich, 2008: 155; Sanjek, 2008: 422) – as a detective shifts this scene into the realms of an in-joke, further negating the authority of state surveillance. The only other notable depiction of authority in the film - the guards who torture Bundy before his execution - are shown to be as cruel and sadistic as the killer. While the film has been criticised for creating sympathy for Bundy in these final scenes (Annoyed Grunt, <http://www.horrorview.com/movie-reviews/ted-bundy>, no date), his treatment by the guards parallels his own dominance and mocking of victims. While this echoing arguably downplays the seriousness of Bundy's crimes, it also implies that power resides in those who are able to exert physical authority, hinting at patriarchal power structures which shape Bundy's violence.

While the depiction of Bundy as abnormal and his victims as anonymous and usually skimpily dressed undermines the potential for exposing gender disparities, some aspects of the film allude to inequalities which contribute to Bundy's ability to evade detection. His

abuse of Lee is portrayed as disturbing and sinister, and her sickened expression as Bundy casually reveals he is to be charged with the murder of “some girl” aligns us with her perspective. The film slows slightly and music builds to express her shock at his blasé reference to the death. Most significant, given its 2002 release, is the depiction of the killer as rather desperate, anxious and pathetic, in comparison to the intelligent, sophisticated masterminds who populated the profiler film from the 1990s.

This depiction of failing masculinity is typical of both the chaotic and coherent cycles, as is the lack of police intervention and slow pace of the film. What is rare in both cycles is the emphasis on the killer’s lower-middle class status and his performance of roles to escape detection, which would suggest that his class and gender are linked to this ability to adopt convincing personas. Other portrait killers, including another Bundy-based film, *Bundy: A Legacy of Evil*, also sometimes assume roles but these are less significant within the films. *Ted Bundy* recalls the killers of *The Mean Season* and *The Bone Collector*, white middle class (or aspiring to middle class) men whose race and class status allows them to access places without detection and evade suspicion. However, while these profiler films expose this status as a surprise, shocking us with the contrast between the killer’s violence and his ‘normality’, *Ted Bundy* maintains a tension between the appearance of normative masculinity and brutal aggression throughout.

The Chaotic Portrait Film

Like the coherent portrait film, the chaotic film demonstrates the killer’s outward normality and the ineffectiveness of state surveillance, but distancing devices - unmotivated editing, disconnected shots, lengthy voice-overs - make this film a more unusual viewing experience as it pushes further the dissociative aspects of the coherent film. An immediate reaction to the chaotic narrative’s cheap appearance and decontextualised shots is to view it as poor, rushed, amateur film-making, and this is a common response.³⁰ It is unclear whether some surreal images and scenes are fantasy or dream sequences, and whether this lack of clarity is intentional. A reliance on voice-over also indicates a low budget (requiring less sound to be recorded on location and providing exposition, limiting the need for further scenes).

³⁰ Rigney, <http://www.beyondhollywood.com/ulli-lommels-latest-cinematic-offering-d-c-sniper/>, 5/2/10; accessed 13/6/10; jaconet (Jason@flash.net), “Feels Like a Made For TV Movie”, <http://uk.imbd.com/title/tt0321505/usercomments?c=1>; accessed 13/6/10

Other than the first film, 2002's *Speck*, the chaotic portrait films are made by two writer/directors, Michael Feifer and Ulli Lommel, both of whom have a background in straight-to-DVD horror (although several Lommel films were distributed theatrically in the 1970s and 1980s, including the 'video nasty' *The Boogeyman* (1980)). Each director uses a stock company of actors and similar aesthetics across the films. Feifer's films share an orangey wash and grimy texture. Lommel's demonstrate (along with *Speck*) the shallow, poor contrast look of cheap digital cameras (a trend noted in responses).³¹ Lionsgate distributes the films of both Feifer and Lommel, further pairing the two, and Lommel's films are trailered on the DVDs of Feifer's films and vice versa. The trailers urge: "look for it on DVD", indicating that these are designed for domestic viewing. The short time period in which these films are released highlights their exploitation horror associations.

The similarity of these directors has been noted in reviews which hint sardonically at the auteurist nature of these films; one suggests "Lommel and Michael Feifer should have a fight, and only the winner is allowed to make any more movies based on the exploits of real-life serial killers" (The Foywonder, <http://www.dreadcentral.com/news/32249/more-serial-killers-coming-your-house>, 23/6/09). While Feifer's films gain mixed reviews, I have been unable to find any positive reactions to Lommel's films. As I have discussed, responses from audiences and popular reviewers is often influenced by the perceived status of the film, and Feifer's slightly higher production values, as well as his casting of the horror actor/stuntman Kane Hodder, is significant here. However, it is equally true that Lommel's work *does* feel amateurish, indicating the problem of distinguishing 'deliberate' effects from 'bad' film-making.

For these reasons, the franchise status of the portrait film is most evident in the chaotic portrait film. DVD audiences see trailers for other portraits first, introducing the concept of seriality before the film begins. The domestic viewer - particularly those who respond on message boards or submit reviews to websites - may search the internet for information on the killer. The chaotic film's departure from factual accuracy - period setting, methods and type of victims often differ from reality, actors rarely look like the killers they play - seems strange given the technical capabilities of its audience. In investigating this issue, I found that several of the DVD commentaries indicate a desire to use the individual killer's story as an interpretation of events or a character study; on the *BTK* commentary, actor Kane

³¹ barnthebarn, "Nurse Killer Makes a Naff Thriller", <http://uk.imbd.com/title/tt0321505/usercomments>, 27/5/08; accessed 13/6/10

Hodder suggests the film represents “what [Dennis Rader] might be thinking in jail right now”. This comment supports my interpretation of these films as aiming to offer an impression rather than a true crime-style retelling.

In failing to accurately represent the killer’s story, these films create a sense of the serial killer as an abstract figure; to view these films as a group is to remove these killers from their individual context in a way which echoes the seriality associated with these killers. The quoting by *Speck* of other serial killers - the lengthy voice-over cites Bundy, David Berkowitz and Carl Panzram, two of whom were unknown during *Speck*’s 1966 crimes - reinforces this sense of the serial killer as a category of individual. These films are sometimes self-referential: both *Green River Killer* and *BTK Killer* feature slow pans down the body of the killer as he lies on the ground. The franchise-style marketing and distribution, together with the film-makers’ tendency to refer to various films and killers within the same DVD commentary, further undermines the individuality of these killers.

Departure from the facts allows film-makers to comment on specific aspects of the horror film. In *Ed Gein: Butcher of Plainfield*, Gein’s crimes are exaggerated in terms of both the number of victims and the level of violence perpetrated against living people. However, study of these differences suggests a knowing comment on horror cinema. Gein’s first victim is seen hanging from a meat hook, a reference to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), which Gein’s story famously inspired. The casting of Hodder, bigger than the shy, small Gein, alludes to his roles in several of the *Friday the 13th* films, in which he played the mother-dominated Jason Voorhees - another cliché which can be traced to the Gein story. One fictitious murder references Hodder’s most famous role: Gein slams a guard into a tree and pins his head between branches before hitting it with an axe, methodically and imaginatively disposing of the victim in a way that is more akin to a slasher than either the portrait or profiler films. This killing echoes an attack from *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (John Carl Buechler, 1988) which Hodder describes as his “favourite kill” (DVD interview), in which a man in a sleeping bag is thrown against a tree. The film’s revision of the facts, then, is both an in-joke for horror fans and a comment on the history of the Gein story.

Similarly, Lommel’s films can be interpreted as either exploitation or critique. While it is not my purpose to judge the ‘intention’ of these films, I recognise the need to take into account extra-diegetic material in which the film-makers discuss these often problematic films. For this reason I have chosen Lommel’s *BTK Killer* as my case study. The film

portrays Dennis Rader, who killed ten people between 1974 and 1991 but who was only identified in 2005, the same year as the release of the film. The swift making of the film is typical of Lommel's serial killer series; he made fifteen films about real crime stories between 2004 and 2010, and is vocal about his desire to subvert traditional cinematic conventions in a way which invites comparisons with Haneke.

BTK Killer: Narrative

BTK Killer's odd structure and unmotivated images demonstrate its rejection of classical narrative conventions. The viewer is detached from the start, as an opening montage sequence depicts disjointed, candlelit images of a naked, bound woman, the eye of another woman whose face is almost obscured by plastic film, a snarling dog eating (human?) meat and the severed head of a pig. Viewers familiar with the Rader story will be surprised by the animal images and the Gothic set and lighting (Rader killed victims in their own homes). The speeding up of the montage in time with the percussion/string-based horror-style music is closer to parody than effective horror editing despite the genuinely disturbing images.³² A quick cut woman waking from a nightmare suggests the montage can be contextualised as her dream, but we later see images from the montage which are not linked to her.

The film offers ways of following events which take place over thirty years: onscreen credits date the year and a fade from past to present alerts us to the fact that different actors play Rader (Gerard Griesbaum in the 1974 sequences, Eric Gerleman in the 2004 scenes) and his wife Paula (Crystal Nelson in 1974, Nola Roeper in 2004). There is a logical progression from the first narrative scenes - in which characters discuss the return of BTK - to the flashback to the younger Rader writing an early BTK letter. Yet there is little context for many of the images. The narrative jumps from long scenes of violent slaughterhouse and torture images, to banal sequences in Rader's home and church, to the experiences of journalist Laci Peterson (Danielle Petty), who disappears from the narrative before Rader's capture. Many aspects of the film are neither narratively nor thematically relevant. There is no sense of economy: for no reason, Rader interrupts a minister during a service; there is a long panning shot of the lights in the television studio; a conversation between Peterson and her boyfriend is insignificant. While *Ted Bundy* exhibits a meandering pace but retains a cause and effect logic, *BTK Killer's* narrative progression is

³² The commentary notes that the film was submitted three times before gaining an R rating from the MPAA.

impeded by unnecessary scenes and odd repetitions, and feels frustrating to watch.

Unusual angles distance the audience from characters. In early shots of Peterson, the distance between the actor and the camera gives the scene an awkward feel. When filmed from her right, Peterson seems too far away from the camera; when filmed from her left, a blurred object obscures part of the shot. A later shot of the Raders sitting at a dining table is overtly staged. Rader is shown at church, but this space is too small, resembling the dimensions of a family home. Again, the characters are peculiarly crowded, perhaps to allow the swift moving of the camera (Figure 5.10). The lack of establishing shots throughout the film make it difficult to gauge the spaces depicted, and shots of Rader walking outside lack the spatial conventions of classical cinema.



Figure 5.10: The church scenes are oddly composed and obviously staged.

The insertion of unmotivated images also contradicts the classical narrative model. Some of these images are linked to the dialogue with which they coincide, but not in a way that readily creates meaning. It is possible to offer some context for the slaughterhouse images, as Rader voices his concern for animals and thus draws associations between serial killing, cannibalism and industrialised slaughter.³³ It also contributes to the film's privileging of sight. During his murder of Nancy, Rader shouts at her to close her eyes and finally

³³ None of the books or articles I accessed referred to Rader's concern for animal rights or their use in his killings. I believe that these lengthy slaughter scenes may have been filmed for *Killer Pickton*, based on the crimes of Robert Pickton, whose victims were allegedly fed to pigs. I have been unable to access *Killer Pickton* (legal issues led to its withdrawal shortly after its release) but the trailer features similar images of animal slaughter.

blindfolds her; as he does this we see images of a severed pig's head with candles in the eye sockets, an image derived from the opening montage, which is never overtly connected to Rader - it may be his fantasy, but is not explicitly marked as such (Figure 5.11). He later refers to her eyes as we see images of eye-gouging, and the opening sequence also features repeated shots of a woman's eye, surrounded by what looks like plastic wrapping, wide with terror (Figure 5.12). When he talks about slaughterhouses, we see images of animal slaughter and mutilation (although we also see these throughout the film with no dialogue connection). The most obvious reading here is a paralleling of victims with the slaughtered animals, a concept that is implied by a victim's recognition of Rader as the local dogcatcher and from a butcher shop. However, it is difficult to determine the film's political standpoint (if any). If a link is to be made between the serial killer and mechanical slaughter, it seems problematic that the only character to note the connection is the killer.



Figure 5.11 : Images of a pig's head, the flames in its eye sockets mirroring Nancy's blindfolding.



Figure 5.12: The opening montage also emphasises sight.

At these points, *BTK Killer* resembles the Mondo film, and other chaotic films also exhibit a Mondo influence, particularly in the inclusion of documentary footage (Rice, 1986: 153). The similar *Green River Killer* features unmotivated images of autopsy scenes as well as excerpts of the real killer's police interviews and Feifer's *BTK* includes pictures of crime scenes by Rader. However, Mondo films highlight their status, often to the extent of using the word Mondo in the title. Publicity for the chaotic portraits does not highlight their defamiliarising effects; DVD covers are typical of horror and trailers do not reveal the alienating effects of the films (although their low budgets are obvious). Michael Haneke's films provide the closest model to understanding the portraits: the chaotic portraits offer 'unpleasure', frustrating the desire to enjoy suspense conventions and reminding the audience of their role in these depictions of violence. The distanciation techniques are specifically noted by Lommel in extra-diegetic material, suggesting that the similarity to Haneke's films is intentional.

"Reality Horror" and the Subversion of Profiler Conventions

Lommel's website, *Hollywood Action House*, lists his portrait films under a 'true crime' category along with several other films which are obviously fictional (*Zombie Nation*, (2004); *The Raven* (2007)). The site states that Lommel made "so-called horror films, mostly about serial killers, to hold a mirror in front of the public showing them their fascination with evil, murder and destruction" (<http://www.hollywood-action->

house.com/index.php/about-ulli-lommel/the-serial-killer-cinema-of-ulli-lommel; accessed 2nd July 2009). Lommel's DVD commentaries highlight his efforts to critique codes of representation and violence. While I have noted the danger of allowing extra-diegetic material to lead responses, Lommel's description of his serial killer films as "reality horror" is useful in considering these effects. He defines this technique as making viewers "feel you're right there". His co-commentator, producer Jeff Frentzen, defines this phrase in response to criticism of the film. Reality horror adopts the approach of reality television, making us feel "you're right in there with the camera [...] everything is in your face [...] everybody is really close-up, almost talking right at you". Referring to a scene in which a body is removed by police as the camera pans about as if seeking a suitable position, Lommel comments that this is "typical reality horror scene [...] as if we were just there with the camera like a news team covering the event".

The two modes referenced here - reality television and television news - have contrasting approaches and effects. This blurring of entertainment and informational reference points may be deliberate, echoing the exploitation tradition of self-reflexively merging contrasting modes (Jackson, 2002). However, the unsteady camera which characterises *BTK Killer* resembles reality television more than news footage, not least because it lacks the contextualising presence of reporters. Angles are often uncomfortable and unflattering, and whereas *Ted Bundy*'s direction is best described as unobtrusive, the most appropriate analogy for *BTK Killer* would be unrehearsed cinema vérité. Few scenes feature more than one camera set-up, shots last a considerable amount of time, panning and tracking movements appear clumsy. However, the manipulated voice-over, montage sequences and unmotivated panning shots, particularly of the news television studio, shift the film from vérité/reality-style modes to a more obviously mediated text.

Aside from the echoes of Mondo films, *BTK Killer* also exhibits aspects of more mainstream horror, but undermines these conventions. The film's use of voice-overs, for example, includes an exaggerated horror-style voice-over which does not sound like either the young or older Rader: it lacks the Kansas accent and is electronically manipulated. Its raspy snarls, triumphantly drawing out each syllable, sounds like the voice of a slasher killer, particularly *Nightmare on Elm Street*'s Freddy Krueger, and Jigsaw's computer-manipulated voice from the *Saw* franchise which began a year before the release of *BTK Killer*. While we hear Rader read out his letters as he writes, connecting the voice-over to the diegetic events, the horror-style voice is non-diegetic. As with the narrative devices outlined in the previous section, it is difficult to determine the significance of this voice. It

contradicts the portrayal of the outwardly normal Rader, whose performance of normality is highlighted in the film - like Bundy, he is unconcerned as others discuss their fear of BTK - and in extra-diegetic material (the trailer and DVD cover list the social identities he fulfilled while evading suspicion - father, husband, church leader, neighbour).

Similarly, the spinning camera and repeated dialogue, particularly during attacks, are difficult to interpret as anything other than parody. These murder scenes are very long and shot quite differently from similar scenes in traditional police procedural, horror or profiler films. There is a limited build-up of suspense in the moments leading up to Rader's attack, as the image cuts from Rader's eyes to a point of view shot of the unwitting victims, but tension is never highlighted to the same extent as the profiler film. The murders are rendered absurd by Rader's bizarre dialogue, use of animals to terrorise and kill, and odd effects. The camera spins round Rader's face as he repeats phrases; it is unclear whether this repetition is diegetic - he is actually repeating the words - or created through editing.

Unlike other serial killer films such as the profiler or the slasher movies, these killing sequences are not elaborately filmed or aesthetically compelling. Shots (apart from the spinning camera) are relatively stable, while lighting and locations are banal; other than the Gothic candlelit space glimpsed in the unmotivated shots, there is no creation of fear through traditional cinematic devices. Even the Gothic associations of these scenes are undermined by our inability to determine what is taking place and its relation to the banal Rader. Compared with the first killing in *The Mean Season* (a woman filmed from behind is shot by an off-screen assailant) and the first abduction in *The Bone Collector* (the camera is trapped, along with a terrified couple, in a taxi driven by an anonymous figure), *BTK Killer's* killing scenes show more but to less effect. The music, editing and camera angles of the profiler films build tension; we cannot see the killer but witness the victim's fearful reactions from his perspective; we are encouraged to vicariously share the victims' fear. In contrast, the subdued synthesiser music of *BTK Killer* is present throughout so much of the film that its gradual crescendo is barely noticeable and we are not aligned with either character (there are few point of view shots, and these are restricted to the stalking scenes). Although there are many close-ups, the camera does not adopt the angles associated with this type of scene. Instead, it is more of a bystander to the events, alerting the spectator to the unusual mode of address. The sense of standing on the sidelines, lacking the guidance of conventional direction and editing to comprehend the events, is frustrating and tedious, an example of the 'unpleasure' these films provide.

The effectiveness of these techniques are questionable given the unenthusiastic reactions to Lommel's films, but nevertheless their subversion of traditional, standardised cinematic techniques offers a new angle on these familiar devices. The definition offered in Lommel's commentary provides a way of considering the apparent unpreparedness of the camera for the attacks in *Ted Bundy* and other portrait films. The reality horror concept also links to another branch of horror which has developed through the late 1990s and 2000s: the limiting of narration to one camera, explained diegetically as a handheld camera controlled by one of the characters. *Man Bites Dog*, *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999), *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008) and *REC* (Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza, 2007) also use reality television-style filming to offer innovative depictions of horror, yet by emphasising this aspect diegetically and in marketing declare this effect intentional, escaping the criticism met by Lommel's version of the technique.

However, the radical potential of 'reality horror' is undermined by a more conventional depiction of gender. Like *Ted Bundy* and other portrait films, *BTK Killer* limits the extent to which the killer's aggression is linked to gendered power structures. When Peterson asks why the killer sends letters to her, her male producer smirkingly responds: "because he likes to scare women"; the film does not question the commonsensical way in which this idea is presented. While the real Rader killed men and children as well as women, he only kills women in the film (and in Feifer's *BTK*), reinforcing the misogyny of the killer without deconstructing it.³⁴ The depiction of the frightened Peterson, Paula Rader, and the victims ensure that the only women we see are victims or potential victims. Peterson's difficult relationship with her sleazy, bullying boss, Jack (Michael Barbour), suggests a continuum of male violence, but like *The Mean Season* the gendered aspect of this critique is limited by the focus on media ethics. Each of the altercations between Peterson and Jack concern his desire to present the BTK case in a sensationalised style, regardless of the killer's obvious enjoyment of the attention.³⁵ Jack's language is crude and misogynistic, his lack of concern for Peterson paralleling him with Rader. Additionally, two shots visually link the domineering Jack and Rader. As Peterson argues that the station should focus on less violent stories, Jack leers in towards her, the camera staying close to him to emphasise his overbearing, uncomfortable presence (Figure 5.13). In the next scene,

³⁴ Although his victims varied by age and gender, it has been suggested that women and girls were his main target (Douglas, 2007). It could be argued that the film's gendering of victims in contrast to the facts of the case reveals a cultural or cinematic convention suggesting that women make more plausible or more effective victims.

³⁵ Like the real Dennis Rader, the fictionalised killer depicted in the film communicates with the media through anonymous letters. However, the real Rader did not target a specific female news anchor.

Peterson reads out the latest, threatening communiqué from the killer as Rader watches the television, his face caught in a tight close-up echoing that of Jack (Figure 5.14).



Figure 5.13: Jack is caught in a tight close-up as he harasses Petersen...

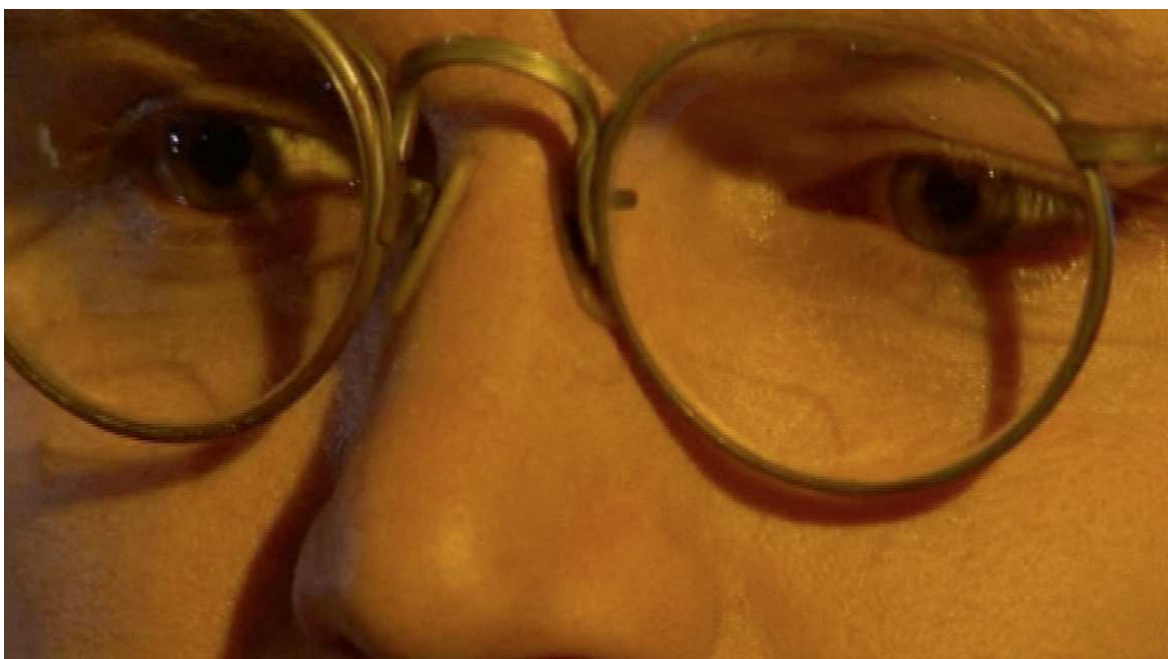


Fig 5.14: ... linking him visually to the outwardly calmer Rader, watching Petersen on television.

The depiction of Peterson is interesting given Lommel's claims to critique sensationalistic representations of violence. Although Rader did write to the media, Peterson is a fictional

character who shares her name with a murder victim whose husband, Scott Peterson, was convicted of her killing in a 2005 trial which became a major news story shortly before the arrest of Rader. While the link to this case may be coincidental, the allusion to the Peterson killing may comment on the saturated media coverage of the trial which would correspond to the film's disparaging depiction of television news.

Peterson is similar to the profiler figure, particularly Malcolm in *The Mean Season*. She is linked to Rader: the opening gory sequence may be her nightmare; a later shot depicting these images on television monitors may be imagined by either or both of them; Rader delivers a letter to her as she dreams; she unknowingly joins his Church group. She is also often 'caught' within the diegetic cameras and monitors of her workspace, and this framing is doubled by that of the non-diegetic camera (Figure 5.15). We see Rader watch television broadcasts in which she nervously reads out his letters which feature violent bondage fantasies. As she prepares for broadcast, male technicians focus their cameras on her and watch the multiple images which appear in the gallery. Like Malcolm, she is scrutinised by technologies of surveillance and the men who manipulate them and feels trapped and threatened by the killer. She is also paralleled with victims, who are themselves framed in various ways. Nancy is bordered by a window as Rader spies on her. A later victim is left in a warehouse beside a mirror which reflects her bound, meat-covered corpse. The mirror is central within the camera's image, with the body positioned at the side, drawing more attention to the framed reflection than the actual woman (Figure 5.16).



Figure 5.15: Caught in an array of frames, Peterson is watched by a male technician.



Figure 5.16: Echoing Peterson’s capture within the camera, a victim is framed within a mirror.

However, her relationship with Rader is not one of tight doubling familiar from the profiler film. She has considerably less screen time and no real active role (although she appeals to him to turn himself in, the film adheres to the true reason for his capture and does not credit her with any influence over Rader). Unlike Malcolm, she is not implicated in the killer’s desire for fame and argues against reporting the story. When Rader is finally arrested, the sound of her news report accompanies close-ups of the killer’s eyes and images of Paula crying. Peterson ends her report with the question: “who is Dennis L. Rader?” This need to understand the killer echoes the end of *Ted Bundy*, when Lee asks “who was Ted Bundy?” Unlike the profiler, both Lee and Peterson are marginal characters whose final questions ultimately reinforce the inscrutability of the serial killer.

Like *Ted Bundy*, Lommel’s film depicts the world inhabited by the killer as one in which state surveillance is absent or ineffectual. Although the police eventually capture Rader, their dependence on luck is suggested by the words “one fatal mistake” which appear onscreen just before Rader asks to use the Church computer to print a letter which will eventually identify him. *BTK Killer* is typical of the chaotic portrait film in its excessive destabilisation of cinematic tradition, particularly around narrative and horror conventions, which reveal the extent to which more standard films portray violence within specific codes. *BTK Killer* arguably makes the audience desire the presence of the reassuring, knowledgeable profiler whose investigations structure events and make the violence

palatable - Peterson's initial paralleling with the killer prompts us to assume she will fulfil this role. A world lacking the surveillance skills of the profiler, the film suggests, is disturbing, chaotic and anarchic.

BTK Killer is one of the most disorientating of the portraits. Even to a viewer who knows the Rader story well, the departures from fact and from conventions of classical cinema make the film gruelling and confusing. It is unsurprising that responses should interpret the film as 'bad'. However, its extreme and disconcerting deviations from conventional cinematic representation, particularly the horror/thriller genre, demonstrate the way in which standardised mainstream film conventions encourage audiences to accept particular depictions of violence. While the films do not promote a specific political reading, and their subversive potential is compromised by their conservative depiction of women, they foster a new appraisal of more typical representations of the serial killer, demonstrating the extent to which the conventions of other serial killer narratives, such as the profiler film, follow established conventions which downplay the violence being depicted.

Conclusion

Despite its relatively minor status in terms of both numbers and impact, the portrait film is an interesting example of the serial killer film. Although it shares commonalities with the profiler film - constructing the killer as an agent of surveillance capable of evading the scrutiny of others - its focus on the experiences of the killer without the comforting filter of the profiler character significantly alters the viewing experience. These films expose the extent to which the profiler interprets the killer for us, containing him both narratively (catching or killing him) and in a wider sense, explaining his violence as a pathology which distances him from the rest of society. In the absence of the reassuring profiler, the killer is more disturbing, despite lacking the almost superhuman intelligence and stamina of the profiler film killer. Nor does the portrait offer a legitimating framework for our interest in violence; we do not watch to solve a puzzle or enjoy a spectacle, and our desire to view violence is not obscured by these conventions.

Although the coherent and chaotic portrait film exhibit significant differences, they both force a re-evaluation of the more respectable serial killer narratives discussed in this thesis. Their niche status, low budgets, exploitation connections and disconcerting deviations from familiar conventions have influenced their reception, demonstrating the high/low

brow divide. It is clear, however, that while the coherent films adhere to mainstream cinematic conventions, the amateurish, crude, very low budget characteristics of the chaotic films suggest they belong within a more marginal segment of film-making such as the exploitation film. As responses to these films demonstrate, there is a divide between the coherent films, which tend to be understood as low budget efforts aiming to fulfil the expectations of mainstream audiences, and the chaotic films, which are interpreted as examples of very poor film-making. My reading of these films as critiques of representations of violence, in contrast, suggests that by offering alternative modes in which to depict violence, the spectator is prompted to consider the film/viewer relationship (Wheatley, 2009: 36) and recognise the extent to which generic conventions manipulate responses. The sense of an absence of direction (in terms of both narrative and film-making) makes us aware of the indiscernible management of our interpretation of more conventional films. Rubin's argument regarding the denial of emphasis is also significant here: the rejection of conventional catharsis suggests their violence is somehow beyond the boundaries of traditional representation, denying the audience the opportunity to enjoy vicariously the detection of a frightening but ultimately containable figure (1999: 60).

The fact that the portraits are not discussed in these terms in the responses I have accessed, however, poses the question of exactly which audience these chaotic films are for; while it is clear that mainstream viewers and niche audiences can respond positively to the coherent films, my research indicates that the chaotic films are met with universal dismissal, despite their potential to provide an interesting and unusual portrayal of the serial killer.

The overview chapter argues that the portrait film constitutes a reaction to the profiler cycle, which demonstrates a fall in both numbers and cultural impact at the same time as the main portrait cycle begins in 2001. The next chapter explores another body of films running through the 2000s which are similarly indicative of this post-profiler phase. In the protagonist-killer film, the profiler narrative is depicted from the point of view of the killer, who is often himself a profiler. In the torture porn serial killer film, the contemporaneous torture porn cycle assimilates the serial killer figure. Like the portrait cycle, these films demonstrate a significant shift from the profiler film, suggesting the exhaustion of the profiler cycle in the 2000s prompts a variety of responses as its familiar conventions are subverted and reworked in different ways.

Chapter Six

The Serial Killer in the 2000s: Profiling and Torture Porn

Introduction

This final chapter tracks two key developments in the serial killer film in the 2000s. Firstly, as the portrait films develop into a niche straight-to-DVD market, mainstream films also begin to depict the killer as a protagonist rather than the protagonist's quarry. This shift demands a re-evaluation of the doubling between the profiler and killer I have argued is key to the films of the 1980s and 1990s. Additionally, a separate development in the horror genre, referred to as torture porn, incorporates the figure of the serial killer. This cycle's focus on the suffering of live victims and technologies of surveillance is also pertinent to my analysis. Although different stylistically, these two trends share important commonalities, particularly in their use of established profiler conventions to negotiate cultural shifts and subvert audience expectation, and in their representation of the white, male killer as a (semi-)sanctioned agent of surveillance.

In the first section I discuss the cultural and industrial shifts which have influenced these developments. I then examine each trend in greater detail, using two films as case studies. Torture porn is a recognised category in both academia and journalistic discourse; the term has developed out of debates around the violence of these films. The other category, which I have called the protagonist-killer films, has not previously been identified. I examine *Mr Brooks* (Bruce A. Evans, 2007) as an example of the protagonist-killer film, which both amplifies and reworks the conventions discussed in chapters three and four. *Saw II* (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2005), meanwhile, is representative of the torture porn cycle and similarly strikes a balance between straightforwardly repeating and self-consciously replaying the traditions of the profiler film. This chapter argues that the 2000s films indicate the profiler cycle of the 1980s and 1990s has been exhausted, and considers how this fatigue – frequently noted in reviews – has been exacerbated by the new historical context.

While torture porn has provoked academic scrutiny, this chapter represents the first attempt to define the protagonist-killer film. Scholarly work on films within the latter trend is

limited and does not recognise the significant developments they exhibit, although I have sourced a considerable amount of material relating to the television series *Dexter*, which demonstrates many of the key features of the protagonist-killer film but has enjoyed a greater cultural and commercial impact than any of these films. In referring to this work on *Dexter* I do not intend to overlook the significant differences between film and television, but instead suggest that similar factors influence both this series and the films.

My analyses here continue to focus on masculinity and surveillance. In tracking the shift of the killer from antagonist to protagonist and the assimilation of torture porn, I remain concerned with strategies which distance the killer from normative masculinity, representations of surveillance, and the interplay between these two aspects. Additionally, the chapter takes account of the distinctive tone of these films. They demonstrate an offbeat, often ironic tone through the empathetic depiction of the killer and the use of comedic elements which reduce the impact of the violence and suggest complicity with the killer. They often exhibit a self-consciousness in their playful attitude to familiar profiler conventions which, while never approaching pastiche or parody, suggests awareness of these conventions is assumed. Both the protagonist-killer and torture porn films seem somehow removed from reality, replaying the familiar profiler conventions in a semi-ironic context. A playfulness not apparent in the earlier films, particularly around the exaggerated power of the killer and the narrative structure of the films, distances them from the real-world environment depicted in the 1980s and 1990s films. This tonal shift suggest a different approach to the serial killer than that evident in the portrait films, demonstrating that while the portrait film rejects profiler film conventions, the protagonist-killer and torture porn movies rework these traditions, often subverting them but also frequently reinforcing the power structures they maintain.

Familiars: Serial Killer Films in the 2000s

This section considers the influences on the trends investigated in this chapter. Some of the films of this period are typical profiler films (*Taking Lives*, *D-Tox*, *The Watcher*), though they appear in smaller numbers than in the 1990s.³⁶ This chapter, however, discusses two new trends which demonstrate the continuing influence of profiler conventions as they subvert our expectations of these traits. The protagonist killer films play with our

³⁶ The appendix illustrates the divergent nature of the serial killer film since 2001.

familiarity with the reassuringly knowledgeable profiler by revealing that the most successful profilers are themselves killers. This concept is not new, yet it builds throughout the 2000s, suggesting both efforts to prolong the profiler cycle through this twist and a willingness on the part of the audience to empathise with the killer. Similarly, profilers are often unsuccessful in the torture porn films, which highlight the inscrutability of the killer and shift from ‘cold’ crime scenes to the extended torture of living victims.

As my appendix shows, neither of these groups have many films thus far: there are eight protagonist-killer films, while seven torture porn films feature serial killers. These figures reflect the overall decline of the serial killer film in the 2000s: fewer films featuring serial killers are released, and these receive less critical and commercial attention (Gates, 2005: 284). One exception is the *Saw* series, featuring Jigsaw (Tobin Bell), the only fictional serial killer to have made a cultural and commercial impact over the last decade (Murray, 2007). However, the serial killer figure has not disappeared: serial killer true crime and fiction continues to sell well, while the serial killer has become particularly visible on television (Gates, 2005: 284), a development attributed to the importance of seriality in both serial killer narratives and television drama (Schmid, 2005: 144).

The depiction of the serial killer in a medium associated with the domestic indicates that the figure is a relatively safe fear. This construction of the serial killer as a manageable anxiety has been traced to concerns around the ‘new’ threat of the terrorist after 9/11. The reassuringly familiar and ‘American’ threat of the serial killer provides “an ambivalent place of refuge: they are familiar and therefore in many ways less threatening than the terrorist” (Schmid, 2005: 248). They also continue to maintain “a pleasing image of ourselves as civilized and non-violent; it is they who are violent, not us”; yet they now also constitute “a quintessentially American figure; indeed, as a piece of ‘Americana’, with all that term implies about folksiness and even a perverse kind of nostalgic fondness” (Schmid, 2005: 248).

Whether the developments can be explained by 9/11 is debatable, however. It is tempting to explain post-2001 shifts through the filter of 9/11 and the geopolitical events it precipitated. Schmid’s reading of *Dexter* as “the quintessential serial killer of the post-9/11 era in that he is provided with an abundance of characteristics that make him a sympathetic, even identificatory, figure” (2010: 133) typifies this interpretation of the newly safe serial killer as a reaction to the traumatic figure of the terrorist. Yet my study of the protagonist-killer film, which offers a serial killer with the same sympathetic aspects as

Dexter (Michael C Hall), indicates that 9/11 cannot be the only factor in this shift. Like *Dexter*, *Frailty* and *Hannibal* (both 2001) promote allegiance with the titular killer by depicting his victims as rude and corrupt, while *Frailty*'s empathy-inducing flashback structure evokes *Dexter*'s voice-over. These early examples of the protagonist-killer film indicate that this development predates the attacks. Taking into account the preceding chapters, it is more likely that while the familiarity and 'Americanness' of the serial killer may provide a reassuring contrast to the terrorist whose national, racial and ideological otherness is prominent in responses to 9/11, it is equally true that the serial killer was in no need of comparison to highlight its familiarity. Chapter four argues that the high budget and star casting of *The Bone Collector* illustrates the positioning of the serial killer in the mainstream. The sheer diversity of serial killer portrayals has contributed to the "nostalgic fondness" with which the serial killer is now viewed, explaining the appearance of both the empathetic killer in the protagonist-killer film and the explicit violence of torture porn, which increases the brutality of the killer to ensure he remains frightening.

This nostalgia is interwoven with an ambivalence to FBI profiling, the concept so influential in the development of the serial killer film since the late 1970s. By the end of the 1990s, a number of high profile FBI failures, most notably the incorrect yet highly public identification of Richard Jewell as the 1996 Atlanta Olympics bomber, contributed to a decline in support for the FBI, and particularly for BSU profiling. Jewell's case was the most infamous of various misleading profiles which undermined the FBI's authority (Jenkins, 1994: 71; Schmid, 2005: 93-95; Seltzer, 1998: 125). Profiling is criticised in a number of fictional representations throughout the 2000s. In a season one episode of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* ('The Strip Strangler', original airdate 17th May 2001), an imprecise FBI profile is inferior to the CSI team's hard science. In *American Psycho II: All American Girl* (Morgan J. Freeman, 2002), egotistical Robert Starkman (William Shatner), possibly based on BSU founder Robert Ressler, fails to identify an aspiring profiler who kills rival students. The special significance of the serial killer is undercut in series five of *The Wire* (2002 - 2008; HBO), in which Detective McNulty (Dominic West) seeks funding for a drugs investigation by manipulating overdose deaths to fake a serial killer case. The resultant media and police attention satirises the sensationalism and disproportionate concern around serial killers. McNulty's amused expression as an FBI profiler offers psychological insight into the killer which perfectly describes the detective encapsulates disillusionment with profiling. The profile is technically accurate as it embodies McNulty, but he is only staging existing corpses. Similarly, the limitations of profiling are depicted in *Dexter* as well as the cinematic narratives I discuss here.

The distance between real FBI profiling and the intuitive, empathetic fictional version offers fictitious profiling an inbuilt defence against obsolescence. It is not the bureaucratic categorisation of killers which attracts audiences, but the sense of the profiler's uncanny knowledge. The de-mythologisation of BSU profiling offers new possibilities in the profiler narrative. The outmoded status of BSU profiling is one factor in the merging of killer and profiler. Fictional profiling has always been closer to an innate gift than learned skill. Interestingly, the television series *Criminal Minds* bucks the trends described in this chapter by focusing on a team of highly professional (as opposed to profiler film-style maverick) FBI profilers in a department closely modelled on the BSU. Beginning in 2005 (one year before *Dexter*), the series highlights the categorisation of criminal behaviour and the procedures followed by the professional profilers, whose team dynamic is quite different to the killer/profiler double investigated in this thesis. This discrepancy, however, can be explained by the success of the *CSI* franchise, which *Criminal Minds* emulates in its visual depiction of killers as the team describes them, echoing the “*CSI* shot” (Allen, 2007: 6). A tie-in book featuring photographs and quotes from the series focuses on the real killers who have ‘inspired’ the series, further shifting *Criminal Minds* from the irony-infused *Dexter* and the protagonist-killer films (Mariotte, 2010).³⁷

Wider factors also influence the 2000s films. A perceived ‘crisis’ of (white, heterosexual) masculinity in response to economic problems, advances by women and ethnic and sexual minorities, and a supposed marginalisation of traditional masculine qualities is understood to be important in late Twentieth Century culture (Faludi, 1999). Several high profile Hollywood releases in 1999 and 2000 depict troubled, ‘emasculated’ men whose problems are linked to powerful women, changes in the workplace and the rejection of ‘masculine’ traits (Gates, 2006: 49). Bruzzi links these male crisis films to *Falling Down* (Joel Schumacher, 1992), an earlier portrayal of a white man as “social victim” which follows the protagonist as his violence takes the form not of serial killing but spree-style vigilantism, foreshadowing the vigilante killers of the 2000s (Bruzzi, 2005: 152). Gates argues that the “masculine crisis” films - including *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999), *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) and *American Psycho* - “debunk the myth of dominant masculinity that has informed society since the frontier era and expose men’s lack of access to power in American society” (Gates, 2006: 46-7).

³⁷ The casting of *Criminal Minds* actor Matthew Gray Gubler as an apprentice killer in the comedy *How to Be a Serial Killer* (Luke Ricci, 2008) suggests that knowingness can exist simultaneously alongside ‘straight’ modes.

The protagonist-killer films depict a male hero in crisis and portray men who discover that a reliance on traditional 'masculine' qualities - violence, dominance over others, a focus on physical action over verbal articulacy - do not offer stable identities. Torture porn links to this concept in its depiction of a modern society which is too safe (perhaps too 'feminised'). These films refer less overtly to the gender anxieties negotiated in the earlier masculine crisis films, assimilating these concerns into the profiler narrative. The commercial and critical success of masculine crisis films suggests that audiences are willing to accept violent, am/immoral protagonists, encouraging the development of films which depict events from the perspective of the killer.

Another industrial/cultural development is the emphasis on charismatic, intelligent, fascinating villains evident through the 1990s epitomised by the Hannibal Lecter films (Gates, 2006: 259). As I argued in chapter four, the serial killer is increasingly clever and talented throughout the 1990s, with films like *Copcat* and *The Bone Collector* maintaining mystery and suspense around their little-seen killer. Most of the 2000s films, however, reveal the killer early on; he is not a shadowy presence but a character with whom we spend much of the narrative. The 2000s movies frequently depict lengthy scenes with the killer without the reassuring barrier of the profiler. The trajectory of Hannibal Lecter from enigmatic peripheral villain in *Manhunter* to the hero of *Hannibal Rising* encapsulates the incorporation of the serial killer into mainstream culture as a fascinating though notorious celebrity (Schmid, 2005). This construction of the killer as a romanticised, flawed hero is evident in earlier depictions of violence (Cameron and Fraser, 1987; Caputi, 1987). The 2000s films rely on audience literacy in terms of both narrative tradition (the law-abiding hero will outwit the villain) and more specific serial killer conventions (only a profiler can tackle the killer) to subvert expectations while referring to this existing idea of the killer as hero. It is not just the exceptional success of *The Silence of the Lambs* which prompts these triumphant im/amoral protagonists, but a trend towards victorious criminals, from Keyser Soze in *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, 1995) to Bridget Gregory (Linda Fiorentino) in *The Last Seduction* (John Dahl, 1994).

Additionally, the killer's shift from unsuccessful antagonist to triumphant main character can be connected to a late 1990s/early 2000s inclination towards 'twist' endings such as those associated with the films of M. Night Shyamalan. *The Usual Suspects* is an obvious instance in which familiar conventions are overturned, particularly regarding the investigator/criminal hierarchy and narrative perspective (the character with whom we experience the story usually enjoys the greatest knowledge) (Gates, 2006; Bordwell, 2006:

81). The combination of an existing group of films in which information and identification is manipulated and the development of the serial killer into a well-known terror controlled through familiarity helps to account for the unreliable narration, lack of closure and ambiguous identification in the films I discuss in this chapter. Several 2000s films - *Frailty*, *Surveillance*, *Righteous Kill* and the *Saw* franchise - subvert traditional prompts regarding identification and narrative authority, forcing us to reconsider everything we have witnessed. Killers escape retribution, law enforcement officials are revealed to be killers and we discover our 'objective' view of events has been manipulated. Our familiarity with the serial killer figure makes it possible for closure to be deferred, sometimes indefinitely, as we can manage our fear with reassuring cultural knowledge.

Finally, another major cultural development encompassing the three-decade scope of this thesis but particularly significant in the 2000s is the ubiquity of surveillance. Advances in science and technology over the last decade provoke fear of/fascination with surveillance: since the internet became part of everyday life in the West, even those who do not access the web on a regular basis are familiar with it through representations in other media. An awareness has developed of the potential scope for surveillance: abilities once restricted to science fiction or military applications are now exploited on a daily basis by millions of people. Information about individuals and places is easily and cheaply accessed in seconds: from Google Earth and webcams to electoral rolls, the ability to scrutinise, and be scrutinised, has increased dramatically.

American attitudes to surveillance have been particularly shaped by the 9/11 attacks (Tziallas, 2010), although as I have argued these trends precede September 2001. The success of the 1999 'found footage' film *The Blair Witch Project*, which relied on an internet-based marketing campaign and the exclusive use of camcorder footage, connects two major aspects of surveillance culture - the accessibility of the internet and the ubiquity of the camera - while implying that neither offers safety. Similarly, *The Bourne Identity* (Doug Liman, 2002), following the competing surveillance talents of a spy and the CIA, entered production before 2001 and is based on the 1980 Robert Ludlum novel. While 9/11 has influenced surveillance rhetoric, existing factors such as a growing awareness of surveillance technology and the containment of criminality through surveillance (Foucault, 1994) are also crucial in establishing surveillance as potentially empowering, fear-inspiring, fascinating and ubiquitous, all of which shape the figure of the serial killer.

These historical and industrial shifts contribute to developments in the 2000s serial killer film. The rest of this chapter explores these shifts, arguing that while the protagonist-killer and torture porn films refer to our existing knowledge of the profiler to play with our expectations, they also use various strategies familiar from earlier films to distance the killer from normative masculinity. The ironic tone of these films offers a different viewing experience from that of the 1980s/1990s profiler films, yet conceals the reinforcement of gendered, racial and economic power structures by privileging the male killer as a scrutinising monitor of society. That these killers are often members of law enforcement or echo the attitudes of law enforcement suggest that their crimes are to some extent endorsed by the state, a point which is particularly important in the case of the vigilante killer. As this chapter argues, however, even when the killer is not a vigilante we are still encouraged to view the surveillance of society by white men as somehow natural and warranted.

Case Studies

The Protagonist-Killer Film

This section defines the protagonist-killer trend, in which the killer's shift to protagonist balances an empathetic portrayal of the killer with familiar devices which distance him from normative masculinity. The protagonist-killer film's adherence to profiler conventions extends to its thriller/horror narrative: unlike the portrait movies, the focus on the killer does not hinder narrative progression. These films are goal-orientated narratives, the main difference with the earlier films being the question over whose goals constitute the subject of the film. All of these films feature known actors and professional-standard film-making. Although few have achieved critical or commercial success, all are widely available on DVD, indicating their mainstream positioning.

The following eight films constitute the protagonist-killer trend:

Frailty (2001)

Hannibal (2001)

Red Dragon (2003)

Suspect Zero (2004)

Hannibal Rising (2007)

Mr Brooks (2007)

Righteous Kill (2008)

Surveillance (2008)

Before embarking on a case study of *Mr Brooks* in order to explore these films in greater detail, I will discuss two interlinking features which distinguish these films: their construction of the serial killer as an empathetic figure and their ironic tone, stylistic innovations which conceal the more conservative aspects of the movies.

Allegiance and serial killer

Like much of mainstream Hollywood cinema, these films offer privileged insight to the subjectivity of the protagonist. Most of the movies make clear from the start that the protagonist is the killer (*Frailty* and *Surveillance* suppress this information until the end, while *Suspect Zero* is split equally between killer and profiler). They are not alone in depicting the killer as the protagonist: *The Minus Man* and *American Psycho* both position a killer as the main character, but, like the portraits, they minimise narrative progression; not only is the killer never caught, no one is chasing him. What is significant about the protagonist-killer films is the profiler's failure. It is likely that the success of *American Psycho* influenced the development of the protagonist-killer films: it demonstrates several late 1990s trends (the masculine crisis movie, the twist ending, the fascination with violent and amoral characters) which influence the protagonist-killer film, as well as a detached address to the viewer, also evident in these movies.

The killer's shift from antagonist to protagonist adjusts the perspective through which we view events, a shift which usually promotes empathy for the killer. *Mr Brooks* and *Hannibal Rising* depict profilers who are narratively subservient to the killer, while *Frailty*, *Righteous Kill* and *Surveillance* confuse the killer/profiler boundary, destabilising our

alignment with the characters. They connect the problem of determining narrative authority to the uncertain boundary between killer and profiler common to serial killer mythology and the profiler film, tapping into “Lecter syndrome”, a tradition in which serial killers are consulted about other killers (Schmid, 2005: 280). The influence of real killers over representations of serial killing is epitomised by *The Gates of Janus*, an analysis of serial murder by British murderer Ian Brady (2001). The depiction of the killer as profiler amplifies this idea. Schmid questions true crime’s portrayal of the killer as an expert, arguing that affording killers the status of “authoritative repositories of supposedly authentic information [...] configures serial killing more as a vocation than as a pathology” (Schmid, 2005: 280).

While *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* introduced the now iconic Lecter to audiences, it is not his story which is told, but that of the profilers Graham/Starling. However, 2001’s *Hannibal* focuses on the killer and this new division of roles is consolidated in *Red Dragon* and *Hannibal Rising*. An interview with the screenwriter Ted Tally on *The Silence of the Lambs* DVD reveals his concerns about the portrayal of Lecter’s escape because it took emphasis away from lead character Starling. Conversely, *Hannibal* distances us from Starling not just through the significant amount of time spent with Lecter, but also in depicting the efforts made to capture Lecter by Mason Verger (Gary Oldman) and Detective Pazzi (Giancarlo Giannini).³⁸ Rather than shifting attention from Lecter, however, these other characters contribute to encouraging audience empathy with him through a contrast with the paedophilic Verger and greedy Pazzi. His targeting of the rude and the corrupt undermines sympathy with these victims and bolsters his romanticised image (Oleson, 2006: 118).³⁹

Audience support for violent murderers encouraged by these films makes traditional ideas around ‘identification’ problematic. As an alternative to this model, Murray Smith proposes a “structure of sympathy” to posit various “levels of engagement” with fictional characters (1995: 5). These levels include alignment, which regulates our access to characters through the interlocking functions of spatio-temporal attachment and subjective

³⁸ Publicity stills and posters for the later films display an increased emphasis on Hopkins in the role of Lecter. It is also significant that while Jodie Foster was replaced (by Julianne Moore) in *Hannibal*, the temporal discontinuity risked by the casting of the ageing Hopkins in *Red Dragon*, set twelve years earlier than *The Silence of the Lambs*, is outweighed by a desire to maintain casting continuity regarding the killer.

³⁹ In depicting Lecter in this more sympathetic light, *Hannibal* retrospectively alters events depicted in *The Silence of the Lambs*. In *Hannibal*, Barney (Frankie Faison) explains Lecter’s brutal assault on his guards – they were “rude” to him – yet *Silence of the Lambs* portrays the guards as polite and respectful, and the attack as unprovoked and animalistic.

access; and allegiance, through which we morally evaluate the characters (82-4). Smith emphasises the potential for subversion of these conventions, particularly in the detective/horror/thriller genres. We can believe we have access to a character whose real thoughts and intentions are ambiguous, for example, or unreliable narration can disorientate us in terms of both alignment (whose story are we watching) and allegiance (a character is less or more honest and principled than we first believed). Allegiance is often dependent on a hierarchy developed by the film (1995: 194). The protagonist-killer films offer several examples of this ranking: we know Lecter is a murderous cannibal, but in *Hannibal* he is surrounded by unpleasant, avaricious individuals who lack his taste and flair, ensuring that he remains, with the exception of Starling, the most likeable character. The sense of vocation suggested by Schmid stresses the controlled, dispassionate version of serial killing portrayed in these films, and this restraint acts as a further bolstering of support for the relatively empathetic killer. Dislikeable and corrupt victims are depicted in *Frailty*, *Righteous Kill* (which highlights the vigilantism of its killer through the casting of Robert De Niro, still heavily associated with vigilante Travis Bickle of *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976)), *Surveillance* and *Suspect Zero*. Only 2008's *Surveillance* depicts 'innocent' victims and pre-mortem torture to any degree; this discrepancy suggests a near-overlap with torture porn and the related cycle of psychological torture films such as *The Strangers* (Bryan Bertino, 2008).

Dexter also hierarchises its relatively moral killer, who limits his victims to unrepentant murderers who evade legal forms of justice, reframing his crimes as "not only comprehensible, but somehow laudatory" (Byers, 2010: 148). This support for his apparently community-minded murders is compounded by Dexter's professional status within law enforcement - a blood splatter analyst - which links his recognised work to his serial killing, hinting that his murders are "an *extension* of his role in the law-enforcing team" and allowing him (and the audience) to potentially rationalise and validate the crimes (Riches and French, 2010: 129; authors' emphasis). Like Dexter, the protagonists of *Righteous Kill* and *Suspect Zero* frame their killings as a purging of their community, connecting the killer's surveillance to state-sanctioned forms of monitoring while obscuring the fact that only certain types of people - white, male, middle class - are privileged with this regulatory power (Byers, 2010: 155).

The films encourage support for their violent protagonists by depicting their crimes as to some extent understandable and/or by offering us a significant level of insight into the motivations of the killer. Techniques fostering both alignment and allegiance are mobilised

to ensure we accept the killer in his new guise as protagonist, while white masculinity remains distanced from the killer, a point I discuss in the case study, after exploring the distinctive tone established by these movies.

Permission to relish: tone and irony

Smith's recognition of the difference between access to characters' subjectivity and allegiance with these characters is crucial to the tone of a film. This distinction takes account of the "split between the characters' positionings and our own more 'knowing' alignment with the film as a whole" (Thomas, 2005: 167); we are not tied to characters to the extent that identification models suggest but can shift between alignment and closer allegiance throughout the film. This comprehension is useful when considering films featuring violent protagonists, and also films which use both humour and suspense to provoke unnerving responses. It alludes to the self-conscious aspects of some films, not in terms of acknowledging the cinematic apparatus, but in implying an awareness of conventions being replayed, as if placing familiar concepts in quotation marks (Pye, 2007: 36).

Existing writing on tone highlights the difficulty in articulating interpretations of this concept (Pye, 2007: 32; Thomas, 2000: 9). For the purposes of this thesis, my understanding of tone concerns "the ways in which the film addresses its spectator and implicitly invites us to understand its attitude to its material and the stylistic register it employs" (Pye, 2007: 7). Tone is central to the viewing experience, conveying the "attitudes and feelings [...] embodied in a film's stance towards its subject matter" (Smith, 2000: viii) and allowing us to understand "the kinds of narrative worlds" we are about to inhabit (Thomas, 2000: 9).

Most of the protagonist-killer films exhibit a tongue-in-cheek tone which offers the audience permission to experience the film from the point of view of the killer. The world of the protagonist-killer film is infused with irony and demonstrates a strikingly detached address to the viewer. In this way it is quite different from profiler movies which offer moments of humour but are basically serious in tone. My use of the term irony in this chapter refers to both dramatic irony - the audience's knowledge is superior to that of a character - and a wider sense of depicting events through a detached, darkly humorous perspective. Unpicking the exact nature of the comedy apparent in most of the protagonist-

killer films is complex as they do not maintain a straightforwardly comic mode throughout; instead, they merge humour and suspense, often suggesting audience complicity with the killer. They contrast serial killer films which privilege a comedic rather than suspense register, such as *So I Married an Axe Murderer* (Thomas Schlamme, 1993) and *Serial Mom* (John Waters, 1994), both of which appeared as the serial killer became a well-known cultural figure. The heightened comic tone of these films, featuring absurd and incongruous violence (in *Serial Mom*, a ‘perfect’ suburban housewife batters a victim with a leg of lamb for failing to rewind a rented videotape) insulates the audience from the violence depicted (King, 2004: 131).⁴⁰ The light-hearted tone of *So I Married an Axe Murderer* (particularly the casting of Myers, shortly after the release of *Wayne’s World* (Penelope Spheeris, 1992)) and the legitimating satirical intent of *Serial Mom* (especially given Water’s niche associations) alleviate the potential for these films to disturb (King, 2004: 139-40). Conversely, the protagonist-killer film demonstrates a register more evocative of the ‘real world’, although we are still protected by genre expectations which prompt us to expect violence and remind us of the fictional basis of the events.

In the protagonist-killer film, comedy and suspense often work together, with witty allusions to macabre acts encouraging laughter, often implicating us in the killer’s crimes through our privileged knowledge and potential allegiance with the murderer (Smith, 2000: 49; 62).⁴¹ The protagonist-killer film refers to familiar profiler conventions but overturns our expectations, while maintaining a balance of tension and comedy which remains quite obviously fictional, partly because of the almost superhuman skills of the killer, and also through an emphasis on irony. The stress on irony over the suffering of victims and real-world consequences of the events reminds us that we are watching a fictional text, offering “permission to relish” potentially disturbing events (Thomas, 2005: 175).

The protagonist-killer films offer various examples of the way in which this ‘permission’ is granted. The twist endings of *Frailty*, *Righteous Kill* and *Surveillance* alter not just our understanding of the narrative, but also the tone of all that has gone before. A second viewing would likely take on a more ironic register. In contrast, the twist endings of profiler films - *Eyes of Laura Mars*, *Cruising* or *Seven*, for example - retain the solemn tone of the rest of the films. The difference in the 2000s films is the self-conscious way in

⁴⁰ Further work on the disparity between the extreme violence and the outwardly normative femininity of the killers in both these films would be an interesting counterpoint to the analyses in this chapter.

⁴¹ Smith’s work shows that serial killer narratives balancing humour and suspense are not unique to the 2000s; what is unusual in these films is their adherence to an existing cycle’s narrative conventions (the profiler film) while subverting this cycle’s apparent moral justification (in the profiler’s search for the killer).

which the suppressed narrative is revealed. In *Righteous Kill*, the mediated nature of the film is foregrounded through the killer's confessions to a video camera; only at the end do we discover he is innocent but has been forced to confess. *Surveillance* withholds the fact that its lead characters are serial killers until the end, but foregrounds sight metaphors in its title. *Frailty* uses flashbacks to 'trick' us into accepting the confessing character's lies as fact. The revelatory final scenes of the earlier films, however, tend to be shocking and downbeat rather than playful, and do not remind us of the fictional status of the events.

Other aspects - music, performance, dialogue, editing - contribute to the potential for comedy. Lecter's witticisms, while evident to some degree in *Manhunter* and particularly *The Silence of the Lambs*, are stressed throughout the final three Lecter films. The end of *Hannibal Rising* provokes humour in its omission of the final killing: Lecter smiles at his final victim as the shot cuts abruptly to the back of his car as he drives away, a jaunty children's theme playing non-diegetically. The elliptical nature of the scene echoes similar effects in *American Psycho*, in which a jump from just before a murder to its aftermath, allowing the audience to fill in the gap, also prompts amusement (King, 2004: 133). It is not just the depiction of humorous events but of constructing a sense of knowingness about both the familiarity of the conventions and the macabre transgressive behaviour portrayed which makes these films distinctive. *Dexter* is a helpful comparison, as its ironic mode of address has been discussed by several writers. The series' self-reflexivity has been identified as typical of quality television like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB, UPN, 1997 - 2003) (Lavery, 2010: 43) but my work indicates that an awareness of its own construction is also apparent in the protagonist-killer film. From the quirky opening credits which highlight the incongruity of Dexter's violence and his outward appearance, the series hints at an "underlying tone of companionship or levity" which stresses dramatic irony (Francis, Jr, 2010: 176). This irony links tone to character allegiance. Dexter's deadpan voice-over allows us to hear his thoughts as he maintains his normative demeanour for other characters: his smirk to the camera in the final shot of the opening credits coincides with a musical chime acting as a "symbolic wink" to the audience (Francis Jr, 2010: 178). The audience is drawn into complicity with the killer as we share his secret knowledge. None of the protagonist-killer films are so explicit in this acknowledgment, but with the exception of the serious-toned *Suspect Zero* and *Righteous Kill* they stress our awareness of the killer's activities in ways which downplay the potentially disturbing aspects of the killer/audience relationship by highlighting a sense of playfulness.

My case study of *Mr Brooks* examines these interrelated concepts of allegiance and tone. Released in 2007, towards the end of the time period under investigation, the film depicts a successful businessman “addicted” to killing who takes a rigorous, professional approach to his crimes in order to escape detection. The film plays on the killer’s outward normality, but rather than use his ordinariness to increase the sense of threat as in earlier films portraying white, male killers, the film encourages us to enjoy his success in evading suspicion. The film’s self-consciousness and our allegiance with the killer contributes to a downplaying of racial and gendered power structures as the killer is removed from a real-world context, his surveillance skills and divided existence exaggerated to the extent that he is significantly distanced from normative masculinity. While typical of the protagonist-killer film in many respects, the film highlights patriarchy to an unusual extent, an aspect which links it to *Saw II*, which is the subject of my second case study.

Mr Brooks: Violence, allegiance and tone

The 2000s protagonist-killer films’ reworking of conventions indicates the exhaustion of the profiler cycle and attests to the “nostalgic fondness” which develops around the serial killer figure. *Mr Brooks* is positioned as a ‘new’ take on serial killing through the depiction of a wealthy man, successful in business and adored by his family, who is also a serial killer.⁴² We are offered an insight into his attempts to control his homicidal urges through the depiction of an alter ego who appears on screen. This alter ego is not an unconscious split self along the lines of *Psycho* or *Fight Club*. In a documentary on the DVD release, the director, Bruce A. Evans, describes this concept as a way of depicting the id or “the voice that we all have” encouraging us to follow our desires despite social and legal sanctions. This unusual way of depicting the killer’s internal structures encourages the audience to support the killer while also distancing him from normative masculinity. This section explores how the film’s use of irony and shifting allegiances reworks the profiler/killer relationship familiar from the 1980s and 1990s.

⁴² Early publicity stresses the film’s novel approach to the killer, with his alter ego Marshall depicted in the cinema trailer and poster. However, the DVD cover and menu suggest a more conventional film, with psychological thriller traditions referenced in the synopsis and the cover’s close-up of a sinister Kevin Costner and background image of a fingerprint alluding in a ‘straight’ fashion to the forensic narratives with which the film plays. Remarks by the writer-director on the DVD commentary and documentary also imply a divergence between theatrical and DVD publicity, suggesting that limited theatrical success led to more conventional marketing for the DVD. The fact that none of the film’s stars are associated with comedic roles may also have contributed to the decision to sell the film as a ‘straight’ thriller.

The film focuses on the serial killer whilst maintaining profiler conventions. The killer, Earl (Kevin Costner), is encouraged to kill by his alter ego, Marshall (William Hurt). His latest “Thumbprint killing” is witnessed by a voyeuristic neighbour, who blackmails Earl into ‘teaching’ him serial killing, and calls himself ‘Mr Smith’ (Dane Cook). Earl is doubled with profiler Detective Atwood (Demi Moore). Earl and Atwood both experience family problems: Atwood’s husband is demanding a large divorce settlement, and she is estranged from her wealthy father. Earl’s daughter, Jane (Danielle Panabaker), becomes pregnant, drops out of college, and has ‘inherited’ his homicidal tendencies. Atwood is also in danger from escaped serial killer Thorton Meeks (Matt Schulze) and his girlfriend/accomplice Sarah (Traci Dinwiddie). These different plots are eventually tied together: Earl kills another person to give Jane an alibi, frames Smith for all his own crimes, kills Atwood’s husband and assists her in finding Meeks. Finally, he kills Smith, but remains haunted by the knowledge of Jane’s crime.

This short summary indicates that the main character is Earl, with Atwood’s profiler status adjusted to take account of this shift. She is a traditional female profiler in her intuitive ability to understand the killers, her reliance on ‘hunches’ over conventional detection, and her distance from the killer’s violence. However, she fails to catch Earl (though she recognises that Smith is not the Thumbprint Killer) and requires Earl’s help in finding Meeks.⁴³ Her final scene echoes that of *The Silence of the Lambs*, as she receives a taunting yet polite telephone call from the killer. This reference indicates the film’s self-consciousness regarding its positioning within profiler narratives.

Mr Brooks departs from the profiler film in its portrayal of violence. We see few of Earl’s crimes but know that they do not include pre-mortem torture. We see only one of Earl’s lone killings; the others are committed with Smith and are outside Earl’s series. This lone killing is depicted from Earl’s point of view. We watch him enter the home of the couple he selected earlier in the film, non-diegetic music suggesting excitement rather than danger, distinguishing the film from profiler movie stalking sequences such as the sinister opening scene of *Manhunter*. As Earl experiences euphoria after the murder, slow motion and flashbacks of the killings aligns us with his perspective. The victims are killed quickly, reducing the possibility of sharing their fear, and any concern for them is overshadowed by Marshall’s realisation that the crime may have been witnessed. The next scene highlights Earl’s guilt as he cleans the scene and disposes of evidence; elegiac music suggests his

⁴³ My earlier analyses show it is not uncommon for the profiler to fail to identify the killer before their final showdown, but it is unusual in the 1980s and 1990s for the killer to remain at large at the end of the film.

remorse. We next see the scene in daylight as Atwood studies it faster than her counterpart in *The Bone Collector* before our attention is shifted to Atwood's divorce (she is served with legal papers at the scene), although she also later walks through it at night. This murder scene lacks the Gothic associations and interpretative potential of the 1990s scenes. Later killings by Earl are similarly swift: his killing to protect Jane takes place off-screen; when Earl and Smith kill Atwood's husband, the scene cuts before the first shot is fired. As well as promoting allegiance with Earl, the relatively weak violence in the film contributes to a playfulness which differs quite strikingly from the more solemn, fear-inducing attacks and crime scenes of *The Mean Season* and *The Bone Collector*.

In contrast, the eventual killing of Smith is more graphic, the hierarchy of sympathies suggested by the film allowing us to relish the gruesome throat-slashing of this unpleasant character. Meeks is depicted as particularly brutal, encouraging us to ally ourselves with Earl through this comparison. During Meeks' attempted kidnapping of Atwood, he pounds her head and warns her of the torture which awaits. Conversely, Earl is restrained, experiences guilt and tries to stop. It is not impossible for audiences to empathise with violent killers, and it has been argued that real killers are often the subject of identification (Caputi, 1987; Schmid, 2005). However, the film depicts Earl in a particularly compassionate way to encourage empathy with his plight rather than identification with his power: his desire to stop killing seems genuine, as does his affection for his family; he is distressed and guilty on discovering Jane's crimes; he admires Atwood and his final call to her is an oddly friendly taunt. Additionally, by contrasting him with the sadistic Meeks and the sleazy Smith, the film hierarchises him as the least violent and most likeable.

This hierarchy concerns their different killing methods (Earl kills quickly, Meeks is sadistic) as well as class distinctions. Earl is a wealthy businessman with a luxurious house. In contrast, Meeks has a heavier accent, a muscular, tattooed body, and an equally 'white trash' accomplice/girlfriend; their sexual deviancy is suggested when Meeks tells Atwood that they will both torture her. I discussed the linking of types of violence to class markers in the previous chapter, and it has also been explored in work on earlier films (Rehling, 2007). *Mr Brooks*' allusion to this concept underlines the distinction between upper middle class and working class killers, bolstering empathy for Earl. Similarly, the lazy, moody Smith reinforces the audience's connection with Earl: Earl's killings are depicted sympathetically as an addiction, while Smith's desire for a "rush", together with his voyeuristic photographing of the victims, seems adolescent. His messy hair, slouching demeanour and aggression distinguish him from the well-dressed, restrained Earl.

Rationally, there is little to differentiate the two - Earl is also a voyeur and he is self-deceiving about his own morality - yet these contrasting characterisations further ally the audience with Earl by offering a contrast in the impetuous, arrogant, amoral Smith.

The film's fostering of allegiance towards the killer is particularly evident in the casting of Kevin Costner as Earl. While no longer a major star by 2007, Costner is still recognisable and is particularly associated with heroic, 'everyman' roles in films like *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (Kevin Reynolds, 1991) and *Dances With Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990); our attachment to Earl is promoted by our recognition of Costner as a star (Murray, 1995: 119). The casting offers an ageing star a role more demanding than blockbuster heroes, assisting a move into character roles, yet also plays off Costner's associations with virtuous characters, underlining the transgressive nature of the character. In contrast, his murderous alter ego, Marshall, is played by William Hurt, who is associated more with acting than stardom; the actors' distinctive role connotations echo the different aspects of the characters they play here.⁴⁴ Hurt's performance is more theatrical than those of the other actors, a contrast which potentially neutralises the violence Marshall encourages Earl to commit and distances the more passive Costner. Additionally, the casting of Costner, Hurt and Moore suggests the temporal associations of the profiler film as the three have connotations to the 1980s and 1990s, when the conventions subverted in *Mr Brooks* were played 'straight'. Along with the later Lecter films' inevitable referencing of *The Silence of the Lambs*, this casting contributes to the "nostalgic fondness" addressed by Schmid, foregrounding the self-consciousness of the films and the sense that they are playing with conventions once treated with a greater degree of seriousness.

As well as Costner's familiar star presence, our privileged witnessing of conversations between Marshall and Earl demonstrates a particularly transparent form of subjective access to the killer. This access implies that we are aligned with Earl, as "narrative information is being filtered through the protagonist" (Smith, 1995: 87). Our insight into Earl and Marshall's arguments from the start of the film and in later scenes in which Earl is comforted by Marshall strengthen our understanding and, to some extent, support of Earl. Other characters are fooled by Earl's ordinariness, yet we gain privileged insight which deepens our connection to the character and consolidates the reassuring familiarity of the

⁴⁴ As Costner achieved blockbuster success in mainstream heroic roles, Hurt was regarded as "one of America's most complex but compelling actors" (Iley, 1998: 27), working on stage and in medium budget films such as *The Accidental Tourist* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1988) and *Broadcast News* (James L Brooks, 1987), developing a sardonic, intellectual persona on which his performance as Marshall plays.

serial killer. We no longer rely on the profiler to contain the threat of the killer and are able to empathise with the character in a way which is unimaginable in earlier profiler films.

Our alignment with Earl/Marshall provokes empathy, suggests complicity and increases suspense. At the start, we alone are aware of Earl's violence, linking us to him through this privileged knowledge. We recognise the ironic discrepancies between Earl's 'normality' and his true desires, and are often caught between sympathising with the remorseful Earl and the funny, charismatic Marshall. Earl is voted Man of the Year by a local business organisation, yet can barely control his urge to kill. He runs a box factory, an absurdly dull occupation yet oddly reminiscent of his killings (box/coffin). The irony is compounded when the newly murderous Jane announces she wants to join "the family business", a term which Marshall loads with significance as he reminds Earl of its double meaning. Earl tries to control his desires by attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, leading Marshall to comment caustically on the incongruity between chemical addiction and murder but also fostering support for Earl through the familiar positioning of serial killing as a form of addiction (Seltzer, 1998). We are drawn into a potentially uncomfortable association with the killer through this humour, as only he shares our awareness of the potential double meanings of innocuous phrases.

Comedy also encourages empathy in scenes in which Earl and Marshall share private jokes, with Marshall's mischievous, sly, dark wit often prompting laughter. Marshall's presence often surprises us (the camera pans to catch him standing at the side to the frame, or we glimpse him in the back of Earl's car). He sardonically comments on other characters, studying them as they remain oblivious. As Earl drives with a sullen Smith, Marshall sits forward from the back seat, twisting his head to mockingly scrutinise Smith (Figure 6.1). His odd positioning suggests a gargoyle or, more appropriately, a devil on Earl's shoulder. He ridicules Smith, dismissing him as a spoilt child when telling Earl: "Mr Smith wants you to notice that he's pouting". When Smith eventually storms away, a shot from the back of the car captures Earl and Marshall turning around to watch him walk away in exact synchronicity. Marshall deadpans of the immature, moody Smith "even if that guy was charming and funny I still wouldn't like him" before the pair turn forward, again making simultaneous movements which link them but also inspire comedy.



Figure 6.1: A sulking Smith deters sympathy, encouraging allegiance with Earl and sardonic Marshall.

Our allegiance is complicated by uncertainty over our affinities throughout the film (the murderous but remorseful Earl, entertaining but amoral Marshall, Earl's naïve wife, manipulative novice killer Jane, or the driven Atwood, whose success relies on the capture of Earl/Marshall). The complex responses to the characters provoke unease, and this interplay of humour and suspense contributes to the black comic tone of the film and a sense of divided loyalties (Smith, 2000: 30). Earl and Marshall's loud laughter at the idea that Smith may be run over as he walks across the road, followed by their surprise when a car screeches to a halt in front of Smith, is amusing but reminds us they intend to kill Smith. The killing of Atwood's ex-husband and his lawyer is preceded by evidence of their greed and duplicity but these character traits do not excuse the murders. Earl's apparently tidy tying-up of loose ends through framing the dead Smith provides closure until Jane attacks him; the revelation that he is dreaming reveals that his control over events is less certain than we have assumed.

The film's mixture of suspense and comedy both reinforces and questions audience support of Earl as well as ironising serial killer conventions (Earl's everyday surname, along with Smith's self-chosen pseudonym, alludes to the hyper-normality of the killer). However, familiar stereotypes persist - the hierarchising of killers by class, for example, and the association between middle class white men and surveillance which is endorsed by the film, particularly as Earl is depicted as safer and more likeable than Delour in *The Mean*

Season or *The Bone Collector*'s Richard. While Earl's subjective transparency promotes allegiance, suggesting our complicity, this possibility is neutralised by the flamboyant but amoral Marshall, exempting the audience from responsibility in the crimes Earl commits reluctantly. I explore the characterisation of Marshall in the next section, before focusing on the depiction of Earl as a father figure.

Surveillance and the gothic

Marshall's portrayal as a pale, devilish, seductive figure alludes to Gothic concepts – doubles and split selves – which inform serial killer rhetoric. Yet *Mr Brooks* balances Gothic allusions with a knowingness around surveillance and sight metaphors which downplay the seriousness of the events. The use of frames and mirrors suggests doubles and the split self, while reflective, transparent surfaces at Earl's factory convey his concern with control of the visual field and remind us that this apparent visibility can be deceptive.

Earl's preparations for the first murder highlights the split self concept. A large, self-contained pottery studio houses a wardrobe of black, tight-fitting casual suits and work-boots. Dressed in his killing gear, Earl resembles a covert military professional. The clothes are burnt in the pottery furnace after each killing, along with photographs and vacuum bags from the victim's house. Close-ups of Earl's thorough vacuuming of his car after the first killings are the most overt reference to forensic detection in the film. The casting of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* cast member Marg Helgenberger flags up the need for care in respect of forensic clues and ironises the duplicity Earl maintains.⁴⁵

The black, military-style outfits Earl wears to kill echo the suits he normally wears; in casual clothes, he seems diminished. Marshall's occasional adjusting of Earl's jacket reinforces the idea of clothes protecting Earl from scrutiny like a uniform. When detectives interview Jane about the college murder, Earl is not in control, and his casual trousers and jumper contrast with the suited police officers and lawyer. We usually see him in smart suits and he often adjusts his glasses, particularly when under stress, as if they provide a shield. He does not wear glasses when he kills, as if they form part of his masquerade of normality; with them, he seems benign and passive, without them, he is more familiar as a film star (Figure 6.2). Jane's wearing of his glasses at two important points underlines their

⁴⁵ Helgenberger has played lead CSI Catherine Willows since the beginning of the hugely successful series, which has contributed to awareness of forensic science in popular culture.

status both as symbol of his powerful sight and as element of his disguise: firstly, as she tries to convince him to let her join Earl's business (only later do we discover the double meaning here), and later, after she kills him in his dream.



Figure 6.2: In his 'killing uniform' and without his glasses, Earl is at his most recognisable as Kevin Costner.

Despite this focus on Earl's professional managing of his killing, as well as references to modern surveillance practices (he uses the internet to learn about Atwood and avoids leaving forensic clues), the film also repeatedly references Gothic traits, indicating a tension between this ironic, modern idea of serial killing as a vocation and older ideas relating to doubling and splitting. In particular, the depiction of Marshall repeatedly alludes to the Gothic. He is usually filmed standing to Earl's side or leaning over his shoulder like a devil or goblin. As he is not a real character, he is not obliged to follow the spatial rules of classical cinema and his appearance in the frame often surprises us. Marshall is glimpsed in doorways as Earl walks past, and unexpectedly interrupts Earl with laughter or sarcasm. He offers the answer "incubus" to Earl's crossword clue, referring to the mythic creature he resembles. Lighting, camera position and acting further alludes to ideas of manipulative doubles/devils (Figure 6.3). The contrast between Costner and Hurt is highlighted by Costner's tan and Hurt's pale skin (through lighting and make-up). Hurt is slightly taller than Costner and stands very straight, giving him an air of otherworldliness. He is always dressed formally in black, a scarf isolating his pale face. Other characters wear pale colours, distinguishing Marshall and linking him to Earl's black 'killing

uniform'. His long coat and buttoned waistcoat lend him authority and reinforce the sense that he is out of place in his summer surroundings.



Figure 6.3: The ghostly Marshall whispers to Earl.

One place Marshall does belong is the pottery studio. Earl's bright house with its light furnishings and swimming pool and his glass-filled offices suggest visibility, contrasting the dark, windowless studio which provide Earl with an alibi and allow him to prepare for the crimes and destroy evidence, distinctions which rhyme with the Earl/Marshall double. The studio offers the opportunity to scrutinise Atwood via the internet: as Earl accesses records, we see Atwood swimming, placing her in a reflective, transparent environment similar to that of Earl's office and home. Later, as they discuss Atwood, Earl methodically replaces items on shelves, while Marshall leans into a corner, his body twisted (one arm is behind his back, while his head is twisted up slightly, catching the light). Earl is in the foreground, almost in the centre, wearing a white t-shirt and fully lit. Marshall is in the opposite corner and further behind, his dark clothes isolating his face and making him less conspicuous against the dark shelves, connecting him to the studio which is associated with killing (Figure 6.4). Conversely, he is out of place around the bright, reflective, transparent surfaces of Earl's office (Figure 6.5).



Figure 6.4: Marshall blends into the dark studio...



Figure 6.5: ...but stands out in Earl's bright, glass-walled office.

The film's mise-en-scène stresses the killer's status as an agent of surveillance who is also exposed to scrutiny, a dichotomy which highlights the divided allegiances between the various characters. Our first sight of Earl emphasises the split between his outward normality and hidden violence (Figure 6.6). Preparing to accept his award, he repeats the serenity prayer in the bathroom, the mirror reflecting his face as he anxiously fidgets with his glasses, foregrounding their importance in signifying his scrutinising vision and indicating his reliance on them to maintain his appearance of normality. The mirror shot is

frequently used in film “as a way of representing the character as divided” (Branigan, 1984: 128), and appears frequently in serial killer films, from *M* to *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. The low camera and its distance from Earl suggests we are somewhat detached from Earl despite our privileged knowledge of his homicidal impulses; a tension is suggested in the first scene between our extensive insight into Earl and his ability to surprise us. This friction is most apparent near the end of the film, when he astonishes Smith and us by deciding not to allow himself to be killed.



Figure 6.6: Our first sight of Earl: a divided figure, sight aid in hand.

Mirrors and the framing of characters provide an important motif. After the awards ceremony, Earl and his wife eat as Marshall gazes up to watch Earl’s victims, the large window framing the pair, just as Earl was earlier framed in the bathroom mirror. Later, as Earl kills the couple, he spins round in front of a huge mirror, again representing him as divided. Smith’s voyeurism is indicated by his photographing of the couple as they have sex, while his photograph of Earl frames the killer within both the picture and the window. Throughout the film, Marshall often sits in the back of the car as Earl drives, and they catch each other’s eye-line through the rear-view mirror (Figure 6.7). Marshall is often portrayed in this manner, underlining his near-supernatural aura as his face and particularly his eyes seem to hover like an apparition. At several points, Earl tries to block out Marshall’s taunts by moving the mirror.



Figure 6.7: Earl and Marshall communicate via, and are visually doubled by, the rear-view mirror.

Additionally, Earl's spacious factory and glass-walled offices hint at his desire to control the visual field. The wall-length windows of his personal office allows him to survey the city; through them we can see highways which recall the overhead shots of the city as he trawls for victims with Smith, suggesting the entire city is open to his surveillance. The conference room, in which he first meets Smith, is similarly filled with transparent, reflective surfaces, and he is linked to this space through his shiny, clean glasses, while the unkempt Smith appears out of place (Figure 6.8). Yet we discover this apparent transparency is deceptive: Smith has visual evidence of Earl's crime, usurping his control of sight. Later, as Earl plans a murder to provide Jane with an alibi, we view him through his glass table, ironising his ability to hide his violence as well as his shock at Jane's violence, particularly as their first scene together takes place around the same table (Figure 6.9). Our final glimpse of Atwood also plays with ideas of visibility: as Earl ends his telephone call, leaving Atwood with no clues as to his identity, she stands by a large window which looks out onto buildings similar to that on which Earl stands; the two seem spatially close yet Atwood's expansive view of the city offers no help in finding Earl.



Figure 6.8: The scruffy Smith is out of place in Earl's clean, reflective conference room.



Figure 6.9: The transparency of Earl's table flags up his deceptive appearance.

In bringing together Gothic ideas with modern images of surveillance, *Mr Brooks* demonstrates the continuing influence of the Gothic on serial killer discourse. The characterisation of Marshall as a devilish figure makes this allusion particularly self-conscious, yet the reliance on the split self has a very traditional effect in its distancing of Earl from the violence instigated by Marshall. The clear surfaces and open spaces of the film are similarly ironic, as they highlight the blindness of most of the characters to Earl's

crimes, while his apparent control of space and sight is undermined, first by Smith, and later by Jane.

Patriarchy and the Serial Killer

The depiction of Jane is particularly interesting given my argument that serial killing is overwhelmingly associated with men. Along with *Surveillance* and the *Saw* franchise, *Mr Brooks* presents a female killer who is not depicted as a seductive *femme fatale*, the most familiar version of the female serial killer (Birch, 1993: 52). While a shift away from the *femme fatale* may suggest a progressive distancing of female sexuality and violence (the sexually independent woman is often linked to transgression and violence), these new female killers adhere to another female killer stereotype: they are helpmates or apprentices to the killer (Cameron and Fraser, 1987: 145). They remain subordinate to male mentors: Earl's daughter Jane relies on her father to conceal her involvement. Amanda (Shawnee Smith) and Jill (Betsy Russell) in the *Saw* films are instructed by Jigsaw, with whom they have relationships defined by patriarchy (surrogate daughter and ex-wife respectively). In *Surveillance*, the female member of a pair of killers takes instruction from the male. Yet the depiction of female characters is in other ways typical, linking to their class origins and adhering to traditional gender roles.

While Jane (as far as we know) has only killed once, it is assumed by Earl that she will kill again, having inherited his homicidal tendencies. This genetic explanation aligns the film within a tradition of Hollywood cinema in which active women are motivated by an identification with their fathers, suggesting "very little space for the heroine as articulating an identity for herself" (Tasker, 1998: 102). *Mr Brooks* offers an intricate version of this convention as the active role Jane inherits is legally and morally transgressive and is never openly acknowledged by the two characters to each other, while Atwood's career motivation is a reaction to her misogynistic father. Earl's unhappiness with Jane's crime and departure from college is compounded by his admiration for Atwood and contributes to his construction as a father figure to her.

The relationship between the petulant, spoilt Jane and her indulgent father is ironic in the light of his violence. When she drops out of college with the intention of taking over the business, she is manipulative and immature. When Earl/Marshall discover Jane has killed, the revelation is framed within patriarchy. Her double meaning in her desire to join the

'family business' reinforces Earl's role in her killing. As Earl discovers his daughter is a killer, he loses control over her education and sexuality (she is pregnant). His legal and social control over her life is diminished as she matures, but concurrent to this is a reinforcement of his influence in her killing.

Atwood's career is also explained through her father's influence. When Earl discovers that Atwood's father is very rich, he is intrigued and impressed by her decision to find an occupation despite her wealth, comparing her independence to Jane's reliance on him. She later tells him her decision to become a detective stems from her father's disappointment that she was born a girl; unlike Jane, she reacts against her father's authority. However, Earl's intrusion into her personal and professional life reinforces the power of the killer 2000s films and positions Atwood as subordinate to Earl's paternalism. His killing of her husband hints at a control of her sexuality which he fails to administer over Jane, paralleling him with Atwood's father, who could use his influence to speed up the divorce proceedings. Similarly, his framing of Smith as the Thumbprint killer and his clues leading her to Meeks demonstrate Earl's influence over her career.

Earl's intrusion into Atwood's career and personal life constructs the profiler/killer relationship quite differently than in earlier films, with the exception of *The Silence of the Lambs*' multiple father figures (Caputi, 1993: 103). Cettl reads the profiler/killer model as the battle between two patriarchal figures over the community, demonstrating that the concern with father figures apparent in the 2000s films amplifies this existing concept (2003, 28). Yet *Mr Brooks* depicts Atwood as surrogate daughter, rather than competing patriarch, to Earl. In this way the film highlights the patriarchal aspect of surveillance. In targeting Atwood's husband and Meeks, Earl's killings suggest a monitoring of her. Additionally, the killing of Atwood's husband echoes Earl's murder for Jane; the film thus doubles the state-sanctioned profiler not with the main killer but with an amateur novice killer. It undermines Atwood's agency: like Jane, her career decisions are prompted by her father and she needs another paternalistic figure to escape the control of the three men who threaten her independence, her career, and her life.

Despite its stylistic and thematic shifts compared to the earlier profiler films, *Mr Brooks* maintains existing class and gender power structures. The portrayal of three active women - Atwood, Jane and Meeks' accomplice - relate these characters' fates to their class status: the upper middle class/wealthy women are rescued by the fatherly Earl, while the white trash Sarah never speaks and is killed. *Mr Brooks* acknowledges our familiarity with the

serial killer by casting a recognisable star known for likeable characters who merge ordinary and heroic qualities, yet displaces his violence onto individual pathology, neutralising the potentially radical casting of a major star in this role; it is Costner's associations with these roles, rather than the roles themselves, which are subverted. Other films featuring fathers who kill are similarly careful to distance normative masculinity from aggression: *The Stepfather* (Joseph Ruben, 1987) and its remake (Nelson McCormick, 2009) stress the abnormality of the killer. He talks to himself, espouses odd ideas about family life, kills wives and children who disappoint him and even the title highlights his imitative, simulacrum status, which echoes the repetitiveness and feigned normality of his other identity as serial killer. Although Newitz finds this "serial father" to be a critique of capitalism, demonstrating the difficulty in reconciling American capitalist ideology with the needs of family life (1999: 75), both versions of *The Stepfather* pull back from implicating patriarchy in the killer's violence. His obsessive desire to mould the "perfect" family demonstrates his instability, rather than comments on paternalistic dominance, although both films go further than *Mr Brooks* in suggesting a link between violence and patriarchy. Earl's most appealing trait is his genuine love for his family; his need to kill is to be an instinctive drive rather than a result of domestic repression.

The film's depiction of the family is potentially subversive. Earl's monitoring of Jane is shown to be inadequate: in a 'twist' ending, Jane attacks her father and registers her usurping of his murderous authority by wearing his glasses, before we discover that he is dreaming. The alternative rock song (The Veils' *Vicious Traditions*) which begins as a rather smug Earl ends the telephone call with Atwood, and which plays quietly over the dream sequence before increasing in volume as the credits begin, questions Earl's dominance. The song's title alludes to the inherited nature of Jane's violence, while the repeated line "fight your way out of this one" hints at Earl's predicament, challenging him to overcome this latest threat. Additionally, the age-specific associations of the grungy song - more likely to appeal to Jane than Earl - suggest it expresses Jane's desire to violently contest her father's position of power.

While Earl's portrayal within a family setting suggests an effort to normalise the serial killer, the ironic tone and Gothic portrayal of Marshall and the implausibly influential Earl remove the film from a real-world setting. It therefore undermines its critique of patriarchy. Earl's management of the threats facing Jane and Atwood is framed as benevolent paternalism rather than the sinister monitoring of active females, in much the same way that his neutralising of Meeks and Smith suggests social caretaking rather than

vigilante violence. In positioning the two main female characters as requiring his intervention, the film underlines the authority of white men which is nevertheless not identified as a particular identity, demonstrating that despite the significant shifts in the 2000s, white masculinity remains distanced from violence.

This feature is fairly typical of the protagonist-killer film in offering an innovative perspective on the serial killer while reinforcing the power structures evident in the profiler film. The sharing of the killer's perspective is mitigated by a stress on irony and the exaggerated power of the killer, which effaces the experience of the victims and ensures we do not become troubled by our proximity to the killer. The concluding case study investigates the contemporaneous torture porn cycle, which shares a patriarchal killer with *Mr Brooks*, but exhibits very different aesthetics and portrayals of victims.

Torture Porn

The second major trend in 2000s serial killer films is a recognised and controversial category, first described as 'torture porn' by a journalist, David Edelstein (2006). While not all torture porn depicts serial killers, the most successful films, the *Saw* franchise, do involve serial killing along with two others, *Scar* and *Untraceable*.⁴⁶ These films assimilate some of the profiler conventions in order to undermine audience expectation in a way comparable to the protagonist-killer film, yet the focus on extreme violence means that tone and allegiance work differently.

Torture porn is defined by Edelstein as the depiction of lengthy scenes of violence towards live, conscious victims in films with high production values and wide distribution.

Edelstein's concern is the positioning of these films as mainstream: he suggests that this kind of violence belongs in exploitation pictures with niche audiences (2006). Despite Edelstein's concern regarding the sadistic nature of torture porn, others have suggested that the films are less straightforward than his analysis indicates. A defining aspect of torture porn other than its violence is its playful attitude to narrative. Shock endings and suppressive narratives foreground our lack of knowledge. The plots "are puzzle boxes, webs of mini-challenges and tangled motivations that that are only fully unravelled at the movie's end" (Thompson, 2007: 2). The films fail to offer the male spectator mastery of

⁴⁶ Other torture porn films (*Hostel* (Eli Roth, 2005), *Captivity* (Roland Joffé, 2007)) depict killers who could be, or could become, serial murderers, but my focus here is on those identified as serial killers.

point of view and the intercutting between various characters in *Saw* denies the audience a stable point of view leading us to suspect each male character (Boyle, 2009: 44). To return to Smith's structure of sympathy schema, we are denied allegiance with any character since we are repeatedly made to doubt the reliability of the alignments we develop with each character. Boyle links the film's plot to its narrative technique, suggesting that

the games of spectatorship have become the point, and the threat of violence has become both more pervasive and more diffuse [...] the game-playing - both at the level of narrative (the games the victims are forced to engage in) and form (the games the director plays with his viewers) - arguably precludes both identification and empathy (2009: 44-5).

This "game-playing" extends quite literally in the case of the *Saw* franchise: merchandise includes a video game and a comic book prequel, *Saw: Rebirth*, while the last in the franchise was released in 3-D, distancing it from less interactive films such as *Mr Brooks* and suggesting that its core audience is likely to enjoy "game-playing" rather than identification and empathy.

This reading contradicts efforts to defend the films as social commentary, an argument which has rehabilitated controversial 1970s horror films such as *Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972) (which is referenced at the end of *Saw II*, when Jigsaw includes the title in his (mis)direction to a detective) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (Wes Craven, 1977). The makers of these films, along with academics, have argued that they critique the political and social problems of contemporary America (Britton and Wood, 1979). Similarly, in response to disapproval of the violence of torture porn, film-makers have claimed to be commenting on existing anxieties. The *Hostel II* (Eli Roth, 2007) DVD features Roth's commentary and a documentary (*A History of Torture*) which allude to the social commentary defence in describing the film as expressing "disgust with the Bush administration".

Similarly, Darren Lynn Bousman, director of *Saw II*, *Saw III* and *Saw IV*, refers to the films' "moral message" asking critics to "look beneath the surface" (Warner, no date). The traumatic events of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have prompted re-evaluations in American culture. Jigsaw's attempts to reawaken the "survival instinct" allude to stories of survival which followed 9/11 and Katrina, which provoke considerations of our own reactions to such circumstances. However, while these films can certainly be understood as *reactions* these events, it is unclear how much of a commentary

is offered (Boyle, 2009). Their moral messages and critiques of American imperialism and capitalism do not bear scrutiny. On the *Hostel II* commentary, for example, Roth demonstrates that any progressive potential of the film does not extend to its gender politics: he states that an American businessman-turned-killer is “emasculated” by his breadwinner wife, indicating that this reversal of traditional gender roles prompts his desire to kill (Roth stresses that the businessman’s victim is dressed like his wife). Additionally, talk of moral messages obscure the fact that many of Jigsaw’s victims are economically and socially disadvantaged (including, in *Saw IV*, a victim of domestic violence punished for not leaving her husband) compared to the university-educated, wealthy killer. These defences ignore that these films are predominantly made by white men whose view of the world fails to incorporate the experiences of those less privileged.

This unwillingness to encourage empathy is a disturbing element of the films themselves: they replicate rather than critique the real political and social issues they reference. Boyle finds that their “effectlessness and effectiveness” reveals these films’ resemblance to porn as much as the lingering shots of violence, and indicates their hierarchising of “immediate physical pleasure” over “male emotion and empathy” (2009: 46). This argument returns us to the notion of game-playing, which is used to both defend and critique serial killer narratives. We quickly learn that these films will destabilise our understanding of events and so focus on working out the twists. The puzzle element is one of several similarities between torture porn and the profiler film. Stylistically, these films resemble the 1990s profiler films, particularly *Seven* and *The Bone Collector*. The visuals are very dark, with greenish tinting, and very few scenes take place outside: the action is restricted to industrial spaces. Camera angles and editing restrict our vision, with space often constructed as a disorientating labyrinth. Yet the earlier films present these spaces in the context of detection *after* the killing, with our perspective aligned with that of the profiler searching for evidence; the victim is an anonymous, silenced body to be investigated. Torture porn, conversely, depicts the prolonged torture of living people, whose anguish we witness in disorientating, frenziedly-edited close-up. These are not spaces for the profiler to interpret (Tithecott, 1997), but instead shift the emphasis from the dead to the dying, and from the profiler to the victim.

Torture porn’s quoting of late 1990s profiler aesthetics indicates a continuum between these two cycles which is also evident in their frequent depiction of a character with profiler attributes who is defeated by the killer. Yet the cycle is most known for the use of “MTV aesthetics” - dizzying camera spins, extreme close-ups, exaggerated sound effects,

fast edits - which are unlike anything found in the profiler film. These aesthetics potentially distance the spectator from the victim's experience "because the slick disorientations and fragmentations with which their images assault the senses are, in fact, all too familiar" (Lockwood, 2009: 47). Despite the emphasis on the victims' suffering, stylistic references to music videos highlight the mediated nature of these images, reducing their power to disturb. Similarly, the exaggerated aspect of the tortures we see inflicted, particularly in the *Saw* traps, shift the films into the fantastical. The implausibility of the violence and the killer's ability to manipulate events suggests that the familiarity of the serial killer enables him to be portrayed as an absurdly improbable figure.⁴⁷

Various explanations have been offered for this new focus of detailed, extreme physical suffering, from the social commentary outlined above to the ubiquity of surveillance (Tziallas, 2010). Technologies of surveillance are particularly important in these films, amplifying the monitoring powers of the serial killer and incorporating anxieties regarding these technologies. Of the seven torture porn films featuring a serial killer, only *Scar* does not depict the killer's use of surveillance technology (it is partly set in the late 1980s, before such technology was widely available). Yet this film does highlight the power and danger of looking in ways similar to *Untraceable* and the *Saw* films. A killer kidnaps two victims and tortures them in tandem, offering to stop only when one tells him to kill the other. Victims are forced to watch suffering, knowing the same fate awaits them, yet have the ability to end it. This dilemma echoes that of *Untraceable* - the profiler can see the victims being tortured on a website but cannot trace the location; the victims are being punished for their part in uploading the suicide of the killer's father to a shock website - and *Saw*, in which Jigsaw's control of space and sight allows him to play dead between his victims as they squabble and misinterpret what they see. This control of surveillance, along with the nurturing of other killers and a selection of victims which suggests the killer is monitoring society, again depicts the killer as establishing a patriarchal authority. Despite considerable stylistic, marketing and industrial differences, torture porn is not far removed from the protagonist-killer film in its construction of the killer.

Like the protagonist-killer film, the *Saw* films are marketed as a new twist on the serial killer genre. While *Saw* jumps between characters and timelines, withholding the identity of the killer until the end, *Saw II* develops the Jigsaw character, giving him a back story

⁴⁷ This hyperbolising of the apparently omniscient killer echoes other extraordinarily powerful villains, particularly the international network in the *Hostel* franchise and the 'puppet-master' killers featured on television series *Profiler* and *The Mentalist*.

and dedicating a considerable section of the relatively linear narrative to his taunting of Detective Mathews (Donnie Wahlberg). Like other investigating characters throughout the franchise, Mathews is a typical profiler, his obsession with the killer alienating his family. He is doubled with the killer, framing people he believes belong in prison, mirroring Jigsaw's vigilantism. Unlike most earlier profilers, however, he underestimates the killer, linking the franchise to the protagonist-killer film and to the 1990s unreliable narration, masculine crisis and heroic villain trends discussed above. The case study will focus on two main aspects of *Saw II*'s engagement with the themes I examine in this thesis: the depiction of technologies of surveillance, and the interrelated construction of the killer as a disciplining power.

Saw II: Technologies of Surveillance

Technologies of surveillance are not new in serial killer narratives. They are used by both killer and profiler in the profiler film. Surveillance equipment is highlighted in both *The Mean Season* and *The Bone Collector*, as well as the 2000s protagonist-killer film (a video-taped confession is crucial in *Righteous Kill*, Earl hacks into databases in *Mr Brooks*). Torture porn, however, is saturated with allusions to surveillance and technologies of surveillance, a trait usually related to the contemporaneous debates following 9/11, from increased governmental surveillance to the Abu Ghraib photographs (Tziallas, 2010: 27).

The linking of vision and violence is evident in the franchise's name. *Saw* suggests both a brutal form of violence (one that is important in the first film) and, in its referencing of the act of vision in the past tense, the re-evaluation of what we have seen, which is especially important in these unreliable narratives. It also shortens Jigsaw's nickname and references its antecedent *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974). Jigsaw's reference to *Last House on the Left* indicates that this association with these earlier horrors is intentional, hinting at the cine-literacy of its assumed audience.

A striking element of *Saw II*'s depiction of surveillance technology, though this aspect is evident throughout the franchise, is its self-consciousness. The first shot of the film is a close-up of a single, unshaded lightbulb, its fragility suggested by our ability to see its workings (Figure 6.10). It is the only source of light in a filthy industrial location.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁸ The *Saw* films' lack of establishing shots contribute to the sense of claustrophobia (Koven, 2009: 402) and accentuate the disorientating jumps in time and between characters. Interestingly, the absence of establishing

first victim, police informant Michael Marks (Noam Jenkins), wakes in a subterranean room attached to a 'death mask'. A television screens Jigsaw's message, in which he berates the "snitch" for having "made a living watching others". As is typical of Jigsaw, he has designed the test/punishment to fit the victim's flaw: to escape, Marks must gouge out his right eye to retrieve a surgically implanted key. He sees a blurry film of his own unconscious body being operated on, emphasising his vulnerability and stressing the paradoxical nature of looking: his privileged view of his own operation increases his fear rather than control. His limited vision is underlined when he feels the injured eye with his hand before noticing a small mirror. The self-reflexivity typical of horror is apparent as Marks attempts (in close-up) to slice through his eyeball, reminding us of the importance of, and the potential fear inspired by, vision (Clover, 1992: 166-7).



Figure 6.10: The first shot of *Saw* // highlights sight and industrial aesthetics.

This emphasis on sight is linked to technology in the next scene, when an unmotivated shot of a CCTV camera as Mathews collects his delinquent son Daniel (Eric Knudsen) from a police station makes us aware of the silent, unobtrusive monitoring of everyday life (Figure 6.11). Daniel connects Mathews to this surveillance when he accuses him of being "a cop 24/7", the first of several criticisms of Mathews' concern with surveillance. As a colleague relentlessly studies Jigsaw's videotaped message for clues, Mathews insists there is nothing to learn from the recording, suggesting a distrust of surveillance technology. Instead, Mathews' breakthrough takes the shape of a dream, highlighting the intuitive

nature of his investigative process. In a sequence reminiscent of *The Bone Collector*, a fast montage of images and sounds relating to the murder leads to a vital clue.



Figure 6.11: A CCTV camera blankly views Mathews' son waiting at the police station.

Surveillance technology is highlighted as the SWAT team raids the factory to which Mathews' epiphany leads. They communicate through radio headsets and illuminate the dark, labyrinthine factory (a dangerous scene evocative of profiler films) with torches attached to their rifles, linking sight to aggression. Although Jigsaw is quickly located, he is revealed to have kidnapped Daniel, along with others, including surviving *Saw* victim Amanda (Shawnee Smith), linked through their relationship with Mathews: the detective has framed each of them. The victims are trapped in a booby-trapped house into which a toxic gas is leaking. In the first scene at the torture house, they recognise they are being watched by an anonymous viewer through CCTV (Figure 6.12). As the group fights and tries to outwit torture devices to access an antidote, Mathews watches through an array of television monitors before finally torturing Jigsaw, who offers to take him to the house. However, as Mathews searches the house, the source of the video feed is discovered only for the SWAT team to barge into an empty building in which a video recorder plays the footage. The feed is not live, Daniel is released from a safe which has been sitting beside Jigsaw throughout and Amanda, revealed to be working with Jigsaw, traps Mathews in the dingy bathroom familiar from the first film.



Figure 6.12: Jigsaw reminds the captives they are being watched at the torture house.

These revelations are conveyed in a climactic montage which exposes the unreliability of the narrative. Like the suppressive narratives of *Surveillance*, *Frailty* and *Righteous Kill*, and the playful tone evident at the end of *Hannibal*, *Hannibal Rising* and *Mr Brooks*, the climax of *Saw II* self-consciously mocks our faith in the profiler. More specific to torture porn is its exposure of the unreliability of sight and the sense that there is no trustworthy, reassuring character through which to understand events. The desolate tone which accompanies Mathews' entrapment in Jigsaw's trap is considerably bleaker than the endings of the protagonist-killer films as these at least promote some sympathy with the killer as he escapes retribution. *Saw II*, in contrast, ends with an impression of the hopelessness of attempts to tackle Jigsaw without the allegiance encouraged by the protagonist-killer film which would allow us to enjoy his victory. The climactic montage is reminiscent of epiphany scenes in earlier profiler films, but here it does not represent the profiler's recognition of a major clue; instead, it demonstrates that the killer has won. Additionally, the montage at the end of *Saw II* is not solely aligned with Mathews, but replays images and sounds witnessed throughout the film by a variety of characters in a more 'authentic' context, underlining the profiler's lack of authority and control.

Jigsaw's eerie control of the house (he does not watch the monitors but is content that everything is going to plan - only later do we realise the extent to which he is manipulating events) underlines the technological aspect of his crimes. Each of his traps are cleverly designed machines, his distance from events underlining the vacant neutrality of his

mechanised crimes. Like the CCTV cameras blankly recording injuries and deaths as Mathews cries for his trapped son, Jigsaw's machines are defined by their cold objectivity. In this way, torture porn is differentiated from the "warm-bloodied" violence of most horror: instead of chases and surprise attacks, torture porn "is about slow, drawn-out, controlled, premeditated pain" carried out with "meticulous, cold and calculated method" (Tziallas, 2010: 11). This differentiation links torture porn to the blank, vacant serial killer, a connection underlined by Jigsaw's serene composure and neutral voice in contrast to Mathew's anguish. It recalls Seltzer's work on machine culture, an identification with technology which links serial killing to technological forms of "duplication, multiplication, reproduction, seriality and substitution" which underplays the suffering of the victims (1998: 212). It also alludes to industrial rock music, which is often used in the films' soundtracks, and the films' grimy aesthetics are similar to those of industrial rock music videos, contributing to a sense of the world of the *Saw* franchise as one in which cold, mechanised tortures mutilate warm, screaming bodies, dehumanising the violence.

For much of the film, technology is frustratingly objective, with armed and muscular police officers limited to watching monitors. When the recorded nature of the footage is revealed, parallel editing echoing that used in the SWAT team/Jame Gumb house sequence of *The Silence of the Lambs* alludes to this earlier example of misdirection. Yet in the case of *Saw II* this twist has been designed by the killer, taking advantage of our tendency (and that of the characters) to treat the image as unmediated. This inclination is further undermined when we discover Amanda is working for Jigsaw; these twists recur throughout the franchise, so we never know who to trust.

This manipulation of technology is an extension of the serial killer's habitual subversion of surveillance in the profiler film. Yet it has a greater impact in the torture porn films, in which technologies of surveillance are more significant thematically. In *Saw II*, this reversal occurs at the end of the film, aiding the killer in his escape. The audience is also fooled by the killer's managing of this technology, aligning us with the failing profiler and reinforcing the killer's power. This depiction of surveillance takes account of the immense technical advances since the start of the profiler cycle, yet while the cost reduction and increased public knowledge regarding this technology could potentially democratise it, instead the killer demonstrates superior skill in controlling the equipment. The tantalising proximity of the victims frustrates the characters and the audience. Scene shifts from Jigsaw's factory workshop to the house do not take the form of traditional cuts; instead, the camera zooms into the blurry, green-tinted monitor screen and into the house, with the

image quality improving as the camera ‘reaches’ the victims. It then zooms out again back into the workshop when we return to Jigsaw and Mathews. The implication that the film camera can bridge the gap between the two locations is also apparent in *Untraceable*, when FBI agents can only watch as tortures are broadcast live by webcam.

The implicating of the film camera links to the wider phenomenon of reality television and related examples of the filming and monitoring of private space. Lockwood describes *Saw II* as a “control allegory”, with an “emphasis on surveillance and tracking”, which connects to the tendency of video games and reality television to prepare the subject for constant testing and modification (Lockwood, 2009: 45). Tziallas reads *Saw II* as “a sinister version of *Big Brother*” through its confinement of strangers in a house rigged with cameras and traps. He argues that the film critiques reality television and a more general undermining of privacy (Tziallas, 2010: 25-6). However, while the film does reference the *Big Brother* model, its critique is limited, mimicking rather than reviewing reality television. It replicates a familiar set-up its audience recognises, providing a way of understanding the narrative conventions of this particular instalment and connecting the reality television/game show model to the slasher film in its depiction of a squabbling group being killed off one by one. Unlike Lommel’s portrait films, which undermine the tension and excitement promoted by both traditional horror and reality television, *Saw II* epitomises Turner’s argument regarding the depoliticised articulation of surveillance in mainstream Hollywood, in which surveillance modes are associated with spectacle and suspense.

The reality television references link to the game/puzzle concept, again indicating that the torture porn films maintain the mythology and themes established by earlier serial killer narratives. The depictions of technologies of surveillance indicate a concern with the mis/use of these advances, but the most significant impact is on the characterisation of this individual killer, whose control of the equipment suggests omniscience. Its critique of governmental and institutional surveillance, which several authors claim is a major aspect of torture porn (Murray, 2008; Tziallas, 2010), is limited. Jigsaw’s manipulation of surveillance technologies stresses his unique power, dissociating surveillance from criticism in the same way that masculinity is distanced from violence through the individualisation of the killer.

The killer as disciplining power

This linking of the killer to surveillance technology amplifies the surveillance capacities of the killer, allowing him to remain outside the games he sets, avoiding the roles of participant or spectator but instead being closer to a referee (Huntley, 2007: 2). This sense of maintaining a distance as arbitrator or judge is another example of a typical serial killer convention amplified rather than reworked by the film.

Jigsaw's philosophy - he is not a serial killer but instead tries to 'teach' his victims the 'survival instinct' - is restated throughout the films. Allusions to religion recur throughout the franchise, but are first obvious in *Saw II*. Throughout the film, Jigsaw remains very still, complementing his calm, neutral persona. He wears a black hooded robe with red lining, a costume adopted by Amanda at the end of the film which resembles the dress of a religious leader. Our first glimpse of him, sitting in a dark, industrial room framed by equipment with a stark light behind him, hints at his self-declared role as a prophet, as does his mannered dialogue and the semi-biblical promise (and film tagline) "There will be blood". As he describes Daniel's potential fate, the camera zooms into his face. Along with the framing effect of his brightly lit face against dark robes, the police rifles aimed at him structure sight lines towards his face. His pale features, red rimmed eyes and eerie stillness make him resemble an almost devilish figure - his dark clothes, pallid skin and mannered stillness bear a strong resemblance to Marshall in *Mr Brooks* - while his sharp blue eyes signal his dangerous, penetrating vision (Figure 6.13).



Figure 6.13: The impassive Jigsaw resembles a religious leader.

Additionally, his ability to inspire novice killers points to religious or cult associations. *Saw II* shocks us with the revelation that Amanda, his only surviving victim, is Jigsaw's willing apprentice. Other apprentice killers appear in later films. These killers, Amanda explains to Mathews, allow Jigsaw to achieve "immortality" as his ideas will live on after his death, another concept with religious overtones. His crimes also offer religious allusions: he forces "confessions", offering victims "salvation" and the chance to be "born again" (Tziallas, 2010: 20). Similar quasi-religious ideas are evident in *The First Deadly Sin*, *Seven* and *Frailty*, demonstrating that this is another generic trait replayed in the film.

Allied to this concept is the depiction of Jigsaw as the "sadistic conservative panopticon": he "surveils, judges, and then designs individualized 'treatments' to help these 'victims' with their 'afflictions', merging and highlighting the relation between surveillance and psychiatry" (Tziallis, 2010: 20). Tziallis links this characterisation to the political environment, relating the focus on surveillance to an allegorical depiction of the Bush era and right-wing attitudes to liberalism. Yet despite his reliance on modern technology, little of Jigsaw's persona is new. The idea of the serial killer as a monitoring figure goes as far back as the Jack the Ripper crimes, as chapter one explores.

There is a tendency in real and fictional serial killer narratives to position the killer as placing his community under violent scrutiny according to his own moral logic, and this rhetoric rarely analyses the racial, gendered and economic power structures underpinning the killer's monitoring of particular groups (Walkowitz, 1982). The eerie echo of Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe's "street-cleaner" analogy in *Righteous Kill*'s Fisk's (Al Pacino) self-description as a "street sweeper" highlights the implicit condoning of the serial killer as social surveillance. Like the Hannibal Lecter films, *Dexter*, *Frailty*, and *Suspect Zero*, the *Saw* franchise encourages us to overlook or even support the killer's targeting of the rude, the violent, and the complacent. These narratives conceal the reality of violence by stigmatising the victim in order to ally us with the killer. Many of the *Saw II* victims are unpleasant and deter us from empathising with their plight. We know they are criminals and several of them threaten the teenage Daniel when they discover his father's identity. Conversely, the *Criminal Minds* episode 'Legacy' (first broadcast 9th May 2007) depicts a similar killer targeting prostitutes and the homeless; by focusing on the plight of one victim and a dedicated detective who has recognised otherwise ignored disappearances of local vagrants, the programme prompts empathy with the victim and the law enforcement team who save her. The victim's bravery and love for her daughter is highlighted, while the killer is repeatedly described as flawed and pathetic. These

distinctions demonstrate that the *Saw* franchise's depiction of victims whose selfishness and corruption limits our empathy for their predicament, as well as the portrayal of Jigsaw as mysterious and powerful rather than misguided and egocentric, is a deliberate choice. Different characterisations and perspectives significantly alter our sense of allegiance.

While debates regarding physical violence have developed around the *Saw* films, the franchise's depiction of a wealthy, well-educated white man administering moralistic lessons to the less privileged has escaped attention. Not all of Jigsaw's victims fall into this category: Lawrence Gordon (Cary Elwes), the white doctor from *Saw*, shares Jigsaw's white collar background.⁴⁹ However, the construction of the *Saw II* narrative as a test/punishment for Detective Mathews brings Jigsaw's advantageous social status to the fore. The captives are a mix of races and genders, yet they all share a criminal background; more specifically, they have all been framed by Mathews. While we learn little about them, their experiences in the criminal justice system indicate that they are neither economically nor socially powerful (it is unlikely that Mathews would have framed them if they were able to access expensive lawyers). However, the selfishness and lack of sympathetic traits exhibited by the captives weakens our empathy for them and obscures the asymmetry in their political, economic and social power in comparison with Jigsaw.

Mathew's exploitation of his own status within the police to free his delinquent son underlines the influence of social origins while indicating that this influence is restricted to men and in particular to patriarchal figures. Although his accent and manner imply a working class status, Mathews enjoys privileges not through economic advantages, but through his occupation. From his first scene, in which he collects Daniel after his arrest, Mathews' father role is highlighted. It is only at the end that we discover Jigsaw acts as surrogate father to his apprentice, Amanda, but this revelation allows us to rethink the film as a struggle between two men whose 'children' are tested in the booby-trapped house.

The depiction of Amanda as a novice killer positions her within patriarchal control to a greater extent than that of Jane in *Mr Brooks*. While Jane's murder is linked to her father through genetic inheritance, and it shocks and disturbs Earl, Amanda is taught by Jigsaw,

⁴⁹ That he is revealed in *Saw 3D* to have survived and become another of Jigsaw's disciples (and the only one to survive the franchise) indicates the association of the monitoring killer with privileged identities. Additionally, Detective Hoffman (Costas Mandylor) is revealed to be an accomplice in *Saw IV*. That another white male agent of surveillance, FBI Agent Strahm (Scott Patterson) is suspected of being an accomplice stresses the linking of violence, white masculinity, and monitoring roles, as does the often confusing physical resemblance between Hoffman and Strahm.

adopting his vocation with his blessing. During the climactic montage, Amanda's tape recording describes Jigsaw as "a father, a leader, a teacher" underlining Jigsaw's paternalistic influence. The image during this statement shows a sombre Amanda as a robed Jigsaw bends down to meet her eyes, stroking the underside of her chin with his hand in a pose which suggests his authority while associating her with a childlike subservience (Figure 6.14). In the next shot, Jigsaw works on a trap design as an adoring Amanda gazes at him.



Figure 6.14: Jigsaw tenderly comforts the subservient Amanda.

Amanda is further framed within patriarchal superiors when she doubles Mathews and Jigsaw by describing them both as men who have "changed my life": her imprisonment by Mathews is the factor which led to her despair from which she was 'saved' by Jigsaw. Her surname, Young, indicates her inexperience and subordinate status, which is underlined by her/our discovery that the targeting of new victims in *Saw III* constitutes her own 'test'. Additionally, her adoption of Jigsaw's robe and vocabulary reinforce the sense of her moulding her own persona around his. When we learn she is a killer, she wears Jigsaw's robe and pig mask as she attacks Mathews. Leaving him semi-conscious in the bathroom familiar from the original film, she mimics Jigsaw's dramatic exit in *Saw*'s final scene as she coldly states "game over" while closing the door. Even before we know she is a killer, she repeatedly aligns herself with Jigsaw, begging the other captives to "follow the rules". This depiction corresponds to the idea of the female killer as apprentice or helpmate, as I

discussed in reference to *Mr Brooks*. It limits her grasp of the surveillance skills enjoyed by her mentor, and later films confirm that she eventually ‘fails’ Jigsaw’s test.

Like Jane in *Mr Brooks*, Amanda is influenced to kill by a father figure, potentially implicating patriarchy in serial killing. However, like the protagonist-killer film, allusions to the Gothic and the exaggerated power of the killer position the events within a fantastical setting which undercuts the linking of violence to patriarchy. Jigsaw is constructed as fantastical, demonstrating extraordinary intelligence, ability to manipulate others and imperviousness to pain, disassociating him from normal white men, and assuring us of his essential otherness.

Saw II demonstrates the continuing influence of the profiler cycle: after the initial film which established torture porn conventions and split narrative authority between multiple, potentially unreliable characters, the sequel merges these defining features with the older profiler narrative. In its depiction of two men struggling over control of surveillance, the Jigsaw/Mathews doubling refers back to the 1980s profiler film, particularly in Jigsaw’s goading of Mathews over his violence.⁵⁰ Like the protagonist-killer film, it also assimilates a variety of trends of the late 1990s. One of the most striking elements of torture porn is the depiction of technologies of surveillance yet this is not new; it amplifies the killer’s power as it incorporates modern anxieties into an existing idea of the killer. Despite concerns regarding the extreme nature of the violence depicted, the film’s speeded-up scenes, pounding music, grimy visuals and revelatory climactic montages self-consciously evoke the mediated nature of film. Together with the implausibly elaborate traps and omniscience of the killer, *Saw II* and other torture porn narratives construct an exaggerated serial killer which engages with the familiarity of the killer in the 2000s and shifts these films into the fantastical.

Conclusion

These analyses demonstrate that despite their stylistic differences, the protagonist-killer and torture porn films adhere to similar gendered, racial and power structures in their depiction of a monitoring, powerful, white male killer. Their female killers are subordinates who require guidance and supervision. Novice male killers are equally

⁵⁰ *Saw* also doubles a detective and killer, but this is a relatively minor plot compared to the Jigsaw/Mathews relationship.

inadequate, but are not contained within patriarchy in the same way (they are not ‘fathered’ by the killer). The killers’ abilities - physical endurance, intelligence, eerie scrutiny - and the Gothic symbolism with which they are associated distance them from normative masculinity. As these films intensify the profiler conventions and absorb other cultural and industrial trends, the killers are increasingly exaggerated. The sophisticated inventions of the *Saw* films begin to resemble the camp, embellished murders of blackly humorous films such as *The Abominable Dr Phibes* (Robert Fuest, 1971). Technologies of surveillance stress the power of the killer, who is uniquely able to manipulate them; contemporary concerns regarding surveillance are mobilised from a non-politicised perspective, with underlying power structures concealed. Similarly, the appearance of Marshall in *Mr Brooks* self-consciously references the double motif prevalent in serial killer discourse, pushing it to its extreme without critiquing its function in constructing the serial killer as an unusual individual.

The downgrading of the profiler figure also indicates an undermining of conventions in order to prolong the profiler cycle rather than interrogate it. In earlier films, the profiler is a reassuring barrier between us and the killer, making him containable and comprehensible; the depiction of the failed profilers in the films I have discussed overturn this idea, empowering the individual killers rather than reviewing the meaning and uses of the profiler figure.

The construction of the killer as a disciplinary power and as an expert in serial killing is similarly an extension of earlier concepts. Again, the reworking of these ideas does not question their function; the troubling link between the vigilante/scrutinising killer who become particularly dominant in the 2000s to real ‘mission’ killers is not considered. The subversive and radical elements of the films extend only as far as their narrative and aesthetic elements; they remain as conservative as the earlier films and reinforce existing myths.

Also evident from my analyses here is the familiarity of the serial killer, a situation which is itself influenced by the profiler narratives. As the figure becomes less frightening, a ‘safe’ fear managed through existing cultural knowledge, films play with the conventions to unsettle audiences used to these traditions. At the same time, the films move further from reality, a shift which allows them to evade debates around the depiction of violence and the construction of the serial killer.

A particularly interesting inference to be made from my assessment of the protagonist-killer and torture porn films is the different reactions to similar killers depending on the type of violence depicted in the movies. It is not the semi-sanctioned, relatively likeable protagonist serial killer which attracts criticism, but the brutal torture porn killer. There is little to distinguish these two classes of killer, yet the lack of pre-mortem torture and ironic tone of most protagonist-killer films enables them to evade much of the criticism directed at torture porn. Edelstein's concern with the mainstreaming of torture porn makes clear that his anxieties are less concerned with the existence of these films than their relatively mainstream status. This point demonstrates Clover's work on the divide between high and low brow, which often obscures the similar ideology of stylistically different movies (Clover, 1992: 232). Attacks on the violence of torture porn which ignores the privileging of white masculinity in the protagonist-killer film highlight the concealment of power structures which maintain this privilege.

This privilege is also evident in the positioning of the killers in the films examined in the case studies as father figures. Similarly, the killer of *Frailty* trains his sons in serial murder, with the purpose of serving a patriarchal god. A major subplot of *Righteous Kill* concerns the (apparent) killer's surrogate father/daughter relationship with a young murder witness. While few killers are actual fathers, a paternalistic status is suggested by Lecter's efforts to protect his younger sister in *Hannibal Rising*, and arguably also by his concern for Starling in *Hannibal* - it is interesting that the film adaptation departs significantly from the novel, in which the pair become lovers (Harris, 1999). *Hannibal* ends with the killer feeding human brain to a young boy, suggesting he is grooming the next generation.

This thesis argues that the serial killer acts as a monitoring agent, his white male status offering him a privileged role in scrutinising the community; as chapter one argues, the idea of the killer as brutally enforcing patriarchy is as old as the serial killer figure. Yet the 2000s films hint more strongly than earlier examples of the link between the serial killer and conventional understandings of patriarchy although, as I have demonstrated here, the distance between the killer and normative masculinity is stressed. These depictions of killers who are also literal or symbolic fathers coincide with *Dexter*'s stressing of patriarchal influence: Dexter's adoptive father, Harry (James Remar), teaches him how to use his crimes "for good", targeting killers who have escaped justice. Dexter and Harry both work for the police, allowing them to use knowledge and skills gained from state-sanctioned monitoring to select victims and evade detection.

As in *Mr Brooks* and *Saw II*, the privileges enjoyed by the white, male, middle class Dexter are positioned as inherent and natural; his extra-judicial killings are coded as benefiting the community but actually persecute those who do not conform to his (apparent) normative masculinity (Byers, 2010: 152; Paterson, 2010: 47). The ‘code of Harry’, followed by Dexter as a way of rationalising and justifying his violence, is less the attempt by a father to protect his son than the manipulations of a disillusioned white man in crisis coercing the boy to carry out the crimes he does not dare to (Howard, 2010: 61). *Dexter* has been compared to a variety of television shows in which “fathers play or have played rather disruptive or negative roles in the lives of the main characters”, suggesting that it can be read as an indictment of patriarchy (Howard, 2010: 76). However, it is interesting that one of these programmes, *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999 - 2007), promotes empathy for its protagonist by portraying him as a father figure to both his own children and various younger characters (Don Diego, 2002: 97), indicating that these representations are not so clear-cut. Father figures in these texts, then, can offer a limited critique of patriarchy, the most obvious way in which male surveillance of the world is maintained, but each text finds a way to restrict this assessment.

Conclusion

Introduction

At the start of this thesis, I referred to *Saw 3D* in order to open up questions regarding the centrality of surveillance in serial killer cinema. I stated that the depiction of mechanised violence distances this aggression from (hu)man agency while the staging of murder as a spectacle foregrounds sight and moral scrutiny as key themes; both the ethical failings and physical suffering of the victims are staged publicly. I set out to explore the key themes of surveillance and masculinity in film, with a specific emphasis on films influenced by the American serial killer panic of the late 1970s and 1980s. Taking into account the aesthetic, narrative and tonal aspects of relevant films, as well as their industrial contexts and historical influences, I identified and examined four cycles evident in American cinema between 1978 and 2008. Having used case studies to consider each of these cycles in detail, this final chapter discusses the conclusions I have reached. I contemplate the implications of my conclusions before suggesting potential opportunities for further research.

Findings

A significant element of this thesis is my grouping of films into categories in order to trigger discussion of their discrete features and developments. Focusing on narrative structure and characterisation as distinguishing characteristics, I have found that the profiler film offered an (eventually) commercially successful model which influenced the different cycles I have termed the portrait, protagonist-killer and torture porn movie. My study of these films - using textual analysis as well as the more systematic classification of relevant aspects in table one - has allowed me to plug gaps in existing literature and offer a paradigm for understanding the ways in which masculinity and surveillance are articulated in serial killer discourse.

Given that this type of film is the most prolific of the movies discussed here, and has gained the most commercial success, cultural impact and academic scrutiny, it is logical that my first two analysis chapters trace the progress of the profiler movie. In situating the beginning of this cycle in 1978, I suggested that the success of *The Silence of the Lambs* is

the consolidation of more than a decade of similar films. While some influences identified as important factors in the film's success are undoubtedly significant - the near-contemporaneous arrest of Jeffrey Dahmer, for example (Tithecott, 1997) - the late 1970s/1980s films establish the key conventions which run through the 1990s and continue into the 2000s despite the appearance of other films which challenge these by now familiar traits. My analysis of *The Mean Season* demonstrates that the obsessive allusions to sight and surveillance evident in *The Silence of the Lambs* are apparent in earlier films. From the beginning of the profiler cycle, through the protagonist-killer and torture porn movies, scrutiny of and by these characters is emphasised through the monitoring of the city, technologies of surveillance and institutions of surveillance. My analyses indicate the variety of ways in which surveillance is articulated in these films, each of which reveal a fascination with surveillance which downplays the suffering of the victims and ensures our attention remains focused on the profiler and killer.

A crucial strand of my argument in bringing together this range of films from various genres within the profiler grouping relates to my specific definition of the profiler figure. Other writers have used this term in ways which are closer to real profiling, limiting it to depictions of characters who work within or alongside law enforcement and combine detection and psychological study to categorise the killer within pre-existing types (Cettl, 2003; Simpson, 2000; Tithecott, 1997). In contrast, I have defined the profiler in a way which takes account of the cinema-specific portrayals of this character. Seeing connections between the recognised profilers of *Manhunter* and *The Watcher*, the detectives who function as profilers in *Sea of Love* and *The Bone Collector*, and individuals unconnected with law enforcement who fulfil the profiler role in *Eyes of Laura Mars* and *Blink*, I have developed a definition which incorporates these different manifestations of the profiler. My assimilation of 'amateur' profilers also acknowledges the fact that the professional profilers tend to reject their state-sanctioned procedures and authority in favour of an intuitive, instinctive form of detection which characterises the type of detection these films glorify. As table one indicates, the profiler is often associated with occupations and skills which relate to sight and the scrutiny of the community, consolidating the idea that these characters are somehow destined to combat the serial killer.

This veneration of the profiler, however, is undermined by the repeated failure of these characters to identify the killer; usually, the killer manipulates an encounter between the two, or the profiler recognises mid-interview that a witness or adviser to the investigation is the murderer. The profiler's apparent control of the visual field and the monitoring of the

community is often sabotaged: in *The Mean Season*, Malcolm's journalistic skills fail to alert him to the fact that a 'witness' is the killer; *The Bone Collector*'s Rhyme neglects to identify the murderer who walks unchallenged his open-plan, elevated home despite its innumerable monitoring devices. That the profiler is so often flawed in this way suggests that these films do not straightforwardly represent the expert profiler of FBI/true crime lore. The cinematic profiler is a special individual, and the only person in the film capable of comprehending the threat posed by the killer and catching him, but there is something haphazard and muddled about his/her detection. Two effects are evident as a result of this tendency. Firstly, the profiler is never so exceptional that the audience may be estranged from him/her. The efforts of the profiler are portrayed in ways which encourage allegiance with this character. We share his/her frustrations, sense of threat at recognising his/her own proximity to the killer, and elation at discovering major clues (the tight close-ups of Rhyme/Amelia's eyes accompanied by swelling music during the epiphany montage scenes of *The Bone Collector* illustrate the attachment constructed between profiler and audience). Secondly, even the early, pre-*The Silence of the Lambs* movies represent the killer as powerful and dominating, in contrast to the profilers who, even when they solve the case before the killer orchestrates a climactic meeting, do so almost by accident. The profiler film, then, undermines the profiler, whose victory is often tempered by the long-lasting effects of his/her interaction with the killer.

This interaction between killer and profiler has been the focus of a considerable amount of scholarly work which highlights the doubling of the two characters. This doubling has antecedents in Gothic literature, as I have acknowledged. The familiarity of this concept is such that the idea is lampooned in the film *Adaptation*. (Spike Jonze, 2002) and has been absorbed into other media such as television: the Ray Langston (Laurence Fishburne)/Nate Haskell (Bill Irwin) relationship in season ten and eleven of forensic crime drama *CSI* has been wearily compared in mainstream reviews to that of Starling and Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Graham, 2010). As Rehling argues (2007; 2009), the construction of the killer as the profiler's dark doppelgänger suggests latent aggression in white masculinity, a concept which is reinforced when the profiler is female or a black male, identities which make the whiteness/maleness of the killer more apparent. The double concept is emphasised by my focus on surveillance: the killer and profiler, I have found, are both watchers, their behaviour, skills and occupations frequently contributing to the impression that they are linked by their surveillance roles.

However, this implication clashes with a central premise of this thesis: the idea that a number of strategies are invoked in order to maintain a divide between 'normative' - white, middle class, heterosexual, American - masculinity and aggression. My analyses suggest that a tension between these two interpretations is maintained throughout the profiler film cycle. Some films - *Tightrope*, *Sea of Love* and *Manhunter*, for example - suggest fairly strongly that the profiler shares the killer's socially and legally unacceptable desires, making necessary a climactic fight which rehabilitates the profiler, as he neutralises the threat of the killer and his own troubling predilections. Arguably, these films hint at the potential violence of normative masculinity, particularly as these films allude to the neutral status of white masculinity as provoking aggression in this identity (Rehling, 2009), a point my case studies in chapters three and four support. However, as my work on these films indicates, the profiler is always already a special individual, limiting the extent to which the films can be said to expose the violence of normative masculinity. Genre and cultural expectations code the profiler's violence as acceptable and even satisfying. The forceful neutralisation of the killer is provoked by the murderer's excessive brutality and his ability to evade conventional judicial punishment. Additionally, some of the films suggest it is not the killer's violence which the profiler finds fascinating; *The Mean Season* offers an example of a profiler whose similarities to the killer are limited to less disturbing aspects.

Furthermore, in films featuring non-white male profilers, the potential for revealing the violence of the white male killer through contrast with the non-violent profiler is often undermined. It is true that these films frequently insinuate connections between the killer and the 'normal' men who also appear in the film - parallels are drawn between FBI Agent Crawford (Scott Glen) and Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*, for example (Badley, 1995; Tasker, 2002) and John Doe and Detective Mills in *Seven* (Dyer, 1999). My case studies note several similar instances. However, the profiler film finds ways to ultimately distance the killer from 'normal' white men, and justify the violence which we do see committed by these normative men. *Copycat*, for example, highlights the killer's "dead averageness", but his "Norman Bates-like" sexual repression and awkward, child-like demeanour locates him in the familiar category of mother/wife-dominated serial killer, distancing him from normative masculinity (Rehling, 2009: 244). The film also references racial biases in the murder of its most amiable male character, Detective Reuben (Dermot Mulroney), shot during an escape attempt by a young Asian man. This scene begins as detectives attempt to question a crowd of Asian male youths who have been arrested; the aggressive posturing of the youths and their noisy shouting in their native language allude to Asian gang stereotypes and suggest their very ethnicity introduces chaos into the police station. In

contrast to the violence of the film's serial killer, shown to be extraordinary and requiring the consultation of an expert profiler, Reuben's murder is quick, relatively banal, and soon overshadowed by the next serial killing. Yet the coding of this crime as gang-related locates this violence in the ethnicity of its perpetrator, something that is less evident in the film's portrayal of its serial killer.

Other factors are also mobilised to distance the killer from normative masculinity. In films featuring both white male and female or black male profilers, killers are often intellectuals (*The Silence of the Lambs*, *Seven*), insane (*The First Deadly Sin*, *Striking Distance*), or connected to the supernatural (*Virtuosity*, *Angel Heart*), even if they at first appear to be typical white men. Their very ability to appear average is, as Schmid argues, a sign of their deviancy (2005). They are too typical, excessively ordinary; these aspects function as symptoms of their skill in masking their aggression. While Rehling argues the depiction of the 'abnormally normal' killer convention reveals the vacuity and blankness of white masculinity, she also points out that this very absence of distinction in the white male heterosexual male allows this identity to act as "the universal term," meaning "the gendered and raced specificity of serial killing can then be subsumed by broader concerns about postmodern culture and society" (2009: 245). The neutral status, then, of white masculinity ensures that this identity escapes recognition as the source of serial killing, which will always be represented as a social problem, rather than one pertaining to a specific gender and race.

This analysis acknowledges the class, racial and gendered biases which are endemic in the societies in which these films are made. My focus on surveillance highlights the ways in which normative (white, heterosexual, middle class) masculinity escapes scrutiny, existing as the everyday, typical marker against which other identities are defined. The paralleling of the killer with panoptical surveillance emphasises both the apparent neutrality of the killer and his violent categorisation of individuals. His assimilation of victims into his series - a series defined by him but recognised by law enforcement and the media - engages with concerns regarding the administrative monitoring identity, but also constructs the killer *as* a monitor, lending him authority and power. This convention reinforces the idea that white men are entitled to this status, and also amplifies the concept of the killer as achieving a kind of vigilante justice in his targeting of those deserving of punishment. Chapter one referred to feminist analyses which demonstrate the convergence of the killer's attitude to his crimes and media and community responses to this form of violence. Most significant here is the naturalisation of male violence towards women who have

somehow defied male authority (Walkowitz, 1982; Ward Jouve, 1986). Yet white masculinity's privileged status conceals the misogyny of these crimes, which are understood to be if not excusable then at least understandable.

The thesis demonstrates that this idea of the scrutinising killer recurs throughout the thirty-year period under investigation. In some cases the killer's surveillance extends only as far as voyeurism and/or the serialising of victims, yet many films position the killer as regulating behaviour. I have argued that the killer's violent forcing of victims into the context of his own series can be understood as a form of surveillance, following Knox's work on the serial killer as pathological collector (2003).⁵¹ This regulatory aspect of the killer is enhanced by cases in which the killer is related to vigilantism. Chapter six argues that the protagonist-killer and torture porn films of the 2000s portray killers as monitoring society, targeting individuals who fail to adhere to his standards - which, disturbingly, often coincide with those of wider society. Furthermore, the fact that the role of serial killer is often taken by a white, middle class man with economic advantages compared to his victims suggests a strangely conservative depiction of this disciplinary power. Some films which position the killer as a police officer or at least portray his crimes as understandable to the law enforcement agencies seeking him further link this figure to ideas of accepted authority.

As chapter six indicates, the later protagonist-killer films frequently emphasise vigilantism in order to promote allegiance with the killer and undermine sympathy for his often immoral and dislikeable victims, but the killer/victim imbalance remains, with most victims lacking the killer's access to education, economic power and social mobility. It could be argued that this propensity exposes power imbalances, but the films' valorisation of the killer suggests this reading is unlikely. I have not focused on the question of different reading strategies in this thesis, and it is possible that some audience members may find the films more open to progressive interpretations than my case studies indicate. However, my analyses demonstrate that the aspects which can be interpreted as offering insights into the prevalence of concealed power structures are constrained by the films' adherence to generic convention and the traditions of serial killer discourse. My reference to *Copycat* above epitomises this trait.

⁵¹ A further addition to the torture porn group, released one year after the end date of this project, suggests this idea in its title: *The Collector* (Marcus Dunstan, 2009) depicts a killer who tortures families, keeping one member of each alive for his 'collection', a more sadistic idea than that depicted in the unrelated John Fowles novel of the same name (1963) filmed in 1965 (William Wyler).

This tendency is particularly evident in the profiler film and in the later torture porn and protagonist-killer film, reflecting their status as mainstream Hollywood movies. The portrait film, as chapter five explores, offers formal and narrative innovations in its questioning of the manipulation of the audience of these generically conventional cycles. However, despite some acknowledgment of the killer's privileged status as a white man, the portraits also depict the serial killer as an enigma whose power is not ultimately connected to white masculinity. The portrait film downplays the suspenseful aspects of surveillance apparent in the profiler film to create oddly flat and sometimes incoherent narratives. The seemingly haphazard, arbitrary nature of the portrait film's account of real events lacks the sense of authority and pedagogic purpose of true crime literature and documentaries. There is no commentary from police officers involved in the case and no trustworthy, objective narrator to reassure the audience. The fact that many of the films end with the killer still at large promotes a sense of unease as there is no sense of narrative closure: the killer is not contained, either literally by a prison sentence or figuratively by an explanatory clarification by profilers, police officers or psychiatrists.

The niche status of the portrait film suggests that a wider audience would find this level of ambiguity unacceptable, but even in their small numbers and marginal market status in comparison to other films, the portraits suggest a desire to see depictions of the killer quite different from that of the mainstream profiler film and true crime. They offer instances of killers benefiting from patriarchal biases - *Ted Bundy's* adoption of the benevolent father figure and the authoritative police officer, for instance, and his clean-cut persona which distances him from the monstrous sex killer stereotype - and of the murderer's similarity to other aggressive white men (the associations drawn between Rader and the television news editor in *BTK Killer*). Yet the road movie-esque escape of *Ted Bundy* when his woodland body dump is discovered hints at his extraordinary capacity for escaping surveillance, while the bizarre (and fictional) murder methods featured in *BTK Killer* shift focus from the killer's banal existence to his peculiar rituals. Once again the killer is positioned as special and distanced from normative masculinity, disrupting the continuities which are drawn between his violence and typical men.

The chronological structure of the thesis allows me to trace shifts and fluctuations in the time span under scrutiny. A particularly interesting development throughout the thirty-year period under examination is the shift from a homosocial bond between killer and profiler in the 1980s and 1990s to a more obviously patriarchal status for the killer in the 2000s. There are exceptions to this general trend - the group of films featuring female or black

male profilers which appears in the 1990s, for example - but the post-profiler films of the 2000s show a definite bias towards depicting the killer in a paternal role, with the inferior profiler often criticised for poor parenting or, alternatively, placed in a child-like position in relation to the killer. The killer's monitoring status is particularly patriarchal in these films, their crimes often framed as his way of protecting his community. While these films maintain the killer's distance from normative masculinity, undermining any meaningful critique of patriarchy, the new emphasis on father figures in the 2000s is interesting as this role is important in cultural conceptions of masculinity, but is also associated with surveillance. Throughout the thesis I have looked for points at which surveillance can be understood to be both benevolent and sinister; the portrayal of figurative and literal fathers who are also serial killers is particularly interesting given the level of violence explicitly depicted in torture porn and the encouragement of audience allegiance in the protagonist-killer film, the two groupings in which fathering is linked to serial killing.

The depiction of mainly white, male profiler figures in these films confirms the impression that the introduction of black and female profilers in the 1990s was ephemeral. The few non-white and female profilers who appear in the 2000s tend to fail, along with their white male counterparts. The killer, however, remains extraordinarily powerful in most of these later films, highlighting the shift from shadowy villain to protagonist. Additionally, the depiction of marginalised identities may offer the films a way of condoning the repressive surveillance methods they use, which are also justified by the extreme threat posed by killers who know how to take advantage of contemporary concerns with civil liberties and privacy. These apparently enlightened films may ultimately reinforce support for judicial sanctions which are more commonly controlled by dominant, privileged identities.

A significant development discussed in the thesis is the downgrading of the profiler figure. Cinematic depictions of failed profilers in the 2000s, accompanied by highly public failures by real FBI profilers, suggests that this character has run its course, although a number of television profilers (most notably in the offbeat detective series *The Mentalist*) remain popular. Although the profiler figure is important in the development of the serial killer film and in serial killer discourse more generally, the *success* of this figure in individual texts is not essential. Moreover, the portrait film's complete negation of the profiler shows that interest lies very much with the killer, despite the success of the profiler film both commercially and in establishing conventions which continue in cinema and in other media. As my earlier reference to *CSI* indicates, a kind of shorthand has developed around the killer/profiler relationship, with *CSI* Langston's African American status

subverting earlier ideas of the black profiler: Langston's potential violence is hinted at throughout the series, up to the moment at which he kills the handcuffed, white, nondescript killer Haskell out of revenge for Haskell's rape of Langston's ex-wife. The gradual allusions towards Langston's aggression clash with both Fishburne's persona (in *The Matrix* (Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski, 1999), he plays a sage, contemplative character fitting the wise black man stereotype discussed in chapter four) and his apparent affinity with the thoughtful, cerebral Gil Grissom (William Peterson), whose character he replaced in season ten and who himself is the converse of Peterson's profiler character in *Manhunter*. The variety of opposing ideas here demonstrates the significant history of the profiler figure and the way in which it can be reworked, even outside a profiler narrative.⁵²

Similarly, the serial killer detective novel *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Larson, 2005) and its cinematic adaptation (Niels Arden Oplev, 2009) play with the profiler figure, setting young female sexual abuse survivor Lisbeth and middle aged disgraced male journalist Mikael against a wealthy, influential family whose members include a father-and-son serial killer team. The doubling of these pairs is less explicit than in the profiler film, although references to surveillance abound (Lisbeth's computer hacking skills, Mikael's desire to expose corruption). The novel and film avoid many of the conventions which distance the killer from normative masculinity, and indeed the book highlights the prevalence of misogyny in its quoting of statistics relating to gendered violence. However, in positioning the Goth-styled, mysterious Lisbeth as an enigma for Mikael and the reader/viewer to unravel (we only gradually learn of her abusive past), the novel and film potentially align us with Mikael - an example of normative masculinity - while ensuring that the inscrutable Lisbeth remains a figure of fascination rather than allegiance. These texts allude to the noir femme fatale and its offshoots - Tasker finds a similarly problematic characterisation in *Mona Lisa* (Neil Jordan, 1986), in which the female lead is constructed as a mystery who enthralls the knowable male lead (1998: 4). Yet *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is particularly revealing of this tendency as its depiction of Lisbeth exposes her to the scrutiny of the audience in much the same way as she is repeatedly subjected to patriarchal surveillance in various sinister guises throughout the trilogy.

In identifying Gothic literary traditions, frontier mythology and contemporary FBI rhetoric as influencing the development of the cinematic profiler, I have implied that the FBI and the makers of the profiler films appealed to similar social needs. Both the FBI profiler and

⁵² Chapters two and four discuss the differences between the profiler film and forensic crime drama.

the cinematic profiler empower the killer by suggesting only a special person can combat him. Additionally, fantasies and fears of surveillance are potentially tapped by this figure. That the killer appeals to these same fascinations and anxieties underlines the way in which these two figures remain doubled, to the extent that they merge in the 2000s.

This thesis has also demonstrated the usefulness of surveillance studies, showing that this area not only provides helpful models - the panopticon, for example - but can also offer insight into the ways in which aspects of surveillance are often implicit or taken for granted. My aim to investigate concealed power structures has prompted me to consider the naturalisation of particular identities' links to authority and control. The extent to which the films offer a critique of this relationship differs in each cycle, although none of them can be regarded as progressive, radical texts. In the profiler cycle, the profiler's state-sanctioned role as the defender of the community against the serial killer offers an insight into the type of person entrusted with such a role. These films normalise the concept of white, straight men protecting women and weaker men, and in many cases continue to demonstrate biases regarding the victimisation of certain groups (most notably female prostitutes) as being in some way comprehensible. Yet as I have argued, the films also offer a limited critique of white male privilege in suggesting links between the killer and the white male profiler. As Rehling (2009) and Dyer (1999) discuss, the clichéd doubling of killer and profiler is not just an indicator of the profiler cycle's Gothic roots, but implies that the killer's aggression in some way stems from white male identity.

Similarly, the portrait films tend to undermine the radical potential suggested by their more subversive elements, usually depicting the killer as an example of individual aberrance rather than linking him to patriarchy. While the portraits challenge the more comfortable, familiar profiler conventions, they also often display fairly conservative portrayals of women. The ignorance of the girlfriends and wives of the killers is often highlighted, stressing the murderer's ability to disguise his capacity for violence (another common idea which reinforces the killer's difference from normal men) and creating an unpleasant sense of superior knowledge for the audience. Our privileged awareness is sometimes used for comic effect and highlights the naivety of these women, while the films fail to acknowledge the special status of white masculinity in Western society which makes only certain men likely to be suspected of such crimes.

This privileged status is also disregarded in the protagonist-killer film, which again underlines the exceptional nature of the serial killer and thus distances the figure from

normative masculinity. Moments of progressive potential - depicting the killer as a father or father figure, for example - are negated by reminders of the killer's unique pathology and his almost superhuman abilities which ensure wider patriarchal structures remain distanced from his aggression and his manipulation of women and weaker men. Similarly, the exaggerated skills of the torture porn killer and the stylised aesthetics of this cycle dissociate the killer from other men, positioning him within Gothic tropes.

Each of the cycles depicts the killer as agent of surveillance, hinting at connections between the serial killer and law enforcement authorities. Along with the doubling of killer and profiler in many of the films, this linking of serial violence to authorities dominated by white men could offer a radical paralleling of the serial killer and patriarchal power structures. Analysis of the Peter Sutcliffe case, for example, has demonstrated that the contempt for female prostitutes violently acted out by Sutcliffe was implicitly shared by the police, media and wider public (Ward Jouve, 1986). Additionally, by associating the killer with surveillance, the films allude to concerns relating to the ubiquity of surveillance and its potential misuse. These fears are expressed in the serial killer film, in which fantasies of transcendence and control through surveillance are combined with images of repressive monitoring. However, this engagement with surveillance is depoliticised, the association of the serial killer with state sanctioned authority limited by the depiction of the killer as aberrant and exceptional. Potential readings of the monitoring killer as exposing power structures through his paralleling with the state and white male authority are closed off by the texts' reliance on conventional ideas of the killer which recuperates normative masculinity. Despite elements hinting at potentially radical representations of the serial killer, then, these films are ultimately fairly conservative, although the tensions and ambiguities I have traced in each cycle offer moments of insight into the power structures they reinforce.

Opportunities for further research

This thesis incorporates work from various fields and as such offers findings which may be extrapolated to other films and forms of media. This final section suggests some directions future work may take.

Firstly, it would be interesting to consider connections between the killers depicted in the films studied here and portrayals in other films and different cultural texts. In investigating

the gendered, racial and class origins of the serial killer, I have argued that a certain type of killer is offered authority and potential audience allegiance. Paternalistic killers and those with a vigilante motive are most likely to be included in this bracket. These killers tend to be wealthy white men, or alternatively white men with links to law enforcement which allows them unusual power in their community. An obvious comparable text is the television series *Dexter*, which has already produced some academic responses. Noting the series' prompting of audience allegiance with the serial killing protagonist, Paterson argues that *Dexter* "shows the triumph of the middle class white professional male" (2010: 47), underlining the connections between the series and the films studied here.

The diverse industrial contexts of these similar representations are interesting. Torture porn is a violent horror cycle, the killer-protagonist films are closer to the psychological thriller and associated with older and more mainstream viewers than is torture porn, while *Dexter* emerges from quality television but is made by subscription channel Showtime, enabling it to portray more graphic scenes than mainstream television. While torture porn has met with considerable controversy due to its violence, the less graphic protagonist-killer films have not been subject to similar condemnation for the way in which they position their killers as enjoying a privileged status which enables them to target weaker, marginalised individuals. *Dexter's* aesthetic qualities and industrial context distance it from the torture porn associations of the *Saw* films - bright Miami sunshine opposed to grim industrial landscapes, restrained violence and a knowing voice-over rather than explicit gore, 'quality' television over lowbrow horror. However, the show's focus on an intelligent, articulate killer whose violence is contrasted with that of more brutish, less empathetic murderers, and his portrayal as vigilante-minded rather than sexually motivated, indicates that along with the *Saw* franchise *Dexter* is part of a trend in which the killer's idiosyncratic sense of morality and superior intelligence, manners and articulacy counteract sympathy for his victims and detective adversaries, and potentially promote approval of his actions.

However, *Dexter's* status as a character-driven drama marketed as challenging, dark and distinctive (Paterson, 2010: 47) marks it out as different and likely to offer depictions unusual for television. What can be said of more formulaic series which portray serial killers? The 1989 police drama series *Unsub*, based within a profiler unit, lasted only eight episodes, suggesting the success of *The Silence of the Lambs* was necessary to draw audiences to this type of investigation week after week. Serial killers crop up repeatedly on American supernatural-themed shows of the 1990s such as *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990 -

1991), *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993 - 2002) and *Millennium* (Fox, 1996 -1999). More recently, 2000s forensic dramas often use the search for a killer in major, series-encompassing story arcs: in *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, the Miniature Killer is sought throughout series seven, and incarcerated killer Nate Haskell (Bill Irwin) is involved in the search for the Dick and Jane Killer in season nine, the investigation of Dr Jekyll in series ten and provides the season eleven cliffhanger. *CSI: NY* uses the Taxi Cab Killer (season four) and the Compass Killer (season six) as recurring investigations. Like *Criminal Minds*, these shows depict the killer in a traditional crime narrative: they are the focus of a search by law-abiding, heroic protagonists through whose perspective we witness events. The serial killer is an obvious plot choice for television series, offering a season-long story arc woven through individual episodes, particularly as it allows the convergence of the medium and the cultural figure around the shared concept of seriality (Schmid, 2005: 138).

What is interesting about the use of the serial killer in these successful, mainstream programmes is the way in which the police procedural contains the threat posed by the criminal by resolving the crime and providing closure. While the *CSI* series are defined by their graphic, gory visuals, the plots are contained within each episode as skilled investigators use technology to impose order on a messy, confusing crime, limiting its potential to disturb. However, the *CSI* franchise, along with *Criminal Minds*, repeatedly depicts the threat of an uncaught killer over the course of several episodes or even series; the characters with whom we identify are at continual risk from clever and brutal killers and the restoration of order is deferred. It may be the case that the incorporation of these killers in prime-time police dramas not associated with science fiction or fantastical themes (in which we would expect sinister, unresolved threats to recur), suggests that the serial killer has become familiar enough to instil fear without repelling the audience.⁵³ While the distressing elements of individual murders are contained through their narrative resolution, the violence of the serial killer is immediately incorporated within an existing understanding of signatures, patterns and profiles and is contained in an equally effective way, even though these plots last weeks or months. Our cultural fluency in serial killer lore means that these series need do little to trigger the audience's knowledge of serial killing; it is enough that we recognise, along with the investigators, that this perpetrator will kill again, his/her crimes will be linked by ritualistic behaviour, and it is not the individual qualities of the victims, but what they have in common, which will lead to the killer.

⁵³ On British television, a long-running and highly successful *Coronation Street* (Granada, ITV, 1960 -) plot followed a serial killer, Richard Hillman (Brian Capron) as he targeted various regular characters and married into one of the oldest families on the soap, demonstrating a convergence between the serial killer and the relatively non-threatening 'soap villain'.

These uncaught killers which haunt the heroes of the various *CSI* series, *Criminal Minds*, *Profiler* and *The Mentalist* demonstrate extraordinary proficiency in the surveillance skills I have traced throughout the thesis. The ‘puppet-master’ killers are usually known only by a nickname since their real identity is unknown; they manipulate others, including those within the law enforcement agency department at the heart of the series; they often induce others to kill for them; they taunt the protagonists with their technological skills; even when a suspect is identified, we can never be sure that this individual is not just another of the killer’s proxies. Since analysis of this particular figure is lacking, an interrogation of these texts given the work provided here on the scrutinising serial killer may prove useful. Additionally, many of these shows - most obviously the science-obsessed *CSI* franchise - potentially prompt support for increasing powers of surveillance by showing this scrutiny to be essential to the success of trust-worthy law enforcement teams. A parallel may be drawn here with the pro-surveillance agenda of the profiler film. Although the profiler always finds conventional law enforcement monitoring to be inadequate, the heroes of *CSI* use forensic and computer advances to successfully solve crimes, without expressing concern over the extent to which government agencies are able to scrutinise the population. These series are less likely to connect the monitoring of the killer to that of the protagonists, undermining possible analogies between the killer’s repressive surveillance and the protagonists’ benign, justified observation.

I have noted throughout that the monitoring aspect of the killer is not unique to post-1978 American cinema, and a wider analysis of cinematic representations may provide interesting results. *The Spiral Staircase* (Robert Siodmak, 1945), for example, depicts a killer targeting disabled women. It would be interesting to compare the film’s striking point-of-view shots - we see with the killer, the impaired area of the intended victim’s body blurred to demonstrate his obsession with erasing imperfection - with the instances of surveillance in the films discussed here. It is possible that such an analysis would find more similarities than differences. The film’s 1945 release would have made the killer’s motive particularly topical given Nazi Germany’s euthanasia policies (Siodmak left Germany to escape the Nazis, suggesting this parallel may be deliberate), the resulting focus on the disability rather than the gendered status of the victims potentially concealing the misogyny of the killer. This reading mirrors the feminist interpretations discussed in chapter one, which point out that the killings associated with Jack the Ripper, along with later ‘Ripper’ murders, focus on the victims’ status as prostitutes, and construct these crimes as in some way understandable. Greater understanding of the ways in which the serial killer is depicted as a social monitor (and understands himself as such) may be useful

not only to analysis of fictional texts but in comprehending the continuing power of this figure in wider society, and in particular cultural fascination with the serial killer.

Further to this point, study in relation to wider issues around surveillance may be possible in the light of my work here. My focus on surveillance is slightly different from most existing investigations of representations of surveillance in cinema in that I do not centre my study on technologies of surveillance within the film, as most writing on, for example, torture porn and the spectacle of surveillance tends to do (Turner, 1998; Tziallas, 2010). My understanding of the serial killer as a monitoring figure offers a perspective which takes account of the specific concepts around this figure - those suggested by the writers I refer to in chapter one - and also considers the gender, race and class biases prevalent in these texts. A number of films highlighting surveillance and identity could similarly be examined. Films as diverse as *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, 2006), *Trust* (David Schwimmer, 2010) and *The Skin I Live In* (Pedro Almodovar, 2011) depict medical surveillance, optical monitoring, hierarchies of surveillance based around gender, class and/or race and technologies of surveillance. Despite their different cultural and industrial contexts, each film constructs surveillance as ambiguous and potentially sinister as well as positive. They each offer parents, or parental figures, who mis/use surveillance for what they believe to be benevolent intentions and engage with theories of surveillance in order to articulate their specific themes.

Similarly, the punning tagline of *The Manchurian Candidate* (Jonathan Demme, 2004) ("Everything is under control") expresses the uncertainty and distrust which is a common response to surveillance issues. Along with *Source Code* (Duncan Jones, 2011), *Eagle Eye* (DJ Caruso, 2008), *Moon* (Duncan Jones, 2009) and *The Bourne Identity*, *The Manchurian Candidate* is part of an interesting body of films which has developed over the last decade in which an individual's body and mind is manipulated by extraordinary technology controlled by the military-industrial complex. As Turner argues in relation to 1990s paranoid/panoptical narratives (1998), spectacle and suspense take precedence over political critiques. However, a study of these films using the panopticon model employed in this thesis may help to understand the ways in which these mainstream, popular movies express contemporary anxieties regarding surveillance, and particularly the ways in which repressive monitoring can be represented as benign and helpful. Interestingly, *Eagle Eye* depicts a massively powerful computer which manipulates individuals by using data from government records and social network sites to build a profile of those whose behaviour it controls, suggesting an analogy with serial killer rhetoric.

This thesis has argued that few of the films discussed are straightforward in their representation of gender and the inter-related concepts of class and race. Frequently, resistance to dominant political agendas can be detected within mainstream texts, while apparently progressive films often undermine their radical potential by alluding to conservative explanations for the serial killer and using this figure to bolster support for increased surveillance. My emphasis on the monitoring aspect of the serial killer has, I believe, allowed me to consider the ways in which this figure can be used to both conceal and expose patriarchal violence. His special surveillance skills make him unusual and fascinating, distancing him from normative (white, economically advantaged, heterosexual) men. Yet these normative men are often those entrusted to protect the community from deviancy, implicitly linking them to the killer through their shared reliance on surveillance. Instances throughout each cycle hint at the potential oppression and aggression in both state-sanctioned surveillance and normative masculinity. Overall, the films discussed here ultimately maintain the privileged status of white masculinity. Yet their moments of resistance suggest that a focus on these scrutinising men offer alternative understandings of our society, exposing to a limited extent the power structures which determine the demographics which perpetrate and suffer violence. Scrutinising these watching men uncovers the patriarchal structures which ensure these individuals enjoy the privileges associated with surveillance.

Table 1: Development of the Cycles

Table one illustrates the general trends throughout the films discussed in the thesis. Descriptions are necessarily reductive but offer a broad indication of developments. I have indicated the race and gender of characters but only stated their class origin where their profession does not suggest it. I have noted instances where a profiler is given considerable support by another character. As my analysis chapters show, some of the later films feature the profiler in a relatively peripheral role; however, I believe this undermining of the profiler character is in itself significant and so have identified these characters as such and have noted where they are killed early in the film, fail to catch the killer or are revealed to be killers. Many films feature other investigators but I am interested here in isolating those which fulfil the profiler criteria defined in chapter two. In films featuring more than one killer I have separated their motives and victim types. Some films feature several serial killers (for example those in which serial killers are themselves a target); in these cases I have isolated the most important killers. It is impossible to track numbers of victims since most films are ambiguous on this point; like other serial killer texts, they hint at an unknowable number of interchangeable victims. Victims are only counted when they are part of the killer's 'series'; for example, I have excluded police officers murdered by the killer to allow him to escape capture. I have indicated the 'type' of victim where the film offers this information. Motive is tricky to pin down but I have detailed the motive offered by the film without commenting on ideological biases as my analysis chapters explore these points. While the motives listed are somewhat reductive, my intention here is to summarise rather than critique the films' depictions of motive.

Although many cinematic representations allude to some extent to real killers, I have noted those films which dramatise specific real cases. My categorisation of the main features of these films refers to *their* depiction of events rather than historically recorded fact, as in some cases the films depart quite considerably from accepted versions of events.

The splitting of film trends into decades allows the analysis of time-specific developments but no cinematic shift can be expected to adhere rigidly to decades. It is apparent from the colour-coding used in the table that there are overlaps amongst these cycles (the 1990s profiler film, for example, lasts into the 2000s). My categorisation of films within decades, therefore, is intended to offer a concise way in which to discuss the film trends rather than definitive start and end points.

Colour coding

1980s profiler film

1980s/1990s portrait film

1990s profiler film

2000s coherent portrait film

2000s chaotic portrait film

2000s protagonist-killer film

2000s torture porn

Year	Title	Setting	Profiler	Killer	Motive	Victims
1978	<i>Eyes of Laura Mars</i>	Contemporary Manhattan	White, female photographer who psychically 'sees' killings	White male detective	Split personality; witnessed neglectful prostitute mother's murder as child	Colleagues of profiler; mostly female, one gay man
1979	<i>Time After Time</i>	Victorian London/contemporary San Francisco	White, middle class male writer (H G Wells)	White male surgeon (Jack the Ripper) using Wells' time machine	Sexual sadism	Young women
1980	<i>Cruising</i>	Contemporary New York	Italian American male police officer working undercover (may be killer)	Ambiguous – may be the profiler, possibly several killers	Sexual sadism and split personality both suggested	Young gay men
1980	<i>The First Deadly Sin</i>	Contemporary New York	White male detective nearing retirement	White businessman	Unexplained; possibly insanity, rage at immorality	Various
1983	<i>The Dead Zone</i>	Contemporary New England	White male teacher with psychic abilities	White male police officer	Sexual motives; repressive mother	Young women

1984	<i>Tightrope</i>	Contemporary New Orleans	White male detective	White male	Sexual motives	Young women
1985	<i>Confessions of a Serial Killer</i>	Contemporary America	Various police officers but no profiler	Three white drifters (two male, one female) with a focus on male 'leader' (based on Lucas/Toole murders)	Unexplained	Various, mainly women
1985	<i>The Mean Season</i>	Contemporary Miami	White male journalist	White male	Celebrity, duplicating earlier, ignored crimes	Various
1986	<i>Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer</i>	Contemporary Chicago	None	Two white male working class parolees, one 'taught' by the other (based on Lucas/Toole murders)	Unexplained, rage?	Various
1986	<i>Manhunter</i>	Contemporary America	White male former FBI agent	1) White male psychiatrist 2) White male photography technician	1) Unexplained (precede start of film) 2) Seeking transformation	1) Female college students 2) Middle class white families chosen through home movies
1987	<i>Angel Heart</i>	1950s New York/ New Orleans	White male private detective	White male private detective, controlled by the devil	Devil taking revenge after Faustian pact	Those associated with Faustian pact
1987	<i>The Rosary Murders</i>	Contemporary Detroit	White priest	White abusive father	Seeking revenge after suicide of daughter who told priest of abuse	Priests and nuns
1988	<i>Cop</i>	Contemporary Los Angeles	White male detective	White male	Misogyny, sexually motivated	Young women
1988	<i>Jack's Back</i>	Contemporary American city	White male with psychic connection to murdered brother who witnessed killing	White male doctor	Mimicking Jack the Ripper	Young women, working mainly as prostitutes
1988	<i>Off Limits</i>	1970s Saigon	White male army investigator helped by black partner and white nun	White male army officer	Misogyny and racism; promotion failure blamed on Korean wife of superior who	Vietnamese women working as prostitutes

					disliked his working class background	
1989	<i>The January Man</i>	Contemporary New York	White male former detective	White male	Celebrity	Young women
1989	<i>Relentless</i>	Contemporary Los Angeles	White male novice detective	White male rejected by police force	Seeking approval of dead, violent police officer father	Various, selected at random from telephone directory
1989	<i>Sea of Love</i>	Contemporary New York	Italian American detective	Working class white male	Jealousy, monitoring sexuality of ex-wife	Ex-wife's potential lovers
1990	<i>The Exorcist III</i>	Contemporary American city	White male detective	White male possessed by demon	Revenge for exorcism detailed in <i>The Exorcist</i>	Those associated with the original exorcism
1991	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	Contemporary America	White female trainee FBI agent (only catches one killer)	1) White male psychiatrist 2) White male	1) Unexplained (precede start of film) 2) Seeking transformation	1) Not discussed 2) Young women
1992	<i>Candyman</i>	Contemporary Chicago	White female sociology student	Ghost of a black slave	Unexplained	Anyone who repeats his name five times into a mirror (mainly women)
1992	<i>Jennifer Eight</i>	Contemporary rural California	Hispanic Los Angeles male detective	White male police officer	Sexually motivated; childhood trauma	Blind young women
1993	<i>Kalifornia</i>	Contemporary rural America	White male writer	Rural 'white trash' male	Profit; random rage	Various
1993	<i>The Secret Life: Jeffrey Dahmer</i>	Contemporary Milwaukee	None	White male (based on Dahmer murders)	Sexually motivated	Young men, mainly of Asian and black descent
1993	<i>Striking Distance</i>	Contemporary Pittsburgh	White male detective	White male detective (cousin of profiler)	Sexually motivated/revenge on profiler	Young women, later victims are known to profiler
1993	<i>Blink</i>	Contemporary Chicago	White female musician given donated corneas from killer's girlfriend	White male hospital technician	Delusion/seeking revenge after girlfriend's death	Recipients of girlfriend's donated organs
1995	<i>Copycat</i>	Contemporary San Francisco	White female psychologist helped by white female detective	1) 'White trash' male 2) White male laboratory technician	1) Not explained 2) Imitating famous killers	1) Unknown 2) Various, selected to mirror demographics of famous killers'

						victims
1995	<i>Hideaway</i>	Contemporary American city	White male antique dealer with psychic link to killer	Young white male Satanist	Satanic ritual/building art out of corpses	Young women
1995	<i>Seven</i>	Contemporary American city	Black male detective nearing retirement helped by young white male detective (fails to stop completion of series)	White male	Symbolic attack on modern apathy and sinfulness	Various, deemed guilty of specific (Christian-defined) sins
1995	<i>Sleepstalker</i>	Contemporary American city	White male writer (brother of killer) helped by white female friend	'Resurrected' executed white male	Traumatized by child abuse	White families
1995	<i>Virtuosity</i>	Near-future Los Angeles	Black male former detective now imprisoned helped by white female psychologist	White male computer program (amalgam of many killers) brought to 'life'	Fulfilling programmed characteristics	Various
1996	<i>The Glimmer Man</i>	Contemporary Los Angeles	White male detective (former intelligence operative) helped by black male detective	1) White male 2) Crime gang mimicking real killer to frame profiler	1) Christian-based delusions 2) Framing of profiler	White families
1996	<i>Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer, Part 2</i>	Contemporary America	None	White male drifter (based on Lucas murders)	Unexplained	Various
1997	<i>Kiss the Girls</i>	Contemporary North Carolina	Older black male psychologist helped by younger female victim after escape	Two white men working together; one doctor, one police officer	Sexually motivated, both desire to 'possess' their victims	Attractive, talented young women
1997	<i>Switchback</i>	Contemporary rural America	White male FBI agent	Black male	Unexplained	Various
1998	<i>Bone Daddy</i>	Contemporary American city	White male pathologist	White male pathologist	Revenge on profiler	Various, mostly associated with profiler
1998	<i>Diary of a Serial Killer</i>	Contemporary American city	White male journalist	Male, possibly of Arab descent	Sexually motivated	Attractive young white women
1998	<i>Fallen</i>	Contemporary Philadelphia	Black male detective helped by white female academic (detective dies)	White male and others (various races and genders) possessed by	Metaphysical evil	Various

			and demon escapes)	demon		
1999	<i>The Bone Collector</i>	Contemporary New York	Black male disabled forensic specialist aided by young white trainee police officer	White male forensic specialist jailed for manipulating evidence	Revenge on profiler who exposed his crimes	Various
1999	<i>Eye of the Killer</i>	Contemporary American city	White male detective with psychic ability	Invented by white male journalist (unrelated deaths linked by faked 'signature')	'Series' invented to boost circulation	Various
1999	<i>In Dreams</i>	Contemporary New England	White female children's author with psychic link with killer	White male	Traumatized by childhood abuse	Children
2000	<i>The Cell</i>	Contemporary American city	Hispanic female psychologist helped by white male detective	White male	Sexually motivated; traumatized by childhood abuse	Young women
2000	<i>Ed Gein</i>	1950s Wisconsin	None	White male (based on Gein murders)	Punishing the 'sinful', attempting to resurrect dead mother	Middle-aged women
2000	<i>Frequency</i>	Contemporary New York	White male detective helped by father (time travel plot)	White male	Sexually motivated	Young female nurses
2000	<i>Red Team</i>	Contemporary American city	White male FBI agent (murder conspiracy remains unsolved)	FBI agents in specialist serial killer unit (all white, most male)	Vigilantism	Serial killers
2000	<i>The Watcher</i>	Contemporary Chicago	White male detective	White male	Sexually motivated/obsessed with profiler	Young women
2001	<i>Frailty</i>	Contemporary/1980s Texas	White male FBI agent (also a killer and himself killed)	White male sheriff with ability to identify 'demons'	Killing demons	Demons in human form
2001	<i>From Hell</i>	1888 London	White male detective (discovers conspiracy but fails to prove it)	Jack the Ripper; Masonic/Royal conspiracy	Killing witnesses to a secret royal wedding	White women working as prostitutes
2001	<i>Hannibal</i>	Contemporary America and Florence	White female FBI agent (fails to catch killer)	White male psychiatrist	Unexplained	Various – mainly the rude, greedy
2001	<i>Replicant</i>	Contemporary	White male retired	White male	Traumatized childhood	Women he believes to

		America	detective helped by clone of killer			be 'bad mothers'
2002	<i>Dahmer</i>	1980s-1990s Milwaukee	None	White male	Sexually motivated, response to loneliness?	Young men, mainly of Asian and black descent
2002	<i>D-Tox</i>	Contemporary American city/rural rehab facility	White detective	White male	Sexually motivated/revenge on profiler	Young women
2002	<i>Feardotcom</i>	Contemporary New York	White female Dept of Health investigator	1) White male doctor 2) White female ghost of doctor's victim	1) Sexually motivated 2) Seeking revenge	1) Young women 2) Visitors to doctor's snuff website
2002	<i>Red Dragon</i>	Contemporary America	White male former FBI agent	1) White male psychiatrist 2) White male photography technician	1) Unexplained (precede start of film) 2) Seeking transformation	1) Female college students 2) Middle class white families chosen through home movies
2002	<i>Speck</i>	1966 Chicago	Black detective	White working class male (based on Speck murders)	Sexually motivated	Young female nurses
2002	<i>Ted Bundy</i>	1960s-1970s America	None	White middle class male (based on Bundy murders)	Sexually motivated; rage at powerlessness?	Young white women
2003	<i>Gacy</i>	1970s-1980s Chicago	None	White male (based on Gacy murders)	Sexually motivated	Young men/teenage boys
2004	<i>The Hillside Strangler</i>	Late 1970s Los Angeles	None	Two working class Italian American men (based on Bianchi/Buono case)	Sexually motivated	Young women
2004	<i>Mindhunters</i>	Contemporary American island used for FBI training	White female FBI trainee	White male FBI trainee	Power; proving intelligence	FBI agents and trainees
2004	<i>Saw</i>	Contemporary American city	Black male detective (killed by killer)	Wealthy white male engineer	Brain tumour; 'teaching' survival instinct	Various, all deemed in need to 'tests' to reawaken survival instinct

2004	<i>Starkweather</i>	1950s rural Nebraska	None	Young white working class man with girlfriend who does not kill (based on Starkweather/Fugate case)	Profit; random rage; split personality	Various
2004	<i>Suspect Zero</i>	Contemporary America	White male FBI agent with psychic ability	1) White male psychic 2) White male	1) Vigilantism 2) Sexually motivated	1) Uncaught serial killers 2) Children
2004	<i>Taking Lives</i>	Contemporary Montreal	White female FBI agent	White male	Adopts victims' identities	White men
2004	<i>Twisted</i>	Contemporary San Francisco	White female detective	Black male police commissioner, profiler's 'mentor'	Punishing profiler for sexual relationships	Profiler's sexual partners
2005	<i>BTK Killer</i>	1970s-1990s Wichita	None	White male council compliance officer (based on Rader murders)	Sexually motivated	Young women
2005	<i>Green River Killer</i>	1980s-1990s Utah	None	White working class male (based on Ridgeway murders)	Sexually motivated	Young women working as prostitutes
2005	<i>Saw II</i>	Contemporary American city	White male detective (fails to catch killer)	1) Wealthy white male engineer 2) White female 'disciple'	1) Brain tumour/'teaching' lost survival instinct 2) Disciple to killer	Various, all deemed in need to 'tests' to reawaken survival instinct
2006	<i>Saw III</i>	Contemporary American city	White male detective (fails to catch killer and peripheral to main events)	1) Wealthy white male engineer 2) White female 'disciple'	1) Brain tumour/'teaching' lost survival instinct 2) Disciple to killer	Various, all deemed in need to 'tests' to reawaken survival instinct
2007	<i>Chicago Massacre: Richard Speck</i>	1966 Chicago	None	White working class male (based on Speck case)	Sexually motivated	Young female nurses
2007	<i>Ed Gein: Butcher of Plainfield</i>	1950s Wisconsin	None	White male (based on Gein case)	Unexplained	Various
2007	<i>The Gray Man</i>	1920s-1930s New York	None, one detective takes special interest in case	White male (based on Fish murders)	Sexually motivated; cannibalism	Children

2007	<i>Hannibal Rising</i>	1940s Europe	White male detective (fails to catch killer)	White male teenager orphaned by WW2	Avenging death of murdered sister	Killers of sister; those who threaten surviving family
2007	<i>Mr Brooks</i>	Contemporary Portland	White female detective (catches one killer)	1) White businessman 2) 'White trash' male and female accomplice 3) Daughter of businessman	1) 'Addiction' 2) Sexually motivated 3) 'Addiction'	1) Couples 2) Various 3) Unknown
2007	<i>Saw IV</i>	Contemporary American city	Black detective (fails to catch killer)	1) Wealthy white male engineer 2) White female 'disciple' 3) White male detective 'disciple'	1) Brain tumour/'teaching' lost survival instinct 2/3) Disciple to killer	Various, all deemed in need to 'tests' to reawaken survival instinct
2007	<i>Scar</i>	1980s/Contemporary rural America	White female serial killer survivor	1) White male killer 2) Teenage white male 'disciple'	1) Power; sexually motivated 2) As above; recreating crimes	Teenagers, mainly female
2008	<i>Baseline Killer</i>	2000s Arizona	None	Two working class males (based on unsolved Baseline Road murders)	Sexually motivated?	Young women
2008	<i>BTK</i>	1970s-1990s Wichita	None	White male council compliance officer (based on Rader murders)	Sexually motivated	Young women
2008	<i>Bundy: A Legacy of Evil</i>	1960s-1960s America	None	White middle class male (based on Bundy murders)	Sexually motivated; disturbed by illegitimacy	Young attractive women
2008	<i>Righteous Kill</i>	Contemporary New York	White male detective	White male detective	Vigilantism	Male criminals who escape justice
2008	<i>Saw V</i>	Contemporary America city	White male detective (fails to catch killer)	White male detective disciple	Disciple to killer from previous films	Various, all deemed in need to 'tests' to reawaken survival instinct
2008	<i>Son of Sam</i>	1970s New York	None	White male (based on	Power?	Young couples

				Berkowitz murders)		
2008	<i>Untraceable</i>	Contemporary Portland	White female FBI agent	Young white male	Revenge on those who screened father's suicide on internet	Various, all connected to internet death film
2008	<i>Surveillance</i>	Rural Nebraska	White male and female 'FBI agents'	White male and female masquerading as FBI agents	Sexually motivated	Various

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Filmography

The Abominable Dr Phibes (Robert Fuest, 1971)
The Accidental Tourist (Lawrence Kasdan, 1988)
Adaptation. (Spike Jonze, 2002)
All the President's Men (Alan J Pakula, 1976)
American Beauty (Sam Mendes, 1999)
American Psycho (Mary Harron, 2000)
American Psycho II: All American Girl (Morgan J. Freeman, 2002)
Angel Heart (Alan Parker, 1987)
Badlands (Terrence Malick, 1973)
Baseline Killer (Ulli Lommel, 2008)
Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon (Scott Glosserman, 2006)
The Blair Witch Project (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez, 1999)
Blink (Michael Apted, 1994)
Blue Steel (Kathryn Bigelow, 1989)
The Bone Collector (Phillip Noyce, 1999)
Bone Daddy (Mario Azzopardi, 1998)
The Boogeyman (Ulli Lommel, 1980)
The Bourne Identity (Doug Liman 2002)
Broadcast News (James L Brooks, 1987)
BTK (Michael Feifer, 2008)
BTK Killer (Ulli Lommel, 2005)
Bundy: A Legacy of Evil (Michael Feifer, 2008)
Candyman (Bernard Rose, 1992)
Cannibal Holocaust (Ruggero Deodato, 1980)
Captivity (Roland Joffé, 2007)
The Cell (Tarsem Singh, 2000)
Chicago Massacre: Richard Speck (Michael Feifer, 2007)
Cloverfield (Matt Reeves, 2008)
The Collector (William Wyler, 1965)
The Collector (Marcus Dunstan, 2009)
Con Air (Simon West, 1997)
Confessions of a Serial Killer (Mark Blair, 1985)
Cop (James B Harris, 1988)

Copycat (Jon Amiel, 1995)
Cruising (William Friedkin, 1980)
Dahmer (David Jacobson, 2002)
Dances With Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990)
The Dark Knight (Christopher Nolan, 2008)
The Dead Zone (David Cronenberg 1983)
Death Walks at Midnight (Luciano Ercoli, 1972)
Deep Impact (Mimi Leder, 1998)
Diary of A Serial Killer (Joshua Wallace, 1998)
Disturbia (DJ Caruso, 2007)
D-Tox (Jim Gillespie, 2002)
Eagle Eye (DJ Caruso, 2008)
Ed Gein (Chuck Parelo, 2001)
Ed Gein: Butcher of Plainfield (Michael Feifer, 2007)
Enemy of the State (Tony Scott, 1998)
Eye of the Killer (Paul Marcus, 1999)
Eyes of Laura Mars (Irvin Kershner, 1978)
The Exorcist III (William Peter Blatty, 1990)
Fallen (Gregory Hoblit, 1998)
Falling Down (Joel Schumacher, 1993)
Fatal Attraction (Adrian Lyne, 1987)
Feardotcom (William Malone, 2002)
Fight Club (David Fincher, 1999)
The First Deadly Sin (Brian G Hutton, 1980)
Frailty (Bill Paxton, 2001)
Frequency (Gregory Hoblit, 2000)
Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood (John Carl Buechler, 1988)
The Frighteners (Peter Jackson, 1996)
From Hell (Hughes Brothers, 2001)
Funny Games (Michael Haneke, 1997)
Gacy (Clive Saunders, 2003)
Gattaca (Andrew M. Niccol, 1997)
The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (Niels Arden Oplev, 2009)
The Glimmer Man (John Gray, 1996)
Glory (Edward Zwick, 1989)
The Gray Man (Scott L Flynn, 2007)

Green River Killer (Ulli Lommel, 2005)
Halloween (John Carpenter, 1978)
Hannibal (Ridley Scott, 2001)
Hannibal Rising (Peter Webber, 2007)
Heat (Michael Mann, 1996)
Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer (John McNaughton, 1986)
Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer, Part 2 (Chuck Parelo, 1996)
Hideaway (Brett Leonard, 1995)
H H Holmes: America's First Serial Killer (John Borowski, 2004)
The Hillside Strangler (Chuck Parelo, 2004)
The Hills Have Eyes (Wes Craven, 1977)
The Honeymoon Killers (Leonard Kastle, 1969)
Hostel (Eli Roth, 2005)
Hostel II (Eli Roth, 2007)
How to Be a Serial Killer (Luke Ricci, 2008)
The Hunt for the BTK Strangler (Stephen T. Kay, 2005)
In Dreams (Neil Jordan, 1999)
I Survived BTK (Marc Levitz, 2010)
Jack's Back (Rowdy Herrington, 1988)
The January Man (Pat O'Connor, 1989)
Jennifer Eight (Bruce Robinson, 1992)
Kalifornia (Dominic Sena, 1993)
Kiss the Girls (Gary Fleder, 1997)
The Last Broadcast (Stefan Avalos, Lance Weiler, 1998)
Last House on the Left (Wes Craven, 1972)
The Last Seduction (John Dahl, 1994)
The Legend of Bagger Vance (Robert Redford, 2000)
M (Fritz Lang, 1931)
Man Bites Dog (Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde, 1992)
The Manchurian Candidate (Jonathan Demme, 2004)
Manhunter (Michael Mann, 1986)
The Matrix (Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski, 1999)
The Mean Season (Philip Borsos, 1985)
Mindhunters (Renny Harlin, 2004)
Mona Lisa (Neil Jordan, 1986)
Monster (Patty Jenkins, 2003)

Mr Brooks (Bruce A Evans, 2007)
Murder One (Graeme Campbell, 1988)
Natural Born Killers (Oliver Stone, 1994)
Nightmare on Elm Street (Wes Craven, 1984)
Off Limits (Christopher Crowe, 1988)
Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1960)
Philadelphia (Jonathan Demme, 1993)
Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)
The Raven (Ulli Lommel, 2007)
Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954)
REC (Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza, 2007)
Red Dragon (Brett Ratner, 2002)
Red Road (Andrea Arnold, 2006)
Red Team (Jeremy Haft, 2000)
Relentless (William Lustig, 1989)
Replicant (Ringo Lam, 2001)
Righteous Kill (Jon Avnet, 2008)
The Riverman (Bill Eagles, 2004)
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves (Kevin Reynolds, 1991)
The Rosary Murders (Fred Walton, 1987)
Saw (James Wan, 2004)
Saw II (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2005)
Saw III (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2006)
Saw IV (Darren Lynn Bousman, 2007)
Saw V (David Hackl, 2008)
Saw 3D (Kevin Greutert, 2010)
Scar (Jed Weintrob, 2007)
Sea of Love (Harold Becker, 1989)
The Secret Life: Jeffrey Dahmer (David R Bowen, 1993)
Serial Mom (John Waters, 1994)
Seven (David Fincher, 1995)
The Shawshank Redemption (Frank Darabont, 1994)
The Silence of the Lambs (Jonathan Demme, 1991)
The Skin I Live In (Pedro Almodovar, 2011)
Sleepstalker (Turi Meyer, 1995)
So I Married an Axe Murderer (Thomas Schlamme, 1993)

Son of Sam (Ulli Lommel, 2008)
Speck (Keith Walley, 2002)
The Spiral Staircase (Robert Siodmak, 1945)
Starkweather (Byron Werner, 2004)
The Stepfather (Joseph Ruben, 1987)
The Stepfather (Nelson McCormick, 2009)
The Strangers (Bryan Bertino, 2008)
Striking Distance (Rowdy Herrington, 1993)
A Study in Terror (James Hill, 1965)
Summer of Sam (Spike Lee, 1999)
Surveillance (Jennifer Lynch, 2008)
Suspect Zero (E. Elias Merhige, 2004)
Switchback (Jeb Stuart, 1997)
Taking Lives (D J Caruso, 2004)
Taxi Driver (Martin Scorsese, 1976)
Ted Bundy (Matthew Bright, 2002)
The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, 1974)
Thelma and Louise (Ridley Scott, 1991)
Tightrope (Richard Tuggle, 1984)
Time After Time (Nicholas Meyer, 1979)
True Romance (Tony Scott, 1993)
Trust (David Schwimmer, 2010)
Twisted (Philip Kaufman, 2004)
Untraceable (Gregory Hoblit, 2008)
The Usual Suspects (Bryan Singer, 1995)
Virtuosity (Brett Leonard, 1995)
The Watcher (Joe Charbanic, 2000)
Wayne's World (Penelope Spheeris, 1992)
While the City Sleeps (Fritz Lang, 1956)
White of the Eye (Donald Cammell, 1987)
Zodiac (David Fincher, 2007)
Zombie Nation (Ulli Lommel, 2004)

Television series

Buffy the Vampire Slayer (The WB, UPN, 1997 - 2003)

Castle (ABC, 2009 -)

Coronation Street (Granada, ITV, 1960 -)

Criminal Minds (CBS, 2005 -)

CSI: NY (*Crime Scene Investigation: New York*) (Atlantic Alliance, CBS, 2004 -)

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Atlantic Alliance, CBS, 2000 -)

The Deliberate Stranger (NBC, 1986)

Dexter, (Showtime, CBS, 2006 -)

Martina Cole's Lady Killers (ITV, 2008)

The Mentalist (CBS, 2008 -)

Miami Vice (NBC, USA Network, 1984 - 1989)

Millennium (Fox, 1996 -1999)

Numb3rs (Scott Free Productions, CBS, 2005 - 11)

Prime Suspect (Granada Television/ITV Productions, 1991)

Profiler (ABC, 1996 - 2000)

Sherlock (BBC, 2010 -)

The Sopranos (HBO, 1999 - 2007)

To Catch a Killer (Creative Entertainment Group, 1992)

24 (Fox, 2001 - 2010)

Twin Peaks (ABC, 1990 - 1991)

Unsub (Stephen J Cannell Productions, NBC. 1989)

The Wire (2002 - 2008; HBO)

The X-Files (Fox, 1993 - 2002)