#### Violence and Film in the US

#### **Complexities in Film Violence**

- "Violence" is not a single thing.
- Is only physical violence violence, or are emotional and psychological violence to be considered?
- How violence is defined and the steps taken to regulate it are *political actions*.

## **Complexities in Film Violence**

- Elements to be considered in analysis:
  - the act
  - the actor (perpetrator and performer)
  - the victim
  - the motivation of the act
  - the representation of the act
  - the narrative context in which the act occurs
  - the tone or mood of the film
  - the purpose for which the act is presented
  - strategies of spectator attachment
  - reception situation

#### How Violence Is Made Palatable

- narrative and style
  - constructive versus destructive violence
  - secure/paranoid endings
  - violence as ritual
  - iconic stars
  - iconic weapons
  - displacement in time and/or space
  - stylized violence, cartoony excess
  - non-realistic cinematic style: nondiegetic music, obtrusive cinematography and/or editing, obvious CGI and SFX

## De Quincey's two-handled cup

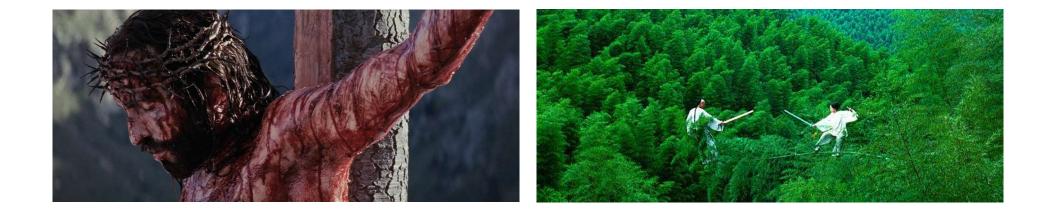


## Example: Bonnie and Clyde (1967)





#### Violence as Ritual



# **Iconic Stars**



## **Iconic Weapons**





## **Stylized Violence**



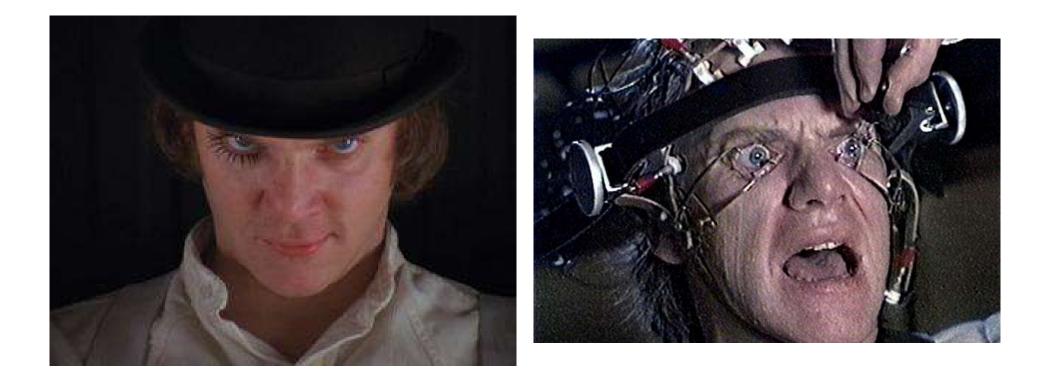
#### Tarantino and the 1990s: Balletic Bloodshed and Mixed Responses



## **Cartoony Violence**



#### Problematic Example: Spectator Attachment



#### Problematic Example: Using Violence to Critique Violence



#### Criticism of the MPAA

- "Ratings creep"
- most apparent in PG-13 and R categories
- filmmakers push for PG-13 ratings for commercial reasons
- nonviability of NC-17  $\rightarrow$  R ratings for extreme content

#### **Common Beliefs about Mediated Violence**

- A cathartic way to cope with fears
  - no evidence for this
- Viewers attach to perpetrators of violence
  - little evidence for this in horror films
- A social safety valve for aggression
  - no evidence for this