

'Violence Is Bad, but It's Just a Game': The Glorification of Violence from Roman Antiquity to Popular Culture

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Abstract : Violence and entertainment are not mutually exclusive subjects in the Ancient Roman world, in reality they are closely knit together. Their world is permeated by repeated and continuous episodes of violence in its many manifestations, both sanctioned and spontaneous, most of which is considered as some form of entertainment, from plays and writings through the spectrum to the gladiatorial arena. In the 21st century this socio-psychological dynamic is manifested through the stage provided by the screen and what we watch in terms of TV, movies and games. This glorification of violence in a modern world is not out of place as seen in contemporary post apocalyptic/ dystopian literature, film and computer games where the act of violence, frowned upon by social norms and values, becomes sanctioned by the (un)real nature of the game: 'I am not a violent person, violence is bad, this is just a game'. This paper will examine how violence is framed in the Ancient World and subsequently how it is received by popular culture to represent a world in which the maintenance of stability can only be achieved through officially sanctioned violence, whether sanctioned by the State or the gaming community. This argument will examine both ancient and modern critics of violence such as Seneca, Coleman and Foucault and framed by Baudrillard's commentary on the post-modern conceptualization of reality.

Keywords : entertainment, violence, gladiatorial games, gaming

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