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MONOGRAPH

- The horror genre in American cinema. Origins, representatives and progress throughout the years.

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GRATITUDE

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SUMMARY

The monograph takes a deep look into the horror genre in cinematography. First, in order to really get to know the genre, it is fundamental to understands the origins, the context itself. By analyzing the factors of the genre, it is explained how the roll of emotions and feelings play. What is intended for an audience, is to get them into a horrifying experience, fill them with fear and probably even anxiety. But as I mention it is only an intention, a film should follow a list of things that are considered good to make horror films. These characteristics may vary many times, but the most important things like sound, makeup and placement are advised to be considered the most.

After we understand the context of the genre, we take a look at the first historic films as examples that contain basics of the genre. Then all the follow up works by decades, the influence these movies had in society, and how was the genre progressing throughout the years. The most iconic films with the most iconic characters. Looking at the more classic ones like Dracula, Frankenstein and The Wolf Man, and then the more modern ones like Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers, Leather face.

For the final chapter, an analysis took place to understand what people like about horror films. What society thinks about the genre and what are the most fundamental characteristics should be considered. Also, some 2000′s films are showed so there is an idea of how the genre is nowadays. It is important to know what is trending, because there are so many films, only some of these are real successes and people like them. At the end the opinions may vary by each person, but some things are fundamental and complement the genre, things people think should be considered by majority.

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INTRODUCTION

The horror genre is one of the most important genres in cinematography, it covers subgenres like thriller, or suspense. This genre has had a large journey, since 1896 there have been hundred of thousands of films that have made history. It is not a genre for everyone, it is indeed horrific, so it depends on the movie. It is not a genre for children or sensitive people who cannot tolerate horror films. The main point of many films is either to scare the audience in a literal way or try to get in the heads of the watchers in a psychological way.

It is important to know the origins of the genre, the progress throughout the years and how it is doing currently. The reason is divided in two answers, the first one, general culture, or cinematic culture. The other one, which is linked to the first one, is interesting to know a little more about the best movies of the genre, some which are a lot of people´s first choice for favorite movie. It is like having bloopers, people must get to know a little more than just the movie, they must know the story behind it, the purpose, at least from some historic films of the genre.

Not only analyzing the most influential films by decades, understanding the origins of the genre, it has also been fundamental to know the reaction of the society and how it changed throughout the years. This is important because the way how the industry works is that they do what people like, that is why there are a lot of franchises, and what is trending, the reason why copycats exist is due to huge successes that are trending, so companies try to make similar films.

The horror genre, at its beginnings were very basic, simple spooky ideas brought to life in black and white with ghosts, witches, bats and more. Later, many influential characters came to life, such as Frankenstein, Dracula, The Wolf Man. The science fiction effects improve the way how movies looked and as years passed by, new concepts were brought. Lately in the twenty first century, gorier, bloody movies are trending, something not seen as much back in the 50´s.

The monography is divided in 3 chapters. The first chapter talks about the horror genre, its beginnings and how it came to life. The second chapter talks about the progress throughout the years and the most influential films by decades. The third and last chapter talks about the current horror genre and has a conclusion of an applied survey that asks people most of all, what they like to see in horror films and what make a horror film a good one.

Chapter I

The beginnings of the horror genre

1.1 Its beginnings

1.2 Origins.

The word "horror" means a strong feeling of fear, something intense, sometimes shocking, other times disgusting. The idea of the horror genre is to provide a terrifying experience, that could cause you panic, nervousness and that feeling that your biggest fears come to life, all with the purpose of entertainment. Horror films takes us to a shady environment, sometimes to dull places, that feel murky. The catch is to get the viewer to feel alarmed, to scare him and to provoke trepidation. In the horror genre we can find many things that we could look as weaknesses, such as our fear to animals, fear to zombies, to monsters, our nightmares or even sexual fears. All the traits the horror genre possesses are linked to fear.

The genre is often tied to the thriller genre, which is all about suspense, that feeling of excitement or anxiety of what may happen. This is due to the concern that the horror genre provides, this makes the audience feel worried and when you combine all the emotions, what you get is a real experience, a great one. Also, the intensity of the violence is what makes it great, people often like watching this kind of explicit stuff, "Living in a violent time has not diminished our taste for blood" (Lake, 1994, p. 1).

Another genre that is related to the horror genre is the science fiction. Everyone knows that science fiction brings a better experience wherever it is due to its more likely to have great special effects and helps with the fact that horror genre is linked to the fantasy and supernatural. So, it gives a very good touch with for example, the monsters, the more real it looks, the more terrifying it looks, the better. Implementing effects of sound was also fundamental, "The horror film was particularly amenable to the bizarre effects that could be achieved through a foregrounding of 3-D and stereophonic sound" (Heffernan, 2004, p. 24).

Horror films takes us back over 100 years ago, giving us an opening to a scary world, full of emotions of fear and thrill. In horror films, the bad, horrifying or chaotic forces need to be defeated, and often in these films there is a victory over the bad forces.

The first horror films were gothic in style, they were obviously in black and white at that time, and they were often set in spooky places, such as old mansions, castles or any scary looking local. The main character could be human, creature or monster like vampires, zombies, werewolves, evil spirits, demons or any diabolic macabre presence.

Horror films had been developed in many sources, such as folktales with devil forces, myths and ghost stories. A lot of influence in various novels like Oscar Wilde´s "The picture of Dorian Gray" or "The Island of Dr. Moreau" by H.G. Wells that were adapted to film versions. The films were inaudible, and this gave the films a cinematic unique expressive style. Later, a lot of this films were remade with audio.

In the history of film, one of the most recognizable characters is the vampire, manifesting from the early cinema to present-day, the bloodsucking creatures were the ones who frightened a lot of people from different cultures around the globe. In the big-screen the vampire tales have always been a relic for the horror genre. It was around the 18th and 19th century that the vampires began to emerge in the world of fiction, right while writer Bram Stoker wrote the famous classic novel Dracula.

Even though the most popular films at the beginnings of the horror genre were long enough to be compared with nowadays horror films, the first horror film was only 2 minutes long, originally titled "Le Manoir Du Diable" more known as The Devil´s Castle (1896) was made by filmmaker Georges Melies. It has all the essential elements that are used in horror films today, the more basic stuff but still very representative. The witches, the ghosts, the demon, the flying bats and in this case a spooky castle as the place. But not long after, Victor Hugo´s novel *Notre-Dame de Paris* was adapted into a film directed by Alice Guy titled *Esmeralda* in 1905, becoming the first 10-minute length horror short. Later, it was adapted to be a full-length film called *The Hunchkback of Notre Dame* (1911).

1.3 Representatives and influential people.

1.4 Works of representatives.

Most of the early full-length horror films were made by German filmmakers in the 1910´s and 1920´s. A notable film was *The Golem* (1915) made by writers and directors Henreik Galeen and Paul Wegener, a story about an eerie statue being brought to life by an antique dealer, that made use of him until the statue fell in love with the antique dealer´s wife and because it wasn´t possible for the statue to be with her, he engages in a killing rampage. What we can learn from this, is that at the beginning it was just fine, as it progresses, the idea of love begins to engage, but because it is horror, the huge statue of clay can´t find love and rages at a point where it begins killing everything at its path. What we get is a terrifying looking creation that betray its mentor and becomes bloodthirsty.

The German Expressionist Cinema was a big deal in films back in the time films were incorporating, and in the horror genre one of the biggest films was *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). A film that provides us a style with very good visual effects, great stunning scenes where we can appreciate the art of the expressionist cinema. What makes a lot of people say it is the real true horror film is the visual illustration of the bizarre and twisted style. So as movie expert says "Caligari is said to be the first example in cinema of German Expressionism, a visual style in which not only the characters but the world itself is out of joint" (Ebert, 2009, p. 2). It is important to consider this style, it is an influential horror film after all, giving birth to a great horror style, opening doors for more films later those years, implementing the same style.

The first vampire picture was produced by the filmmaker and director F. W. Murnau, *Nosferatu* (1922), it was an unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker´s novel "Dracula". This became problems for the film, with copyright issues, the name changed from Dracula to Nosferatu and the place was Bremen instead of Transylvania. The highlight in this film is the main character, in this case the vampire Nosferatu, being a classic monster in the cinematic world. This may be due to the appearance, how realistic it looked, and the small details gave life to an unforgettable character. Even though we are talking about a horror film, a lot of people think is more symbolic or artistic, "Nosferatu has always stood apart from other expressionist films made in Germany, in this period such as Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919) because of its use of real locations rather than expressionistically designed sets and lighting" (Hantke, 2004, p. 13).

Chapter II

Progress throughout the years

2.1 Journey and development

2.2 Influence in the society.

To have a good start, let´s begin with a classic of the 1900´s, a story created by Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", a tale taken to the theaters as "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde". The story of a doctor that transforms into an evil version of himself using a magical formula. This movie is an adaptation from the book, the first one in 1908. Afterwards there have been a lot more adaptations, all having the same great concept of the book. The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde El Ying and the Yang of people:

> "Men are inclined to evil by nature; so that all, when they find no pleasure or utility in evil, like good more than evil; but since their nature is fragile, and the occasions that incite them to evil are infinite, they are easily inclined by natural inclination by self-interest. (Guicciardini, 1512, p. 30)

What made this a great story is the way Dr. Jekyll behaves and has a double personality that is nothing like him. According to Robert Louis Balfour "I suppose when the drunkard reasons with himself about his vice, not once in five hundred does he allow himself to be influenced by the dangers to which

his brutal insensitivity exposes him"(parr.5). The critics were above expectancy, being a great success. Even though it was still silent cinema, it remains as a good adaptation.

We are talking cinema language in here, but people must admit this is one of those cases were the book is way better than the movie, in fact, it is because most of the time, the film adaptations are just not long enough to project to the audience all the things that happen in the book, some important details or they just skip a good part. The idea of creating a good movie based on a book or novel is to capture the essence of it and try giving it life, doing this makes it more likely to convince people more that the movie is like the book. Because a lot of good readers are also film lovers, and if they enjoy the film as much or more than the book, then you know it is a good adaptation.

2.2.1   In the 30´s

The first big hit in the 30´s portrayed the iconic character of Dracula, the most influential character, appearing in nearly 200 representations, so what a way to start the decade in horror cinema. As we already know this film; Dracula (1931); is an adaptation of Bram Stoker´s novel, but this one could be described as an exotic bloody explicit movie. It may sound not as horrific as it is, but little details like Bela Lugosi interpreting the main character give it some touch of extravagant feel to it, probably due to the Hungarian accent and elegant style.

Another big hit in the decade was the one and only Frankenstein, movie that came to theaters very closely to Dracula, just like a successful follow up, this 1931 film made this year a great one for horror culture. Frankenstein could be described as a thriller with gothic and science fiction implemented.

Just as Dracula was an adaptation from a novel, so does this iconic film; adaptation from Mary Shelly's novel "Frankenstein". This monster is described in the novel as an 8-foot-tall ugly creation made by Victor who gather body parts to make with the little knowledge of technology at that period, an experiment for unnatural purposes.

2.2.2 In the 40´s

So, in the 30´s we´ve got 2 of the most recognized characters in horror films of all time, but in the 40´s we get "The Wolf Man", directed by George Waggner in 1941. The main roll in this movie was propagandized by Lon Chaney Jr. The plot is about a man called Larry Talbot who got bitten by a wolf in the chest and because a this a fortuneteller tells him he would become a were-wolf. In fact, he becomes this mythological creature, hairy, tall and of course, a wolf looks alike.

Yet another big movie, worth the mention for this decade is Albert Lewin´s adaptation of Oscar Wilde´s novel "The Picture of Dorian Grey". This 1945 movie is a very well-made film with a great cast and style of direction. But as I said before, reaching the potential of a book is very complicated, and this novel was huge at the time, so many people think it didn´t catch the greatness of the novel.

2.2.3 In the 50´s

There is a difference between the movies before the 50´s and after the decade. All the movies from the 30´s to late 50´s were classified as B-grade movies, not having much sequels, the 50´s is an

introduction of new concepts. The concept of adding new effects due to the progress of technology at the time, opened a space for subjects such as radioactivity, things or monsters created by scientific accidents, and more. The decade made it best out of mutants and monsters, a clear example is Godzilla (1954).

The concept of science fiction was more developed, for example the extraterrestrial theme for the movie "The Thing" (1954) or the mutant ants in "Them!", also the same year.

Still two of most notable films were "The House of Wax" (1953) a hit film that experimented 3-D effects. This film that starred Vicent Price, and launched his career giving him the recognition for the great performance, getting the nickname of "the King of Horror". And just as mention before, the introduction of the concept, in this case being mutants, was crowned to the film "The Fly" (1958). This successful movie made it to theaters several many more times, having a lot of sequels. A great film to close the 50´s and one that stocked around in other decades too due to remakes.

2.2.4   In the 60´s

The horror cinema took many different directions in the 60's, this was due to the disappearance of the Production Code and the film censorship being on decline. But this didn´t stop the great movie productions, this decade started with one of the most iconic horror classics ever. We are talking about the Alfred Hitchcock masterpiece "Psycho" (1960). This movie made an impact in the horror genre, changing the way we see movies that involve psychological themes. This film had also a very famous

scene in which the heroine was stabbed in the shower several times, with the iconic violin-tinged sound that plays in the background. And not so long after this huge success, the mastermind Hitchcock made another hit that´s worth an honorable mention, "The Birds" (1963).

Next, we are exploring the field of zombies, and the best one in this area is George A. Romero. The one film that started all is the classic "Night of the Living Dead" (1968). Romero is known as the master of the "zombie films", and the evidence is in the big screen, this movie gave life to the concept of zombies, even though they were other films before the 60´s about zombies, Romero´s films became the real dead at the time. "Zombies existed in cinema long before Night of the Living Dead. They are generic feature of horror in the sound era but are surprisingly absent from silent cinema" (Williams, 2003, p. 17).

Romero after the big hit movie made a lot of notable projects like "Dawn of the Dead" (1978); "Day of the Dead" (1985); "Land of the Dead" (2005) and many more hits. What we must remember about George A. Romero is his big influence in the horror genre and his style which gave a new perspective for zombie films. "Night of the Living Dead introduced cannibalistic features into "living dead" representation, which later films such as I eat your skin (1971), The Living Dead at the

Manchester Morgue (1974), Zombie Flesh Eaters (1979), Zombie Holocaust (1979) and countless (forgettable) imitators all reinforced" (Williams, 2003, p. 17).

2.2.5 In the 70´s

A huge decade for horror films, so many different styles of movies with very divergent topics. "The exorcist" (1973), probably the first biggest hit for the decade, explores the field of the presence of evil and diabolic possessions. This movie was an adaptation from William Peter Blatty's best-selling novel, making it to the big screen with outstanding visual effects and makeup that made the movie a box office success.

One decade after Psycho, Tom Hopper made his first notorious film called "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" (1974). The story of a psychopathic killer called "Letherface" who carries always a chainsaw, kills his victims and uses the skin of their faces as masks. The topic here is the same as Psycho, the difference is the gore impute and the more brutal concept of psychopathic killers. The movie has more than 6 sequel movies, and still counting.

The bloody theme of killers is not over after the Texas Chainsaw Massacre, only four years later, the character of Michael Myers comes to life in "Halloween" (1978), a classic film by John Carpenter. This movie is characterized by his creepy soundtrack, being a modern slasher movie and having the iconic Michel Myers, a huge man that uses a white mask, and just like Letherface carries a Chainsaw, Myers carries a big knife. This huge box office success film is still alive today, having more than 10 movie sequels and counting.

2.2.6   In the 80´s

If two gory psychopathic killers were not enough, the 80´s start with the most popular killer in horror history. "Friday the 13th" (1980), a movie that has countless sequels, is a very successful series. Starring Jason Vorhees as main character is the story of a kid who drowned in Crystal Lake and nobody helped him, so he comes back many years later seeking revenge and killing everyone in his path. The seven foot-tall manic became an iconic character, earning a spot in the most popular characters in horror cinema culture.

A very worthy mention for the decade is "Evil Dead" (1981), a very low-budget film that surprised everyone and made a lot of success, so it could have a trilogy. The most stunning fact is that Bruce Campbell made this movie with his friends and never expected such an amazing response from all over the world. A simple great movie about evil monsters and possessions, with an iconic hero named Ash (played by Bruce Campbell), who has the duty to close the portal of hell.

To close the 80´s, we got a very different movie concept. "Child´s Play" (1988), about a two foot-tall redheaded "Buddy" doll that got possessed by the soul of a serial killer named Charles Lee Ray. The story follows up with the bloody adventures of this dull, that basically just kills for fun and tries to terrorize a young boy and his family. As mention, the movie has a lot of sequels that let us visualize how the dull keeps trying to kill the young boy. One notable characteristic about this film is the black comedy it has. Some people find this movie not scary at all, but for young audiences, this film is one of the most horrific movies in history.

Chapter III

Current horror genre

3.1 Current progress and development

3.1.1 Most influential horror films of the XXI century.

Opening the new century, plenty of new titles pop up in the industry, big films that left a mark and due to their success had a franchise, and some sagas are still going. One of the biggest films in the 00´s was Saw, a mass success, huge box office hit. The film can be described as a gory bloody movie in which people get mutilated and die horribly. "Wallis (2013) can describe it as demented illusions, grotesque hypocrisy, obscene violence, and utter lunacy of the Bush-Cheney era." (Keller, 2010, p.7). And because that made millions, and had a huge growth in the industry, a lot of movies that came in the

00´s were just like saw, bloody, gory and violent. That is what people like after all watching the torture scenes, enjoying the pain of the characters, no positive message left, but a great visual graphic experience for sure. As John Wallis says, "It is the saw franchise, a collection of seven movies produced between 2004 and 2010, that has emerged as the most successful horror franchise of all time, grossing $872 million worldwide and $416 million at the U.S. box office." (Wallis, 2013, p. 1). The franchise is still going, same subject, there are more than 10 movies just till 10´s.

Just as Saw, a similar but smaller saga, Hostel was also an influential film. Many other films were equally sadistic as these two. So, what the new millennium wanted was blood, and this is what they gave to them, putting more aside the films that involved monsters and psychological thrillers. And do not get me wrong, they are still a lot of good thrillers, but nowadays what you see more often are movies like Saw or Hostel. "In true torture-horror, torture is the source of horror and not merely an accident of plot or character." (Fahy, 2010, p. 47).

3.1.2 In the 10´s.

This is the last decade so far, not so disappointing but there are a lot of films that are bad, made with low budget, a waste of time and space. However as always there are films that stand out and have great response, critics and are box office hits. There are so many films, because of commercial reasons,

but to begin we have the 2017 movie Get Out, directed by Jordan Peele. This stunning film had an outstanding script, amazing well-developed concept. The movie is about an interracial couple, a black guy and a white girl, both visiting the wealthy white girl´s family. Ends up that the mother uses hypnosis to slave the dark toned white girl´s boyfriends, and this protagonist when discovers this, fights back for his life. The impressive thing about the movie is that it was nominated for best picture and best original script in the Oscars.

Another movie that got a lot of attention was The Conjuring directed by James Wan, a film that scared a lot of audiences, that feature and iconic character, Anabelle, a new trendy toy that is alive, the perfect replacement for chucky. The film is very spooky in compression with Get Out, reason is the genre for Get Out is more of thriller and mystery and The Conjuring is more horror and thriller. There are also plenty of adaptations from old movies, some of which end up being a success, such as "IT" the horror film based of the Stephen King novel. The legacy King leaves behind is humongous, is impressive the amount of novel successes he has written. "During his literary career, Stephen King has published four dozen novels, about a dozen novellas, and over a hundred short stories" (Strengell, 2006, p. 3).

3.2 Survey

What is so different between old horror films and current horror films? As always, we talk with price tags, meaning is all a big bubble of money. It is indeed a commercial industry with commercial purposes, but in that context, we can understand why there is a humongous uncountable list of films from every year that are just bad, low budget, not worth watching films. They (the companies) drag people to watch films with bad casting, bad scripts, and even bad effects, and have in mind we are in 2018, no excuses for bad technology.

The point is to get to know what people want, and just by doing a little survey I analyzed and concluded with the following statement: People have a diversity of opinions, some like the more modern gory bloodiest style, others prefer the suspense, thrillers, like to get scared with sounds and have that feeling of anxiety and some others rather watch just whatever it is in the table. To go more into detail, what people with more gory taste is asking are movies that show explicit content, great makeup, it must look realistic. What people who like better suspense ask is a movie with a good plot, good acting meaning good cast, and of course the main point is that it must be scary enough and look visually stunning. It seems a lot to ask for but there are many good movies in recent years that have this we can say; conditions and they accomplish their purpose in the industry.

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this monographic work it is concluded that:

1. The horror genre is not as complex as people may think it is. It is easy to segment the characteristics that complement the idea the genre tries to provide. The basic feel the genre has is fear. The idea is to get the audience scared, and by visually demonstrating grotesque images, the film plays with our mind. It takes us to a psychological environment, where we see the things that we find disgusting or scary. Sometimes depending on what is the subject of the film, our biggest fears could take place in one of these movies. And if that does happen, we are likely going to have an experience more surreal, altered in an odd what and in some cases even sentimental.

2. The traits the genre have as all the other genres just are complemented by the basics. And then and on the traits stood still but upgrading the requirements as years passed by because of technology improvement. One common genre that was linked to the horror genre is science fiction, the effects that are implemented improve the visual experience. As said, horror films get better by improving the visual look, meaning the more realistic they look, the better. Science fiction also covers makeup, another trait that provides a more realistic visual look. The other genre that makes horror genre better is a thriller, that could easily be a subgenre.

3. The sound is so important in almost all genres and films unless is a silent film of course. But what is respected in this genre is originality, and just implementing hard noise random sounds it´s just cliché. To use it wisely is to use it right, meaning that if the film enrolls you into a suspense environment is when the sound is used correctly. Many other things are taken into consideration when making horror films, in the end, it comes up to the audience if they like what they hear and see.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of this work it is recommended that:

1. To understand all the subject this monograph covers, it is important to do it in order. Not only the meaning behind each idea but the most iconic films, characters, and influential writers or directors.

2. It is important to do a good research because all the films by decade that could be considered the most important ones are still too many to analyze. So, the films that make it to the monograph should be the best of the best.

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