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Proposed question:

What are the impacts of film, and film illustration, especially horror on the body and its senses.

Within this essay I'm going to be using my three key words which are excitement ,escapism and fear. These main key words are going to be used to help captivate the effects that film, especially horror, has on the human body and its senses. Within this essay I will assess the different varieties of horror and the fear surrounding it. I will be researching artists such as Stephen King, Ivan Albright and finally H.R. Giger. The keywords in which I have chosen are going to help me to breakdown my question and help me to structure this essay in 3 main sectors and will help to demonstrate the effects that horror has on the body with the work from the three artists that I have chosen as well as different examples from their various aspects of work in the horror industry and then the effects that their work is going to have on the body.

Excitement

Some people find excitement in the fear and unexpectedness of it. When watching a scary movie, the audience is aware that they are in a safe place. "Horror entertainment can trigger the fight-or-flight response, which comes with a boost in adrenaline, endorphins, and dopamine while viewers are in a safe place," according to Concordia University Saint Paul. An innate feeling, fear is expressed in the complex neuronal network of the human brain. Our brains trigger reactions that are meant to secure our life when we encounter a threat, real or imagined. The amygdala, a little almond-shaped structure tucked away deep within the temporal lobe of our brains, is a crucial component of the fear circuitry. The brain's command center for processing fear, the amygdala receives and interprets sensory data about possible threats. Your brain receives sensory information about potentially harmful stimuli, including loud noises or terrifying images, and relays it to the amygdala. After processing this information, the amygdala produces an emotional reaction, especially dread. It functions as a mental alert system, warning the body and rest of the brain that there might be a threat. (Zinoman, J., 2011)

What role does the way our brain interprets fear play in the enjoyment that some individuals derive from watching scary films? It is related to adrenaline. As was previously explained, our bodies release the hormone adrenaline when we are terrified. A "rush" or spike in energy that is assessed both before and after visiting a haunted house said they felt less anxious, bored, or exhausted as a result of the encounter. The "high" that individuals get from watching horror films is probably the main reason why they appreciate it.

In the 1970s, Dolf Zillmann established the excitation transfer theory, one of the first psychological hypotheses to explain why people enjoy horror films.⁵ According to this hypothesis, we like a movie because it makes us feel bad before making us feel good when the threat is averted and gives us a euphoric high.

Recent research indicates that the theory of excitation transmission remains relevant. One examined permadeath, the concept in video games where a character dies and the game restarts, in the survival-horror game DayZ and was published in 2017. It was determined that gamers were drawn to permadeath because of the excitation transfer.^{Six}

Allison F. and Carter M. Permadeath in DayZ: Fear, grief, and purposeful play. What's our dread at the abandoned hotel, the nighttime graveyard, or the haunted house? Ultimately, we have all never encountered a negative ghost experience because, well, ghosts don't exist. Regarding corpses, even the most eerie-looking cadaver is not nearly as likely to harm us as any living person. (Vinney, C. 2022)

The embodiment of death—our own impending death—that we fear in the ghost and the body is what worries us, as does the possibility of coming across that death in the isolated, dark area where an attacker might hide and no one else is around to assist. Notwithstanding these self-serving tendencies, the unbounded wickedness of a sadistic demon driven by primal human desires is perhaps more terrifying. "Death is not something I fear; I just don't wish to be present when it occurs" Woody Allen stated. The secret is to enjoy the thrill of the terrifying death proxies without taking any chances by watching them from the comfort of a sofa while clutching a bag of popcorn.

Author Stephen Edwin King is from America. Known as the "King of Horror," he has dabbled in a variety of genres, including mystery, science fiction, suspense, and crime. In addition, he has penned almost 200 short stories, the majority of which have appeared in collections. I've decided to research Stephen King as his literature makes the readers go through the same emotions that watching a horror movie may give to people. I wanted to explore his book written in 1986 and movie adaptation. His work helps show excitement due to the vast array of effects and short and snappy sentences, for example the scene where he bites the boy's arm, this scene excites viewers because of how frightening and heart racing his words are and this helps demonstrate how Stephen King uses excitement in his work. Stephen's work, it is written extremely well and always helps to keep the reader or viewer glued to the book or screen due to the vast array of powerful and climactic bits of film work and also Stephen's extremely powerful words in his novel (King, S. 1986)

Escapism

Horror films are watched for a variety of reasons. Maybe they enjoy the concept of being frightened to no end, maybe they are drawn to gore and great effects, or maybe they watch horror because they have a paranormal or supernatural belief. For whatever reason, there are a tonne of new horror films coming out every month in a booming business.

My primary motivation for preferring this genre to others is that it offers me a genuine means of escape. Good horror films allow me to forget everything about reality and concentrate just on the plot, the gore, and the scares that are interwoven into each one. Examples of these films are IT, Evil Dead (2013), and The Taking of Deborah Logan. (Yang, H. and Zhang, K. 2021)

The idea of being trapped, the dark, and the unknown are three common human phobias that are used in horror movie scripts, and I find myself attracted to them and paying close attention to all the twists and turns that are made. I can lose myself in a world of ghosts, devils, and monsters when I'm watching a movie and just forget about anything else. I can experience terror on another level, in a much more controlled yet detached way, if I can temporarily let go of my concerns. This further highlights the escapism in which horror films bestow upon me when I indulge in horror and all of its bewildering and fascinating aspects. (Bluefish, 2020)

One artist who helps me to encompass these feelings would be the works by H.R. Giger particularly his beyond the Alien works. This example from H.R. Giger called "BEYOND THE ALIEN" helps me to feel a sense of escapism as his style of art for this particular piece helps to highlight certain aspects of horror, an example of this would be the green undertones that H.R. Giger has used in the painting.

The green tones give off an eerie tone to the painting which adds to the atmosphere the artist was trying to create. The monochrome palette was able to capture a wide range of light and dark tones which helped add to the eerie atmosphere as it gave the rib cage and other bones a life-like look to it. This piece links into my theme as it helps me to have a sense of escapism due to the horror and mystery that H.R. Giger is able to captivate with his work beyond the alien.



H.R. Giger, "BEYOND THE ALIEN" (1976)

fear

Why humans crave and enjoy terror has long piqued the interest of psychologists and academics. Numerous studies and theories have been put up to explain why people react the way they do to horror. For instance, a meta-analysis of 35 journal articles in psychology of media about "the connection between viewer enjoyment and frightening movies" was published by Cynthia A. Hoffner and Kenneth J. Levine, as reported by Pacific Standard. They discovered popular beliefs that help to explain why films such as Paranormal Activity do so well at box offices worldwide, such as:

Excitation transfer, According to this idea, persons who react emotionally to dread also find that threats that are resolved bring them greater pleasure.

Individual empathy, According to Professor Ron Tamborini, those with lower levels of empathy tend to like horror films more. He recommends that "Empathic viewers should not enjoy horror films since they make people feel bad when they see other people suffer."

Sensation-seeking, Audience members who watch scary films can be aiming to elicit strong feelings. Research suggests that compared to other people, these viewers can be more aggressive. (2023, CrimeReads)

Three main variables have been highlighted by psychologist Glenn D. Walters as contributing to the appeal of horror-themed entertainment. First, suspense is built by the addition of aspects of mystery, anticipation, gore, fear, and shock. This is done by producers and directors. Relevance is the next consideration. This is a point that horror films capitalize on by creating relatable themes. This frequently refers to the cultural significance of social concerns or universal relevance, which taps into the psychology of anxiety regarding death and the unknown. According to Walters, viewers also feel a sense of personal importance whether they sympathize with the lead character or despise the antagonist. Unrealism is the final component Walters mentions. Even though gruesome content has been added to horror entertainment in recent years, audiences are aware that what they are seeing is not genuine. TV series and films use uncertain soundtracks, camera angles, and even comedic elements to serve as cues to viewers reminding them that the content they are witnessing is meant to amuse. By skillfully utilizing these elements, horror films and television series can effectively tap into the psychology of terror and captivate audiences. But there's a big difference

between getting a rush of adrenaline from a scary movie and getting a surge of adrenaline from a real threat to your life.

In a study, psychologists found that context determines where the boundary between these two radically distinct adrenaline experiences is (7). We can change how we perceive the high alert state from adrenaline, moving from experiencing fear to exhilaration, when our "thinking" brain signals to our "emotional" brain that we are in a secure place. For instance, when someone leaps at them while they are in a haunted house, their thinking brain comforts them that the person is not actually afraid. When someone jumps at them in a haunted house, for instance, their cognitive brain tells them it's simply a paid actor, despite their emotional brain telling them to be afraid. However, if a stranger suddenly jumps at a person who is strolling down the street, the individual's emotional and cognitive brains will both recognise that they are in danger and that they should either fight or run. (Clover, C.J. 2015)

Whilst researching fear and its connections to horror and the effects on the human body and mind I came across the artist Ivan Albright who is an American printmaker, painter, and sculptor best known for his still lifes, character studies, and self-portraits. He has been referred to as the "master of the macabre" and is frequently included in the Magic Realists due to his dark subject matter and technique. This piece has been painted realistically with elements of abstract art in it, the skin of the person painted has very realistic shades and tones which adds a humanizing element to the painting which gives the painting a horror element. The lighting on the person is very low lit and highlights scars and discolouration on the figure painted. I've decided to research Ivan Albright, especially this painting as it links to my theme of the effects horror has on the mind and body as this painting gives the same emotions a horror would give as it has a perfect mixture of realism and distortion which may make viewers react the same as viewing a horror.



ivan albright, flesh (1928)

conclusion

After researching the effects horror has on the human body and mind it has led me to want to research this topic more in my third year as I plan on going more into the physiological effects of horror as it interests me and exploring this throughout the next year will be useful to my work and inspire more art work through the third year. I would like to do my project based around this topic.

For my project I plan on doing a 2 minute animation that focuses on how the brain reacts to feeling emotions such as fear and excitement in a horror setting. For the animation I would like to explore the idea that the main character is experiencing a horror movie-like scene and is going through the different emotions watching a horror movie at different points throughout the animation. I hope to achieve this by researching further into this topic and making a thorough plan on the way the animation will be set out and what elements I want to include such as an eerie soundtrack playing in the background, dim lighting and suspenseful moments through the animation. I want to make it 2 minutes to build up suspense for the viewer.

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