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A DECONSTRUCTION OF HORROR, FEAR AND TERROR: *USING HORROR*
FILMS AS DIDACTIC TOOLS IN ART EDUCATION

by

ALYSSA WESSINGER

Under the Direction of Dr. Kevin Hsieh

ABSTRACT

This arts-based study discusses using the horror film and monsters as a means of exploring the personification of fear in contemporary society. The paper incorporates the viewing and dissection of horror films into an artistic process to explore fears in order to further artistic expression. It additionally shows how this process can be used in an art classroom within the context of contemporary art to empower students and facilitate art criticism discussions.

INDEX WORDS: Art education, Horror films, Existential, Contemporary art

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ALYSSA WESSINGER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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2011

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INTRODUCTION

Description of Study

I chose the subject of horror films for this project because it is something that I find myself constantly immersed in for various reasons, one of those being that I am married to a horror filmmaker and special effects artist. However, my own fascination with fear and horror goes back long before I met my husband. My horror hazing began around the age of four when my mother foolishly thought she could occasionally leave me in the care of my father while she went out to dinner or shopping. My father, being a brilliant attorney and loving parent if a somewhat oblivious caregiver, one day decided that it was perfectly appropriate to share all of his favorite childhood monster movies with his only child- his only four year old child. Every monster movie that Universal Studios ever put out was watched in our living room. Of course, I slept on the floor of my parent's bedroom in a sleeping bag for the next five years but no matter- father and daughter bonded over Boris Karloff and Lon Chaney, Jr. When my mom realized why I was sleeping on the floor every night she was nonplussed. This only served to fuel my fascination as I was mystified as to how one parent was riveted by the movies and the other appalled. Little did I know at the time how representative that little microcosm was of our society as a whole.

For my purposes in this study, I defined horror as being a sensory overload that may manifest itself in other feelings such as: pain, shock, repulsion, etc. In his book, *Abject Terrors: Surveying The Modern and Postmodern Horror Film*, Magistrale (2005) posits in his introduction, "...the horror monster is alternately viewed by critics in the field as a rebel-outsider against the social mainstream and as a re-enforcer of the social

status quo, as an aggressive feminist and the embodiment of a post-feminist backlash, and as a symbol of sexual liberation and repressive patriarchal control" (p. 2). He goes on to explain the attraction of horror as being similar to the attraction of religion because it is a study of life and death. On a recent episode of Book TV on C-SPAN2 entitled, Panel on The Tea Party, Harvard professor, Dr. Jill Lepore noted that within a society in which religion is declining people begin to look towards politics for existential answers and that this is not the purpose of government (this comment resonated with me as I have been guilty of this myself in past presidential elections). So if not religion and not politics, where are the existential answers? I believe they are to be found in the horror films that your mother warned you about.

The questions that I explored through my study were *How can the use of horror films best be used as a didactic tool in the high school art classroom?* and as it pertains to my own art work, *How can I appropriate horror imagery into my art work to explore and visually discuss my own fears?* My interest was in exploring how the medium of the horror film might be used as a tool to promote existential discussions. I primarily focused on using horror films in the high school art classroom because I feel that the inherent qualities of rebellion found in the horror genre appeal to teenagers specifically and because I believe film to be an often-overlooked medium in art education. The goal of the study was to determine how best to introduce horror films in the art room within the context of contemporary art and use the discussion to allow students to construct connections between the social messages of horror films and contemporary society. I wanted to be able to use that information to teach studio lessons that would allow students to appropriate horror imagery and concepts in their own work. I hoped to

develop a plan that would allow me to guide students through exploring what Nurit Cohen-Evron calls "difficult knowledge, the information often resisted by teachers and students because it forces them to face moral conflict in their own reality" (Cohen-Evron, 2005, p. 319).

My study explored this concept of using difficult knowledge within personal art making but also discussing difficult knowledge as it relates to contemporary society and how we can bring this discussion to a classroom. I found that difficult knowledge might refer to personal challenges and issues for some artists or it might also refer social or cultural concerns for others. I will give an example of an artist using each of these explorations later in the paper. I used an arts-based methodology to explore how fear and horror are visually represented using the horror film as a didactic tool and as a basis for the study. I explored how this concept can be best introduced as part of a process for art-making and art criticism discussions. I incorporated art-making with research to determine the relationships between visual representations of horror and fear with socially coded imagery; essentially using my own art and my own experiences as a case study to uncover the ways in which appropriating the horror imagery and ideas from horror films can inspire and motivate the artist.

It is unfortunate that the horror film has for so long been considered a low-brow art form as it contains so many artistic aspects that we, as artists, are taught to appreciate. For example, the horror film is and has always been a reaction to cultural and social events just like any other art movement (Magistrale, 2005). The horror film typically uses metaphors to convey a social critique. In this way, it could be considered to be the film genre that most closely resembles the artwork typically studied in a classroom. Those

unfamiliar with the horror genre may be shaking their heads at the prospect of using horror films in a classroom. However, this study will focus on using classic horror films from 1970 and earlier. The films used as references here are not rated by the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) because they were made prior to the MPAA's contemporary rating system. They are generally well-known films that are often shown on television. The decision of whether or not it would be proper to show a horror film in a classroom must be made by each individual teacher. Its appropriateness would vary from school to school and even class to class. The teacher has to take into account the administrators, the students and the parents when deciding whether or not showing a horror film in the classroom is appropriate based on the professional knowledge of teaching and learning in the classroom. The teacher has to ultimately make the decision based on each group of students each year. As with any lesson, one that is interesting and appropriate for the students one year may not be so for a different group of students the next year. In a public school setting, I would not show a horror film in a classroom that contains students younger than sixteen or seventeen years of age and then I would also have the parents sign a consent form that outlines the lesson and the film(s) that I intended to show. That is a personal decision based on my community and colleagues but I am always a proponent of including parents, as well as, administrators in the activities of my classroom.

With the *Saw* films recently being recognized as the most successful horror movie franchise of all time, per an online article in *Time* magazine (Tulshyan, 2010), it is apparent that moviegoers are flocking to the theater in droves to see horror films. While the *Saw* movies are certainly not appropriate for a classroom, their popularity may be

indicative of our society's growing interest in horror films. This is an excellent opportunity to use the popularity of the horror film to explore the genre from a critical standpoint. As horror film producer Mick Garris points out in the documentary *Nightmares in Red, White and Blue: The Evolution of The American Horror Film*, as is a genre tradition, real-life war always changes what an audience finds scary (Monument, 2009). Whenever we are involved in war, the horror paradigm shifts dramatically to stretch beyond the crises of real-life. Following Mick Garris' logic that times of war fuel the horror industry, perhaps the popularity of the brutal *Saw* franchise can be explained. In 2002, American journalist Daniel Pearl was murdered by Al Qaeda and the tape was leaked online. In 2004, 26-year-old Nick Berg was beheaded by a similar group of extremists and the tape was also posted online. That was the start of an outbreak of public murders by Al Qaeda and other radical, extremist groups. The first *Saw* movie, often falling under the sub-genre known as 'torture porn' in the horror industry for its gratuitous and violent torture scenes, debuted in late 2004 (Shaffer, 2010). Americans have gobbled it up as the seventh movie in the franchise was just released in October, 2010.

As Americans, I believe we are extremely fortunate to be, as a nation, generally removed from the violent conflict that the rest of the world experiences in daily life. In this sense, I think, we owe something to other cultures to not view violence and war as such an abstract idea. We cannot confine ourselves to self-inflicted Panopticism where we are cordoned off from those not like ourselves and where our entire worldview is shaped for us by the media. There is no greater injustice to our fellow human beings than to pretend like horror doesn't exist. Horror films are clever metaphors for real-life war, crisis and tragedy. These are ideas often explored in art education, as well as concepts

such as otherness, good versus evil, us versus them and other common dichotomies. Take for example Goya's *The Third of May 1808*, if this painting were to be examined critically in a classroom these aforementioned concepts are what would surface. The same such existential discussions can be had using the horror film as didactic tool. Such difficult and challenging concepts are easily taught to students through the politically-neutral lens of the horror film. I will use my own artwork, research and critical exploration of selected horror films to explore how the horror genre can best be used in the classroom to facilitate art lessons and discussion that will help students apply these postmodern messages of horror films to real life events in contemporary society.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was two fold. The first intent was to investigate how the imagery and ideas of the horror film might best be used as a didactic tool in art education to explore difficult knowledge and thereby, enhancing critical thinking skills. The second intent was to use the horror film and it's concepts as a basis for my own artwork and through that process, appropriate some of the imagery to confront difficult knowledge myself. Ideally, using what was learned to guide students to construct their own understanding of socially coded imagery, inherent biases and the use of fear in our society. For my own, personal work, I wanted to incorporate the horror imagery that I am interested in but do it in such a way that it is still expressive of who I am as an artist. I investigated some of my favorite horror films using the criteria that I developed based on previous film knowledge and previous research, as well as, using the extensive exploration that I did of films for this research paper. I developed five common themes typically found in what I would consider to be a successful horror film. I call these the

Big 5 Elements of Horror. They are: (1) good versus evil, (2) power struggles, (3) allegorical narrative, (4) violence and (5) otherness. The goal of the study was to uncover the ways in which the existential ideas hiding within the horror film could be effectively extrapolated and applied to real-world situations. Essentially, what can we learn from the horror film and how can we teach it in art?

In our post-9/11 society, it is more important than ever to get students to think about more existential issues such as respect, peace and tolerance and to ask them to question the societal fears that are personified for us by talking heads. In what Matthews refers to as terrorist times, particular groups of people become increasingly vulnerable and subject to scrutiny (Matthews, 2005) and I believe it is, in part, the responsibility of the education system to teach students to think critically about these societal dilemmas. In a 2000 article Milbrandt quotes Vincent Lanier, "...the lack of moral concern in education is itself a reflection of much the same condition in our society in general"(Milbrandt, 2000, p. 143). In my opinion, getting all students to think critically about fear and why we fear what we do is an essential lesson in giving them the ability, as adults, to separate fact from rhetoric. The horror film is a perfect jumping off point for this discussion because it is something that I have found to be very engaging to young people but they typically aren't aware of the social messages underlying the films. By deconstructing the horror film, a personification of societal fears, students can talk about social messages and fear using a medium that they find interesting and relevant.

Timeline and Outcomes

The timeline for this project was a nine-month period. In this time, I created a body of work consisting of seven pieces that were based around horror films. This body of work was inspired by a few small, unfinished pieces that I had created previously. See figures below.



Figure 1. Alyssa Wessinger, Unfinished and Untitled Works, watercolor, 8.5"x11".



Figure 2. Alyssa Wessinger, Unfinished and Untitled Works, collage, 8.5"x11".

There were two expected results from this study. Firstly, as it relates to my own work I expected to be able to effectively use the imagery from horror movies as inspiration and reference for my own work. I wanted to use it to better express myself artistically and hoped that using imagery that I found interesting would enable me to do

that. In the past, my artwork has fallen into the undesirable category of fan art because I tend to depict monster and creatures that I find interesting but that do little to show who I am as an artist. See some examples below.



Figure 3. Alyssa Wessinger, It's a Trap, watercolor, 8.5"x11".



Figure 4. Alyssa Wessinger, Karen, linocut, 6"x6".

Secondly, I expected that my exploration of fear and horror would allow me to be more effective at using discussions in the classroom on the ideas and origins of fear to lead students to think critically about their own ideas on difficult knowledge. My expectation was that this subject would naturally lend itself to discussions on visual culture and contemporary social issues and would, therefore, enhance critical thinking skills. By facilitating these types of discussions, I hope that students' artwork will become richer and more meaningful. I believe that the open discussion of existential ideas in the classroom is a much-needed component of art education and, in my experience, I have not seen it happen often enough. The ultimate goal is to be able to use what I have learned in this study of horror films and criticism to lead students to construct their own conclusions on the way fear is used in societies and to have them rethink perceived truths about others who might be demonized or marginalized by societies. Essentially, asking students to ask the question posed by all of the great horror films of the past, "Who is The Other?"

Plan for Reflection

I used selected classic horror movies to view and discuss within my Big Five Elements of Horror framework that I developed. Those are: (1) good versus evil, (2) power, an (3) allegorical narrative, (4) violence and (5) otherness. I additionally investigated the historical context. I used film theory and criticism texts to research the films and their social impact and applied some of those identified concepts to my own artwork. I appropriated these ideas and used them as a means of making my own work more expressive.

METHODOLOGY

Method of Study

My method for this study began by selecting some of my favorite classic horror films for further exploration. For this project, I chose four classic horror movies with different social themes and from significantly different times in history. Those films were: *Freaks* (1931), *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (1951), *Psycho* (1960), and *Night of The Living Dead* (1968). I chose these films not only because I thought they would be appropriate to show in a high school classroom but also because their social messages, which I will discuss in detail in the Analysis of Films section, are still relevant to contemporary society. I will explore these films using the Big Five Elements of Horror that I previously identified and the historical context of the film. I will discuss my findings as they relate to contemporary art and society.

After selecting my films, I began watching them all and taking notes. While I had seen all of these films before, I had never really inspected them so closely and I had not watched some of them in several years. I started researching and thinking about the overarching themes of the films and thinking about how I could use these ideas in my own artwork.

Key Terms

These are some terms that will appear throughout the study. These definitions are the ones that I apply as it pertains to this particular project and are, with one exception, in my own words.

Fear- The anxiety produced by any situation or experience that is not the norm

Contemporary Art- Usually produced post-World War II, contemporary art typically contains some sort of social critique conveyed through an avant-garde idea or concept and is often times controversial.

Horror- A sensory overload that may manifest itself in other feelings such as: pain, shock, repulsion, etc.

Classic Horror Film- I will identify a classic horror film as being one that is not rated by the MPAA (The MPAA did not institute the Motion Picture Ratings System that we know today until 1968 per the MPAA website), was created before 1970.

Difficult Knowledge- the information often resisted by teachers and students because it forces them to face moral conflict in their own reality (Cohen-Evron, 2005).

Big Five Elements of Horror- These elements are found, to some degree, in most horror films:

- 1.) Good versus Evil: Pits a hero against a villain and often asks the audience to decide which character is the hero and which is the villain
- 2.) Power Struggles: Multiple characters competing for dominance
- 3.) Allegorical Narrative: Using one subject to symbolize another, a metaphor that is often a social critique
- 4.) Violence: Extreme brutality and death is used to emphasize the narrative
- 5.) The Other: Values and attributes which cannot be assimilated into our own frame of reference.

Limitations

I identified four limitations within this study. First, the specific project of this study is limited to being applicable to high school students due to the mature nature of the

films and concepts that are used. The nature of the lessons and materials presented here are not appropriate for children younger than sixteen years of age. A second limitation is all of the considerations that must be made (mentioned in the introduction) before introducing this type of lesson in a classroom. There are many students, parents, administrators and other community members to consider before a teacher can decide whether or not this is an appropriate project to use in a classroom. Third, I have never taught outside of the United States or, for that matter, outside of the politically-conservative state of Georgia. Perhaps, other countries might confront difficult knowledge with students more consistently. That has not been my experience in teaching however and I hope this study might prompt further investigation into the reasoning behind this phenomenon. Lastly, this arts-based portion of the project is based on my own experiences and artwork. Every person will have a different reaction and different feelings to imagery and ideas that induce horror and fear. The outcome cannot be projected for other people. If a teacher decided to use a lesson in his/her classroom that had the potential to bring up negative feelings and emotions, there should be a proper administrative procedure in place for helping students cope with negative feelings. Notifying a counselor before beginning such a lesson would be a good, pre-emptive safety measure since feelings may arise that a classroom teacher is not equipped to address.

DEVELOPMENT, INTERPRETATION AND REFLECTION

Analysis of Films

I began viewing the horror films: *Freaks*, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *Psycho* and *Night of The Living Dead*. During the viewing of the horror films, I took notes to reflect upon later in my process. A condensed version of these notes can be found in the film grid at this end of this paper. In addition to the Big Five Elements of Horror mentioned in chapter one, I also focused on the films' place within a historical context.

Tod Browning's *Freaks* came out in 1931 when America was seeing the devastation of World War I on the soldiers that had returned home with amputated limbs and mangled bodies. *Freaks* was MGM's answer to Universal's *Frankenstein* released the same year and with a very similar social metaphors (Cahill & Nordan, 1998). Emerging from the Great Depression, these films had some very capitalist messages for the audience to take away. In *Freaks*, the story literally pitted the "Big People" against the "Little People" (Skal, 1993), the circus employees of average height and build versus those with physical differences or disabilities. Browning had worked in a circus sideshow for most of his teenage years pretending to be a freak. When he began making films they often focused on the spectacle of the sideshow. *Freaks* stars a cast of circus performers with real physical disabilities, a shocking production decision at the time. The film follows the love affairs of small-statured Hans. The object of Hans' affection, a sexy, mean-spirited yet "normal" trapeze artist, discovers Hans stands to inherit a fortune and tricks him into marrying her. The freaks hold a wedding dinner in the couple's honor in which the most famous scene of the film occurs when the freaks begin chanting, "One of us, one of us". The film's climatic moment and what ultimately lands the film in the

horror genre is also its downfall as far as its social message is concerned. The freaks, who ironically were up until the end the kind-hearted characters of the film, exact revenge on the trapeze artist after discovering she plans to poison Hans and take his money. The freaks rally together during a thunderstorm and brutally attack the trapeze artist, disfiguring her and turning her into a fellow freak, The Chicken Woman.

The Day The Earth Stood Still came about in a time when Americans feared nuclear attack and the perceived threat of Communism. In 1950, such notable events as the U.S. sending troops to Korea and the Soviet Union's claim that they had an atomic bomb occurred. This fear coupled with that of nuclear war and xenophobia gave way to the rise of the science fiction film. *The Day The Earth Stood Still* is notable because it was one of the first science fiction films to give a negative portrayal of the humans. Although the film tells us that it is the whole world that is in danger, it's interesting that the film takes place in Washington D.C. This makes the viewer ask if it's a comment on Americans believing themselves to be the center of the world or if it's director, Robert Wise's way of focusing his parable on Americans. Klaatu, the alien, has come to warn the world of impending doom if they do not rid the world of atomic weapons. Unfortunately, the bumbling Americans do not have any interest in diplomacy and repeatedly try to foil Klaatu's message of peace. Cole Abaius of the website, Film School Rejects, takes a different and less obvious approach to the film's commonly accepted message of peace and anti-xenophobia. Abaius points out that Klaatu's message is "...get rid of your weapons or we will have to destroy you" (Abaius, 2008, <http://www.filmschoolrejects.com/features/the-stretch-the-true-message-of-the-day-the-earth-stood-still.php>). The same such message that the United States offered to other

countries throughout the Cold War while not making strides to get rid of their own nuclear arms. Therefore, Abaius posits that the alien Klaatu actually symbolizes the United States as the peaceful and diplomatic entity while the movie-version of the United States, in actuality, symbolizes the rest of the world. It all sounds very confusing but Abaius' interpretation is actually more in line with the cinematic themes of science fiction at the time. Personally, I favor the progressive message of Klaatu whether it is the intended one or not and in my opinion, *The Day The Earth Stood Still* paved the way for more modern, kid-friendly movies such as *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* and Columbia Tristar's 2009, *Planet 51*.

Psycho is arguably the film presented here that would be most controversial to show in a classroom. Anyone who remembers seeing it as a child is probably still skeptical of taking a shower in a motel. Again, I would greatly encourage teachers to make film decisions based on each group of children and also on each individual child. I would consider *Psycho* to be the beginning of contemporary, postmodern horror due to its ambiguous villains. The movie begins with Marion Crane stealing money from her employer and running away. She ends up at the Bates Motel where Norman Bates checks her in and flirts with her a bit. Marion changes her mind about stealing the money and the infamous shower scene serves as a metaphor for washing away the sin of theft (Skal, 2001). Before she is "cleansed" of the sin, she is murdered by an unidentified figure. The rest of the movie centers around Norman's relationship with his mother and the police investigation for Marion. There are two things that make *Psycho* different from the horror movies prior to it. One is that the monster is a regular person, a human being. He physically looks like you and me. The other difference is that forty minutes into the

movie the woman we thought was the main character, the heroine, is dead. This changes the landscape of horror forever. We are the monsters and no one is safe. When put into historical context, Hitchcock's reasoning behind making this film seems obvious. The domestic bliss of the 50s was over and Americans were terrified of Communism. The suburban home and domestic life that had once seemed untouchable to Americans were being threatened. It is interesting to note that up until *Psycho* Anthony Perkins had been known as a leading man in romantic comedies. Thus, Hitchcock introduces to us Norman Bates, a seemingly innocuous boy who loves his mother and so the typical suburban home becomes a nightmarish setting for what is arguably the greatest horror movie ever made. That title became a catch-22 for Hitchcock and for the movie studios as no horror movie, Hitchcock's or otherwise, was able to live up the greatness of *Psycho*, thereby, opening the door for independent film (Phillips, 2005).

In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and John F. Kennedy were dead, two prominent voices of a counter-culture that was quickly unraveling. Violence was everywhere, at home and abroad, and people were angry that peace and love had been unable to conquer the problems of society (Lowenstein, 2005).

In that same year, an unknown, Pittsburgh director named George A. Romero released an ultra low-budget zombie movie that paralleled these growing social and cultural issues. The film centers around a group of people who are barricaded in a farmhouse while an army of ghoulish zombies are lurking outside. The tensions inside the farmhouse rival the predators outside as we see what is left of civility start to decay. The cause of the zombie outbreak is never completely addressed. Romero's film stars a woman and a black man. Romero, himself, has said that the casting was not racially

driven and that Duane Jones was simply the best actor they could find for the money they had (Lowenstein, 2005). However, like any other art, sometimes factors the artist did not intend change the piece of art and so one wonders, within the civil rights context of the 60s, if the film would have been met with same controversy and secured its iconic place in movie history had Jones' character not been the only survivor of the zombie attack only to be mistakenly shot and killed by the police at the end of the film.

Night of The Living Dead is universally considered to be the quintessential zombie film. Because of it, zombies have come to be recognized as a metaphor for social upheaval. Within the parameters of a zombie apocalypse, rules don't apply. Laws, currency, etiquette - they are all out the window. Thus, the zombie outbreak becomes a symbol of revolution.

At the time of the Vietnam War, the media specifically television, was making it possible, for the first time, for the American people to watch a war unfold. When pictures of napalmed children are in your living room every night, it is hard to be afraid of the cartoonish likes of Frankenstein and The Creature from The Black Lagoon. When real life trumps fiction, the horror industry is obliged to up the ante just as Hitchcock and Romero did.

Although it seems counter-intuitive that audiences want more scare in times of real-life crisis, critics have said that horror films are cathartic in that they allow us to forget about the real-life horrors that are, sadly, not movies (Phillips, 2005). For me, my gratification from the horror films comes from both the power that I glean by having made it through the film unscathed unlike the less fortunate victims but also the glimpses

that the viewer gets into the dark realms of the human psyche that most of us are fortuitous enough to never encounter in the real world.

Creation of Work

My personal artwork uses the horror film as a means of motivation and inspiration. I chose to confront difficult knowledge from my own life rather than that that is of a social or cultural nature. I mentioned, in chapter one, my Big Five Elements of Horror. I will focus on these elements in discussion of my own body of work. Those five elements are: (1) good versus evil, (2) themes of power, (3) an allegorical narrative, (4) violence and discussions of (5) The Other. Using the aforementioned films and notes that I made while watching the films, I began to develop a plan for my body of work. My challenge was to incorporate my own self-expression while appropriating the horror imagery and concepts that I had been studying.

My decision to use pin-up girls is only somewhat inconsequential to the horror theme. Like horror imagery, pin-up girls are a recurring theme in my own work. I had tried to phase them out of my work at one point because I thought they lent a feminist message to my work that I felt was unintentional. Upon the insistence of a supportive professor I chose to revisit the pin-up imagery for this project and investigate more closely why both the pin-up girls and the horror imagery were recurring subjects for me. I favor the work of pin-up artists Alberto Vargas and Olivia De Beradinis and used their art as references.

I begin my process by designing templates of pinup girls on butcher paper to be cut out of wood later using a jigsaw. The wood was primed before the images were transferred. This template step was not really necessary because I could have just drawn

directly onto the wood. I added this step one day when I didn't have the wood immediately ready to use but I was ready to start working. This step allowed me more time to think about my process and my motivation. I kept this extra step as part of process because it is typical of me when I am working to hurry, hurry, hurry to get to the result. I don't typically take time to relish the process and this one step proved to be integral in my epiphanous understanding of why I kept returning to this imagery.

Using acrylic paint, I created the pin-up girls on primed birch plywood. I, originally, had planned to do more zombie-esque ladies in keeping with the horror theme. However, my process was to paint the girls then zombify them in a second step. I did this only one time and did not like the results. I felt almost sad to mess up the pretty girls on which I had worked so hard. Instead, I chose to hint at their decay rather than to make it blatant. I like the ambiguity and hope that it makes the viewer question whether or not the girls are diseased and dangerous or if they are the victims of a brutal beating. I, myself, haven't quite decided.



Figure 5. Alyssa Wessinger, *Zombie Apocalips Series: Girl #1*, acrylic on wood, 2'.



Figure 6. Alyssa Wessinger, *Zombie Apocalips Series: Girl #2*, acrylic on wood, 1.5'.



Figure 7. Alyssa Wessinger, *Zombie Apocalips Series: Girl #3*, acrylic on wood, 1.5'.



Figure 8. Alyssa Wessinger, *Zombie Apocalips Series: Girl #4*, acrylic on wood, 1'.



Figure 9. Alyssa Wessinger, *Zombie Apocalips Series: Girl # 5*, acrylic on wood, 2'.



Figure 10. Alyssa Wessinger, *Zombie Apocalips Series: Girl #6*, acrylic on wood, 1'.



Figure 11. Alyssa Wessinger, *Zombie Apocalips Series: Girl #7*, acrylic on wood, 2'.

Reflection of Process

As I worked on the pieces, I thought about why I kept coming back to sexy, zombie girls as subject matter. Figure 3.1 has a severed penis in her hand. This is a decision that I made instinctively and thought about it later. My previous work had disembodied male heads throughout (Figures 1 and 2). I began to question whether or not I had some unresolved issues with men that I had compartmentalized somewhere along the way. I also began to question why I always wanted the girls to look sexy. Upon introspection during my process, I came to the realization that many bad relationships with men were still sources of anger for me. I won't go into gory details of said relationships here but I will say that I had always considered myself to be too strong or too smart to be greatly affected by relationships with men. Perhaps, that was my downfall

in causing me to compartmentalize and repress unresolved feelings. As any fellow Southern Belle can attest, repression in all forms is pretty much required as part of being a female resident of the south. This artwork is a manifestation of that anger that I still feel from time to time. I am able to symbolically exert power over these men through my artwork because it was not something I was ever able to do in the actual relationship. So if these artworks are personifications of my own feelings and fears of relationships then those sexy, zombie girls are...me? Which makes perfect sense upon reflection. I grew up in the age of *Baywatch*. I was at my most vulnerable and troll-like with huge Coke bottle glasses and the figure of a ten-year-old boy when Pamela Anderson was running in slow motion down the beach every Saturday morning. She was exactly what I wanted to be and how I wanted to look for the entirety of my painful, preteen years and, only slightly improved, teenage years. As I look, childless and with the beginnings of crow's feet, at my thirty-third year, I suppose there is a part of me that still aspires to look like a Playboy Playmate even though I know that time has passed. And I suppose I am angry because that time in my life was passed not by me as a single, young woman who was able to be free or not even with my wonderful husband who loves me so much and thinks I'm beautiful at 5:00 a.m. when I still wear those Coke bottle glasses, but in horrible relationships where I was belittled and betrayed. The personal fears of aging and infidelity, as well as, the personal challenge of confronting is what manifested itself when I allowed my own fears to be personified and gave myself the time to really process my artwork.

I analyzed my own artwork using my Big Five Elements of Horror. Condensed notes on each piece can be found at the end of this paper. The first of those elements was

Good versus Evil and the exploration of that dichotomy. This means also discussing what is evil and who is evil. Horror movies can have an obvious villain such as zombies, Norman Bates or even the humans in *The Day The Earth Stood Still* but there are always other more ambiguous protagonists. As an example, *Psycho*'s heroine, Marion Crane, is a thief. The people inside the farmhouse in *Night of The Living Dead* make up a microcosm of society in which tensions and emotions are boiling. Inside the farmhouse is a complete breakdown of society and civility. Then, we have the more ambiguous questions of evil like that of *Freaks*. Tod Browning turns the tables on us at the end of the movie, having made us believe that the freaks were the good guys and the average people were the bad guys. At the end of the film, we find that everyone is evil. The two women brandishing severed penises, for instance, might feel more evil than the other pieces. I probably made it a little more severe by juxtaposing the attack on masculinity with the ideals of domesticity. However, if the viewer is unsure of whether the women have been attacked or are attacking others then it may be difficult to decide if they feel like heroines or villains, good or evil. When I think about my artwork and what it means to me, it makes me ask the same questions of myself about myself. What does it mean to be good or evil and which one am I? Probably a little of both on any given day.

My second element, the power struggle is from my perspective, the most important element of my own artwork. My intent was to make the girls ambiguously injured so it is difficult to tell if they are triumphant victims or if they are dangerous, infected creatures. In most early horror films, certainly in *The Day The Earth Stood Still* and *Freaks* but also movies like *Frankenstein* and *King Kong*, the monsters were more sympathetic creatures than the more human monsters of today's films. The monsters of

early horror films were powerful in strength and size but there was often a power struggle with the human victims, which left the monsters emotionally vulnerable. This aspect of the horror film is one of the most interesting to me because it asks the viewer to question what is meant by power. Whether the girls in my artwork are perceived as victims or killers, I hope they come across as powerful women. I tried to achieve this through their smiling and sultry expressions. I also view the blatant sexuality as being powerful but some viewers might see it as vulnerability. I see this body of work as being a reflection of my rebellious inner self and of the power I wish to possess over my emotions. Sex is power and the little hints of the undead are symbolic of anger festering beneath the surface.

The third element that I identified as being important in a horror film is an allegorical narrative. As it pertains to this work, it was not important to me to have that element clearly defined. When all of these pieces are hung together, I see a clear allegory for my life but I would never want to make that clear to the viewer. I would rather leave the work up to the interpretation of the viewer so that they are hopefully able to take away something personal from the work. When these pieces are hung together, they are arranged so that the girls are somewhat interacting with each other and that adds an additional, narrative aspect to the pieces.

Violence is probably the most obvious element of a horror film. Perhaps, that is one reason that I chose to understate it a little more than I originally intended. There is no violence in this artwork. The violence has already happened and the viewer doesn't necessarily know why. The violence of a horror film, in my opinion, usually serves to emphasize the power struggle between the characters. In this case, leaving the violence

more ambiguous served to make it more questionable as to whether the girls were rabid and dangerous or seeking revenge.

Otherness, the last element of my Big Five Elements of Horror, is probably the most difficult for me to define within my own artwork. That is because this work is about me. However, from a viewer's perspective I would want the viewer to be able to question whether or not they can identify with these women. This is ultimately where the ambiguity becomes so important because I would hope that a viewer could look at these and on one level be completely turned off by the blood, the gore and the generally questionable taste but on another level identify with the power and sexuality possessed by the women in my work. On one hand I want the viewer to see The Other in these pieces and on the other hand, to see themselves and this is ultimately the goal of any well-crafted horror film, in my opinion. Similarly, the audience of a horror film wants to be able to yell at the dumb girl who falls down and bumbles around while trying to get up. All the while she is wasting time and the killer is fast approaching. In this way, the audience rejects the girl because if it were us, the audience, we would never so slow to start running again so we would never find ourselves in such a situation. However, the audience also must identify with this dumb girl, to some degree, to care whether she lives or dies. I believe it is this delicate balance of questioning The Other while simultaneously identifying with them that drives certainly horror films but really art, in general.

Through my own process, I learned many lessons about myself. Mostly, because I took the time to really think about and investigate my artistic decisions which, in turn, forced me to reflect on feelings. Part of what allowed me to do this was adding multiple, semi-unnecessary steps to my process which really allowed me time for introspection that

I don't normally take when making art. I also learned how truly beneficial it can be to confront difficult knowledge or ideas through art. My realizations about myself were extremely emotional and at times I wanted to scrap this whole project because I was emotionally drained and I just wanted to start mindlessly painting rainbows and kittens and cupcakes. I knew, though, that would have been another example of compartmentalizing and repressing challenging emotions and the point of my project was to discover how to better express who I was through art and to be able to use that discovery to help others to do the same. Because this project was so challenging for me, I do not believe that I could ever present a lesson to students in which they are specifically asked to confront personal fears. As I said in the beginning of this paper, difficult knowledge may come from within or it may come from social or cultural challenges. As an educated adult, I would like to think that I am fairly proficient in thinking critically about social and cultural events. My challenge comes in thinking critically about myself and my emotions and so, for me, looking inward was confronting difficult knowledge. For teenagers who are just starting to learn who they are and where they fit into our world, I think that exploring societal and cultural difficult knowledge is more appropriate. If a student chooses to explore personal challenges I think that art is a wonderful means for doing so but I would never specifically assign this task in a lesson. I would not ever want to be responsible for asking a person, of any age, to discuss and confront personal challenges that they were not ready to face. Above all, the most important thing that I learned that I will apply to education through my process was what my professor told me as I was making this art with severed penises and saying, "I swear, I love my husband!" and what he said to me was, "Sometimes the art speaks to the artist. Sometimes the art

transcends you." I will forever encourage my own students to pursue subject matter that they find evocative even when the only reason they can come up with is the dreaded "because it's pretty" because if they are given the time and the patience and all the tools necessary, they will have an epiphanous moment.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Implementation

Obviously, my own personal artwork is completely inappropriate to show in a classroom but that was not the point of the study. The point of my art making was to confront difficult knowledge and use that in such a way that my artwork became more expressive. I think that I was successful in doing that and from it learned how to best move forward with using horror films as didactic tools in my own classroom. My concept of using horror films in the art classroom is ultimately rooted in a desire to bring more existential discussions into the classroom. This means often confronting difficult knowledge and, as an educator, not being afraid to do so. The horror film is an engaging medium for students and, in my opinion, a very valid form of contemporary art and one that should be included in any high school classroom discussion of contemporary art.

I believe that an important point to discuss with students when looking at horror films is that monsters are a personification of the fears of a society. As I pointed out in the Analysis of Films section of this paper, war times often breed a new generation of monster film. The emergence of the horror film began with the silent films from the German Expressionist era. Films such as *Nosferatu*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *Metropolis*. In art education, we often discuss the expressive and emotional styles of German Expressionist painters like Kirchner and Macke. The German Expressionist filmmakers used the same expressive stylings to create distorted cinematography, claustrophobic lighting and chiaroscuro lighting (Magistrale, 2005). One lesson that I have done with students is to discuss these silent films and their relation to post-World War I Europe. After the discussion I show the prints of German Expressionist printmaker,

Kathe Kollwitz. The students are very surprised by the similarities of Kollwitz' post-war imagery and the scenes in the horror movies that they have watched. For this lesson, I didn't show any films at all but simply showed some movie stills and discussed the historical context of the films. The students then do a printmaking activity centered around the concept of monsters and are asked to interpret what the word 'monster' means to them. Some notable examples of monsters that students have depicted using this lesson are: Death/The Grim Reaper, political figures and, one of my personal favorites, the Weight Watchers mascot.

As mentioned earlier, many horror films are born of war-times: *Frankenstein*, *Godzilla* and *Nosferatu* just to name a few. These films or clips of these films can be juxtaposed, within a contemporary art lesson, with other styles of contemporary art to create a foundation for discussion on the effects of war and the concept of otherness. In my experience, most high school students have seen the *Saw* and *Hostel* franchises. I wouldn't discuss these films in too much detail but they are worth mentioning as they are films born of society's post-9/11 fears and preoccupation with waging war on the faceless enemy of terrorism. A wonderful example of a contemporary artist who makes conceptual work based on societal fears such as these is Iraqi born, Wafaa Bilal. Bilal's 2007 installation, *Domestic Tension*, involved Bilal living in a gallery for one month. At any time of day or night, the viewer could log onto his website and see a live feed of Bilal in his living quarters in the gallery. What made this work really interesting was that, at any time, the viewer could remotely interact with Bilal by using their keyboard to operate a paintball gun located in Bilal's quarters. Thus, the viewer could learn first-hand what it

might feel like to be a soldier in combat by shooting the unsuspecting Bilal with paintballs.

While I don't know that Bilal himself would qualify this as horror art, it certainly falls into horror art using the Big Five Elements of Horror as a basis. The element of (1) Good vs. Evil occurs as the viewer is instantly moved from innocent viewer to evil marksman when they begin firing the paintball gun. There is certainly a (2) power struggle as Bilal fights to shield himself from the incoming paintballs. The narrative is created in real-time as the viewer shoots at Bilal so each viewer will take a different narrative from the piece but the (3) allegory is quite blatant but it does not allow the viewer to make any mistake that they are simulating combat in the Middle East. Clearly, it's (4) violent since one person is shooting at another and the viewer goes from being in their comfort zone to being (5) The Other just by pulling the trigger.



Figure 12. Wafaa Bilal, Domestic Tension, 2007, installation.



Figure 13. Wafaa Bilal, Domestic Tension, 2007, installation.

Night of The Living Dead offers a story about an infection of undetermined origin, a disease that doesn't even spare the children. Felix Gonzalez-Torres creates powerful installation pieces that are metaphors for the effects of the AIDS virus. While Bilal is an artist that focuses on societal and cultural difficult knowledge, Torres focused on confronting personal difficult knowledge. Torres places multiple piles of brightly colored candies in the corners of the gallery space to create his vibrant installations. Randy Kennedy of the *New York Times* calls the work "A Willy Wonka vision of post-minimalism" (Kennedy, 2007, p. 1). The idea is for the viewer to take a piece and the gallery always refreshes the pile when it starts to get low. Torres' partner died of AIDS in 1991. The works are supposed to symbolize the body of his partner, Ross Laycock. Each pile of candy begins at 175 pounds, the pre-illness weight of Laycock. As the piles are diminished, so is the weight. I had the privilege of discussing this piece with someone who once curated an exhibit in which it was included. She mentioned that another interesting component to the exhibit is how many people were hesitant to take from the pile at all. The viewer's interaction with the candy pile and thus, with the sick, is more important than the piece itself. If this particular piece were examined using the Big Five Elements of Horror, one might find that the (1) good versus evil component comes from the viewer taking repeatedly from the pile but never being able to give back. The (2) power struggle is within the viewer, themselves, as they are challenged as to whether or not they should take a piece of the candy. We are always told not to touch artwork so when we are invited to take a piece of it away that creates an internal power struggle for us. The (3) allegorical narrative in this piece uses the candy as a metaphor for Ross' life and for the diminishing of that life because of disease. This artwork is not seemingly (4)

violent but, in fact, quite beautiful and vibrant. It's only when the viewer understands the metaphor as a way of visually depicting a body ravaged by disease that the viewer starts to imagine a more gruesome component of this work. The viewer may view an AIDS patient as (5) The Other but this work forces us to identify, relate and even interact with The Other. Torres' love and grief for his partner is something that anyone can relate to if they have lost a loved one and so the viewer is confronted by The Other and then interacting with them by taking the candy. In this way, the viewer is challenged by subject matter that they may know nothing about and are, literally, given positive reinforcement for their interaction with that challenge.



Figure 14. Felix Gonzalez Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, installation.

After viewing horror films either by themselves or juxtaposed with other artwork that may lend itself to an existential and critical line of questioning a teacher may introduce some questions to guide students through constructing their ideas and thoughts on difficult knowledge. Using Francis Bacon's *Marketplace of Ideas* as a basis, Sriraman and Adrian discuss the use of anticipatory questions in their article on using fictional

literature as a didactic tool. Sriraman and Adrian suggest teachers guide students through a discussion using questions that "upset the natural biased way of interpretation because they call for reflection" and "do not cause a specific pattern of thought" (Sriraman & Adrian, 2007, p. 4). For example, after viewing one of the horror films from this paper some questions that could be posed to students to facilitate existential discussion would be:

"Are human beings predisposed towards good or evil and why?"

"In this film, which character did you most identify with and why?"

"Are there characteristics of the other characters that you might identify with, as well?"

Using unbiased questions such as these, an educator can lead students through an existential discussion that will allow them to construct their own ideas while enhancing their critical thinking skills. The below is an excerpt from an article entitled, "Students Living With Violent Conflict: Should Educators Play it Safe or Face Difficult Knowledge?"

"The practice of permitting students' artistic expressions regarding unpleasant topics is often considered a "safe" practice in the school culture. It is embedded in the natural tendency of artists to express frightening events and politics in artworks created and exhibited as part of the contemporary world. The question is whether art teachers who believe in critical pedagogy and social reconstruction (Freedman, 2000; Stuhr, 1995) can find this sufficient. Should teachers be content only to provide their students with opportunities to express their positions or should they also encourage students to reflect on those positions and the way they form their identities? Should students go further to inquire how authoritative discourses and the visual images shown by the mass media

construct their positions? How can art teachers promote their students' critical thinking regarding the conflict they are living through?" (Cohen-Evron, 2005, p. 313).

Art Imitates Life

I've included some Pulitzer Prize-winning photographs below. These images are extremely graphic and would be just as controversial in a classroom, maybe even more so, as a horror film. I've included them not to shock but to emphasize the old adage that art does, in fact, imitate life.



Figure 15. Kevin Carter, Photograph documenting the famine in Sudan.



Figure 16. Kevin Carter, Photograph documenting apartheid in South Africa.

The above images were taken by award-winning photographer, Kevin Carter. The first one, taken during the famine in Sudan, shows a starving toddler trying to make her way to a food distribution center as a vulture stalks her progress. When I first saw this image, I immediately felt a lump rise in my throat. I thought I was going to cry but quickly realized that I was instead going to vomit. This is without a doubt one of the most disturbing images that I have ever seen. The second image shows a man being burned alive by 'necklacing' during apartheid in South Africa in 1984. Necklacing was a way of execution which involved filling a rubber tire with gasoline and shoving it around a person's shoulders and setting it on fire. These photographs can also be viewed using the Big Five Elements of Horror:

1.) Good versus Evil: In Figure 16 this seems fairly obvious. Burning someone alive is about the epitome of evil to me. I don't know that it makes any difference to me, but would it change your perspective to know that the gentleman being set on fire was a criminal? Necklacing was done to criminals as a form of public execution. I have tried to research what his crime was and haven't been able to find that information. As I said, I'm

not sure that matters. Figure 15 seems a little more ambiguous as the vulture is just an animal trying to acquire a meal, just as the toddler is trying to acquire food. I don't know if we can qualify a bird as evil but there is certainly a macabre element to this photograph but I'm not sure the macabre element is lent from any subject in the photograph. What about the person taking the photograph? Is he evil? He documented atrocities and didn't do anything to stop them...

2.) Power Struggles: These photographs both depict people dying. They are losing their power. There is also the element of power that these images have over the viewer. They are extremely powerful images that elicit almost painful emotions from the viewer.

3.) Allegorical Narrative: Because these are photographs they are not meant to be metaphors for anything but are meant to be documentation. However, they tell a powerful narrative story. One look at these photographs and the viewer instantly begins to piece together what might be happening in these images.

4.) Violence: Figure 16 shows graphic violence as a man is burned alive. Figure 15 is not violent at all. The violence here is what is implied, what will happen in the future as the child is pecked to death or eaten alive.

5.) The Other: These images depict events in Sudan and South Africa. Africa is a place which often seems so removed from us, as Americans, that is hard to fathom what goes on there at all. These images are very hard to look at it. It is much easier to look at these photographs when we can do it from afar, when we can remind ourselves that these people are not like us, that this wouldn't happen here. The truth is that these people are very much like us in that they have feelings, families, hopes and goals. Removing

ourselves from the plight of our fellow man seems very narcissistic to me. I don't find geography to be a valid reason for separating ourselves from other human beings.

Kevin Carter received the Pulitzer Prize for the Sudan photograph 14 months after it was taken and three months after receiving his prize committed suicide. He left a note to say that the horrors that he had seen in Africa always haunted him (Macleod, 1994). Personally, I have never seen images this disturbing in a horror film. Not by a long shot. In my opinion, we as Westerners, have the luxury of viewing difficult images, then repressing them and then moving on about our daily lives. Then, we wonder what is wrong with Hollywood for producing movies like *Saw* when what really need to ask ourselves is what is wrong with us? Why can we not discuss difficult knowledge? Why can we not confront it? Compartmentalizing and repressing difficult knowledge only serves to insure that we won't learn from past mistakes. We will continue to repeat the same mistakes into perpetuity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Horror films as a contemporary art form are an engaging way to teach existential ideas to students and to allow them to confront and explore difficult knowledge. Horror films and monsters have always been a personification of societal and cultural fears. These films have always been controversial, perhaps, because they force us to reflect on the metaphors presented to us and consider ourselves as the other and as the monster.

The questions that I explored through my study were *How can the use of horror films best be used as a didactic tool in the high school art classroom?* and as it pertains to my own art work, *How can I appropriate horror imagery into my art work to explore and visually discuss my own fears?* In art education, we strive to teach students about tolerance and respect and to provide them with an education that is multicultural and multi-faceted. Examining difficult knowledge is essential in growing individually, socially and culturally. Horror films used as didactic tools in the classroom can facilitate a variety of existential dialogues including, but not limited to, the topics of: the effects of war, the role of media in societal fears and the reflection of oneself in the perpetuation of fear. Studio lessons and criticisms based on the exploration of fears and terror allow students the means to construct their own ideas about our societal fears and to think critically about the origins of those fears. In my own artwork, this study allowed me to personify my personal fears, thereby, confronting them. By reflecting on my process, I was able to examine personal anger and emotions that might not otherwise have been acknowledged and was certainly able to transform my own artwork from fan art to personal expression.

Recommendations

This study, if ongoing, could constitute a lifetime of work. I have found very little evidence of art educators using horror films in their classroom and have not found any evidence of anyone doing research studies in actual classrooms. My next step with this project would be a study, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, to determine whether or not using horror films as didactic tools in art education would, in fact, offer more avenues for critical discussion than a typical contemporary art lesson that does not use horror films as a basis. I would like to measure this using pre and post tests but also through surveys of the students. There are also literally hundreds of other horror titles not mentioned here that could constitute lessons and discussions. I believe an important and additional study should be an investigation into why we choose to shelter children from difficult knowledge. Perhaps, as was mentioned in the limitations to this study, some discussions with parents, other educators and students themselves might offer insight as to why communities and school systems deem discussions about conflict as controversial. Future research may include how to use monsters from storybooks or Jim Henson's movies to discuss the personification of fears with younger children. Future research should also include an investigation into how difficult knowledge is confronted in the classroom in other cultures.

The horror genre is a microcosm of the art world as a whole and both can be viewed as a barometer for social fears and concerns. Exploring horror films as an educational practice may seem controversial or inappropriate but we live in a world in which children can gain instant access to an unlimited supply of frightening and shocking imagery, the majority of which is not fabricated for entertainment but is real-life

photojournalism. As educators and as adults, it is our responsibility to guide students through the difficult imagery and concepts that they are faced with and to do it in such a way that they are engaged and listening to what we have to say. Facing difficult knowledge is a scary and seemingly monumental challenge but one we should confront because terror is all around us and we don't have to look very far.

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APPENDIX

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Twentieth Century.

	Good Vs. Evil	Power Struggles	Allegorical Narrative	Violence	The Other
Films					
Freaks	The seemingly good people are the freaks for the first 3/4 of the film. At the end, the freaks become evil, as well and the viewer is forced to question what it means to be good or evil.	The circus people that have talents rather than physical disabilities are pitted against the freaks. Each group struggles for power but the freaks struggle for recognition and validation while the normals are struggling for literal power and money.	The film is considered to be an allegory for capitalism. Made during The Great Depression, it is about the "big people", the wealthy, lying and cheating their way to power, success and financial gain and stepping on all "the little people", the freaks along the way.	The film does not have too much violence until the end. It is more heard than seen as the freaks retaliate and disfigure the lovely trapeze artist, thus, bringing down the "the big people".	This film challenges the viewer to question who is The Other. On one hand, we identify with the "big people" from a physical standpoint but we can't relate to their scheming and their greed. We relate to the lives of the freaks: the love life of Hans, the family unit of the pinheads, etc
The Day The Earth Stood Still	Klaatu, the alien is pitted against the humans. The humans are the violent characters who want to destroy Klaatu and won't give him the opportunity to relay his message of goodwill. His robot Gort, is semi-violent in that he protects Klaatu at the end of the film and he was created to destroy Earth if humans do not change their violent ways.	Klaatu and the humans are engaged in a struggle for power as Klaatu tries bring his powerful message, the humans keep injuring him before he can speak. Gort and the humans also struggle for power as Gort immobilizes their weapons or shoots the humans. Two of the humans, Helen and Tom, are also engaged in a power struggle. Helen tries to help Klaatu while Tom helps the authorities. Helen ends up breaking off their relationship.	This story is a reaction to the use of atomic power and to the Cold War in the 1950s. The story is more of a fable of peace, in my opinion but could also be interpreted as the United States versus Russia with the US being the aliens asking Russia to lay down their weapons.	Most of the violence in this film is focused on Klaatu. Only at the end does Gort shoot two humans. Klaatu never harms anyone in the film.	This film rivaled other science fiction movies of the 50s. The humans were usually the victors and conquered the aliens in these types of films. This film made Klaatu into the good guy so it takes The Other and makes him relatable. It also challenges the viewer to think about who is The Other.

	Good Vs. Evil	Power Struggles	Allegorical Narrative	Violence	The Other
Films					
Psycho	One of the first horror movies in which the monster is human, Norman Bates is the evil character. His victim, Marion Crane, is also a thief. Crane's sister and Marion's lover, Sam become the heroes of the film after Marion is killed.	The most interesting power struggles in this movie are not between the characters the power struggles that go in within the characters themselves. Norman battles his multiple personalities that each struggle for power in his brain. Marion struggles with her decision of what to do with the stolen money and whether she should be good or evil by returning it or taking off with it.	The film's timing, 1960, makes it an allegory for showing viewers the monster within. After two World Wars, a current Cold War and the very beginnings of the Vietnam War, movies such as the above two that were intended to make viewers question who is The Other were passe. Hitchcock is blatantly holding up a mirror with this film and showing us that we are the monsters.	The infamous shower scene of this film artistically uses shadows and music to imply violence more than show it. Although, one certainly feels as if they are watching a very violent scene. The blood running down the shower drain at the end adds to the gore.	Psycho show us that we are The Other and there is no mistaking that message. Anthony Perkins' handsomelooks and Norman's seemingly innocuous mannerisms lead us to initially like Norman and feel bad for him that his mother is so mean to him and then we find out that the person we initially identified with more than anyone else is the killer.

	Good Vs. Evil	Power Struggles	Allegorical Narrative	Violence	The Other
Films					
Night of The Living Dead	<p>The initial good versus evil comes from Barbara and Ben fighting the evil zombies. As they acquire more comrades in the farm house, civility begins to break down it's every man for himself. As each person becomes a zombie, the dynamics of good versus evil continuously change.</p>	<p>The power struggles are more prevalent amongst the living. The living are continuously physically fighting the zombies but the zombies do have thoughts. The people inside the house verbally are fighting for power the entire movie.</p>	<p>This film seems to be the reaction to the failure of the counter culture movement. The zombies are symbolic of the masses or the government and are consuming those who are out numbered and still able to think for themselves. Romero has said he was a disillusioned hippie. Sometimes associated with a metaphor for the civil rights movement but Romero denies.</p>	<p>This film is fairly violent in comparison to the others. Most striking would be Karen, the little girl who is infected and then turns into a zombie and eats her father and stabs her mother.</p>	<p>This film allows the viewer to be simultaneously drawn to and repulsed by the characters as they bicker amongst themselves. By the end of the film all of the characters that we were introduced to are dead.</p>

	Good Vs. Evil	Power Struggles	Allegorical Narrative	Violence	The Other
Zombie Apocalypse Series					
Girl #1	It is unclear whether or not this girl is good or evil. This particular girl appears more evil than the others because of the severed penis in her hand.	This girl appears powerful over men because she has severed the male part of the body and she is contrasted by the sexy, pink nightie	Individually, this girl's narrative is pretty open ended. Collectively, the girls tell a stronger story. One that appears to be of triumph based on the way that she is half-smiling at the viewer. The allegory in this work is more a metaphor for my own life so I don't think viewers would necessarily pick up on that. I would rather a viewer interpret their own narrative.	The girl has a severed penis and some bruises on her body but the viewer is unsure when and how the violence occurred	This girl is relatable because she is sexy and pretty but because she is bloody and bruised and brandishing a penis she is repulsive
Girl #2	It is unclear whether or not this girl is good or evil.	This girl is using the female body to demonstrate power. She seems unaware or uncaring of the festering sores on her chest. That seems to take away from her power a bit.	Individually, this girl's narrative is pretty open ended. Collectively, the girls tell a stronger story. One that appears to be of triumph based on the way that she is smiling at the viewer and showing her body.	The girl has some bruises on her body and blood on her clothes but the viewer is unsure when and how the violence occurred	This girl is relatable because she is sexy and pretty but because she is bloody and bruised and appears diseased she is also repulsive.

	Good Vs. Evil	Power Struggles	Allegorical Narrative	Violence	The Other
Zombie Apocalypse Series					
Girl #3	It is unclear whether or not this girl is good or evil. She seems more innocuous than some of the others.	This girl is my least favorite. She seems the least powerful to me because she has on too many clothes which kind of upsets me. She is reading Foucault who wrote about power. Collectively, I think the addition of this girl means that power is more easily attainable through sex than through knowledge. I'm pretty sure I agree with that.	Individually, this girl's narrative is pretty open ended but because she has props her narrative seems a little more detailed to me.	The girl has some bruises on her body and blood on her clothes but the viewer is unsure when and how the violence occurred	This girl is relatable because she is reading or wanting to appear smart. I don't think she is sexy and pretty like the other girls. Because she is bloody and bruised and appears diseased she is also repulsive.
Girl #4	It is unclear whether or not this girl is good or evil. This particular girl appears more evil than the others because of the severed penis in her hand and because it looks like she may be about to eat it.	This girl appears powerful over men because she has severed the male part of the body and is about to put it in a bun and eat it. She contrasts the penis because of her domestic situation and attire.	This girl was at some point trying to be domestic before the violence occurred. Perhaps, her attempts to be domestic is what incited the violence.	The girl has a severed penis and some bruises on her body but the viewer is unsure when and how the violence occurred	This girl is relatable in her attempts at domesticity. The viewer is probably repulsed by the severed penis.

	Good Vs. Evil	Power Struggles	Allegorical Narrative	Violence	The Other
Zombie Apocalypse Series					
Girl #5	It is unclear whether or not this girl is good or evil.	This girl is less powerful than some of the others to me because she has kind of a vacant stare that isn't looking right at the viewer. She seems sedated and very feminine in her pink bikini. She seems more of a victim than some of the other girls.	It was not my intent but this girl makes me think of a rape victim.	The violence that occurred here seems more inflicted by someone else than the other girls. Most of the others seem to be more rabid and diseased.	Personally, I do not relate to this girl as much as I do the others. I don't like it that she seems less powerful.
Girl #6	It is unclear whether or not this girl is good or evil.	This girl is trying to be sexy in a man's shirt and failing because of her grotesque injuries. She is losing the power struggle of masculine versus feminine.	This girl is trying to be sexy in a man's shirt and failing because of her grotesque injuries. This could be an allegory for corporate jobs.	The violence in this piece is more pronounced than in the others.	This girl's injuries make her repulsive but she still pretty in a weird way.

	Good Vs. Evil	Power Struggles	Allegorical Narrative	Violence	The Other
Zombie Apocalypse Series					
Girl #7	It is unclear whether or not this girl is good or evil. The black and red color scheme and the fierce look on her face lean more towards evil to me though.	This girl is probably the most overtly feminine because she is the only one with her chest fully exposed. It looks like she is intentionally showing her body. I think her gaze engages her in a power struggle with the viewer.	Individually, this girl's narrative is pretty open ended.	Not as much violence in this piece.	She is relatable because she is pretty and sexy. Her exposed breasts may be rejected by some viewers.