

The Genre of Horror

Mgr. Viktória Prohászková

Department of Massmedia Communication
University of Ss. Cyril and Method
Trnava

Abstract

The study deals with the genre of horror, outlining it and describing the dominant features and typological variations. It provides a brief overview of the development process in the realm of literature, film and computer games and outlines its appearance in other fields of culture and art. It characterises the readers and viewers of horror works and their motives for seeking the genre. The thesis wants to introduce the genre, its representants in Slovak and Czech literature.

Key words: genre, subgenre, horror, dread, short story, novel, film, writer, director, game, violence, blood, danger, mystical, supernatural phenomenon, ghost, monster, vampire, zombie, werewolf, murderer.

1. Introduction

The oldest and strongest human emotion is fear. It is embedded in people since time began. It was fear that initiated the establishment of faith and religion. It was the fear of unknown and mysterious phenomena, which people could not explain otherwise than via impersonating a high power, which decides their fates. To every unexplainable phenomenon they attributed a character, human or inhuman, which they associated with supernatural skills and invincible power. And since the human imagination knows no limits, a wide scale of archetypal characters have been created, such as gods, demons, ghosts, spirits, freaks, monsters or villains. Stories and legends describing their insurmountable power started to spread about them. Despite the fact by the development of science many so far incomprehensible phenomena have been explained, these archetypes and legends are still being used in literature and other branches of art. Three genres are based on fear and imagination: science fiction, fantasy and horror, which together form a so-called fantastic triangle. It is why they so often overlap and enrich themselves.

2. Horror as a Genre

The definitions of the genre of horror differ. Many authors have tried to create a definition that would be able to completely distinguish and separate horror from the similar and close genres science fiction and thriller. However, they always encountered difficulties as the attributes that refer to one genre can be also found in the other one. To characterize horror, as a genre that invokes tension in recipients is not accurate enough, as science fictions, thrillers, detective and crime stories initiate the feeling of suspense as well. The same is to be said about the emotion of fear or the display of blood, which are another attributes of horror production but can be found in the other mentioned genres, too.

In his work “*An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*” Dominic Strinati created the following definition that characterizes horror “as a genre that represents the need for suppression if the horror shown is interpreted as expressing uncomfortable and disturbing desires which need to be contained.”¹

Horror is a varied genre that is hard to be defined by one single definition. And therefore the most accurate is the one that defines horror through each of its categories and its subgenres. Todorov distinguishes between three forms of horror as a genre: uncanny, marvelous and fantastic.

In the first category – the uncanny, the end of the story contains elements of supernatural, events that seem to be unreal, impossible or irrational, or events that follow the laws of rational but are incredible, disturbing, unusual, shocking, unexpected or unique.

¹ Strinati, D. (2000) *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*. New York, Londong: Routledge, p. 82

The viewer/reader has an opportunity to explain them in their own way. Yet the laws of reality remain untouched. Examples of this category are the following films: *Taste of Fear* (1961), *Nightmare* (1964), *Psycho* (1960), or films that overlap with the genre of science fiction. Extraterrestrials can be inhuman but not unnatural; they represent the boundaries of human knowledge.

In the second category – the marvelous horror, seemingly irrational and incomprehensible phenomena can be explained only by accepting the second layer of reality – the supernatural while the story lasts. To explain the incomprehensible phenomena of the story we must accept “the new laws of nature”. Films of vampires, werewolves, living dead, demons etc represent this category.

The third category – the fantastic horror does not allow us clear explanations of the irrational; it offers us several alternatives. The viewer/reader can decide whether they will explain the phenomenon as the existence of the paranormal or as a hallucination of the main protagonist. The fantastic horror raises doubts and hesitation between the natural and supernatural alternative, which the recipient may (or may not) share with the character. Examples are film such as *Shining* (1980), *Cat People* (1942) *The Innocents* (1920) or *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943).²

3. Subgenres of horror

Rural horror, also known as redneck horror, is not related to specific locations only (such as villages or country). It is the horror that is situated in places far from civilization, which also includes a local legend, myth or superstition. These are horrors such as *Hills Have Eyes* (1977, remake 2006, sequel 2007), *The Evil Dead* (1981), *Cabin Fever* (2002), *Deliverance* (1972) or *Wrong turn* (2003).

Cosmic horror is mostly characterized by the work of Howard Phillips’ Lovecraft. In his books he wrote of a civilization coming from outer space, which conquered the Earth before humankind. Cosmic horror implies elements of science fiction and depicts emotions when a person finds out something he would rather not know about. Including Lovecraft’s works we can also mention the works of Clive Barker, Peter F. Hamilton or *The King in Yellow* by Robert W. Chambers.

Apocalyptic horror deals with the end of the world caused by various factors. Therefore it is also called the end-of-the-world horror and it is represented by works such as *The Stand* or *The Cell*, by Stephen King or the works of Robert McCammon.

Crime horror compounds the elements of crime/detective story and horror. It is based on a criminal plot and escalating tension with an addition of horror elements. This category includes films as *Resurrection* (1999) *Se7en* (1995) or the Italian *Tenebre* (1982).

Erotic horror combines the sensual or sexual imagery with horror overtones or elements of the plot. The most famous archetypes of the erotic horror are the vampires. Authors such as Wrath James White, Lucy Taylor, Clive Barker, Anne Rice, Michael Garrett, Amy Wrench or Jeff Gelb represent this subgenre.

Occult horror focuses on exorcism, the arrival of the antichrist, cults, mysticism, curses and a wide scale of so called occult sciences. Horrors such as *The Exorcist* (1973 and the related sequels and prequels), *Constantine* (2005), *The Amityville Horror* (2005), *The Omen* (1976, remake 2006) or *Final Destination* (2000) are only a few examples representing this subgenre.

Psychological horror is based on the fear of the main protagonist, on his feelings of guilt, on his faith and unstable emotional state of mind. Further on it develops the plot, the tension and horror as seen in films such as *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *American Psycho* (2000), Harris’s cannibal series about Hannibal Lecter – *Red Dragon* (2002), *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001) and *Hannibal Rising* (2007); *The Ring* (2002, which is the American remake of the original Japanese horror *Ringu* from 1998) or the novel of Stephen King called *Gerald’s Game*.

²Todorov, T. (1973) *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Concept*. IN: Strinati, Dominic. (2000). *An Introduction to Popular Culture*. New York, Londong: Routledge, p.83

The aim of the **surreal horror** is not only to tell a terrifying story, but to disturb the recipient as well. Besides the classical elements of horror this subgenre also contains elements of surrealism: dreaminess, grotesqueness, bizarreness and the fantastic. Good examples are the works of David Lynch or David Cronenberg, *Jacob's Ladder* (1990) or *Angel Heart* (1987).

The **visceral horror** is the most shocking and disturbing of all the subgenres of horror. It is full of blood, gore and brutality. It depicts the most disgusting and most perverse forms of murder, butchering and mutilation of human body. Films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974, its sequel, remake and prequel), *Saw* (2004 and the following sequels), *Hostel* (2005 and the following sequels), or the works of Jack Ketchum are the most famous representatives of this subgenre.³

4. Literature of Horror

The beginnings of the genre of literature of horror can be derived from the formation of the tradition of gothic literature, which rose in the 18th century. However, the very beginning of the horror is connected with the works of English authors, who followed and developed the gothic tradition. They created characters that became archetypes for the genre of horror (monster, vampire etc.).

Based on the historic tradition and the frequent occurrence of supernatural elements, the genre of horror is considered as one "apex of the popular fantasy triangle" together with fantasy and science fiction. It is so despite the fact that fantastic horror is only one of the two flows of this genre that exist together with the so-called realistic horror.

Unlike science fiction and fantasy, the definitions of the genre of horror do not stand on the structure of various works; they rather focus on the esthetic aspect and emotions, which are evoked in the readers (fear, horror, anxiety etc.) Based on this, horror is defined as "a genre of popular literature focused on evoking emotions of dread, fear and tension."⁴ (Mocná - Peterka)

One of the attributes of horror are some typical archetypal characters: vampire, werewolf, zombie, monster, mad scientist, demon, ghost, eternal wanderer, serial killer, psychopath, bad child, possessed person, and antichrist. The genre is characterized by dynamism, and therefore it is necessary to note that these are only just a few of the archetypes, because they keep evolving along with the genre and new archetypal characters are created perpetually.

Another of the genre's dominants is the environment in which the story is revolving. First, these were places out of the modern world, such as cemetery, abandoned castle, gloomy forest, castle ruins, old house etc. Most of all, these are places intensively charged with mystery that have "their own lives". This is also true for the modern environment that cuts its way into the modern horror.

From the aspect of range we may differentiate between two forms: short story and novel. These two are standing against each other as opposites and which alternate in the various historical cycles. The tradition of horror, unlike the gothic tradition, stems from the form of the short story that elaborates the horror motive in a shorter time, focuses on a smaller amount of characters and this way enables the reader to have a more detailed and more personal contact. On the contrary, a novel reflects a story of a longer time span and mostly focused on larger communities. With its range, it forces the recipient to interrupt the interpretation, which may be of harm in such an emotionally oriented genre. Despite that, the horror of our days (since the 70s of the 20th century) is dominated by the form of a novel.

5. Development of the literature of horror

As mentioned previously, the genre of horror developed from the gothic literature in the 18th century that reached its first peak around 1790 and became a dominant genre of its time. Environments with mysterious atmosphere and massive castles were the first setting for authors like **Ann Radcliffe**, **Charles Brockden Brown** or **Matthew Lewis**, whose works represented the transformation from the gothic novels to horror. Violence and brutality so openly described in the contemporary works of horror were only outlined by a few drops of blood on the floor or a piece of cloth torn on the thorns of the bushes.

3

⁴ Mocná, Dagmar, Peterka, Josef a kol. (2004) Encyklopedie literárných žánrů. Praha : Paseka, s. 253.

The consecutive genesis of horror as an independent genre began in the early 19th century. Even though at the beginning there still were works affected by the gothic fiction, its effect constantly weakened and the horror took over.

The Irish **Charles Robert Maturin** and English with Italian **John William Polidori** made a big contribution to the development of horror. Polidori's *The Vampire: A Tale* and Maturin's novel *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1920) brought new dimensions of fear. Along with them **Marry Shelley** wrote her novel *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1817), which became a milestone of the classic horror and an inspiration to many filmmakers. Other famous authors of this era were **Frederick Marryat** who contributed with a novel *The Phantom Ship* (1839) and a short story *The Werewolf*; **Herbert George "H. G." Wells**, who combined the genre of horror with science fiction in his short stories and novels such as *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) or *The War of the Worlds* (1898); and **Robert Louis Stephenson** with his *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

In the late 19th century there were other authors and their works, which excelled in this field. These were **Rudyard Kipling** with *The Mark of the Beast* (1891), **Bram Stoker** with *Dracula* (1897), **Algernon Blackwood** with *The House on the Borderland* (1908), **Arthur Machen** with *The Great God Pan* (1894), **Lord Dunsany** with *The Laughter of the Gods* (1922), **Montague Rhodes James** with *Count Magnus* (1904) and **Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu** with *In a Glass Darkly* (1872).

However, the genre of horror is not limited to England only. In Germany, it was represented by **Friedrich Heinrich Karl de la Motte, Baron Fouqué** and his *Undine* (1811), **Wilhelm Meinhold's** *Maria Schweidler: Die Bernsteinhexe* (The Amber Witch, 1843) and *Sidonia von Bork, die Klosterhexe* (Sidonia The Sorceress, 1847/48) and **Hanns Heinz Ewers** with *Der Zauberlehrling oder die Teufelsjäger* (The Sorcerer's Apprentice, 1910).

France was represented by writers of realism and romanticism: **Victor Hugo's** *Hans d'Islande* (Hans of Iceland, 1823), **Honoré de Balzac's** *Louis Lambert* (1832), **Theophile Gautier's** *Le Roman de La Momie* (The Mummy Novel, 1858), **Gustav Flaubert's** *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (The Temptation of Saint Anthony, 1874), **Prosper Mérimée's** *La Vénus d'Ille* (The Venus of Ille, 1837) and **Guy de Maupassant's** *Le Horla* (The Horla, 1887). Although these writers became famous through works that did not belong to the genre of horror, they were able to perfectly evoke the tenebrous atmosphere and fear.

Horror literature flourished in the eastern Semitic countries as their culture inclined to magic. Apocalyptic literature and cabalism created a fertile environment for writers **Gustav Meyrink** who wrote *Der Golem* (The Golem, 1914) and **Salomon Anske** and his *Der Döbbek oder zwischen zwei Welten* (The Dybbuk or Between Two Worlds, 1914). The dybbuk and the golem are archetypal characters deeply rooted in the Jewish culture, religion and traditions.

In the United States of America horror was very popular in the 19th century, which was a coup in the history of horror literature, especially thanks to authors like **Edgar Allan Poe** (*The Black Cat*, 1843; *The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1839; *The Pit and the Pendulum*, 1842; *Cask of Amontillado*, 1846 and other short stories), **Nathaniel Hawthorne** (*A Wonder Book*, 1852; *The Marble Faun*, 1860; *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret*, 1882 or *The House of the Seven Gables*, 1851), **Ambrose Bierce** (*Can Such Things Be?* 1893 and *In the Midst of Life*, 1898; these are two collections where the following short stories appeared: *The Damned Thing*, *The Suitable Surroundings* or *The Spook House*).

The genre of horror was not common in the Czech and Slovak literature. But there were streams that had some of the attributes of horror such as the supernatural, tension, fear, horror, and the earlier mentioned archetypes.

From the Czech writers, it is necessary to mention **Karel Jaromír Erben**. In his collection of thirteen poems *Kytice* (The Bouquet) he creates supernatural beings that punish people for amoral behavior and violation of fundamental social relations. The collection includes the ballads *Kytice* (The Bouquet), *Poklad* (The Treasure), *Svatební košile* (The Wedding Shirt), *Polednice* (Lady Middy), *Zlatý kolovrat* (The Golden Spinning Wheel), *Štědrý večer* (Christmas Eve), *Holoubek* (Little Dove), *Záhořovo lože* (Záhoř's Bed), *Vodník* (The Water Goblin), *Vrba* (The Willow), *Lilie* (Lily), *Dcerina kletba* (The Daughter's Curse) and *Věštkyně* (Seeress).

Other significant authors were **Václav Rodomil Kramerius** who wrote *Železná košile* (The Iron Shirt, 1831), a short story similar to Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*; **Jan Neruda** and his short story *Vampýr* (The Vampire, 1871); and **Emanuel Lešehrad** with his story collections *Démon a jiné povídky* (The Demon and Other Stories, 1911), which is dedicated to occult mysteries and weird dreams.

The Slovak literature was represented by the romantic poet **Ján Botto**, and his masterpiece *Žltá ľalia* (Yellow Lily). In this ballad, the author reaches for the elements of mystery, dread and fear, which are typical for the genre of horror.

At the turn of two centuries horror as a genre was perfectly shaped. It completely separated from the gothic novel, although some authors still used its typical elements to brighten up their writings.

A very influential author, should be mentioned, was **Howard Phillips Lovecraft**, the father of the Cthulhu myth.⁵ He created his own system of frightening Gods for his works, as well as the book of *Necronomicon*, which is a collection of black magic and mysterious rites.

Franz Kafka, an existentialist writer of Czech-Jewish descent very significantly contributed to the development of the genre. Even though his works are not defined as horror novels, they are characterized by a threatening atmosphere, in which the main protagonists are suffering physically and psychologically. The twentieth century is the era of the bloom for horror. The genre as such is already clearly shaped but now subgenres are beginning to form. Horror is spreading from the pages of books and magazines to other media, thanks to the advancement of radio, film and television.

Among the prominent authors of the early 20th century were **Robert Bloch** (*Psycho*, 1959), **Ira Levin** (*Rosemary's Baby*, 1967), **Ray Bradbury** (*Fahrenheit 451*), **Shirley Jackson** (*The Haunting of Hill House*, 1959), **Ramsey Campbell** (*Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants*, 1964).

From the authors who are writing up to the present day, it is important to mention **Stephen King** (*Night Shift*, 1993; *Carrie* 1974; *The Dark Tower* saga 1982 - 2004), **Dean Koontz** (*The Good Guy*, 2007; *Intensity*, 1996), **Clive Barker** (*Book of Blood* 1-6, 1984/1985; *Damnation Game*, 1985), **Anne Rice** (*Interview With a Vampire*, 1976; *Queen of the Damned*, 1988), **Thomas Ligotti** (*The Nightmare Factory*, 1996/2007; *Teatro Grottesco* (2006).

The contemporary Czech horror is represented by **Vladimír Medek** and his story collection *Krev na Maltézkém náměstí* (Blood on The Maltese Square, 1992) or **Jiří Kulhánek** and his novel *Vládci strachu* (Lords of Fear, 1995). **Jenny Nowak** (Jana Moravcová) in her cycle about Dracula connected the horror with historical fiction. The cycle is compiled of novels *Nemrtvý* (Undead, 1994), *Dračí krev* (Dragon Blood, 1995), *Trůn pro mrtvého* (A Throne for a Dead, 2000) and *Rozesmátá smrt* (The Smiling Death, 2002). We should not forget about the "Czech Anne Rice", **Daniela Mičanová** and her novel *Modrá krev: O upírech a lidech* (Blue Blood: About Vampires and People) from 1999.

In the early 20th century a new stream of the Slovak literature was born. Naturism used the elements of fantasy, mystery, tension and fear and thus became "familiar" with the genre of horror. It was represented by **Margita Figuli** (*Tri gaštanové kone*, Three Maroon Horses, 1940), **Dobroslav Chrobák** (*Drak sa vracia*; Drak Returns, 1943) or **František Švantner** (*Málka*, 1969). The excelling contemporary authors of Slovak horror are **Alexandra Pavelková** (*Miešanci* 1-3, Mongrels 1-3, 2000 - 2002), **Dušan D. Fabian** (*Invocatio Elementarium*, 2006; *Pestis Draconum*, 2008) and **Miroslav Šustek** (*Nie ste vy náhodou ten chýrny pán Rafin?*, Arent's You, By Chance the Renowned Mr. Rafin?, 2007).

6. Horror film

When we start to analyze the power of the media and their effect on the recipient, without any doubt, it is film and the television that take over the leading positions. It is because sight and hearing are simultaneously involved into the process of reception that intensifies the experience. They reach that "part of our minds where the imagination moves most fruitfully; they do so by imposing the dictatorship of the visual set."⁶

⁵ The Cthulhu myth is a fictive universe inspired by Lovecraft's work and created by his fans. It is a gloomy word, which has its own Gods. The stories drawing on the myth are mostly situated in the vicinity of New England.

⁶ King, Stephen (1981) *Dance Macabre*. New York : Berkley. p. 118

Tim Dirks defines the film genres as “various forms or identifiable types, categories, classifications or groups of films that are recurring and have similar, familiar or instantly-recognizable patterns, syntax, filmic techniques or conventions - that include one or more of the following: settings (and props), content and subject matter, themes, mood, period, plot, central narrative events, motifs, styles, structures, situations, recurring icons (e.g., six-guns and ten-gallon hats in Westerns), stock characters (or characterizations), and stars.”⁷

Film horror (and horror in general) is probably the most poised genre at all, which has a long dynamic history. Its popularity in some particular historical cycles decreased and then in the following ones it increased, thus creating a sinusoid curve. Representatives of the horror production started to appear in these periods and enriched the cinematography with tens of terrifying films and then fell into oblivion.

The narration of a horror film is inherently the same as in the other Hollywood films: order – its violation – its recreation. In a horror film, the order of the society is violated by the arrival of some monster that may human or inhuman appearance. That means that the monster can be: a fictional monster (mutant, alien, zombie, vampire, werewolf, etc.) or a person (mass murderer, serial killer, mad scientist, etc.)

7. *The development of horror film*

The early horror films can be dated almost to the beginning of the film industry. Their genesis was initiated by horror literature that originated in folk stories and fairy tales, magic, witchcraft, myths, fables or ghost stories. The motives of the early gothic literatures (works of Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker etc.) were the topics for the first films of this genre. Its most significant pioneers were the mute films from the era of German expressionism as *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, 1920) by **Robert Wiene**, *Nosferatu* (1922) by **Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau** or *Der Golem* (The Golem, 1915) by **Paul Wegener**.

The gothic character reflected in the settings of the plot which were terrifying old mansions, castles and fortresses and misty dark places. The protagonists were inhuman, supernatural beings such as vampires, madmen, demons, unfriendly ghosts, monsters, zombies like Frankenstein, split personalities like Jekyll/Hyde, satanic villains, werewolves, mad scientists and freaks. Sometimes it was an invisible immaterial evil, which filled the surroundings.

With the succession of the sound in the 30s of the 20th century the horror cinematography spread even more. Hollywood film production, which did not exclude this genre from its repertoire, massively contributed to the growth of its popularity.

In Hollywood, horror became famous thanks to director **Tod Browning** and his favourite actor, Lon Chaney. Together they produced films as *Outside the Law* (1921), *The Unholy Three* (1925) or *West of Zanzibar* (1928). Furthermore he played in films like *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) by director **Wallace Worsley** and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) by **Rupert Julian**.

In 1920 the first film version of Stephenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* had been produced, starring John Barrymore. This was many times remade and adapted, as well as *The Phantom of the Opera*. Eleven years later, in the workshop of director **James Whale** the first adaptation of the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley was born with Boris Karloff in the leading role.

The legend of the werewolf debuted on the screen in 1935 (*The Werewolf of London*). Other significant works of this period were *King Kong* (1933), *Dracula* (1931), *Freaks* (1932), *The Invisible Man* (1933), *The Mummy* (1932), *The Ghoul* (1933) and many others. Then followed the films that combined these basic legends, such as *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1943).

In the 50s of the 20th century horror gained a different errand. It became the mediator of the creators’ own fears of the phenomena of the era such as The Cold War. The most significant film metaphor of this phenomenon was the *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) by **Don Siegel**. In *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) **Jack Arnold** referred to the consequences of radiation. After an unsuccessful experiment the main character starts to shrink and even the most trivial things of the mundane life, such as his cat or a spider, mean fatal danger. In this period the film studios started experimenting with three-dimensional effects.

⁷ Dirks, Tim: Film Genres. Origins & Types. [online] Available : <http://www.filmsite.org/filmgenres.html>

The film *House of Wax* (1953) brought Vincent Price, the actor who played the sculptor professor Henry Jarrod, fame and the title “King of Horror”.

The 60s were the era of first adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe, in which the main character was mostly played by Vincent Price, (for example *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960), *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961) or *The Raven* (1963). However, it was also the era when **Alfred Hitchcock** produced his most successful films such as *Psycho* (1960), *Birds* (1960) or *Marnie* (1964). Films like *Rosemary's baby* (1968) by the Polish director **Roman Polański** and the first from the zombie-film series of **George Romero**, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) excelled as well.

The 1970s were very fertile for horror production. They were characterized by more and more intensive depiction of violence, blood and brutality. In 1971 the prominent American director **Stanley Kubrick** shot *Clockwork Orange* based on the eponymous novel by Anthony Burgess. It was full of violence, murders and behaviorist experiments that tried to eliminate the negative factors. In 1974 **Tobe Hooper** released his low-budget film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which gained the cult status. A few years later other sequels of the story about the mass murderer Ed Gain were produced. In 1975 *Rocky Horror Picture Show* was shot and it combined the genres of horror, musical and comedy, and was later adapted for theatre. **Steven Spielberg's** blockbuster about a killer white shark, *Jaws*, was released in the same year. Among the other important films of this period were, *The Exorcist* by **William Friedkin** from 1973, *Halloween* by **John Carpenter** from 1978 or *Alien* by **Ridley Scott** from 1979.

The 80s and the 90s were ruled by so called slashers, where the main character was usually a mentally disturbed serial killer or mass murderer, who chose youngsters or women as his victims. Legends of Freddy Krueger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and Jason from *Friday the 13th* were born. They were so successful that their creators produced a series of sequels and in 2003 they even confronted them in the film *Freddy vs. Jason*. In 1988 Chucky, the killer doll-boy was born in the film *Child's Play*, which was later followed by two sequels.

It was thus a period of trilogies and sequels from which only few are to be mentioned: trilogy of **Sam Raimi** *Evil Dead*, eight films of *Hellraiser*, which reach the 21st century, the first film of the Hannibal Lector quatrology, *Silence of the Lambs* based on the novel by **Thomas Harris** and the *Scream* trilogy by **Wes Craven**.

The most famous works of the contemporary horror film, the so-called 21st century horror were *The Ring* (2002 – the American remake of the Japanese *Ringu* from 1998) and *The Ring Two* (2005); *The Grudge 1-3* (2004 – 2009, also a remake of a 2002 Japanese film *Ju-On*) or *Dark Water* (2005, remake of the Japanese *Honogurai mizu no soko kara* from 2002). From under the hands of **James Wan** came the *Saw* and its sequels, which is a horror about a jigsaw killer and can be considered as a slasher with a very detailed and interlaced plot. Other significant films are *Hills Have Eyes I – II* (2006 & 2007, remake of a 1977 film); *Creature From the Black Lagoon*, (2007, first shot in 1954) or the sequels of the successful horrors of previous periods such as several sequels and a prequel to *The Exorcist*.

8. Horror as a game

Computer games are the third most popular field of horror production. They often draw from literary works, films and comics, but that is not a rule. Sometimes the computer games inspire a film, a so-called tie-in novel, series of comics and other complements. But there are also horror games that stayed only in the computer field and did not spread into others.

The first group is the group of games based on literary or film artwork are :

Blair Witch (furtheron BW): A trilogy of games based on a famous horror *The Blair Witch Project*. It is made up of the games *BW1: Rustin Parr*, *BW2: The Legend of Coffin Rock*, *BW3: The Elly Kedward Tale*.

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth: A game that uses the motifs of the works of H. P. Lovecraft, mostly from *The Call of Cthulhu*, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and *Shadow out of Time*.

City of the Dead: A game based on the motifs of zombie-horrors by George A. Romero, which was cancelled shortly before announcement day.

Evil Dead (furtheron ED): A series of games created based on the theme of *Evil Dead* films. It is made up of games *Evil Dead*, *ED: Regeneration*, *ED: A Fistful of Boomstick* and *ED: Hail to the King*.

Although the particular games differ from the film, the basic motif of the living dead, the Necronomicon and the main character, Ash are present in all the games as well as in the film trilogy.

Ring: Terror's Realm: A game based on the book series *Ringu* by the Japanese writer Koji Suzuki, which were the inspiration for two Japanese films, *Ringu* and *Ringu 2*, their American remakes (*The Ring* and *The Ring Two*) and a South-Korean remake of the first part.

Nemesis: A computer game drawing from the works of the most famous horror writers such as S. King, A. Bierce, H.P. Lovecraft, B. Lumley, or W. P. Blatty.

The second group of games, which served as a motif for films or tie-in novels, include:

Blood Rayne: A game about a dampire⁸ Rayne, who is trying to find her father. A follow-up game, *Blood Rayne 2* was produced after the success of the first part. Both games were later filmed and a several volumes of comics' books were produced.

Silent Hill (furtheron SH): A computer game inspired by the destiny of a real town in Pennsylvania (although the real name of the town is Centralia), which is made up of seven games: *Silent Hill*, *Silent Hill 2*, *Silent Hill 3*, *SH 4: The Room*, *SH: Origins*, *SH: Homecoming* and *SH: Shattered Memories*. A film was shot based on the first game and many tie-in novels and comics were published as well.

Resident Evil (furtheron RE): A game that unleashed the largest media franchise. Based on it, four films were produced, several comics and novels were published, various collectors' sets were created (figurines, publications, strategic guides, etc.). Nowadays, there are all together 20 games: seven parts of the "main game" and thirteen additional ones. The games of the main series are *RE*, *RE 2*, *RE 3: Nemesis*, *RE Code: Veronica*, *RE Zero*, *RE 4* and *RE 5*, while the creators of the game are planning a new part, *RE 6*.

Alone in the Dark (furtheron AITD): A series of six follow-up games (*AITD*, *Jack in the Dark*, *AITD 2*, *AITD 3*, *AITD: The New Nightmare*, *AITD 2008*), based on which a several comicses were published and in 2005 it was adapted for the screen as well.

Vampire: The Masquerade: A computer game about vampires living in the modern, goth-punk world. Two other games followed the first part: *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines* and *Vampire: The Masquerade – Redemption*. The story was also used in a television series, in several linked comics books and in a music compilation, which contains the songs from the game.

The third group of games includes games that has not been spread from the computer or play station platform to the film screen or print yet:

Kuon: A game based on old Japanese stories about ghosts called *kwaidan* (or *kaidan*). It is set in an old, dark mansion in the Japanese city of Kyoto and the gamer has to beat mutants, ghosts and other monsters.

Clocktower (furtheron CT): A horror game based on solving various puzzles, while the player must hide and protect himself from enemy attacks as well. The game has four parts by now: *CT: The First Fear*, *CT 2*, *CT Ghost Head* (also known as *CT II: The Struggle Within*) and *CT 3*.

Clive Barker's Jericho: A horror game with supernatural themes. The author of the story, from which the game draws, is Clive Barker. According to some resources God created a being in his image that forwent Adam and Eve. The so-called Firstborn was neither a man nor a woman, was beautiful and terrifying at the same time; its soul light and so dark that God himself feared him and condemned him to the abyss. However, he managed to escape. The player has to prevent the Firstborn from escaping during all the five phases of the game which reflect historical eras: the era of the Sumer Empire, the era of the Roman Empire, Middle Ages, the era of World War II and present times

Clive Barker's Undying: A horror game (again) created by C. Barker, who not only thought up the plot in this case, but gave his voice to one of the characters, Amrose as well. The game follows the adventures of an Irish explorer of paranormal phenomena, Patrick Galloway, who researches mysterious phenomena on the property of his friend, Jeremiah Covenant.

Same as in other works of the horror genre, the games evoke the emotion of fear, tension and disgust in the recipient. Horror games also create the illusion that the players themselves are in the world of dread, they have an opportunity to confront ghosts, overcome monsters and save the world and mankind.

⁸ Based on the legends, a dampire is a descendant of vampire mother and human father or counterwise, which possesses supernatural powers but is not threatened by the weaknesses of vampires such as photosensitivity. But it can be vice versa too, that is a dampire sensitive to some stimuli as a vampire but has none of their powers.

They have a chance to try what the social norms prohibit (killing, torturing, etc.) without any consequences. They can experience the supernatural, which is only possible in our dreams and fantasies.

9. Other horror around us

So far, we have only mentioned the three largest fields in which the genre of horror is most widespread. But horror is not only a domain of literature, films and games. We can find it in every type of art and media:

- **radio:** We should mention radio plays and short stories *A Day at the Dentist* by Arch Oboler or the *Haunting of the Hill House* based on the work of Shirley Jackson, which was later adapted for the screen. And the well-known play of Orson Wells *The War of the Worlds*, drawing on the work of H. G. Wells. The play, which dealt with invasion of Martians, was so authentically presented that it caused mass hysteria among the auditors
- **theatre:** Although not meant as horrors, some of William Shakespeare's plays can be included into this genre thanks to its gloomy atmosphere, bloody and revengeful story, elements of the supernatural and mystery. We also have to mention musicals such as *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Dracula*, *Tanz der Vampire* (Dance of the Vampires) or the Czech *Krysař* (The Ratcatcher).
- **animated and cartoon films:** We can mention Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* and *A Nightmare Before Christmas*. The short animated production is not that famous but the following few are notable: *The Passenger* by Chris Jones, *La dama y la Muerte* by Javier Recio Garcia, *La leyenda del espantapajaros* by Marco Besas Alma by Rodrigo Blaas. We should not forget the legendary Walt Disney. His earlier works such as *The Haunted House*, *The Skeleton Dance* or *Hell's Bells* are rather horrorlike.
- **music:** Horroristic elements can be found in music, too, mostly in rock, metal and their gothic subgenres (gothic rock, gothic metal). These streams are represented by *Moonspell*, *Cradle of Filth*, *Marilyn Manson*, *My Dying Bride*, *Theatres des Vampires* or *Type O Negative*. Electronic music inclines to horror as well. Elements of this genre can be found in the tracks of *The Prodigy*, the Australian ambient house band *Pendulum*, Hungarian DJ *Bootsie* or Brazilian *Amon Tobin*.
- **fine arts:** Not even fine arts could escape the influence of horror. Elements typical to the genre can be found in the paintings of such worldwide known artists as *Hieronimus Bosch*, *Francisco de Goya*, or *El Greco*. Surrealist painters were the closest to the genre of horror. *Salvador Dalí*, *Max Ernst*, *René Magritte* or *Yves Tanguy* painted pictures that are terrifying and mystifying. From the contemporary artists we should mention *Todd Scharr*, *Karl Person*, *Allen Koszowski*, *Jerrod Brown*, *Demetrios Vakras*, *Rob Sacchetto* (focuses on zombies), *Jill Baumann*, *Amy Kollar Anderson* or *Zdislaw Bekinski*.
- **photography:** Horror, mystery, blood, monsters, brutality, supernatural and dread are depicted in photographic works of *Dmitrijs Bindemanis*, *Peter Coulson*, *Joshua Hoffine*, *Amanda Norman*, *Alessandro Bavari*, *Mat Lombard*, *Sandra Gonzáles*, *Ñuño Benavente*, *Robert Gregory Griffeth*, *Nathan Wright*, *Simon Marsden* or the French duo creating under the pseudonym *Art Irritant*.

10. Why horror?

Horror is one of the most paradox genres (if not the most paradox at all). It attracts its followers with elements that are in general considered repulsive, disgusting and incendiary. People in their mundane lives try to avoid violence, blood, danger and things evoking fright, fear and dread. However, they often decide to reach out for horror production that is fully charged with these factors. Why is it then that the genre of horror is so popular?

According to Lovecraft, supernatural horror evokes sacred dread and "cosmic fear" in the readers, which he sees as the main feature of the genre.⁹ The essence of the cosmic fear lies in some instinctive intuition that can reveal what the materialistic society denies. It is the "sacred" horror, which is related to the bewilderment typical for religion that wants to assure us of the existence of things, which the materialistic society cannot embrace. But Noël Carrol notes that this dread is only one of the many effects of horror, because not every work of this genre can be considered as the so called supernatural horror.¹⁰

One of the other possibilities to explain the attraction to horror is offered to us via monsters, which represent the deformation of reality and which possess supernatural powers and abilities.

⁹ Lovecraft, Howard Phillippe. (1927) *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. IN: Carrol, Noël: *The Philopophy of Horror*.(1990) London : Routledge. p. 161-162.

¹⁰ Carrol, Noël: *The Philopophy of Horror*.(1990) London : Routledge. p. 162.

They are characters impersonating respect and longing for these features. The aversion evoked by their visage is outweighed by admiration.

Characters can be interpreted as restrained anxiety or latent fantasies. For example, in the novel of Stephen King, *Carrie*, as well as in other works with the motif of telekinesis, the main character embodies the urge for revenge, realization of the longing for a look that kills and for the omnipotence of the human will.

Contemporary theorists, such as Rosemary Jackson, approach the interpretation of horror as repressive cultural schematisations. Particular themes are a manifestation of what the society suppresses by cultural conventions; they represent those phenomena, which the society considers unreal. Horror is often regarded as a form of expressing a disagreement with the political and social situation and anxieties of oppression and tyranny. Yet this imagery is aiming for the removal of repression and expansion of the frontiers of reality.

Another very common theme is the split personality, which can be found in such characters as Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde (*Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson), Dorian Gray (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde), werewolves, creatures that are a half human and half animal, or even in serial killers, who suffer with split personality syndrome. This motif is to be interpreted as an eternal conflict of good and evil, sense and instinct, human and inhuman.

As horror does not always have a happy ending, where the good conquers above evil, this subject offers us a hypothesis about what could happen if the control was taken over by negative forces and is in the meantime a kind of warning for the people, to act in good spirit.

According to Johnson, it is possible to differentiate between four motivational groups, which stimulate the viewer to watch horror films:

- 1.) *gore watching* – this approach reflects the curiosity for physical violence and revenge. The viewer is interested in the way the victims are dying, he likes to see what they deserve. He likes the view of blood and gore. He is characterized by a low level of empathy, lowered levels of fear and increased desire for revenge.
- 2.) *thrill watching* – the viewer is interested in the emotion of tension and excitement evoked by a horror film. Typical features are high level of empathy and longing for adventure.
- 3.) *independent watching* – These are independent viewers who chose a particular role that assumes testing their own bravery and adulthood. They are described by a low level of dispositional empathy
- 4.) *problem watching* – The viewer watches the horror because he feels abandoned, angry and he tries to avoid the problems of his mundane life. He seeks excitement in the suffering of others and often identifies himself with the victim this way revealing his own powerlessness.¹¹

There are many theories about what drives us to these works, which are contradictive and unable to embrace the complete horror production but only some of the themes or subgenres, and which are related only to a particular limited category of recipients.

Every horror fan has their own reasons for seeking outputs that are full of deterrent elements and motives. Some want to experience what they are not allowed in real life; some want to escape from the uncomfortable reality; some are testing their character; some increase their tolerance to fright and fear to avoid panic in dangerous real life situations. Many times they cannot even explain or describe what drives them to seek outputs of horror production, they only know they enjoy them. However, there is always reason, but it might be hidden in the deepest corners of our soul and mind which are hard to reach.

John and Anna Laetitia Aikin in their essay *On the Pleasure Derived From Objects of Terror* state:

„ ... the apparent delight with which we dwell upon objects of pure terror, where our moral feelings are not in the least concerned and no passion seems to be excited but the depressing one of far is a paradox of the heart ... difficult of solution.“¹²

¹¹ JOHNSTON, Deirdre D.: (1995) Adolescents' Motivation for Viewing Graphic Horror. IN : Human Communication Research. 1995, 21/4, p. 522-552..

¹² Carrol, Noël: *The Philopophy of Horror*.(1990) London : Routledge. p. 161.

References

CARROLL, Noël: *The Philopophy of Horror*. London : Routledge, 1990.

ISBN 0-415-90216-9

CASTLE, Mort: *On Writing Horror*. Cincinnati : Writer's Digest Books, 2007.

ISBN 1-58297-420-9

JOHNSTON, Deirdre D.: *Adolescents' Motivation for Viewing Graphic Horror*. IN : Human Communication Research. 1995, 21/ 4.

KING, Stephen: *Az írásról*. Budapest : Európa Könyvkiadó, 2005. ISBN 963-07-7823-8.

KING, Stephen: *Danse Macabre*. New York : Berkley, 1981. ISBN 0-425-10433-8.

MOCNÁ, Dagmar – PETERKA, Josef a kol.: *Encyklopedie literárných žánrů*. Praha : Paseka, 2004, s. 253-158. 8-0718-5669-X

STRINATI, Dominic: *An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture*. New York, Londong: Routledge, 2000. s. 80 – 114. ISBN 0- 415-15767-6.

Electronic Documents

DIRK, Tim: *Film Genres: Origins & Types*. [online]. Available: <http://www.filmsite.org/filmgenres.html>

LOVECRAFT, Howard Phillips: *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. [online]. Available: <http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/superhor.htm>