Syllabus

LIT 155L – Topics in the Vampire Film

Critical approaches: Genres, Media

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Office Hours: TBA

TAs
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PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS CLASS WILL MAKE EXTENSIVE USE OF CANVAS. Your student i.d. will give you access to the course site from the gateway https://canvas.ucsc.edu. Extensive help, including instruction and tutorials, is available at this site. Please be ready to make use of it before the first week.

Disability Resources: If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please get an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center

Class Meetings: Monday-Wednesday 9:00AM-12:30PM, Earth&Marine Sciences, Room 210

Readings:

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Readings for the course will be available in a Reader on Canvas. If you are online at home you can read the material online, download it as a .pdf file and read or print it; or, you can print what you want in the library and pay the page charge there.

There is one **required** text: Michelle le Blanc and Colin Odell, *The Pocket Essential Vampire Films* (Pocket Essentials 2008). The book is out of print, so I've supplied it in the Reader

Films for review: The movies for this course will be made available for students in an online, password-protected site accessible through Google Drive, after the film showing each week. Instructions for viewing available shortly.

Requirements:

Note: Senate regulations specify that the credit workload for a 5-unit Summer Session course is an average of 30 hours per week, including class participation, outside-class reading and film watching, and writing papers. You will be lucky to keep it to that, but I'm required to tell you, so please don't feel insulted.

1. **Regular and Timely attendance**. More than one absence is grounds for reduction in grade, three absences are grounds for failure. Makeup work must be done promptly and students are expected to keep up with the work of the class.

2. **Careful and timely reading and re-viewing of course materials.** These are available on Canvas (see above). **They will be added to from time to time; when new readings are announced, you are responsible for them**. Some articles are theoretical or general in nature; most are directed to the interpretation of specific films. Please note that in general readings should be completed **before** the class in which they are assigned. Every effort will be made to assign readings so they can be done over the weekend before class.

3. **The core films (viewed in class) are to be viewed *twice* by all students, once in class and once via Google Drive outside of class. This is the most basic and primary requirement of the course. This is a class in the textual interpretation of film. You cannot understand a film *as text* having seen it once.**

4. **Papers:** All students will write **one one-page** reaction paper at the beginning of the quarter and **2 two-page** response papers at spaced intervals during the quarter. (You will be assigned paper groups, A, B,

C and D. Each group will write the 2-page response papers on a staggered schedule every 2 weeks). … **……**
…. **…… .**
Note: All papers are to be sent by email to both hml@ucsc.edu, and kilwagne@ucsc.edu **and are due by classtime on the day assigned. Bring a hard copy to class so you can refer to it in discussion but submit it by email. Please send in Word (.doc or .docx) format, or by Google Doc. My OS cannot open Pages files and we cannot conveniently comment on .pdfs.**
.. .. …….
Particular assignments and due dates will appear below in the Schedule. **All papers are to be written after viewing the core movies *twice*, once in class and once outside of class on Google Drive.** Class papers are intended to facilitate discussion, and are due in class on the day assigned.

5. **A final paper**

   A five-to-ten page analysis of a topic of your choosing related to the films and themes of the course and due at the beginning of the week after classes end. Further details forthcoming nearer to the due date.

Binge watching for extra credit:

Throughout the quarter I will be sending you on Google Drive additional vampire movies that seem to me important or interesting contributions to the genre. Anyone who watches and reports to me on five of these will receive extra credit for the class. All that "report" means is a brief paragraph that proves you watched the movie, that is, something about it you couldn't get from looking it up on the internet. These are not required to be analytical. They must all be in by the last class, as time is tight at the end of the quarter.

Class Schedule

Before the First Class (over the weekend)**:**

1, **Read Through this syllabus with care** and keep doing so throughout the quarter. **RTFS** is the first, though perhaps not the primary (see **3.** above), rule of the course.

2. Read "What's a Horror Movie" posted in the Reader (on the Files site on Canvas) and attached to this syllabus, along with the list of film terms attached to the syllabus which will be discussed at the first class.

3. Watch *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* on Google Drive. You access the film

through the email I send you. Double-click on the film. It will take a little while to load (usually less than half an hour) you will then be able to view it through, and to skip around in it as well. If you need more help with this, email me at hml@ucsc.edu.

3. Watch the short film clip "The Boring Prophet" on the Course Movies site, and read 'Expressionism, Architecture and Space" in the Reader.

Just for fun: *Le Manoir du diable* [*The Devil's Mansion*] (France: Georges Méliès, 1896) 3 minutes,18 seconds. The first recorded cinematic use of vampire iconography https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPmKaz3Quzo

Over The next two weeks: Read Wood, "Introduction," in the Reader on Canvas, and le Blanc and Odell, *The Pocket Essential Vampire Films*, required text (see "Readings" above) .

Week 1 The vampire movie and horror in the silent era.

(June 24,26) **one-page reaction and discussion paper on *Nosferatu* due from all students on Wednesday of this week.**

Monday June 24: a) Introductory, b) Lecture: how to watch a movie (be sure to have read through the list of film terms attached to the syllabus).

Movie Viewing: *Nosferatu* (Germany: F. W. Murnau, Decla-Bioscope 1922)

Brief first-response discussion at the end of the class (if time). This movie is one of the longest we'll watch – be prepared to stay a little later, It won't happen again.

Tuesday June 25:
Watch *Nosferatu* again on Google Drive.
Reading: Wood, "The Dark Mirror" in the Reader (Canvas)
Suggested for Wednesday, due by the beginning of next week: Bronfen, "Speaking With Eyes," Reader.
Prepare a one-page paper for discussion in class tomorrow. Remember to re-watch *Nosferatu* first.

Wednesday, June 26: **One-page papers on *Nosferatu* due in class.** General discussion and analysis of the movie.

Movie viewing: *Dracula* (US: Tod Browning, Universal 1931)

Over the Weekend:
Watch *Dracula* Again on Google Drive.

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Watch the filmclip “Abbott and Costello end full” on Google Drive
Watch *Son of Dracula* (US: Robert Siodmak, Universal 1943) on Google Drive.

Reading:”. Bronfen “Speaking with Eyes” in Reader. Robert Spadoni, “The Vampire’s Hiss and the Madman’s Laugh” in Reader. Begin “Loose Canons in the Reader.

Binge watching: 1) The Spanish *Dracula* (US: George Melford and Enrique Tovar Ávalos, Universal 1931) – made simultaneously with Browning’s version on the same sets. 2) *Vampyr* (France/Germany/Sweden: Carl Theodore Dreyer1931)

Group A prepare 2-page response papers on *Dracula* for Monday’s class after a second viewing of the movie.

Week 2 (July 1,3) The vampire movie and horror in the Hollywood studio era, 1931-1945.

Monday, July 1:

Group A papers on *Dracula* due for presentation/discussion in class.

Movie viewing: *Dracula’s Daughter* (US: Lambert Hillyer, Universal 1936)

Tuesday, July 2:

Watch *Dracula’s Daughter* again on Canvas.
Group B prepare 2-page response papers on *Dracula’s Daughter*
Finish “Loose Canons” if you haven’t already – **there will be a quiz**.

Wednesday, July 3

Group B papers on *Dracula’s Daughter* due for presentation/discussion in class.
Movie Viewing: *Isle of the Dead* (US: Mark Robson, RKO, 1945

Over the Weekend

Watch *Isle of The Dead* Again
Group C prepare 2-page response papers on *Isle of the Dead* for Monday

Read “Exploitation” in the Reader

Week 3 (July 18,10)**:** The End of Hollywood studio Horror and the Gothic Revival of the 60s and 70s (Next two weeks: sex, violence and gender in the post-Hollywood vampire movie in Europe and the US)

Monday July 8:

Group C papers on *Isle of the Dead due*
Movie Viewing: *Horror of Dracula* (UK: Terence Fisher, Hammer Films, 1958)

Tuesday, July 9:

Watch *Horror of Dracula* again
Group D prepare 2-page response papers on *Horror of Dracula* for Wednesday
Watch *The Vampire Lovers* on Google Doc
Start reading "Carmilla" In the Reader

Wednesday, July 10:

Group D papers on *Horror of Dracula* due for presentation/discussion in class.
Movie viewing: *La Fille de Dracula* [Dracula's Daughter](France/Portugal: Jesús Franco, Interfilme/Comptoire Français du Filme, 1972).

Over the Weekend:

Rewatch *La Fille de Dracula*

Watch *Blood and Roses* [*Et mourir de Plaisir*] (France: /Italy: Roger Vadim, Films E.G.E./Documento Film 1960

Reading: FINISH "CARMILLA,"
Read "Immoral Tales I" in the Reader
Group A prepare papers on *La Fille de Dracula* for Monday

Week 4 (July 15-17) Sex, violence and gender continued; The Postmodern Vampire

Monday, July 15:

Group A papers on *La Fille de Dracula* due for presentation/discussion in class..

Movie Viewing: *La Morte vivante* [The Living Dead Girl] (France: Jean Rollin, Les Films ABC/Films Aleriaz/Films du Yaka 1982).

Tuesday, July 16:

Group B prepare papers on *La Morte vivante*
Reading: FINISH "IMMORAL TALES II.

Wednesday, July 17:

Group B papers on *La Morte vivante* due for presentation/discussion in class.

Movie Viewing: *Martin* (US: George A. Romero, Braddock Associates 1976).

Over the Weekend:

Rewatch *Martin*
Group C prepare papers on *Martin*.

Watch *Jiangshi Xiansheng* [Mr. Vampire] (Hong Kong: Lao Kun Wai, Bo Ho Films, 1985).
Reading TBA.

if you haven't already, start work on your final papers, due the following Sunday, July 28.

Week 5 (July 22-24) Other Vampires and conclusion

Monday, July 22: **Group C papers on *Martin* due for presentation/discussion in class.**

Movie Viewing: *Låt den rätte komma in* [*Let the Right One In*] (Sweden: Tomas Alfredson, EFTI, Sandrew Metronome Distribution Sverige AB, Filmpool Nord 2008)

Wednesday July 25:
Group D prepare papers on *Låt den rätte komma in* for Wednesday
If you haven't already, start work on your final papers, they'll be due
SUNDAYJuly 28

Wednesday, July 24: **Last Class**, **Group D papers on *Låt den rätte komma in***
General discussion, *Let the Right One In*, final paper topics, and TBA.

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FINAL PAPERS DUE BY EMAIL TO hml@ucsc.edu and kilwagne@ucsc.edu BY SUNDAY, JULY 28. THIS IS PERFORCE A FIRM DEADLINE BECAUSE GRADES ARE DUE AUGUST 1, AND I AM LEAVING TOWN EARLY THAT WEEK (I will have email.)

Basic Film Vocabulary

Angle – the relationship of the camera to what is being filmed. **High angle** refers to the camera looking down on the filmed subject. **Low angle** means the camera is looking up at the subject. A **straight-on angle** places the camera and the subject on the same level.

Apparatus – The material means by which films are made, cameras, sound recording devices, lights etc.

Close-up – a framing in which the scale of the object shown relative to the **frame** is relatively large.

Cut – 1. Joining two strips of film together with a splice. 2. In the finished film, the instantaneous change from one shot to another. **Crosscutting**: editing that alternates shots of two or more lines of action going on in different places, usually simultaneously (distinguished from **parallel cutting**, where the scenes in the alternating cuts are not simultaneous).

Diegesis – in a narrative film, the fictional world created by the film's story. That world need not behave in the same way as our non-diegetic world.

Dissolve – A transition between two shots, less abrupt than a cut, where one image gradually disappears while another image gradually appears. Sometimes called a **lap-dissolve** because of this overlapping effect.

Establishing shot – a shot with a distinct framing that shows the spatial relations among the figures, objects and setting in a scene. Also called a **master shot**. Editing and camera movement within the space set up by the establishing shot (close-ups, cuts etc.) are called the **analysis**.

Fade – 1. **Fade-in**: a dark screen that gradually brightens as a shot appears. 2. **Fade-out**: a shot that gradually darkens as the screen goes black.

Following Shot: A shot with framing that shifts to keep a moving figure onscreen.

Frame: A single image on a strip of film.

Framing: The use of the edges of the film frame to select and compose what will be visible on-screen.

Mise-en-scène: All of the elements placed in front of the camera: settings, props, lighting, costumes, makeup, actors and their behavior. Generally, everything that is in the frame.

Montage: Editing. The way in which shots are spliced together to create a continuous film. Generally, everything that happens between frames.

Montage sequence (or just **sequence**): a segment of film that summarizes a topic or compresses a passage of time into brief symbolic or typical images; the segment is often set off by the use of filmic techniques that contrast with the treatment in other segments.

Motif: A significant repeated image, idea etc. The image version is also called a **rhyme**.

180-degree rule: A classical film approach that dictates that the camera should stay on one side of the action to ensure consistent spatial relations between objects on the right and left sides of the frame.

Pan: or panoramic shot. A camera movement in which the camera turns on its axis from a stationary fixed point (e.g. on a tripod). The classic pan stays true to the line of the horizon.

Profilmic event: the pre-diegetic action, what's really in front of the camera – e.g. actors on a sound stage or on location – as opposed to the fiction of the diegesis

Scene: a segment in a narrative film that takes place in one time and space.

Shot: the basic unit of film construction, designating camera on → camera off. In the finished film "shot" refers to one uninterrupted image (no cuts).

Tracking Shot: a camera movement in which the camera body is moving through space horizontal to the ground on a moving support, often literally on a

track. Some versions and variations are the **dolly shot** (camera on a cart that is pushed along freely; the crane **shot** (camera mounted on a crane, allowing for movement up and down as well as laterally).

Some General Paper-Writing Cues

There are two assumptions that seem to show up a lot in writing about film, especially genre-film:

> One is that what one is supposed to be looking for in doing this kind of work is the "effectiveness" of the film's effect on an audience (a collapse of the viewing position to the lowest sort of lowest-common-denominator genre audience). It comes out in a very mystified account of how movies force us to feel things, which most of you probably don't believe when you aren't writing for teachers. That is to say, **most of you likely don't really believe that film techniques can be reduced to behaviorist stimulus-response formulas that reliably elicit certain emotions** (you likely don't believe that shot of woman hiding from monster + reverse shot of monster coming towards her = mortal fright, or at the very least you ought to have suspicions as to efficacy of such a formulaic approach ever and always producing mortal fright), so try not to act as if you do.
>
> The other assumption, complementary to the first, is that the only affect worth considering in this quest is "horror," whatever that is taken to mean (suspense, mystery, shock, fright, et cetera). This assumption tends to produce, for example, analyses of shot-reverse shot sequences arguing that going back-and-forth between monster and onscreen viewers of the monster necessarily involves the cinema audience in <u>sharing</u> the horror of the characters onscreen (again, refer back to the dubious formula above). This assumption also seems a good occasion to **reflect upon the degree to which a given horror film addresses itself to the body in ways more expansive than that of simply "horrifying" us**. Still another thing to remember here is that the question is not whether or not the film "works" in terms of producing its allegedly desired affects and effects. The questions instead are the following: **What does the film think should work** (formal techniques and use of "scary stuff")**? What does the film think you have learned to think should work** (the discourse history of the genre)**? What does the film do that cuts against both these tendencies**, undermining them, working against its own explicit plot and theme, doubling back on and re-deploying available discursive elements so that they no longer mean what we've told ourselves they mean? —because you've used them differently and simply because history happens, that earlier film happened, and it can never mean the same thing twice**.**

As you watch, think, and write, be aware that **shots and sequences come down to you mediated by a determinate agency** (the camera, the editing, the music and noise tracks, etc.)**. Try to be attentive to the ways in which these films foreground the active work of the enunciation** (the jargon word for all that stuff in the previous parenthesis)**, which tends to get in the way of passive, identificatory looking**. Try to think about **how cinematic technique often functions as the punctuation of visual content**, something that can **distance** us from that content rather than force us to identify with it. At a brass tacks level, such an approach has the merit of forcing us to consider the possibility that in shot-reverse shot sequences there might be a discrepancy between what's onscreen in one shot (what we can see) and the reaction of the characters in the reverse shot—what the characters say they see. One way to get going on a paper is to find a place in the film where "we" (the camera) see something "they" don't

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What's A Horror Movie?:[1]

Discourse and Psychoanalysis

We could begin by noting that in the phrase "horror movie," the word "horror" is not the same kind of term as "science fiction" or "western," or even "women's picture" is for those genres. It is more closely allied to a genre-name like "erotic film" or "fantasy," in that "horror" here names both a subject matter (a genre proper?) and an affect or feeling which that subject matter is supposed or expected (or hoped) to produce. I'll take the two sides of this split denotation in turn, beginning with the genre, and going on to the affect. From the generic slant one might note that the horror film partakes of the general problem that haunts the definition of genre, the problem of history. That is, if the subject matter of the genre is a set of things which "are horrible" in their essence, and which the examples of the genre deliver, how can it have a history? how is it that these things that deliver the horrible can change?

I

As a genre, "horror" names a content, a set of themes, forms, stories, particular elements like vampires or things from outer space, typical situations (the slasher pursues the teenagers), etc. It names a range of subject matter that we might call a discourse. "Discourse" comes from Latin curro, currere, to run,

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and it means that aspect of language-knowledge (above the level of common competence as mere speakers) that runs around the community of speakers, what's current, what everybody who's in on the discourse knows. "The discourse of horror" is a collection of elements, whether words or images or bodily motions or institutions that can be used to signify horror (the affect), because they've been used that way before. These elements of the discourse "horror" are drawn from all over, from literature, from the movies, from the newspapers and the folk imagination (legend, myth, folktale), from criticism as well as art. This giant collection of things is a text, insofar as it's composed or woven from particular verbal, visual, even musical signifiers (like theramin or other electronic music), but it is also a a shifting collection of practices, ways of using things. A vampire is an element of discourse in this sense, but so -- after John Carpenter's Halloween of 1978 -- is a point-of-view shot from a moving camera (a Stedicam is best) where we don't see the person looking (there is no reverse shot), only what is looked at (especially if it is a teenage girl taking off her clothes), accompanied by the sound of heavy breathing on the soundtrack. Such a composite practice or combination of signifying elements signifies "slasher," and it is detachable and reusable. It carriers with it an explicit sense, known to the discourse-community, of where it was before it got into its present position and arrangement. It signifies "horror" prior and in addition to whatever it is doing at the moment.

One of the things this definition of "horror" as discourse means is that the content of the discourse, its repertoire of signifiers, is historical and contingent, that is, has an arbitrary element: particular signifiers and signifying practices, as the example of the slasher POV shot shows, can move in or out of the discourse, didn't always signify what they do now (like that shot), or can stop signifying horror and be replaced by something else, as in the shift from rat-teeth to canines as the mark of the vampire from Nosferatu to Horror of Dracula. On the other hand, though, this shifting quality also means that elements of the discourse are available for new uses in different situations, they don't have to be used in exactly the same way they were before. The vast and shifting array of elements in the Discourse Horror are always ready to be altered, recombined, stressed or discarded, connected, corrected or dropped, depending on the different uses people want to make of them.

To see the raw material of horror films in this discursive way is helpful, I think, because it makes it easier to see any given horror movie (for instance) not as a thing that somehow has an essence ("the horrible") that makes it a horror movie rather than some other kind, but as an individual composition or construction, a particular use of the material. Elements of a discourse can be used in other discourses, or used differently to produce (join up with) another discourse: The difference between "science fiction" and "horror," when there is one, is not a matter of different contents, from this perspective, but of different

ways of reading the same elements. A discourse is a subfield of language as a whole, or a set of relatively determinate practices with respect to language as a whole, and its boundaries are shifting and permeable. This the perspective from which I would like to address the term genre (as in "the horror genre," "the western," etc.): A genre is a discourse and a set of discursive practices, a way of treating signifying elements. This view has some further consequences.

First, this view allows me to stress the agency of the users of the discourse, rather than just the domination of the discourse itself. Because a whole lot of things can signify horror, “horror" for the particular user of the discourse (e.g. the movie maker) gets defined by which ones she chooses to include or discard, which ones he stresses, which ones she makes up or appropriates that weren't in the discourse before. It's not exactly that horror as a discursive practice or generic project is whatever I say it is, because I have to use at least some of the elements that were used this way before -- I am constrained by the previous social construction of the genre that has associated these signifiers rather than others with the discourse. But I do have a lot to say about what, within those rather loose boundaries, horror is for me for now, and for you here and now when you watch my movie (though you do get to push back at me in your response, e.g. by not coming, so I don't sell well and don't get to make any more).

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One might say that a horror movie isn't so much a thing as it is a proposition, an offer to enter the discourse. It is like offering a contract that says you will use a certain number of things that are recognizable as belonging to the discourse, and then proposing to negotiate about the rest -- what other things you'll use, what stress you'll put on what's been used before, and so on. So I guess you could say that a genre is a proposition that entails subsequent negotiation.

Side note: Insofar as this course is a historical enterprise, it involves identifying the major or characteristic elements that belong to the horror genre or discourse at a given time or in a given film. It involves looking at various shifts in the discursive field over time. Thus, Un Chien andalou contains elements like the eyeball slitting that aren't part of the discourse of popular horror film (too violent) at the time the movie was made (though they seem already to have been felt to create the affect), but which come to be so later (in the slasher film). Similarly, the particular dreamlike ignoring or undoing of narrative into a set of eerie juxtaposed images that Vampyr proposes as a generator of horror, wasn't taken up in the popular genres as defined by the Universal Studios model in Dracula and Frankenstein, which committed the form to a clear narrative line with discrete, bounded episodes of horror at particular intervals.

There is, however, another, perhaps more difficult, entailment of the discursive definition of genre, which is that each individual "member of the genre" (a phrase that now has to be put in quotes) is in fact a proposed definition of the

genre of which it aspires to be a member. Genre, in this formulation, is always defined from the current example back, not from a foundation or essence forward. The current example (including my own definition here) proposes and negotiates what the other members of the genre of which it claims to be a member will have been. What's involved here is a project to undo certain common notions of history and of cause, a project identified by the terms genealogy and nachträglichkeit, respectively.

Genealogy refers to the practice of accounting for something by looking back from the object of study in the present to those elements in the past that seem to be connected to it as ancestors, it is a way of letting now control and order the view we take of then, rather than positing a past that inevitably, causally, led to and produced the present out of its ineluctable essence: knowing what we know now we can say that the shadow of the vampire's hand on the wall turned out to be part of the discourse of horror (it occurs, for example in Wes Craven's New Nightmare of 1994, and we wouldn't have known that was going to happen until it did, until Craven, in the wake of others like John Carpenter, made it happen), while buckteeth for vampires has not, so far (though Werner Herzog tried to revive it in his remake of Nosferatu in 19??).

Nachträglichkeit is a term of Freud's, parallel in the psychoanalytic field of the development of the human subject to genealogy in the historical field of that same development. As such, it may help to bridge the transition I'm about to make from discourse to affect, from institutional and social history to

psychoanalysis. The term is usually translated "deferred action" in English, though it literally means something like "dragging after" (tragen, to drag or draw, nach, after). It refers to a psychic mechanism, classically described in Freud's case-history of the "Wolf-man," a convenient name for a course like this. This patient had a dream of wolves sitting in a tree which, after extensive analysis, he and Freud both agreed concealed a repressed memory of observing his parents having intercourse a tergo (from behind), as Freud puts it, what we call "doggy style." The question, which both the analysis and Freud's account wrestled with endlessly, is whether this event actually happened (that is, whether the Wolf-man actually saw it), or whether it was only his fantasy masquerading as a memory, and Freud was eventually drawn to conclude that both were true. That is, the event itself was witnessed and entered into memory before it meant anything to the Wolf-man, and only came to function as a trauma and the source of his neurosis later (nachträglich), when he had developed physically and psychically to the point where it could take on this meaning. Once again, the point is that the event itself, at the time it was perceived, genuinely did not mean what it later came to, as evidenced by the fact that it didn't do damage then, and therefore that that meaning was not intrinsic to the event and was only given to it under new, contingent circumstances later. At the moment when the Wolf-man formed his neurosis, he reconfigured his past to accord with his present, and carried that reconfiguration forward unconsciously into his analysis many years later, when he reconfigured it again in the analysis itself in the attempt (only marginally

successful) to undo it. One might say that the event didn't cause the neurosis, the neurosis (and the subsequent analysis that brought it out) caused the event to take on the meaning it did, to become an event in what we could call the genealogy of the Wolf-man's character. For now, it is sufficient to note the parallel between the two terms, one referring to a way of reading the connections of events across time in the world, the other to a way of reading the unconscious constitution across time of the individual psyche, two processes with a common structure of reading and causality that moves from now back to then rather than from the past forward to the present.

II

In considering the horror film from the affective slant, the problem of what the "feeling of horror" consists in, we have to note from the beginning that the fact of presentation in a film we pay to see immediately complicates the character of the thing we're puzzling about, because the feeling itself can't be single. We aren't just talking about a feeling of simple terror that arises from a real danger, or even from a real hallucination (e.g. a dream), but about something we could call the pleasure of being scared, what one writer on this topic, Noel Carroll, calls "art horror," and that I'll call "horror" in quotes. One might think of a horror movie on the model of opera, considered as a form that is devoted to delivering a particular kind of intense musical pleasure, called an aria, every ten minutes or so. In the same way, a horror movie, or at least many traditional horror movies, seems dedicated to providing a scare every x minutes. We might look into the

possibilities of a definition like "'horror' is imaginary fear," in the way that a tragic opera offers experiences of imaginary sorrow, and typically that fear, like that sorrow, is given to us as belonging first to another. We often seem to be dealing with a question of identification with a character, of losing oneself in some way in the represented experience of someone else (the vampire's prey, the slasher's victim). In a general way psychoanalysis seems like a good theoretical tack to take in trying to think about this, because there is general agreement that the experience in question is quasi-involuntary, a powerful feeling that comes when it comes, not when you want it to: you can tempt "horror," but you can't be sure of making it come, its springs are unconscious. One of the things that haunts the definition of affect, parallel to the problem of history and social construction that haunts the definition of genre is that a proper theory of something like "horror" has to explain how, if there is such a thing as "the horrible" in and of itself, how can it fail, why don't supposedly horrible things always horrify?

I'll begin this aspect of the discussion with the retelling of a story, not a claim about actual facts but a psychoanalytic myth of origin, a story told now to make sense of the way things are now, by positing, nachträglich, what might have happened then to bring them about this way[2]. The myth is ascribed to Jacques Lacan, and it is called "The Mirror Stage." It begins with the

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[2]Judith Feher Gurewich has seen this aspect of the mirror-stage with particular clarity. See her introduction "Who's Afraid of Jacques Lacan?" to Judith Feher Gurewich and Michel Tort, eds. in collaboration with Susan Fairfield, The Subject and the Self: Lacan and American Psychoanalysis (Jason Aronson, Inc: New Jersey and London) 1977, p. 22, and note 7.

psychoanalytic thesis, taken from Freud and elsewhere, that infant children ("infans" means "without language") in the first eighteen months of life are not good at distinguishing between themselves and their environment, and in fact treat the world as a part of themselves, constituting their world from their own needs and desires, from their drives (Triebe, pulsions, one could say motives in the sense of the things that push you along, or move you, whether you know it or not). The child thus lives a body that is fragmented, floating, with detachable parts. The mother's breast, for example, appears in order to feed the child, a body-part constituted by the hunger drive, then mysteriously floats away, comes back later, etc. The French term usually used for this kind of a body (or concept of a body) is corps morcelé, or "body in fragments" (morcels, bits).

At a certain point, supposedly between about six and eighteen months, so the story goes, the child sees itself in a mirror, and identifies the mirror image with itself (realizes that what it sees in a mirror is itself). The child's reaction is a delighted (Lacan's word is "jubilant") "aha!" as if to say "Wow! you mean that's me?" The image is perceived as single, whole, coordinated, while the child still feels itself to be fragmented, morcelé. As a result of this split between inner feeling and suddenly perceived or posited external appearance, the child forms a project to become the wholeness its body looks like, and that project itself gives it an intense, anticipatory pleasure. The mirror-image is an ideal ego, or what is also called an "imaginary identification," based on the notion (derived from French philosopher of perception, Maurice Merleau-Ponty) that sight makes

wholes in this way; it is held to be a property of the Imaginary to constitute images as whole and complete. Ever after, the child will think of itself, and strive to be, that wholeness it imagines it sees, an ego or self. But the child (and the adult it becomes) will always fail in this project, because the wholeness is an illusion: the individual's reality is, and will always be, the collocation of conflicting drives, even if those drives are now to be repressed and to become largely unconscious.

Now if the imaginary self is an "I" who is another, an other that I can never reach except in fantasy, that phantasm itself has a double character. 1) Insofar as it functions as an escape from the feeling of morcellation, of being torn apart by the drives, the imaginary wholeness is something that is desired. The situation described in the mirror-stage in fact generates a definition of desire as that which is left over after you get what you think you want. Desire is what resides in the constant gap between the reality of the drives and the phantasmatic wholeness of the unreachable image. Unlike a need (food when hungry) or a demand ("give me that toy") desire is what can never be satisfied, a wanting in both senses -- that is: lacking something and therefore trying to get it. The image is what you want and don't feel yourself to be, your ideal of yourself.

But 2) Insofar as the image is by its very nature and constitution inadequate to the drives it is intended to subdue and unify, it is continually beset by the remainders it doesn't contain, beset by the uneasily repressed, the finally

irrepressible, that which wants to break free of the imposed false unity of the image, and which hates the ideal self both for its mocking unattainability and because it requires so much restraint of the drives. Thus, the experience of the inadequacy of the Imaginary, ideal image to the Reality of the drives is always double, both shunned or repressed and sought or unconsciously desired. The name for that experience has come to be jouissance, a word that means first "enjoyment" in the sense of the pleasure of what turns you on, and is connected to "jouir," the ordinary French word for experiencing orgasm. But the word also means "enjoyment" in the sense of possessing or exploiting something, making use of it as one enjoys a right or a benefit, a piece of land or a sexual partner -- it feels good, perhaps but it also siezes you, whether you -- your ego -- wants it or not. Jouissance is the breaking through ego defenses of the drives, an ecstatic experience of breaking up or losing yourself, which can be felt as pleasure or as a kind of, well, let's call it "horror," the loss of the stability you identify yourself with. Julia Kristeva, in a book called Powers of Horror, calls this kind of unpleasant jouissance that breaks through the cracks in the ego abjection, the loss of self that occurs in such experiences as vomiting or -- if that's what turns you off -- the scraping of fingernails on a blackboard, the sight of people being carved up in a slasher movie.

This whole way of imaging the ego and its situation has the advantage of stressing the positive as well as the negative aspects of failures of repression. It

has the advantage, in fact, of making the source of what turns you on and what horrifies you the same thing, or rather the same dynamic, the same structure of events. It also has the advantage of defining these feelings as a relation to the body, that is, as consequences of having a body, without, as in conventional Freudianism, having to specify a relation to particular privileged body parts such as castration (which would raise the problem of why women feel horror, and necessitate, as it always has, a lot of fast talking). What this doubleness or indeterminacy in the basic bodily and involuntary affect itself, in jouissance, suggests, is that the basic affect evades representation except retroactively (nachträglich, in fact). We are dealing with an experience whose ecstatic immediacy escapes determination and only gets itself called or constructed as "horror" (or pleasure, or funny or disgusting) after it has passed.

On this side of things, it remains to be said that psychoanalysis takes all acts of looking, all visual involvement with an object, or especially a person, as being like this one, the mirror-stage. Looking at someone (or even something) else, is akin to, or modeled on, looking at yourself.

But as long as we think of the mirror-stage and the Imaginary as simply, primordially there, as functions of an independent human faculty of seeing that is always the same, since it is an ability of the animal, we still won't easily be able to explain the problem of horror's failure, why different things are horrifying to different people, or to the same people sometimes and at others not -- why, that is, the retroactive representation of jouissance varies with individuals and times.

To address this question, we first have to ask another, namely, why is there a mirror in this story? Clearly the mirror isn't really necessary, and seems anomalous -- what about cultures that don't have mirrors? Don't they have egos? On reflection, it seems obvious that all that's really necessary for the mirror stage to occur is for the child to identify itself with the image it sees in a mud puddle, or someone else's eyes -- in fact all it has to do is make the connection somehow between its own body, which it can't see all of, and the bodies of others that it can see. By calling this event the mirror stage, Lacan deliberately brings in an image that makes it seem ego-formation is dependent on a particular piece of technology, something people had to make. This conspicuously inadequate image is, I think, deliberately inadequate, in exactly the way child's self-image is, in order to point to the fact that the apparently primordial and independent faculty of vision, the Imaginary, is itself always supported by some specific prior human construction. The mirror means that whatever there is to be looked at (oneself) is always already framed, constituted, by a network of prior cultural constructions -- that the Imaginary itself is always already Symbolic.

THIS MIGHT BE A GOOD PLACE to point out that this is where my two perspectives cross – the entry of discourse into affect.

The Symbolic is the term in this system for language, considered in the largest possible way as any form of organized signifying relation or practice -- besides languages like English or French it includes such things as body-

language (pointing or crying) and kinship systems (ways of classifying the relations of human bodies to one another, whose arbitrary, human-made symbolic character is revealed in the fact that what counts as kin differs from culture to culture). The point about Language in this large sense is that it is something human beings made and something they constantly change, which is also something that is always here before any individual human being arrives, and into which each newly-arrived human being has to enter.

But to enter into language is to be separated from the "real world" (which now has to be put in quotes) to which language refers, by the very fact that reference puts what referred to at a distance -- defers it. Because the word is <u>not</u> the thing (it differs from it), it gets between the speaker and the thing and <u>puts off</u> (defers) access to it. For this way of thinking one is only a human being by entering into language: that is, one is only human by being separated from the world and from oneself. But this is a different way of saying what the myth of the mirror stage also says: you form your ego by installing an image (an image which is a fraud, which is really only a kind of language or representation, a <u>symbolic</u> image) between the reality of your drives and the separate mystery of the external world. The Imaginary is the Symbolic posing as the Real.

(The Real in this system is the "x-factor," what there is no direct access to, and it comes in two forms. 1) The mysteriousness or unreachability of the world outside of vision or representation, for example the fact that we know the world is "really" composed of atomic and subatomic dispositions of matter and energy

which don't appear to perception, and which can only be indirectly, mathematically, symbolized. 2) the mysteriousness of the instincts that make up the repressed drives -- sex, hunger, etc., that arise beyond the individual's control. The Real is only manifest in experience as a kind of poke of contingency or desire (jouissance), which generates Symbolic or Imaginary representations that endeavor, after the fact (nachträglich) to explain, contain and control whatever it is that happened.)

Symbolic and Imaginary, then, are words for two ways of experiencing the same object even if, as in a movie, that object is itself an image. To see the object as a signifier, part of a system, something that points beyond itself to a reality that it isn't, is to see it as symbolic, or as part of the Symbolic, a piece of language. But to see a film image as not just a picture of a real object but as if it were itself that object is to move it into the Imaginary, to convert the image to, and treat it as, a body capable of being desired or feared (it is one of the odd, and apparently distinctive, things about being human that we can do this). You make a film image Imaginary when you become caught up in it and invest it with your desire, when you treat it the same way the child in the mirror-stage treats its own image (remember that desire and fear are two ways of experiencing the same thing, jouissance). The dynamics and erotics of seeing are such that all seeing is tempted by or inclined to the Imaginary, to constituting the beheld as bodies of desire. But the Imaginary itself is also always liable to be invaded and undone by the Symbolic that supports it -- it's just a mirror, "just a movie."

Though all of this is necessarily sketchy and preliminary, it does offer a suggestion of what it might mean to think of a horror movie as a form (institution, discourse, genre) devoted to the pleasure of being scared. As a set of images that have been used this way before, and organized in ways that also have a relation to similar uses in the past, such a movie offers the potential raw material of the experience of Horror. Horror when it came, if it came, would be the Real, the experience of being morcellated, coming apart -- or maybe just the fear or fantasy of such an experience -- and our previous discussion suggests that the experience could be expected to be an undecidable balance or mix of abjection and pleasure, a jouissance. What a horror movie offers is "horror," a discursive or Symbolic presentation of what has been previously made by culture in order to call forth Horror. As such, the movie is a Symbolic waiting to be converted into an Imaginary, something that may succeed in calling real Horror out -- or it may not.

This view of the kind of thing a horror movie is, finally, has consequences for the method of analyzing them. Since Horror is complexly contingent, psychological, individual, varies from time to time, and is not reliably present in any given moment or movie, it seems more productive not to use it as a criterion, but to concentrate instead on "horror," the Symbolic-discursive framing or construction of a site where Horror could or should occur, according to the text (the movie) being analyzed. This method will attend, in other words, not to what actually scares you in the film you're studying (though of course you shouldn't

ignore that), but rather to what the film thinks ought to scare you, what it posits as horrible.

LIT155L Horror Film: The Vampire Film

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