

Horror Cinema and the Audience: Aesthetic Scene and Psychological Impact

DR. AMARI ALLEL¹

¹University of Ziane Achour Djelfa (Algeria).

The E-mail Author: allel.amari@univ-djelfa.dz

Received: 10/09/2024

Published: 05/03/2025

Abstract:

The horror film is one of the most widely viewed genres among audiences due to its positive and negative impact on viewers. It encompasses a range of artistic and technical elements with psychological implications that stimulate the latent feelings in the subconscious of the audience, providing them with an impression that contrasts with reality, thus generating a sense of what is called catharsis. Horror in cinema can either stem from real human experiences or be entirely the opposite, meaning a reflection of imagination that negatively impacts reality in society.

Keywords: cinema, horror, audience, aesthetics, scene, impact, psychology.

1. Introduction:

There is a consensus on the importance of horror cinema in daily human life and what it can evoke in the souls of its viewers through the experiences and human emotions it expresses. These films are a primary source of artistic aesthetics, technical creativity, and psychological content, representing a creative image in how they address human reality and reveal its mysterious secrets in the inner psychological life, deeply interpreting the human self and the conflicts it entails. By showcasing the true image of dreams and fantasies on one hand, and simulating destinies with a sense of wonder and the extraordinary in the past, present, and future on the other hand, the classification of horror films takes various forms with diverse dramatic, artistic, and technical characteristics. This has led critics to embrace this classification theory. Horror films have been a focus of interest for early American filmmakers in particular and modern filmmakers in general,

making them a rich material for psychologists and similar scholars to study and analyze this human phenomenon (horror) and to define its concept as well as its internal psychological (emotional) and external (social) impacts on the viewing audience.

Horror films hold a significant place in the list of the most viewed films in global cinema, given their artistic, aesthetic, and even technical aspects. They have formed a unique trajectory since the early days of cinema, acquiring philosophical dimensions on one hand and psychological aspects on the other. They are a type of film that considers specific goals, with the ultimate aim of creating feelings of fear, confusion, and anxiety in the audience. This genre is widely recognized, allowing it to win significant awards, notably the Oscars, such as “Jaws” (1975) by Steven Spielberg, “Dracula” (1992) by Francis Ford Coppola, and “M3GAN” (2023) by Gerard Johnstone.

The aim of this study is to understand the uniqueness that horror films possess compared to other films, the relationship between cinema as an art and industry with psychoanalysis, and the commonalities with other related cinematic genres such as science fiction, the fantastical, and even action at times. Thus, the problematic can be summarized in the following questions:

- What distinguishes horror films from other genres?
- What are the levels of psychological impact on viewers of horror films?
- What is the nature of the relationship between horror films and the audience?

2. Procedural Concepts

2.1 Horror in Language:

Ibn Manzur states in “Lisan al-Arab”: “Raa’ba: horror and fear; he frightened him, he is terrified. Do not say ‘ar’aba’ and ‘ra’aba’; he is terrified and frightened. In the hadith: ‘I was aided by fear a month’s journey.’ The enemies of the Prophet, peace be upon him, had fear instilled in their hearts by Allah, so that even a month’s journey away, they feared him and were terrified. In the hadith of the trench: ‘Indeed, the first ones frightened us.’ Ibn al-Athir remarked: This was narrated with the letter ‘ain omitted, but it is commonly narrated with ‘ghain’ denoting oppression. He noted that fear is frequently mentioned in hadith.

The term ‘ter’aba’ refers to the fright from anything, and ‘mara’aba’ refers to a frightening wasteland, where a man might leap and sit next to you while you are unaware, startling you.” (Manzur, 1994)

“Rahaba: he feared, he is afraid; fear means to be frightened. The term ‘rahba’ means fear and fright.” (Manzur, 1994)

“Fear: ‘the fear is fright; he feared him, and the place of fear is called ‘makhaf’. In the hadith of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him: ‘Frighten the creatures before they frighten you’—meaning, be cautious of them. If something appears from them, kill it.” The meaning is to make them fear you because if they see you killing them, they will flee from you.”

The Wise: “And We shall certainly test you with something of fear and hunger...” (2:155 Al-Baqarah).

It is also mentioned in the Book of Allah: “And when a matter of security or fear comes to them, they spread it...” (4:83 An-Nisa). Fear: Knowledge: Allah Almighty says: “So whoever fears from a legacy some wrongdoing or sin...” (2:183 Al-Baqarah). And the righteous one says: “And if a woman fears neglect or disinterest from her husband...” (4:128 An-Nisa)”. (Manzur, 1994) “Faza’a: panic and terror of something; it has frightened him and terrified him, he is in panic. Faz’ah refers to that which frightens one.

It is said: ‘Until the fear was removed from their hearts...’ (34:23 Saba) meaning: the fear was revealed.” (Manzur, 1994) “Dha’ra: it frightened him; it terrified him. Dhari’a means he is astonished, he is frightened. Inhadha means he was afraid and panicked, and dha’ir means the frightened one.”

In the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him: “The devil continues to terrify the believer.” It is said: a terrified man means one who possesses fear; terror means fear and fright. (Al-Arabia, December 17, 2005, p. 324)

Al-Fayruzabadi, in his comprehensive dictionary, goes on to affirm what Ibn Manzur said in his explanation of the word “terror,” stating: “(Ruhb) with a dhamma and two dhammas, means fright; he frightened him, thus he is terrified and fearful, like terrifying him (tar’ib) and scaring him (tar’aba) as in preventing (ruhba) with a dhamma, and he was terrified (irtaba) and the (tir’aba) with a kasra means fright.” (Al-Fayruzabadi, 1995)

3. The Meaning of Terror in the Noble Qur'an:

Allah says, "And He put terror in their hearts..." (Al-Hashr 2), which refers to the intense fear that is the greatest army of Allah, which is not diminished by numbers or strength. (Al-Sa'di, 2002) Here, terror or fear is a type of Allah's army, "And no one knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him". (Al-Muddathir 31) It is a great test that Allah imposes on His enemies, a devastating and comprehensive weapon.

Regarding the people of the cave, Allah says: "If you had seen them, you would have turned back from them in flight, and you would have been filled with terror. (Al-Kahf 18) - "It was revealed that He protected them with the terror that Allah spread over them; if anyone had seen them, their hearts would have been filled with terror and they would have fled from them". (Al-Sa'di, 2002, p. 472) In summary, the term terror in the Qur'an has connotations of fear and terror.

As for the English language, the term "terror" is also synonymous with fear, as we find that "horror" corresponds to "fear". Thus, the term "terror" is used in Arabic cinema in relation to its English usage, so we say in English "horror movie" or "horror film," which translates to الرعب فيلم in Arabic.

According to Larousse:

- رَعِبَ - رَعِبًا: "To be afraid, to be anxious / frightened / alarmed, to worry, to alarm, to terrify."

- رُعب: "Fright: Alarm, fear, terror, horror, panic."

- الرُّعبُ عليه استولى: "To be seized with fear, to panic."

- رَعَابٌ رَاعِبٌ، ← مُرْعِبٌ - خوف ~ "Fear: terrible fear, panic fear." (Larousse, n.d.) On the other hand, in the English language, the words "Horror" or "Fear" are used for different meanings, meaning terror or fear, as found in the language dictionary:

"Fear, dread, terror, fright, anxiety, worry, terrifying, frightful, fearful." (Previous source, 1985)

3.1 The Concept of Horror

Horror is a disturbed behavior exhibited by individuals or groups against a specific person or segment of society. It varies according to the personality and psychology of the one instilling fear. Literature and the arts have drawn upon this term since the dawn of human civilization, building stories, myths, and legends around it. Hardly any of the ancient nations have not utilized and diversified horror in some form (religious rituals, customs and traditions, totemic beliefs), such as the Greeks, Pharaohs, Romans, and ancient Eastern civilizations, leading up to the Arabs and their rich traditions and worship practices, which are filled with terrifying stories and frightening tales in their poetic anthologies.

4.1 Horror in Cinema

The term “horror” has a close connection with literature and the arts (novels, plays, stories, cinema). In modern times, it has become even more intricately linked to cinema, as images have invaded the world, dominating thoughts and ideas. Horror has thus evolved into a distinctive cinematic genre with its own components and characteristics.. A horror film consists of dramatic events that are highly complex and exciting, filled with intense fear and terror that shake the soul and stir deep emotions, often involving murder, bloodshed, and loss of life, perpetrated by a person, ghost, strange monster, or some unknown entity.

2.2 The History of Horror Films

“Some recent studies indicate that the presence of such strange and terrifying creatures and actions in cinema mirrors the existence of monsters, witches, and demons in ancient myths and fairy tales. These beings, primarily associated with worlds of fear and darkness, have remained with us through sacred texts and literary works such as Dracula and Frankenstein, along with various human cultures and their analogous monsters and demons, despite possible differences in their outward appearance” (World of Knowledge, 2001). Cinema drew ideas from classic horror novels such as Frankenstein, Dracula, and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. During this period, there was a fusion of horror films with science fiction, especially in American productions, including dinosaur and alien films.

“It is well known that the beginnings of cinema were in silent films, with the film ‘The Devil’s Castle’ marking the beginning of this genre. It is a French film about an eccentric man who commits criminal acts, produced in 1896. In 1910, the first version of ‘Frankenstein’ was released, lasting 16 minutes, with little to mention except that the

director was Thomas Edison, the most famous inventor. The same year also saw the first version of ‘Mr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde’” (Talat, 2022).



After a few years, new trends emerged that represented new cinematic visions for horror films, while the cinema remained silent. The most significant event during this period was “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” (1920), a film that introduced a bold new type of horror cinema. In this movie, the protagonist commits a series of murders that lead him into a chain of crimes. He travels between German villages, where he and his troupe present various theatrical performances in different regions of Germany. This film was superior to its predecessors in terms of cinematography, character portrayal and direction, marking the best contribution of silent cinema.



In 1919, *The Miracle Man* was released, starring Lon Chaney in his first horror role. In 1920, the second version of “*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” was released, and a few years later, the film industry was shaken to its core with the release of the second version of “*Dracula*”, inspired by Bram Stoker’s novel entitled “*Nosferatu*”. During this period, the movie “*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*” (1923) was released, based on the famous novel by Victor Hugo, with Lon Chaney portraying the titular character. The plot of the movie revolves around an outsider in a French village who is severely mistreated because of his unusual appearance.

In the 1930s, with the advent of the talkies, Boris Karloff became the second most famous actor in the genre after Lon Chaney. Karloff was of British descent, and Bela Lugosi, of Hungarian descent, also rose to prominence during this time. Lugosi was considered a near-legend and a rare phenomenon in horror cinema, earning the title “*Prince of Vampires*”. He became best known for his portrayal of Count Dracula, the most prominent vampire character in Hollywood cinema.



Alongside the development of horror cinema during this period, there was another development, particularly in America, where there was a growing interest in science fiction, which imagined technological and creative advances. This development stemmed from the immense changes in the daily lives of ordinary people, and attracted an audience

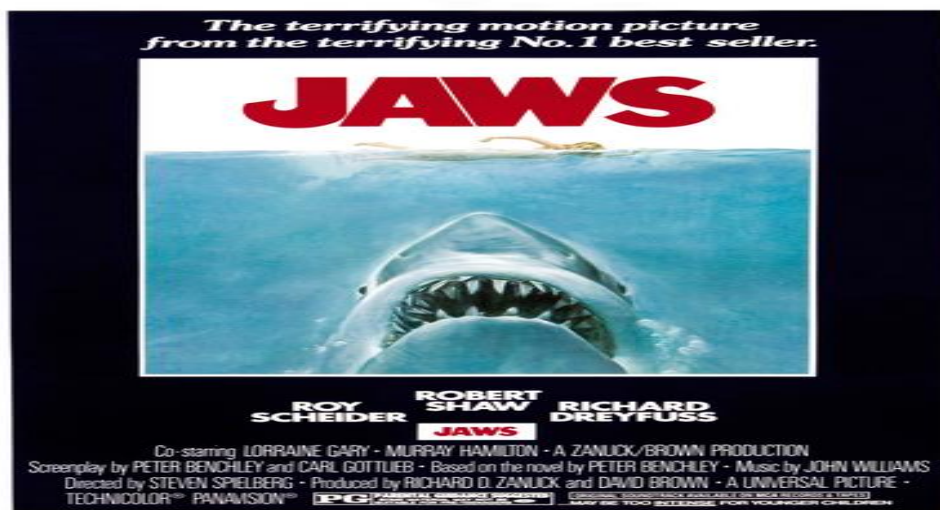
that saw these stories as legends, a form of popular art, but presented in a more sophisticated and futuristic manner.

As a result, the status of horror films declined and their importance waned as the world shifted its focus to the future rather than the past of previous civilizations.

A large number of horror films emerged, offering a rich blend of cinematic suspense characterized by masterful technical execution. These films effectively evoke feelings of tension, anxious nerves, and an escalating fear of the unknown or the known, featuring terrifying figures such as ghosts or deadly monsters. Sometimes they depict criminals who are skilled in methods of murder and torture. As a result, these films create horrific hours and bloody moments that serve to cleanse the human soul of its impurities, reflecting mankind's need for fear. A notable aspect in all these narratives is the psychological dimension of the protagonist characters and the significant impact on the audience, whether they are adults or children.

In "Jaws. Spielberg narrates the harrowing hours experienced by the residents of Amity Island and its vacationers when the predatory shark approached the beach. Three brave individuals - Roy Scheider, Richard Dreyfuss and Robert Shaw - confronted the creature and saved humanity from its deadly threat.

Directed by Steven Spielberg, "Jaws" (1975) was a remarkable success, surpassing other horror and thriller films. It generated considerable buzz and quickly surpassed James Bond films, earning three hundred million dollars in 1975 alone.(Allah.1995)



The cinematic language used in this genre of films, as well as the technical and execution standards, often accompanied by commercial objectives aimed at achieving significant financial returns, have led many filmmakers and prominent directors to shy away from entering the world of horror cinema, opting instead for other genres.

From a different cinematic perspective, “The Fly”. directed by David Cronenberg in 1986, revives Kurt Neumann’s film of the same name, followed by two sequels: “The Fly II” and “Curse of the Fly”, which tell the story of a bizarre scientist who turns into a giant fly against a backdrop of harsh and abrasive atmospheres, summarizing the tragedy of a desperate social system without redemption. The sequel, directed by Chris Walas in 1989 and titled “The Fly II”.suffers from a weak structure.

Cronenberg’s film, however, explores the theme of birth defects, depicting children born deformed and forced to attack people in self-defense. Larry Cohen, a respected director of horror films, respects the traditions of the genre, instilling a sense of dread in the audience and giving a tense rhythm to the scenes, most of which take place at night. This approach is also evident in the third installment he directed in 1987, entitled *It Lives: Island of the Living. (Al-Ahmad, 2001, pages 322-323).



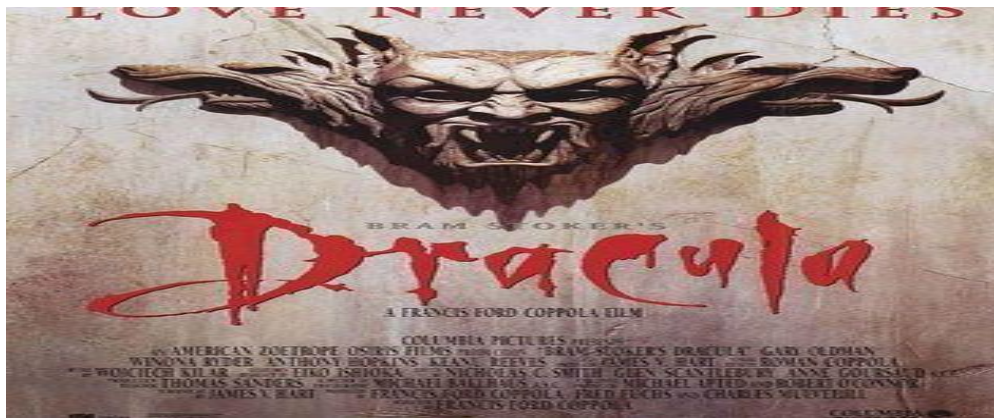
The character of Dracula is considered to be the greatest character known in literature, first, and then used by the cinema for his fame. After a series of films dealing with Count Dracula from the early days of silent cinema to the talkies, the talented director Francis Ford Coppola presented his magnificent film entitled “Bram Stoker’s Dracula” in 1992.

Set in 1462, the story follows Count Dracula (Gary Oldman), who is deeply in love with his beautiful wife Elisabeta (Winona Ryder). He suffers a severe psychological ordeal when the Turks kill her, shattering his heart. His deep grief over the death of his beloved drives

Dracula to madness, causing him to abandon his faith and become a vampire and servant of the Devil, the Prince of Darkness.

Traveling through several centuries, he arrives in London in 1897, where he discovers his former love, now named Mina Murray, preparing to marry the young Jonathan Harker (Keanu Reeves). In Bram Stoker's Dracula, Coppola uses legend and symbolism as a hidden language of expression, paving the way for a high stylistic approach that reveals his clear creative potential, creating a poetic cinematic experience that is as tender as it is violent and terrifying.

It is noteworthy that this film established what is known as the Romantic Horror School, which produced some of the best films in the genre, such as "Frankenstein" and "Interview with the Vampire". (Al-Ahmad, 2001, page 222)



The vampire Dracula represented a turning point in the horror that dominated cinema. Before him, Lon Chaney embodied the bloodthirsty villain, a character that could be overcome and exterminated by human intelligence. In contrast, Dracula was an unnatural phenomenon that struck terror into the hearts of people - a remarkable being who craved blood, believing it to be the only means of sustaining his existence.

The insane fascination with Dracula opened the floodgates to the imaginations of specialized horror writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson. This eventually led to Mary Shelley's creation of the character of Frankenstein, through which cinema presented similar films depicting a world of horror, suspense, and bloodlust in a realm defined by violence, murder, crime, and the blood of the poor, exemplified by films such as "The Mummy," "The Invisible Man," "The Wolf Man," and others. "(Al-Ghareeb, 1996) This cinematic genre has witnessed a remarkable development in line with the advancement of modern

technological techniques, resulting in globally renowned films that exceeded expectations, such as “The Golden Glove” (2019), “You Should Have Left” (2020), “Squid Game” (2021), and “Sissy” (2022). (HOREUR.NET).

3. Psychoanalysis and Horror in Cinema

Cinema is a collection of images, an art form that embodies meaning rather than merely representing a concept. Psychoanalysis can serve as a direct impetus for the narrative processes in films. Conversely, there are new fields of knowledge that contribute to these cinematic representations, such as semiology, which has made significant strides in this area and has become an independent methodology that examines cinematic images from a psychological perspective, following in the footsteps of Freud and the psychoanalytic school.

Georges Lacan’s reading of Freud’s works is one of the most well-known interpretations in scientific and academic circles. He sought to merge Freud’s theories in psychoanalysis with linguistic and structural methods, reading the phenomenon of the unconscious as a structural analogy to the linguistic phenomenon itself, or rather as language itself. In this view, the rational becomes a pathway to the irrational, and consciousness becomes a pathway to the unconscious.

Lacan concludes that Freudian psychoanalysis does not reveal a conscious self or an authentic human nature, but rather uncovers unconscious structures that control the character’s behavior in all its movements and stillness.

The theme of the “subject” was particularly important to Lacan, who preferred not to use the term “individual” or “man” in its singular form, but rather “the self”. The self is the identity that he sees as formed through the specific mechanisms of the unconscious, language, and desire. “Subjectivity” refers to a person’s view of themselves or their self-concept, or how they perceive themselves as a unique individual within a particular culture. Thus, Lacan’s interests extend to the ways in which the self is shaped by ideology, language, and cognitive representation. (Al-Hamid, 2005).

Bazin views cinema as a “mummy of change,” suggesting that the similar desire stems from the mummy complex in the origins of plastic arts. It is possible to escape death by transcending time to preserve the being in appearance. The preservation of the image of

time is an ancient desire upon which the essence of cinema relies. While this is theoretically known in every film, it does not apply to documentary films, as they do not provide a temporal view like the memory of change but rather present something present, even if the film is old and we know that the actors have died. We still believe in the presence of the portrayed characters, moving on the screen as if they are eternal. In this case, this is only possible with imagination and movement, because in fictional films—even old documentaries—the situation becomes a prevailing one in the present, similar to images from the war (1914–1918) in “Jules et Jim (François Truffaut, 1962) during World War I. (Ishaghpour, 2001)

Christian Metz’s comparison between the spectator in front of the movie screen and the child in front of the mirror leads to a distinction between the two. He notes that the viewer or spectator is absent in front of the screen, unlike the child who is present in front of the mirror.

The spectator is concerned with form, aesthetics and the depth of content, intelligently expressing the dream that absorbs his heroes from the depths of their hearts and passions.

“Christian Metz has made identification with cinematic characters and events a secondary form of identification, while the primary experience is identification with the camera, which ultimately represents a form or type of identification with the self. This mirrors the early identification with the mirror or with what exists in it (the self). This seems to invoke a non-central imaginary that governs the process of identification with the characters. However, since this secondary identification is perceived as an extension of the identification with the self, it ultimately serves as the cornerstone”. (Al-Hamid, Aesthetic Preference, 2001)

Cinema is not limited to depicting the past; it inspires and reveals it. In addition, it addresses problems and issues relevant to the new reality. The image has an immensely significant impact, serving as an effective means of understanding today’s world as it has become visible to us. The cinematic image reflects and shapes the world according to the realities of modern civilization. The existence of the image has heightened the sensitivity needed to recognize a world that has become distant due to the loss of primal instincts. However, the distance and separation between image and language is one of the regular symbolic and mental events.

“In conclusion, psychoanalytic theories in the field of cinema have proliferated and branched into different schools, to the extent that each element of the film has a unique psychological study, starting with acting, editing, cinematography, costumes, and more. From their inception, through Freud and his disciples, to Lacan and Christian Metz, all have asserted the existence of similarities between the dream process and film through processes of identification and imagination that form the basis of any reception or viewing of cinematic films. Metz noted the direct relationship between the screen and the mirror.” (Aesthetic Preference, 2001)

3.1 The Concept of Horror According to Freud

The psychoanalytic school is closely associated with the name of “Sigmund Freud,” whose reputation in the fields of psychology is well established, particularly concerning the psychology of the human mind and the inner issues it faces, whether directly or indirectly related to consciousness or the unconscious. Freud hypothesized that deep within the human psyche lies a dark, uncharted area of an animalistic and primal nature. This untamed region is what Freud referred to as the “id.” However, he also recognized a drive towards love, life, construction, creation, and creativity alongside the desire for death, destruction, and war.

In early childhood, the id appears to dominate the child’s behavior as they seek to fulfill their needs and express their energies without regard for the demands of the external world. (Al-Essawi, 2001-2002)

It is well known that emotions play a significant and central role in human life, providing a driving force. Feelings are directly related to drives, which provides a clear explanation for the abundance and variety of emotional disorders. These disorders are undoubtedly influenced, directly or indirectly, by physical disorders. Daily events and experiences also have significant psychological significance, which varies from individual to individual depending on how a person reacts in a given situation.

In order to understand the nuances of these disorders and emotions, it is necessary to identify the types of mental illnesses that fall within this framework, along with their causes, symptoms, and psychological and physical consequences for the individual. In addition, it is crucial to assess the impact of external factors. Most psychologists belonging to the psychoanalytic school consider the family environment and upbringing to be among

the most influential factors in emotional development, especially during a child's early years.

Furthermore, "we must differentiate between mental illnesses and neurological disorders, as many people confuse the two: neurological disorders are attributed to neurological, organic, or physical causes, whereas mental illnesses stem from purely psychological causes, that is, they are functional disorders. These disorders are known as psychoneuroses, which include anxiety and hysteria. Symptoms of these disorders include feelings of anxiety, tension, depression, complaints of physical pain without any real cause, excessive health fears, feelings of collapse, fears of madness, and other related conditions." (Al-Essawi, 2001-2002)

It is undeniable that children are the most susceptible group to fears and pathological anxieties, which often lead them to experience fluctuating and unstable psychological states. This has led Freud and his followers to rely on the young child to interpret these emotions and behaviors dominating the sick samples, as well as to understand the motives that cause individuals to experience fear. Thus, a close connection is established between anxiety and fear, as some consider anxiety to be the fear of something vague or unknown, an acquired response that prepares the individual to encounter frightening situations.

"Freud believed that fear has a biological, genetic basis. This ability to react (fear) is beneficial to humans in the face of danger. Freud abandoned a crucial part of his new theory by linking fear to critical and dangerous situations where stimuli come in continuous bursts and remain unreacted to, resulting in fear appearing accordingly." *(Al-Razzaq, 1987)* This means that we cannot get rid of fear even if we want to. Experience shows that it is impossible to eliminate fear because fear is born within us; we are born with it and it accompanies us from the cradle to the grave. The problem is not to eliminate fear, but to effectively use and benefit from it. It is reasonable to assume that Freud modified his theory when it failed to gain acceptance, and shifted his focus to the phenomenon of anxiety, which he frequently observed in many of the cases of neuroses he treated.

Through psychoanalysis, he found that his patients suffered from anxiety with obscure causes and unknown motives, which was different from rational anxiety. Let us assume that what he said is true, but its practical applicability is extremely limited. For example, Freud distinguished between two types of anxiety: objective anxiety and neurotic anxiety. We must also draw a clear line between rational fears and imaginary fears. "Objective

anxiety is the fear of a known external danger, such as the fear of a wild animal, fire, or drowning. This type of fear is understandable and rational because people typically fear external threats to their lives.” (Freud, 1997).

3.2 The Psychological Impact of Horror Films on the Audience

Horror films that rely on direct violence attract a significant number of viewers from various social strata, particularly teenagers and young adults. Psychologists attribute this interest to the psychological charges that adolescents discharge while watching this genre of films. Despite the variety of horror films and their different characters, the scenario remains consistent—a combination of bloody violent scenes, images of ghosts and hidden spirits, along with the use of sound effects that create tension and lighting techniques that enhance their psychological and neurological effects on the viewer. This scenario, characterized by the escalating pace of horror, with a rapid rhythm in the visuals of any horror film, captivates the majority of young audiences. They find pleasure only in watching horror and violent films, stating that what they enjoy most about this cinematic genre is the fear and tension they experience during the film. Most of these viewers prefer to watch horror films with a group of friends, although going to the cinema provides a more emotional and exciting atmosphere.

Family and social upbringing play a significant role in determining the types of films that teenagers watch. While many adolescents and young adults enjoy horror films, these films often provoke anxiety and fear in parents, who hold a different perspective on them. Most mothers do not favor their children watching this type of film continuously, believing it heightens certain negative aspects of their personalities.

It seems that the viewing process occurs under a purely psychological influence, where the thoughts and opinions of the audience unite with what they see on the screen in the theater. This leads to a blending of their various emotions, desires, and beliefs with the artistic work or film in particular.

Thus, it becomes clear that the idea of identification is fundamentally linked to the idea of imitation or resemblance, where the concept of catharsis, as articulated by Aristotle, arises by evoking the emotions of pity and fear in the audience, similar to what occurs in theater. (Al-Hamid, Aesthetic Preference, 2001)

Christian Metz's comparison between the viewer in front of the cinema screen and the child in front of the mirror highlights a distinction between them. He observed that the viewer is absent before the screen, in contrast to the child, who is present in front of the mirror.

The viewer is concerned with form, aesthetics, and the depth of content, expressing intelligently the dream that absorbs its heroes from the depths of their hearts and passions.

“Christian Metz has made the identification with cinematic characters and events a secondary form of identification. The primary experience is the identification with the camera, which ultimately represents a form or type of identification with the self. This mirrors the early identification with the mirror, or with what exists within it (the self). It seems that this invokes a non-central imaginary that governs the process of identification with the characters. However, since this secondary identification is perceived as an extension of the identification with the self, it ultimately serves as the cornerstone.” (Al-Hamid, 2001, p. 375)

3.3 The Relationship Between Aesthetics and Psychological Impact

The relationship between the aesthetics of a scene and its psychological impact is evident in the directors' ability to utilize visual and auditory elements to create a balance between artistic appeal and emotional excitement. A visually beautiful scene can have a multiplied psychological effect when coupled with moments of horror and suspense. Thus, the viewer becomes caught between enjoying cinematic beauty and experiencing fear and tension. Film critic Noël Carroll noted that aesthetics in horror cinema extend beyond visual impact to include the emotional effects that scenes leave on the audience.

Psychological studies of cinema (Pinedo, 1997) have explored how aesthetic elements influence the audience's response to fear, thereby enhancing the power and lasting impact of horror films.

There is no escaping the new reality of cinema, which has fused modern technological advances, incorporating developments in various aspects, starting with the camera. Directors or cinematographers can focus on lighting, complex camera movements and special lenses that distort sizes and shapes to create an atmosphere of mystery and psychological tension that affects the viewer. This, along with computer programs, multimedia, digital systems and digital video, plays a crucial role.

This technical innovation is the magic key that filmmakers have used as a weapon against the apathy of audiences in theaters, transforming it into a method of enticing audiences, since any studio can now create the most complex and emotionally shocking scenes.

However, this purely commercial obsession has not prevented the emergence of cinematic talents who believe that this film genre reflects a general awareness that it is part of the cultural heritage of societies that hasten technological progress at the expense of their spiritual values and authenticity. They have transformed their cinematic texts into futuristic visions filled with pessimism about humanity in the coming century. Perhaps the best example of this remarkable type is the American director Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which deals with the frailty of humanity in the face of the computer revolution and the awe of machines.

4. Conclusion

Horror cinema is one of the most controversial film genres because it combines elements of artistic beauty with a profound psychological impact on the audience. Throughout this article, it has become clear that this genre of film (horror) is not merely a means to entertain or scare the audience; rather, it is an art form in its own right, relying on advanced directing techniques, creativity in scene construction, and the use of elements such as lighting, music, visual effects, and set design to create a unique cinematic experience.

From an aesthetic perspective, horror cinema highlights the ability of directors to transform dark and frightening scenes into artistic tableaux that express profound visions. Scenes that may appear frightening on the surface can conceal underlying human or social messages, making them a powerful tool for expressing complex issues such as loneliness, fear of the unknown, or even the internal conflicts of humanity.

On a psychological level, the effect of horror films on the audience remains a topic worthy of study. While some viewers enjoy the excitement and suspense these films create, others may experience negative effects such as anxiety, fear, or insomnia. Nevertheless, the ability to confront these fears by watching the movie may provide viewers with a form of emotional catharsis, allowing them to face their fears in a safe environment.

In conclusion, horror cinema is a unique blend of art and psychological impact. It is not only a test of the viewer's courage, but also a test of cinema's ability to transcend traditional

boundaries of artistic expression. By understanding the aesthetics of the scene and its psychological effects, we can better appreciate this cinematic genre-not just as a means to provoke fear, but as a mirror that reflects our deepest fears and human struggles.

References:

1. Ibn Manzur. (1994). *Lisan al-Arab*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar sadir.
2. Al-Ahmad, M. (2001). *Cinema Renews Its Youth*. Damascus, Syria: Ministry of Culture Publications.
3. Al-Hamid, S. A. (2001). *Aesthetic Preference (Vol. 267)*. Series of Knowledge World.
4. Al-Hamid, S. A. (2005, January). *The Age of the Image - Negatives and Positives*. Knowledge World, 311, pp. 265-266.
5. Al-Razzaq, A. A. (1987). *Symptoms and Mental Illnesses and Their Treatment - Children and Adolescents*. Amman, Jordan: Dar al-Fikr.
6. Al-Sabeq, J. (1985). *Dictionary of Languages - English, French, Arabic*. Paris: Sabeq for Authorship and Publishing.
7. Al-Saadi, A. A. (2002). *Facilitating the Merciful Creator in Interpreting the Words of the Merciful*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Al-Risalah Foundation.
8. Al-Arabiyya, M. A. (December 17, 2005). *Al-Mujam Al-Wasit*. Egypt: Al-Shorouk International Library.
9. Al-Essawi, A. A. (2001-2002). *Encyclopedia of Modern Psychology*. Beirut: Dar al-Ratib al-Jāmi'īya.
10. Al-Ghareeb, A. (1996). *Science Fiction Cinema Now*. Amman, Jordan: Dār al-Kindi for Publishing and Distribution.
11. Al-Fayrouzabadi, M. A. (1995). *Al-Qamus Al-Muhit*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Jil.
12. Allah, M. S. (1995, June). *A Brief History of Motion Pictures - Cinema: A Young Art of One Hundred Years*. *Al-Arabi Magazine*, p. 69.

13. Talat, A. (2022, November 10). Your Guide to the Best Horror Films: How Cinema Purifies Us from Our Worst Fears. Retrieved 2024, from Al Jazeera Net: <https://www.aljazeera.net/arts/2022/11/10/>
14. Knowledge World. (2001). Aesthetic Preference - A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Taste. In S. A. Al-Hamid. Kuwait: Series of Knowledge World.
15. Freud, S. (1997). The Ego and the Id and Anxiety (M. A. Najati, Trans.). Algeria: Diwan of University Publications.
16. Larousse Library. (n.d.). Larousse Al-Sabeel - Arabic-French - French-Arabic. Daniel Rigg.
17. Carroll, N. The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart. USA: Routledge.
18. HOREUR.NET. (n.d.). Retrieved from Film: GOLDEN GLOVE: <https://www.horreur.net/film/golden-glove-185525>
19. Ishaghpour, Y. (2001). Cinema. France: Dominos.
20. Pinedo, I. (1997). Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing. SUNY Press.