

# In a Stranger Field

Studies of Art, Audiovisuals  
and New Technologies in Fantasy,  
SciFi and Horror Genres

Eds. Mario-Paul Martínez  
& Fran Mateu

ASOCIACIÓN DE DESARROLLO Y DIFUSIÓN  
DEL GÉNERO FANTÁSTICO  
"UNICORNIO NEGRO"

**MASSIVA**  
GRUPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN UMH

  
**FANTAELX**  
CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL DE GÉNERO FANTÁSTICO  
ACTUALIDAD Y NUEVAS TECNOLOGÍAS

In a Stranger Field. Studies of Art, Audiovisuals and New  
Technologies in Fantasy, SciFi and Horror Genres.

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Cover design: Vicente Javier Pérez Valero.

Book design: Vicente Javier Pérez Valero - Francisco Cuéllar Santiago

Association of Development and Dissemination of the Fantastic Gender “Black Unicorn”  
 (“Unicornio Negro”).  
 CIF: G54802251.

Massiva Research Group.  
 International Congress of Fantastic Genre, Audiovisuals and New Technologies.  
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First edition: November 2019.

ISBN: 978-84-09-16300-7

Edited in Spain.

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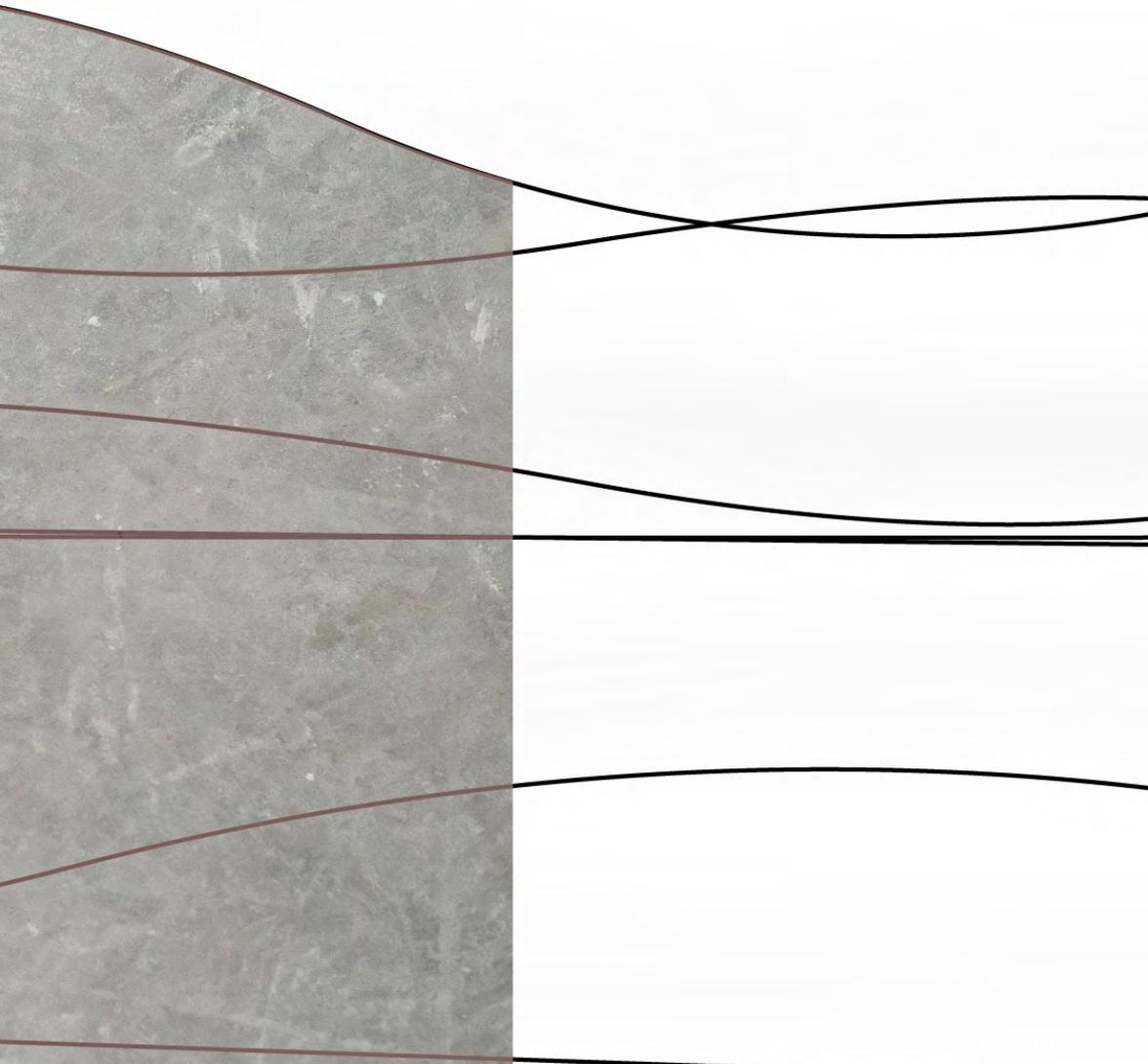
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# Chapter 0.

**In a stranger field.  
Studies of Art, Audiovisuals  
and New Technologies on  
Fantasy, SciFi and Horror Genres**



## *CROSSING BEYOND THE FIELDS OF FANTASY, SCIENCE-FICTION AND HORROR*

Mario–Paul Martínez Fabre  
Fran Mateu

The frontiers that divide fantastic subgenres tend to be ambiguous, and we are aware of that. For example, in which genre could we classify the masterpiece *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), directed by Tobe Hooper? Surely, its most appropriate field is the subgenre of horror. However, horror is closely related to emotion, and we can consume a product of the culture industry, such as literature (Maupassant, Lovecraft, Poe, Stoker), video games (Toyama, Kamiya, Kojima), or cinema (Carpenter, Argento, Polanski), that emotionally arouses us with horror, but not necessarily in the field of fantastic genre with supernatural meanings. We should remember that the *slasher*<sup>1</sup> film directed by Hooper or *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) –film based at the same time on the homonymous novel by Robert Bloch (1959)–, are both inspired by real events. In this sense, there have never been the characters of *Leatherface* (Fig. 1) or Norman Bates, but we shouldn't forget Ed Gein or Sawney Beane, shocking historical figures, in which both films are inspired, whose actions produced an atrocious horror in their victims (Wilson, 2015). And yet it was something real, not something fantastic.

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<sup>1</sup> The *slasher* is a subgenre of horror movies where a murderer always tries to kill teenagers, especially developed with titles like *Halloween* (1978) directed by John Carpenter, and *Friday the 13th* (1980) directed by Sean S. Cunningham.



Figure 1. The character of Leatherface in a frame from the horror film *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974) (Source: Bryanston Picture ©).

However, we're faced with a book where we first want to clarify the frontiers of the different fields of the fantastic genre to, in this way, cross them and deepen their cultural studies in relation to them and through the different authors who have participated in the present volume. Without serving as a precedent, and without delving too much into classic definitions of authors such as Louis Vax (1960; 1987) or Rosemary Jackson (1981), the russian formalist Tzvetan Todorov (1975) defined the fantastic genre as a particular literary genre that was located between the mysterious and the wonderful: *l'étrange* and *le merveilleux*. Obviously, the artistic and audiovisual spheres and the rise of new technologies mean that this definition must go beyond literature. Even in the context of Todorov, the fantastic genre could be transferred to other existing artistic fields, such as sculpture (Bernini, Cellini, Bourdelle) or painting (Brueghel, Memling, Blake).

From our point of view, we start with a clear premise: the fantastic genre includes three subgenres, which are fantasy, science-fiction (SciFi) and horror. These subgenres, in addition, would contain other subgenres. Thus, the aforementioned *slasher* is a subgenre of horror, and as *gore* –where the explicit presence of blood stands out–, *giallo* –framed in the italian historical context–, the *B Series*, the *psychological horror*, or the *found footage*.<sup>2</sup> Also, new technologies have allowed horror

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, this type of subgenres can be merged, like in the case of the film *Cannibal*

to evolve, giving rise to subgenres such as *survival horror*, within digital entertainment. Thus, and sharing the definition of Noël Carroll (1990), we frame the horror as a field of expression where the feeling of fear is caused in the audience (or in the characters, as happens in Lovecraft stories), but not necessarily with supernatural or monstrous presences, unless the subgenre allows it (*supernatural horror*, *cosmic horror*, *kaijū genre*, etc.). We should think about films like *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975) or *Funny Games* (Haneke, 1997): the feeling of horror is imposed on the supernatural; a fact that doesn't happen, for example, in *survival horror* video games such as *Resident Evil* (Mikami, 1996) or *Silent Hill* (Toyama, 1999), along with all its sequels; in films like *Predator* (McTiernan, 1987) or *Alien* (Scott, 1979), or in the classic novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), written by Mary Shelley. However, by citing Scott's film and Shelley's novel, the frontier of horror begins to fade. It's when we enter the field of science-fiction.

It's commonly accepted that Mary Shelley was one of the most representative figures of modern science-fiction in Europe. Her work has resulted in multiple direct and indirect adaptations, especially cinematographic<sup>3</sup> and ludological<sup>4</sup>. We must also remember authors like H. G. Wells or Jules Verne, but it was the American writer and inventor Hugo Gernsback who coined the term «science-fiction» in 1926 by including it in *Amazing Stories*, a popular magazine edited by himself, which was dedicated to spread this fantastic subgenre (Bleiler, 1998). In this sense, science-fiction –unlike horror– is a fantastic subgenre whose stories necessarily have a scientific substratum, which is modified to offer its own subgenres, where post-apocalyptic stories, dystopias, superheroes, or alien's invasions are found, with representative universes as those created by Aldous Huxley, Frank Herbert, Ray

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*Holocaust* (1980), directed by Ruggero Deodato, also influenced by other authors like Gualtiero Jacopetti or Paolo Cavara.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted to the cinema for the first time in 1910 in a homonymous short film directed by J. S. Dawley and produced by Thomas A. Edison. However, the first version that achieved a greatest impact was the Universal Pictures feature film released in 1931, directed by James Whale and where Boris Karloff played the iconic creature.

<sup>4</sup> For example, through video games like *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (Bits Studios, 1994) or *Frankenstein: Master of Death* (Jetdogs Studios & Fineway Studios, 2015).

Bradbury, George Lucas or Moebius, but without forgetting two more recurring themes: time travels (Gaspar, 1887; Wells, 1895) and space travels (Wells, 1901). In fact, probably one of the first film versions in the field of science-fiction is the short film *Le voyage dans la Lune* (1902), directed by Georges Méliès –which adapted the novel by H. G. Wells *The first men in the Moon* (1901) (Fig. 2)– and also adapted in other films like *The first men in the Moon* (Gordon & Leigh, 1919), and expanded to video games, with interesting titles like *Voyage* (Kheops Studio, 2005).



Figure 2. An illustration by E. Herring from the SciFi novel *The first men in the Moon* (Wells, 1901) (Source: George Newnes ©).

Focusing now on fantasy, it's common to find sources where the term «fantasy» is used as a synonym of «fantastic». They aren't synonyms, although if a content belongs to the subgenre of fantasy, it will inevitably be part of the fantastic field. Unlike horror –which is connected to fear– and science-fiction –whose foundation is science, with stories that may or may not happen in the future– fantasy focuses especially on the imagination, and in close connection with mythology and folklore. Therefore, it's common that in fantasy stories there are references to the past, but connected with fantastic elements (Clute & Grant, 1997), as it happens with the *arthurian cycle*. Therefore, magic or creatures such as dragons, goblins, elves and orcs have a presence in these stories, present in pioneering authors of literature, such as John Ruskin (1851), George MacDonald (1858; 1872) or William Morris (1876), and in the extensive legacy of writers such as C. S. Lewis or J. R.

R. Tolkien, creator of the *Middle Earth*, framed within the subgenre of *epic fantasy* or *medieval fantasy*, which has influenced to recent authors such as Robert E. Howard, Michael Moorcock, J. K. Rowling or George R. R. Martin. Of course, the rest of arts have also echoed the fantasy in its different expression ways, such as illustration and comic (Rackham, Froud, Frazetta), video games –remembering the saga started with *Final Fantasy* (Squaresoft, 1987 ) or *Blade: The Edge of Darkness* (Rebel Act Studios & Mercury Steam, 2001) (Fig. 3)–, cinema and television series –sometimes adapted from literature, like *The Neverending Story* (Petersen, 1984) or *Game of Thrones* (Benioff & Weiss, 2011–2019)–, or role–playing games (*Dungeons & Dragons*, *Magic: the Gathering*, *Warhammer Fantasy*), always with its constant adaptations to the different media and platforms.



Figure 3. A frame from the fantasy video game *Blade: The Edge of Darkness* (2001)  
(Source: Rebel Act Studios & Mercury Steam ©).

Once the three subgenres of the fantastic genre have been defined, we can affirm that the subdivisions of the genre itself lead us to find ourselves in a stranger field (Fig. 4). And from a multidisciplinary approach, in this book we propose three blocks divided into the three fields that encompass the fantastic genre: fantasy, science–fiction and horror.

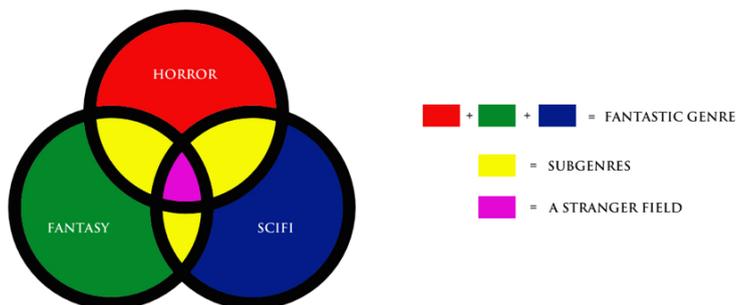


Figure 4. The connections of the fantastic genre (Source, own elaboration: Martínez Fabre & Mateu, 2019).

In this book, readers will find different texts whose authors have delved into the mysteries that run through the next pages.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, with the studies in the field of fantasy, readers will find five texts: *Witchcraft and feminism in Japanese animation: Kiki's Delivery Service and Little Witch Academia case study* (Samanta Sempere), whose author explores the witchcraft and feminism in the animation cinema from Japan, especially with the film *Kiki's Delivery Service* (Miyazaki, 1989) and the television series *Little Witch Academia* (Yoshinari, 2017); *Fairy tales, legends and yōkai. The traditional Japanese society through its own fantasy literature* (Kevin Díaz Alché), where the possible relations between the *yōkai* genre, a subgenre of Japanese fantasy, and the society that created it are analyzed; *Fantasy manga as a reading motivational tool for primary education* (Claudia Torres Pastor), in which the author analyzes the use of the fantasy manga as part of the Spanish class in primary school; *Influences of the animator Ray Harryhausen in the design of fantastic creatures for videogames* (Manuel Ferri Gandía), whose author explores Harryhausen's influence in the field of video games, with the presence of the creatures that the animator made popular throughout his long career, and with special attention in the films *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (Juran, 1958), *Jason and the*

<sup>5</sup> Several of these texts have emerged as a result of the *I International Congress on Fantastic Genre, Audiovisuals and New Technologies*, held in the city of Elche (Spain) on November 22 and 23, 2018, in the context of the *VI Elche International Fantastic Film Festival – FANTAELX*.

*Argonauts* (Chaffey, 1963), *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (Hessler, 1971) and *Clash of the Titans* (Davis, 1981); and *Fake It While You Make It: When Do Fantasy and Science-fiction Movie Trailers Become Deceptive Advertising?* (Ryan Garcia and William Watson), where the authors explore and analyze trailer content from fantasy and SciFi films, proposing a four categories system for classifying it along the spectrum of content and purpose. These are texts with different perspectives on fantasy, although the last one is a connection to the next field of study: science-fiction. In this second chapter, four texts are presented: *In search of the perfect woman* (Sylvia Lenaers Cases), where the author analyzes the process of creating the figure of women through mythology and SciFi, citing representative films such as *Metropolis* (Lang, 1926), *Alraune* (Galeen, 1928) or *Galaxina* (Sachs, 1980); *Fantastic chronicle of unchained Prometheus* (Ruth Cristina Hernández Ching), that moves around the igneous element in the work by Mary Shelley, forerunner in the horror and detective novel; *Superhero representation in Netflix produced serial fiction. The case of Daredevil, Jessica Jones, Luke Cage, Iron Fist and The Punisher* (Laura Agüera Santiago), in which *Marvel* comic book hero's representation and heroicity in the current serial fiction of *Netflix* are analyzed; and Transhumanism and bioethics in the fantastic iberoamerican motion pictures (César Oliveros Aya), where the treatment of some transhumanist references in iberoamerican filmography are reviewed from bioethics, adapting narratives located in the contemporary popular culture. Finally, in the third chapter, dedicated to the field of horror, readers will have at their disposal four more texts: *Horror as affective estrangement* (Jasper Vrancken), where the author argues to see the genre of horror as a genre of affective estrangement using different affects in a extratextual and intertextual way, and reflecting this process in his horror short film *Muil* (Vrancken, 2018); *Children who give you shivers in Mariana Enríquez's short stories* (Pol Vegara Meirelles), in which the use of the child figure as a key element in the political terror stories from the argentine writer Mariana Enríquez is analyzed; *The Craft: riffs, adolescence and witchcraft* (/ javi moreno), where the author reviews the universe of rituals, witchcraft and adolescence, with special attention in the film *The Craft* (Andrew Fleming, 1996); *Violence and Death treated as entertainment.*

*Reality and fiction of products created from the mass media* (Germán Piqueras Arona), whose author explores and reflects on the confusion between reality and fiction in the representation of death in our time; and *Giallo. An Aesthetic Innovation in Cinema* (Vicente Javier Pérez Valero), where the author analyzes, from an aesthetic approach, this Italian film subgenre, which is characterized by a very particular use of lighting and color, with classic filmmakers such as Mario Bava or Darío Argento, and whose influences have remained until the present day with professionals such as cinematographers like Natasha Braier or Benjamin Loeb, or film directors like Nicolas Winding Refn or Panos Cosmatos.

We consider that these texts reflect some very interesting approaches, in order to observe the fantastic genre and its subgenres from different perspectives. Therefore, we invite readers to discover in these cultural studies a content in which the nuances between fantasy, science-fiction and horror can be appreciated. However, we also invite the readers to cross that frontiers to discover another field. A stranger field.

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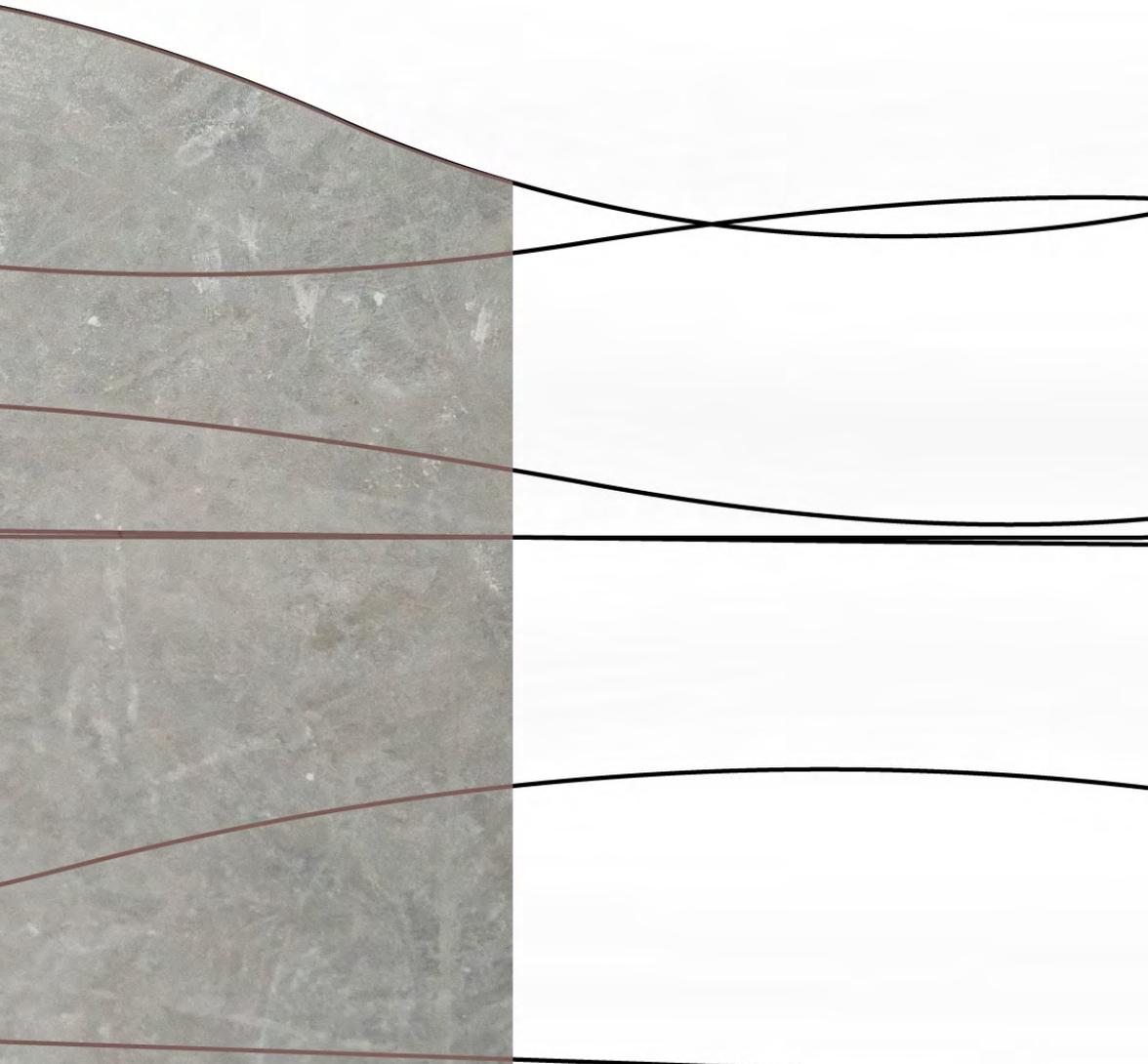
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# Chapter 1.

## Studies in the field of Fantasy



## WITCHCRAFT AND FEMINISM IN JAPANESE ANIMATION: *KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE AND LITTLE WITCH ACADEMIA* CASE STUDY

Samanta Sempere

### **Art and social reality**

Art evolves along with societies. Every pictorial representation, song or movie is a heterogeneous mixture of the author's concerns and what comes about beyond his/her own person. In other words, it's always influenced by reality in so far as humans coexist and interact with their peers in the context of a group with very specific characteristics. In this interplay there's an influx of determining factors like socioeconomic status and role and other personal circumstances, so each member of a society lives a unique experience which shapes his/her personality, style and creations.

Like other schools of thought which pursue a social improvement, feminism aims to change the way women are portrayed in art. This is how gender perspective is finding its place in the analysis of past works and the creation of new ones. And it's not even the same process in every continent or nation, because it depends on the way their morality, laws and political situation changes along centuries.

In this brief study, we want to approach how Japanese animation has transformed witchcraft in such a relevant topic for women's empowerment. Despite stereotyped representations of the bad, ugly witch and some plain, hypersexualized conceptions of this character,

today we are able to find a high volume of positive examples where witches are depicted as strong-willed, charismatic, diverse and complex women. To exemplify this, we chose two representative cases from different points in time: *Kiki's Delivery Service* (*Majo no takkyūbin*, 1989), by Studio Ghibli, and *Little Witch Academia* (*Ritoru Witchi Akademia*, 2017), by Trigger. Likewise, we wanted to bring variety to the analysis by selecting a feature film and a TV series. We will dissect them to know their main lines and find out if each author incorporated a true feminist look into the story. But first, it would be very interesting to provide some historical context.

### **Historical context: magic women in Japanese mythology**

Japanese mythology is extremely rich in female characters like main goddesses (Amaterasu, Izanami, Inari), *yōkai* (*Yuki-onna*, *Nure-onna*) and all manner of good and bad spirits (*Zashiki-warashi*, *yūrei*). There are, of course, some witches in these stories.

We find the mountain old woman (*yama-uba* or *yamanba*), which is always portrayed as a creature «of immense strength whose sharp-toothed mouth is hidden under her airline, and whose hair turns into serpents with which she ensnares and captures small children to eat, or as a merciful foster mother to many heroes» (Ashkenazi, 2003: 290-291), like Slavic's *Baba Yaga*<sup>1</sup>. This old woman also meets men working in the mountains or defeated warriors to ask them for holding her baby until she comes back. The child's weight increases beyond the average man's endurance so if the victim is strong enough to stand it, *yamanba* bestows him on a hereditary super strength.

We can mention the women who had a magic animal (*tsukimono*) in her power as a familiar too. The prestigious folklorist Yanagita Kunio mentions different two families of witch animals, which are, theoretically, capable of possessing human beings: snakes and four-legged species such as foxes<sup>2</sup> and dogs. As the mythology says, some

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<sup>1</sup> It seems that *baba* is a multicultural word to say grandma or old woman.

<sup>2</sup> Foxes are messengers of the harvest and fertility goddess Inari.

women had them as familiars. Their name is *tsukimono-tsuji*, and the most popular kind of them are the *kitsune-tsukai*: those who possess a fox, like European witches did with cats or toads (Blacker, 2004: 4). But this wasn't just a myth. In Japan, women suspected of being a *tsukimono-tsuji* were said to use the animal for manipulating other people and pass «the ability to control a fox from one generation to the next», like a contagious disease (Foster, 2015: 184). So, the most direct consequence of this rumors was ostracism.

Most of the Japanese legendary witches are represented as malicious creatures, but there's some other example of good or neutral. The kind anti-saddle hag (*arikura-no-baba*) from Takayama used her powers to stop the dangerous eruption of a mountain<sup>3</sup>. But if we talk about Japanese witchcraft legends based on real characters, perhaps the most interesting of them all is the story of Himiko.

The Chinese *Records of the Three Kingdoms* reported a visit to the kingdom of Yamatai in 240 AC, ruled by a mysterious and powerful woman who never married and «occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people». She apparently was devoted to shamanism and consented her younger brother to attend the administrative affairs (Henshall, 2012: 14).

Under the influence of Shinto religion and some folkloric beliefs, it was a vast set of legends based on femininity that supports the idea of a matriarchal society in Ancient Japan<sup>4</sup>. They usually were tied to things like natural forces, the health of all living beings, emotions and feelings or powerful blessings and curses. But it started to change after 552 AC, when Buddhism arrived from China waving its misogynistic flag. Then, the Edo period (1603-1868 AC), a Japanese variant of Chinese Confucianism meant a total reform of Japanese society, guided by the supposed 'natural order' of things.

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<sup>3</sup> This information was taken from the International Research Center for Japanese Studies' yōkai database.

<sup>4</sup> As ancient Japanese, such as the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, historical literature shows.

Women were confined in private spaces with the duty of caring for her husband, children and home. She owes obedience to the father when she plays the role of a daughter, to the husband when she marries and, finally, to the son when the child grows up (Sugano, 2008: 258-259). Every woman who deviated the norm was a pariah among their own, as, for example, geishas, single women, sterile wives, or those felt envy. Due to this socio-political landscape, Japanese women never enjoyed the same opportunities as the opposite sex. Little by little, things just went to bad from worse for real and fictional women.

## **Manganime heroines to change the society**

*Manga* and *anime* are sometimes used as synonyms for the same concept, but the truth is that they represent two different kinds of arts. *Manga* is a Japanese comic book and *anime*, as its name points out, is a drawn movie: they were called a line drawing film (*senga eiga*), moving pictures (*dōga*) and *manga* film (*manga fūrumu*) after the current name was imported from French language (Hu, 2010: 101).

From 1900, there were artists who saw in *manga* creation a unique way to banish traditional Confucian ideals from Japanese society. The 1920s was a very important decade for the industry *anime* due to two reasons: artists began to consider young people as a new target audience and Japan negotiated their first exports so that everyone could know their talented *mangakas*. Both events were determinant for this sector to consolidate after 1945.

In parallel with this almost completely masculine reality, Fusae Ichikawa, Raichō Hiratsuka and Mumeo Oku founded the New Women's Association (*Shin-fujin Kyōkai*) to promote gender equality. But the NWA wasn't the only organization that fought patriarchy nor the most radical. During the Taishō era (1912-1926 AC), women waged a great war for the conquest of their rights.

The researcher Barbara Molony germanes this period to a persistent struggle «for the right to participate in the state, either in such formal ways

as access to suffrage and political office or in less formal ways such as state recognition of the ‘voice of the kitchen’» and for state’s protection from «certain aspects of public and private society which they viewed as oppressive» as «domineering husbands» –right to divorce– and «miserable economic conditions that led to suffering and deaths of woman» (Molony, 1999: 22-23).

Unfortunately, the Second World War temporally curbed the debate and gave more relevance to the criminal responsibility for war crimes against women. Only after a certain time, and due to the American imposition of liberal democracy in Japan, the feminist discourse strengthened again. As a result, women’s suffrage and other social rights were approved to the detriment of Confucian ideals. But until the decade of 1970s, women didn’t start to be truly meaningful. Taken to the *manganime* scene, it means that the first atypical feminine characters were introduced by men in *shōjo magazines*<sup>5</sup>.

Going back to pre-war *manga*, Kodansha’s *Shōjo Club* (1923-1946) released on 1934 a 16-page *one-shot* entitled *Nazo ni Kurubaa* (*The Mysterious Clover*), by the artist Katsuji Matsumoto. The protagonist was a young antiheroine who saves poor people from greedy well-heeled. Ryan Holmberg, art and comic historian, describes her as a «masculine teenage female hero» closer to «an Americanized *shōnen*». Maybe, «an attempt to take the modern girl into an age, that of rising militarism and social control, in which she was no longer welcome»<sup>6</sup>.

Matsumoto’s *Clover* was an excellent case of *shōjo manga* heroine, so after the Second World War new super girls were born to follow her steps. The most recognized of them is Sapphire from *Ribbon no Kishi* (*Princess Knight*), created by Osamu Tezuka in 1953. This author is considered the father of *shōjo manga* as we know it today, together with her pals Machiko Hasegawa and Riyoko Ikeda.

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<sup>5</sup> *Manga* for girls. Magazines such as *Shōjo Kai* (*Girls’ World*, 1902-1913), were drew by the same men who worked on *shōnen-manga* for boys– publications (Inoue, 2006: 116). Consequently, they were full of gender stereotypes.

<sup>6</sup> Holmberg’s considerations around this character were published on *The Comics Journal*, on 4 June 2014.

As Dr. Kinko Itō describes, *manga* «depicts other social phenomena, such as social order and hierarchy, sexism, racism, ageism, classism, and so on» through its own style, which contains a lot of «humor, satire, exaggeration, and wit» (Itō, 2005: 456). This definition is also applicable to *anime*, because they always had a similar evolution so far and, now, are complementary to each other.

*Anime* it was born in the early 1900s, but there's not almost information about these first productions because the content is very scarce and too damaged to use for investigative purposes. However, researchers understand the productions of this stage until the end of 1950 as precursors of the «new era of animation» (Horno, 2012: 109).

These first *anime* works showed, mainly, legends from Ancient Japan and China, costumbrist portraits and tales with animal characters. In addition, there was some educational stories –*Ubasute yama* (literally *The Mountain where people abandon their elders*, 1925)–, and residual *hentai*<sup>7</sup> short films which were censored and prohibited by Japanese authorities –as *Suzumi-bune* (*A nocturne boat ride*, 1932).

Between 1930s and 1950s, it was common to find animated short films for propaganda purposes. They were funded by the state in order to extol the virtues of the Axis powers: Germany, Italy and Japan. When the war aim finally vanished, the number of animation studies, genres and usual topics increased. The American influence is, again, remarkable. As we know thanks to researchers, it seems that Osamu Tezuka was inspired by Walt Disney and the Fleischer brothers to put their characters on animated series (Montero y Pérez, 2015: 126).

*Anime* industry has grown exponentially since then and it makes very difficult to know how many subtopics exist inside every category. In this wide range of possibilities, witches have ended up getting very interesting roles as protagonists and companions in all kind of stories. And fortunately, they have become richer over the decades thanks to the efforts of the feminist movement across the world.

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<sup>7</sup> Erotic *manganime*.

In a rough way, we differentiate two large groups of *manganime* magical heroines:

- **Magical girls**

One of the most outstanding categories of *anime* around women. This subgenre was traditionally inside *shōjo* and follows a group of Japanese teenage girls who become defenders of peace (*majokko*), so they could be understood, so to speak, as good witches. Generally, they must protect a powerful object or a place –their hometown– from the evil action. For that purpose, magical girls count on the assistance of magical pets.

While they assume their protecting role, the girls deal with the usual issues on their age: school life, friendship, love ... There's a clear differentiation between these lives, because they hide their magical identity by using special clothes and another hairstyle. An eye-catching transformation scene, influenced by the *kawaii* aesthetic, often makes the difference between both identities. It's a common thread amongst *majokko* of several decades: *The secrets of Akko-chan (Himitsu no Akko-chan, 1962)*, *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon (Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn, 1991)* y *Pretty Cure (Purikyua, 2004)*.

Despite the style doesn't match the classical conception of a magical girl story, the first-recognized magical girl of all times is Sapphire from Osamu Tezuka's *Ribbon no Kishi*. Taking place in a medieval *European-like kingdom*, this is the story of a girl who was mistakenly given two hearts: a blue heart, which belongs to boys, gifted with courage, bravery and some adventuring related skills; and a pink heart, for girls, full of empathy, kindness and love.

In this case, magic is not necessarily inside *Sapphire* but in her world. While facing courtly conspiracies, Sapphire will have to fight against witches and demons who will try to steal her special heart. It was a revolutionary approach to the *manga* heroine in its time, since Tezuka gave the traditional woman a more active social role.

Between the middle of 1980s and early 1990s, some positive things happened in Japanese society. The feminist discourse continued winning supporters (Ehara, 1993: 54), so more and more women entered the university or undertook their own journey to success. Besides that, the government approved the Equal Employment Opportunity Law in 1985, which went into effect in 1986. As a result, the *manganime* industry received new female talents.

*Sailor Moon*, created by Naoko Takeuchi, was the beginning of a great revolution linked to women and magic in *anime*. This anime put a group of young women in a unique position of strength through the power of friendship and affection. In addition, it was revolutionary due to the love story between Sailor Uranus and Sailor Neptune. The audience ratings of first season confirmed that Japanese society was ready to embrace more powerful heroines capable of saving the world on their own (Navok and Rudranath, 2005: 26). And, fortunately, we have enjoyed many similar series to date.

Meanwhile, in the last decade, some new experimental stories arrived to the market. *Puella Magi Madoka Magica (Mahō Shōjo Madoka Magica, 2011)*, for example, introduced us to a darker concept of the magical girl. Unknowingly, their protagonists are part of an ancient plan orchestrated by an alien race to maintain the entropy of the universe. In exchange for seeing her greatest wish fulfilled, each *majokko* must fight against evil witches until the end of their days. And unlike any previous franchise of the genre, *Madoka Magica* doesn't skimp on blood nor are there miraculous saves for the power of love.

As *Madoka Magica*, *Yūki Yūna is a hero (Yūki Yūna wa Yūsha de Aru, 2014)* focuses on the sacrifice of the magic girl. As Taisha warriors, Yuna and her friends have access to powerful special skills called *mankai* (full bloom). These attacks allow them to defeat the toughest enemy of all, but in exchange they lose a piece of their bodies forever.

Finally, the novel approach of *Magical Girl Ore* (*Mahō Shōjo Ore*, 2018) is noteworthy. A high school girl discovers that her mother worked as a magical girl and ends up inheriting the title, much to her chagrin. As she finds out later, that power transforms her into an attractive magical boy with dress. Other friends will join her with the same destiny. The best thing about this series is that it banishes the idea that only a cis woman is allowed to be magical so, unintentionally, questions the traditional classification of this genre: it doesn't have to be just a *shōjo anime*.

### ○ **Witches and sorceresses**

Towards the first third of the 15th century, European Christendom propelled a new period of massive persecution that would end the lives of thousands of innocent people. With the Church heading this great operation, demonic witchcraft was spread as the new main enemy of God: it was said to be a variant of the traditional sorcery in which, supposedly, Satan intervened. Thus began the famous 'witch hunt' that lasted until the early 17th century.

Of all the books dedicated to this subject, the most remarkable volume was written by Dominican monks: the *Malleus maleficarum* (*The Hammer of the Witches*, 1486), an instruction manual for hunters that defined these hypothetical heretics. There's a long description of women devoted to the devil who managed to teleport «real and physically», «cast enchantments through the eyes or through a recited spell» and «push [men] to madness, an insane hatred and excessive appetites». Natural disasters such as «terrible hailstorms and tempests» were attributed to them as well.

The stereotype of witch emerges almost at the same time. Women who refused to be submissive wives and dutiful mothers, against the role model of the moment, were usually pointed (Zaffaroni, in Bigalli, 2006: 94). The menopausal women suspected of being infertile and widows too. Therefore, the witch archetype that became popular in the Middle Ages was a middle-aged or elderly woman (Rosen, 2007: 28). She was imagined as a lower-class

woman with no maternal sense who often took refuge in female collaboration circles (Beteta, 2014: 295a). Regarding sexuality, some representations showed a physically attractive witch while others represented her as an unattractive and deformed person.

Although it seems a distant issue, this conception of witches has found a way to reach our days through the culture that we create and consume. The pictorial art, the literature or the cinema have not escaped from reflecting the Christian conception of the witchcraft, whose unidimensionality has conditioned how we continue understanding this subject. We have a clear example in classical Disney films such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *The Sword in the Stone* (1963) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989).

The researcher Yolanda Beteta points out regarding the legitimation of gender inequalities, to repeat over and over again manipulated images that distort and denigrate women «is internalized in such a way that it makes critical questioning a very difficult task» (Beteta, 2014: 295b). However, feminism is appropriating sexist symbols as a new way to fight patriarchy. These efforts ended up turning the witch into a symbol of ancestral wisdom, resistance and power, so today we can read slogans like «We are the granddaughters of the witches you were not able to burn».

That Puritan deconstruction has not prevented the appearance of other representations that distance themselves from the medieval stereotype. In fiction, it's increasingly common to find reimagined classical witches as empowered women and other recent characters who can instruct new generations in a different way of understanding magic. In this vein, Japanese *anime* has even a certain advantage over Western animation. Again, we must thank Japanese feminism for recovering of these historically masculinized spaces.

There are many witches and sorceresses that could be mentioned as reference cases in this section. Some of them are Reena Inverse from *Slayers (Sureiyāzu, 1995)*, Arusu from *Tweeny Witches (Mahō Shōjotai Arusu, 2004)*, Honoka from *Witchcraft Works (Witchikurafuto Wākusu, 2014)*, Izetta from *Izetta: The Last Witch (Shūmatsu no Izetta, 2016)* y Makoto from *Flying Witch (Furaingū Witchi, 2016)*.

The audiovisual products that we analyze next, *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Little Witch Academia*, are two more exemplifications of this inspirational witch model. We identified their main themes, the primary characters and the values that permeate everything. Thus, it helped us to get an idea of how much influence had the women's cause over these Ghibli Studio and Trigger works.

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## CASE STUDY #1

### **Kiki's Delivery Service (1989)**

Adressing female empowerment and witchcraft in anime requires to discuss about Studio Ghibli, Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata. From the youngest to the oldest, their incredible heroines are some of the best examples of how to represent women on the screen. Each of them is always in the spotlight as a strong, multifaceted main or secondary character, taking control of the action. Never appears as a pasive or extremely weak person waiting for a white knight<sup>8</sup>.

We can call it an unwavering commitment, because this statement has been present in every Miyazaki and Takahata's common work: from *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (Kaze no Tani no Naushika, 1984)*, to their last movie *When Marnie was there (Omoide no Māni, 2014)*. Moreover, there's a second element that impregnates the Ghibli worlds

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<sup>8</sup> As Miyazaki explained once, «they'll need a friend, or a supporter, but never a saviour; any woman is just as capable of being a hero as any man».

in many ways: magic, which is usually linked to nature, spirituality and positive values such as friendship or love.

In this section, we are analyzing our issue of interest within their fifth<sup>9</sup> animated movie: *Kiki's Delivery Service* (*Majo no takkyūbin*, 1989), inspired by a children's fantasy novel with the same original name.

*Majo no takkyūbin* was published in 1985 by the popular writer Eiko Kadono. The book follows Kiki, a thirteen-year-old girl who descends from witches and aspires to be one. To reach her goal, she must leave home and spend a year on her own in a witchless town. Along the chapters, Kadono describes Kiki's day by day in Koriko and how hard she fights to overcome every new obstacle.

Whereas Kadono's concept is very simple due to its target audience, the screen adaptation sought a deeper interpretation of Kiki's adventure. Miyazaki's purpose is to create an interesting story which can be fulfilling both for kids and adults. It necessarily pass through providing the narration with complex elements that wasn't part of the original work, as in other Studio Ghibli movies.

Through the life of a young witch and a bit of magic realism, Hayao Miyazaki delved into a series of unusual topics in animation but very familiar to Japanese women of that time, most of them related to Kiki's internal struggle. We find a strong connection with Miyazaki's usual claims as well.

- **Maturity**

The concept can be defined as the process of adapting our minds to new circumstances and choosing wisely as we grow up. In *Kiki's Delivery Service*, Kiki counts on the counseling of two great pals but she must learn how to take good decisions and deal with life by herself.

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<sup>9</sup> If we have Topcraft's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* in mind.

From the moment of leaving her hometown, our little adventuress understands the importance of having a job to survive and find out her specialization in magic. Luckily, she meets a powerful ally on the arrival day in Koriko: Mrs. Osono, the owner of Guchokipanya bakery. As Kiki's most remarkable skill is flying on a broom, she doesn't hesitate to open a delivery service.

As an entrepreneur, Kiki prioritize what, in her opinion, is most important to reach success. The witch dedicates almost all her time to the business and, regardless of the conditions, she delivers each order on time. Kiki's sense of duty is so strong that she even dares to fly on a stormy day. But as the girl turns her passion into an obligation, bad things start to happen. She fails more and more. Finally, there's a huge self-confidence crisis that only disappears when Madame reminds her why she chose to open her delivery service: Kiki enjoys flying and making people happy.

Maturity has to do with Kiki's way of dealing with social relationships too. In the first minutes of the film, we observe a good relationship with her family and other girls from her hometown because Kiki feels this place like a safe space where everyone loves her just as she is. The difficulties come after arriving in Koriko: she is not sure how to deal with non-magical people, even when she follows her mum's last advice: «don't forget to always smile».

The only creature that seems to share her frustration is her pet Jiji, with whom she can talk. But suddenly, one day, Kiki is not able anymore to understand his words. This change symbolizes, precisely, that our witch says goodbye to childhood and enters the puberty. In this new stage of her life, Kiki finally notices what ephemeral friendship is through a new lesson: no one lasts forever, so appreciate these special moments you spend with our beloved ones. As Charles Chaplin said, «life is a play that doesn't allow testing; so, sing, cry, dance, laugh and live intensely before the curtain closes and the piece ends with no applause».

## ○ **Independence**

Some fans say that Kiki is a sort of anime Pippi Långstrump, clearly influenced by Miyazaki and Takahata's refused project around Astrid Lindgren's character. Likewise, the reality of Japanese women could have been an inspiration for them: in the 80s, female emancipation was a rising phenomenon<sup>10</sup>. For example, *Women's liberation (ūman libu)*, a radfem movement founded by Mitsu Tanaka in 1970, became very relevant in the next decades despite the mockery its members bore from media and the public opinion (Matsui, 1990: 435a). Meanwhile, hundreds of women jumped into universities and joined the labor market as Kiki does. But it's not just about personal independence. Our amazing heroine, who comes from a humble family, decides to run a small business in Koriko and learns to manage her earnings to be self-sufficient. And far from being an easy journey, Miyazakian heroine's quest for self-sufficiency is full of doubts and sorrow. Definitely, Kiki's story reflects some problems that any working-class woman could encounter in her day-to-day life. Problems that derive from a social structure where the richest have access to a larger variety of resources to have a comfortable life.

## ○ **Female mentorship and sisterhood**

As in Vogler's Hero's Journey scheme, there are characters who have the mission to help Kiki in her adventure. It's not by chance that this role is performed by Osono and Ursula. Both are wise, courageous and diligent women who got over the same problems that Kiki is confronting. Their lessons are essential to arouse a real change in her mind (Vogler, 2007: 117).

On the one hand, Mrs. Osono is the first person who clearly sees her enthusiasm and inner goodness. She gives Miyazaki's heroine a solid

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<sup>10</sup> According to the sociologist Ueno Chizuko, it started in the heart of students' movement as a «global simultaneity» but there are other origin stories linked to the Meiji era and «transnational feminist groups, especially those associated with Christian missionary organizations» (Kano, 2018: 273).

basis to start her mission: a new home, her first work as shop assistant in the bakery and the warmest welcome possible. Sometimes, she acts like a mother by encouraging Kiki to make friends and giving her a good labor advice.

What makes Osono so special is her personal circumstance: she owns the bakery and keeps working even during the pregnancy. Again, we find a new critic reference to Japanese traditional conception of women, condemned to play secondary roles and forget their professional aspirations after getting pregnant. Even when they keep the job, a good work-life balance is almost nonexistent (Matsui, 1990: 437b).

On the other hand, Ursula is the helping hand Kiki needs at her worst moments: first, when the witch loses a decisive order; and second, after our heroine's final crisis. As a young itinerant artist, she knows better than anyone how difficult is to leave home and follow a dream in such a competitive world. In fact, a very emotive scene happens when the girl tells Kiki her story<sup>11</sup>:

*URSULA: It's nice to be a witch, isn't it? I like the idea – to be a witch, to be an artist, to be a baker... It's an energy bestowed by the gods or someone, right? Though thanks to it, we do have to suffer at times...*

*KIKI: I never even thought about my magic powers. I used to think this training was just an old-fashioned custom... I was so happy you came today. If I were alone, I'd just be running around in circles.*

If we consider the new feminist terminology, the correct word to describe these situations is “sisterhood”. In Spanish is translated as “sororidad”, a word that comes from *soror* in Latin and refers to a religious sister. Sisterhood is about creating alliances with other women to reflect upon our different social conditions and identities (Qi, 2010: 328), empower ourselves and fight actively against gender inequality.

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<sup>11</sup> The conversation changes a little bit depending on the version of the movie. For this analysis, we took a script in English which was translated from Japanese.

In this sense, there's a last subtopic that we must highlight: the world needs for positive role-models to encourage young women to change the world. And Kiki is one of them, as we can see at the end of the movie: a little girl, sheathed in a long, black dress, looks at the witch with fascination. Furthermore, Tombo admires Kiki because she can fly as he would like to do.

○ **Self-belief**

Kiki's main conflicts are tied to a heap of misconceptions about herself. Whilst our heroine tries hard to succeed, she becomes her worst enemy. Consequently, she loses temporarily her ability to fly. There are two main troubling issues:

1. Aside from riding her mother's broom like a beginner, Kiki apparently doesn't have any useful skills such as forecasting the future or creating useful potions. Thus, she thinks that something is wrong with her. But Kiki ignores something crucial: practice is the only thing that makes a good witch (Morillo, 2018: 34). The character who best represents this idea is Koriko.
2. Kiki is a cheerful, outgoing girl. However, her brilliant personality turns very gray in Koriko because she feels out of place. Our heroine can't stop comparing herself with the beautiful, well-dressed city girls—she can't afford nor a pair of shoes. And if it was not enough, they look at Kiki as she were a zoo animal. Oftenly, we watch her yearning desire for social acceptance despite she refuses to connect with Tombo. Kiki is afraid of rejection.

KIKI: *A black cat, black clothes... I'm all in black.*

KOKIRI: *Kiki, don't worry so much about your appearance. What's important is the 'inner soul'.*

KIKI: *Yes, I understand. Leave the 'inner soul' part to me. It's too bad I can't show it to you.*

Fortunately, the headstrong Kiki manages to dispel her doubts in time to save Tombo from death. Thanks to Osono, Ursula and Madame's gentleness, the witch learns to accept her essence and the deserved love she receives from people in Koriko. Also, she understands the relevance of making mistakes to grow up improving personally and professionally. Here, Miyazaki leaves a priceless message of hope: self-confidence always bring us one step closer to the success.

- **Self-care**

Work occupies Kiki's hands and mind constantly. Therefore, it's normal that the exhaustion ends up destroying any apex of its characteristic enthusiasm and causing her some other complications. So, when Kiki lose her powers, she learns a new powerful lesson: in life, everyone should have a self-care space. Not necessary a physical one, but a moment of the day to stop, breathe and enjoy something which makes you feel better.

The forest cabin is Kiki and Ursula's self-care zone. There, in the privacy of the nature, both girls laugh, do relaxing things share what worries them the most. For example, this conversation starts when Ursula is portraying Kiki:

URSULA: *Magic and painting are a lot alike. You know, a lot of times, I just can't paint.*

KIKI: *Really? When that happens, what do you do?*

URSULA: *No, no. Don't look over here.*

KIKI: *Before, I could fly without giving it a thought. But now, I don't know how I did it.*

URSULA: *When that happens, all one can do is struggle through it. I draw and draw, and keep drawing.*

KIKI: *But then, if I can't fly...*

URSULA: *Then I stop drawing. I take walks, look at the scenery, take naps, do nothing. Then after a while, all of a sudden I get the urge to draw again.*

### ○ **Love**

As we can appreciate in other Studio Ghibli movies, romantic love loses relevance in favor of other values such as self-esteem. These one is essential to reach a state of harmony, because Kiki doesn't realize that others like her until she accepts herself.

Tombo apparently likes Kiki from their first encounter but she is not interested in him as a boyfriend. Nevertheless, he's Kiki's first admirer and plays a prominent role in her personal evolution. Besides, the boy is our heroine's main connection to other teenagers from Koriko – Ursula is an itinerant soul, so she doesn't make a single effort to meet other people. This case proves that other kind of relationship between women and men is possible, just as friends with a special, unique connection.

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## CASE STUDY #2:

### **Little Witch Academia (2017)**

Japanese animation is living one of its most glowing periods ever due to its popularity among national and international audiences. Anyone who sees the huge amount of new series, movies and OVAs that come every season to the market could be aware of it. But this reality is only a side of the same coin: while the industry is in a booming growth phase, businesses seek for a way to cheapen the cost of production. Wages just go down, work shifts are becoming extremely long and there are fewer and fewer companies instruct the recently graduated animators.

To make the same or a bigger profit, some animation studios are delegating this part of the process to specialized companies in countries such as China or Korea, where the cost of an animator is much cheaper than hiring and/or training one in Japan.

In response to this bleeding phenomenon, the Japanese Animation Creators Association (JAniCA) promoted in 2010 the *Wakate Animētā Ikusei Purojekuto* (*Young Animator Training Project*), a public annual grant for those businesses that were willing to accept new emerging talents. Each phase ended with the exhibition of a short film created by their interns. Between 2012 and 2013, framed within the *Anime mirai* (*The Anime of the Future*) program, is when the magical universe of *Little Witch Academia* was born.

Under Yō Yoshinari's direction (*Neon Genesis: Evangelion*), Trigger premiered a shortened version of what would be a revelation franchise three years later. *Little Witch Academia* follows the life of Kagari Atsuko, a 14-year-old girl whose biggest dream is to inspire people with magic as her childhood idol, the witch Shiny Chariot, did. To achieve this, Akko moves to the Isle of Man (Great Britain) to become an apprentice at the prestigious school where Chariot studied: the Luna Nova academy for witches. However, she comes from a non-magical family and things will not be easy for her. Luckily, the mystery of a Gaelic legend and her new friends will give Akko the courage she needs to go ahead.

*Little Witch Academia* cast is full of charismatic, versatile and very capable women who step forward without asking for permission nor forgiveness. In fact, there are only a few male characters and never make an appearance to monopolize the viewer's attention, because the main action falls on our heroines. Boys hold a secondary role. Maybe it's not the best formula but the most vindictive considering the current imbalance between series starred by women and men.

Of all these characters, there are six that we can point out as the main ones of the adventure:

○ **Atsuko 'Akko' Kagari.**

She arrives at Luna Nova to follow in the footsteps of the witch Shiny Chariot, her childhood idol. Akko is a clever, energetic, optimistic, sociable and somewhat impulsive girl who enjoys challenges. On the other hand, she is undisciplined and a little bit childish, gets bad grades and often generates controversy because of her idealized vision of magic, influenced by Chariot shows.

○ **Sucy Manbavaran.**

Although they don't start off on the right foot, Sucy is the first friend Akko makes during her arrival at Luna Nova. She is a ghostly-looking girl who loves mushrooms and experimenting with poisons. She is shown as a distant, sarcastic and mocking witch who enjoys disturbing other students, but Sucy is always willing to help out when needed.

○ **Charlotte 'Lotte' Jansson.**

This girl completes the main trio of *Little Witch Academia*. Lotte is a specialist in communicating with the spirits that dwell in objects, which she calls out through an ancestral song of her family. Another remarkable aspect of Charlotte is that she loves to read romantic novels and learn new things. Usually, she is a shy, cautious and warm person.

○ **Diana Cavendish.**

As a descendant of a prestigious family of witches, Diana puts the honor of Luna Nova above all. She is an intelligent and disciplined witch and an incredibly good diplomat. Her sense of duty is outstanding as well. Apart from that, Diana hates the way that Akko admires a dishonest witch as Shiny Chariot. That is why she become her rival, but deep down they appreciate and care about each other.

○ **Ursula Callistis/Chariot du Nord.**

Chariot studied at Luna Nova in her youth and it's shown that she was very similar to Akko. As artist, she wanted people to believe in magic again to give through her shows. Thus, thousands of people fell in love with Chariot while her fellows and teachers treated her like an outcasted. But one day, she suddenly left the show business and disappeared. Then, Chariot returned to Luna Nova to be a teacher. Under this false identity of Ursula Callistis, she guides and protects Akko.

○ **Croix Meridies.**

Croix is a prominent figure in the construction of powered-by-magic electronic devices and one of the best ex-students of Luna Nova. Under her charming appearance there's cold, logical and selfish woman, whose greatest desire is to unravel and control the magic of the Grand Triskelion.

Also, is worth mentioning a special male character and other three Luna Nova students who join Akko's group shortly after the start of the season:

○ **Amanda O'Neill.**

The personification of rebelliousness, in addition to an excellent gymnast and broom dancer. She is presented as an individualistic girl, a bad student and the best friend of other people's properties. However, Amanda gives everything for her new pals when they need help or are in danger.

○ **Constanze Amalie von Braunschbank-Albrechtsberger.**

Among all students of Luna Nova, she stands out for being one of the few who combines technology and magic. Throughout the series, Constanze puts her creativity and dexterity to the service

of her friends to help them in different tasks. She possess a modified wand and support droids, as well as a secret base inside the academy.

○ **Jasminka Antonenko.**

Her role consists of giving moral support to her friends when something goes wrong. She is extremely happy and cheerful. Sometimes she gets into trouble because of her obsession with sweets and food in general.

○ **Andrew Hanbridge.**

Viscount and son of the Ministry of State of Britain. Because of his social position and the education he received, Andrew is a spoiled and arrogant child. Like his father, he argues that magic is obsolete and it should disappear. But thanks to Akko, Diana and the others, he finally starts to change his mind.

Even if Akko is the protagonist, *Little Witch Academia* develops all the main characters in a marvelous way. Each witch has multiple facets that are revealed as the plot progresses. It allows us to discover their most valuable qualities, what they aspire to in life, their biggest fears and many other interesting aspects. This closeness submerges the viewer in a process of introspection that allows him/her to compare the experience of each character with his/her own<sup>12</sup>. After that emotional connection, each new turn of events is lived much more intensely.

*Sleeping Sucy* (1x08) is the episode that best represents the complexity of those characters. In this chapter, Sucy drinks a poison that induces her to an endless dream and Akko enters her mind to save her. The inner world of the character is populated by different versions of herself, such as the Impatient Sucy, the Mushroom-Loving Sucy or

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<sup>12</sup> Several authors specialized in cinema have reflected on this topic in the last three decades. Perhaps, one of the most remarkable texts in this respect is *Empathy and (film) fiction* by Alex Neill.

the Spit-on-the-World Sucy. Also, there's a court that condemns the new desires that Sucy wants to banish for some reason<sup>13</sup>, such as the Sucy who's interested in Reading Lotte's *Fall Night* series or the Sucy who would like to use eyelash extensions.

The secondary characters do not have such an extensive development, but *Little Witch Academia* reminds us every so often that they deserve a little acknowledgment. There's an episode dedicated to the director Holbrooke and several moments focused on Constanze, Amanda and Jasminka putting into action their strengths. Andrew, meanwhile, plays a crucial role in the last chapter of the season, urging his father to issue a public statement supporting the witches.

*Little Witch Academia* doesn't openly declare itself a feminist show nor mentions terms like 'sisterhood' or 'patriarchy', but its principles are very clear from the first episode. Likewise, there's a certain claiming essence in relation to class consciousness. The main trio comes from poor or middle-class families. Although Lotte and Sucy avoid this topic, Akko doesn't miss the opportunity to proudly talk about of her origins, fight rich girls of the Luna Nova off and stand on the side of the oppressed ones, like in the fourteenth episode.

Unlike *Kiki's Delivery Service*, some messages are more diluted. These ideas are organized around the Seven magical Words of Arcturus, which Akko seeks to open the Grand Triskelion, unleash the power of the Ygdrasil and give rise to all magic.

- ***Noctu orfei aude fraetor:***

«Fight for your ideal place». The extended meaning is that there are times when we all face difficulties in meeting our

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<sup>13</sup> A very intriguing moment of the chapter arrives when a small Sucy appears with a bouquet of lilies in her hands and gives them to Akko. Her shy attitude, as well as the symbolism of the flower in Japanese culture, suggests that Sucy may be questioning her sexuality. The answer remains in the air since the authorities stop this version of the witch before she reveals her name. Later, she is the first Sucy to lose control, probably because of that repressive attitude.

goals. Failures are opportunities to learn something new and destructive criticism, noise that you should ignore. Nothing nor no one extinguish the flame of a fiery heart. Akko already understands the meaning this word, and that's why she can activate it in the first chapter with the Shiny Rod (Wand of the Seven Stars, *Claiomh Solais*).

○ ***Phaidoari afairynghor:***

«You do not get what you dream of, but the things you work hard for». Akko revived this word when rejecting the idea of renouncing her past to live the future she craves. Our heroine understands that her memories, friendships and experiences matter more than she ever thought. These elements have forged her identity, which fills the dream she pursues with a special, personal and non-transferable meaning. Therefore, Akko decides to continue with his own effort and the help of his new community.

○ ***Arae aryrha:***

«Don't compare yourself with other people, just keep doing those things what makes you special». This word appears in a context of internal and external competition, first when forcing herself to be as good as Shiny Chariot and, then, against Diana. The message is that everyone must find their own way, idols and rivals just are there to encourage people to improve. We all have something that makes us special, we just have to discover what is it. As Chariot used to say, «a believing hear is your magic».

○ ***Mayenab dysheebudo:***

«In times like these, patience is a virtue». Not a worthwhile goal is achieved in haste. You should take your time to plan each movement and do things well. Being patient has its reward sooner or later, as Akko discovers after finding a remedy to save Lotte and her family from a strange disease.

○ ***Sybilladura lelladybura:***

«An old tradition and a new power will cross to open the door to the unseen world». Diana leaves Luna Nova to become the head of the family and Akko follows her to the Cavendish mansion to change her mind. There, the fifth world comes alive. We can deduce that Diana understands, first, that respecting tradition doesn't necessarily mean following it to the letter; and, second, the changes do not imply a complete break with the customs from the past. From the central scene emerges a contrast of the traditional, represented by Diana, and the new, personified in Akko. To overcome the test of the Cavendish family, they must work together.

Bringing this to the context of the feminist struggle, we can talk about listening to our predecessors to understand where we come from and what is at stake nowadays. This intergenerational learning could help the new women to open their eyes and put even more effort into their daily fights for the gender equality.

○ ***Lyonne:***

«Thank you». As Ursula tells Akko, it's probably the most important word of all. This word awakens when Akko warmly thanks Ursula for all his support since she began her magic adventure in Luna Nova. Gratitude implies that you have in high regard those around you and what you have achieved in life.

○ ***Phasansheer shearylla:***

«Connect with other people and your dreams will grow». The last magic word suggests that Akko's connections with other witches are the fuel which will revive Ygdrassil, the most powerful source of magic on Earth. To make this legendary tree come back to life, the little witch needs the support of all her friends and allies including Chariot and Croix -who finally teams up with them to

save the world from a greater evil-. Thus, *Little Witch Academia* reinforces the idea that a fulfilled dream has much more value when you share it with your beloved people. And, sometimes, you can surprisingly find that it's more than an individual goal.

As we identified earlier, sororities are very relevant in so far as they allow witches to survive and help others like them. If *Kiki's Delivery Service* highlights the relevance of connecting with other women outside their usual circles, here it's emphasized the need for creating links within the coven. The existence of witches is not a great mystery in this fictional universe, but they are considered old fashioned, obsolete and dangerous. Therefore, there are those who seek their extinction, mainly by making difficult for them to have places for educational and safety purposes.

Therefore, it doesn't matter if they are friends, rivals or total strangers. All the students of *Luna Nova* are united by a common legacy and always care about the welfare of the rest. When there's a problem, they are the first to help each other. This is reflected in every episode of *Little Witch Academia* and is more than evident in the second opening of the series.

At the end of the path, after revealing the seven words, Akko not only reactivates the Grand Triskelion and becomes a wiser person but helped other witches to rethink themselves. Once again, romantic love yields center stage to other types of affection closer to friendship, self-esteem and female collaboration based on the seek of a fairer world for women.

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# FAIRY TALES, LEGENDS AND YŌKAI. THE TRADITIONAL JAPANESE SOCIETY THROUGH ITS OWN FANTASY LITERATURE.

Kevin Díaz Alché

## Introduction

When we talk about the fantasy genre, we refer to a series of artistic manifestations that have found different spaces and forms that deal with something that goes beyond reality. The most varied descriptions, narrations and images that have left behind a remnant in the form of a collective imagery conceived by society, inherited, transformed and reinvented to give an answer to specific needs in each era. The context of the pre-industrial societies is, perhaps, where that remnant is deeper found. Reinforced by an economy marked by an indisputable predominance of agriculture and livestock farming, with a strong dependence on seasonal cycles and a social organization divided into estates that we can affirm that had a tangential influence on their behavior (Martínez, 2003: 148), this is a time in which fantasy adopts a much more tangible aspect. Proof of this is the persistence, already in the Middle Ages and during most of the Modern Age, of stories and legends, both old and renewed, with diverse and rich origins about fantastic places and beings out of the ordinary. From the Atlantis of Plato, through the Arcadia of the *Eclogas* of Virgil<sup>1</sup> and the *Utopía* of Tomás Moro<sup>2</sup>, there

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<sup>1</sup> Virgil takes a region of the Peloponnese as a basis, of which stories and legends were already told during its period, to conceive a country in which nature satisfies all needs and where human beings can live in perfect harmony with their environment.

<sup>2</sup> First published in 1516, the *Utopía* of Tomás Moro is about an island inhabited by

are many stories about ideal cities and societies under the imagination of their narrator. There was also space for marine beasts, as attested by maps and descriptions like the treatise and the *Carta Marina* (1539) of Olaus Magnus<sup>3</sup>, the *Cosmographia universalis* of Münster (1544) and other narratives that during the following centuries<sup>4</sup> linked the fears towards these monsters to explanations about natural phenomena such as whirlpools and ocean currents (Olaus Magnus expressed in his *Carta* the existence of a whirlpool caused by Maelstrom currents near the Lofoten Islands).

Therefore it is logical to find outside the European geography and in the same era examples of fantasy. In this sense, the narratives about the mythological American city of Aztlán, described and illustrated in a large number of manuscripts and codices such as the Durán Codex (1579) and the Aubin Codex (1576), constitute a paradigmatic case of pre-Columbian legends that have survived the metamorphosis that took place in the New World with the European colonialism.

It is of great interest, since the preceding studies in our territory are recent and therefore there are unexplored areas, the case of fantasy in the feudal Japan, a period in which it managed to preserve its political and social structures virtually unaltered until the middle of the nineteenth century. In the center of these manifestations we find from heroes living adventures, through young girls proud of or lamenting the role imposed to them by society, to other characters belonging to different groups of the Japanese society. Myths that have as a common nexus some beings known as *yōkai* that have ended up interconnecting, in some cases through a syncretic process under the political unification of the archipelago.

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a utopic society that, contrary to Virgil, owes its prosperity not to nature itself, but to the human work. In this sense, its theological, philosophic and political ideals are very different from the ideals of the Europe of the sixteenth century. The author also describes its geography, architecture and economy. It is one of the most influential works regarding creation of ideal societies.

<sup>3</sup> As for its content, refer to the study of Prieto Villa (2015)

<sup>4</sup> In this matter, refer to the work of Arturo Morgado García (2011)

The origin of these beings can be found in the very beginning of the Japanese religions, with an extremely animistic starting point with the understanding that nature is inalienably linked to the supernatural (Lanzaco, 2011: 50-51). Although not being directly referred to as *yōkai*, there are countless references to fantastic beings that cannot be considered as *kami*<sup>5</sup> in the *Kokiji*<sup>6</sup> and the *Nihongi*<sup>7</sup>, both texts of the eighth century. A century later, in the *Nihon Ryōiki*<sup>8</sup>, myths, stories and legends are described, many of them based on the two aforementioned works (Nakamura, 1973) and, since then, there have been many cases of scrolls containing drawings of supernatural beings in different forms and stances<sup>9</sup>. We first find them represented in detail in the four illustrated volumes of Toriyama Sekien, already in the eighteenth century. The tetralogy<sup>10</sup> consists of *Gazu Hyakki Yagyō* (1776), *Konjaku Gazu Zoku Hyakki* (1779), *Konjaku Hyakki Shūi* (1781) and *Gazu Hyakki Tsurezure Bukuro* (1784) and, in all of them, as a bestiary, the physical features of a large number of *yōkai* are described, as well as references to legends in connection with these beings. Without any renovation in form or content, the *yōkai* preserved the same form until the nineteenth century, when European authors joined this cataloguing labor started by Sekien and brought it into the context of legends.

In fact, it is from the sixteenth century when, under the strict Tokugawa Shogunate system (1603-1867), Japan lived a period of politic stability that the authorities used to homogenize the religious practices, control the social dynamics and direct the artistic and cultural manifestations through a network of institutions and regulations

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<sup>5</sup> The term *kami* refers to all the divine spirits, considered superior to human beings. They are usually benevolent deities, as long as they are worshipped and revered, and they can become vengeful otherwise (Frédéric, 2002: 461).

<sup>6</sup> There is a version translated into English by Gustav Heldt (2014).

<sup>7</sup> William George Aston has made a translation into English

<sup>8</sup> He consulted edition of this work belongs to Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura (1973).

<sup>9</sup> Among them, the two “hell scrolls”, dating back to the twelfth century, located in the Tokyo National Museum and the Nara National Museum.

<sup>10</sup> The tetralogy of Toriyama Sekien has been compiled in a facsimile edition that also includes a translation and an edition in English. It was published as *Japandemonium Illustrated: The Yōkai Encyclopedias of Toriyama Sekien* (Yoda & Alt, 2016).

(Mason & Caiger, 1997: 272-372). Within this period, the eighteenth century is of great importance. The data shows a cultural and economic growth consolidated during this century by the bases of the Japanese society of the Edo Period (Kondo, 1999). Meanwhile Europe saw the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, the spreading of painting styles such as *ukiyo-e*<sup>11</sup> and the birth of great artists and poets, like Toriyama Sekien, author of the work that we refer to here. It is remarkable that, although the first references to the *yōkai* by the European population date back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, like the case of the letter written by a Jesuit missionary in 1617 in which he informed that “it was a marvelous thing that the name of the demon in Japan is Tengu, which means Heaven Dog”<sup>12</sup> only in the decades before the twentieth century we see true attempts to study and record this type of superstitions in an extensive and systematic way. We find clear examples in the compilations of Japanese legends *Kwaidan* (1904), of Lafcadio Hearn and *Ancient tales and folklore of Japan* (1908) of Richard Gordon Smith.

## **The complexity of the *yōkai* nature**

Nowadays, the audiovisual mass culture has inherited the concept and the idea of *yōkai* to create and inspire several brands and products. With the only aim of illustrating this situation, we will mention the two most common ways. The first one is the phenomenon of cross media *Yo-kai Watch*<sup>13</sup>, where this idea is used to give name to the beings that appear in its comics, animated series and videogames. We find a similar example in some beings of the universe created by the illustrator and

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<sup>11</sup> Painting style originated in Japan throughout the second half of the seventeenth century with a great development in the eighteenth century. Its main difference with regard to other Japanese styles is its production technique and the woodblock printing (Mihawa, 1943: 247-250).

<sup>12</sup> Content extracted from a letter written in Japan in 1617, located in the National Historical Archives, Section clergy Jesuits, file 271/59, folio 24 with the title *Carta annua del Japón del ano de 1616 escrita en Nangasaqui a 22 de Feberero de 1617 para nuestro Pe General Mutio Vitelleschi*.

<sup>13</sup> It is a franchise with products that range from videogames to animated series and Japanese comic or manga. Information extracted from the website *Yo-kai Watch Wiki*.

director Hayao Miyazaki for the Japanese animation studio Studio Ghibli. Among all of them, the *kodama* are especially noticeable, which are small spirits from the woods that inhabit ancient trees (Toriyama Sekien, 2016: 8-9) and that appear in *Princess Mononoke* (1997)<sup>14</sup>.

The second way, less perceptible for being less explicit, its basing the physical appearance or behavior of certain characters on concrete examples of *yōkai*. In this sense, the *Pokémon* franchise is paradigmatic. Regarding this franchise, we can see the influence of *kappa* in the *Lombre*<sup>15</sup> creature. Although not sharing all the attributes that characterize the *yōkai*, both live in ponds, lakes and rivers, have an appearance resembling a turtle or an anthropomorphous amphibian of interdigital membranes, has a beak and its main physical feature is a cavity filled with water on the top of its head (Pérez & Chida, 2012: 50-53). We also see in *Vulpix* and its direct evolution, *Ninetales*, the influence of *kitsune*, a *yōkai* in the form of a fox whose relation with these creatures becomes more evident with the example of *Ninetales*<sup>16</sup>. In the same way that, in the twenty-third episode of the fifth season of the animated series of *Pokémon*<sup>17</sup>, where an ancient *Ninetales* of two hundred years of age uses its power to take the form of a young girl to attract the attention of one of the main characters, we find references to a powerful *kitsune* with nine tails known as *Tamamo-no-Mae* that took the shape of a young girl to captivate the Emperor of Japan (Toriyama Sekien, 2016: 98).

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Available at: [http://yokaiwatch.wikia.com/wiki/Yo-kai\\_Watch\\_\(franchise\)](http://yokaiwatch.wikia.com/wiki/Yo-kai_Watch_(franchise)).

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the film of Hayao Miyazaki, visit the website IMDb. Available at: [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119698/?ref=mv\\_sr\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119698/?ref=mv_sr_1).

<sup>15</sup> The information regarding this fictional creature has been extracted from the website *Wikidex*. Available at <http://es.pokemon.wikia.com/wiki/Lombre>.

<sup>16</sup> The information regarding both creatures has been extracted from the website *Wikidex*. Available at: <http://es.pokemon.wikia.com/wiki/Vulpix> and <http://es.pokemon.wikia.com/wiki/Ninetales>, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> Information of the episode extracted from “EP234”, *Wikidex*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3E2vqEsUwo>.

This image of the practically harmless and even attractive *yōkai* started taking the place of the image of that supernatural and incomprehensible being of the Japanese tradition. The deep transformations that this society went through from the Meiji period, consolidated after World War II, brought artists like Shigeru Mizuki, who developed an extraordinary work popularizing the *yōkai* with his manga *GeGeGe no Kitaro* (Shamoon, 2013: 279-281) and through his encyclopedias about them. Nonetheless, his contribution cannot be taken into account in our study if we look at the change introduced in the descriptions of these beings and the fact that Mizuki added some invented by him<sup>18</sup>.

It is precisely because of this complexity in their typology, as regards the origin and definition of the *yōkai*, that we can only refer to them as superstitions that have adopted their own nature, form and personality. Within this idea, however, we find a different typology. Their form remind some people of the Abrahamic demons. In other cases, however, they can be reminiscent of plants, animals, objects or have an anthropomorphic figure, although they can also be simple representations of some strange phenomenon (Yoda & Alt, 2016: viii-x). This is the reason why, despite the broad semantic field that characterizes these beings, the term *yōkai* *does not even* appear in two of the main encyclopedias about Japanese history, geography and culture<sup>19</sup>. However, *oni* do appear, which refers to all kinds of folkloric beings with horns, bulging eyes and a body usually dyed red (Frédéric, 2005: 753). *Mononoke*, a term used to refer to the form taken by some human spirits, generally female<sup>20</sup>, that come out of their bodies to possess other beings or people, transmitting diseases or even causing death (Frédéric, 2005: 658). Also *bakemono*, beings or spirits that simply

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<sup>18</sup> Regarding the social role and the psychological treatment of the *yōkai* in the contemporary Japanese society, it is worth mentioning the study *The social roles of "Yokai" in Japan*, of Ayako Takahashi (2018).

<sup>19</sup> We refer to the *Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan* (Papinot, 1910) and the *Japan Encyclopedia* (Frédéric, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> According to most of the *mononoke* included in this work and about which we refer to later.

have a strange, unusual or monstrous form (Frédéric, 2005: 67). The list can encompass hundreds of terms, but the descriptions should not cause these creatures to be considered as necessarily dangerous beings (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 10). Overlooking the several cases in which such relation exists, we find other in which these fictional beings can take the form of phenomena as ephemeral and inconsequential as that of *Enenra*, which refers to the smoke of a bonfire moved by the wind (Sekien, 2016: 180).

We must stress that the purpose of this article was not to cover the complex task of establishing precise relationships between the Japanese literary or pictorial works of fantastic nature and the already established typologies of folkloric beings. Neither was it, avoiding a presentist perspective, to observe the influence that Japanese folklore still has in contemporary cultural representations such as films or manga. These are matters, incidentally, worked on by researchers such as Miguel Herrero (2018) and Andrea de Pablo (2016: 727-737) respectively. The aim of this study was to create a selective list of standard characters and themes present in the traditional Japanese fantasy genre from documentation on the eighteenth-century Japan and the critical reading of both the work of Toriyama Sekien and compendiums of legends written later like *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things*, by professor Lafcadio Hearn (1904), and *Ancient Tales and Floklore of Japan*, by Richard Gordon Smith (2015). Based on this methodology, we have also been able to establish its possible link with some of the customs and roles in the Japanese society and the didactic function that would derive from this genre (Figure 1) in a society in which superstition, spirituality and the supernatural explanation of the phenomena of Nature were usual.

Through this relationship we have typologically classified the *yōkai* in accordance with their role in society, the social and cultural environment of the Tokugawa Shogunate Japan that they embody or relate to. This has allowed us to raise various questions on their daily life, such as the explanation that was given through them to incomprehensible phenomena, both natural and from everyday life;

what some of the main concerns and fears among the population were; how important nature was among its people; what role some social groups played, such as women or the Buddhist clergy, and how they were perceived; etc. It is imperative to point out that, since the number of *yōkai* references amounts to more than two hundred, a significant number of them will not be explicitly listed, although, in most cases, their contributions are assumed by other examples to which references will be made.

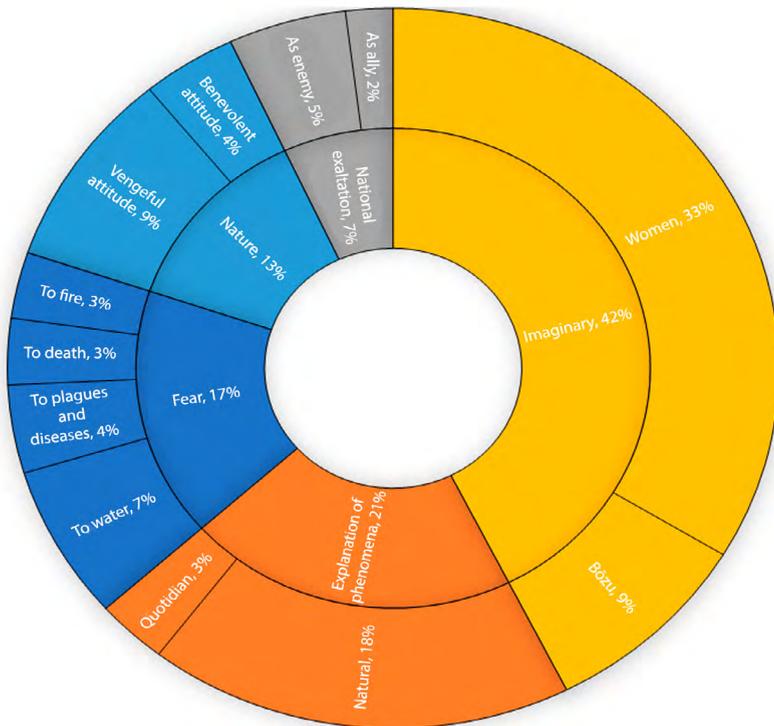


Figure 1. Distribution of the total of *yōkai* analyzed, starting with the works of Sekien (2016), Hearn (1904) and Smith (2015), in consideration of the social or cultural sphere that they relate to. Data presented in percentages on the total of elements studied.

## The venerable nature

When Sekien conceived his encyclopedic work, he did it in consideration of one of the bases of Japanese religiousness, the respect and veneration for nature. Generally speaking, he expressed this by way of two feelings, depending on the creature: compassion and terror.

Regarding compassion, the first *yōkai* mentioned by the Japanese author is the *Kodama*, which is among those that have generated most literature. Sekien describes these beings as spirits that appear in ancient trees in the form of elderly people, as in the case of a couple that introduce themselves to a *shintō* monk in one of their journeys (Sekien, 2016: 8-9). The theme is repeated, albeit with some changes, in the legends collected by Lafcadio Hearn and Richard Gordon Smith. The first of them replaces the monk with a samurai called Tomotada and adds a young woman to the elderly couple, their daughter, and he falls in love with her. The story continues and becomes somewhat more complex, including the marriage between the samurai and the young woman, named Aoyagi (which literally means “green willow”), until, one day, she suffers a sudden pain that makes her disappear, since the tree from which she came out is cut down (Hearn, 1904: 121-136). The plot, which has strong similarities with the one of Gordon Smith, although the latter changes the samurai for a humble peasant (2015: 21-26), ends with the samurai visiting the place where he met the *Kodama* family to discover that there were only three stumps in the place where there was once a cabin. The case of the *Jiu-roku-sakura* or “Cherry Tree of the Sixteenth Day”, which takes this name for being the day of the year of the old Japanese calendar in which the cherry tree featuring in this story blossomed, is closely related, for giving human traits to trees. It is said that a samurai performed *seppuku* that same day of the year where the tree had withered years before to make it come back to life (Hearn, 1904: 139-141).

Other *yōkai* that follow a similar path are the *Bashō no sei* or “Banana Spirit”, which appear when banana trees of advanced age take human form and tell old stories (Sekien, 2016: 212); or the *Ninmenju*,

“Tree of human faces”, very similar to the previous example, but in which the flowers of old trees are those that, although not telling stories, laugh continuously (Sekien, 2016: 167).

While the previous ones tried to transmit a feeling of tenderness and veneration towards nature, other *yōkai*, like the *Kappa*, sought to cause the fear due to the possible consequences of mistreating the environment. In the case of this aquatic creature, the repercussions for invading the lakes where they lived could cause the death of the invader, by being dragged to the depths and then devoured (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 50-52). We can see again similarities in other examples, this time in the very work of Sekien, which shows the regional diversity of these legends. In this sense, we find the *Suiko*, or “Water Tiger”, which differs from the *Kappa* as it has a carapace similar to that of a pangolin and kneecaps as sharp as the claws of a tiger (Sekien, 2016: 91); the *Mōryō*, which feeds on livers of corpses, although the illustration of Sekien depicts it eating what looks like a brain (Sekien, 2016: 135); and the *Yamawaro*, a version of the *Kappa* that acts on roads not cared for or that have been obstructed and where the curious warning that part of the wild fruits should be left in place to allow animals to feed is included (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 140-142).

## **Social roles and imagery**

Another predominant theme in the work of Sekien (as it covers over forty percent of its content) is the transmission and representation, through the *yōkai* and their actions, of social roles assumed by the Japan of the eighteenth century. Among them, the image of the Buddhist clergy stands out, as well as the gender roles assumed for the female sex, to a greater extent. In addition, both cases share certain similarities, in a way that, under a Manichean point of view, the references to the Japanese clergy and the female collective adopt two possible well-differentiated forms that admit no intermediate tones.

With regard to the Buddhist clergy, there are many representations in the form of an elderly pilgrim, usually blind, and carrying a *biwa* (a

Japanese lute). In this case, the image that is transmitted is that of purity, serenity, illumination. In this regard the *Umizatō* appears, which is a creature of great size that takes this stereotyped form and walks on the waters in which great naval battles took place, such as Dan-no-Ura (1185)<sup>21</sup> at the same time that it makes its instrument sound (Sekien, 2016: 38). In other recorded stories, this *yōkai* acquires the ability to help vessels that have been trapped by a sea storm (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 128).

Despite this idyllic image of the monk, the cases showing a negative image of the monk are much more common. Sekien recorded examples in which the success of sinning was usual. Among them, *Himamushinyūdo* or “fire-eating monk”, represents a creature who was once a priest, but who, as a punishment for his greed, has been condemned to lick the oil of lamps for the rest of eternity (Sekien, 2016: 201). Another monk punished for similar reasons is the one recorded by Lafcadio Hearn in the legend of *Jikininki* (1904: 65-73), where the priest in question is transformed into a ghostly creature and condemned to feed on the corpses of the inhabitants of the closest village. There was also room for sins of sexual nature. Thus, *Ōkaburo* is a *yōkai* that represents the reprehensible attitude of priests having sexual relations with their disciples. Regarding the name of this creature, the kanji of the particle “*Kaburo*” has two meanings: “child” and “bald”, and it is a term that was directly related to the Japanese clergy. All this was reinforced by an illustration and a poem that link both concepts to the existing practice by which children of prostitutes in the so-called “Pleasure Rooms” dressed in feminine attire served clients (Sekien, 2016: 145).

The last example that we will show regarding this matter, this time bringing punishment to those who participated in similar practices, is that of the *Kokuri-baba*, who were lovers of these monks, adopted the form of old women and lived in the woods (Sekien, 2016: 175).

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<sup>21</sup> Important naval battle during the Genpei Wars, that took place in the Kanmon Straits and where the clans Minamoto and Taira battled for the control of Japan (Hershall, 2004: 27-33).

In fact, whether to defend their role in society, satirize their usual practices or condemn their actions, it is women upon whom Sekien and most authors set their objective when working on legends and superstitions. One of the most addressed themes revolved around motherhood and the responsibility that the Japanese society imposed on women in this regard. In the story of *Ubazakura*, which means “cherry tree of the milk maid”, a maid who suckled the newborn baby of the house asked *Fudō Myō Ō*, a Buddhist divinity, to allow her to give her life due to the illness of the young girl when she turned fifteen. In gratitude, he asked the family of the girl to plant a cherry tree in her honor, whose flowers took the form of nipples producing breast milk (Hearn, 1904: 39-41). *Ubume*, or “woman in labor”, is perhaps one of the most tragic examples of the consequences of not fulfilling the role of motherhood. We are faced with the spirit of a woman who, after dying during childbirth, indirectly caused the death of the baby. For this reason, because of not fulfilling her part in the continuity of the family line, she is punished (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 122-125). Something similar happens with *Nure-onna*, «wet woman», who appears on the seashore carrying her baby. The difference is that this creature offers her bundle to anyone who it finds, which begins to grow in size while strongly clinging to the victim. It is at this moment when *Nure-onna*, who takes the form of a snake, attacks (Sekien, 2016: 63).

Continuing with the representations that revolve around women in the *yōkai* genre, we observe that jealousy is a frequent theme, always represented by female-like creatures. In this sense we can see *Hashi-hime*, the “bridge princess”, a woman who, not being loved because of her ugliness, bit the banks of a river and became a horrible bridge (Sekien, 2016: 94). We also see *Hannaya*, the spirit of a woman who comes out of her body to spy on people of whom she is jealous (Sekien, 2016: 95); or *Kiyohime*, who in the story of *Dōjōji-no-kame* fell in love with a monk and, after being rejected by him, stalked, cornered and burned him alive inside the bell in which he had hidden (Sekien, 2016: 172). This peculiar story was also present in the *Yōkai Hatahiro*, although in this case the one being stalked is a husband who abandons his wife (Sekien, 2016: 199).

Finally, we find cases in which some everyday situations in the lives of high-born ladies are satirized. In particular, the aesthetic aspect is of special interest, for being constantly repeated. This is the case of *Ao nyōbō*, “blue maid of honor”, which is a *yōkai* with the appearance of a young woman who, in ridiculous scenes, is not able to thread her eyebrows or blacken her teeth properly due to her inexperience (Sekien, 2016: 124). In a similar fashion we see *Ōkubi*, whose enormous head size is the main difference with the first example (Sekien, 2016: 146); and *Oshiroi-baba*, where the *yōkai* takes the form of an old woman with a bad makeup who appears on New Year’s Eve (Sekien, 2016: 176).

### The didactic function of the *yōkai*

As we have explained at the beginning of the present work, we can observe that there is an important didactic potential within the *yōkai* genre. Depending on the specific function that could be exercised, those with didactic potential have been divided into two groups, including cases dealing with issues that could be included in the previous sections.

In the first case, we have grouped those *yōkai* that have as a main function to explain natural phenomena observed or experienced by the populations of the time, who were not able to understand their origin, so the creation of these creatures has been, presumably, *ad hoc*. In the whole Japanese geography, Sekien recorded a large number of *yōkai* that appeared due to the need to give an explanation to the phenomenon of shooting stars. Among them we find the *Sōgen-bi*, or “fire thicket”; the *Furari-bi*, “aimless fire”; the *Uba-ga-bi*, or “old hag fire”; the *Aosagi-bi*, or “blue heron of fire”; the *Chōchin-no-hi*, or “lantern fire”; and the *Oni-bi* or “demon fire”, collected by Hearn in his legends (1904: 4); among others. Regarding mirages, although present in smaller numbers, we must highlight the *Shiranui*, or «unknown fire», which refers to the reflections on the sea at night from the lighting coming from the coastal areas (Sekien, 2016: 106); and the *Shinkirō*, translated literally as “mirage”, that explains the *fata morgana*, an optical effect that is produced by temperature inversion and that makes objects that are on the sea horizon look exaggeratedly stretched or, even floating (Sekien,

2016: 164-165). Other examples of *yōkai* that explain other phenomena just by their mere presence are the *Amehuri-kozō*, or “rainfall priest boy”, which causes abundant rainfalls; its counterpart, the *Hiyori-bō* or “weather priest”, which causes good weather, but also drought; the *Fūri*, “wind tanuki”, which sweeps the fields at great speed, like the *Kamaitachi*, “sickle weasel” (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 42-45); or the *Ningyo* sirens, which, although fearful and theoretically easy to hunt, have the power to cause tsunamis (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 86-89).

Oddly enough, within the *yōkai* explicitly created to give an answer to usual phenomena, we find a very specific category that refers to domestic situations. Among them, the *Yanari* or “squeakers” are small beings that justify the existence of strident sounds in old wooden constructions (Sekien, 2016: 36); for damp stains on ceilings and walls, the *Tenjō-name* or «ceiling licker» (Sekien, 2016: 251), also called *Akaname* or «filth licker» (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 18-21), is the scapegoat, given its supposed habit of licking those areas and causing their appearance; and, for dust particles, we have the *Keukegen*, a hairy creature that likes to live in unclean areas, where it drops hair when fleeing from human presence (Pérez & Chida, 2013: 58-61).

In the second group, we have taken into account those cases of stories aimed at preventing certain actions or practices and in which fear plays an essential role. The example of *Yuki-onna*, the “snow woman” (Sekien, 2016: 47), a *yōkai* that features in a story by Hearn that causes blizzards and frosts, is paradigmatic. In this story she is responsible for the death of a woodcutter who is trapped by a blizzard along with his apprentice, Minokishi, whom she spares, with the condition that he never tells what happened. Years later, the apprentice meets and marries a woman with whom he has children and decides to tell her what happened. After hearing it, the woman confirmed her identity as *Yuki-onna* and assured him that the day that their children complained about him, she would kill him (Hearn, 1904: 111-118). It is precisely here where we see a creature whose characteristics explain the origin of a natural phenomenon, the snowstorm, but, from the perspective of Hearn, it is also a warning towards the danger of venturing into

blizzards, using for this purpose, a horror story. In this educational sense, there is the *Ao-bōzu* or “blue monk”, who is a *yōkai* that feeds on children that venture into the woods alone; or the *Mujina*, a badger that takes the form of a human body, but with a faceless face able to cause mortal scares if encountered late at night.

Last, within this group we find other *yōkai* focused in transmitting very concrete morals and ethics. The following are clear examples: *The Hikeshi-baba* or “fire extinguishing old woman”, a *yōkai* with the task of blowing out the lanterns of those visiting the so called Pleasure Rooms and make their lives gloomier (Sekien, 2016: 111); the *Taka-onna*, literally translated as “tall woman” and representing a *Rokurokubi*, a creature able to separate its head from the rest of its body (Hearn, 1904: 83-99) which, in this case, stretches its neck under a female form to give lethal scares to those visiting the Pleasure Rooms (Sekien, 2016: 40); *Katawaguruma* or “crippled wheel”, a *yōkai* in the form of a wheel which has a woman in its center, being punished for her impure acts; and the *Wanyudo* or “wheel priest”, a variation of the previous one but with a priest.

## Conclusions

The fantasy genre, as well as any other artistic and cultural genre, has been constantly evolving in accordance with the changes in the society producing them. Proof of this is the presence of elements that have changed and adapted to new needs, in different cultures and regions of the world.

In this way, in the Japanese fantasy genre, we see in the *yōkai* an example that perfectly shows the changes that these types of artistic manifestations can go through. Nowadays they are a part of a folklore with a growing presence in the Western world, but in the past they were an important element of the Japanese way of thinking and superstition. In this concrete case, we have seen a “specialization” of the *yōkai*, which has given rise to creatures and legends involved in all aspects of the Japanese society, life and everydayness, from

interpersonal relationships to natural phenomena, also dealing with the most widespread fears and even gender roles. Areas on which we detect similarities with respect to the previous studies about the social and cultural history of Japan, which suggests the use of literary works as a source for history.

Regarding these matters, after studying the sources and presenting the results, we can see the validity of this type of literature for the study of not only the artistic and cultural representations of a society, but also of the society itself. The *yōkai* genre, as fictional stories born in the heart of the Japanese society, allows us to understand better the ways of thinking in the past in one of the least explored regions by Europe until the second half of the nineteenth century and in which, as it has been implied in this study, there is much to be discovered yet.

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# FANTASY MANGA AS A READING MOTIVATIONAL TOOL FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION

Claudia Torres Pastor

## 1. Introduction

When we talk about education and reading, many teachers put their hands to their heads. Nowadays with new technologies and gaming opportunities, reading is no longer fashionable. There is a large majority of students who say they do not like reading, and when we ask why, the reasons are often very different. Maybe it's because of the format of the books, maybe it's because of the theme or simply because of the effort involved. From our position as teachers, we would be interested in dealing with this problem based on a proposal that in other countries seems to be bearing fruit: using comics as a tool for reading motivation. In the present article we will not only focus on analyzing the inclusion of comics in general, but we will focus on a particular type, which seems to be more unknown, but apparently arouses much more interest than any other type of comic. This is the manga.

We are aware that not everything is valid, and it is necessary to set limits. Our area set on primary education, therefore, we will focus on analyzing what is the situation in students of 6-12 years old. On the other hand, we will always speak as part of a teaching group and with the aim that this work and the data included in it, serve as a teaching practice. This does not mean that our proposal has a strictly pedagogical use, since when we speak or propose a particular title, we

will not always refer to it in order that our students learn something, but other times the objective will be simply to awaken curiosity, motivate, encourage creativity or perhaps that the student poses things that had never before been raised.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. What is the Manga?

For those less knowledgeable in the subject, a manga is a comic from Japan. Regarding the origin of this word, it has always raised doubts, since two possible currents could be considered: The first is the call of continuity which places «the origins of manga in the illustrated rolls of birds and animals Chōju Jimbutsu Giga of the eleventh century, attributed to priest Toba Shojo (1053-1140)<sup>1</sup>» (Guiral, 2007: 9). The second defends the non-continuity of the concept, the latter being the most widespread. According to this theory, «the manga emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the pioneers of the medium came into contact with American cartoons and comics»<sup>2</sup> (Guiral, 2007: 9). The manga has a format with very particular characteristics among which the serialization stands out. On the other hand, another author who also describes manga aspects, such as the plots, is Adam Schwartz, who comments in one of his articles:

Unlike many Western comic strips geared toward youths, manga plots are rather indirect: It is not always clear who the main protagonists are. Moreover, the plots are usually nonlinear, much like soap operas or movies. Subplots are highly common, as shown in the above example. Gender is addressed more flexibly, less moralistically, and in greater complexity than in traditional U.S. comics. (2006: p.42)

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<sup>1</sup> Own translation.

<sup>2</sup> Own translation.

## 2.2 From the comic to the manga. Impact in other countries.

### ○ North American Market

According to the continuity current, the manga was created by the influence of the US in Japan, after its defeat in World War II. In the mid-1940s, Japan suffered an invasion by Yankee comic book lovers and cinemas were filled with Hollywood movies and Disney cartoons.

The American comic, characterized by its superhero's themes, seems to have always been on the crest of the wave, however, the manga has become its clear competitor. When the US market was threatened by this new trend, the United States used all its forces to discredit it.

As conclusive data we will say that «the US market of anime<sup>3</sup> and manga that had a value of 60 million dollars in 2002 reached 110 million in 2003 and, although with certain ups and downs, today continues growing. » (Cortés, 2008: 153)

### ○ Asia

With regard to Eastern European trade, at present, and according to Cortés:

«The main and largest export market is Asia. There are no official figures (since there is a lot of piracy in the region), but in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Korea, Singapore, etc. the manga is current and has completely influenced the local comic; where the manga does not arrive, the anime has undoubtedly arrived.»<sup>4</sup> (Cortés, 2008: 153).

And, on the subject of piracy, around 70 piracy increased in countries like Taiwan through the introduction of pirate editions of

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to differentiate between manga and anime. «Specifically, manga are printed comics found in graphic-novel format, whereas anime are animated cartoons (i.e., moving images on television, movies, or video games).» (Schwartz, 2005: p.41)

<sup>4</sup> Own translation.

children's manga. Currently this problem is being solved through rights transfer agreements. «The demand for mangas in other Asian countries must be very important when publishers allow themselves the luxury of paying licenses, which they would not do if they did not see good benefits.»<sup>5</sup> (Berndt, 1996: 38). However, this was not always the case. Countries like South Korea forbade Japan from importing any kind of manga. This was due to his strong anti-Japanese sentiment after the country's recent Japanese occupation. (Gravett, 2006: 154).

### ○ **Europe and Latin America**

As Gravett (2006: 152) reflected in his book, for a long time it seemed impossible to get the manga to the West, not only because of the protectionism and xenophobia that existed at that time, but also due to all the adaptation process they were experiencing. However, this changed over time and today Europe is the third market to which manga is most exported, after Asia and the USA. «Italy, Germany and France are the places where it is most published, which is perfectly normal because it is where most comics are published in general, followed by Spain with a large difference» (Cortés, 2008: 153).

Regarding Latin America, we would like to highlight the influence of manga especially in Mexico, highlighting the figure of «DREM, Mexican manga created in 2008 by the designer Lorena Velasco Terán, which mixes Japanese manga graphics as well as its marketing formula»<sup>6</sup>. (Castelli Olvera, 2017: p.33)

### ○ **Spain**

As far as Spain is concerned, there is evidence of what could be the first Spanish manga which, according to the blog Tebeosfera (Barrero, 2012), was shown in a Bobín comic strip and appears to have a date from March 1931. However, others speak about Toda Haneko as the first manga in Spain, dated in 1968.

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<sup>5</sup> Own translation.

<sup>6</sup> Own translation.

In Spain comics have always been known as *tebeos* by the famous comic magazine that gives it its name. However, in the 1970s there was a paradigm shift and, as in many other countries, manga entered our country in the form of anime. In 1999 the Dragon Ball series arrived in Spain through regional channels, whose success was key to the popularization of manga in the country. (Vázquez, 2006: p.8). Other titles like Candy Candy (1975-1979), one of the most mediatic; Akira (1992) that served as an alternative to the comic of superheroes, which began to decline from the nineties; Mermalade Boy: The Family Grows (1998-2000), which represented the *shojo*<sup>7</sup> boom in our country; and in 2001 a new manga became a social phenomenon, Shin Chan (1990-2010), which in Japan was cataloged for adults but here it was introduced among the children's audience raising a multitude of polemics (Genis Puig cited by Guiral, 2007: 50).

### 2.3. Data confirm it

Once we have a basis on the subject we are dealing with, we will comment on some current information and the opinion that society has about this new reading tendency.

In Japan, a country of 127 million inhabitants, «it is considered that a minimum of two thirds of the population reads manga with some regularity, and the country spends an average of 2,000 yen<sup>8</sup> per inhabitant per year on manga»<sup>9</sup> (Cortés, 2008: 152). This country sells over two billion manga magazines and books annually. Every month about 300 journals and about 400 titles are published in the form of a book. «Magazines reach millionaire prints and manga books usually appear in first editions of between 300,000 and 500,000 copies»<sup>10</sup> (Berndt, 1996: 15). «The average price of a weekly magazine is less than 400 yen<sup>11</sup>, and that of manga books between 400 and

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<sup>7</sup> «The *shōjo* manga, (literally, “manga for girls”), is the manga addressed to the female audience between 11 and 18 years old». (Guiral, 2007: p.87)

<sup>8</sup> Approximately 15 euros.

<sup>9</sup> Own translation.

<sup>10</sup> Own translation.

<sup>11</sup> 400 yen are approximately 3 euros.

1000<sup>12</sup> yen»<sup>13</sup> (Berndt, 1996: 16). The historical record of manga sales was registered in 1995, when 1,900 million copies were published. If we talk about money, the average in the nineties was 600,000 million yen<sup>14</sup>, which is a very large amount of money <sup>15</sup>(Cortés, 2008: 153). In general, and according to data from the Cinemanía magazine (Rusell, 2009: 64) it is estimated that «it generates around 481 million yen per year (about 32 billion euros).»<sup>16</sup>

In countries like the United States, in 2003, 100 million gross dollars were accumulated in manga sales, 75% more than the previous year's profits. (Schwartz, 2006: 41). With regard to sales figures, Spanish publishers do not provide this type of information. However, we infer that the number of editions that are published could be directly related to the sales success of manga in our country. (Bernabé, 2017)

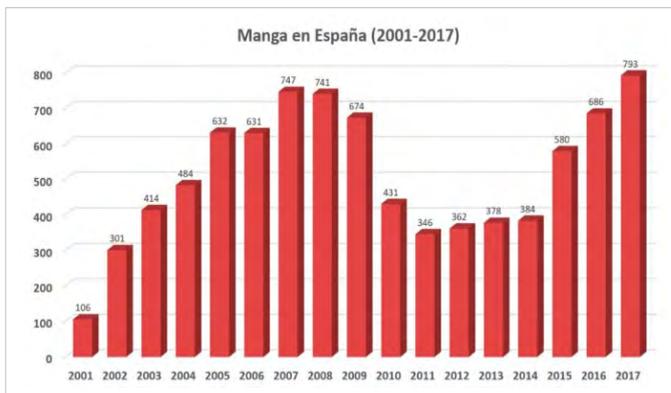


Figure 1. Number of manga publications in Spain. Source: *Mangalandia*

If we look at the figures from Japan, around 37% of Japanese publications are exclusively manga, which is a big difference if we compare it with Spain, taking into consideration that Japan is the origin country of this type of comic. However, the data of this past year is surprising since it has

<sup>12</sup> In euros it would represent between 3 and 7.60 approximately.

<sup>13</sup> Own translation.

<sup>14</sup> Approximately 4'600 million euros

<sup>15</sup> Own translation.

<sup>16</sup> Own translation.

broken the absolute record of manga edition with 793 new features according to Mangalandia blog. As Bernabé (2017) comments in that blog, there is a «possibility that we are facing a new manga bubble»<sup>17</sup>.

On the other hand, many authors have reflected on the possible reasons for this success. Ikue Kunai and Clarissa CS Ryan (2007) talk about the great variety of genres covered by the manga, its connection with series and animes of great audience, its economic price and the quality of writing and drawing as some reasons for the increase of manga readers. Firstly, well-known anime series such as Doraemon, Pokémon, Yo Kai Watch, Pichi Pichi Pitch or Detective Conan have made children used to certain features of Japanese drawing and also to certain typical customs from Japanese culture.

If we observe the reading data of our country, according to a CIS survey carried out in 2014, in 237 municipalities of 49 provinces, 44.9 of the Spaniards do not like to read or do not care (Huffpost, 2015). Therefore, based on these data we can say that the so-called sleeping readers exist and, in fact, there are many. However, according to surveys on reading habits, if we focus on children, these data are not so negative. «According to the report *Hábitos de lectura y compra de libros en España 2014*, developed by *Conecta* for the Federación de Gremios de Editores de España (FGEE), 77.2% of children between 10 and 13 years old are frequent readers»<sup>18</sup> (Filippi, 2017) therefore, this means that the previous data on Spaniards in general, mainly includes adults. However, we do not have to go so far, if we compare with the report of this past year 2017 (Federación Editores, 2017) we see that 79.8% of children between 10 and 14 are frequent readers (so we see a progression and growth). That is why, one of the main difficulties is to ensure that our students, that 79.8%, do not stop reading when they grow and make the remaining 20, 2% wake up from that reader dream that we mentioned earlier.

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<sup>17</sup> Own translation.

<sup>18</sup> Own translation.

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. Benefit or harmful

Once we have discussed these data, we analyze them. In the first place, we would be interested to comment if, having obtained these data that apparently show a clear interest in manga, it would be beneficial or not to motivate it from the school. As a starting point, enjoyment and motivation are spoken as the first benefits. On the other hand, visual support also offers an aid for reading comprehension. Another important fact is that they have a very close dialogue that reflects reality. In addition, many of the themes and plot of the stories tend to have a strong moral charge that develops the critical sense of the readers. As an extra point, most stories often include funny scenes and funny events that make people laugh and enjoy reading.

Following other studies, the School of Education of the University of Fordham in New York, held a conference on visual narrative, which was attended by speakers such as James “Bucky”, English education professor at the University of Texas at El Paso, which affirmed that «there are multiple studies to suggest that students who read comics go on to read more, and to read more varied literature » (Viadero, 2009: 1). One of these studies was carried out in 1996 at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, by Professor Stephen D. Krashen, who discovered that:

«7th grade boys who were avid comics readers also tended to read more books, regardless of whether they were middle-class, suburban students or low-income students from an inner-city school.» (Viadero, 2009: 3)

So far all have been benefits, however, we also find that there are a number of opponents who point to certain characteristics of manga as potentially negative.

In general, it could be said that, nowadays, the biggest opponents, or perhaps those who have shown the greatest opposition so far, have been parents and educators. These, with the argument that mangas are full of violent scenes and sex, have tried to stop this market or perhaps to bring it closer to the little ones. An example of this happened in the early nineties when, in Tokyo and Osaka, several cases were taken to court arguing that «comics are harmful to youth» (Berndt, 1996: 26). Being fair and objective, perhaps there is a difference between the humorous games that in series like Tom and Jerry allows them to «destroy each other to be reborn again»<sup>19</sup> and the violence that is shown in animes such as Mazinger Z or Dragon Ball (Vázquez, 2006: 7). But the question is, where is the limit? Finally, although it is not considered harmful, what really constitutes a limitation, disadvantage or inconvenience is the difficulty of adaptation. An example of this are the onomatopoeias, since in Japan they have onomatopoeias even for silent situations such as *peko* to lean or *niko* to smile. In these situations it is difficult to translate its meaning because in Spanish we do not have any onomatopoeia for these actions. (Cortés, 2008: 170)

### 3.2 Manga in the classroom

Taking into account these advantages we can make our classes more dynamic and motivating, as it gives us the opportunity to perform conversation exercises such as discussing the plot, the characters, if it is visually attractive... On the other hand, its economic format and its easy accessibility make them very attractive and close for students.

As regards the analysis of benefits, as we have seen previously, there is no lack of reasons to read them: they develop reading, visual learning, stimulate creativity and imagination, develop a critical sense ... On the other hand, some of its attractions are that many superheroes that appear represent recognizable icons. Therefore, it is not difficult to become familiar with them. They are usually fun readings and have very powerful images. However, as we have already mentioned, there is a problem that keeps many teachers and municipal libraries from including

<sup>19</sup> Own translation.

them in their shelves, and that is their content. In countries like the United States, comics have the maximum inclusion within public libraries and other countries such as France allocate between 10 and 20% of libraries budget for comic. However, in Spain it does not seem that there is a great variety and in schools most teachers do not even intend to include them in the classroom. We are aware that, especially mangas, have a humor and content that may not be appropriate for children. This is due to the cultural differences between the countries of origin of the manga and the countries to which it is exported. As we already know, the standards of what is appropriate and what is not vary greatly from one culture to another. Therefore, one must be very careful when choosing. Debate could be opened on this issue because there are many people who denounce the content of these comics, but others who defend them arguing that the positive values that are shown in them are much more abundant than the negative ones. One of them is Trajano Bermúdez (Calleja, 1997: 61) who, speaking of Dragon Ball, affirmed: «Dragon Ball transmits a series of ideas or sensations related to friendship above all, love to others, and for peace, the surrender of enemies through love, environmentalism and other matters of like-mindedness.»<sup>20</sup> Analyzing these two positions, we should ask if it is really worth censoring these works or not. Realistically, today there is more violence in many of the movies that children normally see than in the comics they might read someday. On the other hand, if our intention is not didactic but motivational, this fact should prevail, without worrying too much about whether they learn something or not reading this type of comics. However, there are limits. To this end, what Kunai (2007: 8) already proposed in one of his articles is the fact that teachers must read beforehand the works they are going to present to their students. This is the most effective way to assess the quality and adequacy of the stories for the students. In the same way, according to Levi (2008), «Teachers using anime and manga in their classrooms need to be very careful to consider the social and cultural values of their individual communities when deciding what they can and cannot use.» Using anime like Totoro, to teach values or the family structure (Young, 2008) could be interesting, but anime like Death Note (Osmond, 2008) would not be recommended for such young ages, despite its great success on screen.

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<sup>20</sup> Own translation.

Let's analyze the opinions of some teachers who have introduced manga in their classes and evaluate what their results have been.

Professor Nylund (2007: 30) tells us in his article, how introducing manga in his classroom library was one of the best experiences he has had. In his words, « Perhaps the most amazing thing about this genre is the wide base of its appeal. I have never purchased a style of literature that appealed to all ethnic groups, both genders, and all reading abilities.» However, this opinion is not shared by everyone because, even « proponents of the educational uses of comics admit that the medium retains a bit of a stigma among educators, some of whom see the books as “subliterature.”[...] But the supporters don't necessarily argue that graphica should replace literary classics, either» (Viadero, 2009: 1-2). Therefore, we speak then of two streams or maybe three, (manga yes; manga no; manga yes, but not in my class ...).

Let's see other cases. If we talk about comics in general, we need to mention the change that is happening in terms of teachers. Historically, institutions and areas of education, such as schools and libraries, argued that comics impaired the student's reading development. However, «Literacy educators, for example, advocate teaching graphic novels to motivate so-called reluctant readers; support struggling readers; scaffold English language learners; and promote the development of skills associated with visual literacy» (Connors, 2013: 165).

Another teacher who has also used the graphic novel, understood as comics and manga, is Professor Sabine Gabaron (2017: 287), who comments on his results talking about his students:

They take the initiative to look up words in the dictionary to better understand the story,<sup>10</sup> inquire on how to obtain the other volumes of their series if they chose one of several volumes, search for information on the author or the artist to better interpret certain stylistic or plot choices. None of these investigations are required by the assignments. [...] Every semester it is amazing to notice how students find ways to appropriate themselves these books and make the texts theirs. It is fascinating to witness how students, through the reading of graphic

novels, grow and develop linguistically, acquire confidence in the foreign language and find in themselves the abilities to interpret and analyze language and art.

As we can see, students seem to enjoy this type of reading a lot, and the fact that it covers such a wide range of topics makes teachers see in manga a very productive didactic opportunity, especially for the literature class.

«Graphic novels can support the literature curriculum and will certainly support the mission of the academic library to provide recreational reading [...]. Graphic novels can perhaps be mechanism for the return to the humanistic ideal that reading should both educate and delight. (O'English, 2006: 180)

On the other hand, if we take the didactic way by which comics have to teach something to be introduced in our classroom, «some authors and projects like Manga Edutainment Project to Open New Worlds defend the use of manga (Japanese comics) as an educational resource for the teaching of different disciplines, including the teaching of history, society and culture»<sup>21</sup> (Delgado, 2017: 848). Another interesting project is that of Philip Charles Crawford, who created a guide with 101 graphic novels, for children and adults, that promote literature.

To conclude this section, we see that students seem to receive this type of reading favorably and the teachers who have introduced it into their classrooms have had a good result. However, and like everything, this fascination and reading speed that is spoken of when we refer to manga is a question that has also sparked some debate. Is it positive or negative? As regards the positive part, we find an overflowing reading. Students who read and read and do not get tired, want more volumes, continue their favorite stories and do not seem to realize the amount of pages they are reading without realizing it. This is because, as Cortés

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<sup>21</sup> Own translation.

explains (2008: 157), «the narrative slavery that can be assumed»<sup>22</sup> is not perceived. As he explains, when we read a European album or comic of about 48 pages, it may not be a heavy reading because we are talking about a mainly visual reading. However, when we talk about manga, narrative slavery, as he calls it, diffuses a lot more, since when we have finished reading a simple manga of about 10 volumes we can perfectly have read 1900 pages. If we compare it with the 48-page European comic we talked about before, the differences are abysmal.

With regard to the negative part, we must reflect to what extent this type of reading can become obsessive. According to Virginia Fernández (2016: 49) «along with harmless aspects, the love of manga or manganime may present traits of addition and may require specialized interventions with those affected.» In our opinion, this comment is somewhat exaggerated, however, it serves as an excuse to talk about something that, as teachers we should consider, and that our students could use the manga and everything related to it as a lifestyle, which is popularly known as otaku culture.

### **3.3. What do they think?**

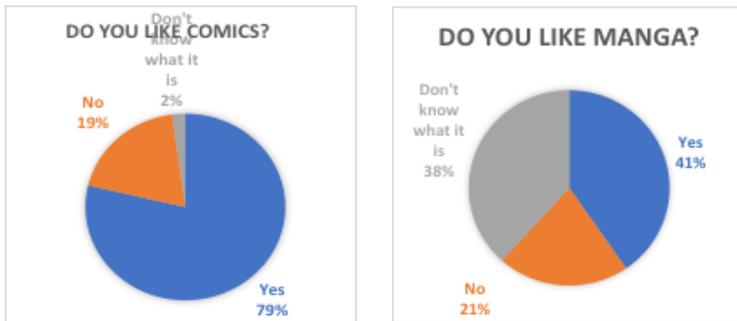
We have arrived to the part of our work in which we intend to find out if children today know the world of manga and whether they like it or not. For this make use of some interviews and surveys carried out in different centers from Elche. Our points of interest are basically 4 (students, teachers, libraries and the comic market). Regarding the surveys, we have gone to two different libraries: the Library of Education of the University of Alicante and the Pedro Ibarra Library in Elche. For the students, we have done the survey in two classes of sixth grade students from a school in Elche. About the interviews, they were made firstly to a Spanish teacher at the school where we did the surveys and secondly to the comic and manga store called Monografic in Elche. Next, we have the results.

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<sup>22</sup> Own translation.

## The Students

First, we will present the results of the student surveys. There were 47 respondents in total, who responded affirmatively to the question «Do you like comics?» Regarding the manga, the students also answered affirmatively to the question of whether they liked it, however, we must highlight the large percentage of students who did not know what it was. Only 10 students of the 47 respondents answered that they did not like manga.



Figures 3 and 4. Questions 1 and 2 results.

As regards the possession of comics and manga by children, the results are striking. 40% have comics at home compared to 60% that do not, while with manga, only 10% say they have this type of reading at home. It is at this point that we are interested in reflecting on these results. We found that 41% of students like manga but only 10% have it at home. And as for the comic, almost 80% of students like it, but only half of them have comics at home. The reasons for this data may be several, that parents may not be aware of their children's reading interests or perhaps they focus more on the purchase of narrative works. This is where the issues that we previously commented come into debate, there is a lack of knowledge of the so-called manga comic book and, if it is known, it is belittled or there is less interest in its purchase.

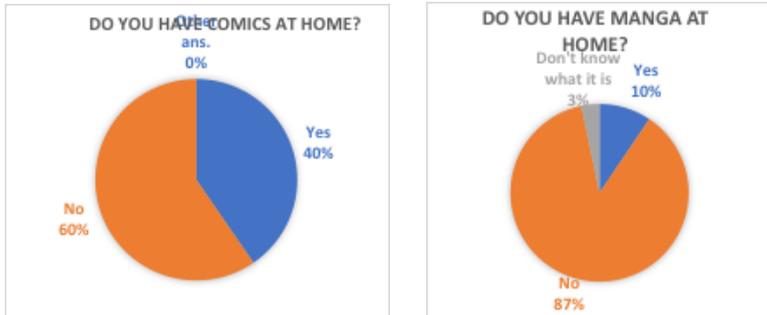


Figure 4 and 5. Results to the presumed 4 and 5

Finally, we asked the students if they had ever watched anime, and the results also attracted a lot of attention. 88% of students have ever watched anime. This supports our previous statements about the fact that the first contact that is usually had with the Japanese market is through the animation series.

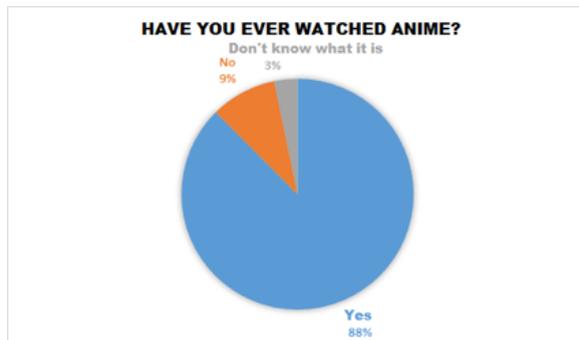


Figure 6. Results to question 3

Finally, in our survey, we want to know what comic and manga titles our students have at home and what animes they have seen. With this we intend to get a little closer to their interests and collect data on which are the works that most children like.

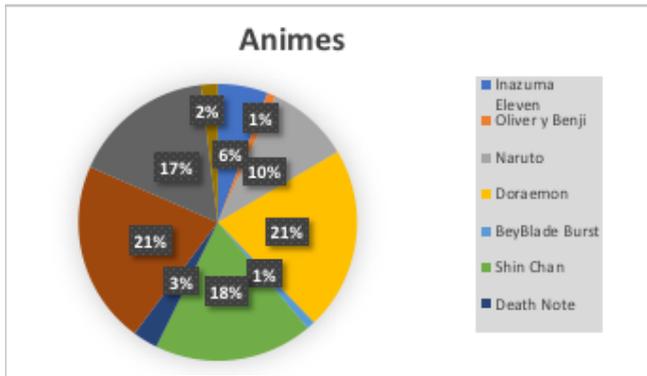


Figure 7. Results to question 3

As we see in the diagram above, Doraemon and Pokémon lead the list along with Shin Chan and Dragon Ball. We had to say that within the titles like Dragon Ball we have included all their editions (Dragon ball Z, Dragon ball Super ...), as in Naruto (we have included Boruto). As for the comics, DC Comics and Marvel superheroes are the titles which mainly appear. On the other hand, we also find Spider-Man and Iron Man as the most popular ones. Another noteworthy fact is the appearance of new comics and collections such as Norman and Mix, which, although it does not have a lot of presence in this school, has had large sales indexes in bookstores.

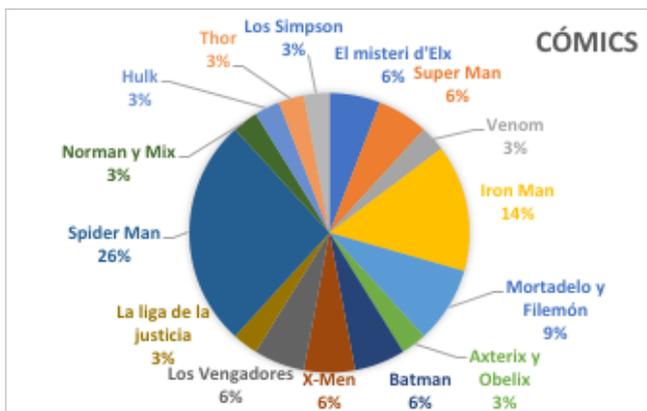


Figure 8. Results to question 4

Finally, as regards manga at home, the results change drastically. We only found the titles of Naruto, Inazuma Eleven and Pokémon, and they represented a very small percentage of the group surveyed. However, when we attended this school to conduct the surveys, we visited his library and found that it had a wide variety of mangas and, according to its librarian, manga books are very popular and children demand them a lot. They look for them more than comics. It is, therefore, at this time, when we want to analyze what role libraries play in the promotion of manga.

### Libraries

With regard to libraries, we conducted a survey of the Library of Education of the University of Alicante and another one to the Pedro Ibarra Municipal Library of Elche. In this case we will show the data of the Library of Elche as it was the most substantial:

	Yes	No	We don't know
Do you have comics?	x		
Do you have manga?	x		
Do you have comics separed from other book types?		x	
Do you have comics separed from manga?		x	
Around how many comics do you have in this library (without counting mangas)?	305		
Around how many mangas do you have in this library?	15		
Could you briefly explain which selection criteria do you follow?			
I'm afraid there is no criteria. Most are series of <i>shonen</i> or <i>shojo</i> without continuity, which were bought long ago. I do not know who recommended them. Also, some classic manga like Pies Descalzos or Adolf, but very little thing.			

Figure 9. Pedro Ibarra Library survey table

We find here a great offer of both comics and manga. However, there is a greater presence of comics. Regarding the selection, we see that here they take into account readers' requests and events related to the comic world. Finally, a fact that is necessary to mention here is the answer to the question about which are the manga that children demand the most and we see that, as we had previously commented, it is the anime that motivates students to read and show interest for manga.

As an extra, we would like to include the comment of the librarian from the school we went to conduct the surveys. He told us that manga were the most popular books in the library, that they took them out of his hands, and that he could not show me all the manga titles that the library has because most of them were on loan. This makes us think about this genre and realize that there really is a great demand and children really want to read them. However, we also want to know what opinion teachers have.

### **The Teachers**

Regarding the teaching staff, we conducted a small interview with the Spanish tutor of the children surveyed. As we see, the interest of libraries to offer titles that interest students is the first step for children to know this type of reading. On the other hand, it is a fact that, if the teacher has had a relationship with the comics or manga, perhaps when he was small, he will have a greater disposition to include it in his or her classes. While it is also true that the curriculum is often against us when it comes to introducing extra material in our classes, as in itself the contents to work, as the interviewee says, are very abundant. However, some teachers have already started to use comics in a transversal way and as part of the development of key competences (Pérez, 2010). Another aspect to emphasize is the change of likes in terms of reading. The interviewee mentioned titles such as Tintin and Mortadelo and Filemón, however, a very small percentage of her students mentioned Mortadelo and Filemón as works they had read, and Tintin did not even appear. However, a whole collection of superheroes appear here, if we

focus on the comic in general, it seems that they have won the game to other titles that, perhaps in previous years were the best sellers.

## **Markets**

Finally, we interviewed a comics and manga selling business in Elche to ask for their opinion on the current situation in this sector. About this interview we find some of the comments that were said very interesting, such as «we have sold to several libraries and high schools in Elche and librarians have told us that since we have taken the manga, the attendance of the students to the library has increased drastically» «Those who are in charge of this (librarians and teachers) think that books have to be something more didactic and it is not like that. [...] I think you should first love reading and then ... But if you do not read at first ... This is a war between machines and books now, and of course, you have to beat the battle to the machines and then we will deal with whether they are didactic.» All our work is based on these opinions, because we believe faithfully that our priority is that students are engaged in reading and then we will worry about redirecting them to read what we propose . At the same time, comments on the function of the internet as a form of promotion are interesting, since there is a large number of readers who read through the screen.

### **3.4. We create in canon**

After analyzing what children want to read, what is most sold, what libraries offer and what teachers can do, we set out to create a canon of manga works grouped into different groups. All of them are recommended to use them in primary school. This canon is created as a ranking with the intention that teachers have a starting point to introduce this type of comic in the classroom. To create this selection, we will also be helped by the selections and recommendations of authors such as Eric Henrickson (2007), Katherine “Kat” Kan (1996) or AA.VV (2006) as well as pages like Manga Edutainment Project to Open New Words and interesting proposals such as Udon Entertainment (Cha, 2008). Our main objectives and the qualities that we seek in these

manga books are that they mainly entertain the students, that they like and engage them in reading. On the other hand, that they are appropriate to their age, and finally, if possible, that they have some didactic aspect or values teaching. However this objective is secondary.

On the other hand, for the excessively long works we would include only the first volume or the first five, and we would be introducing more depending on the demand of our students. We do this because their complete collections would occupy half of our bookcase and we run the risk of the student losing interest when seeing that the story is too long. As the author Rovira (2011: 26) says in his article on the school canon, serialization is one of the main problems of this type of reading, «we do not delimit ourselves to a single work, but collections that can last many years and characters that can go through many authors.»<sup>23</sup>

Based on the study and analysis on the selection and cataloging of the manga carried out by Masaki Eto et alii. (2017), they propose a classification in 5 blocks. We have used blocks 1 and 2, we have eliminated block 4 and we have merged blocks 3 and 5 into one, so we find 3 classifications with different works in each. The canon that we propose is the following:

## Works With An Established Reputation

Within this group we propose works by recognized authors that are more likely to be found in libraries.

### **ASTROBOY**

Author: Osamu Tezuka  
Volumes: 23  
Theme: adventures  
Recommended age: 3º-6º



<sup>23</sup> Own translation.

<p><b>DRAGON BALL</b></p> <p>Author: Akira Toriyama            Volumes: 42            Theme: adventures, supernatural, fight, science fiction            Recommended age: 5° y 6</p>	
<p><b>THE NEW TREASURE ISLAND</b></p> <p>Author: Osamu Tezuka            Volumes: 1            Theme: adventures            Recommended age: 3° y 4ª</p>	
<p><b>SHŌ-CHAN ADVENTURES</b></p> <p>Author: Katsuichi Kabashima            Volumes: 1            Theme: adventures            Recommended age: 3° y 4°</p>	
<p><b>MARMALADE BOY</b></p> <p>Author: Wataru Yoshizumi            Volumes: 8            Theme: romantic comedy            Recommended age: 5° y 6°</p>	

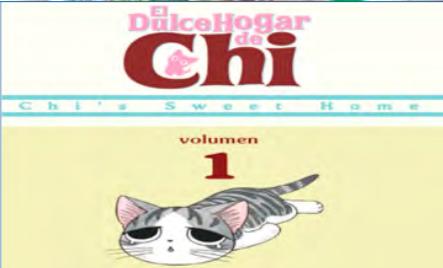
Figure 10. Works with an established reputation

## Commercially Successful Entertainment

In this group we include a selection of works whose content is mainly ludic and whose main objective is to entertain. The vast majority have their television representation in anime and enjoy great popularity.

<p><b>POKÉMON</b></p> <p>Author: Satoshi Tajiri Volumes: 22 Theme: aventuras Recommended age: 1°-6°</p>	 A colorful illustration of Ash Ketchum, a young boy with black hair and a red cap, wearing a red and white jacket. He is holding a Poké Ball in his right hand. A yellow Pikachu is flying next to him against a red background with white sparkles.
<p><b>SPLATOON</b></p> <p>Author: Sankichi Hinodeya Volumes: 5 Theme: adventures Recommended age: 1°-6°</p>	 A cartoon illustration of a character with blue fur, wearing goggles and a black jacket. The character is smiling and holding a green Splatoon gun. The background is white with colorful ink splatters in pink, orange, and blue.
<p><b>YOKAI WATCH</b></p> <p>Author: Noriyuki Konishi Volumes: 16 Theme: aventuras Recommended age: 3° y 4°</p>	 A colorful illustration featuring three characters: a white cat-like yokai, a young boy with brown hair, and a blue yokai. The text 'YO-KAI WATCH' is written in large, stylized yellow and red letters at the bottom.
<p><b>ZELDA</b></p> <p>Author: Akira Himekawa Volumes: 10 Theme: adventures Recommended age: 3° y 4°</p>	 The cover art for 'The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time'. It features the title 'THE LEGEND OF ZELDA' in large gold letters, with 'OCARINA OF TIME' below it. The central image shows Link, a young boy with a green tunic and a sword, holding a blue fairy.

<p><b>SUPER MARIO</b></p> <p>Author: Yukio Sawada Volumes: 53 Theme: adventures, humor Recommended age: 1°- 6°</p>	
<p><b>DETECTIVE CONAN</b></p> <p>Author: Gōshō Aoyama Volumes: 94 Theme: suspense, mystery Recommended age: 4°- 6°</p>	
<p><b>MY HERO ACADEMIA</b></p> <p>Author: Gōshō Aoyama Volumes: 18 Theme: action, adventure, comedy Recommended age: 6</p>	
<p><b>SILENT VOICE</b></p> <p>Author: Yoshitoki Ōima Volumes: 7 Theme: drama, bullying Recommended age: 6°</p>	
<p><b>KOTOURA SAN</b></p> <p>Author: Enokizu Volumes: 7 Theme: romantic, drama, supernatural Recommended age: 3°-6°</p>	

<p><b>BAKABON</b></p> <p>Author: Fujio Akatsuka Volumes: 38 Theme: comedy Recommended age: 1°-6°</p>	
<p><b>YOTSUBA</b></p> <p>Author: Kiyohiko Azuma Volumes: 13 (por el momento) Theme: comedia Recommended age: 3°-6°</p>	
<p><b>CHI'S SWEET HOME</b></p> <p>Author: Kanata Konami Volumes: 12 Theme: comedy Recommended age: 1°-6°</p>	
<p><b>I'M A GIGANT KILLER</b></p> <p>Author: Joe Kelly y Ken Niimura Volumes: 7 Theme: fantasy Recommended age: 5° y 6°</p>	
<p><b>FRUIT BASKET</b></p> <p>Author: Natsuki Takaya Volumes: 23 Theme: dramatic comedy, fantasy, romance Recommended age: 6°</p>	

<p><b>FOOL MOON</b></p> <p>Author: Arina Tanemura Volumes: 7 Theme: Mahō shōjo, romance, supernatural, musical, drama, comedy Recommended age: 5° y 6°</p>	 An illustration from the manga Fool Moon showing a group of characters. In the foreground, a girl with long, light blue hair and large orange eyes wears a green and black checkered vest over a white shirt and a red tie. Behind her, a boy with short blue hair and a girl with long pink hair and red eyes are visible. The background is a warm, golden glow.
<p><b>REACHING YOU</b></p> <p>Author: Karuho Shiina Volumes: 30 Theme: romantic comedy, drama Recommended age: 6°</p>	 An illustration from the manga Reaching You. On the left, a girl with long blonde hair is shown in profile, looking towards a boy with short blonde hair who is holding a pink flower. On the right, a boy with short brown hair is looking at a girl with long brown hair and bangs. The background is a soft, light green and white.
<p><b>GOKICHA</b></p> <p>Author: Rui Tamachi Volumes: 5 Theme: comedy Recommended age: 1° - 6°</p>	 An illustration from the manga Gokicha. It shows a small, black, doll-like character with large white eyes and a black mouth, being held in the palm of a large white hand. The character has a sad expression. The background is white with vertical black lines. The Japanese characters 'もじ' (mōji) are written at the bottom.
<p><b>TOKYO GHOUL</b></p> <p>Author: Sui Ishida Volumes: 14 Theme: dark fantasy, horror, suspense Recommended age: 6°</p>	 An illustration from the manga Tokyo Ghoul. It shows a young man with black hair and a red eye, looking down with a serious expression. He is wearing a black suit and tie. The background is dark with the title '東京 GHOUL 喰種' (Tokyo Ghoul: Re) written in large, stylized characters.

Figure 11. Commercially successful entertainment works

## World Classic Literature And Essays

In this group we include works with a mainly didactic character, in which cultural, historical themes predominate and which probably have a greater place within the primary curriculum, especially in Block 5: literary education. According to Alfons Moliné, quoted by Guiral, «the edu-manga is living proof that every branch of knowledge is adaptable to the historical medium and, at the same time, completely invalidates the prejudices that some still hold about the supposedly low educational value of the comics.» (2007: 134)

<p><b>GON</b></p> <p>Author: Masashi Tanaka Volumes: 7 Theme: adventure, humor, drama Recommended age: 1° y 2°</p>	
<p><b>DORAEMON'S WONDERFUL EXPLORATIONS</b></p> <p>Author: Fujiko F. Fujio Volumes: 1 Theme: adventures Recommended age: 1° y 2°</p>	
<p><b>PRÍNCIPE GENJI'S STORY</b></p> <p>Author: Waki Yamato Volumes: 13 Theme: romance Recommended age: 6°</p>	

<p><b>GREAT HISTORY FIGURES</b> (Biographic collection)</p> <p>Author: several Volumes: 40 Theme: biografía Recommended age: 5° y 6°</p>	 An illustration of two young boys. The boy on the left is wearing a brown jacket and blue pants, holding a yellow model airplane. The boy on the right is wearing a white shirt, green pants, and a green cap, looking at the airplane with interest.
<p><b>CHAMPIONS: OLIVER Y BENJI</b></p> <p>Author: Yōichi Takahashi Volumes: 37 Theme: sports Recommended age: 3°-6°</p>	 A close-up illustration of a young man with black hair, wearing a blue and white athletic outfit with a red and green stripe. He has a determined and slightly angry expression, with his fists clenched.
<p><b>ROMAN HOT SPRINGS</b></p> <p>Author: Mari Yamazaki Volumes: 6 Theme: comedia, history Recommended age: 4°- 6°</p>	 A black and white illustration of a muscular man, likely a Roman figure, wearing a red cape. He is standing with a serious expression. To his left, there is vertical Japanese text: "マリアム・ローマ".
<p><b>PLANETS</b></p> <p>Author: Makoto Yukimura Volumes: 4 Theme: science fiction, drama, romance Recommended age: 6°</p>	 An illustration of an astronaut in a full space suit floating in space. The Earth's blue and white clouds are visible in the background.

Figure 12. Essays and classic world literature

## **4. Conclusions**

To conclude our work, we think that this work proposal may seem risky at the beginning and that it may raise doubts. However, we believe faithfully in the benefits it could bring to our classroom, especially in profit of reading motivation. As we have analyzed throughout our project, ignorance and prejudice are two of our main enemies, but they are not impediments to try, if we know how, to value and correctly catalog our choices.

Finally, regarding the limitations of our work, we have to comment that this is a proposal that has not been taken to the classroom yet, and it would be very interesting to evaluate the acceptance and evolution of the students with the manga that we would include in the library of the center. However, we can only count on the data and statistics proposed and the opinion that we have up to now about this type of reading by society.

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## INFLUENCES OF THE ANIMATOR RAY HARRYHAUSEN IN THE DESIGN OF FANTASTIC CREATURES FOR VIDEOGAMES

Manuel Ferri Gandía



Figure. 1. Ray Harryhausen (1920-2013)

How to describe someone like Ray Harryhausen? In cinematographic field he is considered a craftsman of special effects in fantastic films genre; for others, he was a «creator of monsters»<sup>1</sup>, a «stop-motion magician»<sup>2</sup> or a «master of illusion»<sup>3</sup>. He simply defined

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<sup>1</sup> This is the title of the book (in Spanish, creator of monsters) edited by Maia ediciones in 2009 on the occasion of an exhibition on Harryhausen at the Luis Seoane Foundation in La Coruña, Spain.

<sup>2</sup> According to the cover of the Scifiworld magazine from March 2009.

<sup>3</sup> According to the article «Maestros del fantástico» from the magazine Dirigido por of June 1999 written by Antonio José Navarro

himself as «an animator and a filmmaker»<sup>4</sup>. Throughout his thirty years of career he breathed life through the technique of frame-by-frame animation to more than fifty creatures belonging to different mythologies and worlds. From his hand emerged the imaginative cast of *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (Nathan Juran, 1958), *Jason and the Argonauts* (Don Chaffey, 1963) or *Clash of the Titans* (Desmond Davis, 1981). Harryhausen did not direct any of the sixteen films in which he was involved, but his productions tend to be considered of his own rather than a work of the directors themselves, as he was totally involved in the creative process of them. His influence on the subsequent fantastic cinema has been recognized by filmmakers such as Steven Spielberg, James Cameron or Terry Gilliam, who each inherited in his style that unusual way of telling stories.<sup>5</sup> During his active career he was never valued enough by the industry, but finally the Hollywood Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences recognized his talent by granting him in 1993 an honorary Oscar for his contribution to cinema industry.<sup>6</sup>

It all started one afternoon in 1933, when Harryhausen, thirteen years old at the time, attended the Grauman Chinese Theater in California at the premiere of *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933) with his aunt.<sup>7</sup> There, the prehistoric creatures animated by Willis O'Brien —his future master and mentor— impressed him in such a way that he left the projection room convinced of his future profession. He learned painting, drawing, script, sculpture and everything that could help him to build fantastic worlds populated by the most amazing creatures. And it was precisely King Kong, the immortal O'Brien's creature who, forty-eight years later, became a revulsive of an industry that at that time was in full effervescence: video games. Shigeru Miyamoto, current designer at the videogame company Nintendo,

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<sup>4</sup> (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 8).

<sup>5</sup> A recent documentary, *Ray Harryhausen, Special Effects Titan* (Gilles Penso, 2011), deals in depth with this influence through the statements of these and other well-known filmmakers.

<sup>6</sup> This is the honorary Gordon E. Sawyer Award. Harryhausen, surprisingly, was never nominated during his active professional career as independent animator.

<sup>7</sup> (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 17)

created *Donkey Kong* in 1981, a platform game where we have to rescue a damsel kidnapped by a huge gorilla, a character clearly inspired by the classic movie.<sup>8</sup> This title for arcades became a milestone in the history of the medium, reaching enormous impact in the same year in which precisely Ray Harryhausen premiered his latest film, *Clash of the Titans*, after which he would begin his withdrawal from the industry.

Miyamoto is an independent creator, and his video games capture the experiences that marked him as a child, when he played alone among the landscapes that surrounded his family home, treasuring experiences that later reflected in another of his famous sagas, the *Legend of Zelda*.<sup>9</sup> Here we explore dungeons, discover secret passages and fight against fantastic creatures, characteristics that are all present in Harryhausen's movies, which closely links the work of both authors.

Starting from this connection, and despite the fact that none of the animator's films have been officially adapted to a videogame,<sup>10</sup> we will try to expand the relationship between that format and the cinema taking as a starting point a selection of fantastic creatures; we will observe how the way in which the animator embodied them in his films has taken root in the popular imagination, seeking its imprint mainly in the titles from the first decades of the digital entertainment industry, where it is easier to manage the vast catalog of publications. We will determine that the influences, as Ray Harryhausen pointed out, can «cross the boundaries between different art forms».<sup>11</sup> The *God of War* videogame saga is a perfect example of this:

I was heavily influenced —and I'm sure I'm not alone— by Ray Harryhausen and his work. That was always something that appealed to me

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<sup>8</sup> The president of Universal, Sid Sheinberg, sued Nintendo in 1982 for considering that *Donkey Kong* was a version of *King Kong*. The demand was dismissed, as reported in the book *The Great History of Video Games* (see bibliography).

<sup>9</sup> A saga that already has forty-two titles.

<sup>10</sup> Several digital media echoed in 2006 the intention of the company Mindfire Entertainment to involve Harryhausen in the creation of video games based on his films. In the end, however, there was no such agreement.

<sup>11</sup> (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2005: 19).

and something I wanted to play with. [...] *Clash Of The Titans* was an extremely flawed, wonderful movie – When you're ten years old and watching it, it's just, like... wow. That was the summer of '81 when *Clash Of The Titans* came out, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* had come out, and when you look at *God Of War*, there's clearly a great deal of influence from both of those films. It's like superheroes – it's totally ready to go for videogame creation, with all these amazing powers, monsters, abilities and locations. And very few people had trodden that territory at that time." (2013: 133).

These words belong to video game designer David Jaffé, corroborating that the film about Perseus and Medusa was one of the sources of inspiration for his creation *God of War* (SCE Santa Monica, 2005), the wild and frenetic interactive experience that narrates the epic revenge of Kratos —a Spartan with problems of anger control— against the Gods of Olympus. The saga, which already has seven instalments set in Greek mythology and one in the Nordic, recreated along the same the most varied fauna of mythological beasts, making the legendary adventures —although under a different perspective than before— returned to be fully current, adapted to a new audience whose filmography of Harryhausen might be unfamiliar.

Cory Barlog, the director *God of War II* (SCE Santa Monica, 2007), also made of this sequel a continuous reference to the filmmaker; if in the first part we subdued all the heads of the hydra and mortally wounded the minotaur, here we will fight against griffins while we sail the skies over Pegasus, dodge the tentacles of the kraken and collect Cyclops eyes; Barlog would also have Harry Hamlin, who had played Perseus in *Clash of the Titans*, to put voice to the same character in the game; a wink reserved for the most faithful followers of the film and its author. «What if Paul Verhoeven<sup>12</sup> had directed *Clash of the Titans*?» (2013: 131); that was the question Jaffé used to convey to his team the idea of what would be his new and most recognized video game. Perhaps —analyzing the tone of Harryhausen's filmography, little given to the truculence— the excessive violent charge that Kratos gives off

<sup>12</sup> Director, among other films, of *Robocop* (1987) and *Starship Troopers* (1997),

would not be to the liking of the animator. But if we adjust to the visual, the *God of War* saga is an illustrated encyclopedia of forced enjoyment for lovers of its bestiary.



Figure. 2. Two moments of the video game *God of War II*, with the leading character in front of the Colossus of Rhodes and the kraken, respectively.

Next, we will observe that the references to the work of Harryhausen can be found in many other titles and that, like gentle rain, have soaked the collective imagination of several generations of programmers.

## 1. The museum of the extraordinary

In his narrations, Harryhausen gave prominence to a unicorn Cyclops with lamb legs, a squadron of disturbing armed skeletons, an amazon Medusa with snake tail and a Hindu goddess of metal with multiple arms, and everything was assimilated with amazement by the audience. This was the capacity of the animator to trap us with his «sense of wonder», that characteristic children quality for which we are able to believe as real that extraordinary thing that we contemplate on the screen. Catching the best of each world is one of the common characteristics of his filmography, mixing creatures from different mythologies in the same space; even he chose morphological elements of several of them and combined them into one, a practice very common in video games, where the creation of visually attractive enemies can be key to the success of the product. Let's go back a few decades, when

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characterized by their graphic violence.

the arcades dominated the world and let´s walk among their furniture in search of the first member of this unusual family.

### 1.1. Keep an eye on this character

The video game *Ghost'n Goblins* (Tokuro Fujiwara, 1985) settled the mechanics of the action and adventure genre of the arcade, raising the bar in the artistic sense; in it, we control Sir Arthur, a medieval knight surprised by the demons of hell in the middle of a cemetery; his goal is to reach the fortress of the lord of darkness Astaroth, where his beloved maiden is kidnapped.

Among the minions of the great devil we find more or less veiled references to characters from Harryhausen; we will repeatedly confront a winged and reddish gargoyle as insistent and annoying as the homunculus from *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (Gordon Hessler, 1973) and the harpies from *Jason and the Argonauts*; a walking skeleton dressed in rags will emerge from the ground upon noticing our presence, and an ogre in armor—identified as «unicorn» in its version for Nintendo Entertainment System—will try to block our advancement more times than desired; we will observe in the latter that he has a horn on his forehead, a single eye and pointed ears, remembering the Cyclops from *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, although here he lacks lamb legs, a characteristic that Harryhausen had rescued for this film from a sculpture of 1939 that was to serve as a model for an unrealized project entitled *Daphnis and Chloe*. In *Ghost'n Goblins* the creature is gray and not orange; however, in the cover art of the game for the Famicom<sup>13</sup> console, its color is precisely orange, skin tone of the original film. Later, the saga had a spiritual sequel, *Maximo* (Capcom, 2001), a version that enhanced the comical of this world of ghosts and living corpses. His character designer, Susumu Matshusita, revealed his influences in 2012 in an interview with the digital Spanish magazine *Meristation*:

They are diverse, in the first place could be the animation from Disney, along with the classic Spanish painting. I have to mention the influence that Ray

<sup>13</sup> Japanese version of Nintendo Entertainment System released in 1983.

Harryhausen's animatronic works have had on me, which so many fantastic creatures have left in films like *Jason and the Argonauts*.<sup>14</sup>

The artists of *Wonder Boy III, the Dragon's Trap* (Sega, 1989), chose a design similar to the ogre of *Ghost'n Goblins*, of greenish complexion this time and dressed like a caveman; his ears and teeth are sharp, and a helical horn protrudes from his forehead. The truth is that it is not a detailed version of Harryhausen's Cyclops but, observing discarded sketches of the filmmaker, we discovered the coincidence; the initial design of the character did not have lamb legs, but it was a giant armed with a truncheon, dressed in skins and moving with human legs. This is shown for example in a charcoal drawing of 1957 with a fight between Cyclops or in another where one of them faces a snake; also in a watercolor, dated in 1971, where it appears emerging from a cave and that, like the previous one, does not include a horn on the forehead. Both designs were discarded for the Cyclops from *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and the centaur from *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, respectively, which has not prevented both representations from becoming as recognizable as the definitive one; proof of this is the Cyclops from *Dragon Quest* (Yuri Horii, 1986)<sup>15</sup>, a long series whose designs were made by Akira Toriyama, famous for being the creator of the 1984 manga *Dragon Ball*. As far as the aforementioned creature is concerned, it is undoubtedly one of its most sympathetic versions, invariably appearing throughout the saga with bluish complexion, its characteristic horn and baton in hand.

The Cyclops from *Final Fantasy XIV: a Realm Reborn* (Square Enix, 2013), adds more details to the set; apart from the horn on the forehead and pointed ears, we observed a lion's tail, three-fingered hand, a club with spikes and—in this case, yes—the peculiar lower satyr extremities; equally striking is the two-headed Cyclops Eyedol by *Killer Instinct* (Rare, 1994), or rather we should say giant Cormoran, because it looks more like a version of this enemy in the movie *Jack, the Giant Killer* (Nathan Juran, 1962), which in

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<sup>14</sup> We do not know if it is a translation error, but here the designer refers to Harryhausen's technique as «animatronics», ignoring that it is stop-motion.

<sup>15</sup> The *Dragon Quest* series was born in 1986 and was released for the eight-bit Nintendo console. To date, more than fifty titles have been published, although the numbered series goes by the number eleven.

turn was a copy of *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*; in *Dragon's Dogma* (Capcom, 2012) it was decided to eliminate the horn and lamb legs, adding in its place long fangs at both ends of the jaw. In *God of War* the beasts also resemble the aforementioned discarded design of Harryhausen's Cyclops, that is, without satyr legs—this creature, the satyr, has its own intervention in the game—and without horn. Such an appendix was never a characteristic of the lineage in this series; however, it was taken into account in one of the several versions that were handled at the beginning of production and that were finally dismissed.<sup>16</sup>

The appearance of the Cyclops in *Xena: Warrior Princess* (Electronic Arts, 1999) is undoubtedly inspired by the peculiar Cyclops from *Sinbad*; shares even in the skin color, although we can't confirm if he has satyr legs, because only the top of the beast appears displayed on the screen; where it appears in full body is in the strategy game *Age of Mythology* (Bruce Shelley, 2002) and in another for arcades entitled *The Astyanax* (Tokuhiro Takemori, 1989). Both titles respect each and every one of the characteristics of the original filmic design, making evident what its model has been. *Age of Mythology* uses Greek, Egyptian and Norwegian mythologies to set the mood for their combats, incorporating creatures and characters according to their origin; *The Astyanax*, for its part, mixes ancient Greece with the adventures of Conan the Barbarian<sup>17</sup> and the Arthurian myth, incorporating creatures without order; apart from skeletons and harpies, it presents an «amputated» version of the statue of the goddess Kali from *The Golden Voyage*, with four and not six arms as in the film; in *The Astyanax* there is even room for the universe of the illustrator H. R. Giger, because the enemy from the end of the game is none other than a «xenomorph»<sup>18</sup>, which ends up rounding off this sympathetic pastiche.

The unicorn Cyclops also enjoyed excellent company in *Dragon's Crown* (George Kamitani, 2013), an aesthetic delight where these

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<sup>16</sup> In the *God of War* game extras we can see these discarded designs. Specifically in the section titled Character Graveyard.

<sup>17</sup> Character created by the American writer Robert E. Howard in 1932.

<sup>18</sup> «Xenomorph» is how they refer to the extraterrestrial biological being that appears in the *Alien* saga (Ridley Scott, 1979).

grotesque characters form an army with many of the creatures from the Harryhausen´s gallery; a reduced version of Talos joins the fight at a certain time, as well as the kraken and a dragon, but also other old acquaintances of the animator not as well known as the saber-toothed tiger —seen in *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (Sam Wanamaker, 1977)— and a giant octopus, like the one from *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (Robert Gordon, 1955).



Figure. 3. In the center, the Cyclops from *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. All around him, creatures from Blizzard's *Warcraft II*, 1995 (1), *Dragon's Crown* (2), *Ghost'n Goblins* (3), *The Astyanax* (4), *Wonder Boy III, The Dragon's Trap* (5), *The King of Dragons* (6), *Dragon's Dogma Online* from Capcom, 2015 (7), *The Quest* from Redshift, 2006 (8) and *Killer Instinct Season 3* from Iron Galaxy Studios, 2016 (9).

## 1.2. The bastard sons of the hydra

Mythological legends and the ancient East, origin of all kinds of wonders but also of monsters; and there is no enemy that moves with greater ease in both worlds than the living skeleton, a character closely linked to the career of Harryhausen from his modest beginnings, as they were part of the star cast of the puppet shows he organized in his

youth for his family and friends;<sup>19</sup> it was not until *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* where the skeleton reached the top; and never better said, because the first sketch of the story was a drawing of Sinbad and this enemy on top of a spiral staircase, as it would finally be reflected in the film. Later, its fame multiplied —by seven— in *Jason and the Argonauts*, and its presence would come to be much sought after among video game programmers in later decades for its easy adaptation to all kinds of settings and for its tremendous and truculent appeal; it is the same impassive face death that claims us; Harryhausen himself recognized that the most terrible thing about facing a skeleton was precisely knowing that it was already dead (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 243).

These creatures have flaunted their decrepitude carrying sword and shield in infinity of video games; in most cases they are common enemies like in *Dungeons & Dragons: Shadow over Mystara* (Capcom, 1996), *Dark Seal* (Data East, 1990) or *Cadash* (Taito, 1989), sometimes they surpass us in armament and size as in *Legend of Hero Tonma* (Irem, 1989) or *Dark Souls III* (From Software, 2016); they choose pirate costumes like in *Killer Instinct* or *Maximo*, and a few of them, why not, wear bermuda shorts like the skeleton from *Mega Twins* (Capcom, 1990) or a hat like the enemy of *Wonder Boy III, the Dragon's Trap*; but they are the skeletons of the Barbarian fantasy *Golden Axe* (Makoto Uchida, 1989) those most identify with the cinematographic ones. In this story of revenge, the mission of the heroes is interrupted several times by the sudden appearance of these emaciated beings, who cross abruptly the surface of the dry land at strategic moments, ready for combat. Unlike titles like *The King of Dragons* or *The Astyanax*, where these beings are legion, here the skeletons are shown in very specific points, but a certain strategy is needed to finish them; if they catch you, they are able to leave our life bar shivering with a couple of rapiers. They are as hard to crack as their film counterparts, and although we can reduce them

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<sup>19</sup> In the book *The Art of Ray Harryhausen* the author tells us that as a child he premiered a play for a Halloween festival that included two skeleton thread puppets. As he relates, it was his first attempt to bring skeletons to life, anticipating those animated by *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* nineteen years later (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2005: 31).

with our weapon, the best and quickest thing is to push them down a cliff. Jason himself made good use of this advice.

With another gesture to this sinister battalion, are conceived the bony soldiers from *The Curse of Yssios* (2016), not only because of their characterization but also because of the way in which they pounce on us, raising their steel and emitting a shriek, as invoked by the King Aetes himself, the character from the Jason movie; Juan Carlos Becerra, under the nickname of Locomalito, is the creator of this video game; the programmer —whose childhood passed in the eighties— detected the special thing that was in the Harryhausen cinema, attracted as well as by no other because of its special effects and its sense of adventure; like the filmmaker, he likes to work with a reduced human team, and that also makes his titles —of classic mechanics and appearance— something really personal. As to all of us who educated ourselves with the master's fantasies, Becerra never thought it would be time to say goodbye to him. In one of his last works, *Gaurodan* (2013), included an appreciation in the final credits to Harryhausen, who died the same year of the game's launch.

In my games, Ray's influence is always present, sometimes consciously and sometimes without my knowing it. You have Talos in *Issyos*, the double-headed vulture in *Maldita Castilla*, the giant egg in *Gaurodan* ... But in a less direct way, I always try to print the magic of those scenes in the scenes of my games, when a monster appears, or when some magic element.<sup>20</sup>

In *Yssios* the monsters and magical elements to which he refers are represented in the form of a five-headed hydra —in the style of those depicted in Greek vessels— of giant scorpions, Polyphemus, the minotaur, Medusa and the aforementioned Talos, which here he lacks weapons but in its presentation he adopts the pose of the original filmic and turns its head following the hero's footsteps, initiating then a chase.

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<sup>20</sup> From a personal interview granted in 2017 by Juan Carlos Becerra.

Let's go back to the lands of the East, where *Prince of Persia* takes place, a video game created by Jordan Mechner that supposed a revolution in 1989, not only for its mechanics based on puzzles and agility, but also for the animations made with the technique of rotoscope<sup>21</sup>, that did nothing but enhance the cinematographic development inspired, as *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*, in the stories told in *Arabian Nights*. This time we control the prince of the title by a series of dungeons full of traps in which an evil vizier has imprisoned us; at a certain moment, a skeleton will recompose itself before our astonished eyes, and we will have to fight with him in a duel to sabers, scene that recreates the moment in which Harryhausen's Sinbad fights against the skeleton revived by the dark sorcerer Sokurah. As in the original sequence, we can not cause any damage to the enemy and we will precipitate their bones to the void.

The skeletons from *Myth, History in the Making* (System 3, 1989)<sup>22</sup> can be reduced with lunges; the hero, a time traveler caught between the universes of Greek, Nordic and Egyptian mythology, has to cut off the head of one of these beings —action that is shown in the film about Jason during the final battle— so that fall into a lake of fire, from which a demon will emerge<sup>23</sup>; then await us the chimera, a dragon with three heads and the most high-profile of the three Gorgon sisters, who certainly bothers that someone looks at her.

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<sup>21</sup> Animation technique that consists of drawing on real actors' filming. A representative example is the work of Ralph Bakshi in *Fire and Ice* (1983).

<sup>22</sup> In the Commodore Amiga version, because in the other versions for eight-bit computers the mechanics are different.

<sup>23</sup> In the version for Spectrum computers the skeletons are dropped from above, as does in the *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* at the moment when Sokurah throw on it a spell of life.



Figure. 4. In the center, the skeleton from *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* and *Jason and the Argonauts*. All around them, the ones from Jon Van Caneghem's *Heroes of Might and Magic II*, 1996 (1), *Magic Sword* from Capcom, 1990 (2), *Cadash* from Taito, 1890 (3), *Dungeons and Dragons, Shadow over Mystara* from Capcom, 1996 (4), *Rastan Saga II* from Taito, 1989 (5), *Mega Twins* (6), *Legend of Hero Tonma* (7), *The King of Dragons* (8) and *Golden Axe* (9).

### 1.3. Femmes fatales

The tormented and dreaded Medusa —heart of *Clash of the Titans*—<sup>24</sup> is one of the most charismatic enemies in fantasy video games. Her myth is well known: she was cruelly cursed by the Greek goddess Athena and turned into a repellent being with serpents like hair and devilish eyes, who turned into stone anyone who dared to contemplate them. Harryhausen conceived her in the 1981 film as something repulsive and scaly, which moved with her bow and arrows aided by her snake body. Sibylline and dangerous, is a character that allows a multitude of artistic interpretations; but as we will discover, the design that has become canonical is the one that drew the animator for what was his last feature film.

<sup>24</sup> Harryhausen sought funding for the film using the character of Medusa as a claim (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2005: 116).

One of the first appearances in video games of this creature was in *Fights of the Titan* (Epoch, 1983), a title with very basic mechanics, programmed for toys whose screens worked with diodes of light. Apart from making a play on words with the title to avoid copyright problems, the artists placed a serpentine and archer Medusa as the first enemy; her image was also included in the illustration of the box, where she descends by a stairway before the cornered Perseus. To promote this small and striking amusement machine, the company filmed a commercial where we see an actor dressed as a hero, with a toga similar to the one used in the film, swiping at what to our western eyes looks like a fighting Mexican contender. All in all, there is a clear intention to link the product with the Harryhausen film.

With bow and snake body, the Gorgon was drawn for *Battle of Olympus* (Imagineer, 1988), and a year later it repeated appearance in the third part of the *Castlevania* series, entitled *Dracula's Curse* (Hitoshi Akamatsu, 1989), where she throws snakes instead of arrows and emits equally harmful rays through his eyes. She is shown with the breasts exposed, as in the movie, but the players could only notice this detail in the Japanese versions of the cartridge, because in the rest was victim of a timorous censorship and her curves were softened to the point of changing gender. A decade before, Harryhausen had been less conservative in his cinematic vision, modeling Medusa with his naked torso, as he considered vulgar the first option of cover it with a top (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 272).

Subsequently, the moral control of the corporations was somewhat more lax, so that Medusa boasted of its scaly nudity in titles such as *Portrait of Ruin* (Satoshi Kushibuchi, 2006), *Rondo of Blood* (Toru Hagihara, 1993) or *Symphony of the Night* (idem, 1997), although in the latter case it had a trick, because she is strategically placed on its back. The case of *Super Castlevania IV* (Masahiro Ueno, 1991) is also curious since, unlike in *Castlevania III*, Harryhausen's design was chosen here after discarding a creature in the shape of a snake man.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> You can briefly see the character in the minute 00:15 of the video *Super Castlevania IV* Promo Trailer (Very Early Beta). Available at <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tE\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tE_)

But Medusa, although still enjoying star status in this languishing Konami's saga, has no exclusive contract with the company, and has intervened in the series *Titan Quest* (Brian Sullivan, 2006) or in *Age of Mythology: The Titans* (Ensemble Studios, 2003), including in the design for both titles even the characteristic rattle of the tail from the cinematographic Medusa; in *Dragon's Crown* she does not use the bow, but she uses the rattle; in *Castle Crashers* (The Behemoth, 2006) the designers replaced the rattlesnake by a boot, and in *Xena, Warrior Princess* she shares scenes with her sisters Stheno and Euryale, being the first of them one of the most remembered enemies of *God of War II*, where moves supporting the arms to advance, as it appears in her first sequence in *Clash of the Titans*. It is nevertheless striking that in spite of the fact that in the *God of War* saga all the Gorgons share the snake tail as a common element, in the first design it was not included; initially, she was designed standing up, with a low dress like Morticia Addams, the character from the comics created by Charles Addams in the thirties.<sup>26</sup>

And from Medusa we passed to another fabulous and armed female from the Harryhausen gallery: Kali, the statue of the Hindu deity that comes to life through a spell from the sorcerer Koura in *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, which also has six armed arms with two sabers. Apart from his intervention in the arcade game *The Astyanax* (see chapter 1.1.), she has exercised his many arms in adventures set in *Arabian Nights* as *Arabian Magic* (Taito) and *Arabian Fight* (Sega), both launched in arcades in 1992. In the first of the titles doubled by three the size of the heroes and she is a polychrome figure, but like in the movie, wakes up from a stony dream to attack us; in the second she is more similar to the celluloid version in both proportions and design, changing its name to «Six Hands». In these adventures we will fly in magic carpets and we will face common enemies like skeletons; in the case of *Arabian Magic*, a roc bird<sup>27</sup> and a cephalopod that could well be the one from *Mysterious Island* (Cyd Endfield, 1961) —another Harryhausen film—, will have their minute of glory. For its part, in *Arabian Fight* will make an appearance of an archer Medusa in two variants: red and silver.

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[gFGaYSsM](#) [Last access: 12/7/2017].

<sup>26</sup> See note 16.

<sup>27</sup> Mammoth bird belonging to Persian mythology. Harryhausen would endow him with two heads for *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*.

But the warlike yearnings of Kali are not unleashed only in past times; in the present, he continues to guard the ruins of ancient civilizations against the invasion of grave robbers, although now the player has firearms to try to reduce her effigy to dust; in *Krypt Killer* (Kuniaki Kakuwa, 1995), a statue without name but similar in appearance and resources to Sinbad's adversary—even the swords emerge directly from his hands, as in *The Astyanax*— shares again the limelight with a feisty Medusa with serpent body, here commanding an army of skeletons, rats and demons; in *Tomb Raider III* (Core Design, 1998) this enemy is distributed among the ruins of a Hindu temple, awakening from the stony dream to defend her territory from the longing for fortune and glory of Lara Croft, a well-known aristocratic seeker of treasures. It appears under the name of Shiva, and not Kali as in the movie, but it is not a mistake; Harryhausen actually opted for *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* to represent the goddess Kali under the less grotesque aspect of his dark reflex Shiva, reducing his cannibal nature (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 227) and adding elements of another Hindu goddess, Durga, warrior of multiple arms (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2005: 180).

In *Metal Gear Solid IV: Guns of the Patriots* (Hideo Kojima, 2008), one of the most recognized instalment of this veteran saga of tactical espionage, the designers chose to adapt Kali to their particular technological environment by designing an enemy called Screaming Mantis; she attacks coupled to a device of multiple bionic arms and could well be defined as the cyborg version of the Hindu deity; speaking of heterogeneous mixtures, what would happen if we shake the designs of Kali and Medusa in the same shaker? We would get Lady Vashj, a quirky six-armed Gorgon archer, creature that will face us in *Warcraft III, The Frozen Throne* (Blizzard, 2003).



Figure. 5. In the center, the Harryhausen's Medusa and Kali. All around them, characters from *Castlevania III*, *Dracula's Curse* (1), *God of War II* (2), *Dragon's Crown* (3), *Tomb Raider III* (4), *Arabian Fight* (5), *The Astyanax* (6), *Arabian Magic* (7), *Warcraft III: The Frozen Throne* (8), *Super Castlevania IV* (9), *Fights of the Titan* (10), *Fighting Fantasy* (11) and *God of War* (12).

## 2. Gods against insects

The adaptation of the legendary story of David against Goliath was one of the many unrealized projects we know from Harryhausen, fascinated by the unequal confrontations between gods and humans.<sup>28</sup> In the prologue of *God of War II*, we take part in the battle between the Spartan general Kratos against the very Colossus of Rhodes (see figure 2); this wonder of the ancient world, now a metallic enemy, is a tribute to the Talos seen in *Jason and the Argonauts* and one of the best examples of what in video games is called «final boss», which is nothing but a character, creature or machine that stands out above the rest and faces the hero in strategic points of the story, causing epic strifes and unleashing the climax. It is not by law greater than the other enemies, but notably more powerful. Sometimes it will seem impossible to shoot

<sup>28</sup> In 1948 Harryhausen made two drawings on this biblical story and came to write a four-page outline (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 286).

down, as in the case of the guardian of Rhodes, but even Achilles had his weak point; if in *Jason and the Argonauts* the key to beating the giant Talos was precisely in his ankle, in *God of War II* we will have to enter under the copper skin of the statue to annul its central mechanism, located in the head.

Something less threatening is the mothership from *Phoenix* (Taito, 1980), one of the first final bosses of video games; its design was not too striking due to the sparse memory of the computers of yesteryear, which did not allow great boasts, but with the passage of time and technological progress, the players would face more sophisticated monsters, reaching these to greatly exceed in size the protagonist; we have as an example the beast who throw heads from *Altered Beast* (Makoto Uchida, 1988) or Poseidon and his sea-horses from *God of War III* (Stig Assmusen, 2010), whose extension our sight cannot reach. There is also a type of video game where the continuous confrontation against final bosses dominates the mechanics: the so-called Boss Rush, a term that could be translated as «avalanche of bosses». *Shadow of the Colossus* (Fumito Ueda, 2005) stands out in this section, because it tells the story of a young man who has to eliminate sixteen gigantic and mystical creatures if he wants to resurrect his beloved. So majestic and peaceful are our objectives, that during the game we will come to consider the moral dilemma of why we should submit in that way these beings that do not entail a natural threat; a debate in which Harryhausen himself had contributed his point of view, since he never labeled his fantastic creations as «monsters» (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 133); on the contrary, they are basically helpless creatures confronted by circumstances.

Finally, if we analyze the staging of the classic film sequences between humans and huge creatures, we will see that they are designed taking into account the restrictions of the stop-motion of that time, that is, they used a few limited resources of staging to fit real image and animated creatures later. What the programmers from the early eighties did was to add interactivity to those sequences, sharing

similar visual and framing characteristics.<sup>29</sup> If for example we choose a screenshot of the encounter with the first final boss from the game *Ghouls'n Ghosts* (Tokuro Fujiwara, 1987) and compare it with a still from *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* with the hero in front of the Cyclops, we will perceive a revealing similarity in the composition and scale of both planes, connecting that generation of programmers and small studios with the sets of Morningside, the production studio that belonged to Harryhausen and his inseparable partner Charles H. Schneer.



Figure. 6. Comparison between an image from the videogame *Ghouls'n Ghosts* (left) and one from the movie *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (right).

### 3. Two don't fight if one doesn't want

One day without much work, back in the first decade of the twentieth century, Willis O'Brien, employee of a marbles shop, began to play with a friend imagining fights with figures of dinosaurs made of clay.<sup>30</sup> So revealing was that experience that time after would find the way to make the figures move themselves—the stop-motion—and became an expert organizer of combats between imaginary creatures. We owe to him the animated squabbles from *The Lost World* (Harry O. Hoyt, 1925) and the fabulous *King Kong*, essential films for what was

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<sup>29</sup> On page 187 of the first volume of *Una historia de la Edad de Oro del software español* published in Spain in 2012 by Create Space, we read: «at that time (the designers of the eighties) did not consider the visual aspect of their games according to artistic parameters, they did it out of pure pragmatism».

<sup>30</sup> (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 9).

his young pupil, Harryhausen; he also turned part of his filmography into an arena where a Cyclops and a dragon, a triceratops and a ceratosaurus or a Venusian alien and an elephant were able to resolve their differences.

These sequences were recorded in the memory of a generation of young programmers and artists, and consequently splashed the game industry with characters from different classes, breeds or mythological origins; thus, we witnessed unexpected duels: by sword between a bluish snake woman and a human warrior in *Fighting Fantasy* (Data East, 1989), in *kaiju eiga*<sup>31</sup> style between a giant beetle and a golem in *King of the Monsters* (SNK, 1991) or in free battle mode between a five-headed hydra and a minotaur in *Mutant Fighter* (Data East, 1992). Regarding to death fights in prehistoric landscapes, it is fair to highlight *Dino Rex* (Taito, 1992) and *Primal Rage* (Atari, 1994) from the rest, since they contain antediluvian latex creatures in stop-motion animation, whose stills were later digitized and integrated into the program. *Primal Rage* is superior in quality and handling, but both games reveal Harryhausen from every frame, opting for a traditional technique instead of the computer generated animation that caused so much damage among the craftsmen's guild after the premiere of *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993).<sup>32</sup> *Clayfighters* (Interplay, 1993) also showed an old-school animation, although this time using plasticine and a great sense of humor, choosing a very unorthodox gallery, with a snowman and a Valkyrie among the characters to choose.

Outside of the fighting genre, but also played by friendly hand-modeled figures, the Pac-Man-like *Trog* (Midway, 1990) stands out, which was also presented under the «Playmation» label in allusion to the terms used to advertise

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<sup>31</sup> Kaiju Eiga is the name of a Japanese film genre whose literal translation is «monster movie». *Gojira* (Ishiro Honda, 1956) is its most representative title, starring the creature Godzilla. It is worth mentioning that *Gojira* was shot following the success of another Harryhausen film, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (Eugène Lourié, 1953).

<sup>32</sup> Advanced already the production of *Jurassic Park*, it was decided to replace the special effects in stop-motion by computer generated characters. That caused a furor in the industry, but it was the beginning of the end of the artisan animators.

the Harryhausen films, like «Dynarama» or «Dynamation»;<sup>33</sup> here, some cute plasticine dinosaurs must collect eggs scattered across the stage while dodging the cyclopean man from the caves that gives title to the game, Trog, also name of the primitive being from *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger*.



Figure. 7. Images from the videogames *Primal Rage* (top left) and *Dino Rex* (bottom left) compared with images from the films *One Million Years BC* (Don Chaffey, 1966) (top right) and *Valley of Gwangi* (Jim O'Connolly, 1969) (bottom right).

And we finish this section citing *Magic and Mayhem* (Mythos Games, 1998), a game of fantasy and strategy that features careful introductions and animated characters frame by frame where there is no lack of goblins, griffins, skeletons or chimeras; it was necessary to highlight this work for another important reason: the artist behind

<sup>33</sup> Producer Charles H. Schnee thought that invented words that defined the cinematic experience of the stop-motion effects would be a good advertising claim. Actually, they did not mean anything, but they referred to terms like «dynamism», «animation» and «dioramas» (Harryhausen, Dalton, 2003: 121).

these works is Alan Friswell, restorer in the Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation, created in 1986 with the purpose of preserving the animator's legacy. Here there is no possible chance: it was a meaning tribute to the now deceased master.

#### 4. Conclusion

Two terms that seemed far from deserving an analysis of their connection—that is, Harryhausen and video games—have revealed themselves as two almost indivisible elements. We would even dare to say that the titles that most triumphed in the late seventies, like *Space Invaders* (Taito, 1978) or *Galaxian* (Namco, 1979), have their origin in the success of the movie *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (Fred F Sears, 1956), also part of the filmmaker's filmography.

If when we imagine the aspect of creatures like the Frankenstein one we can't avoid taking as reference the classic film of the same title from 1931<sup>34</sup>, the same has happened with the Medusa from *Clash of the Titans*, another equally troubled and magnetic character. At the time, the archaic representations of mythological beings in vessels and statues were carefully observed by Harryhausen to endow his creatures with a soul; now these are the ones that have become a source where video game designers search for inspiration. Whether it is consciously or not, it is not important; it is the generalized tendency to represent certain creatures in a particular way, which gives relevance to the legacy of the animator. It's difficult to draw Medusa without a snake's tail, or a Cyclops without satyr legs or horn on the forehead. Would there be an enemy as used in video games as the armed skeleton were it not for *Jason and the Argonauts*? On the other hand, if in video games we talk about heroes who face huge enemies, fights to death between extraordinary beings, vast lost paradises, the exquisite corpse made animate creature or the eagerness for exploration, then we also will make reference to Harryhausen. The work of this legend of fantastic is no longer limited to his work on celluloid, it has expanded horizons to conquer new realms. In video games the programmers are the new gods, who treat mortals like pieces of clay on a board, establishing a destiny that can be changed if we have

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<sup>34</sup> Directed by James Whale, based upon the Mary Shelley's book written in 1918.

expertise with the joystick and buttons; the legendary monsters and heroes, those that Harryhausen had to abandon after his retirement, did not die; they remained lethargic for a prudent time until they gained new strength. Now, even Medusa, has at least three lives.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Three was the number of opportunities or «lives» that in a standardized way video games offered in that time the arcades in exchange for a coin. Breakout (Nolan Bushnell, 1976) was a pioneer in offering such a limitation.

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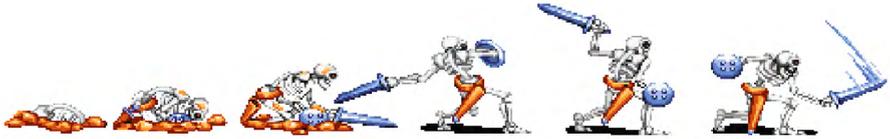
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Chapter 1. Studies in the field of Fantasy.



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## FAKE IT WHILE YOU MAKE IT: WHEN DO FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION MOVIE TRAILERS BECOME DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING?

Ryan Garcia and William Watson

The return of popular franchises such as Star Wars has gone hand-in-hand with the dominance of superhero films over the last ten years to turn Fantasy and Science Fiction films from the exception to the norm. While the popular culture embrace of formerly niche genres such as Fantasy and Science Fiction can be seen in many forms, no singular medium has seen such a dramatic embrace of the fantastic than movies.

While websites and blogs cover the news of upcoming movies, most consumers find out about upcoming movies via their trailers. Trailers were once only seen in movie theaters, but they are now frequently debuted online or watched by millions of people on YouTube and other social media platforms. The changing economic landscape of the movie industry has led to an increased reliance on opening weekend box office revenue, making trailers a crucial aspect in a movie's marketing campaign.

The creative teams behind these movie trailers have an enormous incentive to make the product they are advertising as desirable as possible, but when do those trailers cross the line and become false advertisements?

Increasingly, consumers are taking their frustration over potentially misleading trailers into the courtroom. One fan threatened legal action over the film *Suicide Squad* when the final movie did not include scenes involving the characters Joker and Katana that were shown in the movie trailer.<sup>1</sup> Another fan sued the company behind the movie *Drive* for having a trailer that depicted scenes out of context and implied the film was more action-oriented than the final product, although her claims were later dismissed.<sup>2</sup>

With more movie trailers coming under scrutiny as possible false advertisements, how can trailers be analyzed to determine their risk for such a cause of action? A framework for analyzing the content of Fantasy and Science Fiction movie trailers as well as the intention behind that content can help establish a legal test for applying false advertising law to these movie trailers.

## 1. The Importance of Movie Trailers

While the movie business faces an increasingly competitive landscape for consumers' media spending, the industry as a whole is booming. In 2017, global box office revenue was \$41.2 billion and that number is projected to grow to \$49.3 billion by 2020.<sup>3</sup> But even though the industry is growing it also faces significant obstacles that have led moviemakers to increasingly rely upon advertising such as movie trailers and shortened versions shown on television. This reliance on advertising comes from a pronounced drop in ticket sales and the increasing front-loading of film box office that sees more movies counting on giant opening weekends to establish their financial destiny.

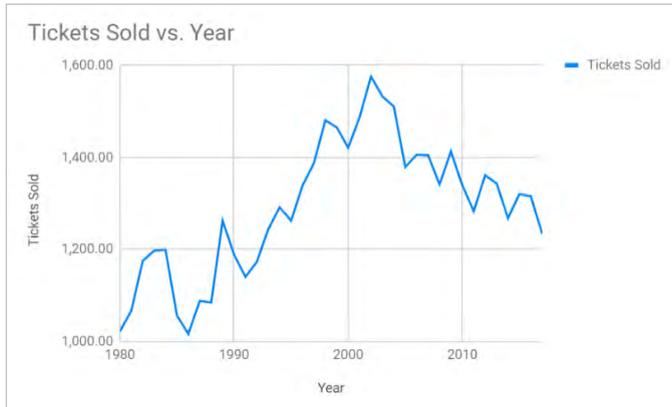
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<sup>1</sup> *Suicide Squad* fan tries to sue studio for 'false advertising' over lack of Joker scenes, *The Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/suicide-squad-fan-suing-studio-false-advertising-lack-of-joker-scenes-jared-leto-warner-bros-a7180231.html>

<sup>2</sup> *Deming v. CH Novie, LLC*, No. 309989 (Mich. Ct. App. Oct. 15, 2013), <http://www.michbar.org/file/opinions/appeals/2013/101513/55553.pdf>

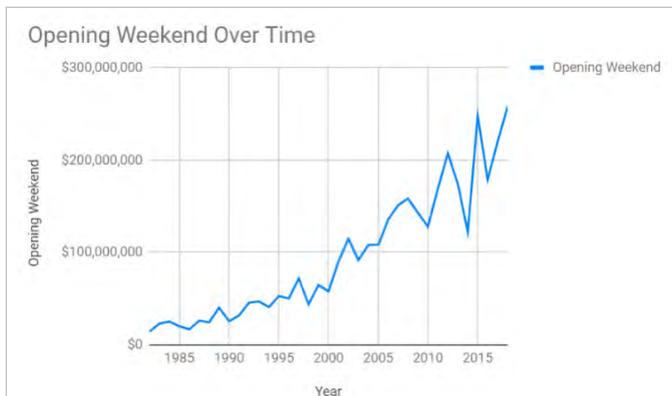
<sup>3</sup> Global box office revenue from 2016 to 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259987/global-box-office-revenue/>

Four charts help illustrate this point in the United States. First, the number of tickets sold each year has been in decline since the early 2000s. As with the decline of television viewership, consumers now have such a variety of media offerings that it increases pressure on studios to deliver revenue to their shareholders.



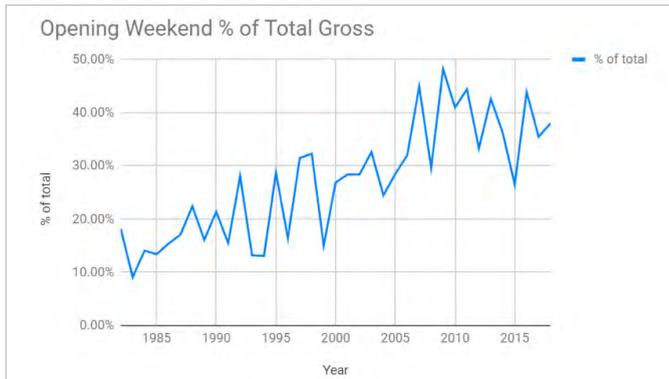
Source: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/>

Second, the top grossing films of each year are seeing a dramatic rise in opening weekend revenue.



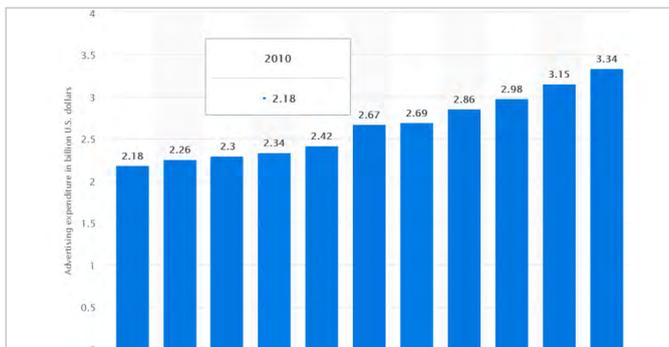
Source: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/>

In fact, we see an overall increase in the percentage of a film's opening weekend as it relates to its total box office. In the years before 2000, the highest-grossing film of the year rarely obtained over 30% of its total box office in its opening weekend. Over the last 15 years, the highest-grossing film of the year rarely earns less than 30% of its total box office in its opening weekend. Now more than ever, opening weekends are essential for a movie's box office performance.



Source: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/>

Finally, we can see that in 2010 the total global spending on movie advertising was \$2.18 billion and by 2020 that number is expected to increase over 50% to \$3.34 billion.



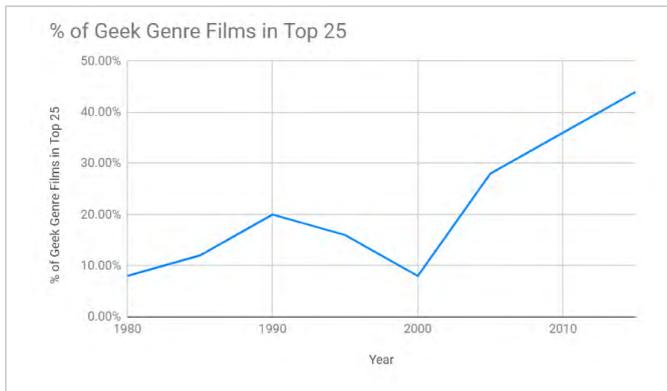
Cinema advertising expenditure from 2010 to 2020 (in billion U.S. dollars),

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/273715/global-cinema-advertising-expenditure/>

These four charts help paint the picture of an industry that is still succeeding, but doing so by pushing sales of its product to the start of its life cycle on a screen. Rather than having long runs of healthy ticket sales, successful movies must sell an enormous amount of tickets on the opening weekend so that its short shelf life can result in a profitable run. Movie distributors, realizing this need for strong opening weekends, are spending more each year to let consumers see movie trailers that compel them to see their product.

## 2. Fantasy and Science Fiction Films at the Box Office

As a significant percentage of the overall box office, Fantasy and Science Fiction films have experienced this push to opening weekends like other genres. While the overall box office increases, the percentage of the Top 25 films that fall within the Fantasy or Science Fiction genres<sup>4</sup> has soared since hitting its lowest point in 2000.



Source: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/>

Given the importance of opening weekend coupled with the rise of Fantasy and Science Fiction genres in the medium, studios might begin to feel the need to push the envelope on their marketing efforts. Including, perhaps, overreaching on the merits of their finished products when it comes to movie trailers.

<sup>4</sup> Collectively referred to as “Geek Films” by the authors.

### 3. False Advertising Laws Around the World

Laws governing deceptive advertising are rarely specific. Advertising laws must be written to cover topics as varied as diet products, hair conditioners, children’s toys, automobiles, local events, entertainment content, carbonated beverages, and in some countries, alcoholic beverages and/or prescription medication (although not in combination).

In order to cover such a wide variety of potential advertising subjects, deceptive advertising laws typically use vague terms in prohibiting such conduct. In the United States, the governing law covers “unfair and deceptive acts in or affecting commerce”<sup>5</sup> with a more specific definition of false advertising being “an advertisement, other than labelling, which is misleading in a material aspect.”<sup>6</sup>

In the United Kingdom, legislation prohibits conduct that “is not professionally diligent, and it materially distorts, or is likely to materially distort, the economic behaviour of the average consumer”<sup>7</sup> while misleading information is more specifically defined as “being likely to to deceive the average consumer (even if the information is factually correct).”<sup>8</sup>

Australia’s laws similarly ban “conduct that is misleading or deceptive or is likely to mislead or deceive.”<sup>9</sup> The pattern of deceptive advertising is repeated across these, and other, countries.

Practically speaking, the advice given by regulatory agencies is also frequently vague with specific guidance for popular topics. The

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<sup>5</sup> 15 USC § 45(a)(1).

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Consumer Protection From Unfair Trading, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/284442/offt1008.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284442/offt1008.pdf) p. 10

<sup>8</sup> Id. at p. 30

<sup>9</sup> Competition and Consumer Act 2010, Part 2-1, 18(1). [https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2013C00620/Html/Volume\\_3#\\_Toc368657554](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2013C00620/Html/Volume_3#_Toc368657554)

Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the agency that ultimately oversees complaints of deceptive advertising in the United States, does not offer specific advice for entertainment content. Its general advice does say that “[a]dvertising must be truthful and non-deceptive.”<sup>10</sup>

The FTC further describes deceptive advertisements as ones that contain a statement or omits information that:

- Is likely to mislead consumers acting reasonably under the circumstances; and
- Is “material” - that is, important to a consumer’s decision to buy or use the product.<sup>11</sup>

This duality of deception and materiality are repeated across other countries’ legislation as well. While these standards can be somewhat easily applied within the context of a product’s features (size, weight, etc.), in the context of advertising entertainment media the standards begin to lose cohesiveness. What aspects of entertainment advertising are supposed to impact a consumer acting reasonable? What parts of a movie or television show should be deemed material to a consumer’s choice in deciding to purchase access to that content?

This analysis also faces increased difficulty due to how entertainment content is created. The process for creating films and television shows is highly collaborative with multiple teams and departments working on various aspects often simultaneously. Frequently, a group separate from all other development may be used to create advertisements for the content and may be engaged when the final version of the content has not been established. These teams may be working with material that may be edited out of final versions or content that has been created especially for the purpose of advertising the final content. One extreme example of how much editing can take

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<sup>10</sup> Advertising FAQs: A Guide for Small Business, <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/advertising-faqs-guide-small-business>.

<sup>11</sup> Id.

place at the last minute: Kevin Spacey was cut from *All the Money in the World* mere weeks before it's theatrical release.<sup>12</sup>

Further muddying the water is the notion that entertainment content may place a high value in surprising or shocking its audience. A murder mystery film would not want the killer revealed in the trailer. A television commercial for a series' season finale may hint at a character's death but not want to reveal which character. There is some degree of legitimate deception involved to keep audiences interested.

#### 4. A Framework for Applying False Advertising Laws to Movie Trailers

As studios evaluate their marketing plans, how should they balance the need to excite audiences and still accurately portray their product? One potential framework for ensuring their characterization of the film within the trailer is not misleading would be to ask two questions:

1. Whether the advertisement utilizes content that does not appear in the final version or appears within a different context; and
2. Was there a legitimate purpose for including that fabricated or out-of-context content?

Using those two factors we can establish four categories of treating this content as potentially misleading advertising.

Fabricated content that never appears in film	Category Three, Do or Do Not	Category Four, Midichlorians
	Category One, The Droids You're Looking For	Category Two, It's a Trap!
Actual filmed content that does not appear in film (or within different context)	Legitimate purpose for content inclusion	Illegitimate purpose for content inclusion

<sup>12</sup> Ridley Scott's Very Candid Account of How He Saved *All the Money in the World*, <http://www.vulture.com/2017/12/ridley-scott-all-the-money-in-the-world-reshoots.html>

Categories One and Two cover actual filmed content that does not appear in the final version of the film or appears within a context different from that implied in the advertisements. The least likely to be deceptive advertising would be Category One, where the content was included for a legitimate purpose such as an honest belief the content would be in the final version of the product but was only removed after creating the advertisement. Similarly, content that is removed from the final product for being duplicative (e.g., a single joke in a series of four jokes told by a character, a particular moment in a several minutes long car chase, etc.) could also be considered a legitimate reason for its removal.

The second category enters into a potentially risky area for deceptive advertising as it contemplates an illegitimate purpose for including the removed or decontextualized content. Establishing an illegitimate purpose can be difficult at times, but can also be inferred through intentional depictions of this troublesome content. Whether such inclusion rises to the level of misleading can be highly particular, but it is important to note that the legal standard is never fabricated content. The standard is misleading content, which by definition includes actual content used in a context that can lead people to believe something that is not true about the final product.

The third and fourth category escalate the risk factors by including fabricated content within the entertainment advertising. Even having a legitimate purpose for such inclusion raises the risk of creating a misleading advertisement by the very nature of using fabricated content. At best, having a legitimate purpose can lead to a potential defense that the inclusion was not material to the consumer or that consumers expect this kind of fabricated content so that it was not actually likely to mislead them. But the fourth category abandons even those defenses and creates significant risks of a consumer raising a claim of false advertising.

Several fantasy and science fiction film trailers can illustrate these categories.

## 5. Examples of Category One, The Droids You're Looking For

Category One, The Droids You're Looking For, trailers are those films that use actual filmed content in the trailer but use the content in a potentially misleading way because of their context or the actual filmed footage was cut from the final movie although there is a legitimate reason for their inclusion. While the content is not fabricated, there can be differences in perception based on the context of the trailer that can cause it to be misleading, although generally this category is less risky than others.

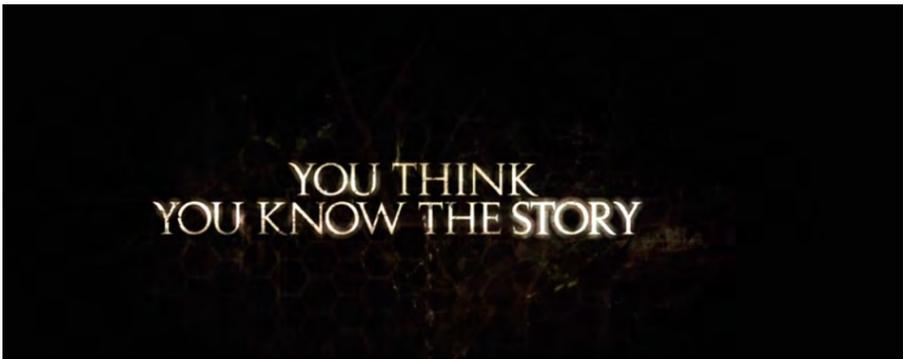
### A. Hiding Plot Twists: Cabin in the Woods

Joss Whedon and Drew Goddard's 2012 movie *Cabin in the Woods* used a trailer that included only footage seen in the final cut of the film. However, the context within which this content appeared was vastly different from what most filmgoers expected upon seeing the trailer. While the trailer shows what looks like a fairly typical horror film with a group of young college students travelling to an isolated cabin in a forest, the actual product is far from the typical horror movie.



*Cabin in the Woods* (2012 Movie) - Official Trailer - Chris Hemsworth & Jesse Williams, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsIilFNNmkY>

The trailer hints at a sinister plot involving the youths, nothing to surprise a horror aficionado. But the actual movie, rather than being a paint-by-the-numbers slasher film, instead attempts to provide a meta-backstory for all slasher films. These stereotypical remote cabins so often seen in movies of this type, the film explains, are actually stations in a global network that must periodically provide human sacrifices in order to satiate the hunger of several giant evil gods and prevent their devastation of Earth. The sacrifices are fulfilled via a ritual that embodies the story structure seen in these movies (having certain archetype youths, the order in which they die, who can survive, etc.).



Cabin in the Woods (2012 Movie) - Official Trailer - Chris Hemsworth & Jesse Williams, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsIilFNNmkY>

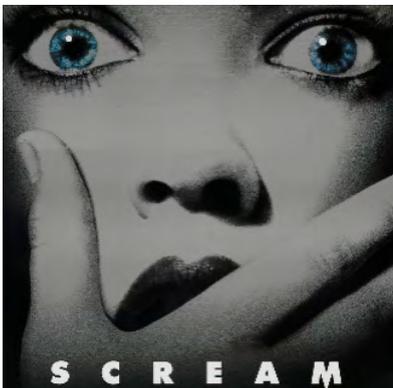
This clever send-up of slasher film tropes is entirely unmentioned in the trailer for a legitimate purpose: this reveal is a pivotal moment in the film's story. The trailer hints at generic sinister machinations in a way that doesn't give away the plot twist but at the expense of pretending to be the very type of movie it comments upon. This presents the content in a way very different from the context in which it is presented in the trailer, but the legitimate purpose of the differing context makes this movie trailer an example of Category One.



Cabin in the Woods (2012 Movie) - Official Trailer - Chris Hemsworth & Jesse Williams, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsIilFNNmkY>

## **B. Hiding Pivotal Deaths: Scream, Godzilla**

Movies tend to not only market the concepts of the films but the creative teams behind them. The directors and actors can take center stage in the marketing and trailers for movies as a way to lure in their fans. Could the trailers and marketing material for movies be considered misleading if they focus on an actor who is killed early in the movie?



Scream - 1996 - 11 x 17 Movie Poster - Style B, <https://www.amazon.com/Scream-1996-Movie-Poster-Style/dp/B0017ASNC4>.

Official Trailer: Scream (1996). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWm\\_mkbdpCA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWm_mkbdpCA)

Take, for example, *Scream*. The 1996 Wes Craven movie featured Drew Barrymore heavily in the marketing material. Not only was the poster a close-up of Ms. Barrymore's face but the trailer also centered on her character's interaction with a mysterious, threatening voice on the telephone.

Moviegoers taking in the film were surprised to learn that Ms. Barrymore's character is killed in the first few minutes of the film. This, however, was not the last time a major name used in the marketing of a movie ended up being a small supporting role due to an on-screen death.



Godzilla - Official Main Trailer [HD],

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIu85WQTPRc>

The 2014 movie *Godzilla* featured Bryan Cranston heavily in their trailer and marketing materials. Mr. Cranston, having just finished his highly lauded six year run on *Breaking Bad* (and who had to wear a wig while filming *Godzilla* due to his bald completion of *Breaking Bad* just a few days before starting *Godzilla*), speaks more than half of the spoken lines in the trailer. Fans of Mr. Cranston and viewers of the trailer alike were surprised when his character dies early in the movie, leaving his character's son to be the main character for the rest of the film.

Both *Scream* and *Godzilla* present other legitimate reasons for misrepresenting the centrality of certain stars' roles in a film. Having

a major star killed in the first few minutes of a movie is certainly a surprise for those believing that star is the central character of the movie. Simply casting such significant talents tends to imply their inclusion in the entire movie or at least a significant amount. Showing that character's demise in marketing material would ruin the shock of the moment within the movie, a moment the team behind the film was obviously willing to pay for and wanting to create. This legitimate reason and inclusion of actual film footage despite perhaps misleading viewers through its context places movies such as *Scream* and *Godzilla* (2014) squarely within Category One.

### C. Hiding the Villain: *Iron Man 3*

When the third *Iron Man* movie (2013) released its trailer and in subsequent media interviews, the main villain of the film pointed towards a character called the Mandarin. Played by Oscar winner Ben Kingsley, the character's distinctive voiceover and top-tier casting led franchise fans to believe that the movie would focus on battles between Tony Stark and his long-time comic book enemy.



Iron Man 3 - Official Trailer UK Marvel | HD,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ke1Y3P9D0Bc>

Viewers of the movie were surprised to discover that the Mandarin was a fake villain. Ben Kingsley portrayed Trevor Slattery, an actor who was hired to be the Mandarin on a series of online videos.

The real villain who hired Trevor was Aldrich Killian, played by Guy Pearce. Mr. Pearce, known for his breakout role in 2001's *Memento*, was barely seen in the trailer and never hinted at being the true villain of the film.



Iron Man 3 - Official Trailer UK Marvel | HD,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ke1Y3P9D0Bc>

While the footage in the trailer is certainly misleading, much of the movie itself is misleading as to the identity and role of the Mandarin character. In this way, an argument could be made that by being misleading itself, the trailer is actually not misleading since it represents the true nature of the film. But to the extent it does present content out of context it does so for a legitimate reason in preserving the story and villain reveal of the film, placing it within Category One.

## **6. Category One or Two Examples: A Question of Intent**

When the difference between two categories is whether the marketing material had a legitimate or illegitimate intent the question of the intent behind the marketing will come into question. While certain actions can point towards a particular intent, the distinction may not be so clear in certain instances. This leads some trailers to fall into either the Category One or Category Two designations, showing at least a small amount of increased risk over trailers that fall squarely within Category One.

## A. Mind the Cut: Rogue One



Rogue One: A Star Wars Story Trailer (Official),  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frdj1zb9sMY>

In 2016, Disney released the first movie that took place within the Star Wars cinematic universe without focusing on the Skywalker characters and storyline. *Rogue One* instead told the story of the events immediately before 1977's *Star Wars* (later renamed *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*) and how the Galactic Empire's plans for the Death Star were obtained for the Rebellion.

As the first expansion of the Star Wars pantheon beyond the Episode movies, news of the movie's production frequently made headlines on cinema and fan publications. Rumors of significant reshoots for the film based on the quality of the original version first started swirling in 2016. While reshoots are common in big budget films, they typically involve small fixes within existing footage. The *Rogue One* reshoots, however, involved significant changes to the story. The changes were so significant the director of the re-shoots ended up with a screenplay credit awarded during arbitration.<sup>13</sup> When the trailer was first released for *Rogue One*, it contained many images and moments that were cut from the final version during the reshoot process.

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<sup>13</sup> "*Rogue One* writer says film was in 'terrible, terrible trouble' with reshoots," <https://ew.com/movies/2018/04/05/rogue-one-reshoots-tony-gilroy/>



All the Footage from Rogue One Trailers Cut From the Film,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJZjqmmL-24>

Over 50 shots or spoken lines of dialogue were shown in Rogue One trailers that did not appear in the final version. While some shots and lines may have been quick edits, several of those moments cut from the film included significant, memorable moments from the trailer.



All the Footage from Rogue One Trailers Cut From the Film,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJZjqmmL-24>

Trailers can be created during the development process so that they are using footage that might be cut from the final product. What makes the Rogue One scenario different is the number of trailers that continued to use these cut moments and lines when the development team knew they were no longer in the film. Trailers released

internationally one month before the film's release, and a trailer released in the United States less than 8 weeks before the film opened continued to use significant images and lines cut from the final product. This brings the purpose of such inclusion into question.

It is entirely plausible that the team in charge of editing and distributing the trailers had no idea what was going to be used in the final cut, especially given the rushed timetable of the film's final edit. However, if the team did know of certain moments in the trailer that would no longer appear in the film and continued to use those shots because of their favorable fan reaction, that activity could reasonably be seen as an illegitimate purpose for inclusion and render the trailer potentially misleading.

### **B. Percentage of New Animation Style: The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge out of Water**

When the first trailer for 2015's *The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge out of Water* was first released the nearly two-and-a-half minute trailer spent a little less than two minutes showing a 3D computer animated SpongeBob and company interacting with footage of real people.



The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water - Official Trailer #1 | In Theaters  
February 6, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGjbpO1toTc>

Not only does the name of the movie imply that the film is mostly about SpongeBob's adventures in the real world, the trailer itself also implies that most of the story takes place there as well. Customers expecting this result were surprised when the 92 minute film only had around 20 minutes of the animated characters interacting with the real world.<sup>14</sup>



The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water - Official Trailer #1 | In Theaters  
February 6, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGjbpO1toTc>

While the trailer did not fabricate footage in advertising the film, by devoting 80% of the trailer's time to showing a part of the movie that constitutes less than 25% of the film, the trailer could certainly be misleading. However, given the fanbase for SpongeBob being more comfortable with the traditional animation style of their beloved characters, it could also be a legitimate purpose to show more of the 3D style SpongeBob characters to adequately prepare fans for the new look. These two highly different potential reasons for the trailer's out-of-context footage places it either in Category One or Category Two.

## 7. Examples of Category Two, It's a Trap!

Category Two trailers, like Category One, uses actual filmed (but later cut) footage or existing footage but out of context. It differs

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<sup>14</sup> The exact amount of time was unable to be verified by this paper's authors because neither could be convinced to actually watch The SpongeBob Movie: Fish out of Water.

from Category One, The Droids You're Looking For, in that there is an illegitimate purpose behind the lack of context or footage inclusion. This riskier category of trailers involves the creative team behind them trying to intentionally deceive customers into purchasing a ticket they might not otherwise buy and potentially making the trailer a deceptive or false advertisement.

### **A. Language: Pan's Labyrinth**

The 2006 film Pan's Labyrinth is noted as a spectacular achievement in fantasy films that received three Academy Awards for Cinematography, Art Direction, and Makeup.<sup>15</sup> It remains a critical favorite with a score of 95% on Rotten Tomatoes<sup>16</sup> and a score of 98 on Metacritic.<sup>17</sup> The film went on to earn over \$37 million in the United States alone, an impressive feat for a foreign fantasy film and it remains the fifth highest grossing foreign language film in US Box Office history.<sup>18</sup>



Pan's Labyrinth - Trailer, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXe5a9pBNzg>

<sup>15</sup> Pan's Labyrinth Awards, [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0457430/awards?ref\\_=tt\\_awd](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0457430/awards?ref_=tt_awd)

<sup>16</sup> Pan's Labyrinth (2006), [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/pans\\_labyrinth](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/pans_labyrinth)

<sup>17</sup> Pan's Labyrinth 2006, <https://www.metacritic.com/movie/pans-labyrinth>

<sup>18</sup> Foreign Language 1980-Present, <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=foreign.htm>

For a film that was made entirely in Spanish and even takes place during Spain in World War II, it is curious that the trailer does not have a single word of Spanish. The international trailer featured several spoken lines of Spanish with English subtitles,<sup>19</sup> yet the official United States trailer opted for a series of quick splices from the movie and a generic voiceover hinting at the film's story. None of the actor's lines were heard, no shot of subtitles were seen. A reasonable consumer, watching the trailer, would have no idea the film was in Spanish.

Is hiding the language of a film a legitimate purpose behind such a decision? There is no doubt it was intentional, but if it was done in order to attract customers that would normally not attend a foreign language film, wouldn't that action be illegitimate? If the very point of the trailer was to conceal a material fact about the movie that might otherwise dissuade a customer from purchasing a ticket, hiding that material fact could be seen as misleading advertising. Although it is possible that there was a different reason for the voiceover, the fact that the international trailer had English subtitles while the United States trailer did not makes it highly likely that this trailer could be considered within Category Two and at risk of being false advertising.

## **B. Implied Paranormal Horror: It Comes at Night**

The 2017 film *It Comes at Night* was a tense, psychological thriller about trust in the midst of danger. While the film centers on two families attempting to live together in an isolated cabin because of a deadly infectious disease, the trailer suggested the movie was more about a zombie invasion or some kind of monster that only emerged at night. The trailer featured commentary about the importance of keeping a door locked every night and had images of one character dripping blood or some thick, black ooze into another character's mouth.

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<sup>19</sup> Pan's Labyrinth - Official Movie Trailer, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Evmr2ZCjWc>



It Comes At Night | Official Trailer | A24,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YOYHCBQn9g>

While this footage did appear in the film, it was part of a nightmare. The footage, however, is shown within the context of other waking moments without distinction. This could reasonably believe the film is more about identifiable monsters rather than a movie about trusting other people in the face of invisible threats. To the extent the film's production company was attempting to make the movie appear more like a traditional horror film rather than the psychological horror film it actually was, this could be an illegitimate use of actual film footage, placing the trailer within the riskier Category Two.

## 8. Examples of Category Three, Do or Do Not

Category Three, Do or Do Not, trailers use fabricated footage for some legitimate purpose. They present a higher risk than Category One or Two movies by nature of using fabricated footage, but their legitimate purpose behind the fabrication will often excuse the deception.

### A. Hiding Plot Twists Via Fabrication: *Thor: Ragnarok*

The third Thor film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, 2017's *Thor: Ragnarok*, has Thor embarking on yet another cosmic adventure relating to his duties as Asgardian royalty. The upbeat trailer, while sticking mostly to the story of the movie, also has two fabricated

deviations from the final product. The first deviation is showing the first encounter with Thor's sister, Hela, when she grabs Thor's legendary weapon, the hammer Mjolnir.



Thor: Ragnarok Official Trailer,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue80QwXMRHg>

While the trailer shows this encounter taking place in an urban environment via the background, the actual movie's encounter takes place on a cliff-top devoid of buildings and other signs of civilization. The second deviation takes place towards the end of the trailer, when an electrified Thor jumps into battle and glares at his enemy with two eyes.



Thor: Ragnarok Official Trailer,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ue80QwXMRHg>

This image different from the final movie because by this point in the film Thor has lost an eye to battle with his sister.

Both of these deviations, while relying on fabricated content, are nonetheless done for legitimate purposes in hiding details that might otherwise spoil elements of the film. In the first instance, while viewers of the trailer expect to see Mjolnir grabbed in the movie they do not expect the first encounter with Hela to yield this development-especially as Thor and Hela square off on a remote clifftop. Nor do viewers then expect that Hela destroys Mjolnir shortly after grabbing it. In the second example, while fans of Marvel films may expect climactic battle scenes, failing to show Thor's significant injury, mirroring the one eyed visage of his late father, Odin, helped keep that important plot point secret until the release of the film. Both of these fabrications serve to show some of the plot that will be in the movie while also concealing important elements for a legitimate reason. This places Thor: Ragnarok within Category Three.

### **B. Fabricated Teaser: Alien 3**

The 1992 release of Alien 3 was hotly anticipated in the wake of the popular 1979 Alien film and its action sequel, 1986's Aliens. The film's production, however, was a mess of fluctuating scripts, directors, and basic storylines. When filming began the script at the time had much of the action taking place on Earth. A teaser trailer was put together that informed Alien franchise fans as such. While fabricated footage of an Alien egg split open, a voiceover announced "In 1979, we discovered in space no one can hear you scream. In 1992, we will discover on Earth everyone can hear you scream." The cracking egg was then seen to be floating above a planet, presumably Earth.



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bk\\_x9W1xKng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bk_x9W1xKng)

However, by the time the final version of Alien 3 was completed, Earth was nowhere in the picture. Instead, the third film in the Alien franchise focused on a remote prison colony on a world far from Earth.

When a movie is so early in the production cycle that there isn't enough footage to cobble together a trailer, it is understandable for a teaser trailer to be made of fabricated footage. It can even be acceptable for the trailer to be a bit vague as to the details. In the case of the Alien 3 teaser trailer, the fabricated footage and voiceover ended up being misleading compared to the final product--but at the time they were created they were genuinely hinting at what was the script for the movie. It was only later that the teaser became inaccurate. Since the intention behind the teaser trailer was not to deviate from the movie's script but actually suggest what was being made, the purpose behind the teaser trailer can be deemed legitimate and the trailer placed within Category Three.

## 9. Examples of Category Three or Four

The difference between trailers in Category Three, Do or Do Not, and Category Four, Midichlorians, is one of intent. Both involve fabricated footage but one has a legitimate purpose while another does not. Trailers where the intention may be difficult to ascertain on their face could reasonable fall into either category.

### A. Fabricated Teaser That Didn't Look Fabricated: Frozen

The 2013 film *Frozen* is one of the most successful animation films of all time. Buoyed by several popular songs, including the now iconic “Let It Go,” the film proceeded to become the sixth highest grossing animated film ever with over \$400 million domestically and \$1.2 billion internationally.<sup>20</sup> The movie, focusing on the relationship between two sisters in the wake of the elder sister’s powers, was very different from the original teaser trailer for the film.



Disney's *Frozen* Teaser Trailer,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1x76DoACB8>

The teaser trailer featured two of the movie’s characters, Sven the reindeer and Olaf the enchanted snowman, in a struggle over Olaf’s carrot nose. None of the teaser trailer appeared in the final movie, whether as a separate animated short or within the movie itself. The teaser itself doesn’t even hint at the movie’s content or storyline, instead suggesting silly stories around cold-themed characters (non-human) in a frozen land. Nothing hinted at the true story of two sisters dealing with the ice-based powers of the elder sister. Moreover, the trailer itself does closely mirror the animation and style of the finished product—nothing about this teaser trailer suggests it is a trailer made of fabricated content. It appears to be footage from an upcoming movie rather than a complete fabrication.

<sup>20</sup> *Frozen* (2013), <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=frozen2013.htm>

The intention behind this teaser being completely fabricated is unknown. On the one hand, the teaser trailer was released six months before the film came out, so it is possible that there wasn't enough final footage to cobble together a trailer of finalized animation. On the other hand, creating a teaser trailer from a completely new script or story would have taken the same effort as creating a teaser trailer that at least attempted to tell something of the movie it was advertising.

If the team behind the trailer was attempting to mislead customers by making them associate a Disney animated film with the more traditional animated characters and silly situations rather than trying to address some of the more serious themes the people in the film explore, that intention could be deemed illegitimate and the trailer misleading. If the footage instead had been created as some animation test and later repurposed for the trailer in order to free the rest of the team to continue working on the main film, that could be a legitimate purpose. Similarly, if the intent had been to start building the Frozen universe in the minds of moviegoers by introducing two of the more fantastic characters in the film, that intent could have been legitimate as well. Since the trailer's intention is unknown and unclear, this trailer falls within Category Three.

## **10. Examples of Category Four, Midichlorians**

Just as the midichlorians were fabrications within the Star Wars universe to help explain away a useless and potentially deceptive plot point, so too are trailers in Category Four potentially deceptive and at risk of being false advertising under the law. These examples use fabricated footage for illegitimate reasons to entice customers into buying tickets when they otherwise would not.

### **A. Implied Content: Red Eye**

Few names carry as many genre devoted fans as Wes Craven does within the horror genre. When his 2005 film, *Red Eye*, was approaching its release date, fans of the director who brought us *Scream*, the

Nightmare on Elm Street series, and The Hills Have Eyes, were looking forward to a movie that seemed to involve some kind of horror scenario on an airplane.



Red Eye Trailer,

<https://youtu.be/TAFDHyH8buQ>

During the trailer, the villain's face is frozen, his eyes turn red, and the rest of his face goes dark. Given Wes Craven's involvement, it was logical for his fans to assume that something demonic or otherworldly was happening in the movie. But the movie itself had nothing demonic or paranormal, merely a creepy, human villain. The animated shot shown in the trailer never appears in the movie and his eyes never turn red in the film.

The only purpose behind fabricating the special effect involving the villain's eyes in the trailer was to make horror fans think this film was something besides what it was. Unable to use existing footage even out of context, the trailer makers resorted to creating their own footage to make this false implication. This kind of intentionally misleading fabricated content places Red Eye within Category Four.

### **B. Digital Body Coverage: Suicide Squad**

When the 2016 DC Extended Universe film Suicide Squad was facing imminent release it was already under an increased amount

of scrutiny. Although the earlier Christopher Nolan Batman films had performed remarkably well for fans and critics alike, the subsequent DC films had failed to impress fans or critics while still performing adequately at the box office.

The 2013 *Man of Steel* film had performed well enough, but the earlier release in 2016 of *Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice* had failed to live up to the hype of having two of the best known superheroes appearing on screen at once. *Suicide Squad*'s release came just five months after *Batman vs. Superman* and featured a cast of characters that, with the exception of Joker, were not well-known outside the comic book community.

One potential breakout character in the movie came in the form of Harley Quinn, Joker's girlfriend played by up-and-coming actress Margot Robbie. The character had already faced scrutiny in comic book communities for being overly sexual and earlier trailers of *Suicide Squad* had fed into this criticism as well.



*Suicide Squad* Official Trailer #2 (2016) - Will Smith, Margot Robbie Movie HD,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKMgB01MU-w>

In the midst of the franchise's uncertainty and possible sexual content controversy, DC released a new version of their trailer to fans in attendance at the San Diego Comic-Con. While the new trailer contained some new shots, it also contained scenes other trailers had previously

displayed. But one moment seemed unusual to fans—a moment when Harley Quinn walks into the background amongst her fellow Squad members. In the original trailer, Harley’s shorts were on the short side, but still fully covered her body. In the new version, the shorts were much shorter, revealing a significant amount of her buttocks.



Suicide Squad: Length of Harley Quinn’s Shorts Digitally Edited,  
<https://screenrant.com/suicide-squad-harley-quinn-shorts-cgi-butt/>

While questions remained as to whether the shorts had been digitally shortened or digitally lengthened, the fact remained that some footage was fabricated either to increase or decrease the sexual nature of the trailer footage. Either way, the footage was altered for the trailer intentionally. Whether the intention was to hide the amount of potentially suggestive material by lengthening the shorts in the trailer or the intention was to infer that there was a greater amount of suggestive material than the final version contained. The fabrication of content was done to explicitly make at least one of the trailers not show the actual film content for an illegitimate purpose: to either hide from controversy or portray its final product as different from that in the trailer. This places Suicide Squad within the risky area of Category Four.

### C. Fake Hero Shots: Avengers: Infinity War

The third Avengers film, 2018's Avengers: Infinity War, promised to be the culmination of ten years of Marvel Cinematic Universe development. Featuring dozens of characters that had been introduced in the previous nineteen Marvel films, the trailer promised an epic battle between the heroes of the Marvel universe and Thanos, the mad Titan attempting to wipe out half the universe. The trailer, while showing many moments of the film, also showed multiple fabrications.

Similar to the Thor: Ragnarok fabrications, some of the fabricated shots were designed to hide an important plot detail. In both the first and second trailers, Thanos is shown engaging in battle with various Marvel characters with only two Infinity Stones in his gauntlet. The purple and blue stones are shown in earlier moments in the trailer, so customers watching the trailer would believe these moments all match. One such moment is when Thanos is about to engage in battle on Titan, another takes place back on Earth when Captain America fights Thanos directly. In both of these moments we can directly see only two stones in the gauntlet.



Marvel Studios' Avengers: Infinity War - Official Trailer,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwievZ1Tx-8>

However, at the point when these moments occur in the movie, Thanos has more than two stones. When Thanos is about to fight on

Titan, he has four stones. The fight with Captain America takes place when Thanos has five stones. These fabricated shots combined with the earlier footage suggest that Thanos only has two stones during the movie, but as Thanos' quest to obtain six stones are at the center of the movie it is understandable that Marvel would want to keep that plot point secret. Of less centrality to the plot is the hero shot Marvel showed in the trailer displaying several heroes about to engage in battle with Thanos.



Marvel Studios' Avengers: Infinity War Official Trailer,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZfuNTqbHE8>

This moment in the trailer shows six identifiable Marvel characters: Bucky (Winter Soldier), Black Widow, Captain America, Okoye, Black Panther, and the Hulk leading the charge of hundreds of soldiers. However, the actual moment in the film varies in that there is no Hulk—in fact, one unexplained portion of the film involves how the Hulk refuses to emerge from within the confines of Dr. Bruce Banner. In the actual film, the Hulk is replaced by Dr. Banner wearing one of the larger suits of armor Tony Stark has created called the Hulkbuster.

Showing an altered version of the film at this point does hide the fact that Hulk will not be seen much in the film, but it is done for less legitimate purposes than concealing how successful Thanos has been in his quest for Infinity Stones. This moment contains a random collection of heroes—some original Avengers, others are characters that

have been added to the mix over the years. Including the Hulkbustor armor instead of the Hulk itself would not have changed the impact of the moment within the trailer but it would have been truthful.

Marvel's fabricated content involving the Hulk was done for no known story-related reason. Viewers of the Marvel films had no reason to believe that Hulk would be largely absent from the movie—it was a plot point that Marvel had successfully concealed from the public. Fabricating content for the trailer to conceal a plot point no customer had reason to guess at nor imply makes this fabrication illegitimate. It actually leads moviegoers to believe that the Hulk will appear—something they may have assumed because of the nature of the movie but never been explicitly told. Instead, the trailer provided fabricated proof that the Hulk would appear. This places the latter fabrication within the boundaries of Category Four as an illegitimate fabrication specifically for the trailer even while other edits may be deemed to fall within other, less risky, categories.

## **11. Conclusion**

Although all movie trailers face the dilemma of being enticing without misleading, this decision becomes increasingly important for Fantasy and Science Fiction films as they make up a greater overall percentage of the global box office. While there can oftentimes be legitimate purposes behind presenting content out of context or fabricating content, there can also be illegitimate purposes for doing so.

Those illegitimate purposes can lead to a movie trailer that effectively becomes false advertising and actionable under local law. Movie production teams would be well advised to consider the impact of their movie trailer choices lest they cross the line too often and face legal, as well as fan, repercussions.

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## Chapter 1. Studies in the field of Fantasy.

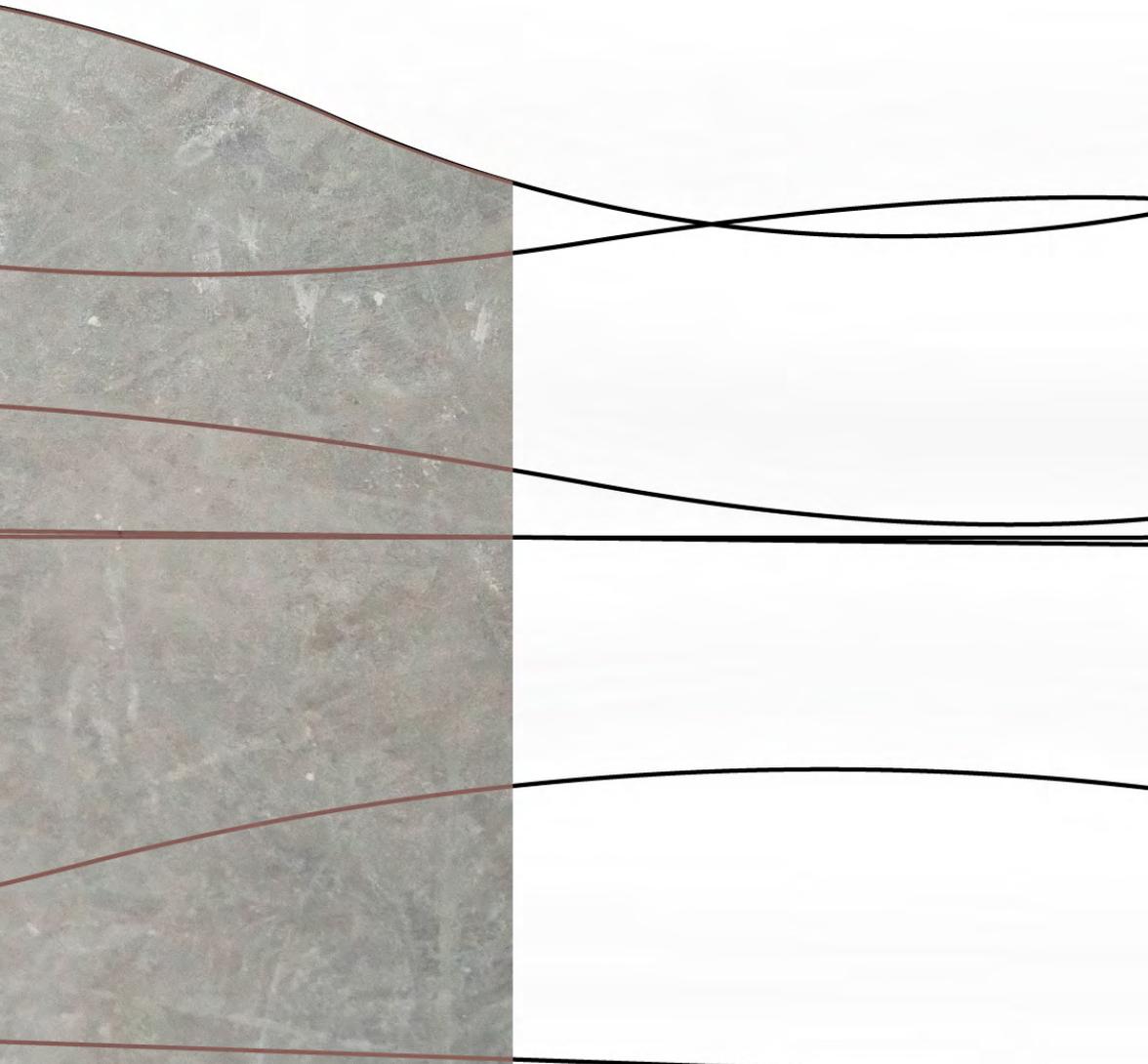
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# **Chapter 2.**

## **Studies in the field of SciFi**



## IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT WOMAN

Sylvia Lenaers Cases

In Greek mythology the creation of the first woman comes after the theft of fire from Zeus by Prometheus. This woman, in order to punish men sends them evil with a gift-like appearance that they gladly accepted. Zeus created the first woman by molding her from mud (like the Golem), with the face of the immortal goddesses and then handing her over to men. She introduced all the evils that plague man: «the suffering, the harsh fatigue and the painful diseases that bring death. From it descends the terrible lineage (female genus) and the tribes of women, a great calamity for the men who live with them».

Pandora is not a begotten being but a created one, that dwells between beasts and mankind (anthropoid). The woman is akin to the *techné*, the artifice and the lowest and precarious ontological position for the Greeks. Pandora will be the beginning of the female lineage, a separate lineage, «the cursed race of women". In this way the generic human overlaps with the masculine, which will be understood as neutral and in whose existence will specify how everything feminine will be on the side of «the different» and from «the other». It will be the thought that does not require a language of its own, even for the body.

Mary Shelley was the young woman who created the monster with pieces of different corpses. This creature shows us a being with feelings that is expelled from humanity because of its ugliness and

it's origin, created by a human being who usurps the divine role. She opened the door to creature-creators in contemporary history and an unknowingly instituted an archetype that would have a broad style of followers and not always with ideals in principle as high as knowledge, but that of their own delight and pleasure, that of overcoming what they consider to be defects of divine creation, to create the perfect woman, in short Galatea.

With this starting point we find that the perfect woman is not actually a woman, it just looks like a woman, but his mind is adapted to the demands of male needs. Normally it would be like a doll (this in the literature prior to the appearance of inflatable dolls or fembots) with all the desirable attributes, even outperforming the copied woman in some cases, but with behavior from the desires of its creator.

One of the «followers» of creators of beings is Villiers del'Isle Adams, who wrote in 1886 the novel *The Future Eve*, loaded with the characteristic misogyny of the nineteenth century. In the novel, the inventor Edison builds the protagonist, Lord Ewald, a doll who is a faithful reflection of his fiancée, that under an apparent and very careful wrapping, has an absolute lack of spirit. We could express our reservations about replacing a real human being, even if he is considered spiritless, a woman-android actually has neither spirit nor conscience. The inventor proposes to the protagonist the creation of a being in the image of his beloved but with a higher spirit. This perfect doll will be endowed with a true spirit through a medium to keep good forms with the ecclesiastical authorities and the ideas of believers.

The creator does not create it as a unique object, but its purpose is to industrially manufacture an army of «lovers» who are not subject to the prejudices of marriage and perhaps to standard sexual practices, they obviously won't be valued for their lofty regular conversation. They are not intended to replace the faithful wife, as this is still necessary in its fertile side, a small inconvenience, but it will have to be approached with stoicism. So we find that the feminine ideal is assumed by an automaton doll that has a series of seventy movements

and some recordings of philosophical poets and narrators and endowed with a spirit that has unfolded from an unknown woman. At the end of the novel Lord Ewald is hopelessly in love with the mechanical doll, but upon death of the owner of the real spirit, the doll also perishes and the coffin in which it travels disappears forever as the ship sinks. Numerous parallels can be found between the android created by Villiers d'Isle and the robot of evil purposes whose appearance is the double of Mary from *Metropolis*.

Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) was based on a novel by the wife of the director Thea von Harbor. This film told the story of a city that was divided into two classes; the privileged class of industrialists, who spend time in decadent pleasure gardens, and hordes of dehumanized workers, all of this was portrayed under a delicious expressionist aesthetic in the presentation of the imagery and an art deco design throughout the staging, with a visual choreography that he would no doubt pickup later in his film *Olimpia* (Leni Riefenstahl). In *Metropolis* there is a small image, which Riefenstahl must have known and delighted over, of young Aryans, exquisitely dressed in t-shirts and white trousers in a clean garden exerting gymnastically their «clean» bodies. What the duo Fritz Lang and Thea Von Harbour are really portraying is the pre-war Germany situation with tensions between socialists, communists and the nascent Nazi party. Absent from this knowledge the film fascinated the audiences of that time.

This dramatic visual choreography of oppression and dehumanization was enhanced by spectacular special effects during the transformation by the mad scientist who builds a female robot, in a miscegenation between l'Isle Adams android and Shelley's Frankstein, in which the maid of Orleans is transmuted into a manual femme fatale. Again the woman is the poisoned gift of the gods (or the mighty), who through a paroxysmal dance, in which Mata Hari alienates male reason by introducing to his body the seven capital sins and sowing chaos and discord in it's wake.

Mary's creation perishes in the purifying fire, with a chilling burn like resemblance of Joan of Arc's bonfire or the witch burning of the inquisition in all its splendor, and it is in these circumstances that reality appears with its polished and chromed appearance of a robot, being soulless, good versus evil, or not, as she was only the instrument of the wicked; the tycoon and the inventor.

The problem of these created women is that their unnatural creation, in an attempt at immaculate male conception, is that often they are close to destroying patriarchal society as well as its creator in a redeeming act that renews the idea of the mistake of the deities in creating women, either from a castle or with mud modeling, as they never follow the universal laws of robotics that Isaac Asimov advocated.

The first case of created women in cinema was the Hungarian film, *Alraune* (Mandrake) of 1918, directed by Michael Curtiz and Edmund Fritz, tells the story of an artificially created woman through what we might consider, artificial insemination, in which a prostitute is inseminated with the semen of a criminal executed by hanging, the results, of course, are disastrous. Based on the 1911 novel by Hanns Heinz Ewers *The Mandrake*, he combines the myth of mandrake<sup>1</sup> with the scientific knowledge of the time. Popular beliefs held that this plant grew where the semen ejaculated by the hanged (during the last seizures before death) fell to the ground, and that's why its roots have a vaguely human-like shape.

Here the mandrake will emerge from artificial insemination ante leteram. In the symbiosis caused by the sexual union between a human and the plant it will create a woman who will kill all those who fall in love with it. A cross-breeding between the woman created the femme fatale.

Leta is a panther genetically modified to look like a woman in *The Island of Lost Souls* based on the novel *Doctor Moreau's Island* by

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<sup>1</sup> Legend has it that the root of the mandrake, which has human form, possesses magical powers capable of making a woman pregnant'.

H.G. Wells. She is presented rather than a tiger, as a frightened kitten, frightened by her master, her creator, as a victim of ill-treatment, which is actually what it is. You're allowed to talk about the law and the house of pain. She is the only woman or female creature created to live in the house, she is the only woman who lives on the whole island, created or not. It is the recurring myth of the woman as a lioness or panther or the most affectionate as a kitten, sweet and docile but with a terrible side to it, with it's feline body and a woman's head, it is the terrible embrace of the sphinx. This film presents us with a chilling terror, in the scientist without ethical values, for which living things are only a material to work with. He will create his own world in which he is the master and lord, he believes that he enforces the laws. The spectre of Nazism resides over the entire film with the reminiscence of race purity and eugenic theories, the supremacy of the white man over all things, with power to do and undo, covered by religion and science. The end, again, as in so many stories, implies purification through fire.

Elsa Lancaster is created by Dr. Frankstein, in *Frankstein's Bride* in 1935, as a companion to the monster, but this one is horrified by it's own vision, without knowing that she is a creation of the scientist just as the monster himself. Here on the one hand we are subjected to the proposed solution in the face of the creature's repeated requests to have a partner, but as you can see, the second one is overdue, this time Dr. Frankstein does better, at least in appearance, as their dialogues leave little to be desired.

In *The Woman Created by Dr. Frankstein* of The Producer Hammer, played by Peter Cushing she appears with an unbeatable look but with an insatiable homicidal appetite. Every gentleman who crosses his path has their minutes numbered.

Sting as another «Dr. Frankstein» will create Jennifer Veals (protagonist of Flashdance) with better fortune than the monster, she became a perfect 19th-century lady. Sting will surrender to his intellectual and moral training by emulating the teachings of his teacher with little savagery, he will not model it only physically, but

mentally, collecting all the longings of its predecessors in the creation of the perfect woman, appropriate to your tastes and needs. But in this variation of Mary Shelley's original story the monster will go on with her life, integrating into a circus and learning to be human and all the values that infer this quality. As for Eva, it is the name given to the woman created by the doctor, while beginning to question its origins is promised with a soldier; this will arouse Dr. Frankstein's jealousy, who will reveal to you its true origin: that it is actually made of different pieces of corpses.

There is a list of women created or built in the most varied or strange ways. Dr Goldfoot and the *Bikini Machine* (1965), in which Vincent Price wants to seize world power with the help of a series of female robots. It is a crazy mix of horror and 1950s beach movies and it resulted in a sequel in which Dr Goldfoot builds bombs shaped like women to destroy the planet in a crazy parody of the James Bond films in *Dr Goldfoot and The Bombs Machine* (1966) directed by Mario Bava.

*The Stepford Wives* (1974), based on the novel of the same name by Ira Levin, in the midst of the feminist revolution, it tells the story of the women of this locality who are replaced by identical robots, by the local men's association, becoming perfect women, or rather, perfect housewives. Under the guise of an alleged anti-feminist, what it actually reflects is how a male society has transformed them to serve their needs.

In *Embryo* by Ralph Nelson (1976) with Barbara Carrera we see the rapid growth of an embryo into a woman without going through the stages of childhood and adolescence which prevented her from learning a moral code and turned her into a lethal beauty. They become predatory women, living representatives of the myth of the toothed vagina and the fears of castration advocated by Sigmund Freud.

*Galaxina* (1980) directed by William Sachs and stars the Playboy model Dorothy Stratten who plays a robot that is capable of feeling love. The script is absolutely inconsequential and the film is of poor

quality. Unfortunately, she owes much of her fame to the 20-year-old female protagonist being killed by her ex-boyfriend before the film was released. It seems that when they try to create male congeners they don't do too well, but when they try to create the woman they always get cute as in *The Explosive Woman* (1982), directed by John Hughes, where two teenagers create a computer program that comes to life and then instead of it being a sex toy, as they intended, it is extremely intelligent and helps them find a future within the society in which they live.

Amongst the builders/creators we find *Blade Runner* by Ridley Scott (1982) where, unlike in other cases, they have succeeded with their creations, even too much so, therefore, creations are only given a life span of four years. These beings, called replicants, at first do not have feelings, but little by little they acquire them, they are not limited to imitating or replicating, but are authentic, emanating from within and learn from the painful experiences to which humans condemn them in a kind of new slavery, becoming more human than humans themselves who are already completely dehumanized. They have restricted access to Earth, to where the four fugitives have escaped in search of the creator, looking for answers, as humans have done with the creation of religions or science, the difference is that the creator has his own name and surname: without morals, he has turned his back on his children.

Of course the created women have wonderful measures and an excellent presentation (unforgettable is Daryl Hannah when a black stripe is painted on her eyes with an airbrush to disguise herself and take the form of an automaton doll). With the appearance of dolls, the aggressiveness of the beasts in the desperate attempt to survive is shown, and as always man annihilates everything that does not interest or suit him, and also everything that can over come him.

As we see the creation of women gives us much to consider in the face of the scant imagination with which we encountered from the first mythological manifestations.

As with superheroes, all these artificially created characters, like Philip k. Dick's replicants, have a series of unanswered existentialist questions, showing themselves to be more human than humans are supposed to be. So once the creature begins to walk it acquires a life of its own, begins a path of knowledge and uncertainty that cannot supplement any program, just like no pill can solve our lives. Of course, parents always find it difficult to assume the independence and autonomous personality of children...

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## FANTASTIC CHRONICLE OF UNCHAINED PROMETHEUS

Ruth Cristina Hernández Ching

### **Introduction**

Why it is meaningful that the author did not baptize the monster with a proper name? Would it be different the end of the story if Victor Frankenstein would recognize the monster as a loved son? What metaphorical element can we find with the death of Victor Frankenstein in the frozen lands of the North Pole? How can someone become a monster? What is the role of binomials fire-alchemy and electricity-galvanism? How meaningful is the term vital spark in the monster's life? These are some of the questions that may arise after reading the book *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. Every one may think about different questions, however, for practical effects of this essay, we would reflect about the last two questions and analyze the importance of binary opposites in this novel.

### **A novel full of contradictions**

As part of deconstruction, Derrida (1975) proposes the study of hierarchical opposites in texts, indeed, by analyzing binary relations or opposites that can be found particularly in occident, such as heaven and hell, good and bad, humans and animals, civilization and barbarism, love and hate; these opposite relations can also be found in Plato. Lotman (1998) recommends the review of culture models and

texts in semiotic of written contexts. Thus, the text exposes the idea of diverse worlds, organized and disorganized, where men are confronted in two planes: anthropomorphous and isomorphic, sharing a wide repertoire of binary opposites or semantic paradigms. This duality can also be reflected throughout different stages of *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*: in the binomials of Dr. Frankenstein and his son or creation, in childhood and adulthood systems, in the terrestrial world and inferno, the existence before and after death, the connection between the motivated and unmotivated world, the chair and village life, warm and cold environments (or polar), the scientific and spiritual order, among others.

To illustrate these ideas, we can mention some passages where the main characters reflect about their own duality, the duality of others, and the environment that surrounds them. One example can be seen when the creature questions the world and its inhabitants: Was man, indeed, at one so powerful, so virtuous and magnificent, yet so vicious and base? He appeared at one time a mere scion of the evil principle and at another as all that can be conceived of noble and godlike? (Shelley, 2019, p. 140), or:

One day, when I was oppressed by cold, I found a fire which had been left by some wandering beggars, and was overcome with delight at the warmth I experienced from it. In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain. How strange, I thought, that the same cause should produce such opposite effects! (Shelley, 2019, p. 120).

Another practical example using this system of opposite poles or antonyms can be found by hierarchizing epithets found in the story when making reference to the monster:

<b>Epithets with positive connotation towards Victor Frankenstein´s creature</b>	<b>Epithets with negative connotation towards Victor Frankenstein´s creature</b>
Creature A Being Heaven-Sent Good And Wonderful Spirit	Creature Catastrophe Monster Repugnance Archenemy Lifeless Form Hideous Guest Devil Demoniactal Corpse Living Animal Vile Insect Abhorred Monster Scoffing Devil Wretched Devil Malignant Devil Lifeless Clay Lifeless Thing Lifeless Matter

Table 1: Positive and negative epithets to make reference to Victor Frankenstein´s creature. Hernández, R. (2019).

Vegara (2018), in her conference *Niños que dan cosica (Scary children)*, explains that in horror movies, the role of children in those contexts resembles a psychological game to the audience, where something monstrous and benign can be found on this stage of life. This author proposes reflection when asking the following challenging question: If nobody can save a child, who can save us? We can translate this same question because the novel makes reference to an innocent-born child who, due to indifference from society and his father, and also, due to his free will, chooses revenge, hate, and destruction. In different passages of the novel, we also discover the different stages of innatism that the «catastrophe» passes through to develop proper and improper competences from his immediate contexts.

Consequently, we can mention one passage from the text when Dr. Frankenstein feels compassion for him: For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness (Shelley, 2019, p. 116). We can observe in the novel, a desire and rejection for childhood as a desired period. In fact, the masterpiece makes reference to *Paradise Lost* by John Milton (1667). With the arrival to the world of the «vile insect», a new life and death starts for Victor at the same time.

### **The igneous elements in the masterpiece and the solar kingdom**

The use of the igneous element in the work already represents a complete universe of contradiction and contrast simultaneously. Lotman (1998) mentions fire as part of initiation ceremonies with all the contributions of light and interior birth. In Christianity, this essential element of matter is also present in the alpha and omega of its followers. González-Rivas (2006) associate the meaning of fire to knowledge, life, and technology: «fire is the science that Dr. Frankenstein uses for its creation» (p. 316).

In the work of Shelley (2014), fire, as a vital spark, is associated with the discovery of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life to guarantee humanity eternal life. If we observe carefully, the story is presented to us as a cyclic history that begins and ends with fire. The origin of the creature and the beginning of a new chaotic life for both characters begins in the laboratory by means of fire and concludes at the pole with the extinction of the said essential element. Fire is presented both at the beginning and at the end: «I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet» (Shelley, 2019, p. 58) and «The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Faraway» (Shelley, 2019, p. 277).

In fact, we can discover moments in the novel when we really doubt about the existence of a monster because it seems that we listen to the narration of a dual actor, in other words, Victor reflecting about his alter ego, his blind ego, as Díaz y Almanza mention it (2006). About this topic, other writers have also related this alternation, like in the novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Stevenson (1886), which is part of the scientific novel genre.

Therefore, there are moments that the text seems a detective novel, and whose readers must determine if there is indeed an «abhorred monster» persecuting the researcher. This same vital spark marks in the story the extinction of both characters in the polar world, absent from the solar kingdom. In fact, it is not until the end of the work, when it is showed for the first time, a documentary evidence that reveals its existence, and this is the last letter written at the end of the story.



Image 2. Mary Shelley and chemistry as part of natural philosophy. Hernández, G. (2018).

## **Igneous roots of Victor and his son**

Propp (1974, p. 257) mentions that, in fantastic story, fire fulfills the mediation between two kingdoms. How is the image of Victor and his son fused with the representation of fire? Are there materials that can show how this linkage has been formed? We can recall that in certain segments of the novel, it is confusing to realize in which dimension action is taking place within the binomial earth and hell.

As an important characteristic to be highlighted, the transfer is rescued as an element of composition, and thus, the antihero is led to this world, which, according to Propp (1974, p.313) reminds us the «representation of the pilgrimage of the deceased to the world beyond the grave.» However, the irony of this transfer in Shelley's work is precisely the fact that the world beyond the grave is represented by the land where both the hero and the anti-hero coexist, who transmute their roles in the same scenario (Hernández -Ching, 2017).

In addition, we could also be talking about what Propp (1974, p.314) mentions as the hybrid forms of transformation in which «the figure of the deceased unfolds in the one who leads and is led, or who guides and is guided». At some point in the story, companies are led by the «archenemy» who orders the scientist what to do. The company of Victor consists, then, in creating a companion for the «hideous guest». It should be noted that this event occurs parallel to the preparation of Victor's wedding, therefore, we can see again how the action in the work takes place at the same time that the binary or opposite relations are presented.

Once again, the very act of scientific progress is questioned here, where a scientific problem can be solved in a laboratory, but its side effects cannot be measured in the social sphere.



Image 3. Request of a female partner. Hernández, G. (2018).

## Conclusions

Fire, as igneous element in Shelley's novel, is used as a secret path to a world of binary elements and relations that allow to write the action to extreme opposite poles linked by common cores. The presence of Dr. Frankenstein in the novel, unmasks binary multifaceted stages that endow the story with mysticism through a wide range of epithets: student, son, father, brother, friend, boyfriend, fiancé, husband, scientist and scapegoat, author of his own destiny, but at the same time, victim of the desire for knowledge, immortality, and power.

We should not only limit the novel to horror genre. Rather, we could expand it to other contexts such as thriller, science, drama, mystery, gothic, science fiction, mythology, literature (Greek, English, French, Swiss, and Italian), science fiction, and love novel, among others. Shelley's work, full of controversy and contrariety, reflects the human and scientific paradoxes not only of past times but also of contemporaneity.

Without any doubt, the ingenuity, cunning, sensitivity, and vital spark of the author will live forever in the annals of universal literature thanks to the complex labyrinth of oppositions that has bequeathed to us through the fantastic chronicle of unchained Prometheus.

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# SUPERHERO REPRESENTATION IN NETFLIX PRODUCED SERIAL FICTION. THE CASE OF DAREDEVIL, JESSICA JONES, LUKE CAGE, IRON FIST AND THE PUNISHER

Laura Agüera Santiago

## 1. The role of superhero today

Today, and since 1985, we are in the so-called Modern Age of Comics. A time in which the usual characters, heroes or villains, are redesigned: their origins and their lives are darker and more complex than ever before; This period is also called the Dark Age of Comics (Ayres, 2016).

Those characters that were quite successful during the Bronze Age because of their themes, dark plots and with great social relevance, will still have a great influence on the Modern Age (Voger, 2006). When competing with the new media -cinema and television- the reading public is no longer childish, but mostly adult. This gave the authors more freedom and ability to create. The superhero tradition is analyzed, reconstructed, and ridiculed; the protagonists no longer wear tights (Ndalianis, 2009). But their weapons to deal with threats are bigger and more ferocious - knives, guns, claws - and their thirst for blood, their role as a vigilante, increases (Voger, 2006). The majority are judges, juries and executioners; the antihero is born: Deadpool or The Punisher.

The Modern Age also has characters, heroes and villains, with great psychological depth and evident imperfections: Magneto, villain of

the X-Men, was portrayed as a holocaust survivor whose controversial actions intend to save the rest of mutants from a similar fate («Magneto Testament # 1», 2008).

In 1996, after the market bubble for the comics' collection, *Marvel Comics* goes bankrupt. Comic book sales go down and cancel many stories. To survive, the company hires new authors, giving freshness to the genre: publications such as «Marvel Knights» (1998) or «Ultimate Marvel» (2000) reinitiate the origins from scratch, forgetting the former long continuity, and focusing more on the quality of the individual stories (Raphael and Spurgeon, 2003). The attack of September 2001 in New York impacted on the narrative of the beginning of the new century: series more realistic than ever, with harder and more effective heroes, unable to stop before any obstacle or threat. The villain was a complex and dangerous terrorist who sought destruction and chaos in society. The themes were about dealing with national politics, foreign policy and civil liberties of the United States (Vilches Fuentes, 2014).

In the 2000s *Marvel Comics* slowly rises from bankruptcy. Although comic book sales are not as high as they used to be, and the public is very limited, it is the versions taken to the movies and television that save the superhero comics. The line «Ultimate Marvel» (2000-2015) focuses more on restarting the stories of the most famous characters but in an alternative universe: characters and series no longer «mix», departing from the existing continuity, to even consider the new as the official one, creating younger characters with different personalities. This is the line that has most often been adapted to other media (Riesman, 2015).

## **2. Adaptation of Marvel's superhero to the new media**

Art imitates reality, and similarly, comic superheroes have tried to adapt to the times in which they have been represented. Due to the extensive American production of superhero comics and the success they initially had, it was inevitable that these cartoons would «jump» to the mass media (Rodríguez, 2012). Television and cinema now reach

wider audiences than even the most popular comic that exists. So that, in today's culture, a narrative flourish, develop, evolve and last, it must be carried out through mass media. The superhero genre is no exception (Muir, 2008).

The comics' characters «were born» in the 1940s, time of the popular American film serials (García-Escrivá, 2018). In addition, they were times of the Second World War: the public longed for the triumph of good. The heroes wore American patriotic costumes and fought to defend American values.

When television arrived in 1950 and with the decline of serial cinema, these characters left the big screen moving to the new medium, with a similar diffusion format: the series (García-Escrivá, 2018). Despite the comical character of the genre, it was possible to give greater importance to the role of the villain; he was no longer a foreigner. This style was maintained until the end of the 1960s: with the rise of counterculture and feminist movements, heroes parodied figures of authority.

The first adaptations of superheroes taken to the movies were not very successful due to technological limitations. With the development of technology in the late 1970s, special effects arrive, and with them the first success of the genre in feature film format: *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978). After the premiere of this film, Hollywood realized the potential of superhero comic adaptations: *Superman* was followed by three sequels (Rodríguez, 2012).

The world of superheroes in these new media advances, becoming more and more a reflection of everyday reality, but maintaining its original fantastic qualities (Muir, 2008). But it has not been until the beginning of this new century, with the premieres of the trilogies of *X-Men* and *Spiderman* (started by Bryan Synger in 2000 and Sam Raimi in 2002, respectively), that the presence of superhero films in the movie listings is habitual.

Stan Lee, father and creator of many characters of *Marvel Comics*, said that the technological advances in the special effects of contemporary cinema and television have managed to make visual justice to the exploits and superpowers of the comics' heroes (Inverne, 2002). The C.G.I. (*Computer-generated images*), *chroma key*, or improvements in special effects, have been a revolution on a large scale in the history of the superhero in film and television: this audiovisual language has captured, in a very realistic way, the vignettes' static images (Rodríguez, 2012).

In the superhero genre, native from *Marvel Comics*, the products that are part of the narrative are not independent: they are integrated into a series of interwoven audiovisual products: cinematographic franchises (García-Escrivá, 2018). Marvel Entertainment, a subsidiary of Disney, contains Marvel Television that, since 2009, produces series in real image. These are framed in the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* (from now on, MCU), and share its continuity and its characters, broadcasting in chains such as ABC or online platforms.

Marvel's leap to the television culminates with one of the most successful alliances in 2013: *The Walt Disney Company* with Netflix, the platform of video on demand. Disney committed to invest 200 million US dollars (Spangler, 2014) to develop 60 episodes in real image distributed in four series and one miniseries, featuring secondary characters from Marvel Comics (Spangler, 2013).

Marvel Studios (owned by *The Walt Disney Company*) is the studio responsible for the successes of the *X-Men*, *Spiderman* and *MCU* franchises -releasing nineteen films with narrative continuity, profiting 14,800 million dollars worldwide: the film franchise with highest grossing of all time- (Mendelson, 2017).

### **2.1. Identity of the superhero in serial fiction**

The costume is, perhaps, the most distinctive feature of the comic superhero. While the personality, appearance and even the powers can

change between the multiple and different versions of the character, the disguise is the most recognizable aspect of superhero characterization: the identity that shows to the world.

Preserving the identity of those who perform heroic actions facing many dangers and threats, it matters: it not only safeguards their integrity, but also protects their friends and family. The costume also allows the heroic identity to enjoy some privacy when challenging the law or the forces of order. The heroes have therefore two identities, the secret and the public. These, apparently incompatible, are separated and enabled by the disguise; the two roles of the superhero seem to be contradictory, since it is ordinary and, in turn, extraordinary (Brownie and Graydon, 2015).

Within the different identities present in the *MCU* and *Marvel Television*, there are superheroes who, through a disguise, prevent others from knowing their other identity and those who do not. Most of the time, the heroes have a normal life with a job and social relationships: the teenager Peter Parker, the scientist and businessman Tony Stark, or the lawyer Matt Murdock. The costume they wear to face threats is what allows them to separate their private life, from their superheroic life.

### **3. Netflix-Marvel Alliance**

In recent years, audiovisual entertainment has stopped showing only in traditional media such as film and television. The emergence of digital platforms on the Internet, specialized in the production of original content or third-party distribution, have introduced a new television model more adapted to the present audience, offering personalized content.

Since its inception in the 60s, *Marvel Entertainment* is one of the most effective entertainment company to create stories based on the more than 5000 characters contained in its archive. And, although the Marvel superhero had previously been represented on television, it is

from his alliance with Netflix in 2013 that it began to invest large long-term resources destined to more ambitious production of dramatic television content, the series, adding better plots and responding to current consumption needs (Radošinská, 2017).

In the original agreement with Netflix, it was commissioned the development of 60 episodes in real image originally distributed in four series of 13 episodes and one miniseries of 8: *Marvel's Daredevil*, *Marvel's Jessica Jones*, *Marvel's Luke Cage*, *Marvel's Iron Fist* and the miniseries *Marvel's The Defenders*. The popularity that *The Punisher* obtained as a secondary character in the second season of *Daredevil*, caused a deal to develop 13 episodes more, to re-introduce the personage with its own spin-off.

This has been a resounding success. The strategy of Netflix-Marvel is the television equivalent of what the *MCU* achieved in the cinema: to present, first individually, some outstanding personalities of society and, later, to make them work together despite their differences and peculiarities. Like *The Avengers* in the cinema, *The Defenders* on Netflix has managed to bring together the different audiences of each individual installment (connected by shared events and characters).

Another outstanding aspect of this alliance is the target group of the series: they are designed to attract a more adult one, as these digital platforms are not required to develop rated products –according to the American age rating (Federal Communications Commission, 2016)– at most TV-14: for «over 14 years», or «underage under adult supervision». This allows adjusting the themes, tones and key scenes to resemble those of adult life.

#### **4. Qualitative Study**

The main objective of this dissertation is to analyze the representation of the Marvel comics' hero in the original series created by Netflix. The reason why these Netflix-Marvel series have been chosen, over the other heroic fictions of television or cinema, is because they are representations of more faithful characters to today's society, more

human and with problems: they are not perfect. These are individuals from different backgrounds, contexts, abilities, gender, and even race, who, despite having special abilities, have a normal life with a job and with social relationships, which must be compatible with their desire, or almost, obligation, to face the villains, the threats and the injustices of the world in which they live.

These are the five series whose first season has been analyzed (each with 13 episodes):

- *Marvel's Daredevil* (2015-Present)
- *Marvel's Jessica Jones* (2015-Present)
- *Marvel's Luke Cage* (2016-2018)
- *Marvel's Iron Fist* (2017-2018)
- *Marvel's The Punisher* (2017-Present)

The analysis of the representation of the hero in the serial fiction of Netflix-Marvel, has been made taking into account certain aspects characteristic of a hero and his environment: his skills, his social relationships, his priorities, his morality, the legality of his actions, the crime and the threats he faces, and the violence he exerts in that search of justice for the society.

A total of 65 chapters have been visualized analyzing the actions of their protagonists. To facilitate the presentation of the results, these have been grouped into headings:

#### **4.1 Protagonist representation**

Unlike most of the audiovisual products that have represented the superhero, in the five analyzed seasons is bet on the racial, sexual, social and cultural diversity of the personages. Both in the male and female case, these series make a more progressive portrait of the human being and of society, showing plurality of individuals, histories and social contexts.

Matt Murdock is a blind lawyer with knowledge of martial arts who, at night, masked as Daredevil, defends the New York neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen from crime. A white man, with dark hair, strong and attractive complexion. From humble origins, he first becomes blind due to an accident, and later orphaned by his only family, his father. He is raised by an authoritarian master of martial arts who also ends up abandoning him. Even so, his origins and his faith in justice will cause him to work pro bono: Murdock understands that the world is not fair or equitable, and he wants to do something about it.

Jessica Jones is a private detective of Hell's Kitchen with post-traumatic stress that tries to face the fears of her past. She has super strength and «flight», although she prefers not to use them. She is a strong, determined and independent woman, with fair complexion, dark hair, and slender; nor is she the typical privileged Western person: orphaned after an accident, she finds it hard to get along with her adoptive family. Jones breaks with the superheroic stereotypes of female representation: insults, drinks and assaults people while trying to build a better society; she is not a sexualized heroine created to please the male audience, she is valued for its heroic feats and characteristics.

Luke Cage is an ex-convict African-American fugitive with superhuman strength and indestructible skin, who struggles to recover his former life and protect the most underprivileged from the mafias and criminals who harass them, thus maintaining the essence of the neighborhood in which he lives, the multicultural Harlem. He is an empathetic, generous and calm character, with a big and strong constitution. Raised in a humble Georgia family, he is willing to risk everything for those who suffer injustice as a pro bono «rental hero», despite his bad relationship with his remaining family, his economic difficulties, and his many enemies.

Danny Rand is a billionaire who dominates martial arts with superhuman abilities, taught by humble Buddhist monks who raised him when he was orphaned after an accident. When he returns to New York 15 years later, he recovers the wealthy family heritage and lives

in the wealthy part of Manhattan. He is young, white, blond, with blue eyes: canon of privileged western person. Danny is also kind, humane and affable; understands that the world is not fair. Therefore, it protects his city and his company from an evil organization, his destiny as Iron Fist.

Frank Castle is an ex-Marine who fights against organized and street crime with lethal methods. He is white, with black hair, strong build, brave and meticulous, with great fighting abilities. It is characterized by exercising physical and verbal violence without fear. Upon returning from the war he discovers that his family has died due to a shooting, which makes him a person damaged and moved by his desire for revenge. Becoming The Punisher, he hunts down and assassinates those responsible, seeking the «justice» that the legal and judicial system did not give to his family.

#### **4.2 Duality of the protagonist: individuality, identity**

The cinema and television representations have shown two types of heroic individuals, those who hide their alter ego, and those who do not; the same happens with the series analyzed in this paper. When setting in a society very similar to ours, the typical and colorful costumes of the cartoons are replaced by a more credible version and adjusted to the reality of today. It has been observed that, although not all the protagonists conceal their identity or disguise themselves, one will.

Matt Murdock at daytime is a public defender who deals with injustice using the law; and at night it is Daredevil, the vigilante who confronts the criminals of the streets, defending his city. This is the only protagonist who prefers to maintain a complete secret identity, which he will not reveal, except for a few he trusts. He successfully protects his friends and himself, preserving his well-being and personal and work safety. He hides with a bandage as a mask for the upper half of his head and a black suit.

Jessica Jones is a private detective who does not hide who she is, nor what she can do. She does not hesitate to use her abilities for her own work interests, nor does she deny her powers when they discover them. There are few characters that really know who she is, being able to seek or offer her help. Like Murdock, Jones also protects her friends from being collateral victims but, having no secret identity or not worrying about hiding it, many secondary characters will end up being harmed by the actions of the villain.

Luke Cage is a fugitive who uses his skills when he needs them, openly helping the people of Harlem, but preventing criminals or police from discovering him. Being aware of his abilities, he is not interested in being a well-known hero since this would reveal his fugitive status, although later, he ends up becoming the defender of the locals from the threats they must face. As happens with Jones or Rand, showing his identity, this character also ends with friends caught in the crossfire.

Danny Rand does not hide he is the heir of the family fortune and protector of the sacred city of K'un-Lun, the Immortal Iron Fist. He uses his powers in the presence of others, revealing his identity to anyone who asks. He does not wear a costume or hide his double life: he wants to be the hero, and wants a criminal organization to locate him in order to confront them. The lack of separation between his identities, makes him a person unable to maintain the welfare of their relatives, although this has an advantage: Rand will find powerful allies who will help him when in need.

Although everyone knows who Frank Castle was in the past, now justice and society consider him deceased. When he confronts those who had something to do with the death of his family, he does so with his face uncovered, making it clear why and who is taking their lives. He has no mask or suit; but he wears dark clothes with a black bulletproof vest with the white skull that characterizes him. Although he keeps a low profile, Castle does not hide his double identity because he knows he has nothing and no one to lose.

### 4.3 Skills and obtaining powers

The characters from the vignettes can perform actions that others can not, with skills that make them different. These special skills vary a lot, but they are classified into two types: within human limits; and outside those limits, the superhuman ones. However, they could also be classified according to their origin: result of an experiment, an accident, or due to training.

As a young man Matt Murdock suffers an accident that leaves him blind. On the other hand, its four remaining senses are hypersensitized. When he becomes an orphan he receives a hard and constant training, learning martial arts, and controlling his other senses: sharpened ear to hear distant sounds, breaths or heartbeats; smell to locate and distinguish people, even from a distance; and touch and taste to recognize materials and notice imperceptible surface vibrations. Daredevil will use these skills to face the crime of the streets.

Jessica Jones is a woman with superhuman strength and ability to jump. She has a faster and more effective healing factor than other humans, quickly recovering when she is attacked. In the first season it is intuited that Jones obtained the powers after the car accident that left her an orphan. Initially, this character does not repress her powers, but she does not use them frequently either. It is in her maturity when she really takes advantage of those skills for her work interests. Although she does not know martial arts or any physical or armed combat, she tries to do justice with her cunning and her abilities.

When Luke Cage was badly wounded in prison he was subjected to chemical experiments. When a guard sabotaged the capsule where he was stuck, a reaction ended up modifying the structure of his skin making it unbreakable, granting him superhuman strength. In addition, this character knows hand-to-hand combat: in prison he was trained in boxing. Despite his great complexion, his size is human. Cage regularly uses his skills, becoming the «rental hero» needed by locals, to defend themselves against neighborhood mafias and crimes.

Like Murdock, when Danny Rand is orphaned he also receives a hard training: the monks of a mystical and sacred city take their human abilities to the limit making him one of their best «warriors»: expert in Kung-Fu, judo and others fights. In the most difficult trial he obtained his supernatural power, the Iron Fist: concentrating all his vital energy flow in his right fist, hardening it, makes him resistant to any attacks. When Rand uses this ability, he hits with great force, without causing pain or injury to himself.

Frank Castle as The Punisher, although having no mystical or superhuman ability, is the one that has best managed to push his capabilities to the limit within human boundaries. As a former military and marine, he is perfectly trained for war: an expert strategist, with excellent marksmanship and very effective in attack and bodily defense. He uses any type of weapon and can even deactivate or make homemade bombs. Castle uses those skills whenever he thinks it necessary, which led to him being called «The Punisher».

#### **4.4 Social and family life of the protagonist**

The need to maintain an ordinary and private life, apart from one as a superheroic public figure, makes some characters to become lonely people, with few, or no friends or sentimental relationships. In addition, some individuals lack family ties, which they abandoned to protect them from threats, or just because they no longer have anyone else. The characters in this essay are very diverse, in terms of relationships: those who do not fear and enjoy socialization, and those who do not. But none of these protagonists has a biological family to lean on.

Matt Murdock is an orphan since childhood: his father was killed by the mafia. An only-begotten child, without mother or other close family, Stick takes care of him until he leaves him. Due to his actions as Daredevil, Murdock does not want to put people in danger: he maintains a very closed circle of friends that he trusts and socializes with in a bar after work hours. Murdock has no love relationships: he fears that the other person will discover his double identity, becoming a collateral victim.

After the Jones' car accident, Jessica becomes an orphan when she is a teenager. Having no more family, she is adopted by a child star. Although she never got along with her stepmother, she did with her stepsister, who ended up being her best friend. But Jessica does not have many friends or socialize in public: the friendship for her is to be there when the other needs it, without implying a constant presence. Jones does have romantic relationships, although occasional.

Luke Cage has no family alive, his parents passed away through old age. Though he has a half brother who hates him for not being accepted as a legitimate son, like Cage. In spite of being a fugitive, he is very sociable: he gets along with all the people of Harlem, they also esteem him and resort to his help when they need it. In addition, Cage is not short on people who want to get intimate with him: Jessica Jones, a police detective and the nurse Claire. Cage, like Frank Castle, was married and is now a widower.

Danny Rand lost his family in a plane crash. Also an only-begotten child without a known family, he was not «adopted»: the monks who raised him acted as mere instructors of fighters. When he returns to New York, he finds it difficult to get back in touch with his childhood friends. Many consider him an impostor, because he supposedly died. Though he only recovers the relationship with some, Colleen, a new friend, becomes his battle and sentimental partner.

Frank Castle is the loneliest, he has no family known: they murdered his wife and two children. He does not want, nor can he, have friends or another loving relationship: his enemies are still looking for him and anyone who is related to Castle is in danger; he goes away because he can not protect them all. However, there are some people who, as allies, will help Castle by providing him with sensitive information necessary to act as The Punisher.

## 4.5 Traumatized heroes

Most heroes are individuals of human nature, and in spite of their extraordinary actions, they are imperfect, physically and psychically. Having a double life implies consequences and events, in part, fateful, that not everyone knows how to deal with correctly. The disabilities, the vital attitude they have, and how they deal with past traumas, will affect the behavior and personality of the characters. In these series, everyone is traumatized, although to a different degree.

Matt Murdock is blind, but this physical incapacity does not prevent him from being Daredevil; he handles himself better with its four remaining senses than any other person. According to him, the view is overrated, he does not need it. The lawyer and Daredevil make up the «man with no fear»: someone who, despite the blindness and his early orphanhood, does not surrender to difficulties, seeing the good side of things and people, protecting them from street crime and various mafias of Hell's Kitchen, the problematic and violent neighborhood where he lives.

The character of Jessica Jones has been shaped by the different experiences lived. The death of her family and her relationship with her adoptive family made her a lonely, tormented, complex and independent person. The last serious relationship she had and its consequences, caused her alcoholism. But she turns from hiding from her fears, to being someone who does not allow traumas to define herself. Although she sometimes believes that humanity does not deserve saving, she will ultimately try to achieve a safer world.

The unjust imprisonment of Luke Cage, the death of his wife and the experimentation to which he was subjected, are events that impact on this character in a different way than expected: instead of isolating himself and surrendering to the difficult circumstances, Cage believes that life can always improve. He tries to move on while fixing the, sometimes violent, Harlem. Despite the experiences lived, he has a pacifist and human nature and does not want to contribute to the horrors and evils of society.

Danny Rand is very optimistic; this leads him to make mistakes when judging the intentions of the people surrounding him. Despite his orphanage, the hard training of the monks and the difficult mission he has as the Iron Fist, Rand is one of the few protagonists who does not stop being happy and satisfied with the life he leads now. His childhood traumas only manifest in dreams or when he needs to concentrate. He believes he can save the world from threats, and that motivates him to keep on trying.

Frank Castle has lost his faith in humanity. The family loss constantly traumatizes him, he is a damaged, tortured and angry individual. Castle does not see beyond revenge, or, as he says, natural justice: «punishment». He has also been betrayed by his superiors, friends and his own government; he is alone. Castle deals with his traumas by eliminating anyone related to the murder of his family, and without knowing exactly what his next purpose will be. For him there is no happy ending.

#### **4.6 Values of the classic hero**

The classic hero is that character who, according to his idealized personality traits, possesses extraordinary abilities that allow him to perform feats destined to improve the society in which he lives. Empathy, a sense of responsibility, courage and willingness to defend the innocent, altruism, personal sacrifice, and perseverance in the face of problems and adversities are some of the defining qualities of the hero. The characters analyzed here, sometimes, do not meet those heroic skills. The main priority of Matt Murdock is to defend the innocent. By day, as a lawyer, with the law and the judicial system. Knowing that, sometimes, both are insufficient, at night, as Daredevil, he faces threats from the streets. Like Luke Cage, Murdock feels responsible for the security of «his neighborhood», sacrificing the interpersonal relationships he may have: he fears that his actions affect third parties. He can see things from the perspective of the other, and will voluntarily put his physical integrity in danger, intervening in many other people's conflicts to save the victims.

Jessica Jones does not consider herself, nor wants to be, any heroine: she avoids getting involved in other people's fights and does not want to «clean» her neighborhood of thugs. She protects herself and those who are affected by the threats that pursue her. Once, Jones was also a victim; that allowed her, eventually, to understand what other people are suffering, deciding to defend them. The villain looks for her and although sometimes it is difficult, it is her responsibility to stop him. Like Murdock, she will also try to sacrifice the friendships she has, so as not to put anyone in danger.

For Luke Cage, Harlem is an «authentic» neighborhood, differentiated from the cosmopolitan City of New York. Cage feels responsible for his neighborhood: he wants to protect it, make it safer for the communities that live in it. Putting himself in the place of defenseless people, he decides to risk his fugitive status by becoming the local «rental hero»: he defends the innocent from the current multiple threats, getting involved in other people's conflicts. Cage knows that the invulnerability of his skin allows him to stop injustices.

Since Danny Rand returned to New York, he had no other objective than to destroy The Hand: his mission as Iron Fist. Like Jones, the priority of this character is not to purge his neighborhood, nor to defend the innocent, but he will do it if it is directly related to his mission. But, although his intentions are good, sometimes he errs deciding what is the best thing he can do for the people he helps. His lack of responsibility is compensated by his willingness to sacrifice everything he has, including himself, to fulfill his destiny.

Of all, Frank Castle is the only one who does not feel responsible for the acts he commits as The Punisher: a «criminal-killer» that punishes whoever deserves it, being indifferent to leave orphaned families behind. Castle believes that his duty is to clean the streets of crime; he is not looking to save anyone, although if he found someone in danger he would eliminate the threat. He is unable to empathize with his victims, but wants to protect the few people he cares about. Perseverance is his distinguishing feature, without fearing sacrificing his own life.

#### 4.7 The moral code of the hero and his relationship with the law

The hero is an ambiguous individual; performs beneficial actions for society, while, on occasion, violates the rules. So what differentiates a hero from a villain if they both end up committing acts that violate established laws? It is difficult to find a character whose actions as a vigilante are not considered unlawful. Hence the need to understand what induces the hero to break the rules: what is the moral code that guides him, and the relationship he has with the law and justice of the society in which he lives.

Matt Murdock is very aware of his roots. His father taught him values such as courage, kindness and good manners, making him disciplined. As a lawyer, he wants and must, believe in the justice system, but he knows that, sometimes, it is insufficient; the concept of «blind justice» haunts him. At night, he breaks some laws such as Daredevil, a vigilante that attempts against the integrity of people but without killing anyone. In addition, being himself a Catholic Christian, he questions often the moral of his actions.

Jessica Jones learned the basic values that her natural family taught her: to be strong, determined, humble and responsible. The different experiences and traumas she went through, made her a survivor who does not allow herself to be influenced by religion, other institutions, or anyone else; she only believes in herself and in her experiences. As a private investigator, Jones collaborates with agencies that abide by the rules; she wants to believe in the justice system, but because it is ineffective, she acts outside the law.

Luke Cage's father was a pastor in a church. Like Murdock, but in a lesser degree, his moral are also influenced by religion: honesty, kindness and generosity towards others, love the family, etc. Although, like Jones, the experience is also decisive for him: Cage distrusts traditional justice, as it is, at times, fruitless, unfair and slow. As he is a fugitive, all the acts he commits are illegal. Even so, he will take the risk to protect his neighborhood from threats and criminals.

Although Danny Rand's parents instilled values in him, it was the monks who welcomed him and the oriental, mystical and spiritual culture that shaped his character: not to fear, to be courageous and patient, not to give in to threats, etc. Since Rand has not been raised in a Western society, he does not believe that he must obey the law or current order of the city: for him, «his fate» as Iron Fist justifies everything illegal he does to protect society from the threat posed by the criminal organization of «The Hand».

The cover-up and murder of the family of Frank Castle translates into a failure of justice and society's values, causing that this character is not influenced by almost any moral code, but his own values of justice and experience lived, as a soldier and as a civilian. His two identities do not respect the law, breaking the rules, taking justice onto his own hands: kill, wound and torture without weighing the value of a human life. Although he calls it «punishment», what motivates him is personal revenge.

#### **4.8 Villains and threats facing the protagonist**

The fight of good against evil has been fought since the beginning of time; the characters in the vignettes are no exception. And since not all heroes are equal in effectiveness, power and characteristics, neither are villains: they have different motivations, objectives, and social and economic resources. In the analyzed series, the protagonists face villains that can be simple street criminals (individuals or mafias) or corrupt official organisms; the threats come from their own social and personal environment, or are external.

Matt Murdock confronts criminals as a lawyer, and as Daredevil: from drug dealers or human traffickers, to rapists and thieves. He does not fear organized crime, nor the most dangerous mafias: The Triad, The Bratva or The Yakuza. His main enemy is a person in particular, for whom the criminals work: Wilson Fisk, a tycoon and construction entrepreneur who makes agreements with drug traffickers, threatening and killing anyone who tries to intrude. Murdock will also face those corrupt people from the official organisms of security, order and government.

Jessica Jones is a tormented woman with powers that avoids to use for heroic purposes: once they provoked a terrible act against an innocent person. That is why she will not fight street criminals, except if she is directly involved. Her main threat is Kilgrave: a whimsical, narcissistic and sociopathic individual, with the ability to control people's will. He commits crimes because of his obsession with Jones, and they are oriented to recover her affection. Being personal, she will face all the obstacles and difficulties that the villain and his accomplices put.

Luke Cage will confront the various criminals on the streets of Harlem: thieves, extortionists or any individual who points at another with a weapon. In addition, Cage faces the gangster who controls them all, Cornell Stokes, «Cottonmouth»: a nightclub owner who controls the illegal sale of weapons and drug trafficking, which has bribed many policemen, councilors and judges whom Cage will uncover. Then comes a threat from the family: his half brother Willis Striker, «Diamondback», who, motivated by his childhood jealousy, will do everything possible to take down Cage.

«The Hand», a criminal organization formed by individuals highly trained in martial arts, is the main threat that Danny Rand faces as the Iron Fist. He was trained for the sole purpose of destroying it regardless of the consequences, protecting the sacred city of K'un-Lun from its evil plans. But it is not until he returns to his hometown, New York, that Rand realizes that the organization has infested the multinational company of which he is heir, thus carrying out its projects on a global scale. Harold Meachum, once a friend of the Rands, betrays him by becoming one of his antagonists.

Frank Castle is the one that faces the most people and threats; his enemies are the most dangerous. He starts hunting the mafias responsible for the shooting of his family: The Irish, The Mexicans, and a biker gang. Later, he discovers that this death was part of a larger conspiracy, in which national security forces, private organizations, judges and corrupt police officers were also involved. As The Punisher,

he will challenge these institutions and people to uncover and eliminate them. But Billy Russo, ex-marine and his best friend, also looks for him because of an illegal Black Op mission they both carried out.

#### **4.9 Violence exerted by the protagonist**

Violence is a tool: villains use their powers for evil purposes; the heroes use theirs to protect the vulnerable and defend the good. But a constant demonstration of aggressiveness of the enemies, causes the violence of the «heroes» to perpetuate. In these series there are no limits established in relation to the amount of violence shown, allowing large doses of violence exerted by both the hero and the villain. It will also be analyzed if the characters are able to seek justice using brute force, enjoying it, and their capacity to kill another person.

When Matt Murdock is Daredevil, he does not hesitate to attack his enemies with learned martial arts. He also uses objects he finds to hit his enemies, such as metal bars, or the clubs of his characteristic costume. His methods are violent: he hurts and tortures harshly but, due to his moral code and his religion, he avoids killing anyone. Murdock takes advantage of Daredevil's violence: not to hurt and enjoy it, but to complement his legal way of facing threats from his neighborhood and do justice.

Jessica Jones is not a fighter; refrains from using violence, unless they force her to do so, or anger her. Despite not knowing how to fight in the proper way, thanks to her abilities, she can throw and strike with energy the individuals she faces. As with Luke Cage, Jones does not want to get into trouble; she is a discreet person who does not enjoy gratuitous violence: the death that she caused involuntarily a few years ago, still traumatizes her. But to take care of the villain and save the city, she must resort to the last, and least desired, possible option: homicide.

Luke Cage does not abuse or enjoy violence when he fights. Due to its enormous strength and the fact that almost nothing wounds him, he does not bother to execute furious attacks against the enemy:

a simple slap knocks someone unconscious, and he is able to bend or break with his own hands the attacker's weapon. But Cage is, above all, peaceful, and will not fight unless they bother him, even stopping to defend himself. Because of the values that Cage has, he is incapable of killing anyone, even though the mafias want to incriminate him some murders.

Danny Rand is different. As Iron Fist his mission is to stop the criminal organization of «The Hand», and will not hesitate to use extreme violence, or even kill, everyone related to the actions of this evil group. But, because of his training as a warrior in martial arts and in the eastern culture and beliefs of Buddhism, Rand is a serene and compassionate person; if he is ruthless when attacking «The Hand» i, he does it because Iron Fist must. He himself does not enjoy violence: the actions of his alter ego do not represent the humanity of Danny Rand.

Frank Castle will do everything possible to do «justice» for his family: he will face his enemies with very different methods and weapons. The Punisher will also hurt and torture anyone to obtain the necessary information, and will eventually murder, because he does not believe that social reintegration and personal redemption is possible. Castle is seduced by violence and blood, which is why he enlisted in the Marine. He is a good fighter, and he enjoys anticipating a death, and the adrenaline that entails carrying it out. With so many enemies, the victims of this character are counted by the dozens, most of them criminals or scofflaws.

## **5. Conclusions**

1. The serial fiction of superhero genre is booming. The superhero of the Marvel comics, not only has gone through the vignettes of the paper to reach to the big and small screen, but also has adapted to the new times and consumption patterns.

2. The production model of Netflix allows originality and creative freedom to create content, without the typical age restrictions that traditional television puts on the superhero genre. That is why the Netflix series created in collaboration with Marvel, are aimed at a more adult audience than the one that, habitually, consumes these products originated from comics. This freedom allows a more adult and obscure theme, where physical or verbal violence, ownership or use of weapons, sex, abuse and other taboos of society can be shown without censorship, making a faithful reflection of the communities and the contemporary individual.
3. Digging up little-known characters from the catalog of superheroes, and showing them on the small screen as brave individuals who face injustice, the emergence of minorities, both social collectives and real-life cultures, has been achieved, enabling the public to identify with a figure to whom they seem more physically, or ethnically, being able to turn them into a role model.
4. It is affirmed that those characters who use a costume to hide the second identity they have, manage better to protect those around him from threats. The more public a hero's secret identity is, the worse his own and third parties' physical integrity will be preserved.
5. Those characters who have supernatural powers, is because they were subjected to a scientific experiment, or that they obtained as a result of an accident. But the lack of skills outside the limits of the human being does not suppose an obstacle when performing heroic actions to do justice and/or a social good, and through an exhaustive training in any discipline, it can improve and, even, achieve, the necessary human attributes to face threats.

6. Heroic actions are, to some extent, triggered by a traumatic experience. All the heroes who try to do justice, or their version of it, suffered the loss of some physical faculty or of a family member, lived some injustice or social disappointment, or made mistakes that now persecute them. However, trying to overcome the trauma, allows them to perform tasks that benefit society.
7. All the protagonists break the law in the same way as the individuals they face; the villains. Consequently, they should not be considered as «heroes». But, since most of them do possess the characteristics of the traditional hero, reinforced by a moral code, it could be said that, in principle, these characters are heroes. Everyone, except Frank Castle, The Punisher, who cannot be considered a «hero» but, rather, an anti-hero.
8. Finally, there has been a shift in the figure of the villain: from the traditional perverse person, mafia or criminal, to the evil coming from public bodies and corrupt government institutions.

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## TRANSHUMANISM AND BIOETHICS IN THE FANTASTIC IBEROAMERICAN MOTION PICTURES<sup>1</sup>

César Oliveros Aya<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

The human being's desire to transcend, prolong life, even create it, defy death, slow down aging, etc., all signed by the help that the technological advance has had its niche of communicability in science fiction literature and films. Until a few years ago, that desire was projected only in stories that seemed very far in time and space. Narratives alluded to worlds beyond galaxies, evoked mythological stories, fantastic creatures, spaceships, amazing worlds, which unattainable utopia motivated dreams and the possibility of a very distant future.

However, today this possibility of combining technology with the potentialization of the human body in order to improve physical abilities, eradicate former menacing diseases and make the subject an individual with greater abilities, is not a simple expectation anymore. Today, is thought that man draws new ways in order to achieve superiority

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<sup>1</sup> Result of research derived from the doctoral thesis in Bioethics, from the Military University of Nueva Granada (Bogota, Colombia) entitled *Transhumanismo e Identidad Humana: criterios deliberativos para la toma de decisiones desde la narrativa filmica de David Cronenberg*, 2017.

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conditions, that the human condition itself is just a step towards expectations of perfectibility, probably another stage in the evolutionary process that does not stop.

We are at the beginning of a fourth industrial revolution that, to the extent of its progress, blurs the dividing lines between biology, physics and digitalization, promoting automation and the consequent development of cyberphysical structures, virtualization, the presence of the Internet in everyday life.

The present paper addresses reflective aspects around this purpose, moving between the cinematographic references that have paid for the terrain of speculation, but also the formulation of problems that sooner or later humanity will have to face.

Because that cluster of thoughts translated into the progressive advance of technology in terms of body development, has allowed us to rethink the role of the human being, his knowledge, his abilities, his possibilities and the type of environment which he interacts with.

This is how transhumanism is open to the contemporary world, with the help of philosophers, historians and scientists such as Nick Bostrom, David Pearce, Ray Kurzweil and Yuval Noah Harari, among others, and increasingly it expands its implications in the artistic divulgation, becoming a socio-cultural phenomenon that envisions a complex, controversial, impressive and fascinating future.

## **1. Transhumanism as a narrative topic**

Transhumanism is understood as the improvement of the human body through technology, which implies confrontations linked to the change, the transformation and, therefore, to the conception of personal identity, both individually and collectively.

In his speech, a moral intentionality shines to improve the intellectual and psychic conditions, using artificial intelligence and

eugenics (Tomás and Garrido, 2018), which has permeated massive communication media and, progressively, has gone positioning itself as a subject that acquires, increasingly greater importance in everyday life.

The definitions of the term are diverse, also called transhumanization; For example, for the French philosopher Luc Ferry, it is

«un proyecto de mejora de la humanidad actual en todos sus aspectos, físico, intelectual, emocional y moral, gracias a los progresos de las ciencias, y en particular de las biotecnologías. Una de las características esenciales del movimiento transhumanista reside, como ya hemos señalado, en el hecho de que pretende pasar de un paradigma médico tradicional, el de la terapéutica, que tiene como finalidad principal “reparar”, cuidar enfermedades y patologías, a un modelo “superior”, el de la mejora y también el “perfeccionamiento” del ser humano” (2017: 34).

The Spaniard Antonio Diéguez, understands it as

«una filosofía de moda; la utopía del momento. Algunos llegan a considerarla como la cosmovisión propia de la época postmoderna, dominada por el culto a la técnica; el único gran relato posible tras el descrédito en el que han caído todos los demás” (2017: 20).

Even, in subsequent lines, he quotes Franck Damour, stating that

«al igual que el resto de las utopías, el transhumanismo se sitúa en la frontera entre lo real y lo imaginario, y desde allí propone un “programa metafísico de investigación”, así como un repertorio de conceptos y de valores que impulsan prácticas concretas encaminadas a la consecución de una nueva era» (Diéguez, 2017: 22).

And is that in this intertwining with ideas that sound utopian, have been defined body categories of new subjects, such as:

The automaton: machine that imitates the figure and movements of a human being.

The robot: virtual or artificial mechanical entity, programmable for the realization of tasks or activities that can supply the human being.

The android: robot with appearance, movements and functions of a human being.

The cyborg: creature composed of organic elements and cybernetic devices.

The Replicant: an expression that Philip K. Dick made fashionable in his story *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* And, of course, on its film version *Blade Runner*, to refer to beings created as a kind of slaves, with a death programmed by the taking of self-consciousness.

The mutant: creature emerged by biological modifications, alteration of DNA.

The avatar: virtual identity chosen by a computer user or video game to be represented in an application or website.

The viability of these creations has motivated us to think, from the bioethical point of view, of the responsibility we have as human beings facing the possible outrages of technological progress in this regard. What is the quality of life that we aspire to in a future in which death can be postponed? What implications will design human beings have to the letter? How to proceed in the creation of new artifacts, as is the case of sexual robots, the implantation of information chips in our bodies, the possibilities of nanotechnology, even in the still utopian download of consciousness in computer media?

These are questions that were previously considered exclusive to science fiction. Since the invention of *Frankenstein*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, which has served as an iconic reference point

for those scientific ambitions that cherish the desire to emulate divinity to create life, through the laws of robotics devised by Isaac Asimov and developed along its narrative, to filmic stories such as the film *Transcendence* (2014), popular culture has helped to questionize, problematize and philosophize those dreams of power.

Under this narrative line, it is inevitable to think about the problematic that has confronted the must be of technology and the possibility of realization. If current advances have suggested the transformation of the individual, it is no less true that the humanities are particularly important on the dais of this process.

We know, in a general way, multiple references of the treatment of these subjects in the world films, in particular the Anglo-Saxon ones. However, little is known about film works produced in Spanish-speaking countries. Therefore, let's look at the references of some of the titles that, directly or indirectly, have raised situations related to transhumanism in the cinema of these latitudes.

## **2. The transhumanist evocation of the classic monster**

Spain and Mexico have had a significant role according to the existence of film industry that has allowed the realization of a profuse filmography.

The spaneard fantastic movies, that had an important boom between the seventies and eighties, under faces such as Jacinto Molina -Paul Naschy-, directors like Jesús Franco, Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, León Klimovsky, Juan Piquer Simón, Carlos Aured, Jorge Grau, Amando de Ossorio, revitalized the entertainment cinema and captured the fears of the historical moment that they had to live.



Advertising Frame, from:

[https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/11/28/icon/1543398253\\_318459.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/11/28/icon/1543398253_318459.html)

Towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the narrative of this style took on new momentum, but not with the remarkable impact of that decade, but with a much more commercial flavor thanks to Jaime Balagueró, Paco Plaza, Álex de la Iglesia, Alejandro Amenábar and some international alliances.

Thus, among monsters, vampires, werewolves, undead, witches, sorcerers and much blood and sex, the fantastic has been exploring various levels of morbidity as popular appeal, but also, has referred mimetic aspects of the transhumanist idea.

In the case of Mexico, in the fifties, wrestling began to take hold and this form of entertainment led to the production of a filmography aimed at promoting both the sport and the favorite characters, at that time Huracán Ramírez, Señor Tormenta, Mil Máscaras and Blue Demon.

Thus, movies of series B appeared like:

*La momia azteca contra el robot humano* (Rafael Portillo, 1958); is about a mad scientist who builds a robot in order to steal an immeasurable aztec treasure from a tomb that, for hundreds of years, has been guarded by an unpleasant-looking mummy.

Federico Curiel's films about the same character: *Neutrón el enmascarado negro* (1960), *Neutrón contra el Dr. Caronte* (1961) y *Los autómatas de la muerte* (1962).

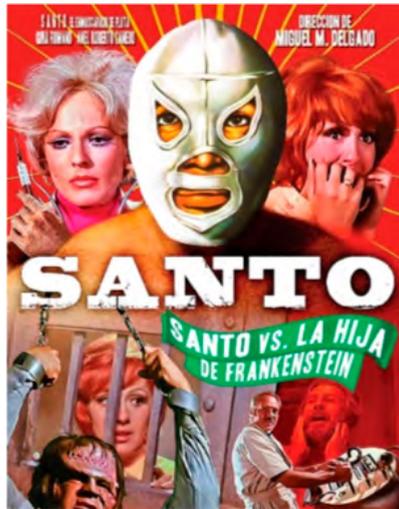


Advertising Frame, from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtGjxUU33Y0>

And, of course, the legend of *El Enmascarado de Plata*, in movies such as *Santo contra los marcianos* (Alfredo B. Crevenna, Mexico, 1966) and *Santo contra la hija de Frankenstein* (Miguel M. Delgado, Mexico, 1971).

Works that had in common the confrontation of the hero with men of science bent on submitting to humanity through mechanical creations. Precisely, the Santo's saga extends to about 56 movies, always with that perspective to draw attention to the supernatural and scientific threats of mass destruction.



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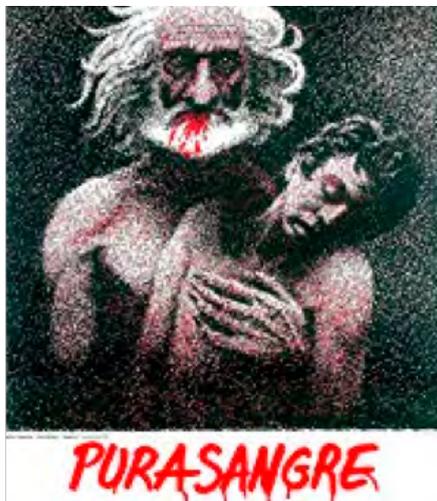
Characters coming from the comic, with clear influence of the American superheroes, already provided material for film adaptations, as it has been the case of *Kaliman*, with two deliveries directed by Alberto Mariscal, *Kalimán el hombre increíble* in 1972 and *Kalimán y el siniestro mundo de Humanón*, in 1976, starred by the Canadian actor Jeff Cooper.

The character, created by Modesto Vásquez and Rafael Cutberto Navarro, focused his powers on the management of the mind and in the second film he confronts a scientist who experiments with the anatomical mixture of living beings.

In these stories, what I have called Frankenstein's dream prevails, «la utopía prometeica, la ambición demiúrgica por excelencia, que ha trasegado por varios siglos desde la creación de figuras rústicas que parecen cobrar vida, hasta la mixtura entre carne y máquina» (Oliveros, 2015: 40) and it remains as a constant that nourishes expectations, hyperbolizes fears, challenges religious paradigms and fissures security in the face of a future that knocks our doors.

But, going back to the sixties, there is a filmic piece of curious invoice; a medium-length film called *EFPEUM (Estructura Funcional Para Encontrarse Uno Mismo*, of Mauricio Odremán, Venezuela, 1965) that approaches in an experimental way a utopian society with echoes of approximations to a *Brave New World* of Aldous Huxley. It is about an architect who intends building a house where human consciousness can be projected, for this he obtains the collaboration of an alchemist and his wife, who will lead him to a spiritual transformation of psychedelic and surreal traits.

In 1982 and 1983, two Colombian films appeared that addressed the topic of bodily metamorphosis: *Pura Sangre* directed by Luis Ospina, a kind of adaptation of the vampiric myth, from an urban legend; the story of an elderly millionaire who needs the blood of children to stay alive, with the help of a group of characters who work in a hospital. The other movie is *Carne de tu carne*, of Carlos Mayolo, where a couple of brothers die, but once buried their corporeality changes and revive, as if the influence of the land and their ancestors led them to a readaptation of their identity.

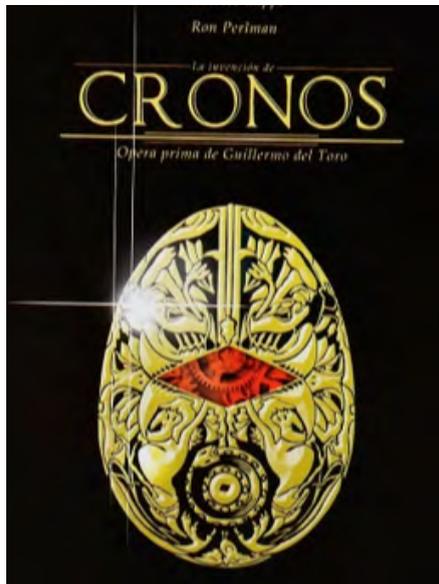


Oficial Frame

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0193438/>

In 1983 also premiered the film *Mexico 2000*, by Rogelio González, in which post-human beings, almost gods, have decided to destroy humanity; but from a very optimistic perspective, one of them opposes arguing that for a country like Mexico it is worth saving it. The story conjugates the personification of religious deification more as a sort of evolutionary perfection of man towards a posthuman condition.

For 1993, there are two remarkable films: the Spaniard *Acción Mutante*, of Alex de la Iglesia and the Mexican *Cronos*, of Guillermo del Toro. Both play with some touches of surrealism, where the concept of body mutation suggests forms of social and political treatment openly discriminatory. *Mutant action* is a film that moves between the absurd, the bizarre and the comic, through characters outside the praiseworthy purposes of a society. In *Cronos*, a strange artifact that feeds on blood, turns its guests into a kind of vampires, metaphorizing the consequences of the addiction that invades the protagonist played by the great Federico Luppi.



Promotion for DVD version, from:

<https://www.imagenesmy.com/imagenes/cronos-guillermo-del-toro-e8.html/>

In 1997, Alejandro Amenábar presents *Abre los ojos*, exposing a suspense drama in which its protagonist faces the effects of a virtual reality. Although it is not said explicitly, it suggests the enthronement of the avatar as a corporeal extension.

We can not lose sight of the fact that the desire to create life, to become another, to metamorphose to obtain new capacities and new milestones of power, surrounds this type of narrative is a constant narrative. The short film *Alguien mató algo* (Jorge Navas, Colombia, 1999), it helps to explore that idea. The protagonist is Heriberta, a girl who fears getting old; and using an anatomy book, a scalpel and his desire to taste blood, she decides to become a vampire.

The figure of the monster, underlies these stories as a condition that makes possible the extension of the drama; therefore, it is shown as that antagonistic, sometimes undesirable, being that subverts the standardized image of the individual. In that order of ideas, the denial of this abstraction called normality results; propagates the difference, the obverse of reality and therefore is feared.

### **3. As if they were gods**

Towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century, three Mexican films expose the sociopolitical implications of scientific achievements:

*Traficantes de sueños* (Alex Rivera, 2008) takes us to a geopolitical world of hermetized international borders, companies with military strength and a working class whose members connect their nervous systems to a global computer network.



Promotion for DVD version, from: <http://comoafueraesadentro.blogspot.com/2012/06/pelicula-trafficante-de-suenos.html>

In *De día y de noche* (Alejandro Molina, 2010), a government measure of control over overpopulation is explored for the improvement of social coexistence. It creates an enzyme implanted in the DNA that forces some people to be regulated by sunlight and others by nighttime darkness.

From another look, *La última muerte* (David Ruíz, 2011) it leads us to a scenario of secret experiments led by Mateo Wilkins, an entrepreneur who has meddled with behavioral alterations. A psychoanalyst will try to discover the convoluted plot, starting from the encounter of a badly wounded young man whose identity is not registered in the Personal Information Bank.

Later, in 2011, two Spanish productions do the same: *Eva* (Kike Maíllo, 2011), which takes place in the year 2041, where human beings live accompanied by mechanical creatures. In this area, Álex (Daniel Brühl), a cybernetic engineer, has been commissioned by a Robotics faculty to create a robot child. There he will meet Eva, a very unique girl.



Advertising, from: <https://lakatarsideldcinespanyol.wordpress.com/2011/07/04/eva-de-kike-maillo-inaugurara-el-festival-de-sitges/>

This work confronts the closest transhumanist risks: the line that separates the ethical aspects from the underlying scientific duty in the relationship between artificial intelligence and robotics.

This approach is related to that of *La piel que habito* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2011), which tells a story of revenge, with the help of a plastic surgeon, Dr. Robert Ledgard, who has devoted years of study and experimentation for the development of a new skin sensitive to the touch, but works as a real shield against all class of aggressions, both external and internal.

The aforementioned productions make possible to reflect on “el sentido utilitarista de la transformación corporal—cuya perspectiva resulta cada vez más cierta en lo cotidiano— sustentada en la mediatización institucional, con fuerte implicación biopolítica, decanta la utopía del creador, no a la posibilidad del surgimiento de nuevos seres sino a la

transformación artificial del mismo cuerpo humano en pos del mejoramiento de sus condiciones, hacia objetivos altruistas en los cuales el discurso de lo colectivo se imponga sobre la individualidad” (Oliveros, 2015: 140).

From another perspective, also in 2011, Brazil produces *El hombre del futuro*, by Claudio Torres, who delves into the experiment of manipulating time and the risk of duplication, idea that Nacho Vigalondo had already worked on in *Los Cronocrímenes*.

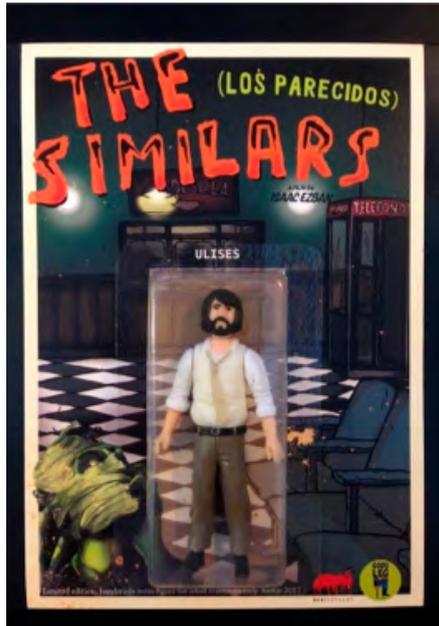
Cuba contributes in 2014 *Omega 3*, of Eduardo del Llano, with a history alluding to a future world war, in which one does not fight for territories or ideologies, but for hierarchizing a way of healthy eating over others. Nick is a Veg soldier (vegetarian) who is a prisoner of Macs (macrobiotics). In prison he meets Ana, a beautiful Ollie (ovolactea). Between the two they look for strategies to escape, or at least to survive...



Oficial Frame

<https://www.filmaffinity.com/co/film435842.html>

Then, two films by the Mexican Isaac Ezban, clearly influenced by the American television series created by Rod Serling, *The Twilight Zone: El incidente* (2014); deals with two parallel stories about characters trapped in illogically infinite spaces: two brothers and a detective trapped in infinite stairs, and a family trapped in an endless road... for 35 years.



Advertising Frame

[https://www.filmaffinity.com/co/filmimages.php?movie\\_id=513061](https://www.filmaffinity.com/co/filmimages.php?movie_id=513061)

*Los parecidos* (2015) tells how on the rainy morning of October 2, 1968, eight people waiting for a bus in a remote station, in the middle of nowhere, to go to Mexico City. In that place they are victims of a situation that they can not explain and makes them transform physically into one of them; as if it were a kind of massive cloning.

In 2016, the Peruvian Adrian Saba releases *El Soñador*; In this story, Sebastian is a petty criminal who must resort to his imaginary worlds to escape his desolate existence and protect the love of his life from the dangers of the real world.



Oficial frame, from:

<https://www.filmaffinity.com/co/film542149.html>

In the other hand, in 2017, Chile produces the movie named *Noche*, of Inti Carrizo. The story is framed in a world submerged in absolute darkness by a strange phenomenon; In this area, a student must choose between maintaining his identity or submitting to the survival instinct.

From Bolivia, the extraordinary film *Anomalía*, directed by Sergio Vargas Paz, premiered this year, 2018, addresses the story of an older woman who lives alone in 2058. Her husband Alessandro has been dead for several years because of a terminal illness. She finds a company called Memorias Corporation that specializes in giving your clients the chance to relive in detail moments of their lives, visiting their memories through a neuroscientific connection. She hires the services to relive the best moments of her love, until one day an anomaly occurs in the system that makes her lose all her past. This event completely alters the reality that lives and undertakes an odyssey to recover that raptured existence.

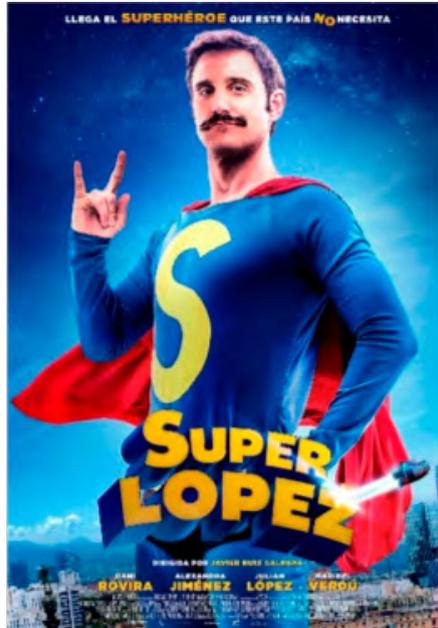


Oficial frame, from:

<https://www.filmaffinity.com/co/film865208.html>

To finish the film list, Ibero-America has also bet on the figure of the superhero. As in previous lines alluded to *Kalimán*, Ibero-America has also had the equivalent approach, either extraterrestrial or mutant, to the figure of those beings devised as a kind of minor gods to save humanity from higher threats, but in the key of comedy; such is the case of *Zenitram*, by Luis Barone, in 2010 and, of course, in Spain, *Superlópez*, interpreted by Dani Rovira in the film last year, 2018, directed by Javier Ruiz Caldera.

The first, based on a cartoon of Juan Sasturain, enhances the stereotype of Argentina, become a national hero. The second, part of an anthological character in Spanish popular culture, which since 1973 created the cartoonist Juan López Fernández as a kind of direct parody to Superman and over the years has been addressing criticism of social order.



Oficial Frame

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4110388/>

These works allow us to think about that still distant, dreamy horizon, which has been understood as posthumanity, being transhumanism a step to reach it. The individual, in that context, aspires to have largely overcome the conditions that today make him weak, will have achieved skills considered today under the label of super powers and will have in his favor new ways of facing adversity, trying to take on challenges of greater scope having as its goal other worlds, beyond the Earth.

And it is at this time, in the midst of the vicissitudes that lead us to the imminent consequences of biotechnology on human corporeity, to that achievable possibility that frames the new tendencies in order to truly convert what was once speculation, when -as says Yuval Noah Harari-, fantastic fiction and, especially, science fiction,

«ha de ser mucho más responsable de la manera como representa las realidades científicas, pues de otro modo podría imbuir en la gente ideas equivocadas o hacer que centrara su atención en los problemas equivocados» (2018: 271).

Consequently, if something has taught us and continues to teach the imagination through stories that anticipate utopian, dystopian, possible and impossible scenarios, it is a critical look at the immense possibilities, both harmful and benevolent, of the capacity of the human being to think to himself. same in complex contexts; in other words, to philosophize in ethical terms about the near future that we want to shape.

### **In way of conclusions**

As can be seen, the Latin American filmography has also addressed these issues are now major global public arena. Transhumanism, as an intermediate phase to embrace a rethinking of the human being, has begun to develop and this forces us to think about it, to question it, to guide that ethical perspective that should permeate the actions of both the individual and the States themselves.

It is a necessarily interdisciplinary dialogue, transversal for contemporary society.

Popular culture in this work not awarded but exerted, serving as memory, as mimesis of reality, gives different views criticism of the subject, and in the case of film, from fantasy, science fiction and stories in advance.

Because these narrations have an undeniable philosophical background that makes them a pretext, text and context to approach a revision of the human sense and that incommensurability that their own creations have.

It is interesting and no less significant that, from these spaces, it becomes necessary to contribute to the global debate, to study from other angles the persistence of that transforming desire of the individual and the way we constantly shape the future.

There are several Spanish-language films that have skirted that imaginary of bodily transformation for the betterment of the species and, increasingly, their arguments are more complex. From South America, it is beginning to take shape a fantastic film better bill worth spreading, analyze, interpret, facing issues that used to consider other people both in time and space and are cyclical, inclusive and well today, relative to all the factors of power.

The bodily transformation, hand in hand with science, is a reality, to the point that it has given rise to thinking about dilemmas of connotation that before might sound like a cruel joke. For example: if a cyborg is run over by a vehicle and its mechanical parts are destroyed, how would the laws interpret it: How does it harm someone else's property or personal injuries?

Perhaps part of the answer we find in these stories, beyond entertainment, provide other key interpretation and argumentation, as in the case of fantasy films.

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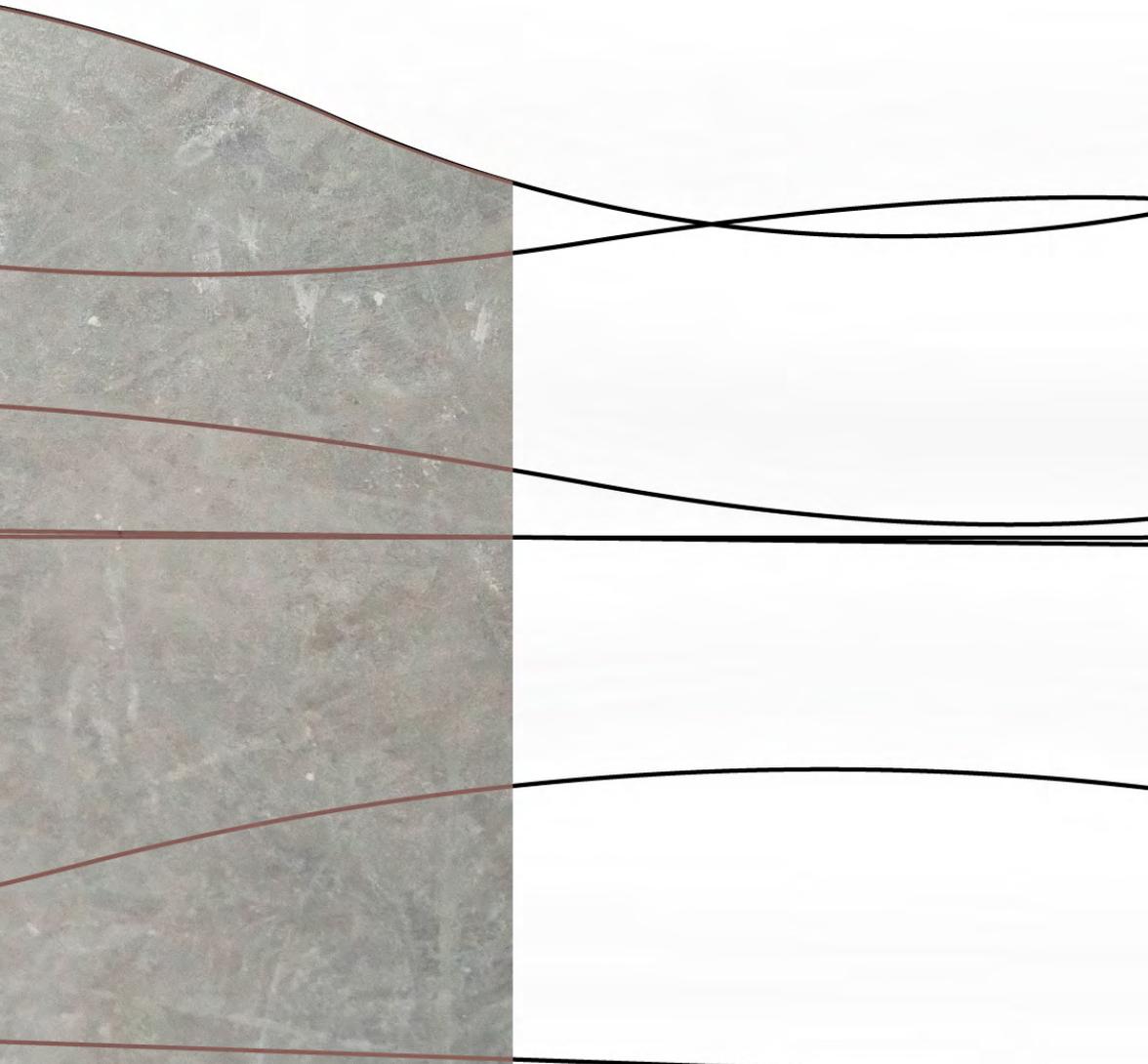
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# Chapter 3.

## Studies in the field of Horror



## HORROR AS AFFECTIVE ESTRANGEMENT

Jasper Vrancken

In 2018 I finished my short film *Muil* («Maw»), my first foray into horror filmmaking as a screenwriter and director. *Muil* follows protagonist Richard who works as a devoted and nurturing elderly-care assistant but is crippled by an unfulfilled and dangerous desire. He is a *vore*: sexually aroused by the idea of being eaten. An opportunity arises in the shape of the mysterious Max, who keeps some kind of animal or monster locked-up in a dark room. For a price, men can enter the room and live out their fantasies. Can Richard escape his own dangerous desire?



Figure 1. Poster *Muil*.

From the outset I was inspired by critical theory during the creation of *Muil*, specifically by Barbara Creed's book *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993). Using the concept of the abject as developed by Julia Kristeva, Creed analyzes the representation of female monsters in cinematic horror, who become monstrous precisely because of their female traits. Through a psychoanalytic, feminist lens she describes a set of very specific patriarchal, male sexual fears. My horror filmmaking takes direct inspiration from this book, especially Creed's concept of the Archaic-Mother, one of the multiple types of female monsters she describes. The Archaic-Mother is the mother-goddess figure from mythology, the fecund mother but also "*the abyss, the cannibalizing black hole from which all life comes and to which all life returns*" (Creed, 1993: 25). Main character Richard gets the chance to meet an actual Archaic-Mother in this story about male castration anxiety / fantasy. The basic dramatic personae are thus: a protagonist (Richard) longing for a sexual (and spiritual) encounter with a monster / creature / animal / Archaic-Mother / ... kept inside a dark room by someone (Max) who nurtures, prostitutes and worships the creature.

The dramatic entry point into this world is a particular kind of sexual fetish or paraphilia, namely 'vore' or 'vorarephilia'. In my screenwriting and development process, I have always wondered what it specifically was about that fetish that made it so fascinating for me as a filmmaker. Neither the content of the fetish itself, nor the sense of community of like-minded people was what drove me: as a filmmaker I am not interested in taking a documentary or journalistic approach to the subject of vore. Why then is a fetish that is so utterly strange and incomprehensible so important for my film? The search for this answer drew me towards starting a larger creative research project about horror film and *estrangement*. *Muil* and my subsequent reflection are the first outcomes of that research.

There is a tradition in literary criticism to see the genre of the Fantastic (or "Fantastika", see Clute and Langford, 2018) as a genre of estrangement. As readers of these tales we encounter strange new worlds, alien creatures and societies that are unknown to us and can

differ drastically from our own world and universe. Seen in this way it seems quite logical and self-evident to use a discourse of “strange” – “estrangement” – “estranging” when talking about the Fantastic. Probably for that reason Darko Suvin starts his milestone work from 1979 *Metamorphosis of Science Fiction* proposing that SF, Folktale, Myth, Fantasy... are estranged genres, differentiating between non-cognitive genres (Myth, Folktale, Fantasy) and cognitive estranged genres (SF and Pastoral). Horror is for him a subcategory of Fantasy, alongside Ghost, Gothic, and Weird (Suvin, 2016a: 21). Suvin is very clear in his preference of SF as being the ‘highest’ genre. In pure Marxist fashion, it is for him *the* genre with the potential to make us aware of our current oppressing ideology and, more importantly, to show us possible alternatives. SF is the preferred genre of *cognitive estrangement*.

Fantasy and horror on the contrary have no potential value for him. This basic view has been picked up by the field of SF criticism: “*Many science fiction scholars claim that sci-fi is a cognitive and philosophical genre while horror is pure emotional, with the implication that this is a lesser state*” (Colavito, 2008: 13). In his later writing, Suvin has somewhat nuanced his findings, and his outright rejection of fantasy and horror. In his text “Considering the Sense of ‘Fantasy’, or ‘Fantastic Fiction’: A Effusion.” he writes: “*The divide between cognitive (pleasantly useful) and non-cognitive (useless) does not run between SF and fantastic fiction but inside each...*” (Suvin, 2016b: 388). The link between uselessness and non-cognitive however remains intact.

To counter this viewpoint, I will argue that it is useful to see the genre of horror as a genre of *affective estrangement* with its own merits and value. This is not to claim that every piece of the horror genre works as affective estrangement, nor is it my ambition to work out a Grand Theory of all things horror. My argument should be seen as a starting point for exploring a certain potential in horror. More importantly, it is a reflection on the creation of my own cinematic work in this genre. Seen in this way, this paper is partly a reflective genre and film analysis, and partly an artist manifesto. It develops my own personal filmmaking ideology on what a (or to be more precise: my) horror film should be

like. When discussing my own work and my own position as filmmaker, I will also offer a more in-depth critique of Suvin's text "Considering the Sense of 'Fantasy'", arguing that at its base it has a misleading and wrong premise.

Although my research focuses on film, it doesn't mean that my findings don't apply to other media. Since the main characteristic of horror refers to a certain kind of affect it raises, horror texts can vary across a wide spectrum of media<sup>1</sup>. It can be a narrative art (film, prose, theatre, ballet), non-narrative (painting, photography), interactive (videogames, board games) or a mix (eg. Haunted house attractions, narrative videogames, ...) (Carroll, 1990).

Before starting my main argument, I will first clarify my use of the term *affect* and then turn my *attention to estrangement*. By using the term affect I am clearly positioning my discourse in the broader so-called "affective turn of the humanities" (Clough, Halley, 2007). Since there is not one clear use of affect, I will use Aldana Reyes' "Horror Film and Affect" as a main reference. In this work he defines it as an umbrella term that collects somatic (or "bodily") responses and emotions and moods (Aldana Reyes, 2016: 6). It is important to remark that the term "affect" is not in opposition to "cognitive". The emotion "horror" for example has a definite cognitive base, because it presupposes some kind of recognition: «In horror, the recognition might be as crude and nonspecific as "something horrible has happened (or is happening)". [...] In other words, horror is through and through cognitive, if only in that it recognizes something as horrible...» (Solomon, 2003: 236).

This also means that Suvin's usage of "cognitive" is not the same as our current use. Probably Suvin wants to express a broader meaning, like e.g. "cerebral", or "inviting reflection".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is not an undisputed idea. John Clute argues against the use of affect as the common denominator for this genre, what he calls "Affect Horror". Instead he offers his own theory of "Horror" and origin of the Fantastic, see, Clute (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Carl Freedman argues for the term "cognition effect" (Freedman, 2008, p. 18), and Suvin aligns it closer to the German word *Wissenschaft* "...which includes not only

My use of estrangement is based on the concept of *ostranenie* as defined by Victor Shklovsky in 1917, better known as defamiliarization. It is «the artistic technique of forcing the audience to see common things in an unfamiliar or strange way, in order to enhance perception of the familiar» (Tarnay, 2010: 150). I will use *ostranenie* and its English translation *defamiliarization* as synonyms: they are the “formal-rhetorical act of making the familiar strange” (Spiegel, 2008: 376). *Ostranenie* can be extratextual, referring to the world, but also intertextual, applying to elements inside a text: e.g. the use of “poetic” language, cinematic parameters, genre, ... (Berlina, 2017: 24). My use of defamiliarization and horror will encompass both these options. Finally, my use of the word *estrangement* refers to the receptive part: the effect achieved on the viewer / audience (Spiegel, 2008: 376).

Although Suvin refers to Shklovsky and Bertolt Brecht in equal ways when talking about his use of estrangement, he is clearly more aligned with the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* (V-Effekt). For Suvin SF (in its ideal form) and the V-Effekt as originally planned in theatre, basically achieve the same thing: they render the action on stage - and by analogy the current social order – visible as something artificial and man-made (Spiegel, 2008: 370). Thus, they both have a strong didactic and clear political meaning. (Spiegel, 2008: 370). This is however not the case with *ostranenie*, where there is no consensus about its ideological meaning. Though it does enhance the perception of the familiar, this doesn’t necessarily lead to a revolutionary and subversive position. Spiegel sees *ostranenie* as deeply conservative:

«Any successful act of estrangement thus rests on a paradox: The end product is meant as a piece of innovation – arrived at through various artistic devices – that serves, however, to revive and make more palpable the old (and constant) substance of things.» (Tihanov, 2005: 686 in Spiegel, 2008: 370).

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natural but also all the cultural or historical sciences and even scholarship (cf. *Literaturwissenschaft, sciences humaines*.)” (Suvin, 2016a: 26)

For Berlina however, ostranenie can promote critical thought, since it is a multifaceted concept that can “*reawaken the mind not only to the beauty of the world, but also to its horrors.*” (Berlina, 2017: 26). We can conclude that there is not one singular way to look at ostranenie’s emancipatory qualities, rather this has to be judged at an ad hoc basis, text by text, with the possibility that one text can have contradicting ideological meanings within itself that are of equal importance and presence.

So, back to horror. Aside from Suvin, there are few authors who link the genre of horror with defamiliarization. Mostly this link is made when comparing the Freudian uncanny / das Unheimliche with ostranenie (e.g. see Epstein, 2003), but there seems to be a lack of critical interest in combining the two. This is probably caused by the dominance of SF as *preferred form of estrangement*<sup>3</sup> as well as a too broadly defined and too vague starting point (= fantasy, myth as *estranged genres*, whatever that exactly may mean) for anything meaningful to come out of that. There is however a clear historical link between the two. In Shklovsky’s foundational text “Art as Device” his first example of ostranenie is nothing less than horrifying. He quotes from Tolstoy’s article “Ashamed” where Tolstoy defamiliarizes the act of flogging as punishment.

«Just why precisely this stupid, savage means of causing pain and not any other - why not prick the shoulders or any part of the body with needles, squeeze the hands or the feet in a vise, or anything like that?” - I apologize for this disturbing example, but it is typical of Tolstoy’s way to reach conscience. The customary act of flogging is estranged by both by the description and by the proposal to change its form without changing its essence.» (Shklovsky, 2017: 82).

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. a prominent SF event like the “World Science Fiction Convention”, held for the 75th time in Helsinki in 2017, had an academic track completely devoted to the concept of estrangement and SF, see <<http://www.worldcon.fi/whats-on/programme/academic-track/>>

It is important to note that in Shklovsky's text this is the very first example he uses to illustrate his new concept. The shocking, perhaps grotesque content of this example precisely helps in explaining ostranenie in a very clear and quick way. It is a prototypical way of using horror as a pedagogical tool<sup>4</sup>.

By now I have defined my use of affect and estrangement. This brings us to my core question: how can negative affects like horror (direct or indirect), fear, dread, disgust, the abject<sup>5</sup>... be used to cause a defamiliarization? And exactly what do they defamiliarize?

In horror there can be a defamiliarization on three levels. Seen from a micro to a macro point of view they consist of:

- a) a defamiliarization at the level of the form;
- b) defamiliarization at the level of the narrative or thematic content: the semantics of the text; and finally,
- c) defamiliarization at the level of the genre. I will elaborate on each of these levels, using examples from other horror films to illustrate my point. Afterwards, I will reflect on my own cinematic work while using these three levels.

With a defamiliarization at the level of the form, ostranenie is here used in the strictest "Shklovskian" sense. A similar restrictive meaning is appointed to "form". With form I refer to the different kinds of cinematic parameters: mise-en-scene (actors, set design, costume design, props, actor movement, ...) camera (movement, placement, angle, lens choice, ...), lightning, sound (design, music, tonality...) and so on. According to Spiegel, this kind of defamiliarization (what he calls *First-degree defamiliarization*)

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<sup>4</sup> For an interesting collection about horror as pedagogy see Ahmad & Moreland (2013).

<sup>5</sup> This summary is inspired by Aldana Reyes who was himself inspired by Julian Hanich, who in his work "Cinematic emotion in horror films and thrillers: The aesthetic paradox of pleasurable fear" explores direct horror, indirect horror, cinematic shock, cinematic dread and cinematic terror in a phenomenological way.

«[...] is far rarer in sf; it even contradicts the genre in certain ways. ...sf's central device— rendering the marvelous possible—is made obsolete. This is, in my opinion, the reason why sf generally prefers a non-experimental mode of narration, what David Bordwell calls classical narration.» (Spiegel, 2008: 378).

The same argumentation works for horror. Most narrative horror in one way or another has its start in a “normal” world, a status quo that is invaded by the monstrous / marvelous / horrific / weird (cfr. Carroll's (1990) Complex Discovery Plot and Overreacher Plot, and Clute's (2014) four-part model of Horror). This starting in (supposed) normality with a slow movement into the marvelous of course presupposes a narration that in itself is not “strange” to begin with, hence the use of classical filmic narration and style. However, formal defamiliarization can exist in isolated moments in a film, e.g. in the prison sequence in *THX 1138* with its endless, disorienting white infinite space. An interesting example featuring horror can be found in the remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Nispel, 2003), in a scene where character Erin thinks she sees her boyfriend Kemper. As an audience, we also believe that we see Kemper once again after his earlier abduction. We recognize his face, but something is off and not quite right. In this short but very powerful moment, Kemper's face is at the same familiar (because we recognize him) and unfamiliar. And then, we and Erin slowly realize the horrific truth: we are not looking at Kemper, but only at Kemper's cut-off face, being worn by the main antagonist, Leatherface. This is a classic example of the uncanny coinciding with defamiliarization. The form used here is of course special effects make-up (as part of *mise-en-scène*), no doubt slightly enhanced by digital special effects.

For the second level, defamiliarization at the level of the narrative or thematic content, we are dealing with a “diegetic estrangement” (Spiegel, 2008) or a *thematic defamiliarization*. Through its use of the grotesque, monstrosity, transgression and excess (Johnson, 2013: 128), the horror genre can estrange us from common cultural representations and concepts, like “the normal family”, “male – female”, “normal birth” ... An interesting link is made by Moghadam (2017: 85) between the

grotesque and defamiliarization. Inspired by Todorov's scheme of the fantastic, Moghadam arranges the grotesque in a similar way: fantastic | fantastic-grotesque | grotesque-caricature | caricature. The grotesque swings between fantastic and caricature, with the overlapping categories fantastic-grotesque and grotesque-caricature. For Moghadam the "pure" grotesque is the line between fantastic-grotesque and grotesque-fantastic (again replicating Todorov's scheme). It is precisely this "*in between stage...bordering on the fantastic and caricature*" that holds a strong power for defamiliarization:

«[...] the notion of defamiliarization can be regarded as a characterizing feature in the conception of the grotesque, differentiating it from fantastic-grotesque and grotesque-caricature. That the grotesque invites, entertains, and at the same time, dispels interpretation is an indispensable part of the phenomenon.» (Moghadam, 2017: 87)

The film *Mum and Dad* (Sheil, 2008) uses grotesque imagery in very effective and unsettling way. The film features a perverse and artificial constructed family with very clear internal power struggles. "Dad" has a primal monstrous sexuality; his sexual needs are of the utmost importance for the whole "family". "Mum" clearly enjoys supporting her husband, while at the same time developing her own sadistic tendencies and tastes. The constituting and oppressing importance of the binary gender system is very explicit in this film, it is a clear and returning visual and narrative *leitmotiv*. The characters of Mum and Dad oscillate between grotesque and caricature, being the strongest in moments where a new element is introduced, while it is not quite clear yet what we are witnessing. For example, Dad's perverse sexual identity culminates in him crossdressing. Once this is clear in the narrative, he becomes a pure caricature, but in the buildup to this reveal, his menacing, unsettling crossdressing presence is extremely defamiliarizing and powerful. However, as discussed earlier, this doesn't automatically lead us to a clear ideological position. *Mum and Dad* doesn't offer an alternative to the binary gender system, while for example a SF novel as *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin does exactly that. Horror remains "*ideologically uneven (across text)*"

*and ambivalent (within a single text)*” (Johnson, 2013: 127). I will talk in greater length about thematic defamiliarization when discussing my own cinematic work.

Finally, a horror film can defamiliarize itself from its own genre, estranging us as audience members from our specific genre expectations. While this kind of defamiliarization can potentially work for any genre (drama, comedy, crime ...) I will argue that horror is the most suited for this kind of estrangement because is the most self-reflexive of all the genres<sup>6</sup>. Horror is very (self) aware of its own history, tropes and rules. It is a genre filled with ‘cues’ or ‘allusions’: «Quotations, the memorialization of past genres, the reworking of past genres, homages, and the recreation of ‘classic’ scenes, shots, plot motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures, and so forth» (Carroll, 1998: 241). This also entails that a horror viewer, depending on his viewing experience and investment in the genre, is always actively on the look-out for genre-specific ‘cues’ in a horror film, which can lead – no doubt – to a very specific kind of viewing pleasure in itself. This active investment of the genre with itself is precisely what makes horror better suited for a defamiliarization on this level. To illustrate, I would like to refer to the recent debate about post-horror. In his article *“How post-horror movies are taking over cinema”* Steve Rose writes about the extremely divided reception of horror films like *“It Comes at Night”*. This film was critically successful but received a very low audience rating<sup>7</sup>. This negative, emotionally heated audience rejection – which I could witness myself firsthand while watching this film on a Friday evening in a fully packed theatre – might partially be caused by mismarketing. For some the *“It”* in the title infers a certain kind of film that is was not. There is no clear visible monster, the *“It”* being the characters’ own inner angst and paranoia. Beforehand the film was featured in a trailer<sup>8</sup>, setting up several genre cues:

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<sup>6</sup> See Mathijs (2004) for an article about horror and reflectiveness.

<sup>7</sup> A Cinemascore D-rating, and a Rotten Tomatoes rating of 87% (critical) vs. 44% (public), see <<https://www.cinemascore.com> and [https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/it\\_comes\\_at\\_night](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/it_comes_at_night)>

<sup>8</sup> See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YOYHCBQn9g>>

«a post-apocalyptic scenario, a cabin in the woods, gas masks, shotguns, prisoners, a stern patriarch (Joel Edgerton), and warnings never to leave doors unlocked or go out at night. It's by no means false advertising, it's just that this tense, minimal movie doesn't play by accepted rules.» (Rose, 2017).

The consequent subversion or alteration following these cues in the full-length film itself, can be seen a defamiliarization of its own genre. Basically “It Comes at Night” is a horror film that asks “what do you, viewer, think a horror film should feature? How do you define horror and am I part of that genre?” and consequently frustrates viewers expectations. This brings us to Rose's most critical and interesting point about the horror genre. He draws attention to its sore spot: the poignant fact that most ‘horror’ isn't worthy of that name:

«Considering that horror is the place where we explore our mortal and societal fears, the genre is actually one of the safest spaces in cinema. ... The rules are our flashlight as we venture into the unknown. But in some respects, they've made horror a realm of what Donald Rumsfeld would describe as “known unknowns» (Rose, 2017).

It is precisely this concern that drives me as a filmmaker in this genre. With my short *Muil* I have tried to journey viewers into the “unknown unknown”, in an attempt to bring back ‘horror’ in horror so to speak.

To continue my reflection on the development process of *Muil*, I return to my initial question: why use such a strange fetish as vore as a dramatic crux of the matter? It is important to know that in earlier versions of the screenplay, Richard had a different fetish. He was a zoophilic, with the plot first revolving around the true nature of the creature in the dark room (animal, human, or some kind of *mélange*) and finally revealing it. In the development process this fetish was later replaced by a *vorarephilia*. This had several advantages. Firstly, it is a much more abstract and psychological fetish, allowing for the plot to steer away from having to reveal the creature. Now, the main conflict

is a pure internal one: does Richard dare to enter the dark room, endangering his life in process? Or can he find a way to escape his own inner desire? Secondly, it better matched my desire to include the idea of an Archaic-Mother, which is in itself more of an abstract concept than a creature that can be depicted. Also, the idea of mother-as-abbyss allowed for a very clear visual and narrative strategy.

This is introduced with the first image of the film, right after the company opening credits. In this opening animation the camera travels inside a maw towards a rectangular shaped darkness. This forward moving camera is repeated several times in the course of the film, towards dark openings in doors, mouths, pictures, ...



Figure 2. Still Mulil

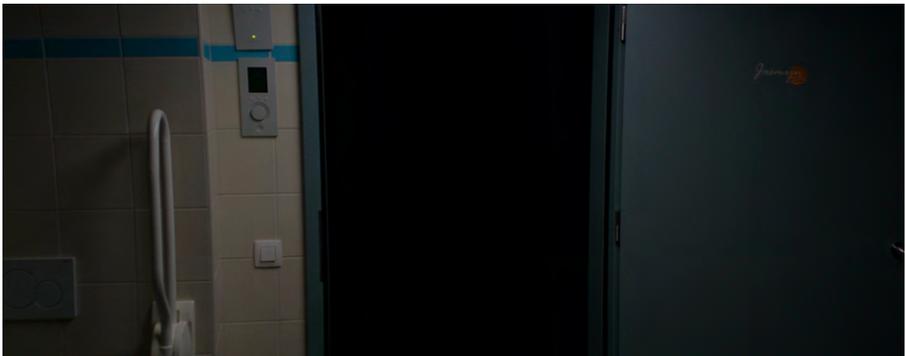


Figure 3. Still Mulil



Figure 4. Still Muil



Figure 5. Still Muil

This also clearly dictated the mise-en-scene, particularly the set design. The main door holding the creature has an obvious vagina dentata-like shape and design. Gradually it becomes clear that the camera matches Richard's desire for and fear of that vagina-like all-encompassing darkness. In that gradual realization lies a strong estranging quality, as the returning forward camera move only slowly reveals its true meaning and fatalistic consequence. Thirdly, the use of vorarephilia opened up a richer thematic pallet. Vore is in itself an utterly strange fetish, so incomprehensible that it has an almost alien-like, otherworldly quality. More so than other fetishes it seems to be completely removed from a 'normal' kind of sexuality, and for a *non-vore* it's very difficult to find some kind of entry point into this peculiar

sexual world. It is also a fetish that is completely fantasmastic and imaginary (the Armin Meiwes case in Germany being the one exception to this rule), and this enlarges the weirdness and *otherness* of this fetish. It is precisely this strangeness that interests me as a filmmaker. The paraphilia vorarephilia becomes an important – in Shklovskian terminology - *device* to estrange us from common concepts of sexuality. It defamiliarizes us from regular male heterosexual desire. It should be also be noted that there is no such thing as a prototypical *vorarephiliac*. Rather this fetish is a very fuzzy and loose denominator containing a multitude of different kinds of tastes, sub-fetishes (hard vore, soft vore, macro vore, tiny vore, ...<sup>9</sup>) and highly individual fantasies. This estranging device points to the fact that every sexuality is to some extent inherently strange and unknowable. To others, who can never truly understand our sexuality, but also to ourselves. The core of our sexuality is alien and can never be fully grasped or understood.

Here I would like to refer back to Suvin's "Considering the Sense of "Fantasy". This text sums up the most recent developments in his thinking about genre and is also his most crystallized and succinct essay. Suvin proposes to see works of fantastic fiction as a *parable*<sup>10</sup>.

«[...] the parable is a key form for understanding SF and other "metaphysical" genres ... For the parable consists of a narrative body as "vehicle" and an intended meaning as "tenor", as a way of intimately relating art to truth or narrative and metaphoric imagination to conceptualized, normative doctrine – and vice versa.» (Suvin, 2016b: 387)

This is however, not true. The parable is not a key form for understanding SF or fantasy, or horror for that matter. It is of course possible that an individual text is a parable, but in general, they are

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://en.wikifur.com/wiki/Vorarephilia>

<sup>10</sup> He first developed this idea of SF as a parable in the text "SF: Methaphor, Parable and Chronotope", published first in the 1980s. In "Considering the Sense of 'Fantasy'" the concept of parable is used in regard to all the genres of the fantastic.

not, nor should they be. For Suvin fantastic texts are like presents: they might be wrapped up in beautiful paper, but what really counts is the gift inside. A parable is also defined by the fact that it has a moral and didactic meaning it wants to convey. This is a too reductive, uninteresting, and very old fashioned (marxist) critical way of engaging with texts. The reality and creation of a fantastic text is much more complex and vastly more nuanced. At the center of the creation process of *Muil* is a deep, personal and artistic fascination for human sexuality. The following quote from Kristeva best summarizes the thematic preoccupation of my film: *“I have the deep conviction that every person has a very particular sexuality. This sexuality and this kind of love organization is what interests me and not the group of the homosexuals, the heterosexuals, and so on.”* (Kristeva interviewed, in Oliver, 1997: 337). However, this does not mean that this is a core meaning that I want to communicate to audiences. If that was my goal, then why not just express it more directly and in another more direct medium or genre? Or to continue in my gift-as-intended-meaning “parable”: why wrap the gift up in the first place, if the paper is not important and will be thrown in the dust bin?

What then, one may ask, precisely has been my goal? In a way the answer is very simple: to offer viewers a disturbing, unsettling cinematic experience filled with affects, and this in a refreshing way. It was my ambition to defamiliarize the genre of horror itself. Although *Muil* could primarily be seen as a psychological drama (the main conflict is an internal one, there is practically no gore, with no graphic violence), the film does clearly position itself in the horror genre. Besides an atmosphere of unsettlement and sense of unescapable dread, *Muil* features several deliberate self-reflexive cues that steer audience expectations, and mark this film as belonging to horror: in casting (the choice of the actor who plays Max), set design and set dressing (the ‘torture chamber’ look referring to films like *Saw*, *Hostel*, ...), costume design (the leather look of Max), sound design (the sounds of the creature), ... These expectations are however subverted causing either (unintended) affects like frustration (as was probably the case in the negative reception of “*It Comes at Night*”) or audience curiosity

and the desire to find out what will happen next. As online reviewer Alice Field said about *Muil*: “[...] *it is body horror, with no violence; erotic, with no sex; tense, with minimal action*” (Field, 2018). However, this audience curiosity works best for viewers who have at least some experience in the genre. This has been confirmed by the film festival reception of *Muil*, with only limited screenings on general, non-genre specific festivals.

In this paper I have proposed to see horror as a genre of affective estrangement, in dialogue with and in response to Suvin’s idea of what SF should be. The use of affect leading us through estrangement is a powerful way of unleashing a renewed audience response, in a genre that is very much about fixed rules and expectations. I have demonstrated how this affective estrangement worked as a strategy in producing my own cinematic work. As Rose says: “*What happens when you stray beyond those cast-iron conventions and wander off into the darkness?*” (Rose, 2017). With my short film *Muil* I have tried to explore that darkness, the inner darkness of our own true desire – monstrous, and forever unknown to ourselves.

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# CHILDREN WHO GIVE YOU SHIVERS IN MARIANA ENRÍQUEZ'S SHORT STORIES

Pol Vegara Meirelles

## Introduction

The aim of this work is to approach the children's figure as one of the usual elements in the fiction of terror; for this, we will go into the narrative of Mariana Enríquez and, as an object of analysis, we will take her stories, since they are short and easy pieces to address in the production of this article. After reviewing the use of her children in an environment of social terror and seeing the different types of characters, we will try, in the conclusions, to unify a possible explanation to why children provoke fear.

Mariana Enríquez is an Argentine author with an early beginning in writing, considering that was in 1995 when she published for the first time, around the age of twenty-two. Enríquez has been educated as a journalist and currently combines her publications with her work as subeditor of the magazine *Página/12*, as well as other occupations, since she has a long career among magazines, anthologies and own editions. Her works have been published in more than twenty countries and they have been translated into several languages. The critic welcomes her with enthusiasm; in fact, she has been awarded with prestigious prizes in literature, such as the Ciutat de Barcelona Prize received in 2017 for its collaboration with the publishing house Anagrama. However, it is too early to know if this emergent voice will be consecrated within

the canon; let's remember that she has two ridiculous obstacles: she is a woman, therefore her narrative diffuses less, and she writes terror (though not exclusively), which we know usually belongs to the periphery of "important literature". Another of the secondary objects of this proposal is, of course, to claim her as an author for her quality and her sharpness to portray the daily deafness in which we live.

In spite of the criticisms that Todorov receives for his proposal of the definition of the fantastic, we can bring up one of his ways to determine if a story belongs to that field: "A story is simply fantastic if the reader experiences in a profound way a feeling of fear and terror, the presence of worlds and unusual powers" (Todorov, 1972: 73). It is not correct, of course, to focus the definition only on what the recipient feels, but in the case of this genre, terror, there is always an approach with high expectations and in many cases it is judged whether a work of this type is good or not because of the feelings it causes, not because if its elements are well fitted, the structure follows a logic (even if it is its own logic), the characters allow identification with the viewer, etc. In the urban cosmos of Enríquez it is easy to find disturbances and a contact with the strange, especially in the *todorovian* sense: it is more an overwhelming reality that provokes apprehension in the reader than other supernatural phenomena, provided that these can be explained by some way (Todorov, 1972: 99). These accentuated sensations in Enríquez's stories fit very well with Freud's theory (1982) about the sinister (*unheimlich*), since one of the terrors that we recognize is presented by the themes that orbit these stories (loneliness, bad treatment, frustration, illness, abandonment, misery, crime, family, etc.). This also affects the figure of child, which is presented as a novel stimulus by associating something usually harmless with terror; what is provoked with this subversion, according to Pérez (2005), is an exposure to an unknown result that generates strangeness. What is unknown is again related to the *unheimlich*, although Pérez places it as a perception opposed to the everyday. Freud has enough subtleness to provide a creepier theory: it is not an opposition, what is known is both known and unknown. Strangeness arises from this experience where we find both phenomena in convergence; and from there, the sinister

appears. Fisher (2018) takes up Freud's theory to explain other related terms: the weird, which is given by excess, and the eerie, which is given by lack (Fisher, 2018: 75).

All these definitions help us to understand the use of the child as a terrifying device. From Freud and Fisher, we could advance some reasoning about it: the child characters are scary because they represent us as what we once were, but we are no longer (*unheimlich*), because they have incomprehensible behaviours for their harmless nature (weird) or because they do not present themselves as innocent creatures (eerie).

Is Büssing (1987) who is responsible for producing a monograph dedicated exclusively to the theme of children in horror fiction. Apart from that exhaustive work, very outdated, unfortunately, in terms of the latest references, we can find few more that explore the subject with such depth. The compilation work of Renner (2013) would be noteworthy, although it lacks the exhaustivity of Büssing's. This author proposes a simple classification to deal with the different uses in horror fiction that infants have: victims of their environment or their guardians, channels for evil, psychopaths or monsters of other species not entirely human.

### **Analysis of the stories**

Before starting to shred (quarter, perhaps, could be more appropriate for the occasion) the stories of Mariana Enríquez, I must warn that I always analyse the titles, since I consider them as a source of concise and delicately information offered by the author, who is also a reader and plays with the enunciation of the content of his story. What precise words do you choose to not advance anything, but, simultaneously, capture interest?

The title is intimately related to the textual indetermination (Martínez (2003)), which means that it has a great weight in the reader's reception: it is the first thing that is read and this opens a series of

expectations. The title is a small indicator about what will be found, so from that moment arrive the first judgments about the work. It seems very interesting to exploit this quote, since the analysis deals with several stories and we will have the opportunity to see how the titles interact with their respective stories:

El título tiene su propia literariedad. Se podría hablar de la estética de la titulación: el poder evocador y connotativo del título, su impacto y fuerza emotiva, la belleza y denso valor simbólico del mismo, capacidad sugerente, sugestiva, y clave interpretativa, son valores que han sido puestos de manifiesto por diversos autores a la hora de elegir el título de sus obras. (Martínez, 2003:11).<sup>1</sup>

To continue talking about titles, it is necessary to mention Gerard Genette, great literature theoretician, who proposed transtextual relations (Genette, 1989). Briefly, I bring up his categorization of title and subtitle, which belongs to the plane of the paratext, which is what surrounds the text and, in some way, helps to diminish the distance between the author and the reader with the expected orientations. However, I consider that it also belongs to the category of architext because the titles also help to know under what genre can be labelled a work of fiction; in this case, we will have to attend to the sum of the titles of both volumes to know if they fit the horror genre (although we can anticipate that this is the case). It is also necessary to mention succinctly Jean Ricardou, another theoretician whose contribution to the field of titling is very interesting, as the article by Vicea (2003) attests. Ricardou has a similar vision to Genette and for him the title works as an epithet, which means that there is a synonymic nature between the title and the text, as long as the first one gives unity to the text and, at the same time, plays with polysemy making the meaning were completed, enlarged, nuanced, in short, changed, according to the progress of reading, which

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<sup>1</sup> *The title has its own literariness. One could speak of the aesthetics of the titling: the evocative and connotative power of the title, its impact and emotional force, the beauty and dense symbolic value of the same, ability of intriguing, of being suggestive, and interpretive key, are values that have been revealed by different authors when choosing the title of their works. [Trad. propia]*

reveals new keys for interpretation. In a genre such as horror, where we notice unexpected twists, even circus pirouettes to provoke the surprise of the reader (or spectator, if we think of a film text), the title is a changing element whose meaning is always completed afterwards.

The stories analysed belong to two anthologies, both published in Spain by the publisher Anagrama: *Los peligros de fumar en la cama*<sup>2</sup> (2016) and *Las cosas que perdimos en el fuego*<sup>3</sup> (2017). Although it has already been mentioned that Enríquez has other published works, in this article we focus on this selection because all the stories are united by thematology: political horror. In addition, the presence of the evil child element is very abundant and it is easy to find examples of the different use of children as a figure of terror.

### ***El desentierro de la angelita***<sup>4</sup>

With this title we are already advancing one of the terrifying elements of the story: an exhumation. This word, in Spanish, “desenterrar” consists of the prefix ‘des’, with two meanings that converge for the occasion: “undo”, on the one hand, and “out of”, and of the other prefix ‘en’ with the sense of “put inside”, “carry” towards”, which, together with the ending ‘-ar’, that helps to create a new verb based on a radical related to the earth, what is loaded with connotations; besides that we recognize the act of “unearthing” as something habitual in horror genre. As for “angelita”, she also gives us information. Probably it is the unearthing of a girl, a little girl, maybe she behaved well enough to receive that nickname. We do not have an identity, but a trait: it is angelic because it is either good or very small, but its name does not seem important. This is significant in the sense that it marks a folkloric flavour that we will see throughout the Enríquez stories; a new formulation of popular neighbourhood stories or anecdotes.

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<sup>2</sup> *The dangers of smoking in bed*

<sup>3</sup> *The things we lost in the fire*

<sup>4</sup> *The exhumation of the little angel*. [Trad. propia]

The protagonist of the story is a young woman whose rebellion against social norms, and more specifically against her role as procreative woman, causes the dissatisfaction of her family: this character does not have a name either. It is still not relevant to know the identity of the characters, who almost function as archetypes. The story revolves around some baby bones linked by family lineage to the protagonist: a great aunt who never came to know, but who, by blood ties, manifests in the presence of her. The time and space of the novel, contemporary and urban, are executed around the dead baby. First we know the house's patio of the young woman's grandmother, where it is known that the baby is buried, and, years later, the apartment of said young woman in which a kind of spectrum of that baby is materialized. The baby can leave bits of her rotten flesh around of his niece granddaughter's home and personal effects.

The tone of this story is entirely ironic, but it distances itself from Enríquez's central intention of making political terror. In this case, there is a normalized and even fun coexistence with horror; the protagonist does not suffer any panic attack, is not anxious or fears the phantom baby. At one point, she declares that the weirdest thing ("unnatural") is to see a baby so young, barely three months old, to be able to walk. Of course, it is a ghost and it is not subject to the physical laws of this world. The baby does not scare the reader either, since it is not a creature who emits evilness. What it can cause, because of graphic descriptions about her state of decomposition, is certain apprehension.

This ghostly baby could be a victim of her environment. Either of extreme poverty or of family as possible reasons, she did not receive a proper burial because her human remains did not rest in a cemetery and his sister, in a fit of guilt, took her to her patio, where she buried her and also forgot her. Years later, the "little angel" has to appear to her niece granddaughter in demanding that she take care of this matter. However, Enríquez has placed here a protagonist with certain hysterical dyes very alien to motherhood. Could this be a way to denounce forced motherhood associated with female role?

It is no novelty to treat this topic in literature; González (2007) already traces in Greek sources what he considers “the dark side”. As for the genre of terror itself, we can consult Gurton-Watcher (2016), which mentions some examples, such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley or *The Yellow Paper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Other examples closer in time could be *The Fifth Son* of Doris Lessing, *We Have to Talk about Kevin* by Lionel Shriver or *The Other Mother* by Carol Goodman. It is also possible to cite several films that revolve around terrifying motherhood, such as *Rosemary’s Baby* (Polanski, 1968) or, even, *Alien: The Eighth Passenger* (Scott, 1979), which has been read numerous times like a truculent mother-child relationship. Today, we still find on the billboard horror films directed by women where motherhood is the key: *Dark Touch* (de Van, 2013), *The Babadook* (Kent, 2014) or *Lyle* (Thorndike, 2014). It is, therefore, a recurrent theme in female genre literature, something that is also seen in Enríquez, even through spectral babies.

There is an obvious rejection not to motherhood itself, but to forced procreation, a position that is reinforced through other characters in its collections, such as the protagonist of “The dirty boy”. The empowerment of women is an issue that has already been seen in Enríquez (Rodríguez de la Vega, 2018 and Cabral, 2016); in fact, the stories of this Argentine author take place in an essentially feminine world. Men, almost always, are absent; and the few that there are, hardly have any voice or, which is particularly curious, there are difficulties to communicate with them.

### ***El aljibe***<sup>5</sup>

According to the title, in this story the “aljibe” will have a special relevance. The choice of the title is evidently motivated by its diatopic variety and not by an intention to use a cultured or elevated language; it is possible, in that case, that for the Spanish reader over against Latin reader, some of the connotations are lost until they realised the figure. A well is a place where water is stored; it is, as a rule, a small space,

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<sup>5</sup> The Well.

narrow, dark, humid, gloomy. Sometimes it is dry and it is like a dark abyss or the water does not flow and remains stagnant. All these connotative units can be associated to the horror genre and there is a film that, by antonomasia, is the ideal representation of the fear that comes from a well: *The Ring* (Nakata, 1998)<sup>6</sup>. In addition, wells also involve danger; they are places where every mother forbids her children to play. The well, by its shape, represents a circle and, in this case, it is a perfect foretaste of the structure of the story, which indicates, like a hoop snake, that it ends where it begins.

In this story, we have a family that is also full of women: grandmother, mother, two daughters and a father, but he will disappear from history without importance. These women are replete of terrors and they live in a continuous state of anxiety, which makes them unable to have a normal life. They decide, then, to visit a *santera*<sup>7</sup> the four of them, although the youngest daughter (remnant of folklore) is vivacious and oblivious to these fears. It is the first one that sees the well and the one that is thrown, curious, to explore it, but the mother takes her from there hurriedly. After meeting with the *santera*, the family returns to its town where they finally begin to develop a common life, except for that small daughter, who suddenly manifests those extreme fears that the other women suffered before. This youngest daughter, named Josefina, cannot, therefore, grow up normally. Enríquez is succinct in the descriptions; she is direct and forceful, with words that sometimes border on the gross and images that pierce it. To describe Josefina the technique she uses is very interesting: she enhances the beauty of her older sister as if it were a flower bathed in the spring sun, while for her she reserves above all actions that involve dizziness and vomiting. At one point she says: «Desde el sillón, con el pelo tan grasoso que parecía siempre

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<sup>6</sup> The well can be considered as a gate between two worlds, since it has a double connection with the land and water, as well as entering the interior of the earth. The well is part of certain cultures as a necessary element in a rite of initiation or a rite of passage (van Gennep, 1986). Normally, it is used as a symbol of the unknown: to look at the well is to overcome the unknown.

<sup>7</sup> Witch doctor.

húmedo, veía pasar el mundo que se estaba perdiendo»<sup>8</sup> (Enríquez, 2016: 61). This appears towards the middle of the story. We find in these words a reminiscence of the well. On the one hand, we have the word “humid”, which refers to “water”, on the other, a world with a unique perspective, as if *she were inside the well* and its vision was forced to perceive everything that disturbs it. In fact, shortly after we know that the witch immersed in the well a picture of her, deteriorated now, just like her.

In the end, the older sister convinces Josefina to visit the *santera* again and they together ask her to take away the evils, but this woman reveals a heart-breaking information: what the women of her family did was to overturn all the ills in her, that is, turning her into a container of fears. Josefina is not a diabolical child, she is not even bad *per se*, but her existence is uncomfortable because of the accumulation of terrors, because they are concentrated in her and not scattered around her. Josefina is an involuntary sacrifice. Upon discovering this, she tries to commit suicide, because she is incapable of assimilating such a cruel betrayal as that, from her own family, and, at the same time, because she wants to put an end to that distressing existence of his. However, she is not capable, because the well frightens her.

Josefina is another of the girls who are afraid because she has two functions: she is a victim of the negligence of her tutors and is a reflector of fear; her body, we imagine that thin, bony, sallow, with dirty and shiny hair, is an unpleasant transformation; Josefina literally embodies the feeling of fear, panic characterizes it. It is a mirror in which we do not want to look at ourselves. We cannot help her because, then, we will be the ones who will suffer. This is, without doubt, one of the best stories of Enríquez. Here also takes up common themes in the genre such as confinement. It is the selfishness of the caretakers that keeps her chained, they are the ones that ruin her life. The family becomes a threatening factor and another feeling that produces Josefina is helplessness, a lack of protection, a primary fear that we suffer in the face of absences.

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<sup>8</sup> From the armchair, with her hair so greasy that it seemed always wet, she saw the world that was being lost go by. [Trad. propial]

### ***Rambla triste***<sup>9</sup>

This story places us in a current Barcelona, but dirty and neglected, very negative. Enríquez's toxic urban environments have been studied in Angulo (2017), among others. The Argentine author offers in her stories a very pessimistic vision of the big cities; it turns them into the epicentre of human decay and misery, she covers them with filth, with spontaneously unpleasant people, which transform the environment into a source of more hostility. Her Barcelona is not a realistic portrait, either her Buenos Aires is such thing; these cities denounce, rather, the mutation that we have suffered as humans to become an inferior, malignant species, without the capacity to understand and help the other.

Una chica caminaba delante de ella, algo inestable, con el jean demasiado bajo y ajustado en las caderas de modo que el vientre hinchado sobresalía por debajo de la remera corta, un rollo de carne blancuzca con estrías que habría sido fácil de ocultar con una remera larga y ancha, pero seguramente a la chica no le importaba la estética. Estaban solas; era temprano, apenas las ocho de la noche, pero extrañamente la calle estaba vacía [...]

En un momento, la chica se dio vuelta, miró a Sofía a los ojos y dijo, con un acento catalán cerrado, pero en muy claro español: «No puedo más.» Entonces se bajó los pantalones y defecó en la vereda, una diarrea explosiva, dolorosa, que le hizo fruncir la cara por el retortijón de los intestinos. [...]

El olor ya no era imaginario, y a Sofía se le humedecieron los ojos de tanto aguantar las arcadas.<sup>10</sup> (Enríquez, 2016: 76-77)

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<sup>9</sup> Sad Boulevar.

<sup>10</sup> A girl walked in front of her, something unstable, with the jeans too low and tight at the hips so that the swollen belly protruded from under the short shirt, a roll of whitish flesh with stretch marks that would have been easy to hide with a longer and wider shirt, but surely the girl did not care about aesthetics. They were alone; it was early, barely eight in the evening, but strangely the street was empty [...]

In a moment, the girl turned around, looked Sofia in the eyes and said, with a closed Catalan accent, but in very clear Spanish: "I cannot anymore." Then she lowered his

We cannot help ourselves either. Enríquez's thesis is very pessimistic, but perhaps it is also a wake-up call to our worst aspect as citizens who are lost in our individuality, but that, at the end, we are also immerse ourselves in a collectivity of similar habits, tastes and movements: denounces us as a mass.

Apart from that oppressive atmosphere, *Rambla triste* receives that name because, according to the story, many children have been neglected, abandoned, abused or killed in those streets. It mixes fictitious characters, like Madame Yasmine, who lost her son, with other real ones, like the recognized pederast Xavier Tamit Tamit. Julieta can see the children that are part of the city; their spectra are presented as if they were flesh and blood, although not everyone can see them. Its main characteristic is its frightful smell, which contributes to the pollution of the city (and, somehow, explains it). The man who appears in the story, Daniel, has a sceptical attitude and does not perceive the boys; he is a man who stays away from the feminine reality. Sofia, Julieta's friend, is influenced by what she tells her about Barcelona: she already smells the putrefaction of the city, so it is not odd for another of her senses to get infected.

We find again the theme of terrifying motherhood within the genre. Julieta wants to be a mother, but she cannot. At some point, the reader is allowed to intuit that she suffers from paranoia, so those children she sees, apart from not being real, could be related to her frustrated desire.

Regarding the use of children, one of its basis is social criticism: child abuse escapes beyond fiction; it is a delicate subject, but it also works within the story because it generates concern about the intention of those children. They are not bad; it is said that they do not hurt, they simply do not allow residents to leave the area. They are looking for,

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pants and defecated in the path, a explosive, painful diarrhea, which made her face frowning because of the cramping of the intestines. [...]

The smell was no longer imaginary, and Sofia's eyes got wet from so much holding the arches. [Trad. propia]

perhaps, someone to help them. The lack of communication is usually very present also in works related to terror. As Renner (2013) points out to us, the archetype of a ghost child that not only seeks revenge, but exposes the culprit of his death is quite common in nineteenth-century authors and is a theme that we still find in the cinema: *The Changeling* (Medak, 1980), *El espinazo del diablo* (del Toro, 2001), *Dark Water* (Salles, 2005) or *El orfanato* (Bayona, 2007) are a few examples that illustrate this theme.

### ***Carne***<sup>11</sup>

This title of a single word is reminiscent of cannibalism, religious transcendence, spiritual nourishment, it has even a sectarian air. It could also be an allusion to the configuration of the human body, its most sensual part, a political claim to its ownership.

In this story we find a media commotion waiting for two young girls to leave the psychiatric centre that holds them: «Cuando fueron dadas de alta, los camarógrafos las persiguieron corriendo, algunos se enredaron con los cables y muchos cayeron sobre el pavimento; pero ellas no huyeron. Sólo los miraron con una sonrisa que después fue descrita como “aterradora” y “mística”, y se fueron en el auto que manejaba el padre de Mariela, la mayor»<sup>12</sup> (Enriquez, 2016: 125). These girls are not dangerous nor have they hurt anyone. The reason why they are harassed through the media, especially through television, is quite curious. They call it the most shocking case of adolescent fanaticism in the world. Following the lyrics of a dark and outdated singer-songwriter who commit suicide, popular, but at the same time scorned by critics for having a mostly pubescent audience, the girls look for his

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<sup>11</sup> Meat. Maybe it is needed to put into context about Spanish word “carne”, which is used indistinctly so much as to “meat” as “flesh”. So, it has both components: edibility and sensuality.

<sup>12</sup> When they were discharged, the cameramen chased them running, some became entangled with the cables and many fell on the pavement; but they did not flee. They only looked at them with a smile that was later described as “terrifying” and “mystical”, and they got into the car that Mariela’s father, the oldest, drove. [Trad. propia]

human remains in the cemetery to eat his meat, although this was in an advanced state of decomposition: «Habían desenterrado el cajón de Santiago Espina<sup>13</sup> con una pala y sus propias manos. [...] Las chicas habían abierto el féretro para alimentarse de los restos del Espina con devoción y asco; alrededor del hueco daban testimonio de su esfuerzo los charcos de vómito»<sup>14</sup> (Enríquez, 2016: 130). Later on we read on the same page: «Uno de los policías también vomitó. “Dejaron los huesos limpios”, le dijo a la televisión»<sup>15</sup>. Mariela and Julieta (frequent names in Enríquez’s stories) have integrated the singer-songwriter’s legacy and as soon as they reach the age of majority and can get rid of adult supervision, they will build themselves as new idols to continue the diffusion of the lyrics by Santiago Espina.

In general, in human society cannibalism is sanctioned with the most extreme rejection and repudiation. The original members of the band abandon their profession and express their rejection; however, they are the only ones that take such a sharp step. Television, although it censures the behaviour of young women, uses it, in a hypocritical way, to take out programs related to this practice (despite the criticisms they receive) and, of course, interview other followers of the singer what they think of the act. They respond, surprisingly, that they are envious because they (the young girls) were the first to understand the true nature of his letters, as if sooner or later they would have reached that conclusion anyway.

The story is not only resolved without any repercussion (punishment) for young girls, but they are reinforced by their actions and adopt a new role among the “Espinosas”<sup>16</sup>, which is how the fans

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<sup>13</sup> His surname means “thorn”.

<sup>14</sup> They had unearthed Santiago Espina’s casket with a shovel and his own hands. [...] The girls had opened the coffin to feed on the remains of Espina with devotion and disgust; around the hole they gave testimony of their effort the puddles of vomit. [Trad. propia]

<sup>15</sup> One of the policemen also vomited. “They left the bones clean”, he told the television. [Trad. propia]

<sup>16</sup> *Thornies*. [Trad. propia]

of Santiago Espina call themselves. Now they are leaders, they have upgraded. The bewilderment in the neighbours of the girls is evident and shows that they do not know what to do, what action to take against the situation rather than moving, since it is an atypical case. That is the beginning of the cult of the flesh. The lyrics of the song, which we barely know, reads: «Si tenés hambre, comé de mi cuerpo. Si tenés sed, bebé de mis ojos»<sup>17</sup>. With the open end and the reproduction of the message, we only have to think of one option: a *thorny* will end up eating the flesh of another *thorny*, perhaps without waiting for it to die, only to being hungry.

Cannibalism has been explored from various points of view. As far as children are concerned, they usually appear as victims (they are forced to eat human), as in *Parents* (Balaban, 1989) or *Somos lo que hay* (Grau, 2010). In the opposite case, we have the sixteen-year-old girl who abandons veganism to try the meat in *Grave* (Ducournau, 2016) or the wild boys of *Juego de niños* (Makinov, 2012), which adapts the homonymous novel written by Juan José Plans.

### ***Chicos que faltan***<sup>18</sup>

This story has also been published independently under the title *Boys who come back* (*Chicos que vuelven*) and as a graphic novel with the same title and illustrations by Laura Dattoli, although the story was fragmented, because the specific needs of text-to-image change as a language's adaptation. In any case, for the analysis we will focus on the story that appears compiled in *Los peligros de frumar en la cama*. It will be the last of this collection we take here to analyse.

The title clearly plays with the fear of losing a child; it is very usual using the disappearance of a minor as a resource for the starting point of a story. It seems a conflict more typical in thriller than in horror, although there are elements that are confused and could be applied

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<sup>17</sup> *If you are hungry, eat from my flesh. If you are thirsty, drink from my eyes.* [Trad. propia]

<sup>18</sup> *Missing boys.*

in both cases. This is a title that, as in “El aljibe”, is constantly updated as the reading progresses, since its meaning fluctuates between those missing children and the reappeared children who only maintain a physical version of the creature that once he was.

The issue of motherhood is still latent and is around the character of Mechi, the official who works in the file of missing children. She keeps the files organized with diligence and sometimes helps a journalist friend, Pablo, who is interested in getting good news. Mechi, apparently, has no children; we do not know if she wants to have them or it has a frustrated feeling about it; however, it is difficult to ignore the usual relationship in Enríquez’s accounts of an adult woman who must take care of children, not yet (or especially) when they are not their’s. Mechi is obsessed with a particular face, that of Vanadis. Once, his journalist friend shows her a video, just a fragment badly recorded, in which the body of a young woman, flaccid by a supposed recent death, is sensed. She has the face of Vanadis. However, Vanadis returns and Mechi is the first to see her. The girl is docile and allows herself to be led; the family recovers her happily, but with a feeling that travels from the reencounter’s joy to repudiation when they discover that she is no longer the same person. Other children reappear also, including children who were presumed dead. No matter how much time has passed, the boys return and all have the same characteristics: they remain exactly the same as the day of their disappearance or death. Nevertheless they appear to be empty, as if they only conserved their physique.

The story has a lot of eerie. The key is in those children who should not go back and yet they do. They represent Freud’s *unheimlich* term: they are known, because they are the boys and girls who once belonged to a home (the Mechi’s files, which include family photos, prove it), but at the same time they are unknown because they are no longer those kids. Underlies a Heraclitean philosophy that inclines towards the sinister because what we know, we know, in fact, only once. In addition, there is the fact that they act as if they were part of the same organism. Vanadis commands them. Again we see power in female hands; she is

the only who has a name, the rest belongs to that set of children. We do not know their intentions, they do not express them. Although they are repudiated, they stay in the city and occupy empty places. They also do not know how many more children are going to return, until when, where they come from or who they are now.

The political terror is clear: it is another denounce for the institutional helplessness suffered by the most vulnerable people in society. Even within the story children appear overcrowded, reified and stripped of their identities. They are grouped, but they are not able to defend themselves, to recover their position or to raise their voices. The story closes without knowing what they are looking for when they returned or how they have done it. In a conference, Enríquez (2017b) comments the following: a friend of her read the story and related it, sadly, with the cases of the stolen babies during the Argentinian dictatorship. When she was able to recover her brother, he was no longer the same. The author states that it was not her intention to approximate that interpretation, but that it is good and also very valid.

There is a television series of French origin called *Les Revenants* (Gobert, 2012), with a Canadian remake, *The Returned* (Cuse, 2015), which has a very similar argument.

While literature (and film) do not have to be sociological records of our culture, they can, among many other functions, act as a channel for our concerns and fears, even those that keep them dormant. The fiction related to terror is much more permissive with its content than other genres, so it is not surprising that it collects marginal discourses to incorporate them into its imagery.

### ***El chico sucio***<sup>19</sup>

We intuit, from the title, that the following story, already in *Las cosas que perdimos en el fuego*, will pivot around a child. The term “dirty” invites us to think that it is an unattended child, like the many

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<sup>19</sup> *The Dirty Boy*.

we have seen in her stories. We could consider it as a recurring theme in Enríquez's social terror stories.

*El chico sucio* is presented, somehow, as a kind of reverse of *El desentierro de la angelita*. While the last story enjoys a healthy ironic tone and is pure entertainment, *El chico sucio* has a darker presentation. We have a female protagonist, in her thirties, single and without children, who challenges her family living in a dangerous neighbourhood; once again, forced motherhood can be underlined. The city is also perceived here as an enemy force, always threatening. In front of his house, a drug-addicted mother, pregnant with the second, and her five-year-old son live in a doorway. The child has layers of grime and the protagonist believes he is aware of his disgusting appearance, at one point he says:

El hijo [...] se pasa el día en el subterráneo, pidiendo dinero a cambio de estampitas de San Expédito. [...] Tiene un método muy inquietante: después de ofrecerles la estampita a los pasajeros, los obliga a darle la mano, un apretón breve y mugriento. Los pasajeros contienen la pena y el asco: el chico está sucio y apesta, pero nunca vi a nadie lo suficientemente compasivo como para sacarlo del subte, llevárselo a su casa, darle un baño, llamar a los asistentes sociales.<sup>20</sup> (Enríquez, 2017:12)

The dirty boy appears one night in the house of the protagonist, but there is no fluid communication and, although there are certain tints of concern of the adult towards the child, the boy's situation does not change. The next day, she receives the news that the body of a decapitated child appeared and it could be a part of a blood ritual.

This "dirty boy" is an element to unleash terror; on the one hand, we have its phantasmagorical aspect according to Enríquez's macabre universe: he is dirty, he smells bad, he hardly speaks and it does not

<sup>20</sup> The son [...] spends the day in the subway, asking for money in exchange for stamps from San Expédito. [...] He has a very disturbing method: after offering the stamp to the passengers, he forces them to shake his hand, a brief and grimy squeeze. The passengers contain grief and disgust: the boy is dirty and stinks, but I never saw anyone compassionate enough to take him off the subway, take him home, give him a bath, call the social workers.

matter to almost anyone. On the other hand, the insistent denunciation before the abandonment of the children, and not only of the children: this urban environment so toxic and frustrated protagonists have an effect on the extreme individualization that suffers our culture, a change with very negative consequences.

Although the presentation of the child is unpleasant, he is a victim of the environment: the city has swallowed him, its neighbourhood conceals his crime, altars are erected to new deities; San La Muerte on the one hand, the Gauchito Gil, on the other, who seem to claim sacrifices. Here there is a folk reminiscence and an attempt (very successful) on the part of Enríquez to exploit the current concerns through terror with local and contemporary factors. The drug-addict mother confesses in the end that she has given her two children, but we cannot imagine in exchange for what, since there is no sign of a traditional improvement. It is as if there was a new cult that feeds on these abandoned boys so abundant in the orography of Enríquez.

The use of children as a sacrifice is part of films like *The Witch* (Eggers, 2015), *The Conjuring* (Wan, 2013) or *The Believers* (Schlesinger, 1987).

### ***Pablito clavó un clavito: una evocación del Petiso Orejudo***<sup>21</sup>

Petiso Orejudo was a real infant killer. This somber character of Argentina explained that he felt certain impulses from a very young age and, in fact, were confirmed several attempts to assassinate younger children when he was just a child. If the reader recognizes the nickname (“petiso” is the equivalent of “short stature” in a colloquial term, “orejudo” is “big-eared<sup>2</sup>), then he or she will know that it is not a pleasant reference. However, if it passes unnoticed by ignorance, it can disconcert you. Next to the phrase that opens the title, it seems that we are faced with a play on words, perhaps with a funny story, something that could happen given the grotesque humor of the writer.

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<sup>21</sup> *Pablito hammed a little nail: an evocation of the Petiso Orejudo*. The first part of the title is a known Spanish tongue-twister.

Nevertheless, it is a title that is remade and completed once the story is read, since it not only contains the direct reference to the murderer, but a milestone in his criminal career, so that “nail” can be premonitory.

It is curious to finally find a story starring a man. Pablo is married and has a baby; he works as a tour guide in Buenos Aires, specifically in a tour of crime history. He has extensive knowledge about crimes and during the trip he enjoys entertaining tourists with morbid details. Apart from the Petiso, another famous Argentine assassin is mentioned: Yuya Murano.

The connection with that real child, anchored to the popular imagination as a short guy and big-eared with homicidal impulses, can be inspiring. Pablo suffers from hallucinations in which he meets the spirit of the young murderer. There is a certain tension in the story, especially because Paul could get infected, at least harbour curiosity, about the macabre motivations of Petiso. It could happen that, after one of his hallucinations, he was tempted to hurt his son, who, on the other hand, does nothing but bother him, according to his point of view.

It is an interesting story, but most of the weight is charged in that evocation. The use of Petiso Orejudo causes fear because it is real and really snatched the lives of several children; although it is transformed into a spectrum, its legacy gives chills. In this case, we have a psychopath and for the first time a child who moves away from the typology of victim or channel for the evil.

About Petiso Orejudo there is a film, *El niño de barro* (Algora, 2007), in which they talk about their crimes. There is also *Joshua* (Ratliff, 2007), among others. As for literature, there are notorious examples of murderous children, but the most discarded are, perhaps, those of Osvaldo Lamborghini in his story *El niño proletario* (1973).

***Fin de curso***<sup>22</sup>

This title is clearly referring to the end of the school year, that is, it puts us again among adolescent characters. Through the influence of other stories, we could think of a *Carrie*-style end of course (de Palma, 1976), for example. However, the paths of this story are different.

We also continue in a feminine environment, in a school. Marcela is the odd girl: they think she has psychiatric problems because she hurts herself, she mutilates herself, she self-harms. She obeys something, although they do not believe her. The body in general is very present in Enríquez's narrative, almost always with negative or grotesque connotations because she stands out defects, illnesses, wounds, fluids and unpleasant odors that emerge from it... It would be an interesting point to make a study approach, perhaps also from a perspective of the horror genre, since, although strange, it is a way of claiming the dominance (or the lack of) we have over our body. In the case of Marcela, it is an almost complete absence, considering that the harm caused is not born from her.

This girl is not bad by herself either, but at the end of the school year, she gets rid of her curse by passing it on to another partner. Unlike "El aljibe", this channel girl has a happy ending, even if that implies the unhappiness of another. Like academic courses, however, this curse follows cycles. It could remind us of *Ringu* (Nakata, 1998) or, more recently, of *It Follows* (Mitchell, 2014).

***Bajo el agua negra***<sup>23</sup>

In this title we have an allusion to water again; this time it appears adjectivated by the word "black". Black water refers to dirty, stagnant, rotten, muddy, contaminated water. Remember that the nominal phrase is preceded by "beneath" as preposition, what means that in this story it is expected there is something or someone submerged. Connotations of "aljibe (well)" are different because this water is not limited to a small space.

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<sup>22</sup> *End of school year*

<sup>23</sup> *Beneath the black water*

We return to topics already seen: a woman protagonist, a prosecutor, confronting the abuse of the authorities with her tools, worried about children who are not hers. It should not be suggested that only by this element we already find the allusion to an absent maternity, but it is a point that must be taken into account by the imposition that prevails, although with less force, on the woman's body and her ability to reproduction. The real police brutality served as inspiration for, at least, a part of the story. Here lies another point that we already know about Enríquez's narrative: political terror or social denunciation. The prosecutor wants to fight injustice: the two accused policemen tortured and threw two boys into a muddy river; in other words, they abused who they should have protected.

An unusual event occurs that connects immediately with the title. The corpse of one of the boys appears; the other, however, no. After several days of investigation, the prosecutor receives the news that Emanuel has resurfaced from the waters. The name is not chosen by chance; it is a name we already associate with a religious cult, a saviour. The water is very symbolic and has a very strong bond with the deities of death and rebirth, as well as other spring elements. The nuance is given by the type of water: it is a god emerged from the mud, dirt, debris. This is one of the stories where toxic nature has an essential role, which is merely the reflection of the most negative part of the human condition: we are monsters of nature that use themselves to give them new horrendous forms (Fisher, 2018). This river borders the city, so for years it has been dumping garbage, waste, even human bodies, into it. There is a Lovecraftian touch in the story: under that anoxic water there is a being that receives all those waste as offerings.

The prosecutor follows the track until a marginal town, abandoned by the local administrations. She discovers children of strange appearance, with feline and batrachian features, who are able to communicate at a frequency far from the common hearing range. It is creepy when it describes the silent screams of those children because of the absence of sound. What kind of messiah can emerge from a dead river? What kind of life is the one that is reproducing at its margins? It is one of the concerns expressed by someone from the village, a priest sent there

months ago, who is warning of the resurgence: «-[...]¿Sabés qué quiere decir “Emanuel”? Quiere decir “Dios está con nosotros”. De qué Dios estamos hablando es el problema»<sup>24</sup> (Enríquez, 2017: 170-171). That same character commits suicide a page later because he is terrified of what has been called water. The prosecutor is debating, as Todorov's (1972) theory has done, between seeking a logical explanation for each of the events or accepting that she is dealing with a neo-cult that escapes from reason, but this last option could lead to the same fate as her confidant, the priest.

Ahora estaba claro que no era una murga. Era una procesión. Una fila de gente que tocaba los tambores murgueros, con sus redoblantes tan ruidosos, encabezada por los chicos deformes con sus brazos delgados y los dedos de molusco, seguida por las mujeres, la mayoría gordas, con el cuerpo desfigurado de los alimentos casi únicamente a base de carbohidratos. Había algunos hombres, pocos, y Marina distinguió entre ellos a algunos policías que conocía: hasta creyó ver a Suárez [...] escapado de su arresto domiciliario.<sup>25</sup> (Enríquez, 2017:172-173)<sup>25</sup>

It is even suggested that the policemen have acted in connivance with this river being, as if they knew that their continued abuses would engender a new veneration.

In this case, we face two types of children: on the one hand, we have the teenager Emanuel, who becomes the idol born again from the dead river; that is, he suffers a transformation that brings him closer to a deity of a negative nature. It will be then, according to the classification of Büssing (1987), a channel, he is not bad by himself. On the other hand, mutant children are presented, who no longer belong to the human category, although they share traits. These children are monsters and if they act in

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<sup>24</sup> –Do you know what” Emmanuel means? It means “God is with us” What God we are talking about is the problem. [Trad. propia]

<sup>25</sup> Now it was clear that it was not a murga [band of street musicians]. It was a procession. A line of people who played drums murgueros, with their noisy drummers, led by the deformed boys with their thin arms and mollusc fingers, followed by the women, mostly fat, with the disfigured body of food almost exclusively carbohydrate base. There were a few men, very few, and Marina distinguished among them some policemen she knew: she even thought she saw Suárez [...] escaping his house arrest. [Trad. propia]

an aggressive or simply in a different way, they cannot be judged under the human model, so they are not bad by themselves either, but according to how we perceive their nature.

We can find in both cases the common factor of the grouping. We have children who change suddenly, as in *The Children* (Shankland, 2008). They decide to act in an organized manner because of a common interest; are they still human or they are not? This theme has been widely explored by literature and one of the most famous titles is *The Lord of the Flies* (2005) of the Golding Nobel Prize, where we also see how the group is hierarchized and the children themselves carry out cruel actions, in principle contrary to its innocent nature. Another example of children who follow the cults and participate blindly in them can be found in *Wicker Man* (2006, LaBute) or in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Nispel, 2003), in the character of Jedidah Hewitt; he probably participated in the known crimes growing up in that family, either intentionally or accidentally.

## Conclusions

In light of these readings and possibly other cases that we have in mind, we can say that children in literature or cinema are used as a part of our nature that ends up being alien; children represent very well the *unheimlich* of Freud; they are an echo of ourselves, but also catalysts of the worst and transform it into something unexpected, that repels us, because we recognize ourselves and at the same time not. Children learn by imitation, something that we sometimes forget, so their gestures are our gestures, even if we despise them or do not want to see ourselves repeated in them.

Children are part of society, but they do not follow its rules yet; they do not have a voice of their own and their autonomy is limited. Despite this last, they are unpredictable. They are also able to jump from the vulnerability to the most disturbing disquiet. The child is an unstable entity. Not because it does not have inherent evil does not mean that it cannot cause a feeling within the spectrum of fear.

It is difficult to establish a generic conclusion to such a broad hypothesis, more after having recovered the classification of Büssing, something brief and for now simple, in which we already intuited a superior division: when the evil lies abroad and when the evil lies inside. In Enríquez's stories, most examples occur in the first way: children are abandoned, neglected, betrayed, etc. for its environment: it is difficult to point out an example (Petiso Orejudo is the clearest) in which we find an intrinsic evil.

A factor that, however, is often common in questions about the use of children in fiction is that it fails to protect them, and if the family, institutions, the church, the authority, society in general, cannot save children, how are we going to save ourselves?

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# THE CRAFT: RIFFS, ADOLESCENCE AND WITCHCRAFT

/javi moreno



Figure 1. Opening frame from *The Craft* (Andrew Fleming, 1996), where the iconic *Tomorrow Never Nows* of the Canadian alternative rock group *Our Lady Peace* played.

## To Know. Filmic rootwork or *The Craft* cinematographic precedents [introduction]

LIRIO

*Do you hear the voice of your mother?*

SARAH

*What about her?*

LIRIO

*She's telling you to be strong. She was a witch too, of course. Didn't you know?*

SARAH

No.

Witchcraft cinema has always been a rare jewel. In between B movie, horror or family humour, witchcraft tends to behave as a plot binder rather than the theme itself; like one of the components of a potion. Very often witches' appearances are contingent to the villain archetype. Or perhaps we should qualify: the poisoned apples villain. And it is that if we made a list of cinema witches and warlocks, the former would win to the point that the warlock would be considered an oddity within the genre. Such issue would correspond to a multifaceted Western tradition of historical, folkloric or mythological character where witchcraft is understood as a magical science practiced mostly by women. Wicked East and West witches, versus Good North and South witches<sup>1</sup> do nothing but show the moral dichotomy the witch character rides between in cinema. Symbol of the perverter of established order, on occasion, however, there also are witch friends<sup>2</sup>. Although it should be understood that good and evil are somewhat narrow words to understand the subject.

I do consider that developing a genealogy or a filmic *rootwork*<sup>3</sup> of the witch is a much wider task of what I can develop here, and certainly

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<sup>1</sup> As it is related in the Lyman Frank Baum *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) novel or in its cinematographic homonym *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> The weight of malevolence usually requires at times of its kind counterpart; something we find for example in the Icelandic film *The Juniper Tree* (Nietzchka Keene, 1990), where the plot centres about two witch sisters, one good and the other bad.

<sup>3</sup> In the magical Hoodoo practices of the South of USA, the use of roots and plants.

a path full of secrets, half-truths, bastard daughters and unrecognized heritages. Regarding to flesh and bone witches it happens the same way. A great deal of the historical-mythical narratives are usually told by the uninitiated and by the enemies; generally, of course, by men. From the Homeric Circe to those women burnt by Inquisitors, the inheritance that remains is abrupt, always mythical and not without a big dose of romanticism. About cinema, which is the matter that concerns us, we cannot find a uniform evolutive trend or limited genres. While witchcraft could be protagonist in a comedy as in a thriller, we could mark some milestones.

Until the exultant goths Nancy, Bonnie, Rochelle and Sarah arrived, walking in slow motion down the high school corridor and awakening the terror of their clean and hygienic North American classmates, diverse film latencies have flourished in cinema. Before the nineties *The Craft*, the topic of witchcraft has been treated (and the magic one of course) since the dawn of cinematography. A winners' vision about the medieval witch and the tortures described in the *Malleus Malleficarum*<sup>4</sup> is found in the Swedish *Häxan: Witchcraft Through the Ages* (Benjamin Christensen, 1922). Near to a documentary and with an expressionist touch, "it shows the perception of witchcraft during the Middle Ages. The dark arts were the path to reach all fantasies the time repressed. However, they were also associated with everything that could not be understood, what religion had labelled as unacceptable" (López, 2018). From the cursed ecstatic witch, to the hysterical woman medicated

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<sup>4</sup> German 1486 criminological-religious treatise, written by the Dominican inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger. Divided in three parts, the first section of the book makes a dissertation about the proven existence of heresy and its heretical character. Secondly, certain sorcery formulas are described and especially the Devil's pact. Finally, all kind of tortures are offered, humiliations and interrogatories as pain methodologies for the witch to declare. This book became the best-seller of the Holy Inquisition, created in 1184 in the south of France to persecute the Cathars and maintained until the 19th century (depending on the country). A clue of this text is provided by the very same title feminized noun *malleficarum*, essential to understand the misogyny that it fired, affirming that is the woman's very own insatiable appetite the one that ended triggering the appearance of a witch, the commitment of its crimes and, what is intolerable, the forced conversion of men to Satan's faith.

by science, this rarity is a statement about the political condition of sorcery. And it continued to delineate the archetypal character of the evil witch of *Snow White and the seven dwarfs* (David Hand et al., 1937). Disney showed us about that a genre prototype of a stepmother obsessed with youth and with beauty, that was even capable of trying to annihilate Snow White with a hexed apple just not to be eclipsed by her. An iconography that will set a mystique of the femininity of the witch as an evil woman (inside and outside the cinema).

The *akelarre*<sup>5</sup> described in *Andrei Rublev* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966) already showed us how these reunions seemed to work as an escape valve to the rigid regulatory rules around the body and the private life imposed by the Church<sup>6</sup>, perpetrator of the true abuses. *Witchfinder General* (Michael Reeves, 1968) gives account of corrupt inquisitors. Who really is the Devil in these narrations? Is it a true fallen spirit to whom offer? Or of the oppressors that devise evil torture plans themselves?<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the films that boarded the inquisitorial question or those that had a historicist spirit, the habituality and potency of the symbol made the witch become not only that recurring magical villain, as in the bloodthirsty *Black Sunday* (Mario Brava, 1960), or in the Argento's *giallo*, *Suspiria* (1977), precursor tapes to the slasher genre. Beyond terror, they were also caricatured in two family films of the nineties such as *Hocus Pocus* (Kenny Ortega, 1993) or *The Witches* (Nicolas Roeg, 1990), this last tape is where it shows how some women of power, lashes of children, come out the closet as execrable beings and with a *vermin* nature, that like to taste the bones of the smallest.

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<sup>5</sup> Word of Basque origin that etymologically could come from the words *aker* (goat, great goat) and *larre* (meadow), what would come to mean "meadow of the goat", related to the gathering places of witches or sabbats in front of the Devil's figure in Goat form.

<sup>6</sup> Or in a more desperate way in *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973).

<sup>7</sup> In this regard we can also mention the film *Akelarre* (Pedro Olea, 1984), about the witch trials that took place in Inza's village (Navarre). Inquisition and marginality, as always, shook hands.

In a very different discursive line is where North American series such as *Bewitched* (Sol Saks), aired between 1964 and 1972, or *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* (Hal Sutherland, 1971) arise. Confirmed as extraordinary beings, the protagonist witches (not antagonists) no longer have a horrible physique but are the living representation of the white North American woman; be it as a married housewife or as a teenager in age to promise. It is inaugurated the birth of the pop witch, the desirable witch, admirable and beautiful. A bit rebellious, but always a good neighbour. After all, they are witches:

Series about witches have always been a good way to measure the degree of submission of the woman. After all, we are talking about women with superpowers, capable of turning you into a hairy toad or a ridiculous Little cup of tea whenever they are pleased, that choose, like the Samantha from *Bewitched*, to use them to keep their house untouched with no more effort than the famous and absurd movement of her nose. It was in the sixties -not even the end of the sixties, when the first feminist revolution broke out- and all that had to worry the average North American woman was to have the laundry ready in time and make happy, domestically speaking, her husband (Fernández, 2018).

In the antipode of the clean North American white witch, and as a hypersexualized symbol of the eighties B series culture, appears Elvira, nicknamed the Queen of Darkness and portrayed by Cassandra Peterson, with a curriculum that includes a television program about offal movies, beer advertisements and occasional incursions in cinema.

Between good, regular and wicked witches, often moral metaphors of what a woman can or cannot do, in a field of audiovisual test witchcraft, for all audiences or for teenage films of blood and boobs, halfway between the pop witchcraft icons and the dark practices premiered the film *The Craft*.

## To Will . California and ecstasy in the akelarre

*BONNIE, NANCY, ROCHELLE*

*(together)*

*Now is the time. This is the hour.*

*Ours is the magic. Ours is the power.*

Directed by Andrew Fleming and produced by Douglas Wick, *The Craft* aired May, 3rd 1996 in the North American cinemas by Columbia Pictures and September, 19th the same year in Spain, under the title of *Jóvenes y Brujas*. With original script by the same director and Piter Filardi<sup>8</sup>, it tells the story of Sarah (Robin Tunney), a recently arrived to Los Angeles young woman that feels isolated between her new high school classmates and family. Soon she establishes friendship with three marginalized girls: Nancy (Fairuza Balk), Bonnie (Neve Campbell) and Rochelle (Rachel True), three self-taught witches that will consider her the fourth chosen one that will finish forming their circle<sup>9</sup>. Fascinated by one of the high school dream-boys, clear-cut brainless football team captain, Sarah ends up spending a night out with him. Spiteful by the girl's refusal, he will end spreading rumours where he says Sarah is the "lousiest lay he's ever had". Through the spells and their latent powers, more and more awake, the four witches find the way of taking revenge on anyone that harms them; until Nancy, traversed by Manon's power, the all-embracing entity they are devoted to, they begin to lose control. A power issue that will end up disputing the antagonistic fight between good and evil. A witches fight.

As a good witch-grunge film was shot in Los Angeles (California, USA), one of the cradles of the noisiest sounds of the nineties. In addition to the Sony Pictures studios, some of the locations used during filming are the schools Verdugo Hills High School (Tujunga, L.A.) and St. Benedict's School (Montebello, L.A.), that give its name to St. Benedict's

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<sup>8</sup> The same who would also write and direct four years later *Ricky 6*, a film about the heavy metal lover Ricky Kasso, accused of Satanism and murder during the eighties.

<sup>9</sup> Also called coven or coventicle, is the name that is usually given to groups, more or less closed, of practitioners of certain witchcrafts. Comes from the Latin *conventum*, from old French *convent* and the English *convent*, translated as "company" or "group".

school where the four protagonists attend, Culver City streets, Long Beach Harbour Place Tower buildings (where Nancy moves with her mother after killing her progenitor's lover with telekinesis and received a good pension) or Leo Corrallo State Park's beach, really close to Malibu, where they invoke the Watchtowers. Another of the most iconic filming sets, especially for the followers of the occult, is the esoteric shop run by Lirio (Assumpta Serna). Panpipes Magickal Marketplace, as it is known in real life, was bought after the film by Fairuza Balk herself.

One of the main novelties *The Craft* brought was leaving behind the archetype of the witch-monster of the fairy tales or the complacent witch of the American dream. An issue that seemed deliberate, in order for it to happen Fleming and Filardi were advised enough so that the witches, readers and occult science practitioners of the time, we perceived that the film had a sustenance on the real witchcraft practice. And we would be ecstatic with it. Obviously, levitation, telepathy and atmospheric phenomena control were necessary as part of the supernatural plot, but many details exist that correspond with existing rituals. In this regard the witch Pat Devin, member of the Covenant of the Goddess (Florida) and Crone Priestess of the Dianic Feminist Tradition<sup>10</sup>, was hired as the main adviser of the film.

Devin was a Wiccan practitioner, a neopagan religion developed during the first half of the 20th century in England. Linked to ancient pagan religions, nevertheless it has a ritual body of hermetic nature, heir of groups such as the Golden Dawn. With a decentralized and eclectic character, since its appearance different orders and traditions have been developing with major or minor hierarchy among its ranks (as High Priestesses, High Priests and first grade initiates, second grade, etc.). Aware of the importance the film could have for the teenage

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<sup>10</sup> A tradition of essentialist feminist witchcraft created by the Hungarian witch and activist Zsuzsanna Budapest, whose devotional body focuses on the Roman goddess Diana. This deity has been pointed out during the Middle Ages and later, as one of the main entities that run the Witches' Sabbat. Budapest, as a militant feminist, organized several squads against sexual violence, and specifically *Take Back the Night* in Southern California, movement that sought a reappropriation of the street and the night by women, frequent victims of night rapes.

collective imaginary that reconfigured the traditional image of the witch and it adapted it more to her religious practice, Devin intervened in several script questions.

From such advice the reconfiguration of Lirio's character arose, much more luminous and less creepy than the writers desired, or the fact of avoiding Nancy's death by impalement, as an execution for her lust for power. A question that once again posed the witch as a woman that, having wanted to be too powerful, ended up sacrificed. The forest ritual has some classic tips of a wiccan initiation and the invocations to the Watchers of the Watchtowers too, as the inclusion of the ethical principle «everything you do, will be returned to you triplicate». Even the book that Nancy buys to invoke the spirits is a real book<sup>11</sup>. Devin also influenced the actresses themselves, although some already knew what they had in hand. One of them was initiated as a witch by her, although she does not tell whom (Brightshadow, 1998), she gave Rubin Tunney (Sarah) a Scott Cunningham classic, Rachel True (Rachel) already knew witchcraft and the awakening of the Goddess, since at the filming time she was Reading *The Spiral Dance* (Starhawk, 1979), and Neve Campbell (Bonnie) had researched on her own. Fairuza Balk (Nancy), however, being 22 years when she participated in the film, had already received a pagan education since childhood, she spoke of certain hereditary magical practices (with a possible gypsy ancestry from her mother) and was a self-confessed Wiccan. In fact, she was along Pat Devin another of *The Craft* advisors.

Manon, not being a real historical deity<sup>12</sup>, is the name chosen deliberately to prevent that after watching the film teenagers, ran to the beach to invoke more dangerous deities such as Hecate. Initially devised as a hermaphrodite by Devin, for Fleming it was somewhat excessive and decided it would stay as a masculine entity. Something that did not

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<sup>11</sup> This was *The Book of Ceremonial Magic* Arthur Edward Waite, published in 1898. The author is also the co-author of the famous Rider-Waite Tarot.

<sup>12</sup> Although it has been wanted to see an influence of the Irish Celtic god Manannan mac Lir, a derisive deity of the sea and magic. The name was inspired by Marcel's Pagnol novel *Manon des sources* (1963).

quite fit with the sorcerous feeling of the time. In one of the film scenes Nancy explains to Sarah that «It's like God and the devil, I mean, it's everything, it's ... the trees, it's the ground, it's the rocks, the moon, it's Everything. If God and the devil were playing football, Manon would be the stadium that they played on, it would be the sun that shone down them» (Fleming, 1994). In this way, beyond the Inquisition Christian propaganda and the perception of social media about witchcraft among the young as a Satanist cult, a witch cult was raised that was not Satanist but inclusive to the Devil<sup>13</sup>. At this crossroad between fiction and reality, *The Craft* made known magical practices that did not quite fit the sweetened vision of the New Age<sup>14</sup>. Even the film, advised by a Wiccan<sup>15</sup>, gave the opportunity to some teenagers to usurp the power, to be ecstatic with it. Something that stipulates the difference between this and other manifestations of traditional witchcraft where the same ethical codes do not always exist. Where both blessing and cursing is permissible, sign praises to Diana as to whisper to the Devil.

But the beginning of the Age of Aquarius also taught that the teenage witches of the nineties we had to work it. As Nancy, Bonnie, Rochelle and Sarah, in a time prior to the domestic inclusion of the Internet and the reigns of the pagan IRC (and what to say, of pdf books), we had to go through many esoteric shops where to browse books that one could not afford and interrogate the consequent (and patient) Lirio regent of the place.

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<sup>13</sup> In the case of Wicca the cult to a God and to a Goddess was assumed, or in the case of Dianic Wicca, to Diana. Precisely from their ranks there has been many efforts to demarcate themselves from Satanism along all the 20th century, as it could be one more reason for police and religious persecution. Currently, and that is something that it is perceived in the theme of series such as the current *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, traditional witchcraft has no problem in claiming the Medieval symbol of the Devil.

<sup>14</sup> Cultural-spiritual movement of postmodern character that is defined from the astrological Age of Aquarius and is characterized by relativism and eclecticism.

<sup>15</sup> Where the notion of “as long as you harm none, do as thou will” prevails.

## To Dare . Empowerment among the cursed

*DRIVER*

*You girls watch out for those weirdoes.*

*NANCY:*

*(lowering her glasses and smiling)*

*We are the weirdoes mister.*



Figure 2. Frame where it shows Rochelle, Nancy, Bonnie y Sarah (from left to right)

W.I.T.C.H. lives and laughs inside each woman. Is the part in each of us, under timid smiles, the approval before the absurd masculine domination, the makeup or the suffocating clothes for the skin that our sick society demands us to wear. There is no “almost” W.I.T.C.H.. If you are woman and dare to look inside you, you are a Witch. Create your own rules. You are free and beautiful [...] Everything repressive, what is orientated just for men, greedy, puritan, authoritarian, those are your objectives. Your weapons are theatre, satire, explosions, magic, herbs, music, costumes, cameras, masks, chants, stickers, templates and paint, films, tambourines, bricks, brooms, weapons, voodoo dolls, cats, candles, bells, chalk, fingernails, Molotov cocktails, poisonous circles, wicks, tape recorders, incense and your own and beautiful limitless imagination. Your power comes from your own being as a woman, and it activates while working together with your sisters. The power of the Group is more than the sum of its individual members, because it is all together. You have the commitment of freeing our sisters from oppression and of stereotyped sexual roles (whether they like it or not) as well as ourselves. You become

a witch when speaking out loud «I am a Witch» three times and thinking about it. You become a Witch being a woman, not docile, angry, joyful and immortal. (New York Group of Witches, W.I.T.C.H., 2015: 75-76)

This is how the radical feminist group W.I.T.C.H. (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, Nueva York, 1968 – 1970) conjured 30 year before. In the North American *yippie*<sup>16</sup> movement context, this group of women fought from the street performance and political action in favour of abortion and against marriage as an institution, masculine violence or the glass ceiling. Initiated by a small group of militants, it was Robin Morgan, witch that defended the cult of the Goddess movement and knower of the herbal properties by familiar tradition, who gave the idea of forming a group that acted in the form of an *akelarre*<sup>17</sup>, whose performances could act as spells and with a horizontality that positioned the group above the individual. «The image of several women reunited secretly with the objective of conspiring against the world is seductive and evokes witch gatherings in a lost place centuries ago» (Wildburg en W.I.T.C.H., 2015: 34).

In *The Craft* there is no mention about feminism, however we can find some prototypical strategies of the *akelarre* revisited by W.I.T.C.H.; no longer a political performance, but as a life test between the four protagonists. The whole movie seems to speak, of base, about power and privileges. And obviously it is not the girls who have such privileges. Nancy, Sarah, Rochelle and Bonnie are not the student prototypes that could be erected as those protagonists that are expected from a supernatural horror film; neither do we find the typical high

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<sup>16</sup> This was the name that usually took the militants of the Youth International Party, an antimilitarist political party and in favour of freedom of speech that appeared in 1967 in USA, at the same time that the *soixante-huitard* French movements. Facing the passive attitude of the hippies, the yippies performed numerous theatrical and vindicative actions on the street.

<sup>17</sup> Facing the contemporary concept of coven, the *akelarre* can be found in the medieval revisions of the group of witches and warlocks, generally worshipers of the Great Goat or a faery deity condemned by the Church. During the 20th century the term *akelarre* has been reclaimed specially by groups and theoreticians of traditional witchcraft (initiatc and less visible than the Wiccan), but also by certain feminisms.

school corridor story. They do not fit totally with the classic feminine genre stereotypes of within the teenager's cinema. Bullying victims, they seek recognition, feeling good about themselves, find love or fit in; but they are, from beginning to end, marginal. A clear marginality versus the univocity of the subjects that usually are privileges: Laura Lizzie (Christine Taylor) or Chris Hooker (Skeet Ulrich)<sup>18</sup>, as their clear persecutors.

De facto, it is about four women in a youth male chauvinism and classist environment of a religious school<sup>19</sup> where the successful girls are white, cheerleaders and upper-middle class. With *luck* they are reduced to sexual medals for the successful males<sup>20</sup>, obviously white, sportsmen and with a clear social status: the possibility of becoming a whore prowls all the time in the film's plot. It is only necessary to be questioned under the words of those who possess the privilege of credibility. So, raised this way, we find a plot context where the protagonists do not belong (for several reasons) to the hetero-centred white majority.



Figure 3. Nancy Down's altar.

<sup>18</sup> Both Skeet Ulrich and Neve Campbell starred that same year in the horror film *Scream*, which will change the course of the North American slasher genre.

<sup>19</sup> Beyond the cameras it was not easy for the stage team to find a high school that would allow them to record a film about witchcraft.

<sup>20</sup> The nerd, the fat or the black (the queer is not seen), as assumed stereotypes within this cinematographic genre do not even appear in the film.

Nancy Downs is the deepest reactive to the imposed order of her environment. Brazen, with a Gothic aesthetic and strong character, she had an affair with Chris and, apparently, he infected her with a venereal disease. In the middle of the AIDS pandemic and other sexually transmitted infections, the nature of the infection is not mentioned in the film and is understood as something shameful. Apparently bisexual, and in case we did not have the menu to not fin in the well-thinking North American disposed society enough, Nancy is of a humble origin. She lives in an exclusion situation (in what is almost a caravan) with her mother and her repulsive abusive boyfriend, both alcoholic. She implores, studies and deepens more than any of her companions to possess «all of Manon's power», reaching gifts such as telepathy, the ability to manipulate dreams, telekinesis, levitation or glamour<sup>21</sup>. And not just that, also lots of money; what she desired.

«I don't like Negroids. Sorry», is the sentence that Laura utters, prototype of the popular white teenager, to explain Rochelle the reason of the continued humiliations she and her chorus of friends proffer. She is black, just that. Radicalized, however, during a ritual she will ask «not to hate those who hate me, especially racist pieces of bleached-blond shit like Laura Lizzie». She will find the pleasure of getting revenge on her by making her go bald in front of her eyes through a spell, and she will be the first one to manifest levitation through the game *light as a feather, stiff as a board*. And finally, she will become arrogant and discriminate Sarah for not obeying Nancy.

Bonnie is white, heterosexual and has no financial problems. However, her body is full of strange sores that makes her look, in her own words, «a monster». A shameful situation that makes the girl go very covered and with hair in her face. It is after the empowerment of the witches, that she asks so much for her healing, that it happens. And her beauty emerges. From that moment she will begin to dress with neckline and visibilize her body with pride; something that, in Sarah's eyes, ended up turning her into a conceited and superficial one.

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<sup>21</sup> Art of hiding the true form of things, situations or the own body, creating an illusion.

Sarah is also white, heterosexual and, for what she lets us glimpse of her great house, wealthy. Her mother, apparently a witch, died when she was born and granted her the legitimacy of being a *natural witch*<sup>22</sup>. Versus her companions, self-taught witches and that gain their power through effort, Sarah from the beginning of the film already shows strong telekinetic powers. Disgusted with her life, marked in her wrists by a suicide attempt, and annoyed by her powers, something that Nancy deeply envies, her efforts go into trying to make Chris Hooker fall in love with her. Her exclusion reason: probably being a natural witch and not understanding it. Halfway through the circle of excluded that has given her shelter and the normality of the rest of the high school boys, she manages to charm him until she has him as a lapdog. But you can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig, and so Chris, despite his conjured character flaunts his masculinity trying to rape Sarah. Deeply infuriated, Nancy goes after him and gives him his due, throwing him throughout a window and ending his life. This is how everything becomes ugly for a witch that will finally dominate all the sorcerous arts, including climate control. Versus her antagonistic Nancy, she will demonstrate that the Invocation of the Spirit also serves to exercise *goodness*.

The students of St. Benedict's high school Nancy, Bonnie and Rochelle (and to whom Sarah will be added) are called by their classmates, almost prophetically, the Witches of Eastwick. An audio-visual nod to

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<sup>22</sup> While most traditions of witchcraft allow any person, with the proper initiations overcome and answered oracles, to become a part of groups or orders, it exists the witch typology that inherits not only the knowledge, but also the power, called the *Cunning Fire* of their ancestors, sisters and related spirits. Such is the case of some hereditary familiar witchcraft traditions, as the Italo-Argentinian tradition Via Stellare of which I am a part, where when a family member dies, the power of their descendants (of blood or adopted) grows and even the gifts that ancestor had are acquired. A transmission of powers that can also be observed in the series *American Horror Story: Coven* (Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, 2013 – 2014). In it the Miss Robichaux's Academy of New Orleans, coven under the form of a select school for girls, has a Supreme who rules the other witches. When she is sick or about to die, the one that will become new Supreme experiments a flourishment of her powers. In this way the Fire is transmitted through the blood of a same family (something also usual in the case of the families of catholic European or South American healers) or of the blood of the witch pact that unites its members.

the North American super production *The Witches of Eastwick* (George Miller, 1987), starring Cher, Susan Sarandon and Michelle Pfeiffer. In it, the three are endowed with power, but with some limitation until they invoke the Devil. This, under the appearance of Daryl Van Horne (Jack Nicholson), with a doubtful taste, obscene and endowed with big *macho* qualities, offers them an amplification of their strengths. Similarly, to *The Craft*, the power of the circle will grow exponentially when they make the Invocation of the Spirit. A ritual that, without alluding the classical pact, causes Manon to cross the body of her daughters and endows them with superhuman powers. This confirms one of the main characteristics of any self-respecting witch: the deal with the spirits as a paradigm of power acquisition, be it through a pact, where a witch-spirit or witch-fairy or witch-Devil exchange occurs, or through the gift of the spirit to the witch. But of course, in this production it ends being a masculine and parental entity the one that has the power and grants it.

A number of girls are marginalized by racial, social and genre issues in a hostile environment that points them out, peruses them and ridicules them. Stalked by heteropatriarchal persecution, like that of any witch and any woman (powerful or not) throughout history, they end un-allying and forming an association that reminds of the feminist sisterhoods. A term coined by Kate Millet in the seventies within the second feminist wave to name the twinning and support among women; a sorority without social classes, ethnic origin or sexuality distinction.

And against political exclusion, witchcraft as a defence. Also, in the seventies the witch and activist Sybil Leek appealed to her comrades to defend themselves of the dark wizards and political persecution: «We cannot risk moving on in unknown territory. We have no other defence than the occult sciences, the Old Religion» (Leek, 96 – 97). A situation of horizontality that will end decompensating in the film when one of the witches will be *blessed* by Manon.

## To Be Silent . Spirit Riffs [conclusions]

NANCY:

*We summon and stir thee!*

*Lend us your powers.*

*Show us your glory.*

*We invoke thee.*

*Manon! Fill me!*

*The Craft* can be the contribution of Andrew Fleming to the evolution of the slasher genre, originated in the context of *exploitation*, where the maniac can be anyone. The question of power as an ambiguous internal agent, which may well develop as an ally, may well manifest as an enemy, that keeps no one safe in the plot; the persecutor may be your best friend or it may even be you, corrupted by irrepressible instincts. Such was Nancy's fate. "I bind you from doing harm, Nancy. Harm against other people and harm against yourself": this is how it sounded Sarah's spell to dominate her former friend.

Always to remember will be the soundtrack, that placed the film in the teenager musical North American present. Along with the themes designed by the New Zealand composer Graeme Revell<sup>23</sup>, a selection of alternative rock and punk rock was added that reunited in a single album *Elastica* with their *Spastica*, the Singer-songwriter Jewel, Letters to Cleo with the reinterpretation of the *Dangerous Type* of The Cars (as historical background for the glorious walk of the witches in slow motion in their high school), Spacehog or the Our Lady of Peace band with an electronic version of the Beatles *Tomorrow Never Knows*, for the multi-frame intro to the film. But it will be precisely the version of *How Soon is Now?* (The Smiths), played by the band Love Spit Love, the iconic theme. And not precisely because of this film, but because two years later it became part of the opening of the famous television series *Charmed* (Constance Burge, 1998- 2006), known as *Embrujadas* in Spain.

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<sup>23</sup> Author of original soundtracks for *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (Curtis Hanson, 1992), *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994), *Spawn* (Mark A. Z. Dippé, 1997) or *Sin City* (Robert Rodríguez, 2005).

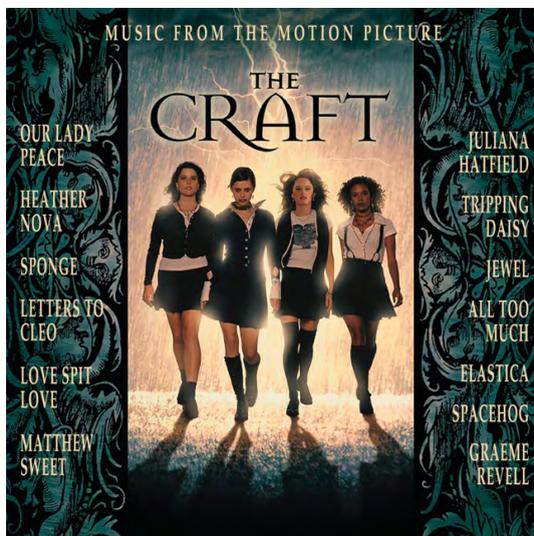


Figure 4. Cover of the original soundtrack of *The Craft*, published in 1996.

The case of *How Soon is Now?* it is representative to understand how *The Craft* was formed as a whole series of musical chords, of style and trend. A binder of audiovisual riffs and distortions that reverberated far beyond Fleming's film, thus defining an entire *ninety* imaginary of what being a witch means. An empowered and riot witch, of course. Along with the Californian background character (grunge and somewhat apocalyptic), certain anarchist philosophy and goth-punk aesthetics would be imprinted on the teenage witchcraft thereafter.

That same year appeared *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (Scovell Nell) and was retransmitted in USA between 1996 and 2003. With a familiar style suitable for all ages, retakes the argument of its 1970's predecessor, «the first North American super heroine witch»<sup>24</sup>. It posed a witch worried about the typical problems of a teenager, who used discreetly her powers and that held a high non-violent ethical code. Somehow, Sarah would be the only of the four witches of *The Craft* that could look more like Sabrina.

<sup>24</sup> (Author's Translation). This is how it was described in the first chapter.

October 1998 we find two new audiovisual witch apparitions, almost, by magic, at the same time: *Charmed*, made by Constance Burge, presents three sisters, who fought the same with demons than run a pub. Gifted with powers like teleportation, time detention or clairvoyance, their lives were also crossed by bills, legal problems and, above all, by loves. *Practical Magic* (Griffin Dunne) was a super production of Warner Bros. Pictures that did not finish charming the public all that it could be expected. With Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman as protagonist sisters, it was posed to us with the question of orphanhood as in *Sabrina The Teenage Witch* (also in *Charmed*) and two aunts that raise them and transmit their ancestral wisdom. The problem: due to a curse, they cannot fall in love or the men fruit of their desire, will die. Again, the legitimacy of a witch-woman for her ability to be a lover or wife. A year later, and in a very different discursive line, it will appear *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sánchez). A horror genre was inaugurated with a fake documentary format where, on this occasion, the well-off youth are the ones that want to find a witch in the forest. However, this is not similar at all to the girls that could integrate in a North American residential neighbourhood.

At the end of the nineties the young sorceresses seemed to be fashionable and we always found as a dramatic constant in the plot, the difficulty of the witch to find love (in a man). The supernatural origin of a witch woman always appeared as a blight to a heterosexual normative life; something to which, on the other hand, their protagonists always seem to aspire. Well, the constant domestic sorority of independent women living and supporting each other, as a more or less familiar bond, was also recurrent.

Almost fifteen years we had to wait for the witches return in full reign of the series. As the phenomenon that inaugurates the new *witch* visuality of the 21st century, the third season of *American Horror Story* (Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, 2013) arrives under the subtitle of *Coven*. Closer to *The Craft* than any other later audiovisual contribution, everything occurs in New Orleans, current hoodoo and the *trendiest* witchcraft capital. Once again, a story of teenage white witches (heirs

of Salem's tradition)<sup>25</sup> that dress in black and have a refined sense of aesthetics, versus the black voodoo witches, is proposed. Beyond the colour of the witchcraft they practice, the plot is crossed by class and ethnic origin issues. The interest in witchcraft, historical in this case, also continued with the disturbing *The Witch* (Robert Eggers, 2015). Set in the 17th century New England, its plot was developed from the statements of alleged witches in various Inquisitorial processes.

Along with the sequel *AHS: Apocalypse*, 2018 has been a great year for audiovisual witchcraft that is genealogically related to *The Craft*. To situate *Hereditary* (Ari Aster) arrived, a horror film well documented on Paimon's cult, a devil whose way of being invoked is described in the *Ars Goetia*, a grimoire<sup>26</sup> of the 17th century. Then came the remakes of the old TV series: *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, the Satanist version of the saga, and *Charmed*, this time with three black sisters, one of whom is feminist and lesbian.

We could conclude that the merit, beyond the intrinsic issues to the film itself (as a greater or lesser quality of the performances, of the direction, of the soundtrack or of the real witchcraft documentation) is, along with all that, what ended up summoning *The Craft* since then<sup>27</sup>. As any good spell, its effects can endure a long time. From a despicable and cannibal being of green complexion to nearly a fairy of bright beauty and healing powers, the witch has always had a *monstrous* character in cinema. It is that *other* that is on the sidelines precisely because of her power; a privilege that ends up locking her as much as it frees her (justice always behind). *The Craft*, continuing with the trail of *Bewitched* or the original *Sabrina*, opened the door to the witch as a heroine who is even beyond the order of morality. Being able to choose benevolence, the contemporary audiovisual witches can play freely with the liminality

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<sup>25</sup> Almost as a footnote to the series, a year later Adam Simon and Brannon Braga produce *Salem* for WGN America. With a Marilyn Manson's opening that has a lot to do with the *AHS: Coven* opening, once again the witch of the time lacking kindness and from a dark, tenebrous, point of view, is shown.

<sup>26</sup> European manuscripts about magic generally found from the Late Middle Ages.

<sup>27</sup> Beyond the rumours of a future remake with the same actresses.

that comes from invoking the dead, cursing or defying the Newtonian laws of reality. Among the characters always the iconological struggle between the witch-monster and the witch-wife, the witch-bitch and the witch-virgin.

«If we want to overthrow the industrial patriarchy, I believe we must resort to deeper energies, energies that the ruling classes of Christianity and industrialism have always tried, desperately, to deny and repress. Those are the energies of magic» (Evans, 2015: 288). They are young and witches, and they want power. But that teenage desire to be something more than in a beginning they were not, it ends up bringing them consequences. The one that wanted more power, ends up crazy. And the one that did not want it, ends up with more power than anyone else. The moral of the tale and the darkness of the bad witch that had so much depth in the audiovisual culture appears. Three girls that trying to escape to a situation that marginalizes them, they fail and end up diminished. However, the white, innocent, heterosexual, attractive and upper-middle class one, ends being the witch with more power. Privilege again. And here it seems that the heteropatriarchal logic of mainstream cinema of the West Coast, also ended up winning.

In a heteropatriarchal filmic context where the powerful forces of gender obligatoriness lurk, witchcraft became a subversion model for many teenagers beyond their sex, their gender, their sexuality, their social class or their ethnic origin. An initiatic formula of sorority. Being a witch to move a broom telekinetically with the nose? No, thanks.

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## VIOLENCE AND DEATH TREATED AS ENTERTAINMENT. REALITY AND FICTION OF PRODUCTS CREATED FROM THE MASS MEDIA

Germán Piqueras Arona

### **Goya As A Starting Point**

The artist Gottfried Helnwein performs in 2007 his series *The Disasters of War*. In it, images of children are mixed with contemporary Asian cartoons. Therefore, the starting point is the influence that Goya has on the representation of death in our society and also on current artists who, like the Aragonese teacher, also record the time in which they live through their art. The reality is closest to the tragedy. This is how Helnwein explains his inspiration in Goya in an interview with Álvaro Fierro (2008):

200 years ago, Francisco de Goya began his famous series *Disasters of War*. There are almost 100 images, between drawings and sketches, which represent the cruelties of Spain torn by war. In memory of this great teacher, I started my own series of *Disasters of War*. Our children are growing up in a world where death, torture and murder happen as if they were virtual incidents of computer games. Many times special effects are more real than reality itself; we are witnessing a total confusion in which fiction is mixed with what appears in the news. I seek to portray that confusion.

Somehow, Helnwein is pointing out that today death has become an idle spectacle and he recalls that in Goya's time corpses were everywhere when soldiers went out to the battlefield. However, it alludes to the fact that today it is difficult to differentiate a death that takes place in a videogame or a movie with a real one, due to the copies of images, often manipulated. And most importantly, the Austrian artist reflects that indeed, today there are still wars, but also many people who go to the cinema with the aim of wanting to see death (violence, murders ...). Therefore, it can be affirmed that death is integrated into our society in an almost unconscious way.

Other artists such as the brothers Jake and Dinos Chapman who, in fact, have experienced the same events as Goya, but through the mass media, are also those that determine the opinion of Helnwein. This is what Elisabet Martín Gordillo (2007: 81) expresses in a publication about the young British art of the nineties: «On television, in the news, in movies, in videogames, recorded on amateur videocases, on web pages dedicated to executions, in programs devoted to mutilation and violent deaths. The play *Great Deeds with Dead*, made in 1994 by the Chapman brothers, is a proof of the audiovisual cult of contemporary violence that they carry out. In addition, in her they are inspired by the engraving *Great feat! With the dead!* of Goya to build a metaphor of the trivialized horror that we usually find in entertainment (Martín Gordillo, 2007: 78-79). One of the points in common that combine the visions about the war and the violence of Goya and the Chapman brothers is nothing but the irreverent attitude they adopt with the world around them, which is related to the non-acceptance of reality (Francés, 2007: 13).

The latter can be seen in the aesthetics of the work *Hell*, created between 1998 and 2000, and which is closer to the violence of the mass media, specifically to that of videogames, than to a literal reconstruction of the horror of the fields of concentration of the Second World War. Although the scenario recreated in the work could also be compared to the hell that El Bosco painted, with the caveat that the hell that the Chapman brothers build is more related to the legitimate visions of the

devil and the hell that television offers, as Martin analyzes. Gordillo (2007: 79), makes a strong comparison when he says that the audiovisual culture “has successfully permuted the National Socialist regime in the contemporary embodiment of absolute evil”. Regarding the controversy that usually accompanies his actions as artists, the Chapman brothers do not hesitate to make a statement that defines the spirit of his work and also, perhaps, the society in which they live: “If someone is shocked with our work, or is a hypocrite or is sick<sup>1</sup>».

### **What Do We Call Violence?**

It is true that today we live wars, catastrophes and various atrocities charged with violence live on television, internet and social networks, as if pain and horror had become a game. But we must not forget that both terror and violence have always been themes belonging to mythology, theater, literature or popular culture. The problem appears when, observing as if it were a game, the tragic reality is hidden (Urta, 1998: 141).

Death as entertainment in our contemporary western society could be linked to what Žižek (2013: 70-71) calls fetishistic denial, which is nothing but the oblivion of what has just been visualized. When we see the images of a collective massacre, of a murder, but also of corpses in a videogame, we choose to forget, “I know, but I refuse to fully assume the consequences of this knowledge, so I can continue acting as if I did not know it. »Expresses the Slovenian philosopher about this denial and, in addition, compares it with the universalized indifference to which Buddhist ethics appeals as a solution to all negative or harmful aspects.

Another observation about how violence affects us is related to the fact that we witness the action in the place that happens, because in this case we are conditioned by our emotional and ethical responses, as well as by our instinctive adult reaction. That is why we hate to witness the torture or suffering of an individual with our own eyes. It is not

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cacmalaga.eu/2004/04/30/jake-dinos-chapman/> (Consulted: 28/11/2018)

the same when we do not find ourselves in the place of action, since in that situation we have an abstract knowledge of the suffering of the masses, being much more difficult for us to torture a person than to allow the launch of a bomb that can cause the death of thousands of people (Zizek, 2013: 58-59). Other ways that violent people use to create distance from victims are through the use of an instrument. And the instruments of death par excellence are weapons, whose use affects natural aggression, transforming it into violence. Although there are also other instruments, in this case immaterial, that significantly affects the biological bases of human interrelations, such as ideas and ideologies, which become a danger when they are taken to the extreme (Sanmartín, 1998: 17).

It is important to specify what we call violence. The key lies in the words of Zizek (2013: 80-81), when he emphasizes that struggle and aggression are part of life, because they belong to the vital force, but that violence, which belongs to mortal force, is an excess of aggression that disturbs. Also, reference to Jean-Marie Muller, who thinks that:

It is essential to define violence in such a way that it can not be qualified as good. The moment we affirm that we are capable of distinguishing good from bad violence, we lose the proper use of the word and fall into confusion. And above all, as soon as we affirm that we are developing criteria for defining supposedly good violence, each one of us will find it easy to use them to justify our own violent acts.

I must also refer to the definitions of José Sanmartín (1998: 18), for whom violence “is a product of the action of culture on nature, of the environment on biology” and of L. Rowell Huesmann (1998: 97- 98), which defines violence more objectively, as «a visual and graphic representation of an act of physical aggression of one human being against another». In addition, the latter author believes that the most harmful is not necessarily the bloodiest, but the violence that teaches the viewer of the mass media in question to be more violent (Huesmann, 1998: 98). Likewise, violence has gone from the events section to the society section, a fact that shows its normalization in our time (Urrea, 1998: 142).

## **The Reality Through The Horror**

Compiling data that indicate that violence is a type of disturbance and that, in addition, there is no positive violence; this could be considered as the cause that leads to death in most cases that show the mass media. For this reason it is important to reflect on it as some filmmakers do, whose products are also important pieces of what we know as mass media. One of the directors whose works are closest to creating a certain state of consciousness critical of violence is Michael Haneke. Gerard Fossas (2017: 46) delves into the volatility of the abundant and tragic images that the mass media show on a daily basis and emphasizes the fact that Haneke incorporates these images into his cinema in order to show the banality, but also with the to give them the just importance that corresponds to them and to make the spectator meditate on the consequences of reality, which he shows through the horror that pervades the systemic evils.

On the other hand, Fossas states that Haneke, the main source of evil is the loss of consciousness, both individual and social, and cites as examples of such loss several factors such as illness, incommunicado or systematic acceptance of an order based in the economy that ends up leading to the loss of humanity that has, as consequences, trivialization of evil. In addition, the origin of violence, the ultimate act of horror in our society, could come from the aggression provoked by the anguish attached to the human being who lives in oppressive environments, as suggested by Haneke's cinema, (Fossas, 2017: 33). In addition, in a generic way, the mass media contribute more to normalize the horror than to spread the indigestible truth, since the works that try to deepen in the latter are minority (Ibídem, 2017: 38). Death is the leitmotiv of the work of the Austrian filmmaker, and Jaume Claver (2017: 65) underlines it when he says that for Haneke "there is no way to avoid the violence that is so present in society if you treat social facts in a serious way. This violence can lead, in many cases, to death. The death is irremediably united to the human being».

The viewer is, perhaps, the most important element for the mass media, as shown in the following analysis that Fossas (2017: 35) issues on Haneke, which also serves to demonstrate the thin line between reality and fiction that occurs in our society: “If the viewer is a key figure in his films, it is because such is the degree of connection between fiction and reality that, in a way, the most disturbing of his films is not looking at the screen, but looking back and asking yourself what is going through the head of the person next to you».

Another of the mass media par excellence and which also has a primary importance in the work of the Austrian director is television, because of its influence on an audience always predisposed to deception and manipulation, considerably affecting issues such as education (Claver, 2017: 70). In addition, Haneke considers this medium a trail of violence and death, guilty of many of the evils of modern society to show huge amounts of images related to the tragedy without issuing previous analysis, getting desensitized to the audience to prioritize the economic interest on the educational. In this last characteristic is where the real danger lies, and this must be added the fact that we no longer perceive reality but the television representation of reality, obtaining therefore a derivative of reality, which is extremely dangerous (Claver, 2017: 71-72). This danger is materialized or not depending on who thinks, because under the prism of the writer Dennis Lehane: “Once the cinema and television get into our blood, we live surrounded by myths all the time, including the myth of us same. We no longer know what reality is. Reality is formed by television and cinema, by constant exposure to fiction”<sup>2</sup>, particularly since the second half of the 20th century and, of course, in the 21st.

As examples of films where Haneke analyzes the consequences of misuse of television can be cited: *Benny's video*, which shows the existence of a teenager over which television exerts a harmful influence, especially because he uses as an educational tool and looks for aggressive images in it, configuring an increasingly amoral personality;

<sup>2</sup> [https://elpais.com/cultura/2018/12/01/actualidad/1543694385\\_115600.html#?ref=rss&format=simple&link=link](https://elpais.com/cultura/2018/12/01/actualidad/1543694385_115600.html#?ref=rss&format=simple&link=link) (Consulted: 04/12/2018)

*Funny Games*, where two young psychopaths compare their reality with that of a movie, living it as if they were two filmmakers filming it; *The Seventh Continent*, in whose last scene we observe that the family has died in front of a television on which the broadcast has ended, “categorical metaphor of its insignificant existence” (Claver, 2017: 72); o *The Piano Teacher*, where the mother of the protagonist waits in an anguished way in the house where both live, watching television with little or no light in the room, creating a sinister and stalking atmosphere (Claver, 2017: 75). It must also be admitted that although violence on the screens is not the cause of violence in the real world, it can be said that certain violent behaviours in the real world can find their source of inspiration in media such as television (Sanmartín, 1998: 2-3).

However in *Funny Games* you can highlight the gratuitous violence in itself, without meaning, for pure pleasure and provoked only to taste new sensations, to know what it feels at the cost of the suffering of others. Haneke seeks in her that the spectator reflects and reconsiders about this gratuitous violence and can, in this way, alter her conscience (Claver, 2017: 81).

But in the work of the Austrian director we also find parallels between violence, death and sex. For Haneke, sexual pleasure and pain are inextricably linked (Galera, 2017: 103). You can see, for example, in a scene from the film *Benny’s video* in which the protagonist gets pleasure in the fact of getting naked next to a corpse, rubbing the blood of it on his body, while recording the entire process with his video camera (Galera, 2017: 109). Later, the teenagers who appear in Larry Clark’s cinema would connect faraway but intellectually with films such as *Kids*, *Bully* or *Ken Park*, where the protagonists raise concepts such as rape or abuse, as pointed out by Albert Galera, who also reminds others directors who, together with Haneke, portray sex through a self-destructive approach, such as Buñuel or Polanski, of whom he highlights, among others, that obscure object of desire or gall moons, respectively. He adds names like Pasolini, when he raises questions such as pain and sadism, as reflected in the film *Saló, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, where the Italian director delves into one of the topics closest to the taboo: violation. In fact,

Haneke himself believes that this work by Pasolini is the only film that shows violence as it really is (Cieutat and Rouyer, 2018: 35). Likewise, other films can be cited in which this topic has a special relevance as *The Clockwork Orange*, Stanley Kubrick, *Frenzy*, Alfred Hitchcock, *I Spit on your Grave*, Meir Zarchi, *Irreversible*, Gaspar Noé, *Joves*, Carles Torras and Ramón Térmens or *Elle*, by Paul Verhoeven. It can also be equated, albeit prudently, with the protagonists of *The Piano Teacher* and *Antichrist*, the latter directed by Lars Von Trier, for the pursuit of sexual pleasure / pain they perform (Galera, 2017: 113).

Galera (2017: 128) concludes his study by remembering that violence in the cinema is accepted, as long as it is outside a sexual context. For reasons like this, he emphasizes that Haneke's cinema is necessary, since it allows us to “glimpse a light of hope in all those who still believe in cinema far beyond the stupid concept of entertainment as an escape into absolute emptiness.”

### **The Conditioning Of 11-S**

Regarding the main external factors that have influenced the change of the way of thinking of our society, we must concretely specify one, the violent and deadly act that conditions the beginning of the 21st century, marking a before and after: that of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, as well as the Pentagon and Pennsylvania. Therefore, it is interesting to reflect on one of the analyzes that can be drawn from the whole process that took place after the attacks, which is issued by Zizek (2013: 209) when he states that the clash between Arab and American civilizations is « the clash between brutal anonymous torture and torture as a media spectacle in which the bodies of the victims serve as an anonymous backdrop for the smiling faces of the innocent Americans who perpetrate torture.”

The Slovenian philosopher suggests a comparative relationship between reality, the New York attack, and fiction, in this case the film *The Birds* by Alfred Hitchcock, recalling the scene in which a bird, which is first a diffuse black spot, enters surprisingly in action in the

upper right plane, collapsing in the head of Melanie, who heads on his boat to the port of Bodega Bay. Therefore, it is important to reiterate the close relationship that, in many occasions, occurs between reality and fiction. Žižek (2013: 215) remarks that «the plane that hit the World Trade Center could be understood as the definitive Hitchcockian blur, the anamorphic stain that denatures the idyllic landscape of New York» and, therefore, we could add, the welfare of the West.

Also, you can relate the event of 11-S with another of the great representatives of the mass media: videogames. Although before continuing I must emphasize that videogames are not a form of representation but of simulation (Anyó, 2016: 65). The turnover of this sector far exceeds the film industry or the music industry. Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter (2012: 248-250) recall that the primal link between videogames and imperial reality is military. In the same way, they offer a list of all the names of those who choose to be the inventors of the game: William Higginbotham, Steve Russell, Ralph Baer or Nolan Bushnell. The common pattern of all of them is to be directly or indirectly related to the complex of the military industry of the United States, because from the beginning, the commercial videogame industry maintained links with the army of that country, borrowing various technologies such as bars side-scrolling or feedback devices, such as the videogame *Battlezone* of Atari, which was used to train the team of a tank.

They also emphasize in their research that the simulations were integrated into the computer during the Cold War and that they were a medium in which the unthinkable could be thought. The *Spacewar* videogame, created in 1961 by Russell and the MIT science students, had the purpose of fun implicit but, in turn, “seemed to release the computer simulation of its deadly functionality, driving it into a happy world of pure pleasure. » It was at the end of the Cold War when the commercial games advanced, beginning to be adapted from diverse military structures like entertainment, like *Marine Doom*. The war-videogame symbiosis is revealed in the 11-S:

While commercial developers rushed to capitalize on the market opportunities created by the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, the funds were poured into civil-military simulations co-designed for the War of Terror. Developers able to demonstrate collaboration with the army gave their creations the cachet of authenticity that the warriors of the console craved, and meanwhile the military trainers took advantage of the familiarity of the new generation of recruits with the Xbox and PS2. The videogame became the cornerstone of what James Der Derian calls *MIMENET: the Military Network of Entertainment Media Industries*.

Videogames such as *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, located within the entertainment and with an antiterrorist connotation or others like America's Army, designed from the recruitment program of the Department of Defense of the United States, are obvious examples of leisure and entertainment. Regarding a comic about the first, Mattia Dal Corno (2010: 1) exposes the following reflection in which he equates fiction and reality: «The world of *Modern Warfare 2: Ghost* is very similar to the real world. Every day there are terrorist actions in the Middle East and wars involving countries that probably do not even remember the reason for these ». Since the beginning of the series, *Call of Duty* has had references based on real events, such as World War II, and fictional, since Ángel Codón and Paco Fox (2016: 63-64) affirm that the first of the installments is reminiscent of movies like *Saving Private Ryan*, by Steven Spielberg, or *Enemy at the Gates*, by Jean-Jacques Annaud, but the videogame is also considered an improved version of the *Medal of Honor*, which was created and produced by Steven Spielberg. The saga continues to sell millions of copies every year.

Nor should we forget the civil-military co-productions such as *Full Spectrum Warrior*, launched as a commercial game and infantry training at the same time, or therapeutic simulators like *Virtual Iraq*, whose use is part of the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder for returning soldiers. of real world war, as Dyer-Witheford and Peuter (2012: 250-251) remind us, who also underline the fact that videogames are systematically incorporated into the Empire's war apparatus, grouping both players and developers in material partners of the so-

called military techno culture. As an example of videogame of this type in Spain we find *Commandos: Behind the Enemy Lines*, published in 1998 by Eidos Interactive and whose graphics are placed in various stages of the Second World War, with the important influence of Hollywood war films through films like *Where Eagles Dare*, 1968, *The Dirty Dozen*, 1967, or *Force 10 from Navarone*, 1978 (Anyó, 2016: 88). The *Commandos* saga has four other games to date, which explains its importance in this type of videogame.

Another paradigmatic case of videogame related to violence is *Grand Theft Auto*, created in 1996 by DMA Design, currently Rockstar North, which simulates violence in a contemporary city. The following information is gathered from the research of Óliver Pérez Latorre (2012: 161), who reviews two of the most representative titles of the saga: *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* and *Grand Theft Auto IV*. In the first of these, the Miami of the eighties is freely recreated, with a nod to the film *Scarface*, by Brian de Palma, famous television series such as *Miami Vice*, or the music of icons such as Michael Jackson. In the second, free recreation corresponds to the city of New York at present. That is, we are talking about fiction based on reality.

For example, in *GTA: Vice City*, among the videogame missions we find some that are directly related to violence and death, such as carrying out car chases, committing murders, provoking clashes between gangs or beating a suspect of treason. Pérez Latorre (2012: 165) specifies a characteristic of the game that makes us understand its dynamics better, as well as the argumentation of the use of violence in it: «In its discursive core, the game staged a transformational rule (action- effect) between violence and attainment of money. In general, the greater the use of violence (and the acceptance of violence against oneself), the more money is [...] obtained. The game promotes an ironic and critical view of the violence-money relationship».

Also in *GTA IV* the main plot seems to remember, notes Pérez Latorre (2012: 170-172), to the retrospective plot line of *The Godfather Part II*, Francis Ford Coppola, it is the story of an immigrant who

disembarks in the United States in search of a better life, with good will, but continuously interfered by the city to enter the game of the mafia. The protagonist of the game stands out, among other skills, for his mastery of different weapons. While it is true that the user can freely decide any of their actions, this freedom is compromised when the two options offered by the game are to kill one character or another, but end someone's life after all, which shows the false illusion of freedom offered by Liberty City, where criminal actions are also irremediably linked to the achievement of large sums of money. Another important feature is the role that the internet has in the game, since it is used above all to make appointments with people who should be chastised or killed.

Although truly, in the game, violence and its related activities do not make the player win, but rather add money. A differential nuance that underlines the plot of the game, is that the characters with greater purchasing power are portrayed in grotesque ways. In addition, Pérez Latorre concludes that in GTA violence leads to money, but also that poverty and indebtedness in our contemporary cities often lead to crime. In this way, the acceptance of violence is better understood, since it gives the person who exercises it economic well-being.

### **They Kill Their Monsters**

In the study conducted by Isaac Lopez Redondo (2014: 67) about videogames, he emphasizes the ideas of other researchers such as Juan Alberto Estallo, who, citing some of the opinions of the detractors of videogames, transcribes that these “may favor a pattern of impulsive, aggressive and selfish behavior among the most frequent users, especially those who play violent videogames. It is even argued that they can predispose children to accept violence too easily, “citing also the fact that, while exercising the action of destroying the enemy, the imaginative, creative or fantasy game, as well as the development of skills social, can not take place. López Redondo makes reference to some of the most interesting conclusions derived from different researches, among them we verify the fact that games of aggressive

content are preferred by males, but that it is in women that there are more violent behaviors after play violent games. It can also be observed that players of aggressive games present a more assertive and fanciful behavior than players of games without violence, as well as the fact that a cooperative game awakens more the aggressive side of a person than a game with competitive characteristics.

In addition, the two opposing theories of Estallo must be remembered, on the one hand that of stimulation, which suggests that people who see scenes of violence are more likely to commit aggressive acts in real life and that of catharsis, a theory that essentially transmits the opposite, that is to say, that the contemplation of violence suppresses this tendency to aggression in real life (López Redondo, 2014: 68). But we must specify that each person consumes the violence and death of the mass media in a different way, integrating the images he perceives in a framework formed by his previous experiences and his biological traits, being small children the only people who do not apply any self-criticism what they look at Also, another fact to consider is that people with a greater predisposition to behave violently are those with damage or abnormalities in the frontal or temporal lobes of the brain (Grisolía, 1998: 39-40). What every adult should know is that, if together with the real violence that is broadcast on television news and other media for the news, we give movies or videogames free of charge to children, what is achieved is a desensitization that ends up trivializing the use of violence, being able to inculcate inadequate values and, therefore, increasing the probability of producing negative consequences in the person, affirms Javier Urrea (1998: 136), who issued the following judgment regarding our society in 1998, although it could perfectly belong to the year 2018: “You read little, you write less, you reflect poorly. We live in the immediacy, the superficiality of the momentary image and, although we criticize the media, we demand a ration, each day greater, of sensations. That’s why in the television culture, violence is the rule, not the exception. “Although Urrea refers to the television culture, this term can be exchanged for other mass media, being underlined with respect to these words, the need for constant stimuli in our society.

You can also reflect on the words of Esther Fernandez, who says that the abusive use of videogames can cause nervousness and anxiety in the person in question, as well as transmit values with which we do not communicate. And, although ultimately, the use and power of any mass media is dependent on the intelligence of the person who consumes it, it can be said that the use of videogames can lead to marginalization, as reflected in another of the studies, in this place, the one carried out by Isabel and Javier San Sebastián, who believe that the power of fascination of a game can give rise to refuge in the virtual world of a person with certain personal shortcomings, which can lead to these situations in cases of marginalization (López Redondo, 2014: 69). An extreme case of this marginalization is the well-known social phenomenon of the Hikikomori, a Japanese term that can be translated as “seclusion” and that affects mainly young people (especially Japanese, but also of other nationalities) around the 20 years, after finishing their studies, they decide to lock themselves in their room, in this way, not to face the hard and competitive world of work. Carles Feixa (2005: 67) explains the peculiar way of life of this group: “The Hikikomori take refuge in their infant world, virtual, that feeds the internet, based on videogames, manga, fetish collections, etc. They do everything without leaving home, sometimes altering the daily rhythms (they sleep during the day, eat in the afternoon and spend the night connected to the internet, playing with videogames and watching television) ». This refuge, certainly radical, could be classified as a negative consequence of the excessive and uncontrolled use of videogames, television and internet, to name a few, through a misunderstood passion of the aforementioned mass media. In order to better understand the phenomenon we must know that in 2016, the Japanese government census raised the figure to 540,000 people between 15 and 39 years that we could consider Hikikomori, although they could be double<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, in the words that Gerald Jones expresses, we find positive aspects in the use, always moderate, of videogames, since Jones emphasizes that the content of violence in these can help

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.es/fotografia/2018/02/asi-son-las-vidas-de-los-hikikomori-los-japoneses-aislados-de-la-sociedad> (Consulted: 27/11/2018)

children to understand the difference between reality and what is unreal. Entertainment can help them distinguish between a simple fear and a problem that must be solved. For Jones, the use of videogames is a training that helps them what they will become as adults, since it is in virtual reality, and in their scenarios of excessive danger, where they can best understand the limits of reality (López Redondo, 2014: 87-90).

In addition, videogames can also serve to adopt an evil and destructive personality, which can compensate them vitally for the contained fury that humans keep for themselves, having to offer a pleasant and fair image with the rest of society. The feeling of power offered by videogames before a disturbing and uncontrollable world is necessary according to Jones, who defends that the game, the fantasy and the emotional imagination can be catalogued as essential tools for the development of both childhood and adolescence. In turn, he recalls that the aforementioned violent games allow them to confront and deal with the realities that scare them the most, even in a simulated way, just like the rap songs about violence that are created in the ghettos, the funereal rock chants about suicide or movies about serial killers. By better understanding these baneful issues and having a certain control over their thoughts and emotions, they can feel stronger and prepared to face them. This is how, says Jones, they can kill their monsters (Ibídem, 2014: 90).

Although, in contrast to this idea arises the one expressed by Žižek in his documentary *Manual of cinema for perverts*, in which he states that the identity adopted by a videogame player is, truly, his real identity, in the sense that that is the psychic truth of his being, an identity closer to his true self that in real life is not allowed to unfold by social restrictions: “We need the excuse of a fiction to stage what we really are.”

Another constructive consideration about videogames is the one that can be read in Rafael Rodríguez Prieto’s study (2016: 37), referring to the fact that videogames help to open the mind: «Videogames and their industry are part of social processes that make up our societies.

Reflection on these cultural products also means rethinking society». Also, he believes that any research extracted on this industry should not only be an academic exercise, but “its projection should be practical in order to influence society to transform it and link this cultural product with the problems and challenges of the whole the society”.

We must also remember, especially all the people responsible for the education of children and adolescents, understanding that every adolescent is a minor, that we must keep in mind the age classification system that created the European videogame industry in 2003, the known as PEGI, whose classification includes 5 levels by ages: +3, +7, +12, +16, +18. Said regulation is built based on the content of the product and, in addition, each videogame kit includes the well-known PEGI descriptors, through which the corresponding age classification is argued in each case. In this way, videogames, like movies or television, also have their own regulations to regulate age, since it is an industry that, like the ones mentioned, is intended for consumers of any age.

When I mention PEGI I am referring to objective facts, but we must not forget the subjective nor the involuntary and indirect learning of videogames that considerably affects the construction of the personality and the way of seeing the world of each individual (Flores, 2016: 196). We are not only talking about videogames, but other mass media such as movies or advertising. Flores, in his study, refers to other researchers who show survey data to 6,000 young people between 6 and 24 years old from different countries in which they claim not to notice the influence of videogames on their behaviour, this type of influences the most marked, by not allowing a rationalization of the matter in question. The conclusions of certain studies express the idea that videogames are linked to socio-political, economic or cultural processes (Rodríguez, 2016: 292). Through the following words one can observe the symbiosis that occurs between reality and fiction (Rodríguez, 2016: 293):

Nothing is as relevant to the human being as living or dying. The war is in a deep process of transformation in which videogames have a central role [...] Drones are already part of this very present future. The recruitment of players for the service units dedicated to combat with drones or the generalization of its use with multiple purposes has become one of the key pieces of contemporary warfare. When the war becomes a videogame, death is trivialized and the warrior ethic is destroyed. It is not that we want to establish the hobby videogame equation equal to the banal violence. Rather, the case of drones and the use made of them is a trivialization of videogames, converted into a tool of domination at the service of spurious interests, which leads to serious mental and ethical problems in soldier-players.

But, for each person to form their own reflection on the importance of videogames, I must also provide the data belonging to AEVI, which dictates that in the year 2017, 1,359 million Euros were invoiced, obtaining the best historical results, and surpassing billing film industry, which billed 597 million, or music industry, which recorded 232 million. In terms of its economic impact, the videogame industry generates more than 8,000 direct jobs and, in turn, each of them produces 2.6 indirect jobs. Another fact to keep in mind is that of each euro invested in it, generates three. The numbers argue for themselves the power, which is increasing, of this sector.

## Conclusions

The way of representing reality changes every time, but not the content because the humanity need to dialogue about what disturbs or attracts us. That is to say, the engravings of Goya, the cinema of Haneke or the series of videogames *Grand Theft Auto* are not but reflecting on the same thing: the violence and the death in different ways. Goya does it, primarily, through criticism; Haneke seeks, above all, the reflection of the viewer and the videogame, the evasion of reality through leisure. Consciously or subconsciously they are expressing some of the fears of the human being and getting him to form his own thinking about violence and death, through an implicit attraction and a powerful aesthetic.

Perhaps the true reality in our current society is that offered by the products coming from the mass media, because we live more and more through them, perhaps because of the need for stimuli, but also because of the evasion offered by the films, the television or videogames. You can see every day how the line between reality and fiction has been crossed, an example of this are the avatars that are created in videogames and that, according to Zizek, are our real identities, our psychic truth.

It is true that we also observe the tragedies that happen in the physical world through television and other mass media, but when our contact with this reality is made solely and exclusively through these means, we transform it into a product that is situated between reality and fiction, and we end up being indoctrinated by what the medium in question expresses. The virtual world is already part of our reality and our thinking.

Factors such as age, intelligence, education or culture are decisive for the correct interpretation, and choice, of what is visualized or interacted with, interpreting the world in a concrete way and not another.

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## **GIALLO. AN AESTHETIC INNOVATION IN CINEMA**

Vicente Javier Pérez Valero

### **From classic horror films to aestheticization in the digital age**

We live in an era in which any artistic manifestation receives aesthetic and conceptual influences from other fields, or from its past «I». Transversality, revision and homage have come to stay, and cinema is no stranger to this reality. While it is true that the new digital technologies allow us to revisit previous places, themes and aesthetics, but with a different result –due to the change of the means and tools used–, in the end, when we are in front of the screen, we recognize the heritage of those who, for more than a century, have contributed to creating the art of cinema.

This thematic line has infinite ways or ramifications to deal with, but in this case we will address the influence, in current audiovisual productions –including in fantasy and horror films– of the aesthetic and expressive contributions around the cinematography that the *Giallo* introduced in his film contributions. It will be taken for this, as a notable example for the analysis, the work of Darío Argento and that of Mario Bava and other creators of this subgenre. In the same way, the work in the photography and art direction of these films and, in particular, the cinematographer Luciano Tovoli in the film *Suspiria* (1977) will be examined. The study will also cover the influences that the authors of this period have had on fantasy and horror films, reaching

their projection in current cinema, highlighting certain aspects of the transition from cinema in photochemical to digital support.

In general, the recurring stylistic aspects that can be extracted from *Giallo* are: the use of hard, punctual and contrasted lighting; pronounced angulations, in which one runs away from any signal that may give rise to a «natural» interpretation of the scene and, lastly and more importantly –because it is the differential factor with respect to the previous horror cinema<sup>1</sup>–, the use of lights in saturated colours that bathe the composition with an unreal environment and with which the effect and sensations that the director intends are transmitted without dissimulation. This last factor is supported by an art direction that also uses colour in the same way, as well as decorations and unique locations.

With regard to fantasy and horror cinema, at present, this work investigates how *Giallo* cinema has influenced and enriched the works of filmmakers such as Panos Cosmatos or Nicolas Winding Refn, among others, and also how that imprint has conditioned and enhanced the work of cinematographers such as Natasha Braier or Benjamin Loeb, an extreme that has led to the identification of it as a personal brand, within the film industry.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the use of the aforementioned formal aspects is not always justified –within the context of the film genre or the script– in some current productions, where there are cases in which the aesthetic and the effective and decorative use predominate over the theme of the cinematographic work or fiction series.

### **Classic horror cinema and Hammer Film Productions**

The visual codes and aesthetics that we currently understand and fit into the category of horror or fantastic cinema are due, in large part, to the first works of cinema and, of course, to the great painters who,

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to *German Expressionism*, the classic horror films of the Universal Pictures and the fantastic and horror films of the Hammer Films Productions.

throughout Art history have established certain formal factors that we all recognize. From authors such as Goya and his *Pinturas negras* (1819–1823) or their *Caprichos* (1799) and *Disparates* (1815–1824), to the Cubist avant-garde of the early twentieth century, through the influence of part of Friedrich's romantic painting, Delacroix or Géricault, the painting has formed the foundation of the codes by which, today, we recognize the cinematography that goes deeper into our fears.

The beginnings of this projection and aesthetic evolution were evident in the so-called *German Expressionism* of the interwar period. In a short space of time a whole compendium of technical resources was developed that would take us to the classic horror cinema.

The first example of this is Robert Wiene's film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and photograph of Willy Hameister, emblematic work that marks the beginning of *German Expressionism* and that already proposed the use of hard lights, unnatural angles and projected shadows in key moments of the footage, as well as close-ups that connected the viewer with the protagonists. The particularity of this film is the use of unreal-looking sets, aesthetically related to the cubist avant-garde and painted by artists Hermann Warm, Walter Röhrig and Walter Reimann, who move us to a state of madness or reverie and that bring their own light to the composition of the shot. To accentuate the theatricality that Wiene brings to its actors, these are provided with a makeup that increases the feeling of nightmare. Finally, the tinting of the film is introduced, which projects, towards the viewer, different visual sensations.

Following the same line, but with greater sophistication, it was presented in 1922 *Nosferatu* by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau. In this case, the cinematographers Fritz Arno Wagner and Günther Krampf, introduced hard and contrasted lights (with respect to the background of the frame) in certain parts of the film, leaving a more conventional lighting, in medium key, for the rest of the film. Murnau also applies tints to emphasize the differences between day and night or exterior

and interior, as well as cast shadows and makeup on the actors. The novelty of Murnau's proposal is the introduction of *chiaroscuro* in the compositions and the backlights that, on the one hand, define the contour of the characters (almost always Nosferatu) and, on the other, create a gloomy atmosphere by allowing visualize the suspended particles that remain between the light source and the character.

In that same year of 1922, Fritz Lang premiered *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler*, a film that introduces a more modern configuration in the composition of the shots and a greater depth in them, accentuated not only by the physical perspective of the objects or constructions, but also for the placement of the lighting in each of the framing shots. The cinematographer Carl Hoffmann explores, like Murnau in *Nosferatu*, the attention to detail and the success in changing angulation and the hardness of the key lights in the foregrounds, within the key moments of the plot, as well as the use of a great contrast in them.



*Nosferatu* by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau.

Photography by Fritz Arno Wagner and Günther Krampf, 1922.

But, without a doubt, one of the works that marks a change between the style of *German Expressionism* and what was already seen as modern cinema (mainly in Europe and North America), is *M* (1931) by Fritz Lang, with photography by Fritz Arno Wagner. Almost ten years after *Dr. Mabuse*, Lang proposes a varied repertoire of shots that breaks with the previous narrative visual inflexibility (no doubt, still limited by technical aspects). To all this, he adds daring compositions

and unusual camera views at this time (chopped and low angle ends), always casting hard lights on the protagonist and casting shadows on the shot, letting the viewer be the one who identifies them with the film theme: the danger of evil. The *chiaroscuro* in the key scenes is evident, but the factor that generates more restlessness in the entire footage is the shots in which the absence manifests: fixed shots of concatenated silence and solitude, which lead to another in motion where the ball dropped of one of the victims rolls until it stops. In this case, the light does not project positivity or hope, but anguish and restlessness. Lang culminates his aesthetic proposal with an improved composition of the wide shots in terms of perspective and lighting, following the aesthetic line proposed in *Dr. Mabuse*.

In 1932, the Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer, applied the aesthetic proposal that he had already experienced in *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*<sup>2</sup> of 1928, but, in this case on a horror story. It's about *Vampyr. Der Traum des Allan Gray*. Together with its cinematographer, Rudolph Maté, Dreyer develops the cinematographic expressionist proposal, composed of shadows and lighting of an unnatural appearance, adding the introduction of camera movements, character tracking and indirect lights (bounced to walls and ceilings), low angle, candle or even backlights. The oppressive frames on the actors, at key moments (closely related to *La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*), as well as the representation of death by arranging the character with the head at the bottom of the shot (backwards), and the introduction of almost subjective shots (as in the sequence of the interment), give this work an innovative character that influenced later authors of the genre.

In the same decade of the 1930s, films with clear influences of *Cinematographic Expressionism* from Europe begin to be produced in the United States. The producer that introduced more titles in the market

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<sup>2</sup> In this work of Dreyer, the use of close-ups (with normal angulation, chopped or low angled) on the key roles, as well as frames in which Joan of Arc's own character is represented oppressed, either because his face is cut off by its upper part or it is in the lower part of the composition, leaving a large amount of air around it, which causes loneliness before the process in which the character is immersed.

was Universal Pictures, specializing in the *monsters movies*<sup>3</sup>. Works such as *Frankenstein* by James Whale –with photography by Arthur Edeson– or *Dracula* by Tod Browning –with photography by Karl Freund–, both from 1931, emphasize European Gothic, the use of hard lights and the contrasting aspect of the image *chiaroscuro* mode. The influence is such that, in *Frankenstein's* case, angled wall decorations and cast shadows of the characters are used, in clear reference to the film *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari* of Murnau. However, there is an element, between these two works, that makes the difference between them. While in *Frankenstein* there is a clear differentiation between the «normal» world and the environment in which the Doctor moves<sup>4</sup>, in *Dracula* the contrasting tone of the film does not change, making the narration always retain uncertainty through the image.

In 1934, Hammer Films Productions was founded in the United Kingdom, a producer that competed with the big Hollywood companies for the horror genre market and also for the fantastic cinema. This company became part of Exclusive Films Limited that William Hinds founded in 1935 with Enrique Carreras, a Spanish businessman who owns film theaters throughout the country, being the first one located in Hammersmith (London) (Memba, 2007: 13-15).

After some first productions such as *The Public Life of Henry the Ninth* (1935) or *The Mystery of Marie Celeste* (1936) and other titles before and after World War II, it was from the 50s when the aesthetics

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<sup>3</sup> Within fantasy and horror or science fiction cinema, *monsters movies* is one in which fictional creatures intervene in opposite interaction or in collaboration with humans. In the decades of the 20s and 30s Gothic literary stories were adapted, incorporating, over the years and historical events, other types of monsters such as, for example, animals or humans affected by mutations due to scientific experiments or exposure to atomic energy.

<sup>4</sup> The world outside the castle of Doctor Frankenstein is luminous and without contrasts, soft light predominates. However, while the action takes place during the night or inside the fortress, the lights are hard, with extreme angulations and the shot is contrasted as a *chiaroscuro*. Even in the scene of the monster and the girl, despite being performed outdoors, the light is predominantly soft except in the shots in which the monster itself appears where, with the help of characterization and direct sunlight, the shades fall on his face.

of Hammer with *The Quatermass experiment* (1955) directed by Val Guest, a good combination of Edwardian science fiction and Hollywood monster movies (Carver, 2012: 2). In parallel, the producer also takes advantage of the popularity of classic horror stories, and releases *The curse of Frankenstein* (1957) by Terence Fisher, a version of the Universal Pictures movie.<sup>5</sup>

The competition for the entertainment business, which the incipient television began to assume, caused the producer to exploit more adult resources, such as sex, sadism, violence and even lesbianism, in order to attract the public to the halls of cinema (Carver, 2012: 3-4). While it is true that already in the *Frankenstein* of Whale, sex is subtly introduced –in the scene in which the monster paves the rooms of the Doctor's fiancée– it is with productions of the Hammer where that theme is explained, playing always with horror and desire.

As for Hammer's contribution to the aesthetic evolution of the horror genre, it could be said that he had two distinct periods, with a director as the main catalyst: Terence Fisher. In the first era, framed in the 50s, *chiaroscuro*, shadow thrown and gothic influence are still present. These features are evidenced in *The curse of Frankenstein* (1957) and *Dracula* (1958), both signed by Fisher. At this time, the introduction of colour in Hammer films is bounded in the art direction. Due to the low budget of its productions (Memba, 2007: 16-18), the company is forced to use with ingenuity, albeit roughly, any element of the scene to cause a greater impression towards the viewer projecting, in this way, an exaggerated effect through, for example, red curtains, laboratory liquids of strident colours or the red colour of the blood itself.

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<sup>5</sup> The American producer yielded the rights of adaptation of *Frankenstein* of James Whale, but not what concerned the aesthetics of the monster, which had to perform a different characterization. Far from being a remake, this Fisher movie places Dr. Frankenstein in a less lukewarm position than in the Whale version, criminalizing his actions and not those of his true victim: the monster (Memba, 2007: 30-31).

However, at the beginning of the 60s and due, in large part, to a tendency to change the aesthetics of cinematography, we can highlight a leap in the key or tone of the films being chosen, in most cases, a middle key. Even so, this general tone contrasts with a few climax scenes in each film, in which it becomes a very contrasting *chiaroscuro*. In this sense, it should be noted that, for example, the character of Dracula, played by Christopher Lee, is always illuminated in the same way in all his films: hard lights, in low angle and / or lateral, whatever the light of the rest of characters in the same scene.<sup>6</sup> With this visual appearance, characterized by the type of light scheme and the physical aspect –tall, thin character and dressed in black (Memba, 2007: 36-37)–, it is as we remember the vampire in our visual memory.

On the other hand, in the films of this decade the *Gothicism* begins to disappear, which had marked the horror cinema since its inception, and other stylistic elements are introduced in the production design, whether from other historical or even contemporary times. The colour begins to be noticed, for example, in the association of red with evil and with the vampire –in the case of *Dracula, prince of darkness* (1965) by Terence Fisher– where even the lighting itself, in some areas of the scenery is done with red leaks without being justified.<sup>7</sup> Although this film is probably not the best in the series, it is undoubtedly the one that, thanks to its cinematographer, Michel Reed, brings more expressive innovations in terms of the use of colour, being, directly, inspiration for the creators Italians of the *Giallo* cinema. This is the opposite of Freddie Francis's *The evil of Frankenstein* (1964), where blue lighting (mainly in the night and lightning sequences) is completely justified. In this way the effects of light are integrated into the narrative and does not stand out as a strange element.

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<sup>6</sup> This characterization of the Count, made by screenwriter Jimmy Sangster, is a compendium of all previous versions of Bram Stoker's work from the 1922 *Nosferatu* de Murnau.

<sup>7</sup> The placement of a light source can be justified if there is an element in the scene that emits that type of light. But in this case, the red light only serves to emphasize the presence of Dracula and support the tension of the moment in a purely aesthetic way.



*Dracula, prince of darkness* by Terence Fisher. Photography by Michel Reed. 1965.

Already in the 70s, the technical possibilities –greater sensitivity of the new supports (films)– and a tendency to use a more natural light, leave almost hard illuminations. In fact, Christopher Lee appears in Roy Ward's *Scars of Dracula* (1970) with a soft, direct illumination, with hardly any shadows on his face: the new film narrative believes in a more adult viewer, making evil no longer so obvious and leaving his own interpretation on the ground of the audience. In the same film, the use of zoom is introduced as another technical resource to capture the attention of the public, trapping it in shots of rapid optical movement. As a climax, at the time of the film's climax, Dracula appears in his coffin, with bright red eyes, superimposed thanks to the visual effects that the technique allowed at that time. Effectism takes over the argument and increases blood and morbidity in the key scenes of the story, as does the sexual burden. This is a trend that, at this time, practically all Hammer productions follow.

### **The innovation of *Giallo***

The vernacular subgenre we call *Giallo* cinema comes, in its origins, from the murder and mystery novels published by the Milanese publishing house Mondadori at the end of the 20s of the last century. The name *gialli* (yellow in Italian) is due to the colour used in the covers of the books, which made them especially identifiable among its plaintiffs. Among the published authors were translated novels by Agatha Christie, Edgar Wallace and Arthur Conan Doyle. Such an

attractive theme, whose penetration into the public was considerable, could not be ignored by the interwar period cinema, being Luchino Visconti himself, the creator of what is considered the first *Neorealist* film, the precursor of the *Giallo* cinema with the film *Ossessione* (1942). At this time, Italy said goodbye to the oppression of the Mussolini fascist regime and opened up to the world to tell, through cinema, its own stories, but at the same time, with contextualized influences in a world that, after the Second War World, began to be more global (Koven, 2006).

Labeled in the category of *exploitation film*<sup>8</sup>, the *Giallo* cinema takes up the stylistic line of sensationalism –which the producer Hammer Films already introduced in her films– with the explanation of violence, sadism, misogyny and sex (Sevastakis, 2016: 1-2). In the Italian case, the monstrous characters are replaced, included in nineteenth-century literary stories, mainly, and located in distant times and distant countries, by other terrifying roles, more in line with the current era: murderers living among us, who they can even be known and, in many cases, whose appearance is not strange to us. They appear, in the majority of the occasions, with the hidden face, with black gloves and with hat and dark jacket. The public has matured, it does not demand easy solutions: it wants to feel that, really, it can be the protagonist of any of the stories it sees on the screen. For this reason, detective and police plots are introduced, in which the protagonists can embody an amateur investigator who decides to investigate on their own, or suffer harassment of the murderer as if he were the spectator himself.

To make this immersion more plausible, the *Giallo* cinema, except for a few occasions, is located in current cities and in the contemporary era, making the characters come true. The visual aesthetic also changes: we start from the influences of Hammer and *Film Noir* on Mario Bava's films until we reach a higher degree of aestheticization in the works of Darío Argento, where design, composition and a more modern narrative, take over the screen.

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<sup>8</sup> The cinema of exploitation or *exploitation film*, is the cinematographic category that groups the themes that are outside the «socially acceptable» and that affect the dark face of the human being, such as violence, crime, highly eroticism sexualized and drug use. These issues are provided, by their great impact, by the producers to obtain the maximum benefit with, generally, a modest investment.

Reality, through the scenes of death and horror, are explicitly exposed, reinforcing the approach of the theme *Giallo* with the viewer (Partyka, 2014). The use of visual effects, more and more plausible, which gives the impression that blood can splash into the camera and, ultimately, the viewer, cause extreme sensations that reach the deepest of human fears.

Emphasizing this aspect, the camera's point of view alternates the subjectivity between the murderer and the victim:

The camerawork and editing in giallo murder scenes further destabilize identification with the characters onscreen. The camera typically adopts the first-person perspective of the approaching killer as the suspense crescendos. During the murder itself, the screen explodes in a flurry of edits: the screaming victim, the plunging blade, cloven skin, flailing hands, gushing blood, gaping eyes, and repeat. The cuts of the film mimic cuts into the victim's flesh, captured in the quasi-abstract detail of the extreme close-up. Identifiable perspectives disintegrate in an ecstasy of thrashing bodies (Roberts, 2018: 124).<sup>9</sup>

Another way to make the product more attractive to the new audience focuses on the introduction of foreign characters and actors, with which it is intended to show some internationality in the productions.<sup>10</sup> This renewal is also included in the plots, where independent and often frequently sexualized women can appear as protagonists –even, sometimes they reveal lesbian relationships or a certain sexual ambiguity– that are used to mix two extreme passions of the human being: sex and violence.

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<sup>9</sup> Related to this, remember the exaggerated use of commercial aircraft shots, in flight and on the ground, by Mario Bava at the beginning of *The girl who knew too much* (1962) and in the final scenes of *The bird of crystal feathers* (1969) by Darío Argento.

<sup>10</sup> Within the perspective of sex, the production of *Giallo* films could be divided into two categories: *M-Giallo*, when the protagonist is male; and *F-Giallo*, when the protagonist is female. This aspect also introduces a certain destabilization in the traditional notions about the masculine–feminine roles that began to arise in the socio-cultural field of the 60s and that left other gender perspectives open (Mackenzie, 2013).

The thematic schemes in *Giallo* are repeated, production after production, giving rise to the term *filone*, a generic characteristic that will be reflected later in the *slashers* of the 80s and 90s (Roberts, 2018).

The influence of pictorial art, as in previous productions of the fantasy and horror genre, is also present in *Giallo*, revealing a very evident influence of contemporary trends such as *Pop-art*, *Op-art* and *Camp*, in Mario's films Bava and painters such as Brueghel the Elder, Edward Hopper, Munch or Goya in Darío Argento (Rubio Alcover and Loriguillo-López, 2018).

### **Mario Bava**

*The girl who knew too much* (1962) of Mario Bava, made in black and white, is considered the prototype of *Giallo* film, in which murders and suspense of Gothic style are combined in the surroundings of the Rome of the 60s. In the argument, an American tourist is involved in some mysterious crimes that she will try to solve, thus becoming a hero. The psychology of the protagonist and the events that occur, were inspired by Jane Austen's novel, *Northanger Abbey* of 1798 and the Hitchcock movie *The man who knew too much* (1934, 1956).

As for the cinematographic visual style, Bava (who also signs the cinematography) is based on the aesthetics of Hitchcock films of the 40s, where realism becomes artifice and mannerism through blurring, off-field actions, empty shots (pillow shots), takings in disengagement of the protagonist, subjective camera views –in order for the viewer to put in the place of the protagonist– and camera movements (Sevastakis, 2016: 6-7) (Rubio Alcover, and Loriguillo-López, 2018: 69). On the other hand, the *chiaroscuro* or low key lighting<sup>11</sup> of the classic horror cinema becomes the protagonist, emphasizing hard lights –many times in low angles–, backlights, and spooky shadows (expressionist). The sensation of unreality becomes evident in the moments of more tension in the narration, getting to deform, by means of angulations of

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<sup>11</sup> Introduced in horror movies from *German expressionists* to classic Hollywood movies and Hammer productions.

light, factions of an apparently innocent heroine. The low key in night scenes, both indoor and outdoor, provides a sense of paranoia focused on the direction, angulation and hardness of light (Sevastakis, 2016: 9). Violence and drama of these scenes contrasts with the brightness of the daytime locations, where it is deduced, through a high-key treatment –sometimes without contrast– that nothing will happen that puts the protagonist in danger.

In his following films, produced in colour, Bava continues to introduce the aesthetic elements, mentioned above, most characteristic of *Giallo* cinema, but adds a clearly differentiating ingredient: the contrasted use of colour shades.



*I tre volti della paura* (*The drop of water*) by Mario Bava.  
Photography by Antonio Rinaldi and Mario Bava. 1963.

During the 60s and early 70s, Bava alternates films located both in the contemporary scene and in the romanticism of the nineteenth century, where the first horror stories come from. An example of this is *I tre volti della paura* (1963), where he shares the direction of photography with Antonio Rinaldi. As a declaration of principles and with a stunning art direction designed to put the viewer in a situation, Bava presents the film with Boris Karloff addressing the viewer with a bright blue background and a pink-purple stage created with coloured lighting. As the camera approaches the foreground, lights begin to change the natural tone of Karloff's skin, turning bright red: night, terror and blood make an appearance. Indeed, in this film three gothic

stories are told, based on texts by Chekhov, Tolstoy and Maupassant, in which only the first, *The telephone*, collects the stylistic lines of *The Girl Who Knew Too Much*. However, to a greater or lesser extent, the approximation to the use of colour is made using the contrasts between cold and warm lights, always justified by the night light or the candles and lamps. The last story, *The drop of water* forces that chromatic polarity, both in the direction of art and in the lighting and uses the colour in a more sophisticated way: green as the contrast base tone; orange red in low-voltage scenes, turning yellow later as climax is reached (applying transitional property); and the purple, centered on the ghost, to demonstrate the supernatural, terror, danger and death (using associative property)<sup>12</sup>. While it is true that the intensity of the coloured light permeates the composition of the scenes, the use of golden, warm or neutral tones in a scenographic composition of decadent aesthetics complements the narrative intentionality of the script and the cinematography.

In one of Bava's latest films, *Gli Orrori of the Castello di Norembega* (Baron Blood) of 1972, the aesthetic varies according to the time in which he enrolls. It is a script in which the current era of the film is mixed with the gothic appearance of the interior of the castle where the plot takes place. The daytime scenes are raised in high key lighting, with soft light or with great light intensity, contrasting with the interiors of the castle, where *chiaroscuro* and extreme angulations predominate in the camera position. In this case, the associative property of colour is also introduced, but this time in the garments of the protagonist, in which red predominates. The visual contrast of Bava's proposal transits between the use of shadows and fog –«traditional» in classic horror movie – and the excessive use of zoom or even the introduction of «pop» icons like Coca-Cola in one of the scenes, whose red colour precedes a murder.

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<sup>12</sup> The associative and transitional properties of colour are used in cinematographic narration to reinforce the meanings in the scene. The first is constant during the story, while the second varies to show the change and feelings towards the viewer.

## Dario Argento

Dario Argento collects the witness of Mario Bava in the late 60s and drives a stylistic twist that, in some way, will consolidate the *Giallo* as more than a subgenre of cult films. In his first film, *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (*The bird of crystal feathers*) of 1969, Argento presents the assassination attempt that triggers the plot in a clear, crystalline way, in a white-walled art gallery, which it has a great showcase as a frame and where the action materializes with a high intensity of soft light in high key. While the key role (North American) observes the action on the other side of the window, as if it were a movie, the viewer moves between chopped general shots, medium shots and close-ups where the blur is used to provide subjectivity and a sense of reality. With this innovative start and, without a doubt, with the help of cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, Argento manages to get the viewer out of the visual arguments to which he is accustomed.

In his first film, Argento uses inserts of details or objects that reinforce the narration, as well as images frozen in flashbacks in the protagonist's memory. The subjective shots become very evident, especially in the second murder. The lighting retains chiaroscuro, hard lights and sometimes extreme angulations.

A constant in Argento's filmography is the use of red colour with associative property. In *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo* it is not yet clear at all, going almost unnoticed, but it always appears as a sign of danger in the locker room, on the mat or in the killer's hair, in buildings, decoration and of course, in blood. This relationship with the colour red will evolve in later works, where it will be continuous, but other ingredients will be added that will enrich the visual narrative.

Another feature of this author's films is the importance of art direction and the inclusion of artistic pieces, either with a leading role, as well as in structural (architectural) and decorative resources within the scenes. In *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo*, the central plot revolves around a painting, inspired by Brueghel the Elder and a modern art gallery, where large sculptures are exhibited. This reference to art is also very evident in

*Profondo rosso* (Dark Red) of 1974, in which Edward Hopper is mentioned visually, in the coffee scene in the square, and Goya, with his *Pinturas negras*, in the house of the first victim. In this work, Argento repeats the plot scheme of L'Uccello, in what is a clear example of *filone*: an English pianist witnesses a murder and launches to investigate to find the culprit. Luigi Kuveiller, the film's cinematographer, introduces novelties such as the use of the murderer's subjective shot with a hand-held camera, as well as framing within frames, taking advantage of doors or windows that frame the figures. These elements are added to the use of empty shots, detailed shots of objects, cut close-ups and the use of red in the art direction (Esquinas, 2012), this time in a more solid and continuous way throughout the footage.

A final aspect, which was first introduced in this film by Argento, is the use of unjustified colour light in the burning house scene, where the protagonist's face is dyed red and the journalist's face is silhouetted with a deep blue. It is to be understood that this effect caused the director's pleasure, because in later productions, such as in *Suspiria* (1977) and *Inferno* (1980), this aesthetic would explode which would make him a reference author in horror movies.

Within this innovative stylistic phase, Argento, fascinated with the use of the colour and theme of the Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), proposes in *Suspiria*, together with the cinematographer Luciano Tovoli and the production designer Giuseppe Bassan, a gothic fairy tale with a triad colour scheme (red, green and blue) almost always contrasted with yellow. This balanced scheme is repeated in scenes in which the «happening of life» is normal (Williams, 2018). The moment a destabilizing element appears, one of the colours of the triad, usually red or green, become protagonists, even «burning» the colour in certain areas of detail. This resource was enhanced by the choice of Eastman 5254 film of 100 ASA and the Technicolor colour transfer process in the laboratories of Rome.<sup>13</sup> Such was Darío Argento's obsession with the colour that he and Tovoli demanded from Bassan more colourful scene paintings on the walls.

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<sup>13</sup> This film development process was carried out by transfer, layer by layer (magenta, cyan, yellow and black) which provided control over the values, contrasts and colours, and a vividness and colour stability that no photochemical technique has been able to



*Suspiria* by Darío Argento. Photography by Luciano Tovoli. 1977.

In the course of film, the *chiaroscuro* or low key becomes, generally, a double of saturated colours that contrast with each other and provide a great impact. These colours can be paired alternately but respond to a specific intention. You could say that the colour blue is the one that constantly appears as opposition from others, especially because it is related to the night. The red colour continues to have a connotation of danger or fear, which Argento previously used, but this time, it acts on three fronts: costumes, decoration / architecture (using mirrors, geometric or textured backgrounds) and light. The third colour, which acts as a sign of the supernatural and that replaces yellow at times, is purple. Bava already attributed that meaning in *I tre volti della paura* (1963) and without a doubt, Argento continued with the same reference. Vivid yellow or orange usually provides the meaning of death, especially in the final scenes through fire. All this light strategy is justified for the sake of a greater visual impact that reinforces the narration. From the first moment in which the viewer perceives this code, he assumes that he is facing a story in which reality is very far away, in which the detective inquiry does not make much sense in the face of supernatural powers outside our understanding. After all, it is an adult story with visual codes of a children's story.

As for the use of camera, both Luciano Tovoli, in *Suspiria* and Romano Albani in *Inferno*, were faithful to the director's style, emphasizing the expressiveness of characters with close-ups, using

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match. Even so, its high production cost caused it to fall into disuse (Eastman Museum, 2015).

chopped, low angles, wide shots that exhibit the architecture or the monumentality of the scene or frames within frames.

In 2017, under the supervision of Tovoli, the digital restoration of *Suspiria* in 4K was completed, being able to introduce all the advances in current technology and selective colour correction (Williams, 2018).<sup>14</sup>

## Projection in current cinema

In the contemporary panorama of fantasy and horror cinema, a stylistic current called *Neo-giallo* has resurfaced in which the elements of the more «classic» *Giallo* (from the 60s) are reinterpreted and deconstructed but without being influenced by its narrative structure. In it, the sensory stimuli are reinforced, whether they come from the image –powered by digital grading– or from music and sounds (Hallam, 2017). Hélène Cattet and Bruno Forzani capture in *Amer* (2009) sex and violence, not as events to progress in the narrative, but as visceral experiences to catch the viewer. To do this, they use tools such as foreground, blurring, fragmented details on the split screen and typical zoom. Close-ups also emphasize textures, reinforced by the sound that accompanies it: the squeak of leather gloves, the scraping of the razor against the skin and, more effectively, the sound of the shaving rack along the teeth. These sounds translate into the treatment of colour in the manner of Darío Argento but without abusing contrasts and stridencies. In this same line acts the remake of Luca Guadagnino *Suspiria* (2018), where the colour in the lighting is used only at key moments and the weight of it falls on the costumes.

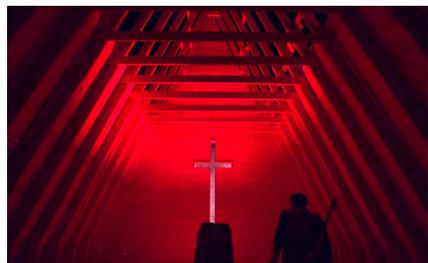
Outside of this trend and encompassing different themes and styles, *Giallo*, in general, and the unmistakable aesthetic of Darío Argento, in particular, have clearly influenced directors as different as Nicolas Winding Refn, Panos Cosmatos, Gaspar Noé or Xavier Dolan, for exposing only a few examples.

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<sup>14</sup> The restoration has been carried out by the Synapse studio in Burbank, California, which has remastered other horror films such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) or *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974).

If we stick to a close thematic relationship between *Giallo* and current fantasy and horror movies, *Mandy* (2018) by Panos Cosmatos is one of the clearest exponents. After a first approach to the use of colour as a narrative element with *Beyond the Black Rainbow* (2010), Cosmatos, together with cinematographer Benjamin Loeb, creates in *Mandy* a visual atmosphere that transits between the supernatural – remembering, somehow to David Lynch's TV series *Twin Peaks* (1990)– and the most human passions of mainstream revenge movies, embodied by Nicolas Cage.

Cosmatos uses the same colour code in light as Argento, attributing and associating, mainly, purple to scenes where the supernatural transcends, red to danger, and gold to death. In the transition scenes, the orange and green ones appear, or a more balanced colour temperature. Sometimes saturation in the low scene to create a stronger feeling in the following one. This strategy was also used by Argento in *Suspiria* (1977). Low key lighting, backlights and simple lighting schemes leave the prominence of the light composition to the colour, but in the case of *Mandy*, and unlike in *Suspiria*, in part of the scenes the colour is justified (although saturated) by the very nuance of objects or lights of the scene. In the rest, saturation is triggered, creating almost binary contrasts, leading us to a world that, at the end of the film, is unreal.



*Mandy* by Panos Cosmatos. Photography by Benjamin Loeb. 2018.

As for the use of the camera, Cosmatos and Loeb opt for open and simple shots, contrasted with close-ups in which a visual dialogue is created between the characters. There are no blurs or outs of frame. Each composition is perfectly measured and prolonged in assembly

time. That neatness is broken by the effects of light on the frame, especially at the edges –with a burnt photographic texture– and with horizontal flares, due to the use of anamorphic lenses.<sup>15</sup> These aspects approximate the aesthetics of the film to a «retro» concept, in homage to the productions of the *Giallo* and, above all, to the horror cinema of the 80s.

In a more aesthetic line, but still introducing a story of suspense, horror and vanity in the fashion environment, Nicolas Winding Refn presented the 2016 *The neon demon*, a feature film whose photography is signed by Natasha Braier. Braier herself gave the perfect profile for this work, since she had made pieces for advertising in which she combined the use of coloured lights with the delicate treatment of the skin and the faces of the models. The theme chosen by Refn is the myth of Narcissus, where a young and beautiful model makes his way between vanity and his companions - competitors, and it is the latter who end up killing her. Nothing to do with the themes of *Giallo*, not even those of horror movies from previous decades. Death is shown in full light and full colour. But there is, without a doubt, a look from the director, towards the cinema of Argento, which is explained in several aspects of the film, such as the use of coloured lights (in this case, almost always justified by the night environments in which characters move) or wide shots linked to close-ups. The use of the high key, in the scene of the photo shoot with the white background and in that of the casting, and the framing of the image in the latter, also remind the moment in which the plot is triggered in *L'ucello dalle piume di cristallo* of 1969, in which the protagonist observes the scene from the window, while the entire gallery is fully illuminated. But unlike Storaro's photograph, in which resources are used to enhance subjectivity, in Braier's the camera is always objective.

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<sup>15</sup> The anamorphic lenses were used to optimize the 35 mm format and thus be able to «stretch» the image and, by optical means, make it panoramic. Currently, these optics are still used to broaden the aspect ratio and also for the aesthetic effects it produces with light, such as oval bokeh or horizontal flares.

While it is true that the use of colour is justified in most of the footage, in the pre-murder scenes golds and reds are introduced – an indication that makes us anticipate the outcome– while blues and purples appear after the act in contrast to the blue night. In the same way as Argento, Refn associates colours with certain characters: the blue-green, cold and low saturation tones correspond to the make-up artist, while the vivid tones (which change as the film progresses) and the gold that precedes to death are associated with the protagonist.



*The neon Demon* by Nicolas Winding Refn (2016) and *L'ucello dalle piume di cristallo* by Darío Argento (1969). Photography by Natasha Braier and Vittorio Storaro.

The use of saturated colours in Refn's filmography began in *Valhalla Rising* (2009), where saturated shots of red are introduced when the key role accesses another dimension that rides between the dreamlike and the terrifying visions. Digital postproduction and grading acquire special importance because it allows you to select aspects of the image to manipulate them in their values, either to enhance them or to attenuate them. Subsequently, in *Drive* (2011) and, above all, in *Only God Forgives* (2013) Refn achieves the aesthetics he would perfect in *The Neon Demon*. In *Only God Forgives* the use of colour is more invasive in lighting and art direction, sometimes impregnating the entire scene as red. The night world, no doubt, allows such licenses.

A final aspect, in relation to *Giallo* and Darío Argento, is the introduction of aesthetic elements related to art, whether using a minimal decoration, sometimes and baroque in others, or the constant mention of fashion photography and architecture of avant-garde and *Op-art* in the final scenes.

Another case of using colour in an associative and transitional way is that of *Climax* (2018) by Gaspar Noé. With a theme more related to psychedelia and substances than potency and psychological horror, Noé plays to create scenarios in which the saturated colour and the moving camera are what modulate the moods of the characters. From the lounge area, where a warm, soft, zenith light predominates, to the bedrooms and showers, where it is the coloured lights that take center stage, Benoît Debie, the film's cinematographer, creates a light system practices that do not interfere with the continuous movement in camera tracking shots, as well as their position, sometimes zenithal and, at the end, turned 180°.

From the soft and warm light, Noé passes to a red emergency light that transmits even more the sensations that the protagonists are living. They can only escape to the rooms where they can be safe: green and blue ones. Finally a door opens and the morning light shines reflected in the snowy landscape, the same landscape that has served to start the film with a sequence shot.

Even if it is a subject away from *Giallo* and having used a transgressive mode in camera management, the influence of Darío Argento's aesthetics on *Climax* is evident, even more so when Gaspar Noé himself recognizes him including a *Suspiria* DVD in the shots where the characters are interviewed.

Incorporated as an aesthetic element in other lighter themes, such as comedy, the influences of *Giallo* can be perceived, for example, in Xavier Dolan's work in *Les amours imaginaires* (*The imaginary loves*) of 2010, where the three protagonists are associated with colours that change at the same time as your sentimental situation.

The relationship between coloured lights and the fantastic and horror movies is so assumed in our visual culture that a piece of metacine, in homage to the *Slasher*, as is *The final girls* (2015) by Todd Strauss-Shulson, also used colour codes introduced by Mario Bava in the story *The Drop of Water*, within *I tre volti della paura* (1963) and later also used by Darío Argento in *Suspiria*.

## In conclusion

Creation and human artistic expression is a process in which, generation after generation, knowledges and techniques of artists that have preceded us are assumed, as well as languages and codes with which we convey our thoughts and concerns. The history of cinema in general, and of fantasy and horror cinema in particular, has been gathering the experimentation, knowledge and technical methodologies that have been projected in the films that are part of the history of cinema for more than 80 years.

From *German Expressionism*, inspired by painting, to the classic horror movies of the 40s and 50s of the 20th century, the cinema perfected the visual codes by which a horror movie is identified: the low key, the *chiaroscuro* and the hard lighting and extreme angulation. The Hammer picked up those codes and applied them systematically, adding some colour element, even if it was shy.

But it is with the appearance of *Giallo* when the suspense and horror genre acquires most of the elements that identify it, using new camera resources introduced by Hitchcock, such as blurring, empty shots and triggers and also the subjective camera and inserts with detailed drawings. Manichaeism, excess and exaggeration take over. It is at that moment when the great innovation of *Giallo* enters the scene: the use of coloured lights in an associative and transitional way. Initially, that resource was used in an exaggerated way and, often, out of context. But over the decades, narrative and visual tools that the language of colour provides, have been enhanced by a more measured, contextualized and coherent use, which evidently demonstrates an evolution in the way of telling stories through the moving image.

All of the above remains in the suitcase of the collective visual culture in which we unconsciously identify and translate the codes that we have assimilated. In short, we all know what happens if red takes over the screen...

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