



Taschen
HORROR CINEMA

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L'horror è un genere cinematografico estremamente popolare e geograficamente eterogeneo; si potrebbe quasi dire che ogni paese produce film horror a sé. Questo genere, che fa leva sulle paure più profonde e archetipiche esplorando le ansie sociali e culturali, è un genere allo stesso tempo senza tempo e figlio del luogo e del tempo a cui appartiene. Fra i moltissimi film recensiti troviamo capolavori quali *Psycho*, *Alien*, *L'esorcista*, *Dracula*.

Gli autori:

Jonathan Penner scrive per il cinema, la televisione e collabora a riviste e blog. Lavora come attore, sceneggiatore e produttore. È stato uno dei protagonisti de *L'ultima cena* e *Let the Devil Wear Black* e del cortometraggio per il quale è stato nominato all'Oscar *Down on the Waterfront*.

Steven Jay Schneider ha conseguito un master in filosofia al Birkbeck College dell'Università di Londra e sta per conseguire il PhD in cinematografia all'Università di New York.

#cinema



The Monstrous-Feminine

Men obsessed with sex and death are the primary makers of horror movies. So, the presence of women at the heroic center of so many of these films shouldn't surprise anyone; women seem more vulnerable and are better looking to the male audience. Having a young woman threatened and either saved by the hero (old-fashioned) or saved by her own resourcefulness (new-fashioned) makes a lot of sense. Men kill women, men watch women, men watch men try to kill women. But if women are the heroes—or, at least, the protagonists—of many of these movies, why are they so rarely flipped and portrayed as straight-up murder machines the way so many male characters are? Is it simply because (in reality) female killers are so rare? Aileen Wuornos was America's most famous modern murderess, and she was so unusual that her life was deemed worthy of a sympathetic (non-horror) film biography, *Monster* (2003), along with a pair of documentaries by Nick Broomfield (1992, 2003). Women are widely held to be more feeling, more expressive, and simply less violent than men. And so any story wherein a woman would be driven to murder becomes a story about justification, motivation, desperation, and fury unleashed. The roots of the horror are always explored, and the "why" of such anomalous behavior is always asked. Why is she killing? How does this happen?

These stories fall into three groups: the woman scorned, the witch, and, most unusually, the pure evil bitch.

"Hell hath no fury ..." goes the saying, and in the movies women get scorned in all sorts of profound ways. Pictures like *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962) and *Strait-Jacket* (1964), with their famous fallen stars Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, portray the scorn the world heaps on ladies of a certain age whom life and opportunity has passed by. Inspired by Billy Wilder's *Sunset Blvd.* (1950) with Gloria Swanson, this first real cycle of female-driven horror pictures, known as "Grand Dame Giallo," ran through the 1960s and includes *Hush ... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964), with Davis and Olivia de Havilland; *The Nanny* (1965), with Davis orise again; *Whoever Slept in Annie Room?* (1971), with Shelley Winters; and *What's the Matter with Helen?* (1971), with Winters and Debbie Reynolds. In them all, wonderful older actresses portray heroes and grotesques—not witches but hags, whose lost sexual appeal adds insult to the injury of their lost sexual lives. These are hurt and angry ladies who must dredge up their own sordid youths before they can move on to whatever futures await them. For the killers, the future is death—their

Still from "Strait-Jacket" (1964)

Lucy Harbin (Joan Crawford) spent 20 years in an asylum after axing her husband and mistress to death in a crime of passion. Out now, but will she revert to her old ways? William Castle gives tight direction from the author of *Psycho*. Robert Bloch,

"One might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses and oppresses."

Robin Wood

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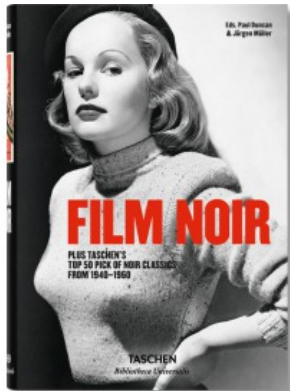
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