

"why we crave horror movies" by stephen king



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TOPIC: Why we crave Horror Movies? It is an irrefutable fact that human beings harbour aggressive tendencies within themselves. Most of us spend our entire life-time attempting to: thwart, disguise or repress such instinctive and admittedly, destructive urges. However, the guidelines of social morality and socially acceptable behavior, perpetually prevent us from unleashing these urges. Thus, we constantly strive to find, alternative and somewhat more acceptable ways of venting out our feelings of hostility and aggression; and in this quest of ours, we are magnetically drawn towards horror movies. Our Id -and the primitive lust for violence cherished by it - as the Freudians would remark, is able to achieve instant gratification through viewing the harrowing scenes depicted on the screen. Thus, it can be asserted that our craving for horror movies is in a way, a manifestation of the: anger, frustration and aggression that we experience in relation to the society around us. The following discussion will suffice to substantiate this point. It is a commonly observed fact that there is a disparity between our public and private selves. This dichotomy leads to a monstrously twofold existence. Our public self is governed by inhibitions whereas our private self constantly yearns to sever itself from the restraints of the more socially poised self. As opposed to the seemingly placid public self, the private self craves for anarchy and social rebellion. It is note-worthy that within each of us resides a spy or an imposter- forever struggling to remain hidden from the outside world. While viewing a grotesque scene or a horror movie, this imposter overshadows the much civil public self and assumes a dominant role. Similar to a spy who experiences exhilaration and profound satisfaction on witnessing the successful completion of a task assigned to him; likewise, the imposter within us derives unprecedented bliss coupled with an acute sense

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of accomplishment after observing the nightmarish replica of our secretly-guarded, forbidden fantasies. The genre of horror movies, therefore, helps in harmlessly satiating those fantasies, which if realized in actual life, would lead to a cataclysm of unimaginable magnitude. Viewed in this context, unlike King's assertion, the reasons why we watch horror movies, cannot be regarded as being 'simple and obvious' (King). In addition to this, the overwhelming socio-economic pressures of a highly competitive society along with the prejudices, envy, greed and hatred projected by the inhabitants of such a society, breeds aggressive and hostile attitudes within a person. Unfortunately, if these aggressive attitudes are not channelized productively, then one develops a sort of resentment towards others- especially towards the people leading happy, picturesque and untainted lives. Thereafter, there starts lurking within us a desperate desire to see the prosperous faction of the society, suffering bitterly. Thus, watching the aggrieved faces of the characters and seeing their painful and irreversible suffering in movies such as 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre' or Alfred Hitchcock's 'Psycho' quenches this demonic desire within us- to see others leading anguished, helpless and ravaged lives. As rightly iterated by King: "The fun comes from seeing others menaced- sometimes killed". Most people realize early on in life that, life is not fair; consequently one can never entertain the hope of experiencing justice in this temporal realm. The realization of this unfortunate reality leads to frustration and anger and possibly at times, homicidal thoughts- especially against those who have contributed toward our sorrow and despair. The medium of horror movies thus, "becomes a modern version of the public lynching" (King) where lynching denotes "unlawful execution especially by a mob" (The American

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Heritage Dictionary 504). To conclude, on a metaphorical level, our craving for horror movies is a manifestation of the sadistic streak within us. This craving also exemplifies how the malevolent and the unscrupulous streak within us will use whatever means possible to satisfy its yearnings.

Bibliography: 1) King, Stephen. " Why We Crave Horror Movies". n. d.

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