

PERVERSE TITILLATION: A HISTORY OF EUROPEAN EXPLOITATION FILMS  
1960–1980

By

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To all of those who have received grief for their entertainment choices and who see the study of weird and wacky films as important to the understanding of our popular culture

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European Exploitation or ‘Eurocult’ films have left an indelible impact on popular culture around the world. Focusing on subject matter that many of the major film studios shied away from, Eurocult films helped a generation of worldwide audiences deal with the rapidly changing social and political landscape that occurred in the ‘60s and ‘70s. The effects of that these films have has also reached out to later generation with modern filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino and Guillermo del Toro achieving success by paying homage to the genre.

With the advent of DVD, Eurocult is enjoying a renaissance, with films long unseen now available in unedited, original versions, released and sold in special editions that are both popular and profitable. Directors and other filmmakers, long unappreciated, have only now begun to receive respect for their daring creations. Looking at the films of Italy, Spain and France from 1960 to 1980 that dealt with sexuality, violence and

monsters both real and imagined, we see the changing social and political morays that chronicled a particular time in world history as well as seeing one of the first examples of a cross-cultural, integrated communication process that has become commonplace in today's international media saturated world.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The European film industry has had an indelible effect on both world cinema and popular culture. Works by such filmmakers as Fellini, Goddard, Bergman, Rossellini, Truffault and Antonioni are considered classics by film scholars and critics and respected worldwide for their cinematic genius. They've also influenced culture and reflected the times in which they were made. Their socially provocative themes whether it's the tearing down of neo-realism of *L'avventura* (Italy, 1960) or *Jules et Jim* (France, 1962), the turning point in the battle of censorship and self-expression as showcased in *La Dolce Vita* (Italy, 1960) or breaking down the barriers of sensuality and opening up new, more adult styles of entertainment which was accomplished in *Jag ar Nifiken, (I am Curious Yellow*, Sweden 1967). European film has brought a unique and refreshing perspective that Hollywood and other international film companies could not have duplicated in the mid 1960s and 1970s.

These critically acclaimed "high-brow" films have been universally by critics and scholars accepted as pioneering examples of quality cinema. However, these quality films were not the only examples of European cinema that were saturating the U.S. market. During the socially turbulent times of '60s and '70s, another type of European film was being introduced to world moviegoers, the Euro-horror and exploitation, or "Eurocult", film. Images of horrific monsters, blood-drooling decaying zombies, sadistic Nazi frauleins, and naughty lesbian nuns filled the screens to the delight and shock of many fans. These scandalous films would become as popular as the "high-brow" art films of

new wave European filmmakers and has proven a long lasting legacy that continues to affect today's movie going audience.

Between 1960 and 1980, Eurocult movies saturated the American drive-ins and local theatres. This, in turn, had a huge influence on a new generation of modern filmmakers, including Quentin Tarantino (*Kill Bill Vol. 1 & 2*, 2003, 2004, *Grindhouse*, 2007), Brian De Palma (*Dressed to Kill*, 1980, *Blow Out*, 1981), David Cronenberg (*Dead Ringers*, 1988), William Friedkin (*The Exorcist*, 1973), Zalman King (*The Red Shoe Diaries*, 1992) and Ridley Scott (*Alien*, 1979), all of whom have incorporated aspects of European horror and exploitation in their films. This cinematic homage is perhaps responsible for the recent explosion of interest in this genre. With the advent of new media technologies like DVD, Eurocult films are enjoying a renaissance, with films long unseen now available in unedited, original versions, released and sold in special editions that are both popular and profitable. Films such as Just Jaeckin's *L'Histoire D'O* (1974), Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1976), Lucio Fulci's *Zombi* (1979) as well as such lesser known films as *La Casa Dalle Finestre Che Ridono* (known in the United States as *The House with Laughing Windows*, 1976) and *La Novia Ensangrentada* (*The Blood-Spattered Bride*, 1972) are currently lining the shelves of American video stores alongside top Hollywood titles.

The time period between 1960 and 1980 was one of great social changes when censorship and social battles were raging around the world, European film producers reacted to these changing social mores by creating a myriad amount of different types of exploitation movies that reflected the attitudes of this turbulent time. Italian murder mysteries with strong sexual and violent themes called "giallo" became popular

worldwide and started a sub-genre that included more than 200 films. These films, the precursor to the American “slasher” movies, focused on the exploitative aspects of social life and reflected a discontent with Italian society.<sup>1</sup> Spanish and Italian cannibal films and their zombie counterparts were also big exports. These films’ nihilism reflected a growing lethargy to consumerism and grew out of the bloody iconography of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup> They were also some of the most violent films in the in the entire exploitation genre. In addition to zombies and slashers, Spain and Italy produced a staggering number of “nunsplotation” films, which featured nuns indulging in sinful—and often murderous—acts, as well as ‘devil possession’ films, which all signified discontent with traditional religious institutions.<sup>3</sup> Spain produced a series of movies utilizing the familiar monsters of the 30s (Frankenstein, Wolfman, etc.) that were modernized and reflected the failings of everyday men. France incorporated strong doses of sexuality and eroticism into their exploitation films.<sup>4</sup> As a result, local film industries took countries social norms and exported them to a mass audience, changing the way that non-Europeans view violence and sexuality.

Hidden in the exploitation films of the ‘60s and ‘70s were a patchwork of important ideals and issues that resonated with worldwide audiences. These films explored themes which included the mistrust of the rising woman’s movement (*Flavia*, *La Monaca Musulmana*, 1974, *Emanuelle Nera*, 1975), technological advances (*Les*

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Blood and Black Lace Introduction. The word “giallo” means “yellow” in Italian. The term was originally used to describe the mystery thriller novels published in Italy that had yellow covers.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Thrower, *Beyond Terror, The Films of Lucio Fulci*. (London: Fab Press. 2002), 23

<sup>3</sup> Steve Fentone, *Antichristo: The Bible of Nasty Nun Sinema and Culture*. (London: Fab Press, 2003) 5

<sup>4</sup> Cahill Tohill and Pete Tombs, *Immoral Tales: European Sex and Horror Movies 1956-1984*. (London: Primitive Press. 1995). 42

*Raisins de la Mort*, 1978, *Il Gatto E Nove Code*, 1971), mistrust between the hippie culture and authority (*Una Lucertola con La Pelle di Donna*, 1971, *Non Si Deve Profanare il Sonno deo Morti*, 1974), marriage (*Il Rosso Segno della Follia*, 1968, *La Novia Ensangrentada* 1972), cultural imperialism (*Mondo Cane*, 1962, *Holocausto Canibal*, 1980), child abuse (*Mais ne Nous Délivrez Pas du Mal*, 1971, *Non si Sevizia un Paperino*, 1971), race relations (*Addio Africa*, 1971, *Emanuelle e gli Ultimi Cannibali*, 1977), sexual freedom (*Emmanuelle*, 1974, *L'Histoire D'O*, 1974), homosexuality (*Quattro Mosche di Velluto Grigi*, 1972, *Profondo Rosso*, 1975) and war (*Apocalypse Domani*, 1980). In addition, Eurocult films brought out subjects that weren't being discussed in the mainstream by delving into areas such as incest (*Eugenie, The Story of Her Decent into Perversion*, 1969), necrophilia (*L'Orrible Dr. Hitchcock*, 1962) and bestiality (*Emanuelle in America*, 1976, *Emanuelle Perché Violenza delle Donne*, 1972).

This dissertation will document the Eurocult phenomena that occurred between 1960 and 1980. While examples of Eurocult from individual country perspective have been featured in the popular press, this topic has never been explored from a full continental perspective and has largely been avoided by academic researchers. Moreover, few scholars have attempted the task of tying all these countries together into one cohesive structure. This study will explore the Eurocult films by chronicling the Italian, Spanish and French film industries, the works they produced and the political and social culture in which they were created. It examines a popular culture phenomenon that was immensely popular in its day and continues to have a profound effect on today's media.

## Significance of the Study

Film has been an integral part of the world's mass media structure. Since its inception, film, along with radio and television, has allowed countries to develop a sense of identity. Cinematic texts allow filmmakers to explore their cultural identities and reinforce notions of nationality, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.<sup>5</sup> It is through film that we can see historical social and political perspectives of those immersed in the era. The rise of European exploitation films in the mid-60s to late '70s gave America and other parts of the world a social and cultural snapshot of the issues and trends that were consciously and subconsciously permeating Europe during that time.

Eurocult films were distinctly tied into political, social, and economical events of the '60s and '70s. Whether it was censorship battles with the devoutly fascist Franco regime in Spain or dealing with a more socially liberal country like France, Eurocult proliferated in the chaotic times of this period. The fall of the Hays code in Hollywood and social and political events that shaped this era, including Vietnam, racial issues, and Kennedy assassination, began to de-sensitize audiences in the United States. Their hunger for new and provocative material matched the themes being explored in Eurocult films.

Most movie historians look at the '60s as being the decade in which a liberating international perspective was challenging and enriching the cinematic landscape. French New Wave auteurs like Godard, Chabrol and Truffaut, Italian masters Fellini and Antonioni, Sweden's Bergman, and Poland's Polanski have long been cited as pioneers and visionaries whose works are considered positive representations of what is "good" in modern cinema. Eurocult, however is largely forgotten in these discussions. Whether it's

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas Kellner, Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism and Media Culture. In Dines & Humez Gender, Race, and Class in America (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), 10

the unsavory, glorified violent themes or the use of sexuality in uncomfortable situations, the Eurocult film seems to have been ignored in any discussion of impact, style, or quality. This study posits that the genre deserves serious re-evaluation in terms of its impact on mass culture and its unique style and production.

The overarching assumption of this dissertation is that Eurocult films are one of the first examples of a modern mass communication, mass cultural environment. The assembly line productions of these films stretched across both physical and cultural borders creating global partnerships that in many ways were a reflection of the changing social, political and economic landscape. In their introduction of *Horror International* (2005), Schneider and Williams make the case that the new 'global economy' has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish exclusive national and sociocultural parameters.<sup>6</sup> This dissertation purports that the phenomenon had occurred some 40 odd years earlier in the exploitation genre.

In addition, Eurocult had a role in the social history of American society. These films, along with their American exploitation counterparts, filled the drive-ins and theatres in a particular time in its history. Understanding their reception and popularity is important in creating an accurate representation of the American cultural landscape of the '60s and '70s.

## **Literary Review**

The first step in re-examining the genre is compiling an accurate comprehensive history. Though particular countries and auteurs have been the subject of discussion in

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Jay Schneider and Tony Williams. Horror International. Introduction. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 2005), 3

many books in the popular press, there is little in terms of a defining text that serves to tie all the different film industries together. The history of the genre thus remains a splintered affair, and this study attempts to rectify that problem.

Given that the focus of this dissertation is on a particular cinema genre that is tied into the popular culture, a cultural studies framework provides a good lens by which to explore the topic. As developed in the late 20th century, in part through the reintroduction of Marxist thought in sociology, and in part through the articulation of sociology and other academic disciplines such as literary criticism, cultural studies focused on the analysis of subcultures in capitalist societies. Following the non-anthropological tradition, cultural studies generally looked at the consumption of goods such as fashion, literature, art, and movies.<sup>7</sup> This perspective is important because it considers the impact of social relations and the system through which cultural phenomena are produced and consumed.<sup>8</sup>

The resistance to serious, academic discussions about European exploitation films often rests within the confines of the subject matter of these films. Whether it is the copious amounts of gore, sex, and generally controversial themes, academic scholars have shied away from or looked down upon, the genre, classifying it as sub-standard and fundamentally at odds with the artistic nature of good cinema.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the subject of these films frequently degenerates into a discussion of “high” or “low” cultural distinctions that usually shed a negative light on the topic. The application of cultural

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<sup>7</sup> Cultural studies website. [http://www.jahsonic.com/Cultural\\_studies.html](http://www.jahsonic.com/Cultural_studies.html) Accessed on April 12, 2005

<sup>8</sup> Kellner, 10

<sup>9</sup> David Kalat, The Unreal Reality. DVD insert in Eyes Without A Face “Les Yeus Sans Visage” Criterion Collection 2004

studies here can help circumvent such a negative mindset since social scientists believe that critical studies provide the tools to look at one's culture critically and to interpret and read without subverting distinctions of "high" or "low" culture.<sup>10</sup>

Another central focal point to cultural studies is the concept of ideology. Kellner asserted that ideologies of gender are what promote the sexist representations of women in such films.<sup>11</sup> Eurocult films have been frequently criticized for being extraordinarily sexist and misogynistic causing women's groups, critics and the occasional actress considerable stress.<sup>12</sup> Compiling a completed history of the genre is the first step to distinguishing where these ideologies originated and how they manifested themselves through the two decades discussed in this dissertation.

According to Sardhar's *Introducing Cultural Studies* (2001) the research approach examines its subject matter in terms of cultural practices and their relation to power. It has the objective of understanding culture in all its complex forms and of analyzing the social and political context in which culture manifests itself. Sardhar also agreed with Kellner that cultural studies has a commitment to provide a moral evaluation of modern society as well as a radical line of political action.

Audience participation and negotiation is an important component to understanding the massive, continued success of European exploitation films. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1980) introduced the notion of audience participation in his reception theory. This approach to textual analysis focuses on the possibilities for negotiation and opposition on the part of the audience. Hall reasoned that a movie is not simply passively

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<sup>10</sup> Kellner, 10

<sup>11</sup> Kellner, 14

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Joe D'Amato, [Emanuelle in America](#) DVD. Blue Underground 2003

accepted by the audience, but instead, it has an element of viewer activity involved. The person, in effect, negotiates the meaning of the text based on her/his cultural background, which explains how some readers accept the images or story from a film, while others reject it. Hall's idea was further expanded as a model of encoding and decoding, where an audience may decode a film in a manner that was different from the producer's original intentions. This reinforces the idea of an active audience.

While various texts discuss aspects of the history of the European exploitation film, no one text has completely explored and covered the era examined here. A review of existing literature revealed a smattering of writings reflecting the industry and those filmmakers contributing to the Eurocult genre, but this topic has largely been covered through the popular press. Very little has been written about the subject academically, and there is no known complete history of the genre.

Alexander Olney's doctoral dissertation, *Playing Dead: Spectatorship, Performance and Euro-horror Cinema* (2003), framed Euro-horror as a tool to move peoples' expectations of the horror film from a single ideological imperative to a more dialogical text. He explored various narrative models that Eurocult films employ to give audiences a better understanding and appreciation of the radical politics that are inherent in these types of films.

The Italian exploitation film with its many different subgenres has been covered by a variety of different authors in the popular press. In what is the most complete historical documentation of the genre, *Immoral Tales* (1995), Toehill and Tombs devoted a chapter to examining the Italian exploitation film industry. They decided not to focus on the success of the genre itself but on the political and economic spheres in which these

films were shown. By showcasing some of the largest producers and directors of film—Jess Franco, Jean Rollin, and Walerian Borowczyk—the authors began the process of compiling a history. However, little attention was paid to those who didn't produce a lot of films.

Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik's *Alternate Europe, Eurotrash and Exploitation Cinema Since 1945* (2004) sought to discover new academic routes for Eurocult films. By compiling a list of articles from academicians in social sciences and film studies, the book looked at different sub-genres of Eurocult, Nazi exploitation, "Black Emanuelle" films and cannibal films to argue that there are actually two legitimate views of European cinema. The first of these views being traditional routes found in filmmatic studies (i.e. Bergman, Goddard, etc.), then second an alternative path focused on Eurocult.

Hawkins's *Sleaze Mania, Euro-Trash and High Art* (1999) looked closely at how European "art" films, including Italian horror and exploitation, characterize and appeal to American low culture. Her analysis that films with a decidedly European point of reference are able to defy the categorization that inhibits American horror filmmakers may help to explain the films popularity. In *The Poetics of Horror* (1971), White used examples of the European horror film to understand and explain factors that make the horror film particularly successful on an emotional level. Seeing these films as extensions of everyday fears, he concluded that these films elucidate the nature of fear brought on by a contemporary society and lead to a better understanding of society itself. Hutchings (2004) looked at one of these fears, the idea of the castrating woman, and explored this role within confines the works of Mario Bava. This psychoanalytic analysis lends itself to

the study of the female characters in European exploitation, perhaps, in part, a source of their great popularity.

The subgenres posited within Eurocult are expansive and varied. This is evident in the few books on Italian horror and exploitation. Smith's *Blood and Black Lace* (1999) is an exhaustive review of the entire "giallo" filmography. Defining and exploring the history of this sub-genre, Smith traced the high points of it with Argento's *Profondo Rosso* (1975) to its decline in the mid -80s. Jay Slater's *Eaten Alive* (2002) manages to do the same thing, except within the content of the Italian cannibal film. Tremendously successful in the '70s and early '80s, the cannibal film was born out of the *Mondo Cane* (1962) style of moviemaking, which showcased the violence of primitive cultures and their clash with modern (Italian) civilization. It was after the Italian success of *Dawn of the Dead* (*Zombi*, 1978) that the cannibal film became fused with the zombie film to great success. The cannibal film is examined in Brottman's *Eating Italian* (2002). The book showcased the Italian filmmakers obsession and fear of different, more savage, cultures and how the war between societies was played out. Palmerini and Mistretta's *Spaghetti Nightmares* (1996) purported to be the first to ever cover the subject in depth. The book contains 26 interviews of those Italian filmmakers and actors that have appeared in films of this genre. These interviews, conducted during the 1990s, showcase the historic timeline of the genre and discuss some of the personal hopes and disappointments of those involved in these films.

Fentone's *Antichristo* (2000) examined the Italian sub-genre of "nunsplotation". Looking at the cultural and religious taboos of Italy, Fentone presented a complete filmography and history of deviant nuns and exploitative themes of religion. Nakahara's

(2004) chapter in *Alternative Europe* also commented on this sub-genre. Citing the way in which the women are portrayed and the way they are incorporated into the ideological and cinematic structure, she evaluated why these types of films are so popular with the viewer.

Another controversial topic in Italian exploitation filmmaking is Nazi exploitation. Koven (2004) looked at the exploitation of history in film and applied it to the string of Italian films in the mid-70s that sexualized the Nazi movement. Calling this sub-genre particularly distasteful, he nevertheless saw academic importance in its analysis.

The major auteurs of Italian horror and exploitation filmmaking are an important part in understanding the history of the genre. Howarth's *The Haunted World of Mario Bava* (2002) and Lucas' *All the Colors of the Dark* (2005) looked at various aspects of Mario Bava's career from his early days as a cinematographer to becoming "the Godfather of Italian horror."<sup>13</sup> Looking at each of Bava's films carefully, Howarth concluded that Bava was more than a director known for his style, a subject on which many articles have focused. Bava's works were also known for their substance and thematic sophistication.<sup>14</sup>

Taking over where Bava left off, Dario Argento has become the modern maestro of the Italian horror film. Gallant (2000) used different theoretical approaches to each of Argento's films. Chronicling the history of his filmmaking, he concluded that Argento, for all his commercialism, constructs films that are non-linear, chaotic, and rich in subtext. McDonagh (1988) seemed to agree by arguing that the world of Argento is one

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<sup>13</sup> Howarth, back cover

<sup>14</sup> Howarth. 12

of stylized, twisted violence that is true twentieth-century gothic. Thrower's book, *Beyond Terror* (2002) looked at the filmmaker Lucio Fulci, whose films became synonymous with over-the-top gore and audacious violence. Thrower made the claim that the competition from filmmakers such as Argento dictated the style Fulci was to employ to make his films successful.

A few authors have also scrutinized France's exploitation films and auteur filmmakers. Black's (1996) interview with Jean Rollin provided an interesting look at the influences that impressed the young filmmaker's mind. Rollin discusses in detail his affection for Luis Bunuel and Georges Franju. Rollin compares filmmaker Bunuel to an artist such as Trouille, who paints people and objects in a realistic manner, which some would say is ultra-realistic. Rollin praises the imagery in Bunuel's films, independent of the story. Rollin also states in the interview that Franju's *Les Yeux sans Visage* (1958) is the "greatest film in the genre" whereby the filmmaker has found the atmosphere of dream, poetry, and madness and applied it to his own work.<sup>15</sup>

With a forward written by Rollin himself, Mathijs and Mendik's *Alternative Europe* (2004) provided an important chapter on his career. Odell and Le Blanc focus on the theoretical areas explored by Rollin's films. They discuss the pulp foundations of Rollin's work and his frequent homage's paid to French cartoonists Feuille and Rohmer. They also took on the very important aspect of visuals and landscaping that are devices employed in all of Rollin's films. This is more evident in the section on self-reflexive staging and the role of the mask that plays a part in films such as *Fascination* (1979) and *Requiem pour un Vampire* (1971).

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<sup>15</sup> Andy Black, Clocks, Seagulls, Romeo and Juliet *Kinoeye* Vol. 2 Issue 7, 178

The subversion of rational order to boyhood fantasies and romantic longings are the subject of Sparks' *The Romance of Childhood* (2003). Examining Rollin's *Levres de Sang* (1975), Sparks employed a semiotic examination of the content and concluded that confusion and terror can (related to a downtrodden existence) evoke a childlike simplicity or even romance in the traditional sense.

An examination of Rollin's *Fascination* (1979) is the focus of Cherry's *The Universe of Madness and Death* (2003). In this work, she looked at the fetishism that Rollin's employs. Most importantly, though, Cherry examined reasons why there are barriers to critical recognition of Rollin and why films such as his have not been accepted by the cultural elite.

Relatively little has been written about the Spain's contribution to the exploitation market. Paul Naschy's *Memoirs of a Wolfman* (2000) takes a no regret point of view and looks back at the Spanish film industry of the late '60s and '70s. Naschy sees that exploitation film work is as revered and remembered today as other more respectable films and feels no shame in the contribution that he has made.

Burrell and Brown's *Hispanic Horrors* (2005) laments the fact that Spanish exploitation has been ignored and attempts to reverse the trend by re-examining several key films from Spain and Mexico during the '60s and '70s as well as several modern day classics.

Sexual exploitation with a violent motif is often an underlying theme is practically all Eurocult films. Flint's *Babylon Blue* (2002) provided a detailed account of the soft-core genre prior to the popularity of *Deep Throat* in 1972. Many early European films such as Metzger's *Camille 2000* (1969), *Lickerish Quartet* (1970), and Sarno's *Inga*

(1967) had a large impact on the industry and paved the way for the explicit hardcore boom that originated in the '70s. With regards to European sexual ideals and how they relate to exploitation genre, Xavier Mendik's *Black Sex, Bad Sex: Monstrous Ethnicity in the Black Emmanuelle Films* (2004) looked to understand the specific fears and contradictions that Europeans have about black sexuality. It focused on the savagery portrayed in the *Black Emmanuelle* films. His concluded that the films represent a long-standing colonial tradition which looks at the black body as a disturbing, yet erotic, spectacle. Another article, Garrert Chaffin-Quiray "Emmanuelle Enterprises" (2004) looked at the European aspects of the Sylvia Kristel films, *Emmanuelle* (1974) *Emmanuelle II* (1975) and *Goodbye Emmanuelle* (1977). Caffin-Quiray's 2003 conclusion that the focus of these films is on sensuality, not penetration, which enhances a more truthful narrative not found in other soft-core, like-minded productions.

Schneider and Williams's *Horror International* (2005) is an initial step of looking into the international horror film from an academic standpoint. In addition to adding theoretical viewpoints on a variety of international film industries the authors such as Raidford Guins looks at the burgeoning DVD market and the effect that the new technology has on the Italian exploitation genre in the U.S. Concluding that the remediation of these movies has allowed us to return with a different viewpoint, from embarrassed fan to serious academic study, either out of rebellion for the present state of exploitation filmmaking or interest in these films as a historical artifact.

## Methodology

This dissertation looks at the history of European Exploitation films from 3 of the most prolific filmmaking countries in Europe: Italy, Spain and France. The films are laid out in chronological order from 1960 to 1980. It employs a cultural school interpretation of history. Using historical methods of research from archival sources, it will attempt to accomplish the objective of presenting the most comprehensive history of the Eurocult genre available.

It is important to establish the definition of what constitutes an exploitation film. Exploitation films can run the gamut from action movies, crime dramas and sex pictures. For purposes of this study, an exploitation film is any film that typically sacrifices the traditional notions of artistic merit for a more sensationalistic display, often featuring excessive sex, violence, and gore. In many cases these films' success relied not on the quality of their content, but on the ability of audiences to be drawn in by the advertising of the film. This definition encompasses a large variety of films that have violence as a commonality. Therefore films with large budgets and/or legitimate literary sources like Just Jaeckin's *L'Histoire D'O* (*The Story of O*, 1974) can still be considered exploitation because the violence portrayed in the film is on an equitable level with other exploitation films.

Since this is archival research both primary and secondary sources will be consulted and analyzed. Primary sources will include a large amount of film texts representational of the era. A detailed filmography will be included at the end of the book. Interviews conducted at the time of release may also constitute some of the primary sources used for this study. Secondary sources will include those texts, both academic

and popular, that have been written about the subject after the period examined, as well as any films that may have been influenced by this particular genre. In addition, recent interviews conducted for re-releases of these films on DVD are also included.

The films and classifications included are from traditionally non-English speaking, mainland, free European countries. Films of an exploitative nature from Great Britain are not included. Though an argument can be made that some films (for example, Hammer's output in the '60s and '70s and the Pete Walker films from the early '70s) qualify under the definition of exploitation, they are not a part of this dissertation for two reasons. First, English and American film productions are inexorably linked in terms of history, language, and themes, so much so that in my opinion the two industries can be considered interchangeable. The cognitive dissonance that accompanies the viewing of Eurocult films dissipates severely with familiarity. Eurocult, by nature, skews the audiences by bending the traditional narrative models normally associated with horror. In addition, it deconstructs sexual, racial, and gender identities that allow audiences to adopt multiple viewing positions and experiment with differing subject positions.<sup>16</sup>

Political events such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy in November of 1963, the complete acceptance of television and such social endeavors like summer trips to Europe all helped bring about a transformation in the American cultural landscape in the early '60s. By 1960, the American audience was ready for new forms of entertainment, which would not originate in the stale homogenous environment of the United States, but instead, outside the country's borders. The start of the "British Invasion" a few years later (with rise of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, as well as the

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<sup>16</sup> Alexander Olney, Playing Dead: Spectatorship, Performance and Euro-horror Cinema. PhD Dissertation, (Omaha: University of Nebraska, 2003)

profound popularity of Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger*) opened the floodgates for European exploitation film and allowed them to flourish. By 1964, the amount of European exploitation cult films that were being released increased exponentially. Seminal works in the genre such as Bava's classic *Sei Donne Per L'Assassino* (*Blood and Black Lace*, 1964), Franco's *El Secreto del Dr. Orloff* (1964), and the American release of Freda's *L'Orribile Secreto di Dr. Hitchcock* (*The Horrible Secret of Dr. Hitchcock*, 1961), all showcase the popularity of the genre within this historical timeframe.

1980 marked a turning point in mass communications as well. The advent of the VCR made it possible for people to watch their favorite films without leaving their homes.<sup>17</sup> Theatres and drive-ins that once were the lifeblood of European exploitation distribution waned in popularity. Obscure favorites such as *L'Uccello dalle Piume di Cristallo* (*Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, 1970), and *Le Viol de Vampire* (*The Rape of the Vampire*, 1968) as well as adult exploitations like *L'Histoire D'O* (*The Story of O*, 1974) could be rented or bought alongside Hollywood blockbusters at any given time. With the exception of a short, intense spurt in the early '80s, European exploitation production dropped off significantly in that decade. This trend continues today with European exploitation films being distributed directly to DVD after their initial foreign run. No longer is it possible with any frequency (with the exception of the larger cities where an occasional showing is scheduled) to see European exploitation in theatres.<sup>18</sup>

Special mention must be made about the films themselves and the methodology of their examination. Any one version of a Eurocult film rarely stands as a completed work. Different versions, titles, varying degrees of violence, nudity and sexuality

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<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Noell-Smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (New York: Oxford Press, 1996), 486

<sup>18</sup> Bill Landis and Mike Clifford, *Sleazoid Express*. (New York: Fireside Publishing, 2002), 5

fluctuate within a film depending on which country it was shown. For example, *La Noche Del Terror Ciego* (1971) was released in a censored form (minus overt sexuality and violence) in Spain. In Germany, the sex scenes and violence were added back in while the rest of the world edited the films to social taste of the country.<sup>19</sup> To grasp this, it is important to understand the intricacies of foreign distribution, which played a huge part in the success of Eurocult from its onset. This extraordinarily complex, multinational exercise arose from the need to make films as palatable as possible to the widest variety of audience tastes and as a way of recouping financial risks associated with production and international distribution. Foreign producers making horror films in the late '50s had to produce their works from a cultural standpoint that was widely applicable.<sup>20</sup>

The usual template for these films productions began with financing. This would be obtained by a differing number of distributors in different countries. Each distributor would then have their own individual rights over a particular film in each of their prospective countries. In order to help facilitate success, distributors would pressure or force filmmakers to cast those stars that would appeal to those particular countries' audiences.<sup>21</sup> A good example of this would be the film *Maison de Rendez-Vous* (*French Sex Murders*, 1972), which had French, German, Italian, and Spanish involvement in its production. Its lead actors were a who's who of popular and fading actors in Europe at the time. Stars Barbara Bouchet (France), Anita Ekberg, Robert Sacchi, Rosalba Neri (Italy), and Howard Vernon (Spain) all intermingle throughout the film to its giallic

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Amando de Ossorio. Blind Dead Collection DVD Interview conducted in 2000. Blue U20

<sup>9</sup> Tohill and Tombs, 66

<sup>21</sup> Pete Tombs, A Note about French Sex Murders DVD supplement in *French Sex Murders*, Mondo Macabro 2005

ending. In order to fully maximize the roles of those actors that had homegrown appeal, distributors in each country would re-cut the film to showcase them to better advantage. The film itself had a varying amount of titles and running times, including *La Casa D'Appuntamento* (Italy, 81 minutes), *Meurte Dans la 17e Avenue* (France, 84 minutes) and *French Sex Murders* (U.S., 90 minutes).<sup>22</sup>

The fluidity of these films can be traced to their production. In Europe, with money tight, films had to be rush-produced in order to capitalize on a current trend. Ian McCulloch, British actor and star of several Italian Eurocult favorites in the late '70s commented, "These films were almost in profit before a frame was shot. They were pre-sold all over the world on a title, storyboards, poster artwork, and synopsis."<sup>23</sup> He added, "Everything is sold...they know before the camera rolls that they will make a profit. It may not be very much but they know they have covered all their costs. They will sell the film to South America and all places that are easy to sell to, and in the difficult markets they will do deals."<sup>24</sup> These deals can have a radical impact on the presentation of the film. Many times American and British distributors will barter for rights to change content. In the early days of Italian horror, these rights were given freely so that the filmmakers could gain a profit. This meant that portions of the movie, Usually the violence, was often eliminated having a disastrous effect on the story, or worse, extra footage would be shot, occasionally by those having nothing to do with the original production, to soften up the material. For example, Mario Bava's first three films *La Maschera Del Demonio* (*Black Sunday*, 1960), *La Ragazza Che Speva Troppo* (*The Girl*

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<sup>22</sup> Adrian Luther Smith, *Blood and Black Lace*. (Cornwall: Stray Cat Publishing, 1999), 17

<sup>23</sup> Thrower. 17

<sup>24</sup> Jay Slater, *Eating Italian: Italian Cannibal and Zombie Movies*. London: Plexus Press, 2002), 102

*Who Knew Too Much*, 1962,) and *I Tre Volti Della Paura* (*Black Sunday*, 1963), were entirely rescored, edited, and changed from their initial conception for American audiences.<sup>25</sup>

The restructuring of films for international audiences results in one of the major complaints about the genre, dubbing. The practice of recording voices that do not belong to the original actors and speak in a different language than these actors has long been the trademark in Eurocult film. Because of the multinational approach, actors would frequently find themselves acting with those who were speaking their own lines in another language, meaning that American actors would say their lines in English, while Italian actors would say their lines Italian. Catriona MacColl, star of Lucio Fulci's *L'Aldila* (*The Beyond*, 1981) commented on the difficulties of these situations for the actors:

"I'm trying to remember the name of this actor, charming man...but his English wasn't very good with all due respect and he tried to learn the lines in English and I can't quite remember what came out but it was quite difficult. It was quite difficult for me to keep a straight face with him sometimes because he would come out with some hysterically funny lines that were between English and Italian."<sup>26</sup>

All of these problems would work themselves out in the dubbing process because rarely, if ever, were films from the 1960s filmed with live sound. Complete redubs of the entire script, along with sounds, etc., were placed within the movie after it was shot.<sup>27</sup>

For purposes of this research, films endemic to the study will be examined using a number of criteria. The majority of these fall within the time parameters of the study (1960 to 1980). A small number of seminal works prior to the time period will be

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<sup>25</sup> Troy Howarth, *The Haunted World of Mario Bava*. (London: Fab Press, 2002), 32,73,86

<sup>26</sup> Catriona MacColl, *The Beyond* DVD Audio Commentary. Anchor Bay Entertainment 2000

<sup>27</sup> Tim Lucas, *Black Sunday* DVD Audio Commentary. 1999

examined in order to gain historical precedent. Movies will be classified as belonging to a particular country if either the director and/or majority of the production staff originate from the area. Care will be taken to find the longest cut of a film available. Films that were not shot using live sound will be examined in the language spoken by a majority of the cast. Those recorded with live sound will be viewed in native language. Any and all comments from directors, actors, and production personnel accompanying the film will also be examined. Critical evaluation of the films will be consulted when available. The point of pinpointing the exact language, running time, and best transfer is to find those elements in which the true expression of the filmmakers' ideas are communicated.

### **Outline of the Work**

This first chapter of this work will look at the beginning of the Italian Exploitation film industry in terms of its early history and style. Beginning with Riccardo Freda's *I Vampiri* (1956) and Mario Bava's *La Maschera del Demonio* (1960) this section discusses the Italian pioneers of the genre and examines the political/social/economic events in order to understand the popularity and acceptance of the genre around the world.

The next section will look in-depth at the wide variety of sub-genres that make up the Italian exploitation industry. The "gothic" with its atmospheric sets and evocative lighting closely mirrors the English gothic dramas of the '30s through the '50s. The "giallo", which are vicious, sexualized murder mysteries that take their name from pulp crime detective novels popularized in Italy, will be discussed. "Zombie" and "Cannibal/Mondo" films, a mainstay of Italian exploitation, from the worldwide success

of *Mondo Cane* (1962) to *Zombi* (1979) represent a sub-genre that walks the line between cinema verite and obscenity. The Catholic church's residence within the borders of Italy and its permeating influence shapes the fifth sub-genre, "Nunsplotation/Devil possession." The final sub-genre will be a look at Italian erotic films such as the *Black Emanuelle* films that blur the line between sexuality and exploitation. Each one of these sub-genres will receive its own history, social/critical effects, and patterns of influence.

Intermixed within this section will be a more indepth examination of those auteurs that have defined the Italian exploitation industry. These filmmakers (Mario Bava (1914-1980), Lucio Fulci, (1927-1996), Sergio Martino (1938-), and Dario Argento (1940-)) crossed the lines between sub-genres and it is important to state their importance to the overall genre.

The second chapter will deal with the Spain exploitation film industry. Spending the better part of the '60s dealing with the declining, repressive Franco regime, Spain was responsible for some of the most popular and provoking exploitation films in the genre. The early history of the genre will be explored focusing on the local traditions of horror and drama, themes important in the development of exploitation. It will also look at both the government and religious factions that sought to repress the genre's unsavory themes.

As film censorship abated in Spain in the late '60s several sub-genres solidified. Like neighboring Italy, Spain is heavily Catholic, and the Spanish "religious exploitation" film used a variety of symbolism to weave tales of religion gone wrong. The Spanish "zombie and blind dead" sub-genre differed greatly from Italian films relating to this genre with its mix of history and sexual politics. Spain was also

responsible for updating the “classic” monster tales (the Frankenstein monster, Dracula and the Wolf Man), presenting the characters with a more exploitative, nationalistic bent.

Intermixed within this section will be an examination of those auteurs (Jacinto Molina (1934-), Jess Franco (1930-), and Amando de Ossorio (1918-2001)) that have defined the Spanish exploitation industry.

The third chapter will look at France. Unlike their Italian neighbors, the French film industry had an aversion to the overt horror and violence of traditional exploitation, shifting its exploitative gaze to the erotic. Early history and style will be examined at the beginning of the French Exploitation film industry. Beginning with Bunuel’s dreamy *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) up to Franju’s *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (1959), this section will discuss the French pioneers of the genre, as well as look at the political/social/economic events prior to 1960 that affected the genre.

The next section will look in-depth at the sub-genres that make up French exploitation. Though not as diverse as other European film industries, French exploitation concentrated on the violent aspects of human sexuality. Their obsession with the vampire is a result of this. Infused with an erotic charge and taking precedent from earlier traditional works (for example, La Fanu’s *Carmilla*), the French embraced various undead motifs. Another popular sub-genre would be the erotic subjugation films. Whether taking their inspiration from the popular French cartoon strips of the time (such as Crepax’s *Valentina*) or popular literature (such as Reage’s *L’Histoire D’O*), these sadomasochistic male fantasies were immensely popular in the ‘70s.

Intermixed within this section will be an examination of those French auteurs (Jean Rollin (1938-), Just Jaeckin (1940-), and Mario Mercier (1948-)) that have defined the French exploitation industry.

The final chapter will bring that information gleaned from Italy, Spain and France into a cohesive conclusion. In addition, it will cover the significance of the topic with regards to both film and media history. Finally it will offer some avenues of possible future research that can add to the body of knowledge relating to the study of Eurocult.

## CHAPTER 2 ITALY

We Europeans have a cultural past that the Americans don't possess, and I think the right thing would be for us to deal with our stories and they with theirs. Instead, we have this desperate attempt to imitate American cinema, which cheapens our cinema.

—Italian exploitation director Michele Soavi<sup>1</sup>

This chapter looks at the history of the Italian horror and exploitation film from its inception in the late '50s to the advent of home video in 1980. Italy, especially from the autumn of 1969 onwards was a dangerous place and the negativity and angst of the times are reflected in the exploitation films of the period.<sup>2</sup> Its conclusion will show the Italian horror and exploitation film industry though born out of duplication of U.S./British themes in the '50s, perfected new original sub-genres successful enough to be copied back by the U.S. By isolating and defining each sub-genre within the category of Italian horror/exploitation cinema and by looking at many of the auteurs involved, Mario Bava, Dario Argento, Lucio Fulci etc. It will show a film industry that had a fluid, cyclical relationship with the Hollywood and British film industries. Allowing Italian filmmakers to copy particular genres styles from established studios, apply their own distinct style, profit, only to lose out again when Hollywood took back these changes and mass-produced them.

If European exploitation films were to have a geographic center that center would be Italy. No one country in Europe has had more of output and influence on the genre

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<sup>1</sup> Luca Palmeretti and Geantano Mistretta. *Spaghetti Nightmares*. (Key West: Fantasma Books, 1996), 147

<sup>2</sup> Richard Harlan Smith. *Your Vice is A Locked Room and Only I Have the Key*. DVD Liner Notes. NoShame films. 2005

than Italian filmmakers and producers.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in 1956 with the Riccardo Freda/Mario Bava chiller *I Vampiri*, the Italian horror film with its lurid, exploitative narratives lasted well over 40 years before its demise in the late '80s. The genre, which began solely as a way of copying American and British themes and productions, quickly turned out some of the most original and evocative films of the '60s and '70s.<sup>4</sup> During that time the Italian production of Eurocult was among the most popular in all of Europe.<sup>5</sup> As the sixties progressed and censorship began to lessen, the films from Italy began to become more sexualized and violent. These films would have a strong impact on generations of established filmmakers including Quentin Tarantino (*Kill Bill Vol. 1 & 2*, 2003,2004) and Bob Clark (*Black Christmas*, 1974) as well as Eli Roth (*Hostel*, 2005), James Wan (*Saw*, 2004) who have all incorporated aspects of Italian horror and exploitation in their films.<sup>6</sup> Films such as Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1976), Lucio Fulci's *Zombi* (1979) and Mario Bava's *Sei Donne per L'Assassino* (*Blood and Black Lace*, 1964) as well as classic gialli films like *La Casa Dalle Finestre Che Ridono* (*The House with Laughing Windows*, 1976) and *Cosa Avete Fatto A Solange* (*What Have you Done to Solange*, 1971) have created such an resonating impression that techniques utilized in these films, (camera shots, music, use of color) have become commonplace in today's media market in such commercials (*Universal Studio's Orlando Nights of Horrors*), television programs (*The Sopranos*) and music videos (Marilyn Manson).

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Paul. *Italian Horror Film Directors*. North Carolina. McFarland Press 1995. 33

<sup>4</sup> Cathal Tohill, and Pete Tombs, *Immoral tales: European Sex and Horror Movies 1956-1984*. (London. Primitive Press, 1995), 20

<sup>5</sup> Palmeretti, and Mistretta. 9

<sup>6</sup> Scott's *Alien* (1979) which was inspired by Mario Bava's *Terrore Nello Spazio* (1965), DePalma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980) has scenes, including Angie Dickinson's demise in an elevator, that match Argento's "L'uccello delle Piume de Cristallo" (1969)

Differing from their American counterparts, Italian horror films are not composed of franchised monsters like the Universal films of the '30s and '40s but encompass a wide range of different sub-genres within the horror and exploitation realm.<sup>7</sup> Gothic horror stories like Bava's *La Maschera del Demonio* (*The Mask of Satan*, 1960) and Caiano's *Nightmare Castle* (1965) focus on lighting and atmospheric sets to transport their viewers into creepy narrative similar to that of *Frankenstein* (1931) or *The Wolf Man* (1942) but the adult themes and violence in these films all stem from an international sensibility that is Italy's own.<sup>8</sup>

Gothic movies were not the only type of horror and exploitation in which the Italian's excelled. During a time when censorship and social battles were raging around the world, Italy produced a mind-boggling amount of different types of sub-genres, each more extreme than the other.<sup>9</sup> Murder mysteries with strong sexual and violent themes, called "giallo," became popular worldwide and started a subgenre that included well over 200 films. These films, the precursor to the American "slasher" film, had a tendency to focus on the exploitative aspects of social life and reflected a discontent with Italian society.<sup>10</sup> Cannibal films and their zombie counterparts were also big Italian exports. These films' reflected the times which saw an increasingly nihilistic society. It reflected a

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<sup>7</sup> Taking a page from Universal's horror films of the 30's and 40's, Britain's Hammer films horror lineup was made primarily of franchise monsters (*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *Mummy* etc.) during 1958 to 1974. In addition Spain also had a tendency to focus on franchise type horrors, i.e. Jess Franco's *Dr. Orloff* films of the sixties and seventies.

<sup>8</sup> Tim Lucas, *Black Sunday* DVD liner notes. Image Entertainment 1999

<sup>9</sup> Toehill and Toombs, *Immoral Tales* 33

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Blood and Black Lace* Introduction. The word "Giallo" means "yellow" in Italian. The term was originally used to describe the mystery thriller novels published in Italy that had yellow covers.

growing devotion to consumerism as well as mistrust of differing societies and cultures.<sup>11</sup> These films were also some of the most violent films in the Italian cinema.<sup>12</sup>

The '60s and '70s also signaled a time of growing unrest with religion. Growing out of the iconography of the Roman Catholic Church, the Italian many times chose to shock by portraying their most respected institutions as dens of sin. Nunsploitation, nuns indulging in sinful acts of sexuality and violence were popular at this time as well as exploitative sexual films, such as the "Black Emanuelle" films, that called into question gender roles and the role of marriage in society. These films saw, often, female protagonists on an endless search for sexual fulfillment in stories where no man, woman or animal was beyond their sexual longings.<sup>13</sup>

Italy has also produced some of the finest auteurs of the Eurocult genre. No two were more prolific than Mario Bava and Dario Argento. Mario Bava worked on the first ever Italian horror film *I Vampiri* (1956) and has become a legend in the annals of horror cinema.<sup>14</sup> With little budget, Bava designed evocative sets and focused on atmospheric aspects of fear to achieve some the best examples of the genre. Films such as *I Tre Volti Della Paura* (*Black Sabbath*, 1963) with its gothic countryside complete with fog and dark shadows where vampire Boris Karloff snatches his grandson off to make him one of the undead to *Terrore Nella Spazio* (*Planet of the Vampires*, 1965) with its deserted

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Hutchings, The Horror Show. Harlow England. Pearson Longman (2004) 71

<sup>12</sup> Slater, *Eaten Alive* 17

<sup>13</sup> In the case of *Emanuelle in America* (1976) animals were indeed shown to be just as randy as their human counterparts as the infamous horse masturbation scene proves.

<sup>14</sup> Howarth, The Haunted World of Mario Bava 16.

barren planet awash in green and red lights showcased Bava at his best.<sup>15</sup> Dario Argento continued on the Bava tradition in the '70s. Becoming the master of the "giallo" with films such as *L'Uccello Dalle Piume di Cristallo* (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, 1970) and *Profondo Rosso* (*Deep Red*, 1975) he quickly moved on to more stylized ghost stories in vein of Bava.<sup>16</sup> His *Suspiria* (1976) is considered one the scariest movies of all time due to the in-your-face violence, jarring rock score and intricate writing.<sup>17</sup> Audiences in an Argento film felt like they couldn't escape the nightmare until the credits rolled.

The proliferation of exploitation movies out of Italy is due primarily to the popularity and fluidity of the Italian film industry. Italy from the 50's through 70's enjoyed an economic and artistic boom. From 92 films produced in 1950 to over 200 films a year throughout the '60s Italy was on the forefront of the changing world cinema environment. The neorealism movement that started after World War I with such Italian auteurs as DeSica had begun to move away from the Italian sociological struggle that was essential to its plots. In its stead it began to use more conventional themes that appealed to a wider worldwide audiences. Better sets, conventional fictional structures and themes and international actors all contributed to the burgeoning Italian film industry.<sup>18</sup> The international success of its films along with money from the government started the money flowing. With the aid of the Marshall Plan, which sought to build back the Italian economy, the film industry experienced increased in prosperity and offered greater

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 149

<sup>16</sup> Alan Jones, *Profondo Argento* (London: Fab Press, 2004), 7

<sup>17</sup> Entertainment Weekly, Oct. 25 2000

<sup>18</sup> Gerald Mast. *A Short History of the Movies*. (Indianapolis: Bobs-Merill Press, 1981), 285

employment to its citizens. Due to the increase in production, more studio personnel were needed to fill the demand. This resulted in a large immigration of from the south of Italy.<sup>19</sup> The influx gave a new, more broadly nationalistic feeling around the industry.

In addition to economics, the social upheavals of the '50s Italy also had a large role in the burgeoning success of their film industry. Writers and directors were taking advantage of relaxed media censorship as Italian politics moved to a more centrist position. No longer satisfied with sanitized images that did not equate with real life the public tastes began to change, requiring more radical narratives than those films in the produced in '40s or even American films which were still fairly conventional.<sup>20</sup> Though full censorship laws would not be relaxed until 1968 in Italy, sexuality and especially violence began creeping into Italian films a decade or so earlier.<sup>21</sup>

The Italian filmmakers penchant for violence and violent drama may have its roots in the psyche of Italians. Author, Luigi Barzini in his book "*The Italians*" (1964) believes that the social culture and mind set that permeates through Italy is violent by nature. He writes

Italians fear sudden and violent death. Italy is a bloodstained country. Almost everyday of the year jealous husbands kill their adulterous wives and their lovers, about as many wives kill their adulterous husbands and their mistresses.

Barzini goes on detailing many scenario's that have rivaled situations in Italian exploitation cinema explaining

The world of vice also demands their daily victims, streetwalkers are found dead with silk stockings wound tied around their necks or knives stuck in their ribs on their unmade beds or country lanes. Fatherly homosexuals are found in public parks with their heads smashed in and their pockets turned out. On deserted beaches,

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Wood. *Italian Cinema*. (New York: Berg Publishing, 2005), 16

<sup>20</sup> Wood. 17

<sup>21</sup> Though sexuality and violence were cropping up in Italian films, they were fairly suppressed. The Catholic Church acted as supreme censor until the late 1960s.

naked call girls are found at dawn in a few inches of water. Even when violent death is not lurking in the shadows, Italians must be alert and move with circumspection.<sup>22</sup>

All of these sentiments were echoed by Italian filmmaker and horror auteur Lucio Fulci who stated, “Violence IS Italian art”<sup>23</sup>

Italians have a propensity of transforming their social deviants to monsters which stems back from the earliest of Italian literature tradition. Though Italy has ties to the classical Greece and Rome literature, where mortals and demigods were consistently embroiled in battles with monsters, it is not the only influence. Representations of monstrosity have been key to understanding the dominant traditions of thought in Italy. Reconceived monsters throughout each period of Italian history have signified major changes in the evolution of Italian art and philosophy.<sup>24</sup> The “monsters” that came out of Italy in the period from 1956 to 1980, go a long way in explaining the particular thoughts, explicitly and subliminally, of a cultural group on such subjects as gender relations, religion, globalization, politics and family issues.

## **Genre Beginnings**

Seeing an Italian name, they (Italians) all made ugly faces because they found the very idea preposterous. They were of the opinion that Italians didn’t know how to make these kinds of films.

—Italian producer Riccardo Freda<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Luigi Barzini, *The Italians*. Touchstone Press. New York 1964. Quoted in Tim Lucas’s audio commentary on *Blood and Black Lace* (2000) VCI DVD

<sup>23</sup> Thrower. *Beyond Terror*. 153

<sup>24</sup> Keala Jewell. *Monsters in the Italian Literary Imagination*. Wayne State University Press. Indiana. 2001. 12

<sup>25</sup> Lucas, Tim “*I Vampiri*” DVD Liner notes. Image Entertainment. 2001

The 1950's was a productive and prosperous period for European cinema. Audiences continued to grow, domestic industries were beginning to recapture much of the box-office that Hollywood had stolen and television, which had radically changed the film industry in America, had been slow to make an impact.<sup>26</sup> In 1955 (the first year for television in Italy), sales equaled \$819 million the highest ever in the history of Italian cinema. Additionally, the number of films that were produced in Italy grew as well from 25 in 1945 to 204 in 1954. These films helped combat the deluge of American products that had been in distribution in Italy. Box-office from domestic features grew from 13% in 1945 to almost 50% by the end of the '50s.<sup>27</sup>

Riccardo Freda's *I Vampiri* (1956) is an important film for many reasons. It signified a new growth potential in the Italian film market. Before its production, Italian filmmakers favored fantasy films and big screen spectacles.<sup>28</sup> It was Freda who came up with the idea of directing a horror film. This idea was intriguing to Italian producers but also made them nervous. Italy had no history when it came to producing films of this sort.<sup>29</sup> They had been banned under the fascist regime of the '30s and '40s and their lurid, violent content still caused censors some sense of nervousness well into the '50s. Freda decided he wanted to out-do the Americans by delivering an Italian horror film. Recalled Freda

They asked if I had anything prepared. I said no, but I could cook something up by the next day. When I returned I brought my treatment- not written out on paper, but

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<sup>26</sup> Nowell-Smith, Jeffrey. "The Oxford History of World Cinema" Oxford University Press, London. 1997 586

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 358.

<sup>28</sup> McCallum, Lawrence "Italian Horror Films of the 1960's" McFarland and Company's Inc. London. 1998 back cover

<sup>29</sup> Lucas, I Vampiri DVD Liner notes. 2

recorded on tape! I did the sound effects also, even the creakings of the door; it was very amusing!<sup>30</sup>

He was able to gain funding by making a bet with producers that one, he could pass the script with the censors and two, that he could shoot the film in 12 days.

*I Vampiri* (1956) set the standard for visual style that would be the foundation for most Italian gothic films of this nature. Freda, a former art critic, chose Mario Bava as his cinematographer for the film. Bava's visual style stemmed from his love of photography and special effects. On a limited budget he was able to create the eerie decaying castle of Gisele (Gianna Maria Canale) via shadows, fog and framing, in short, atmosphere.<sup>31</sup> Gisele's castle is dark, dank and has the air of a dead aristocratic class, which is in keeping with her aged appearance. It is only when she is transformed into a younger, more attractive woman that her surroundings become like a coffin, trapping her. All of this is thanks to Bava who was able to translate his love of gothic literature to the screen. The atmosphere that he created underscored European gothic motif that would become a part of most of the Italian horror movies from the late '50s to the mid-60s. From this film on, all gothic horror films coming out of Italy, whether color or black and white, would employ this foggy, dark and dead atmosphere.

Unfortunately for Freda, he lost the bet he made with the producers. While able to secure passing from Italian censors, Freda was having trouble with the shooting. After 10 days, he had only half the film completed. Bava recalled

Freda knew his job well. He was gifted, but his behavior was unbelievable....Just imagine he would only walk onto the set after the next scene had been completely blocked and rehearsed! He would sit down in his chair, turn his back to the cast and

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<sup>30</sup> Howarth, 16

<sup>31</sup> Lucas, 2

shout, “Roll’em!” After the take was finished, he would return to me and ask if everything was okay!<sup>32</sup>

When asked for an extension on filming the producers said no reminding Freda of his bet.

Throwing a fit, Freda stormed off the set and was replaced by Bava who shot the rest of the film in the remaining two days!<sup>33</sup>

The film was not a success at the Italian box-office due to Italian reluctance to accept a domestic interpretation of the horror genre. Freda explained:

Italians will only accept fettuccine from their fellow countrymen! They would stop and look: I Vampiri...I Vampiri... This seemed to intrigue them, but then at the last moment they saw the name Freda. Their reaction was automatic: Freda!?! Seeing an Italian name, they all made ugly faces because they found the idea preposterous.<sup>34</sup>

For his next horror picture, *Caltiki, Il Monstro Immortale* (*Caltiki, The Immortal Monster*, 1959) Freda decided to use Anglicized pseudonyms to give the appearance that the film was English.<sup>35</sup> This would alleviate the fear Italians had about Italians in the genre and more importantly would help sell the film to other markets including the United States.

### **Foreign Distribution**

Let’s face it, in Italy horror films never made a lira. I always made money in the U.S.

—Italian director, Mario Bava<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Lucas, 2

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 3

<sup>35</sup> Howarth, 17

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 319

To understand the reason for Anglicizing names in Italian (or for that matter any other European film) it is important to understand the intricacies of foreign distribution. The need to make films as palatable to the widest audiences was seen as a way of recouping financial risks from production. From the beginning, foreign distribution played an integral part in the success of this particular market. If a foreign producer wanted to make a horror film in the late '50s, they had to make from a cultural standpoint that was widely applicable. In Italy, with money tight, films had to be rush produced in order to capitalize on a current trend. Ian McCulloch, British actor and star of several Italian horror films in the late '70s comments, "These films were almost in profit before a frame was shot. They were pre-sold all over the world on a title, storyboards, poster artwork, and synopsis."<sup>37</sup> In a later interview he elaborated on the process,

Everything is sold. They know before the camera rolls that they will make a profit. It may not be very much but they know they have covered all their costs. They will sell the film to South America and all places that are easy to sell to, and in the difficult markets they will do deals.<sup>38</sup>

Scriptwriters for these types of films were also at the whim of these distribution deals. Dardano Sacchetti (*Zombi 2*, 1979, *Paura Nella Città de Morti Viventi*, 1980) relates,

For most of my screenplays I learned who the director was only a week before the film went into production. De Angelis (producer of many Italian exploitation films) would attend MIFED (the Milan-based confab for film distribution) and would ask me "could you write a few lines, two, five lines, an idea about an adventure movie, western, mystery or porno. He would have someone draw some posters then he would attend MIFED and display the posters in his stand. When the foreign buyers stopped by the stand, he would tell them that the movies were in production. Then,

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<sup>37</sup> Steven Thrower. *Beyond Terror, The Films of Lucio Fulci*. Fab Press, London. 17

<sup>38</sup> Jay Slater. *Eating Italian: Italian Cannibal and Zombie Movies*. Plexus Press. London. 102

if the foreign buyers said we are interested in this one, he would call me on the phone and tell me “write immediately the mystery, or the porn movie.”<sup>39</sup>

These distribution deals had a radical impact on the presentation of the film. Many times American and British distributors would barter for rights to change content. In the early days of Italian horror, these rights were given freely so that the filmmakers could make a profit. Many times violent portions of the movies were eliminated with a disastrous effect on the story. Even worse, extra footage would be shot to soften up the material. For example, Mario Bava’s first three films, *La Maschera del Demonio* (*The Mask of Satan*, 1960), *La Ragazza Che Troppo Sapeva* (*The Girl who Knew Too Much*, 1962) and *I Tre Volti della Paura* (*Black Sabbath*, 1963) were entirely rescored, edited and changed from their initial conception in many of the countries they played.<sup>40</sup>

The distribution deals that were made in the 60s and 70s have come back to haunt modern-day DVD distributors. These distributors have found it virtually impossible to uncover who legitimately holds the rights to these films. Most films of the period had a variety of different countries (France, Germany, Spain, etc.) involved in the deals and each country believed they had the right to license these films. As the rights traded hands throughout the decades, actual ownership has become murkier with many foreign companies either demanding more remuneration or worse, stopping the release entirely and throwing the DVD company into court.

Dark Sky Films found out the hard way when they tried to release a definitive version of Mario Bava’s *Operazione Paura* (*Kill Baby Kill*, 1966) in 2007. Believing they had secured the rights from the true owners of the film, they proceeded to buy the

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<sup>39</sup> John Sirabella. (CITE) *Zombi 2 DVD Shriek Show* 2005

<sup>40</sup> Howarth. 32,73,86 Each one of the changes in these films will be documented in the Mario Bava section.

licensing rights to release the film in the U.S. As the release date neared, the company was sued by Italian producer Alfredo Leone, who believed that he owned the rights to the film and had recently himself sold the film to rival DVD company Anchor Bay Entertainment. The court sided with Leone and Dark Sky Films, who had already pressed the DVD's and given them out to retailers were forced to cancel the release. Court cases and a very tangled web of distribution owners may signal a decline in future releases of Eurocult. On a web blog, historian Tim Lucas laments:

“The state of classic Italian cinema, especially the popular cinema of the '50s through the '80s, is seriously endangered because the rights issues have become so hopelessly tangled. This is how any one film might now have two, three or four different companies/individuals claiming rights to it. And whoever has the best elements has no more guarantee than anyone else of holding the bona fide chain of title. With this jungle of red tape attached to these films, best elements not necessarily guaranteed, the potential return on any release of these films being limited to begin with, and court costs also a possibility, it could well be that fewer domestic DVD companies will risk this kind of release.”<sup>41</sup>

### **The 60s: A Return to Gothic**

Hauntingly, beautiful, imaginative and startling as a dream, it remains my favorite Italian horror film.

—Horror author, Ramsey Campbell commenting on *La Maschera Del Demonio* (*The Mask of Satan*, 1960)<sup>42</sup>

The late '50s and early '60s found American and British horror filmmakers immersed in Cold War imagination.<sup>43</sup> The nuclear age had caught the fancy of the general public. They demanded stories that went along with the mysteries of science that the new age brought. Television pushed the American teen out of the house and into area

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<sup>41</sup> Tim Lucas. Mobius Home Video Forum. (<http://www.mhvf.net/> Accessed: May 15, 2007)

<sup>42</sup> Steven Thrower. *EyeBall Compendium*. Fab Press, London. 2003. 126

<sup>43</sup> Cynthia Henderson. *I Was A Cold War Monster: Horror Films, Eroticism and the Cold War Imagination*. Popular Press. Bowling Green OH. 2001. 1

drive-ins and local theatres. The films that were shown in this new social setting reflected the fun and rebelliousness of the teenage audience.<sup>44</sup> Serious horror films were few and far between. For every serious horror film like *Psycho* (1960) or *Peeping Tom* (1961) there were 10 lower budget films with names such as *I was a Teenage Frankenstein* (1957), *The Amazing Transparent Man* (1960), *Attack of the 50ft. Woman* (1959) and *Godzilla vs. King Kong* (1963).

In Italy, things were different. Showing a lack of interest in science fiction, the Italian kept mining material like lowbrow comedies that had been a staple in the country since the beginning of its film industry. This type of formula made it easier for Italians to subtly bring in other types of genre. This included horror. *Tempi Duri per I Vampiri*, (*Uncle was a Vampire*, 1959) starred Christopher Lee, fresh off his success in Hammer's *Horror of Dracula* (1957). The Italian film is played for laughs as Lee vamps the popular Italian character Toto (Renato Rascel). This leads up to the standard villain chasing pretty damsels in distress to comedic effect. It is nice to see Lee poking fun at his vampire stereotype as he quickly tired of the role of Dracula by the late '60s.<sup>45</sup> *Il Mio Amico Jekyll* (1960) finds Raimondo Vianello inventing a machine that is able to change him into a handsome schoolteacher (Ugo Tognazzi) with hilarious consequences.<sup>46</sup> If comedy wasn't the focus for these watered down horrors then sex certainly was. *L'Amante del Vampiro* (*The Vampire and the Ballerina*, 1960) played up the sexual implications, as the

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth McKeon and Linda Everett. Cinema Under the Stars: America's Love Affair with the Drive-In Movie Theatre. Cumberland House. Nashville, Tenn. 1998 65-67

<sup>45</sup> *Tempi Duri per i Vampiri* "Uncle was a Vampire" Prod. and Dir Mario Chechi Gore Italy 1960. Christopher Lee's voice is dubbed by another English actor for the film, a rarity since Lee believed in doing all the dubbing for his international pictures himself.

<sup>46</sup> *Il mio Amico Jekyll* "My Friend Dr. Jekyll" Prod. and Dir. Marino Girolami Italy 1960

vampires in these films were portrayed as the most aggressive love makers and crudely sexual as they put the bite on their unclad female victims.<sup>47</sup> Also playing up the sexual aspect was Piero Rognoli's *L'Ultima del Vampiro* (*The Playgirls and the Vampire*, 1960) in which a group of buxom striptease dancers are stuck in castle inhabited by a vampire (Walter Brandi). The dancers represented the typical stereotype of a burlesque dancer. Dumb, overly endowed with a penchant for screaming, they were showcased in various stages of undress as they performed their titillating dance numbers during at the most inopportune times.<sup>48</sup> These films seem to point out the difficulty that Italians had in finding an identity for their horror and exploitation films. By watering down the elements of terror with comedy or sex, both well-known and popular forms of entertainment in Italy, Italian filmmakers showed their unwillingness to commit to true horror pictures. This is significant because it shows that the late '50s Italian population, still reeling from the atrocities of World War II, were unprepared to be taken to a place horror and disparity in their exploitation films. This would soon change as the '60s emerged and the gothic Italian horror film became popular with worldwide audiences.

The term gothic was originally to denote the architecture of Western Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it had changed its usage to describe a particular style of literary writing that focused on supernatural fiction especially geared toward grotesque. These works were usually laden with a heavy gloomy atmosphere, populated by eerie castles atop of hilltops, cobwebbed tombs and vaults, flickering

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<sup>47</sup> McCallum, 216

<sup>48</sup> *Playgirls and the Vampire* "*L'Ultima Preda del Vampiro*" Prod. Tiziano Longo, Dir. Piero Regnoli Italian/German 1960. Rognoli was also one of the writers for *I, Vampiri*. With his stint, in both *L'Amante* and *L'Ultima*, Walter Brandi became one of the first defacto stars of Italian horror/exploitation. Though never as popular as a Christopher Lee, Barbara Steele or Peter Cushing, Brandi continued to act in genre films through the sixties in films such as *La Strage dei Vampiri* (1964) and *5 Tombe per un Medium* (1965)

candlelight and an underlying repressed sexuality. Gothic literature was often considered barbarous and crude yet the genre enjoyed widespread popularity throughout 19<sup>th</sup> and 20th centuries. It is this crudeness and excess that makes gothic the perfect genre for exploitation. Examples such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Shelly's *Frankenstein or Modern Prometheus* (1818) or Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) each which evoke an unnatural attachment of the past which is an underlying theme within the literature. In addition, gothic also suggests that reality may be broader and more tangled than most tend to think. In both literature and film this is achieved through supernatural elements or through ambiguity over whether what one is experiencing is a dream or reality.<sup>49</sup>

The spooky, traditional gothic horror films of Italy came about from the success of Great Britain's Hammer horror films of the late '50s. The success of these films including *The Curse of Frankenstein* and *Horror of Dracula* (1957), *Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958) proved to be exactly the formula that Italians could use to transform and exploit. By adapting gothic style and infusing it with more gore and sex, lower budget Italian filmmakers began to see a way in which they could reap the financial benefit of these lurid subject matters.

The success of these British films was not lost on Mario Bava (1914-1980). Bava specifically responded to Hammer's *Horror of Dracula*: "As *Dracula* had just been released, I thought I would make a horror movie myself."<sup>50</sup> After finishing the directing responsibilities for Italy's first horror film *I Vampiri* (1956) and *Caltiki - il Mostro*

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<sup>49</sup> C. McGee, A. Martray, J. Norrs, and S. Unsinn. *Goth in Film* Ithica College Senior Seminar Website <http://www.ithaca.edu/keg/seminar/gothfilm.htm> 2002 Accessed March 13, 2006

<sup>50</sup> Gary Johnson. *The Golden Age of Italian Horror 1957-1979*. Images website 2000. <http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue05/infocus/intro2.htm> Accessed March 13, 2006

*Immortale* (*Caltiki, The Immortal Monster*, 1959), Bava was given the go ahead to produce his own film. Released on August 11, 1960 in Italy, Bava's original film *La Maschera Del Demonio* (*The Mask of Satan*, 1960) was an instant classic and began the popular cycle of Italian gothic/horror movies.<sup>51</sup> Considered to be "Italian horror at its best." and drawn from Ukrainian author Nikolai Gogol's ghost story *The Vij*, Bava concocts an atmosphere that is reminiscent of the American Universal horror films of the '30s and '40s.<sup>52</sup> Unlike those films in which violence and sexuality were suppressed, *La Maschera* graphically illustrated what the American films only hinted at. Blood pours out of heads wearing spiked, metal masks, corpses are shown graphically decomposing, victims are brutally attacked, their throats being ripped out by the ghostly vampires. All of this was new to the cinematic landscape of the horror film in 1960. So shocking was this violence American distributors A.I.P. were forced to bar *La Maschera* (retitled *The Mask of Satan* in Britain, *Black Sunday* in the U.S.) to all those under the age 12. In Britain, the film was banned outright until 1968.<sup>53</sup>

With *La Maschera* Bava was able to create a film that would appeal to all cultures as a fairy tale for adults with its mystic, faraway castles, fog shrouded forests and ghosts.<sup>54</sup> His landscapes were similar to the American Universal horror films of the early 1930s. One need only look at the ruins of Asa's crumbling castle estate in *La Maschera* and compare them to Bela Lugosi's castle in *Dracula* to see the similarity in decay and

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<sup>51</sup>John Stanley, Creature Features, The Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror Movie Guide. Boulevard Press, New York 1997. 48 The film was released as *Black Sunday* in the U.S.

<sup>52</sup> McCallum, 38

<sup>53</sup> Tim Lucas, Black Sunday DVD Liner notes. Image Entertainment. 1999 In the U.S. case the prohibition stood even though the film was severely edited.

<sup>54</sup> Howarth, 29

atmosphere. Bava would use these elements time and time again in such gothic period horror films such as *I Tre Volta Della Paura* (*Black Sabbath*, 1963), *Operazione Paura* (*Kill Baby Kill*, 1966) and *Lisa e Il Diavolo* (*Lisa and the Devil*, 1973).

*La Maschera* served as an introduction of the ideal gothic heroine as played by Barbara Steele. Steele's luminous looks combined with a glacial personality set the standard for heroines in the Italian gothic/horror movie. Reviewer Gary Johnson said of Steele, "Without Barbara Steele, Italian horror might have been very different. Her face evoked both beautiful and demonic features--instantly suggesting a dual and possibly dangerous power of character."<sup>55</sup> From *La Maschera* onwards, gothic heroines strived to imitate Steele's characteristics. Reserved, sexually repressed yet wildly exciting, many of them like Daliah Lavi (*Il Frusta e il Corpo*, 1963) and Riki Dialina (*I Tre Volti della Paura*, 1963) looked so much like Steele that its possible to forget that they aren't.

Steele's characters suggested a hidden strength masked in a subservient veneer very much in keeping with the modern social mores that were prevalent not only in the early 1960s but had historical literary precedent within the gothic novel. Gothic literature has traditionally had a strong association with women as both readers and writers (Ann Radcliff, Mary Shelly and Joyce Carol Oates to name a few).<sup>56</sup> Infused in this literature are strong female characters that work out solutions within the narrative. This is not to say that these female characters were trailblazing a new female sensibility to modern audiences. On the contrary, the women of the gothic period still were firmly entrenched

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<sup>55</sup> Gary Johnson. [Black Sunday DVD review](http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue10/reviews/mariobava/blacksunday.htm). Images website  
<http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue10/reviews/mariobava/blacksunday.htm>

<sup>56</sup> C. McGee, A. Martray, J. Norrs, and S. Unsinn <http://www.ithaca.edu/keg/seminar/gothfilm.htm> 2002  
Accessed March 13, 2006

within a male stereotype of how women should behave. Steele lamented about the characters and a filmmaking process controlled by men,

The women that I played were usually very powerful women and they suffered for it. You saw these powerful women, usually adulteresses, full of lust and greed, playing out all this repressed stuff, and in the end I always seemed to get it. There was always this sort of morality play, this sort of final pay-off, and that was very consoling to everybody. Because the dark goddess can't just go on wreaking hubris and havoc ad infinitum, she gets her come-uppance, too.<sup>57</sup>

Though dismayed perhaps by misogynistic environment, Steele would go on to star in some of the most successful Italian gothic/horror films of sixties. These films including Freda's *Lo Spettro (The Ghost, 1963)* and *L'Orribile Segreto del Dr. Hichcock (The Horrible Secret of Dr. Hichcock, 1962)* and Margheriti's *I Lunghi Capelli Della Morte (The Long Hair of Death, 1964)* all played on the same themes of repression and subjugation. Each featured Steele as either the unfortunate heroine or wicked temptress in situations she cannot control.

Another classic gothic film released in 1960 was the evocative Italian/French co-production *Il Mulino delle Donne di Pietra (The Mill of the Stone Women)*. Capitalizing on Hammer's success with color, the film was one of the first Gothic's to be shot that way. It also set about changing the setting usually associated with Gothic. In *Il Mulino* it was not the eerie castles of Italy and Eastern Europe that were home to terror but an old abandoned Dutch windmill.<sup>58</sup> The change in setting allows for greater international audience participation. By transferring to a locale that is familiar with the northern European audience and retaining the gothic format popular in Italy, filmmakers opened

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<sup>57</sup> Clive Barker. *Clive Barker's A-Z of Horror* (New York. Harper Prism. 1996) 126

<sup>58</sup> Pete Toombs. *Mill of the Stone Woman DVD Notes*. Mondo Macbro DVD 2004 Though shot in color in 1960, the practice of shooting gothics in color didn't really occur until 1963. Color at the time was saved for epics and action films.

up the market for a film, ensuring more return on their investment. Directed by Giorgio Ferroni, the film was a veritable hodgepodge of international themes and impressions. With its Dutch setting, French, German actors and Italian director, the film floats across the screen like an international hallucinogenic nightmare. The old mill functions as an old time camera turn, cranking slowly, menacingly as statues of beautiful young women decorated the mill's walls from inside. As the movie progresses, we find out the statues are actually the plaster-covered bodies of murder victims.<sup>59</sup> The film also is significant because it features one of the first nude scenes by an actress (Dany Carrel) in an exploitation film.<sup>60</sup>

The Italian gothic/horror movie of the early 1960's prospered in an era of enforced censorship. These films were nothing more than period ghost stories giving the each film a pleasantly old-fashioned feeling that could be appreciated by worldwide viewers. Though the subject matters were decidedly adult the execution was still steeped in traditional, Hollywood code.<sup>61</sup> This meant that while the subject matter of these films often dealt with modern issues such as sexual longing, unhealthy family relationships, and violent death, they were still rooted in suppression. Though some brief glimpses of nudity and overt violence was beginning to creep in, early gothic audiences members had to decipher these perversions for themselves. This was done in an audience members mind as opposed to having the action on the screen.

One glaring example of a Gothic that was steeped in adult, depraved behavior was Ricardo Freda's *L'Orribile Segreto del Dr. Hichcock* (*The Horrible Dr. Hichcock*) in

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<sup>59</sup> Johnson. The Golden Age of Italian Horror 1957-1979. Images website

<sup>60</sup> Toehill and Toombs. 37-38

<sup>61</sup> Andrew Mangravite. Once Upon a Time in a Crypt. Film Comment: Jan 1993; 29

1962. Filmed in only 8 days, Freda's return to gothic drama was a study in adult perversion. In the film, Dr. Hichcock (English actor Robert Flemyng) finds himself sexually aroused by necrophilia after accidentally killing his first wife via an overdose of drugs. His new wife (Barbara Steele), in turn, becomes haunted by her predecessor whose spirit is out for revenge.<sup>62</sup> The main plot, as Flemyng tries to deal with his necrophilia, is one that has never been considered appropriate material for any film regardless of the genre. It is only through European exploitation films that occasional themes of necrophilia are explored.<sup>63</sup> It is interesting that a film about the frustrated passions of a necrophiliac could find an audience in 1962. It is even more interesting to not see a major outcry from religious and concerned parents over the film. It's a testament to the way these horror and exploitation films were officially ignored on every cultural level back in the early '60s.<sup>64</sup> The film did not escape the censor though. Prints including the scenes of Flemyng fondling the bodies of dead women were cut from both the American and British original release. These edits didn't lessen the impact on the film. Audiences could read between the lines. As modern director Joe Dante (*Gremlins*, *Innerspace*), a lover himself of gothic horror films explained, "Even though a lot of these films were re-edited before they got to America, it was very difficult to take out all the undertones of necrophilia and lesbianism."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Barker. 128

<sup>63</sup> In addition to Dr. Hichcock, the theme of necrophilia has been explored in Aristide Massaccesi's *Buio Omega* (1979), Lamberto Bava's *Macabre* (1980), Armando's Crispino's *Macchie Solari* (1973) and Jorg Buttgeriet's *Necromantik* (1987) and *Necromantik 2* (1991)

<sup>64</sup> Glenn Erickson. *The Horrible Dr. Hichcock, Women on the Verge of a Gothic Breakdown*. Image website <http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue05/infocus/hichcock.htm> 2000

<sup>65</sup> Barker. 128

Freda's follow-up to *L'Orribile Segreto* was *Lo Spettro (The Ghost)* in 1963. Though the film is often looked upon as a sequel to the *L'Orribile*, the two have little in common except its star Barbara Steele.<sup>66</sup> Again the themes of murder and sexual affairs are at the center of the film. The ending is a typical gothic construction with the doctor injecting Ms. Steele with a paralyzing drug only to have missed the fact that she has previously poisoned his celebratory drink. This seals his fate making the last thing he sees her twisted grin, all played out in an atmospheric gothic setting.<sup>67</sup>

Antonio Margheriti (1930-2002), previously noted for his Italian science fiction films, began his slight but influential gothic horror films with the classic *Danse Macabre (Castle of Blood)* in 1962.<sup>68</sup> Shot in two weeks and day, the film arose out of the success in Italy of Roger Corman's *Pit and the Pendulum (Il Pozzo e il Pendolo)*. Looking for a formula that would mimic Poe's story, *Danse* concerns a young writer (George Riviere) who tracks down Edgar Allen Poe in a tavern. Making a wager with Poe and his friends that he can spend the night in a local haunted castle, he arrives only to be haunted by the Blackwood family including Elizabeth Blackwood (Barbara Steele).<sup>69</sup> As the evening wears on, the house begins teeming with life and our writer begins to realize that the Blackwood family seems to have a sinister plan in store for him.<sup>70</sup> Filmed in evocative black and white utilizing a three-camera system that allowed for a quick production, the

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<sup>66</sup> It also has the character married to a Dr. Hitchcock but the movie never explains if its supposed to be the same character as the earlier film.

<sup>67</sup> Horrible Dr. Hitchcock "L'Orribile Segreto del Dr. Hitchcock" Prod. Emmano Denato, Dir. Riccardo Freda Italy 1962

<sup>68</sup> The film was released two years later (1964) in America with Mario Bava's *Ercole al Centro della Terra* "Hercules in a Haunted World" filmed in 1961.

<sup>69</sup> Between the years 1960 through 1966, Barbara Steele appeared in more than 8 Italian gothic or horror films.

<sup>70</sup> Castle of Blood "Danza Macabra" Prod. Marco Vicario, Dir. Antonio Margheriti Italy/France 1964

film's notoriety stems from a graphic, for its time, lesbian scene between Steele and actress Margarete Robsahm as well as a nude scene from Silvia Sorrente. These scenes were considered quite shocking not only for audiences in the early sixties but also for the actresses contracted to play them. Speaking to Michel Caen of the French magazine *Midi-Minuit Fantastique*, Barbara Steele lamented the difficulties in shooting such provocative material. Speaking of the lesbian scene between her and Robsahm she remarked,

That scene was terrible. My costar didn't want to kiss me...she said she couldn't kiss a woman. Margheriti was furious. He told her to just pretend she was kissing her Ugo (in reference to her husband, actor Ugo Tognazzi) and not Barbara! I don't know what it looked like on the screen; I never saw the picture.<sup>71</sup>

Margheriti's next picture 1963's *La Vergine di Normiberga (The Virgin of Nuremberg, Horror Castle)* began to play up the exploitative aspects, which would become popular in films of these types in the later years of the '60s and '70s. Shot in bright Eastman color, *Le Vergine* had all the trappings of a gothic, gloomy castle, beautiful woman in distress, suspicious husband and staff, and added a graphic violent component. The film's protagonist was former Nazi, whose face was removed during the war and longed to relive the glory days of the Third Reich. His female victims were subjected to such things as having a rat tied to their head (as to be able to gnaw its dinner) or having their eyes pierced with spikes from an Iron Maiden. All of this shown in blood red color.<sup>72</sup> It's easy to see the transference of

After directing a variety of science fiction and Hercules films, Margheriti returned to the genre in 1964 with *I Lunghi Capelli della Morte (The Long Hair of Death)*.

Returning to the traditional black and white format, he once again called upon Barbara

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<sup>71</sup> Tim Lucas. *Castle of Blood* DVD Liner Notes. 2002 Synapse Films

<sup>72</sup> *Virgin of Nuremberg* "La Vergine di Norimberga" Prod. Marco Vicario, Dir. Antonio Margheriti Italy 1963

Steele to play the lead role in a thinly written but visually beautiful gothic. By the mid-60s, the plots for these gothic horror stories were becoming stale. While the gothic visual style is fairly easy to replicate, there seemed to be a limit to the situations that writers could put characters in. With the typical plot line featuring the female witch burned at the stake only to exacting her revenge on future generations, *I Lunghi* was no different than many of the previous Gothic's that came out of Italy.

After his first foray into the Giallo with *La Ragazza Che Sepeva Troppo* in 1962, Mario Bava returned in 1963 to the gothic format with his anthology *I Tre Volti della Paura* (*The Three Faces of Fear/Black Sabbath*) and the sexually charged *La Frusto e il Corpo* (*The Body and the Whip*). For the first time Bava used color in these two films, forever dispelling the idea that gothic is best realized in black and white.<sup>73</sup> Both of these films also incorporated more blatant adult themes than ever before. Incest, rape, sadomasochism and violent death are all plot points included in these films. The second story of *I Tre*, "The Wurdulak" is a classic gothic vampire story. Filmed as a color companion piece to *La Maschera* (1960), Bava paints a damp, foggy, cold landscape of isolationism where a young man (Mark Damon) is thrown into an extended family's struggle against vampirism. Taking place in a secluded Eastern Europe cottage at the turn of the century, Bava sees the vampire as a completely incestuous character. In this story, vampires can only feast on those they love the most, in this case, family members. As the male head of the household, Gorka (Boris Karloff) returns to his family as a vampire and quickly takes a shine to the youngest boy of the house. The scenes of Gorka holding the young boy by

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<sup>73</sup> Though not used on his thrillers, Bava had been used to and perfecting his color cinematography on such epics as *Erocle al Centro della Terra* (1961) and *Gli Invasori* (1961)

the fire with a gleam (blood lust) in his eye, border on lewd.<sup>74</sup> Not afraid to showcase his nihilism, Bava ends the story on a down beat note with the family each being killed and turned into a vampire. Though intended to be the middle story of the trilogy of *I Tre Volti*, American distributors thought the story the strongest and picked it to end the film. After viewing it thought they realized they had ended the movie with evil winning out over good.<sup>75</sup> Worried that this would be too intense for a 1963 teenage audience the distributors insisted on a lighter ending which had Boris Karloff, as narrator, riding an obvious fake horse and having stage hands run trees by him to showcase that the film was an illusion.<sup>76</sup>

What passed as the final story in the European version of the film in *I Tre Volti Della Paura* (1963) was called *The Drop of Water*. Inspired by a short story from Chekov, *A Drop of Water* is widely considered to be one the scariest short stories ever filmed.<sup>77</sup> Bava pulls out all the colorful, atmospheric stops on this story of a young nurse (Jacqueline Pierreux) who steals a ring of a dead medium only to find her spirit is not as dead as her body. Utilizing all the tricks in the gothic trade, the medium's huge home is decrepit, filled with cobwebs and wild cats that one would associate with a crypt, Bava paints the reality vs. illusion subtext with a morally bankrupt character whose greed is her downfall. In an interview given in 72, Bava related thoughts about his fascination with these types of characters,

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<sup>74</sup> Black Sabbath "I Tre Volti Della Paura" Prod. Paolo Mercuri, dir. Mario Bava Italy 1963

<sup>75</sup> Lucas. Black Sabbath DVD Liner Notes. In the original European version order to the stories were *The Telephone*, *The Wurdulak*, and *The Drop of Water* Producers believed that Drops of Water was entirely too scary to end the movie on and the Telephone wasn't strong enough. The American version (Black Sabbath) the stories order was *The Drop of Water*, *The Telephone*, and *The Wurdulak*

<sup>76</sup> Howarth. 86

<sup>77</sup> Howarth. 84, Lucas. Black Sabbath DVD liner notes

I'm especially interested in stories that focus on one person: if I could, I would only tell these stories. What interests me is the fear experienced by a person alone in their room. It is then that everything around him starts to move menacingly around, and we realize that the only true 'monsters' are the ones we carry within ourselves.<sup>78</sup>

Whether it was a reflection of the turbulent social changes of the '60s or his own proclivities, Bava's main characters were often representations of a flawed society. These characters often contributed to the violent situations that they were immersed. Whether it was *Sei Donne per L'Assassino* (*Blood and Black Lace*, 1964), *Il Rosso Segno della Follia* (*Hatchet for the Honeymoon*, 1969), *5 Cinque per Luna D'Augusto* (*5 Dolls for an August Night*, 1970) or *Ecologia del Delitto* (*Twitch of the Death Nerve*, 1971), Bava frequently, did little to encourage audience sympathy for his characters actions. Most of his main characters are unaffected by matters of conscience. They are rich with greed or nurture unhealthy neurosis, which essentially results in their downfall by the end of the film.<sup>79</sup>

A good example of this as well as an example of loosening censorship can be found in Bava's other film from 1963, *La Frusto e il Corpo* (*The Whip and the Body*). A deeply disturbing, sexually provocative film which relies on a heavy gothic influence, *La Frusto* deals with the psychosexual and dysfunctional sexual maladies that plague a wealthy family in the twentieth century. At the heart of the picture is a woman, Nevenka, played by Israeli Daliah Lavi, who must deal with her intense sexual and emotional attraction to her evil masochistic brother-in-law Kurt (Christopher Lee). Upon his return home from exile, he immediately seizes on Nevenka's attraction and savagely beats her with a whip then rapes her much to her liking. When Kurt is killed, his ghost seemingly

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<sup>78</sup> Howarth. 310

<sup>79</sup> Howarth. 85

haunts Nevenka, romancing her and beating her. Unable to understand or deal with her perverse sexuality, Nevenka seeks to destroy Kurt's ghost. Unfortunately for Nevenka her quest will only destroy herself because it is her sexual desires that are haunting her and not Kurt.<sup>80</sup> Though there is no nudity or explicit sexual scenes, *La Frusta* was Bava's most frequently banned film, having been forbidden in a number of countries and forbidden to young viewers in Italy.<sup>81</sup> For the U.S audience, who was not used to such deviant sexual fetishes the film, underwent extensive editing to eliminate the whipping scenes and rendering the film incomprehensible. Shelved for 2 years, the film was released in the U.S. strangely titled *What!*, which may be what audiences were asking after seeing the edited edition.

The Gothic horror film had its last prolific period in the mid-60's. Films like Mario Ciano's *Amanti d'Oltreboma* (*Nightmare Castle, The Faceless Monster*, 1965) and Lucignano Ricci's *Il Castello del Morti Vivi* (*Castle of the Living Dead*, 1964) were the stylish last gasps of the genre. *Il Castello* in particular plays up the multicultural nature of these Italian productions in the mid-60s. Starring actors from Britain (Christopher Lee), Canada (Donald Sutherland), France (Philippe Leroy), Italy (Gaia Germani) and Yugoslavia (Mirko Valentin), the movie was designed to appeal to the widest possible audience ensuring success due the audience familiarity.<sup>82</sup>

After remounting the Giallo in 1964 with *Sei Donne per L'Assassino* and infusing a bit of gothic style to his science fiction thriller *Terrore nello Spazio* (*Planet of the*

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<sup>80</sup> The Whip and The Body "La Frusta e Il Corpo" Prod. Frederico Natale, Dir. Mario Bava Italy/France 1963

<sup>81</sup> Howarth. 91

<sup>82</sup> McCallum. 61,66,67. The film never did receive a proper American theatrical release. It was bought by AIP for the straight to television market.

*Vampires*, 1965) Mario Bava returned to his gothic roots with *Operazione Paura* (*Kill Baby Kill*) in 1966. Cited by critics as “one of the most thrilling ghost films in the entire Italian horror cinema” *Operazione* downplays the sex and violence while playing up the supernatural dread key to the gothic motif.<sup>83</sup>

*Operazione Paura* has been looked at as the last film in great gothic cycle of Italian horror.<sup>84</sup> Quiet, without much of the exploitative elements occurring in Italian cinema in mid 60s, *Operazione* tells the story of a young doctor (Giacommi Rossi-Stuart) who is summoned to investigate a series of brutal murders in which a golden coin is found embedded in the hearts of the victims. His investigation leads him to the ghost of a young girl (Valerio Valeri), killed in a carriage accident years ago during a village festival, who has come back to take revenge on the townspeople who refused to rescue her.<sup>85</sup> Filmed in shadows and an array of green and red colors, which was Bava’s specialty, the film is replete with black cats, fog, half-lit figures and ancient decrepit buildings all which add to noir-ish supernatural aspects of the plot.<sup>86</sup>

*Operazione Paura’s* (*Kill Baby Kill*) release in 1966 ushered the end of the traditional gothic period in Italian filmmaking. This gothic film went out of style as the censorship lessened in the late 60s when it became permissible to show the things

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<sup>83</sup> Paul. 96

<sup>84</sup> Leon Hunt. *A (Sadistic Night at the Opera). A Horror Reader*. Edited by Ken Gelder. London. Routledge. 2000. 332

<sup>85</sup> White. <http://www.horror-wood.com/italianhorror1.htm> Valerio Valeri is a boy interestingly cast and crossed dressed as the young female ghost Melissa.

<sup>86</sup> Howarth. 145

(repressed sexuality, overt violence) that were only hinted at in these films.<sup>87</sup> The subject matters seemed squarely rooted in the past in a time when moviegoers were searching for something a little more modern. Trying to infuse a modern sensibility into the gothic genre both Bava and Margheriti returned in the early 70's with some modern updates.

Hoping to update his *Danse Macabre* (1962) to his modern audience, Antonio Margheriti directed the remake *Nella Stretta Morse Del Ragno* in 1971. Shooting in color with a strong cast, Margheriti expressed misgivings about the project expressing his preference for the original. "The second was made at the express request of the producer, the same as had produced *Danse Macabre* said Margheriti. When asked about the main flaws of the film, he expressed the problem that a gothic had in the 70s cinematic landscape. "First, of all the fact that color was used, which made the blood red, the use of Cinemascope and, worst of all the fact that the actors all overshadowed the story."<sup>88</sup>

Margheriti's second attempt at gothic in 1970s was *Seven Deaths in the Cat's Eye* (1973). Fusing both the Giallo and Gothic together, Margheriti compiled an international cast including the French couple of the moment, Jane Birkin and musician Serge Gainsbourg. The story of the beautiful young girl (Birkin) who returns to ancestral castle only to find a sadistic murderer roaming the grounds is awash in the blood and gore that the early 70s was famous for.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Stephen Thrower. *Beyond Terror. The Films Of Lucio Fulci*. Fab Press 2002 144-145. Gothic made a comeback in the early 1980's with a trio of successful films by Lucio Fulci. Though these films were modern and set in the U.S., Thrower insist that they were 'southern gothic' and adhered to the same standards as earlier Italian gothic with only the places and time changed. These films included "L'Aldila" (The Beyond, 1981), *Quella Villa Accanto al Cimitero*" (The House by the Cemetery, 1981) and "Paura nella Citta dei Morti Viventi" (1980)

<sup>88</sup> Palmerini and Mistretta. 73

<sup>89</sup> *Seven Deaths in a Cat's Eye* DVD Blue Underground. 2005

*Gli Orrori del Castello di Norimberga* (Baron Blood, 1971) was an attempt by Mario Bava to throw a very modern mini-skirted Elke Sommer into the gloomy, gothic castle motif. Seen as a throwback the Italian horrors to the early-to-mid sixties, the film became a box office hit in America.<sup>90</sup> Somewhat predictable with the usual cross representation of actors (German Elke Sommer, American Joseph Cotton, Italian Antonio Canafora) *Gli Orrori* surprises because of its violence. In the film the exploitative aspects are played up as characters have metal spikes driven in their heads, made to lie in spiked coffins or chased around half naked through a dark castle. Baron Blood himself is shown to be a grotesque with a face that resembles lasagna. This new attention to blood, gore and sexuality were forced on gothic filmmakers in order to find an audience.<sup>91</sup>

The worldwide success of *Gli Orrori* in 1971 persuaded producer Alfredo Leone to offer Bava the chance to produce any film he wanted with total artistic control. Never offered this before, Bava set about making a gothic horror tale that surrealistically moved between the traditional aspects of the genre and the modern ones. The result of this is the classic *Lisa e il Diavolo* (*Lisa and the Devil*, 1972)<sup>92</sup>

Starring Elke Sommer (fresh from *Gli Orrori* the year before) as Lisa and a lollipop sucking Telly Savalas as the Devil, the film is a non-linear exercise as Lisa finds herself stuck in a nightmarish world as the Devil plays out a gothic scenario with her and a few other guests in a creepy gothic house.<sup>93</sup> The film hits all the machinations of a

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<sup>90</sup> Hardy. 263

<sup>91</sup> Baron Blood “Gli Orrori del Castello di Norimberga” Prod. Alfredo Leone, Dir. Mario Bava Italy/Germany 1971

<sup>92</sup> Howarth. 276

<sup>93</sup> Lisa and the Devil “Lisa e Il Diabolo” Prod. Alfredo Leone, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1973 The use of a lollipop for the Telly Savalas character predates his lollipop sucking enjoyed in his CBS-TV show Kojak. Originally the character of the devil was supposed to be chewing gum but Savalas believed that using a

traditional gothic with images of raw sexuality combined with adult themes like necrophilia to create a dreamy world where fantasy and reality are intertwined. Like a bad dream that never ends, Lisa benefits from the beautiful cinematography, typical of a Bava film, strong performances and an adherence to a completely non-linear style of narrative.

Unfortunately, *Lisa e il Diavolo* (1973) was perhaps a bit too ephemeral for an early 1970s audience who were now used to straight narratives and flowing gore. Though the film was well received at the 1973 Venice film festival, foreign distributors showed absolutely no interest in distributing it. Producer Leone commented on baffling lack of interest:

“We had a tremendous turn-out for the first screening. No one left the theater. We had additional screenings also to packed houses but there were no buyers. The best offer I had at the time was \$6,000 for the Far East – for the ENTIRE Far East, can you imagine?”<sup>94</sup>

Consequently, the film disappeared for over two years. Not wanting to lose his 1 million dollar investment, Leone completely remounted the film (with an assist from Bava) as an Exorcist rip-off in 1975 called *La Casa dell'Esorcismo* (*The House of Exorcism*). The resulting film so offended Bava that he had his name removed from the it.<sup>95</sup>

With the exception of these few films in the 70s, the Italian gothic horror film was in deep slumber after mid-60s. Audience had moved on from the subliminal thrills that Gothic's provided to the more visual and graphic. The Italian gothic would experience a

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lollipop would be to more dramatic effect.

<sup>94</sup> Lucas. *Lisa and The Devil/House of Exorcism* DVD Liner Notes 2000 Image Entertainment

<sup>95</sup> Lucas. *Lisa and the Devil/House of Exorcism* DVD Liner notes

slight resurgence in the early 1980s with a number of films from Italian filmmaker Lucio Fulci like *Paura nella Citta dei Morti Viventi* (*City of the Living Dead*, 1980), *Black Cat* (1981), *L'Aldila* (*The Beyond*, 1981) *Quella Villa Accanto al Cimitero* (*The House by the Cemetery*, 1982). These films were gothic only in atmosphere though as they were more vehicles to showcase explicit gore.

Gothic films played an important role in the development of European exploitation. They bridged the gap between traditional storylines and modern day sensibilities. They allowed for first examinations of such themes as perverse sexuality to seep into the consciousness of moviegoers in the guise of a literature form that audiences felt comfortable with. Through the success of gothic films, Eurocult filmmakers could begin to branch out to other forms of exploitation that were each more explicit than the other. They served their purpose as an initial starting point for the Italian horror/exploitation films that would follow for the next few decades. In describing these films, Italian writer Giovanni Simonelli sums up the genre, “In these movies, what you see is what you get. They were not meant to be artistic, they were just meant to be entertaining. They served their purpose and they all did well.”<sup>96</sup>

### **It's a Mondo World**

Perhaps the most devious and irresponsible filmmakers who have ever lived.

—Pauline Kael, author and film critic<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Simonelli. *Seven Deaths in a Cat's Eye*. DVD interview. Blue Underground. 2005

<sup>97</sup> Thomas Jane. *The Mondo Cane Film Collection*. DVD Review. DVD Maniacs website [http://www.dvdmaniacs.net/Reviews/M-P/mondo\\_cane.html](http://www.dvdmaniacs.net/Reviews/M-P/mondo_cane.html) Nov. 6, 2003

The “Mondo” film with its slanted eye toward exploiting different cultures emerged as the gothic Italian horror film waned. The acceptance of television as well as the changing state of immigration trends in Italy contributed to the success of a sub-genre that still exists in today’s media environment. Mondo films lofty ambition was to educate audience about differing social cultures around the world. In almost all cases they were nothing more than crass exploitation that took advantage of people’s fear and distrust of the changing social landscape.

In the 1960s Italian immigration patterns began change. In previous decades the country saw more people leaving than entering. By the early 60’s this trend began to reverse. Italian men began leaving the country in short time spans because some European countries refused entry to workers' relatives because of housing shortages. Often they would come back to Italy bringing stories about their time in other cultures. More importantly Italy was also experiencing larger immigration from places like Asia, Africa and Latin America. For several years the scale of the influx of non-European immigrants was difficult to assess, as no policy existed either to measure or to control it. In 1972 Italy for the first time registered more people entering the country than leaving.<sup>98</sup> For the first time Italians were seeing different cultures on their streets making their curiosity about the outside world grow.

Immigration wasn’t the only factor in the Mondo films success in the 60s, television also played a major role. As television began its ascension as a provider of news around the world, filmmakers sought to produce product that could compete with the medium. In Italy, the popularity of ‘exotic documentaries’ of the 1950s mutated into

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<sup>98</sup> Italy. (2007). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-26980> Retrieved May 18, 2007

one of the first forays in exploitation meant solely for an adult theatre going audience; the Mondo film.<sup>99</sup> The first of these films, *Mondo Cane (A Dog's World)* was resounding success around the world. Released in 1962, it caused a firestorm of controversy and was the precursor for such 1980s video favorites as *Faces of Death* (1978) and *Faces of Death II* (1981).<sup>100</sup>

Exploitation films began as sensationalist exposés involving sex and drug related scandals. They are, by nature, films that sacrifice notions of artistic merit for a more sensationalist, shocking approach. Many times these films are about a topic in which a movie-going audience has some interest. These topics are usually played out with graphic violence, sex and are considered taboo.<sup>101</sup> *Mondo Cane* (1962) and its sequels *Mondo Cane 2* (1964) *Women of the World* (1963) and *Africa Addio* (1964) served as true exploitation under the guise of documentary filmmaking. Showcasing both modern and tribal cultures around the world, Italian filmmakers Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi brought a domestic perspective to the 'weird and wonderful' customs of these people.<sup>102</sup> With little respect for outside cultures and moralizing audio commentaries, the Mondo film, while trying to parallel primitive cultures to modern ones, succeeding in exploiting their subjects for sensation.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Noell-Smith, 592

<sup>100</sup> Bill Gibron. The Mondo Cane Film Collection DVD Review. PopMatters website <http://www.popmatters.com/film/reviews/m/mondo-cane-collection.shtml> Oct. 28, 2003

<sup>101</sup> (Author unknown) Exploitation Film. Dr. John Grohl's Psych Central Website. [http://psychcentral.com/wiki/Exploitation\\_film](http://psychcentral.com/wiki/Exploitation_film) April 12, 2005

<sup>102</sup> Toombs, 31

<sup>103</sup> Peter Goldfarb. Mondo Cane. Movie Review. *Film Quarterly* Vol. 17, No. 1 Autumn 1963. 46-47

Mondo Cane filmmaker and journalist Gualtiero Jacopetti believed that both his love of film and journalism contributed to his taste in telling a story. He replied:

“Italian neorealism never convinced me, quite frankly. As a documentarist, I saw neorealism as artificial. I was a professional journalist. What I realized, and it didn’t take long, was that cinema provided me an immense wealth of photos, of frames, and at the same time a sound track to transfer my text into spoken words, I realized that this was the perfect medium to tell the facts of life.”<sup>104</sup>

These “facts of life” were what was fascinating and shocking about Jacopetti’s and Prosperi’s films. Jacopetti began his career with documentaries about the adult European nightlife, going to strip clubs and local cabarets. The first of these was *Il Mondo di Notte (Nights of the World, 1959)*. Sent by producers around the world to the can-can and burlesque shows popular in the 50s, Jacopetti became most interested in the social aspect of these environments over the theatrical shows. These first forays into the adult themed Mondo films mirrored the nudie films of the U.S. in the late 50s and early 60s.<sup>105</sup>

Franco Prosperi, a naturalist filmmaker with degrees in natural science, biology, and theology, began shooting documentaries when he realized they would be more lucrative than shooting scientific films. In 1961 he teamed with Jacopetti to create their biggest hit *Mondo Cane*.<sup>106</sup>

Translated as *A Dog’s Life*, *Mondo Cane* was initially designed to show the different aspects of love (human, animal, etc.) around the world. Realizing that documentaries are usually flattering, over polished affairs, Jacopetti wanted to try his hand at an “anti-documentary” which would show the world in a real light. Looking at

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<sup>104</sup> David Gregory. The Godfathers of Mondo DVD documentary. Blue Underground 2003

<sup>105</sup> Gregory

<sup>106</sup> Gregory

the film as a “very long newsreel”, Jacopetti and Prosperi jetted around the world to showcase the oddities of human life. The film contains a variety of different socio-cultural rituals some more shocking than others. Neutral subjects such as life-guarding in Australia, or a group of naked woman using their bodies to paint a blue canvas are intermixed more horrifying scenes of Chinese peasants eating of cats and dogs in Hong Kong or the “house of death” (a place where elderly are left to die) in Singapore.<sup>107</sup> This hodgepodge of stories gave audiences insight into a variety of different cultures that they had never seen before.

Jacopetti and Prosperi were optimistic that the world’s film critics would see this as an important work. They didn’t. Released in 1962, the critics called the film vulgar and pornographic. Composer Riz Ortolani responded to criticism:

“The critics were not kind to them. They attacked them for many reasons, said they were porn directors because there were these black women showing their breasts. This made audiences from modern Western societies more eager to see the film causing it to be a smash hit. The fact is, we took advantage of the little knowledge the public had of the world at large back then.”<sup>108</sup>

Critical response aside, the film was a top box office hit around the world. At a time when European artists were having huge success in the U.S. and pushing the boundaries of what could be shown on theatre screens, *Mondo Cane* cashed in on the audience thirst for the new and different. Ironically for a movie with large adult and exploitative themes, the films title song *More*, a love song, became a global pop smash that was nominated for an Oscar.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Mondo Cane* Prod. and Dir. Paolo Carvara Italy 1962

<sup>108</sup> Gregory, Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Gibron, Ibid

The success of *Mondo Cane* propelled producers to create a sequel. With a plethora of unused material from the initial shoot, they decided to use it for *Mondo Cane 2* (1964). “It was about commercial money.” said Jacopetti in a 2003 interview, “I knew it was going to be old hat, a rehash, so I didn’t have the same enthusiasm that I had with *Mondo Cane*.”<sup>110</sup> *Mondo Cane 2* was only a moderate success as compared to the original. Prosperi believed the originality that defined the genre had been used up already. The film still made a profit as audiences lined up to see the new Mondo movie that showed Buddhists monks set on fire or young Asian children eating a burrito made of raw ants.<sup>111</sup>

Perhaps looking for added originality Prosperi and company began to incorporate in each Mondo film fabricated events. Beginning with *Mondo Cane 2* (1964) several of the events of the film like the burning suicide of a monk were faked. Mondo film producers walked the line between true documentary and faked reality based entertainment. Audiences at the time were completely unaware of the trickery. In the early 60s television and magazines like National Geographic only opened up the public minds on international cultures to a small degree. They had not prepared the general public intellectually to see the stunts for what they were. Mondo film producer’s happily re-created events for maximum thrills duping audiences into believing what they were seeing were real. Because the deception was never uncovered, they could continue to push the envelope in situations, resulting in more outlandish acts of violence and sex.

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<sup>110</sup> Gregory. Ibid

<sup>111</sup> *Mondo Cane 2* Prod. Mario Maffei and Giorgio Cecchini, Dir. Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi Italy 1964

By 1963, Mondo films were being produced with large frequency from a variety of countries around the world. All of these films followed the same format with worldwide settings not found in traditional fictionalized films. Most of the time they focused on bizarre cultural and social rites. As films like *Mondo Bizarro* (1966), *Mondo Teeno* (*Teenage Rebellion*, 1967) and Russ Meyer's *Mondo Topless* (1967) saturated the marketplace Mondo films became synonymous with sleaze. This branding did not sit well with Jacopetti who believed that *Mondo Cane* was a piece of art. "People confused Mondo Cane with all that ugly, vulgar junk."<sup>112</sup>

While filming some extra scenes for *Mondo Cane 2* (1964), Prosperi and Jacopetti began work on *La Donna nel Mondo* (*Women of the World*, 1963).<sup>113</sup> The collaboration between Prosperi, Jacopetti and feminist author Oriana Fallaci took an exploitative yet lighthearted look at women throughout societies around the world. Prostitutes in Hamburg, lesbians in Paris, and half-clad female natives from Africa were all put under the mondo spotlight.<sup>114</sup> Though the film had a feminist voice behind the scenes, its obvious that it was men who were the prime audience. The film is not interested in getting inside the psyche of these women but in seeing their faults. The women of this mondo world are only meant to be looked at and the audience (males) is made to feel superior over them.

Following *La Donna*, Prosperi and Jacopetti filmed *Africa Addio* (1966). *Africa* tried to break away from standard Mondo format and focus on the political problems of

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<sup>112</sup> Gregory. Ibid

<sup>113</sup> Many of *Mondo Cane 2* (1964) scenes were shot prior to *Women of the World* (1963) though the film was released after.

<sup>114</sup> Women of the World "La Donna el Mondo" Prod. and Dir. Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Prosperi and Paola Cavara Italy 1963

Africa. Jacopetti wanted the film to be journalistically relevant. He began thinking about the film in the mid-60s as he received a letter from a friend warning of the changes going on in Africa. Showcasing the brutality of burgeoning political dictatorships in Africa (in the explicit style of Mondo films), the filmmakers spent three years getting all the footage that they needed. The film looks at the plight of African men and women who are caught in the post-colonial power grab of the '60s.<sup>115</sup> Beatings, animal killings, rape and murder are graphically depicted which may have caused some to wonder whether Prosperi and Jacopetti had a natural bias. Jacobetti denied the allegation stating, "We didn't have a political viewpoint. The film was totally objective. We were witnesses to a tragedy, political meaning left aside."<sup>116</sup>

Showing the gruesome violence towards both humans and animals the film was met with a storm of controversy. The motion picture became the first film to have a complaint registered against it at the United Nations as 5 African delegates protested the movies release. U.S. critical reaction to the film was favorable although some critics (the New York Times for example) saw Jacopetti's and Prosperi's "shock" filmmaking style as a "reckless and dangerous"<sup>117</sup> The political outcry from the film and pressure from some governmental agencies around the world to suppress the true extent of the upheaval in Africa caused the film to have undergo extensive editing or be pulled entirely from distribution. In the U.S. the film was shorn of 45 minutes of political content and re-released as *Africa Blood and Guts* in 1970.<sup>118</sup> In typical exploitation style publicity, U.S.

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<sup>115</sup> Africa Addio Prod. Angelo Rizzoli, Dir. Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi Italy 1966

<sup>116</sup> Gregory. Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford. Slezoid Express. Fireside Publishing. New York. 2002 168

<sup>118</sup> Unknown. Africa Addio DVD Liner notes. Blue Underground. 2003

distributor Jerry Gross hired out-of-work black actors and outfitted them with grass skirts and spears, stationing them in the lobbies of some New York theatres.<sup>119</sup>

As the '60s progressed the Mondo film's popularity waned as movie audiences quickly tired of the subject matter. The loosening of censorship around the world allowed for recreations of cultures in movies that could exploit without being under the guise of documentary. Mondo films became synonymous with tacky, bizarre and deliberately shocking.<sup>120</sup>

The relative un-interest in Mondo films in the early '70s didn't stop Prosperi and Jacopetti from producing their most controversial work, *Addio Zio Tom (Goodbye Uncle Tom)* in 1971. After the controversy of *Africa Addio*, the pair tried to make a film that was anti-racist. "We thought, why don't we do '*Mandingo*' as a documentary?" said Prosperi in a 2003 interview.<sup>121</sup> Looking at the history of slavery in America, the producers sought to produce a news style documentary as if it were available in the early 1800's. Fusing real historical characters with slavery literature, Prosperi and Jacopetti took advantage of the racial divides of the '60s and '70s to create a film that offended absolutely everyone. Scenes of naked men on slavery ships forced to live in their own waste and vomit were mixed with scenes of idiotic white people relishing the violence they inflicted upon their slaves. The film is so over the top, exploitation style, it is difficult to take the political message seriously. For example the final scene of the film meant to perhaps be an affirmation of black power had a modern day Nat Turner coming

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<sup>119</sup> Landis and Clifford. 165

<sup>120</sup> Gilbert and Sullivan. 164

<sup>121</sup> *Mandingo* was a popular exploitation novel in the early 70s that was about a slave and his sexual exploits on a plantation in the South prior to the Civil War. Full of illicit sex and violence the novel was turned into an exploitation in 1975 to great success.

into a house and massacring a white family including picking up a baby in a playpen and smashing it (obviously a dummy) against the wall leaving a bloody mess.<sup>122</sup> Years after its premiere Prosperi himself realized the extreme nature of the film, “As for the film, it is difficult to watch, understandably so. Perhaps we went to far. It’s our own fault”<sup>123</sup>

As the Mondo film faded from the theatrical landscape in the 70s, it experienced a renaissance in the early ‘80s via videotape. Films like *Faces of Death* (1978) and its many sequels as well as titles like *Ultime Grida dalla Savana: La Grande caccia* (*Savage Man, Savage Death*, 1974) all followed the template that Jacopetti and Prosperi created. It also mutated into another form of exploitation in the ‘70s that will be discussed later, the cannibal film.

Today the Mondo film is evident in today’s television reality shows. Looking at such programming like *Big Brother* (any edition), *Fear Factor*, *Survivor*, or even *Flavor of Love* it is easy to see the connection of the Mondo film to these types of entertainment. Each program shows a fascination of seeing people doing things within a foreign cultural setting. Audiences are riveted, entertained and perhaps mildly disgusted by these programs content, exactly the same feeling that they got from Mondo films. As long as audiences are interested, scared of and distrustful of societies that are different than ones they reside, there will always be some form of the Mondo film.

## **The “Giallo”**

Horror by nature is the emotion of pure revelation. Terror by the same standards is that of fearful anticipation.

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<sup>122</sup> Goodbye Uncle Tom “Addio Uncle Tom” Prod. and Dir Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi Italy 1971

<sup>123</sup> Gregory. Ibid

Arriving at the same time as the Mondo film, the Giallo film began its ascent into the imagination of audiences around the world. The Mondo film focused on the “real” way of life via a documentary style film. The Giallo was a purely fictional concoction whose success was connected to the rising wave of violence that was sweeping throughout Italy in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. The Giallo film, like the books that preceded it, has always seen the unseemly in modern Italian society. Murder, death and sexual betrayal are the underlying themes of most Giallo. By the late ‘60s, the Italian population was reading about these issues in newspapers and watching them everyday on television.

When the Italian publishing company Mondadori published their first Giallo in 1929, little did they know that it would be starting point for a genre that would last in popularity for over 70 years.<sup>125</sup> Jumping from print to film, these murder/mystery novels, which were the equivalent of U.S. pulp fiction and film noir and were immensely popular in Italy from the ‘30s through the ‘50s. Distinguished by their yellow covers (giallo means yellow in Italian) these books contained lurid descriptions of violence and sexuality under the guise of a murder mystery.<sup>126</sup>

Giallo films usually involve an assailant who preys on beautiful women. The killer, of undistinguishable gender would only be seen in quick shots wearing black clothing and gloves. Using sharp butcher knives, ropes and other torturous methods

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<sup>124</sup> Jones. Ibid 10

<sup>125</sup> Gary Needham. Playing with Genre. An Introduction to the Italian Giallo. Kinoeye Vol2 Issue 11 6-10-2002

<sup>126</sup> Adrian Luther Smith. Blood and Black Lace. Stray Cat Publishing. Cornwall England. 5

instead of the usual guns to murder their victims often highlighted the violence. Often nightmare and dream sequences were incorporated within the story that highlighted the fantasy and horror aspects.<sup>127</sup>

Due to the unfilmable sexualized violence of its content, Italian's were not producing film gialli prior to the '60s. By 1962 things were beginning to change as Mario Bava wrote and directed the first considered Giallo, *La Ragazza che Sapeva Troppo* (*The Girl Who Knew Too Much*). A black and white parody of sorts to popular films of Alfred Hitchcock, *La Ragazza* tells the story of a young American tourist (Letícia Román) who becomes embroiled in a violent murder mystery. The film has the classical plot devices of a typical Giallo with its shadowy, atmospheric visuals, red herrings, drug use (omitted in the U.S. prints<sup>128</sup>) and more attention paid to lurid violence than your standard Hollywood fare<sup>129</sup>. Many film critics at the time commented that the film comes across as Hitchcock "all'italiana".<sup>130</sup>

Author Gary Needham believes that this "Italian-ness", which is at the heart of most gialli, is representative of Italy selling itself. This is probably true as the standard Giallo usually concerns a foreigner coming to Italy. The obsession with travel and tourism, all marked a newly emerging European jet set with Italy, a country rich in style

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<sup>127</sup> Windslow Leach. [Spaghetti Slashers, Italian Giallo Cinema](http://members.aol.com/grindhousesite/giallo.html). <http://members.aol.com/grindhousesite/giallo.html> April 12, 2005

<sup>128</sup> Tim Lucas, [The Girl Who Knew Too Much](#). DVD Linear Notes. Image Entertainment 2000. Many of the unsavory aspects were cut for the American print. American International Pictures (who had distributed "Black Sunday" the year before) had held the picture back a year. Released under the name in "The Evil Eye" the film was rescored, the name of the main character was changed, as well as the aforementioned drug use.

<sup>129</sup> Howarth, 67

<sup>130</sup> [The Girl Who Knew Too Much](#) "La Ragazza Che Sapeva Troppo" Prod. Lionella Santi, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1962

and fashion and historic sites, rivaling France in the world's social market.<sup>131</sup> All of the elements that were associated with Italy are found in *La Ragazza*. The film helped create a formula that would be successful for over 30 years in film.

Surprisingly, Bava was not enthused about making the film. Confessing to Italian director Luigi Cozzi, Bava remarked,

I didn't feel like directing, but I needed the money, so I did it. It was supposed to be a romantic thriller, but the very idea seemed absurd to me. Such a thing might have worked with Kim Novak and James Stewart, but I had...never mind – I don't remember who they were! I started filming seriously though, as if it were a truly macabre story and somehow it worked out. It was actually somewhat successful.<sup>132</sup>

The “somewhat successful” *La Ragazza* set up the Giallo template. After that film, Bava reinvented the Giallo in color for the first story of his 1963 film *I Tre Volti Della Paura* (Black Sabbath). Dealing specifically with overt and hidden sexuality the story moved beyond the cute trappings of *La Ragazza* and provided the sexual angle the genre employed for the next two decades. In the first story, *The Telephone*, Michele Mercier plays Rosy, a fashionable young woman with a questionable past, who is terrorized by phone calls made to her apartment. Believing they are coming from her incarcerated former lover, she calls a female friend Mary (Lidia Alfonsi) over to comfort her. It is soon apparent Mary is a jealous, predatory lesbian who had an affair Rosy and is the source of (most) of the obscene phone calls. Unfortunately for Mary, Rosy's boyfriend did escape from jail and looks to settle an old debt. Mary's death at the hands of Rosy's boyfriend is played out obviously as the only fitting end of such a clandestine

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<sup>131</sup> Gary Needham. *Playing with Genre: Defining the Italian Giallo*. In *Fear and Frontiers*. Fab Press. 2003  
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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 1

relationship.<sup>133</sup> All of the lesbian subplot was too much for American International Pictures who joined forces with Galatea and Emmepio Film of Rome in Italy and Societe Cinematographique Lyre of Paris to produce the film. Fearing that the American teenage audience would be stunned by such subject matter, they exercised their right to edit the story. Taking out all hints of the lesbian relationship, the producers changed the nature of the story characterizing Rosy's telephone assailant as a ghost.<sup>134</sup>

Bava's next Giallo *Sei Donne per L'Assassino* (*Blood and Black Lace*, 1964) is considered one of the finest examples of the genre. Commencing filming the day of JFK's assassination (Nov. 22, 1963), *Sei Donne's* violent, sexually exploitive material foreshadows the changes about to take place in world cinema.<sup>135</sup> In the film, concerning a faceless killer within an haute couture fashion house, Bava uses the camera to literally put the audience in the action and to witness the violence first hand. Instead of the customary camera pulling away during the violent acts, Bava is shown the completely without cuts. In addition, the fact that he was filming in color gave the violence a very real effect.

After the worldwide success of *Sei Donne*, the Giallo seemed to languish until the late '60s. It was in 1968 that the sub-genre exploded across theatres in Italy and around the world. The success of earlier gialli by Bava and the dismantling of censorship laws in the late 60s that allowed more nudity, sexual situations and graphic violence to be shown contributed to this. In addition, new social concerns involving globalization created an

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<sup>133</sup> Black Sabbath "I Tre Volti Della Paura" Prod. Paolo Mercuri, dir. Mario Bava Italy 1963, Image Entertainment, 92 min

<sup>134</sup> Tim Lucas. Black Sabbath DVD liner notes. Image Entertainment 2000

<sup>135</sup> Howarth. 337

atmosphere of fear in Italy resulting in violent plots. Issues such as tourism, exoticism, hybridity and foreignness were all incorporated into the Giallo. Looking at Italian cinema in the late '60s and early '70s it seemed that the textuality of most screenplays point up the problems that Italians had with their national identities. Gialli was no exception. The hero/heroines of the genre are often the foreigner in Italy or Italian but on vacation. Whether it's London (*Tutti I Colori del Buio (All the Colors of the Dark)*, 1972), Dublin (*L'Iguana dalla Lingue di Fuoco (The Iguana with a Tongue of Fire)*, 1971), or Haiti (*Al Tropico del Cancro (Death in Haiti)*, 1972), the Giallo uses the uneasiness of the period to promote violence and mayhem. When the Giallo takes a place in Italy it often becomes a nostalgic homage as in Bava's *Ecologia del Delitto (Twitch of the Death Nerve)*, 1972) or Lenzi's *I Corpi Presentano Tracce di Violenza Carnale (Torso)*, 1974), to those things that make Italy special via promoting 'Italian-ness' through a foregrounding of identifiable tourist spots that often half the narrative.<sup>136</sup>

As the film Giallo became more popular, Hollywood stars such as Carroll Baker (*Giant* 1956, *Baby Doll*, 1956) and Farley Granger (*Strangers on a Train*, 1954) frequently crossed the ocean to appear in them.<sup>137</sup> Baker began the second state of her career in Umberto Lenzi's *Orgasmo (Paranoia)*, 1968). Playing a woman who involves herself in a deadly threesome after her husband's death, the film plays up the exploitative aspects of sexuality that was more permissible in the late 60s. It also offered audiences several nude scenes with the 38-year old Baker. Baker and Lenzi would re-team for more films in the next two years including, *Cosi' Dolci..Cosi' Perversa (So Sweet.. So*

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<sup>136</sup> Needham. 143

<sup>137</sup> Smith, 1, 110

*Perverse*, 1969) and *Paranoia* (*A Quiet Place to Kill*, 1969).<sup>138</sup> Each of these films would exploit Baker's persona, having her appear in a variety of nude scenes, something very few Hollywood actors were doing at the time.<sup>139</sup>

Though the Lenzi films were marginally successful internationally, it was Mario Bava and Italian auteur, Dario Argento who made the Giallo sub-genre popular with worldwide audiences. Bava's *Ecologia del Delitto* (*Twitch of the Death Nerve*, 1971) forgoes any subtlety that was apparent in his earlier gialli and opts for explicit gore and violence. One of the first 'body count' movies, where the entire plot of the movie revolves around piling one murder after another, *Ecologia* is an exercise in extremes. The story of a group of people in a holiday resort setting fighting and killing for inheritance money is cited by critics as the modern precursor to the American 'slasher' film predating the Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> films by 9 years. Our killer/killers utilized every trick in the book to kill their rivals from machete's in the head, decapitation to harpooning two people together as they make love.<sup>140</sup> Bava plays the film as a black comedy embracing the notion of 'man as destroyer'. It's clear that he is both amused and repelled by his characters. Overall the film stands as a comment on the declining morals of European society. Bava's characters, including children, are shown capable of the most despicable acts without conscious reason or morality.

At the same time that Bava was exploring the lack of morals in Italian society, Dario Argento's (1940- ) "animal" trilogy of the early '70s was earning him the name "Italian

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<sup>138</sup> Names of Baker's gialli can be confusing. *Orgasmo* (1968) was retitled *Paranoia* for international audiences. Her next film with Lenzi was given the Italian title of *Paranoia* (1969) but called *A Quiet Place to Kill* outside of Italy.

<sup>139</sup> Baker's full body nude scene in Corrado Farina's *Baba Yaga* (1973) was so shocking that Italian censors cut it out completely. It has since been included as an outtake in *Blue Undergrounds DVD*

<sup>140</sup> *Twitch of the Death Nerve* "Ecologia Del Delitto" Prod. Giuseppe Zaccariello, Dir. Mario Bava. 1971

Hitchcock” by critics around the world.<sup>141</sup> His *L’Uccello Dalle Piume di Cristallo* (*Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, 1970) was a smashing international success whose critics said “out-Hitchcock-ed, Hitchcock.”<sup>142</sup> A reworking of Fredric Brown’s novel *The Screaming Mimi* and written by Argento, *L’Uccello*, concerns a young American writer (Tony Musante) who witnesses an attack on a woman in an art gallery in Rome. Coerced by the police to aid the investigation, our hero inadvertently puts himself and his English girlfriend (Suzy Kendall) right in the path of the serial killer.<sup>143</sup> The film contains all the red herrings, dramatic violence and sexualized situations that are associated with the genre but with the freshness a new, young writer/director could bring. Surprisingly, Argento was not keen on directing the film that he had written but didn’t want any outside influence corrupting his story. Said Argento,

I did think the script was a magnificent piece of writing mainly because no one had paid me to do it. I had just written it for myself to see if I could do justice to a noir-type thriller set in Italy. It was an uncommon genre at the time but I followed my heart and went with the flow. Uppermost in my mind was that if I didn’t want my screenplay ruined I would have to bite the bullet.<sup>144</sup>

Argento’s directing style was similar to that of Bava’s in terms of his use of color, but the similarities end there. Argento’s style of filmmaking is much more a “in your face” modern technique with its quick edits, use of loud, electronic music, and graphic violence. The photography by Vittorio Storaro, the music by Ennio Morricone and a tightly written script by Argento all provided the blueprint for a smashing success in the

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<sup>141</sup> Jones, 22

<sup>142</sup> Dario Argento. *Cat’O’Nine Tails 30 Second Ad*. Cat O’Nine Tales DVD. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2000

<sup>143</sup> *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* “L’Uccello Dalle Piume di Cristallo” Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1970

<sup>144</sup> Jones. 20

international market and became the first part of Argento's 'animal trilogy' which as included *Il Gatto a Nove Code* (*Cat O'Nine Tales*, 1971) and *4 Mosche di Velluto Grigio* (*4 Flies on Grey Velvet*, 1972). All three of these films, showcased the internationalization of the Giallo. Each film starred popular, young and established American actors of the time (Karl Malden, James Franciscus, Tony Musante, Michael Brandon), a move to make distributors happy by widening the appeal of the film.<sup>145</sup> What made these films, as well as Argento's other classic Giallo of the 70s, *Profondo Rosso* (*Deep Red*, 1975), unique was that they represented the new style of gritty filmmaking that was occurring in cinema in early '70s.<sup>146</sup> This style focused on modern settings and conversations taking out the fantasy aspects of earlier genre films. Characters in these gialli were real people like family members, lovers and friends, who were thrust into terrible situations. The horror in the story was inherent in the everyday.

*Il Gatto a Nove Code* (*Cat o'Nine Tails*, 1971) carried on the idea of a masked, glove killer that is essential to gialli but added a scientific component. The film concerns a reporter (James Franciscus) who, with the help of a blind crossword puzzle creator and his niece (Karl Malden, Cinzia de Carolis), track down a killer who has a rare genetic anomaly allowing for schizophrenia.<sup>147</sup> Though criticized for being more science fiction than actual horror by some critics, the film showcased the advances in medicine and psychotherapy that was occurring around the world in early '70s.<sup>148</sup> The mistrust of these

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 27

<sup>146</sup> An example of the U.S. version of this style of gritty filmmaking would be Pakula's *Klute* (1971) which showcased some giallo filmmaking techniques.

<sup>147</sup> *Cat O'Nine Tales* "Il Gatto e Nove Code" Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1971

<sup>148</sup> Paul. 41

advances plays out throughout the film. Though not as successful as *L'Uccello*, it did manage to obtain worldwide distribution breaking even outside of Italy.

Argento's third film in his 'animal trilogy' *Quattro Mosche di Velluto Grigio* (*Four Flies on Grey Velvet*, 1972) continued the scientific trend began in *Il Gatto*. The title comes from a police test on the eyeball of a murdered victim done with a laser. The film supposes that a victim's killer's image is retained on the retina of the eye as the last thing they see. In *4 Mosche* the image on the eye of the last victim looks like 4 flies on grey velvet. The scientific explanation doesn't stop the violence from coming. Heads are decapitated and women are slashed with large knives all to the tune of Ennio Morricone's rock synthesized score. The story of a rock musician (Michael Brandon) and his increasingly unstable wife (Mimsy Farmer) who must endure blackmail from a psychopath, the film is also one of the first to feature a homosexual character in a hero role.<sup>149</sup> As played by Jean-Pierre Marielle, the character of private detective Arrosio mirrored the increasingly moderate society that Italy was becoming in the early '70s. Though stereotyped by today's standards (effeminate, funny, alone, etc.) the role is played with dignity and integral to the story.

Argento openness for a homosexual character was a result of his rebellion against the confines of Italian society. Prior to *4 Mosche*, Argento wanted to make a Giallo with a homosexual character much like the Tony Musante's character in *L'Uccello delle Piume de Cristallo* (1970),

I thought it would be an interesting milieu to explore but, of course, everyone thought such an idea would spell box office disaster." I wanted Arrosio to be a

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<sup>149</sup> *4 Flies on Grey Velvet* "Quattro Mosche di Velluto Grigi" Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy/U.S. 1972

social rebel because I was also rebellious. I felt as persecuted by the critics as most gays did by society in general at the time so I could sympathize.<sup>150</sup>

Though groundbreaking in its approach, adding a main homosexual character that was not a villain did not catch on with other Italian producers. The rest of the 70s gialli relegated gays as victims and perpetrators of crime.

While immensely popular in Italy, *4 Mosche* was a flop everywhere else.<sup>151</sup>

Argento himself was tiring of the genre,

It occurred to me that I should change my style around 1972. If I brought the horror thriller back into style, I know wanted to distance myself from it. Everywhere I looked there were pale imitations of my work with catchpenny titles that evoke my success.<sup>152</sup>

Argento had good reason to be wary. His success motivated an Italian industry already steeped in the art of imitation to crank out a mind-numbing amount of gialli in early 70s. These films were directed and produced by some of Italy's best talent all trying to "out Argento, Argento."

Lucio Fulci (1927-1996) tackled the Giallo 4 times in the late '60s and early '70s with *Una Sull'Altra* (*One on Top of the Other*, 1969) *Una Lucertola con la Pelle di Donna* (*Woman in a Lizard's Skin*, 1971), *Non Si Sevizia un Paperino* (*Don't Torture a Duckling*, 1972) and *Sette Note in Nero* (*The Psychic*, 1977). Each one of these films explores the deep psyches of the repressed. *Una Sull'Altra* plays like an Italian version of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) including the San Francisco setting. The film focuses on the deception of an adulterous doctor (Jean Sorel) by his wife/mistress (Marissa Mell).

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<sup>150</sup> Jones, 38

<sup>151</sup> The film was picked up in the U.S. by Paramount hoping to cash in on the success of Argento's earlier works. The film sank without a trace so much so that the film has yet to receive a DVD release as of April 2006

<sup>152</sup> Jones, 55

Blackmail, intrigue and murder all set to a wildly played jazz score by Riz Ortolani combine to make a seedy psychological thriller in the vein of *Basic Instinct* (1991) and *Black Widow* (1987).

Both sexual and homosexual angst is the root of the problems in *Lucertola* with Brazilian beauty Florinda Bolkan walking the tightrope between sanity and madness. Her attraction to her bisexual neighbor (Swedish, Anita Strindberg) sets off a murderous hallucinogenic rampage.<sup>153</sup> The idea of playing a woman with this much inner turmoil appealed very much to Bolkan. Discussing the role and the lesbian aspects of the film,

In fact I have never played anybody as disposed off, to be sexually and evilly treated as that woman, it had a lot of attraction. The mind of Fulci was to create an ambiance that gave the idea of the erotic side only that but the bad, the nastiness that a woman can produce by being sweet yet sexually driven. At that period, no one talked about it, it was taboo to talk about that. Especially because it was two women, we had seen things on men but never two women.

French co-star Jean Sorell agreed with the controversial aspects of the plot line.

Now this is perfectly normal but back then these were the first movies which were sexually explicit where you could see love scenes, where homosexuality was addressed. You could often see them in detective movies, which were somewhat erotic. All this is completely related to a period of Italian filmmaking.<sup>154</sup>

For audiences, it wasn't the sight of Bolkan and Strindberg enjoying windblown hallucinating sex that they remembered but the shocking gore effects that Fulci and special effects creator Carlo Rambaldi devised. In one scene, Carol (Bolkan), believing that she is being pursued, runs into a room where she sees 4 eviscerated coyotes hanging from being on a life support machine. So real were these effects that Fulci and Rambaldi

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<sup>153</sup> *Lizard in a Woman's Skin* "Una Lucertola Con La Pelle di Donna" Prod. Edmondo Amati, Dir. Lucio Fulci Italy/Spain/France 1971

<sup>154</sup> John Sirabella. *Shedding the Skin*. DVD documentary. *Lizard in a Woman's Skin* DVD. Shriek Show. 2004

were taken court by animal rights activists and the sequence was edited out from most foreign versions.<sup>155</sup>

*Non Si Sevizia un Paperino (Don't Torture a Duckling, 1972)* deals with sexual repression as well but this time within a religious context. The male children of a rural town in Italy are turning up dead. The lists of suspects include the village idiot (Vito Passeri), a woman purporting to be a witch (Florinda Bolkan), and drug addict (Barbara Bouchet) who had granted some of the local boys sexual favors. The killer though turns out to be the young local priest (Mark Porell) who strangled the boys to rescue them from the horrors of sexuality.<sup>156</sup> A favorite of Fulci's, *Non si Sevizia* points out the discrepancies in Italian society involving sexuality. It contrasts a repressed, murderous, member of the clergy with a liberated manipulative female praying on boys' inexperience, highlighting the degree of tolerance of among pervasive acts in Italian society. In the film, the early sexual experiences of the young boys with the older woman is portrayed as fun with an air of nostalgia while the priest is portrayed as deviant, due not to the homicidal impulses but the homosexual ones.<sup>157</sup>

Fulci was not the only director focusing on repression. Sergio Martino (1938- ) made his genre debut with the same types of thriller beginning in 1970 with *Lo Strano Vizio della Signora Wardh (The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh)*. Starring Algerian beauty Edwige Fenech as a woman being driven insane by an unknown perpetrator, the film

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<sup>155</sup> Thrower. 70

<sup>156</sup> *Don't Torture a Duckling* "Non si Sevizia un Paperino" Prod. Renato Jaboni, Dir. Lucio Fulci Italy 1972

<sup>157</sup> Thrower. 98 It is easy to posit the Father Avoline character as a repressed homosexual taking out his frustrations on the young boys.

combined eerie, melancholy score by Nora Orlandi from its opening scenes.<sup>158</sup> A strange and gripping film, *Lo Strano*, foreshadows many of Martino's later masterpieces delivering a tight and compelling storyline that features a nifty twist finale that somehow still manages to hold water. Fenech, who starred a year earlier in Bava's *Giallo 5 Bambole per La Luna D'Agosto (5 Dolls for an August Moon)*, became such a strong presence in these types of films that she has come to be regarded by many fans as the ultimate Giallo heroine. The violence level in *Lo Strano* comparatively mild compared to the others in the genre though the film does contain one nasty throat slashing in the shower as well as a few other minor violent scenes kept the audiences who relished the gore happy.<sup>159</sup>

Martino's next two films, *La Coda dello Scorpione (The Case of the Scorpions Tail, 1971)* and *Il Tuo Vizio E una Stanza Chiusa e Solo Io Ne Ho la Chiave (Your Vice is a Locked Room and Only I Have the Key, 1972)* continued the tormenting of young beautiful women (Anita Strindberg and Edwige Fenech) by their cheating spouses/lovers. Even more so the *Lo Strano*, these films began to mirror the political and social unrest that was occurring in Europe in early '70s. In *Il Tuo Vizio*, characters discuss the subject of the "integration of Europe" which was inaugurated by a relaxation of the Catholic standards encouraging an open door policy toward tourism and a cultural exchange. This resulted in the introduction of more British, French, German and American products into Europe. Lamented by one character (Luigi Pistilli) that these exchanges by outsiders were "poison", Martino showcases the increasing xenophobia predominating the Italian

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<sup>158</sup> The flashback "Dies Irae" theme is so effective it was later recycled as Michael Madsen's theme for *Kill Bill, Vol. 2* (2004).

<sup>159</sup> Nathaniel Thompson. [The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh DVD Review](http://www.mondo-digital.com/torso.html). DVD Maniacs website. <http://www.mondo-digital.com/torso.html> Accessed on April 13, 2006.

mindset.<sup>160</sup> This xenophobia is manifested in ambiguity, which is the trademark of the Giallo. Without a clear idea on the identity of the killer, the characters and audiences must suspect everyone, believing that anything outside their own personage is capable of evil deeds.

Martino's final two films in the genre, *Tutti I Colori del Buio* (*All the Colors of the Dark*, 1972) and *I Corpi Presentano Tracce di Violenza Carnale* (*Torso*, 1974) show the increasingly malefic and violent direction the Giallo was taking. The typical Giallo storyline was starting to show signs of repetition and producers were looking for ways in which give the genre new life. *Tutti I Colori*, concerns a young couple (George Hilton, Edwige Fenech) that are trying to overcome their recent miscarriage due to an automobile accident. Finding herself at hounded by a devil's cult, Jane (Fenech), increasingly becomes unstable which flings her from one violent situation to the next. The introduction of a satanic cult came as a result of the popularity of Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) giving Martino the ability to transcend the Giallo constraints and film Jane's nightmares as both kinky and scarily hallucinogenic.<sup>161</sup>

With *I Corpo*, Martino, like Bava's *Ecologia del Delitto* (1971) created the template for the modern "slasher" film. Using a stunning musical score by Maurizio De Angelis and Guido, that mixes sultry jazz, suspense music and rock, *I Corpo* is begins as a Giallo but plays out as a woman in danger scenario imperative in such 'slasher' movies as *Halloween* (1978) and *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980). In the film, local, college women are being killed by a sexual perpetrator. When four of the students decide to leave the town

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<sup>160</sup> Smith. *Your Vice is Locked Room and Only I Have the Key*. DVD Liner Notes

<sup>161</sup> *All The Colors of the Dark* "Tutti I Colori Del Buio" Prod. Mino Loy and Luciano Martino, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy/Spain 1972

on a vacation they realize that the killer has followed them. After dispatching 3 of the girls, the murderer turns his attention to the only one left (Suzy Kendall). Thus insues a cat and mouse game between virtuous girl and cold-blooded killer. The perpetrator turns out to be the hunky local college professor (John Richardson) exacting revenge on those who secretly taped him having a ménage-a-trois with two students.<sup>162</sup> The events of the screenplay mirrored real life events in Italy as Martino took inspiration from a man who murdered woman, cutting them into bits, and leaving his father to tidy up his mess.<sup>163</sup>

Less violent yet no less erotic were the gialli of Luciano Ercoli (1925- ). His first Giallo, *Le Foto Proibite di Una Signora per Bene (Forbidden Photos of a Lady Above Suspicion, 1970)* defined Ercoli's style. A mixture detective movie with lots of overt sexuality, Ercoli's films focused on the deceptive relationships between heterosexual spouses and lovers. In his films, he utilizes the nightmare of being threatened by one's own sexual partner.<sup>164</sup> In *Le Foto*, Minou (Dagmar Lassander) is sexually, blackmailed by a sadistic stranger who proceeds to tell her that her husband is a murderer. Increasingly unstable and addictive to tranquilizers, she finds out the truth, that her husband (Pier Paolo Capponi) is trying to murder her for her insurance money. Helping her to understand what is happening is her bisexual free spirited friend played by Ercoli's real wife Susan Scott.<sup>165</sup> Deception from men is key to Ercoli's work helping to explain

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<sup>162</sup> I Corpi Presentano Tracce di Violenza Carnale Torso Prod. Carlo Ponti, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy/France 1973

<sup>163</sup> John Sirabella. Interview with Sergio Martino. All the Colors of the Dark DVD. Shriek Show. 2004

<sup>164</sup> Smith. 36

<sup>165</sup> Forbidden Photo's of a Lady Above Suspicion "*Le Foto Proibite di Una Signora per Bene*" Prod. Alberto Pugliese and Luciano Ercoli, Dir. Luciano Ercoli Italy/Spain 1970 Susan Scott's real name was Nieves Navarro. She appeared in other exploitation throughout the seventies including *Emanuelle e Gli Ultimi Cannibale* (1978) and *Tutti I Colori del Buio* (1972).

the strong female characters he infuses his films. In *Le Foto*, Scott's character as the sexually liberated, independent, Dominique is portrayed in direct opposition to Minou or any of the typical female characters of the time. She was neither a victim nor villain but an intelligent, sexually strong character that manages to figure out the plot and diffuses it.

Ercoli's *La Morte Cammina Con I Tacchi Alti* (*Death Walks in High Heels*, 1971) and *La Morte Accarezza a Mezzanotte* (*Death Walks at Midnight*, 1972) carry on that tradition. Both films feature Scott, as a tough, independent woman who is inevitably deceived by her lovers. This deception either results in sudden death (*La Morte Camminia*) or in abusive violence (*La Morte Accarezza*).<sup>166</sup> Regardless of characters outcomes, Scott imbued the characters with a new found strength that mirrored the attainment of equality for women in the early '70s. Though there was some positive movement in about women's roles in these characters it must be stated that it always came with a price. Often the main female character must endure some form of punishment before coming to any happy conclusion. In Ercoli's case, this could be tied to his fascination with 'Fumetti', a form of Italian cartoon. Fumetti's typically have stronger women's leads but these women must go through a myriad of life changing events.

By the mid-70s the originality in Giallo's began to disappear. As a result, audience attendance began to drop and producers began looking at other genres to make a profit. Ironically, Dario Argento returned the Giallo with his strongest effort yet, *Profondo Rosso* (*Deep Red*) in 1975. Merging the boundaries between a thriller and a horror film, Argento reworked the classic structure of the Giallo and gave audiences a rich, thought provoking story that both fascinated and terrified. Explained Argento: "I

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<sup>166</sup> One could make the argument that Ercoli did not like putting his real-life wife and girlfriend in situations that would make her appear weak but no interviews or reference material substantiates this argument.

came back to the Giallo with all my love, with all my being, with all my desire and it sublimated itself in the form of the most complex story I've ever written."<sup>167</sup> The typical Giallo of the time gave short shrift to the psychological motives behind the protagonist's actions. *Profondo* explores a new psychological perspective giving the film a multitude of layers in which audiences can discover a variety of different meanings. The story incorporates all types of neurosis including, alcoholism, homosexual/transgender angst, mother complex, inadequacy and dementia.<sup>168</sup>

Starring David Hemmings and Daria Nicoodi, *Profondo Rosso* uses the standard gialli device of a man witnessing a brutal murder, in this case a German psychic, and his subsequent involvement in the investigation. With an electronic score by The Goblins and a completely different technique of filming involving the use of color, composition and framing, Argento created a film in which many critics call his "crowning achievement".<sup>169</sup> The violence in the film is beefed up to appeal to a mid-70s audience. Helga's, (Macha Meril) death at the hands of the killer via butcher's cleaver or Carlo's (Gabriele Lavia) dragging death are all filmed unflinchingly in close-up with a large amount of blood. A huge success in Italy and around the world, *Profondo Rosso* stands as the ultimate benchmark to the genre.

The success of *Profondo Rosso* (1975) may have given the sub-genre critical acclaim and acceptance but did not result in a huge influx of new gialli. Though Argento would return to the sub-genre in 1982 with *Tenebrae* and as recently as 2003 *Il Cardino* (*The Card Player*) and 2005 *Ti Piace Hitchcock* (*Do You Like Hitchcock?*), the Giallo

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<sup>167</sup> Jones. 63

<sup>168</sup> Deep Red "Profondo Rosso" Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1975

<sup>169</sup> Julian Grainger. Deep Red. Art of Darkness. Edited by Chris Gallant. Fab Press. London. 115

would disappear and its lobotomized companion the ‘slasher’ film ascended thanks to American filmmakers such as John Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978), and Sean Cunningham *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (1980) who employed techniques synonymous to gialli filmmaking, camera as eyes of the killer, music use etc., for their successful thrillers.<sup>170</sup> It seemed that audiences no longer wanted the convoluted stories that the Giallo offered. By the late 70s, these audiences gravitated towards sex and violence punctuated by lots of gore.

### **The 70s: Sex and Sadism**

You know everything changes, everything ages, everything needs to renew itself, you always need to go hunting for something new... And in Italy, the horror genre, like the Giallo genre, does not know how to renew itself.

—Italian film director, Michele Soavi when asked about state of horror film production in Italy during the 1970s and 1980s<sup>171</sup>

Italy in the early ‘70s was in the midst of a recession. In addition the negative social and political unrest that was occurring was making Italy a violent place to live and work. Behaviors such as organized crime, drugs, terrorism etc., began to swell in the country. These also contributed to an overall malaise in Italian businesses including the film industry.<sup>172</sup> By the late ‘60s, Italy was beginning to feel the effects of a stagnant economy. The late fall of 1969, referred as the ‘Hot Autumn of 69’ saw a proliferation of strikes, factory occupations, and mass demonstrations throughout northern Italy. Most of the work stoppages were unofficial, led by workers' factory committees or militant leftist groups rather than by the (party-linked) trade unions. The protests were not only about

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<sup>170</sup> Howarth. 100

<sup>171</sup> Galanetto, Federico and Vittorio Cristiano. *An Interview with Michele Soavi*. *Flesh and Blood*, A Compendium, Edited by Harvey Fenton. Fab Press, London. 350

<sup>172</sup> Nowell-Smith. 594-596

pay and work-related matters but also about conditions outside the factory, such as housing, transport, and pensions, and they formed part of a more general wave of political and student protest.<sup>173</sup>

In the '70s the situation worsened: bankruptcies increased, inflation hit twenty percent, and unemployment skyrocketed. This led to some extremely violent forms of unrest within the Italian population. Factions from the far right, who were behind a bomb which killed 16 people in Piazza Fontana in Milan in 1969, and the Piazza della Loggia bombing in Brescia five years later warred against those on the left, composed of disaffected intellectuals from Northern Universities, creating fear within the populace.<sup>174</sup>

In film, the late '60s and early '70s was a period of re-emergence for the American horror film. The social mood brought on by factors such as Vietnam, Watergate in the U.S. as well as the establishment of the MPAA ratings code had changed the nature of films from big blockbuster types (*Sound of Music* 1965) to smaller more independent films that appealed to the social consciousness of the time (*Easy Rider* 1969).<sup>175</sup> The American horror film was able to reinvent itself to become a parable to these events. Films such as Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), Craven's *Last House on the Left* (1972) and Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) not only proved to strike a chord in audiences around the world, they were to have a profound impact on the Italian film industry who in the '70s were having yet another crises in their film industry.

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<sup>173</sup> Italy Encyclopædia Britannica. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. May 23, 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/eb/article-258866>>.

<sup>174</sup> Travelotica Web Site (<http://www.travelotica.com/travelguide/180/italy/the-1970s-and-1980s-33225.htm>) Accessed: May 23, 2007

<sup>175</sup> Nowell-Smith. 314

European cinema, including Italy, was experiencing a general decline. The drop in attendance in Italy was close to catastrophic. From 1976 to 1979, ticket revenues fell from 514 million to 276 million.<sup>176</sup> The cause of this was a deep neglect by the state both institutionally and financially as well as the proliferation of private television stations.

Italian horror/exploitation film producers choose to find the easiest, audience tested, successful products in order to make a profit went back to the tried and true behavior they exhibited in the late '50s. They created niches (i.e. rip-offs) that were adapted from the horror/exploitation films of the U.S. With Italy experiencing violence throughout its society, producers could tailor these sub-genres to their most exploitative possibilities. Showcasing almost pornographic representations of sex and violence, most of these sub-genres appealed to basest of entertainment choices. The Cannibal, Zombie, Nunsplotation and violent sex sub-genres were among the most exploitive. They gave audiences something even more violent than they could get in their living rooms.

### **“We Will Eat You” The Zombie and Cannibal Film**

This was not your daddy’s favorite cannibal movie, this was an ass-kicking flick, the proudly repugnant progeny of collective fears.

—Author Jim Van Beeber, describing his first viewing of *Cannibal Ferox*”  
(1983)<sup>177</sup>

The Italian Zombie and Cannibal film are two of the most successful sub-genres in Italian horror and exploitation. Both have their origins in the Mondo films of early 1960s, both rely on extreme gore, nudity and violence as devices to shock the audience

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<sup>176</sup> Nowell-Smith. 594. This would fall even further to 165million in 1983. By 1992 it would be down to 90 million.

<sup>177</sup> Jay Slater. Eaten Alive, Italian Cannibal and Zombie Films. Plexus, London. 2002. 22

but whereas the zombie film is a liberal borrowing from the successful films by American George Romero, the cannibal film is distinctly Italian.

Audiences who had previously enjoyed “gawking” at other cultures via the Mondo film in the ‘60s, changed their tastes in ‘70s. They became bored with seeing exploitative documentaries. Producers, in turn, decided to use completely fictionalized stories that involved strange customs and rites of international cultures without changing any of the graphic nature of the material.

The Cannibal and Zombie films are a reflection of man’s disruption of the natural order of the world. They are also a reflection of the collective fears of an Italian society going through a social transformation. As mentioned earlier, immigration patterns in Italy had changed by the ‘70s. A huge influx of immigrants from Asia, North Africa and Eastern Europe had begun to settle in Italy. This fear of societal encroachment mixed with a cynicism of new western values created the template for the Cannibal film. Audiences from the ‘60s saw the Mondo films cultural education and marveled at the differences between the modern world and poor one. Cynical audiences of the ‘70s saw western man’s encroachment on these societies as a bad thing and this nihilism is reflected into the Cannibal sub-genre.

Zombie films usually centered on mans ability to screw up his environment. Much like the ‘big bug’ movies of the ‘50s, which was a direct result of the uncertainty of the atom bomb explosions, Zombie films reflect the uncertainty of late ‘70s society with regard to things like nuclear power and medical breakthroughs. Accidents like the nuclear spill at 3-Mile Island or the contamination of Love Canal in the U.S. as well as European disasters such as the A-1 nuclear spill in Czechoslovakia added to the Italian imagination

that man was somehow screwing up the world. The Zombie film is the culmination of that screw up.

Cannibal pictures preceded the Zombie genre by a few years. The first of these pictures, Umberto Lenzi's *Il Paese del Sesso Selvaggio* (*Deep River Savages*, 1973) set up all the plot devices that became familiar to rest of the films in the genre.<sup>178</sup> Unsavory, morally bankrupt characters paired with the occasional scientist/student, find themselves in either the Amazonian or an Asian, jungle where they slaughter live animals, terrorize the indigenous tribes then are literally cannibalized when the tribes fight back.<sup>179</sup> *Il Paese* starred Ivan Rassimov as an English photographer who on assignment in Thailand and Burma accidentally kills a criminal forcing him to escape into the jungle. Captured by a primitive tribe, he is forced to endure a variety of tortures including being used as a human dartboard and graphically forced to kill live animals. After all the torture, Rassimov is accepted into tribe, marries a native girl (Me Me Lai) and becomes the head tribesman.<sup>180</sup> Essentially an action/adventure film, *Il Paese* contained graphic scenes of rape, torture and most shockingly live animal killings. It is these animal killings that are the staple of the Italian cannibal genre. Throughout the decade, turtles, monkeys, snakes, mongooses, crocodiles and others are all killed on camera to add to the shock of this sub-genre. For directors, the practice of killing live animals didn't seem too extreme. Many of them believed their motives were justified. Lenzi pointed out that no animal suffered

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<sup>178</sup> Slater. 44

<sup>179</sup> The animal killings in Italian cannibal films were all too real. They were added to give the films a more realistic feel and were produced long before organizations like PETA existed.

<sup>180</sup> *Deep River Savages* "Il Paese del Sesso Selvaggio" Prod. Ovidio G. Assonitis, Dir. Umberto Lenzi Italy (*Deep River Savages*) 1973

unnecessarily if it wasn't to be used as food for the film crews.<sup>181</sup> Ruggero Deodato (1939), director of the *Ultimo Mondo Cannibale* (*Jungle Holocaust*, 1977) and the infamous *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) also defends this practice. "The rats, wild pigs, crocodiles and turtles were killed by the Indios (on the set of *Cannibal Holocaust*) themselves, for food. I simply followed them on the hunts – the equivalent of shooting the butchers at the slaughterhouse."<sup>182</sup>

The violence directed towards humans was also intense. Lenzi took a decidedly political viewpoint when dealing with critics on this subject.

Look, my position about cannibal films, films that, should we say exploit, are all primarily a result of experience I had with a previous film entitled *The Man from Deep River*. The scenes in that film were taken from genuine, authentic rituals that a local anthropologist had explained to us. We should not be surprised by if the film contains some violent actions that take place among savage tribes. What I wanted to show primarily is that this violence, even when it's not merely sexual violence, but violence such as killing, mutilation has been caused above all by a policy, by a long history of third world colonization of the exploitation of savage tribes.<sup>183</sup>

As shocking as these animal killings and human violence were, worldwide audiences flocked to theatres to see them. "With the exception of Italy, *Deep River Savages* was a great success all round the world," said Lenzi, though he adds: "apart from whatever merit they might have, they were in fact projects made on commission and shot "cold" as it were, purely to make a living."<sup>184</sup>

Though *Il Paese* was popular, it was 5 years before the next cannibal movie was produced. Ruggero Deodato's *Ultimo Mondo Cannibale* (*Jungle Holocaust*, 1977) was a

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<sup>181</sup> Slater. 46

<sup>182</sup> Palmerini and Mistretta. 42

<sup>183</sup> John Sirebella. Interview with Umberto Lenzi. *Jungle Holocaust* DVD. Shriek Show 2001

<sup>184</sup> Palmerini and Mistretta. 69

record moneymaker throughout the world. “I got the idea from an article in a National Geographic magazine which described a tribe of aboriginal cannibals living in a cave on the island of Mindanao (Philippines).” said Deodato.<sup>185</sup> Following a story similar to *Il Paese, Ultimo* follows two oil entrepreneurs who become lost in the Philippine jungle. Separated, one (Massimo Foschi) is captured and imprisoned by a cannibalistic tribe. Stripped of all his clothes, he is abused by the tribe, slung up and down on a large catapult and forced to eat raw meat from recently dead animals. In addition, he finds a woman tribe member (Me Me Lai, appearing in her second cannibal film) who frequently masturbates him from within his bamboo cell. The exploitative highlight of the film comes when a tribe catches a female member of a different tribe and ripping open her stomach and eating her insides. In addition, the film has the requisite animal killings, rapes and little, if no, cultural sensitivity.<sup>186</sup>

The popularity of *Ultimo Mondo Cannibale* (1977) opened the Italian market for variety of new cannibal films. First on the list was Aristide Massacessi’s (1939-1999) *Emanuelle e Gli Ultimi Cannibali* (*Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals*, 1977) which was an entry in the popular ‘Black Emanuelle’ soft-core series of the late 1970s. In the film, intrepid reporter Emanuelle (Laura Gemser) gets wind of a cannibal cult in the jungles of Brazilian jungle.<sup>187</sup> After meeting and bedding a local New York professor (Gemser’s real-life husband, Gabrielle Tinti) who agrees to act as guide to her trip, Emanuelle takes a group into the Amazon. It is there that her group come under attack from the local jungle cannibals where the cast is either ripped to shreds and eaten or forced to perform

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<sup>185</sup> Palmerini and Mistretta 42

<sup>186</sup> *Jungle Holocaust* “Mondo Cannibale” Prod. Georgio Carlo Rossi, Dir. Ruggero Deodato Italy 1977

<sup>187</sup> Emanuelle obtains this information from a shocking scene in which she masturbates a tied up female mental patient in the hospital.

various sexual acts. Knives are thrust between female's legs, breasts are torn off and eaten, and men are gutted, stripped of their intestines all of this moving the plot forward. Emanuelle manages to survive by painting herself as a water goddess and rowing away.<sup>188</sup> The film, like many others in the genre, played off the fear of colonialism. The combination of hardcore violence and soft-core sex also plays into the fear of sexuality and death. It is not surprising in these films that protagonists who carry on illicit affairs or incite overt violence are usually subjected to the worst punishments such as castration or being burned alive.<sup>189</sup> When asked in a 1998 interview why he chose to incorporate erotic footage with the cannibal genre Massaccesi replied, "Well you know I'm a real copy-cat and since Deodato's film had been so successful we thought about doing something along the same lines commercially."<sup>190</sup>

Attempting to give the genre a touch more class was 1978's *La Montagna del Dio Cannibale* (*The Mountain of the Cannibal God*) starring popular international actors Ursula Andress and Stacy Keach. Director Sergio Martino, well known for his gialli in the early 1970s, concocted an action/adventure movie that incorporated all the stylings of the cannibal genre. Decapitations, sadistic torture, graphic masturbation, animal torture and bestiality are included in this story of a woman (Andress) and her brother (Antonio Marsina) search for her missing husband in equatorial New Guinea.<sup>191</sup> Director Martino

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<sup>188</sup> Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals "Emanuelle e gli Ultimi Cannibali" Prod. Gianfranco Couyoumdjian, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1977

<sup>189</sup> Xavier Mendik. Black Sex, Bad Sex: Monsterous Ethnicity in the Black Emanuelle Films. In Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik's *Alternate Europe*. Wallflower Press. London. 156

<sup>190</sup> Manilo Gomasasca and Davide Pulici. Joe D'Amato Completely Uncut. Noctorno Films. 1998

<sup>191</sup> Mountain of the Cannibal God "La Montagna del Dio Cannibale" Prod. Luciano Martino, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy 1978 Though taking place in New Guinea, a majority of the film was shot in Sri Lanka and Malaysia. The scene where a native is sodomizing a large wild boar is usually cut from most prints but has

had no delusions about the artistic merit of a film such as this. Speaking about the film in 2003 he related that the film was a product of its time.

I decided to begin making cannibal movies because I've always worked for an organization whose main purpose is to make successful movies. At that time, we were working in the 'imitation' genre, mimicking successful American genre films at 10 times less cost." "The film definitely focused on some images of violence that at times were meant to have a documentary quality. Maybe this movie is a little too violent; I blame myself now because movies this violent are counter-educational. But in those days, to tell you the truth, there were other movies made earlier that are worse in that respect.<sup>192</sup>

1980 saw the release of the most controversial example of the genre, Ruggero Deodato's *Holocausto Cannibal* (Cannibal Holocaust). Banned, seized, and/or heavily censored in most areas around the world, *Holocausto* has earned the reputation of one of the most frightening films ever.<sup>193</sup> Consequently, due its extreme violence it has also been dubbed as "one of the most extreme and brutal films ever screened".<sup>194</sup> Utilizing a combination of fictional narrative and a documentary style, like that of Mondo films, Deodato's film blurs line between reality and fantasy creating a cinema verité experience that shocked and disgusted film critics and audiences alike. The precursor to such films as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *The Last Broadcast* (1998), *Holocausto* begins with the departure of a search party hoping to locate a documentary film crew that was lost in Amazon. The party (led by porn star Robert Kerman<sup>195</sup>) comes across a tribe of 'tree' people. Believing that the search party is gods (by use of a tape recorder), the tree

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been included in the Anchor Bay DVD of Mountain of the Cannibal God.

<sup>192</sup> G. Vitacane. Legacy of the Cannibal God. Blue Underground and Anchor Bay Entertainment. DVD interview with Sergio Martino. Mountain of the Cannibal God. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2001

<sup>193</sup> Lucas. Cannibal Holocaust 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collector's Edition. Grindhouse Releasing. 2005

<sup>194</sup> Slater. 108

<sup>195</sup> Kerman, who under the pseudonym R. Bolla appeared in such porn films as *Debbie Does Dallas* (1978) and *Amanda by Night* (1981), would go on and appear in such films as Lenzi's *Cannibal Ferox* (1981) as well as *Spiderman* (2002)

people take them to the remains of the documentary crew. There they discover several canisters of film, which they bring back to the states. The remainder of *Cannibal Holocaust* consists of the material found in the canisters depicting the native's horrific revenge on the unfortunate filmmakers who tortured, raped and humiliated the tree people in order procure sensationalistic footage for their documentary.<sup>196</sup>

The mixture of Mondo style documentary and fictionalized narrative allows the film to move from one torture sequence to the next. Young native women get their vagina's bashed in by large wooden dildo's as punishment for extra-marital affairs, a pregnant woman is tied to a stake and given an abortion while being beat fatally on the head, animals are killed outright, and men are castrated and eaten, all shown to their graphic excess on the screen. Even more disturbing is the complete lack of humanity in which the American documentarists are shown. Lacking any moral compass, the Americans are portrayed as savagely as the natives, raping, killing and even turning on each other in complete disregard of human and animal life.<sup>197</sup> Actor Luca Barbareshci believed that the times (late '70s) allowed for a film like this made and the controversy about it is worse today. Commenting in 2004 Barareshci said,

Probably because of the story, of the violence against animals, especially in an era of political correctness and attention, which is as it should be, based upon respect of nature. You know a lot has happened in 25 years. 25 years ago, the problem of the environment was not heard of as much as it is today. Today, everything is untouchable to the point that I did a show that made fun of the Green Party. But

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<sup>196</sup> *Cannibal Holocaust* "Holocausto Canibal" Prod. Franco Di Nunzio, Dir, Ruggero Deodato Italy 1980

<sup>197</sup> Deodato believed that the films subject was so savage that he made the actors sign a release asking them not have any contact with other producers for a year so that they hype the film would cause would not have a negative impact on their careers. When the film was confiscated in Italy, Deodato exempted the contract when the judge, believing that he actually killed the 4 actors, threatened him with life in prison.

nature is defended and rightfully so and this is a film that is politically incorrect in that sense.<sup>198</sup>

*Holocausto*'s director of photography, Sergio D'Offizi, gives us what is perhaps the final word on what the mind set of those filmmakers who produced these films.

When we film, as least speaking for myself, perhaps we distort ourselves. We enter into a way of looking at things that is not the objective one, the correct one of the viewer, who sees something horrifying. We didn't notice. This distortion, let's call it "professional" as far as I'm concerned kept me from understanding precisely and objectively what we were doing. So the violence against people was a fake violence, as was recognized later. Less so with the animals, unfortunately, but that's what the scenes called for.<sup>199</sup>

Ready for distribution *Holocausto Cannibale* (1980) immediately faced the wrath of censors. Pre-sold by United Artists, the film was met with a barrage of criticism on its opening in Italy. Deodato recalled the legal battles:

"Perhaps the producer's mistake was to not pre-release it in a small country the way they usually did, to get it confiscated. Instead they immediately attempted, and perhaps it was United Artists that wanted this, to premiere it in Milan. In Milan, there was this terrible aggressive young judge who confiscated it. The film was seized, the film was stopped after it had earned an amount equal to \$5 million today after 10 days."

Seizing the film was not the only thing the judge did, convinced that they really did kill people (false) and animals (true) for the making of this film, he ordered a trial. Hiring 7 to 8 media lawyers, Deodato was able to produce the actors in the film freeing him from murder charges though he was found guilty of the animal cruelty charge. Given a suspended sentence of 4 months and a fine of \$300, Deodato was forced to find a way to distribute the film. United Artists dropped out early and Deodato found it impossible to sell the film abroad. 3 years later (1983) the film was released due to intervention by the

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<sup>198</sup> Alan Young. The Making of Cannibal Holocaust. Alan Young Pictures. Cannibal Holocaust 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary DVD. Grindhouse Releasing. 2005

<sup>199</sup> Young.

Italian Appeals court.<sup>200</sup> Released, the film still underwent editing dependent upon the country it was playing in. In Britain, the film was banned outright and put on the “video nasty” nasty list meaning that it could not be viewed in that country.<sup>201</sup>

The success and controversy surrounding *Holocausto* spurred other filmmakers to jump on the cannibal bandwagon. 1980 saw the release of several cannibal themed movies most slightly different than Deodato’s film. Trying to steer away from the controversy and perhaps not wishing to indulge in a costly legal battle, directors looked to make their cannibal films more commercial focusing more on traditional movie narratives.

*Mangiati Vivi!* (*Eaten Alive*, 1980) marked Umberto Lenzi’s return to the genre. Filmed before the release of *Holocausto Cannibali*, it was a fictionalized account of the Reverend Jim Jones and Jonestown massacre. Lenzi opted to use a traditional action/adventure narrative over the Mondo style of the previous cannibal movies. *Mangiati*, is the story of a young woman (Janet Agren) searching for her sister (Paola Senatore) who’s been abducted by a strange Jim Jones type cult in the jungles of Sri Lanka. With the aid of a guide (Richard Kerman) she battles cannibals in the jungle and the sexual advances of the cult leader (Ivan Rassimov) before escaping with her life.<sup>202</sup> For the film, Lenzi used previous footage from other cannibal films to supplement the gore. He believed that gore was essential to the success of these types of films. “The film was a smashing success especially because of the famous scene that I think the audiences

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<sup>200</sup> Young.

<sup>201</sup> Jay Slater. *The Forbidden Era*. Rue Morgue Issue 47. July 2005. 30. The “video nasties” were films banned by the Thatcher administration of the early 1980s who believed these films led to burgeoning violence that was plaguing England during that time.

<sup>202</sup> *Eaten Alive* “Mangiati Vivi” Prod. Mino Loy and Luciano Martino, Dir. Umberto Lenzi Italy 1980

will remember.” recalls Lenzi, “When the Italian actress, it was Paola Senatore is cut to pieces and eaten alive, still alive, by the cannibals”<sup>203</sup> Whereas Deodato’s film was entirely nihilistic, devoid of humanity, Lenzi goes for fun imbuing his characters with charm that is somewhat reminiscent of the Indiana Jones films that were popular at the time. Lenzi would return to cannibal genre in 1981 with *Cannibal Ferox*, a film in which some consider to be as shocking and nihilistic as *Holocausto Cannibali*.<sup>204</sup>

The Italian cannibal genre proliferated in the era when audiences were clamoring for more adult fare in their movies about death. Television had begun to air documentaries that were slightly shocking in nature and had even begun playing heavily edited versions of *Mondo Cane* (1962) on local television stations.<sup>205</sup> The cannibal film, for all its positive and negative points, offered audiences a barbaric, visceral, thrill ride that could only be obtained by sitting in a darkened movie theatre. With the release of American George A. Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* (*Zombi*, 1978) in Italy, the Cannibal sub-genre deviated into one of the most popular in the Italian canon, the zombie film.

The Italian Zombie film borrows the cannibalistic and nihilism aspects of the Cannibal genre and adds an action component that is strictly Hollywood. Though other European countries, most notably Spain, had dabbled in the genre, it is in Italy where the sub-genre had the most success. Author Stephen Thrower believes that its not surprising that Italy turned out so many zombie films. He explains,

A zombie in Italian cinema carries an iconoclastic connotation. It is explosive; able to fragment realism by inferring the implacable presence of something supernatural

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<sup>203</sup> John Sirabella. Interview with Umberto Lenzi. *Eaten Alive* DVD. Shriek Show Entertainment. 2002

<sup>204</sup> Bill Landis. Make the Die Slowly DVD liner notes. Grindhouse Releasing. 2000

<sup>205</sup> Landis and Clifford. 165

yet stubbornly corporeal. For Christians the body is a mere waste product, exerted by the passage of the soul into heaven.<sup>206</sup>

The Zombie movement success began with the release of the US/Italian co-production *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). American George Romero's sequel to his own cult classic *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) was co-produced and co-financed by Dario Argento and producer/brother Claudio. Speaking of his involvement Dario commented,

One of my all-time favorite horror films was *Night of the Living Dead* and when I found out George Romero was looking for a co-producer, naturally I was more than a little interested. The Italian film industry was through another time of crises and I thought investing overseas would be a good way of keeping the wolf from Seda Spettacoli's door.<sup>207</sup>

Retitled *Zombi* in Italy, Romero's and Argento's opened 8 months prior to the U.S. premiere (due to censorship difficulties<sup>208</sup>) and was a smash success. The distribution deal between Argento and Romero stipulated that Argento would have the final cut on all non-English language versions. By selectively editing down some of Romero's humor, Argento tailored the film to a European sensibility.<sup>209</sup> "When we brought the negative back to Italy for editing," relates producer Claudio Argento, "we created an entirely different version. We made lots of cuts because George's version was too long."<sup>210</sup> Perhaps because of the Argento name, the film had immediate European distribution in contrast to America where Romero had to go around looking for buyers who would take on such violent subject matter.

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<sup>206</sup> Thrower. 22

<sup>207</sup> Jones. 97

<sup>208</sup> The film was originally rated "X" by the MPAA. Romero subsequently released the film without a rating, prohibiting those under 17 from attending.

<sup>209</sup> Jones. 103-104

<sup>210</sup> Perry Martin. *The Dead will Walk*. DVD documentary. Dawn of the Dead Ultimate edition. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2004. There would be three versions of *Dawn of the Dead*, the U.S. theatrical version at 127 minutes, the extended version at 139 minutes and Argento's European version at 118 minutes.

Based on the success of *Zombi*, Italian filmmaker Lucio Fulci quickly created a sequel of sorts, the classic *Zombi 2* (1979).<sup>211</sup> Going into production one month after the initial release of the original, *Zombi 2*'s was an even bigger box office hit than the original with receipts topping a billion and half Italian liras.<sup>212</sup> Set in both New York and Santo Domingo, with an international cast (American Tisa Farrow, Scottish Ian McCulloch, British Richard Johnson and Italian Al Cliver), the film echoed such diverse themes of both Tourneur as well as the popular Italian cannibal film. The film eschewed all of Romero's intellectual references to consumerism and focused primarily on action and out-goring the previous film. Fulci's zombies don't represent everyday people like Romero's. His zombies look like they've been through the shredder barely resembling anything human. In the film, Farrow stars as a young woman in search of her doctor father (Johnson) who has disappeared on an island in the Caribbean. After his boat is found abandoned in New York Harbor, save for one flesh-eating zombie, she travels to the island with reporter McCulloch. From there violence begins with Farrow and her group being terrorized by the hungry undead. Eyeballs are gouged out, blood flows from every orifice, flesh is torn off the bone all accompanied by a beating soundtrack from Fabrizio Frizzi that makes the film a truly visceral experience.<sup>213</sup> The film became a monster hit in both Europe making over a million dollars profit before it was ever shown.

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<sup>211</sup> Fulci knew that by naming the film *Zombi 2* he would have a built in audience. This film has nothing to do with the previous Romero/Argento film. Ironically, the film was released as *Zombie* in the U.S.

<sup>212</sup> John Sirabella. *Building a Better Zombi*. *Zombi 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. Media Blasters 2005

<sup>213</sup> *Zombie* "Zombi 2" Prod. Fabrizio De Angelis, Dir. Lucio Fulci Italy 1979. The death of Olga Karlatos by a wooden splinter to the eye is considered to be one of the most shocking deaths in the zombie canon. Fabio Frizzi, the films composer would go on and produce many electronic scores for Fulci in films such as *Aldila (The Beyond)*, 1981) and *Lo Squattore de New York (New York Ripper)*, 1983)

It also was a success in the U.S. with the tag line ‘We Are Going to Eat You’. Like its predecessor *Dawn of the Dead* (*Zombi*, 1978) it was released uncut without a rating.<sup>214</sup>

With the financial success of *Zombi 2*, Italian filmmakers jumped on the bandwagon trying to outdo Fulci’s masterpiece. First on the list was Marino Girolami’s *Zombi Holocaust* (1980). Utilizing some of the cast of *Zombi 2* as well as the same locales, *Zombi Holocaust* juggles both the zombie genre and the cannibal genre to mixed results. Beginning in New York, the story follows a policeman (Ian McCulloch) investigating brutal mutilations at New York hospitals. Following up some leads, he and a beautiful anthropologist (Alexander Delli Colli) end up in Southeast Asia where they discover a mad doctor (Donald O’Brien) transforming the local natives into cannibal zombies. Though the plot is strictly action/adventure, the gore and sex is pure exploitation. Zombies have boat motors driven into their faces, hands are seen delving into eviscerated bodies with the inevitable intestine pulling, people are impaled on makeshift bamboo traps and our heroine manages to show her breasts in 10 minute intervals.<sup>215</sup> Though appealing European audiences, the American distributors believed the film needed more localized setting in order to be successful. Incorporating a small amount of footage from American filmmaker Andy Foukes’ half completed *Tales that Will Tear your Heart Out* (1979) the U.S. distributor retitled the film as *Dr. Butcher M.D.* This re-titling mistakenly led the movie audience to believe it was an American

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<sup>214</sup> The practice of bypassing the MPAA and releasing a film without a rating in the U.S. allowed European exploitation filmmakers to screen their films at large cineplex’s without cutting the gore which would have gotten them ‘X’ ratings. By stipulating that there was no explicit sex in the film and only those over 18 were allowed to see it, filmmakers could show their films without the stigma that the ‘X’ rating carried.

<sup>215</sup> Zombie Holocaust “Zombi Holocausto” Prod. Fabrizio De Angelis, Dir. Marino Girolami Italy 1980

production. Distributors would often blur the line of production in order to get higher returns at the box office.<sup>216</sup>

Umberto Lenzi tried his hand at the genre in 1980 as well. Already delving into the Giallo (*Sette Orchidee Macchiate di Rosso*, 1972) and Cannibal pictures (*Mangiati vivi!*, 1980), Lenzi crafted a zombie movie with a few key differences. Instead of the recent dead coming back to life, in *Incubo Sulla Citta Contaminata* (*Nightmare City*, 1980) Lenzi decided to use the fear of nuclear power that was prevalent in the early 1980s. Related Lenzi:

“If you ask me what is the biggest threat to society is contamination from radiation and chemicals that cause sickness and death. It’s not that I wanted a political message, I didn’t, but I did want to have an alarm go off.”<sup>217</sup>

Political fears aside, *Incubo* plays like exploitation camp. The story of a reporter (Hugo Stiglitz) who witnesses the siege of a city by radioactive cannibals contains all the sex and violence of typical exploitation fare. The film puts the characters in outlandish early-80s situations like having the zombies attack the local Italian version of a “Solid Gold” type video dance show. In Lenzi’s version all the lovely leotard young ladies are attacked, getting their nipples ripped out for the audience to see.<sup>218</sup> One new characteristic is that Lenzi imbues his zombies with speed. Unlike the rambling slow dead of both the Romero and Fulci films, Lenzi’s zombies are fast, intelligent and use

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<sup>216</sup> John Sirabella. *Interview with Roy Foukes*. *Zombie Holocaust* DVD. Shriek Show. 2002 The M.D. in Doctor Butcher M.D. stood for Medical Deviate

<sup>217</sup> David Gregory. *Tales from a Contaminated City*. DVD interview with Umberto Lenzi. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2002

<sup>218</sup> *Nightmare City* “*Incubo Sullà Citta Contaminata*” Prod. Luis Méndez, Dir. Umberto Lenzi Italy/Spain 1980

weapons to destroy their prey.<sup>219</sup> They also don't feast on flesh as much as they needed uncontaminated blood to live on.

The shift in typical zombie movies demonstrated by Lenzi was not lost on other Italian exploitation directors. Each tried to come up with a different angle that would move a formula that was already becoming stale by 1980. Antonio Margheriti, known for his gothic horror films of the 1960s, came up with the most unique, *Apocalypse Domani* (*Cannibal Apocalypse*, 1980). Set in Atlanta Georgia, *Apocalypse* looks at the lives of 3 Vietnam vets, (including American John Saxon and Italian Giovanni Lombardo Radice<sup>220</sup>) who after undergoing extreme torture during their stints in Viet Nam find themselves lusting after human flesh. It was the political content that most appealed to actor Saxon:

I thought it was interesting, it was a horror film but had a kinda of a metaphor that war or something like war was a transmittable like a virus. We were just finishing up the sense of Viet Nam, the problem of the war in Viet Nam war and the problem it caused in this country. There was something like kinda a virus, something that made people sick, the idea that something was going on that was transmitted was interesting.<sup>221</sup>

Margheriti's film had the lofty idea of exploring a different side of cannibalism this time through the eyes of a war/horror film, The film producers capitalizing on the trends on 1980 saw to it that it contained large doses of gore. Consequently in *Apocalypse* stomachs are shot out, blood is spilled and the usual amounts of female nudity are all

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<sup>219</sup> This type of fast zombie was recently resurrected in both Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002) and in the recent 2005 remake of *Dawn of the Dead*.

<sup>220</sup> Radice was busy in 1980 making 3 of the most infamous Italian exploitation, *Fulci's Paura nella Città de Morti Viventi*, Lenzi's *Cannibal Ferox* and Margheriti's *Apocalypse Domani* in the span of a year.

<sup>221</sup> Cannibal Apocalypse Redux. *Cannibal Apocalypse* DVD. Image Entertainment. 2003

apart of the film.<sup>222</sup> Not surprisingly the censors in both U.S. and Britain had a field day with it. In the U.S. the film was initially shown, slightly trimmed, under the titled *Cannibals in the Streets* without a rating. It was replaced by a massively edited R-rated version, (*Invasion of the Flesh Hunters*) which distorted the screenplay to a large extent. In Britain, the film was banned outright, another casualty of the ‘video nasties’ era of the early 1980s.<sup>223</sup>

Another “zombie” themed film released in 1980 with much less loftier cinematic goals was Aristide Massaccesi’s *Anthropophagus (The Grim Reaper)*. The story of a group of travelers tormented on a Greek island by a cannibalistic killer (writer Luigi Montifiore) was made solely for entertainment and had no artistic pretensions. Written in 4 days and shot on a shoestring budget, *Anthropophagus* contained some of the most radical gore sequences to date. Scenes included our cannibal protagonist pulling out an unborn fetus from actress Serena Grandi and eating it and climaxes with the killer eating his own intestines after receiving a fatal knife wound from heroine Tisa Farrow.<sup>224</sup> Montifiore stated that these effects were included as a game to see whom between him and Massaccesi could come up with the most disgusting scenes.<sup>225</sup> Consequently, many of the heavy gore sequences were edited out of most U.S. and British versions. Retitled *The Grim Reaper*, it was only in 2006 that these sequences became available via DVD.

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<sup>222</sup> Cannibal Apocalypse “Apocalypse Domani” Prod. Maurizio and Sandro Amati, Dir. Antonio Margheriti Italy/U.S./German 1980

<sup>223</sup> Travis Crawford. The Butchering of Cannibal Apocalypse. Cannibal Apocalypse DVD. Image Entertainment.

<sup>224</sup> Anthropophagus Prod. George Eastman, Edward L. Montoro, Aristide Masseur, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1980 The effect used was a skinned rabbit to take the place of the fetus.

<sup>225</sup> Interview with Luigi Montifiore. *Anthropophagus*. DVD Shriek Show 2006

If Massaccesi made movie audiences uncomfortable with his use of gore, he confounded everyone when he included hard-core pornography within the Zombie sub-genre. 1980 saw the release of both *La Notti Erotiche dei Morti Viventi (Erotic Nights of the Living Dead)* and *Porno Holocaust*. Filmed together in Santa Domingo with the same cast, Massaccesi, who had previously filmed the black Emanuelle films, fuses the two genres together making for a visceral experience. Both *La Notti* and *Porno Holocaust* focus on a group of business people and/or scientists who reach a deserted island, have sex, and are killed one by one. Bad acting, poor gore effects and un-erotic sex make the films an alienating experience.<sup>226</sup> The merging of hard-core and extreme violence is disturbing. In *La Notti*, the juxtaposition between a man having a three-way with two ladies and another man getting his throat torn out is jarring. Another scene in which the hero (Luigi Montefiori) getting orally pleased only to have his penis ripped off confounds an audience's response. Are people supposed to be turned on and excited or scared and disgusted? In *Porno Holocaust* (1980) racist attitudes dominates, as a dark-skinned zombie with a monstrous penis rapes the white female travelers killing them with his wide girth. In one scene, the zombie forces a woman to fellate him, which inevitably leads to her choking to death.<sup>227</sup> Neither of these films garnered much success. Massaccesi, who endeavored to mingle his two favorite genres conceded that the public rejected both films.<sup>228</sup>

Though many can argue that the Italian Zombie sub-genre was purely exploited for financial reasons, the truth is the zombie was more than that. These films were a

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<sup>226</sup> The sexual scenes can be considered a turn off because lead actor Mark Shannon clearly had genital warts which were fully on display during the sex scenes.

<sup>227</sup> Russell. 134-135

<sup>228</sup> Palmerini and Mistretta. 77

manifestation of all the fears society had in the late '70s and early part of the '80s. Whether it was nuclear, religious, environmental, political or even increasing globalization, the zombie film forced audiences into facing their fears in a visceral way. In a time when the Italian horror industry needed a hit, the zombie film provided some brief comfort. Though wildly popular in 1980, the zombie craze would only last a few more years. Films such as Fragrasso's *Zombi 4: After Death* (1988) and Bianchi's *La Notte del Terrore (Nights of Terror, 1981)* pretty much thematically bankrupted the genre with bad effects, acting and terrible scripts. Only recently with films such as *28 Days Later* (2003), *28 Weeks Later* (2007), a remade version of *Dawn of the Dead* (2005) has the Zombie film has experienced a resurgence in popularity. With the war in Iraq, new, frightening medical advances, immigration issues and a world increasingly more chaotic, the Zombie films allow modern audiences to transfer their fears to a mindless foe just as they did in the late 70s.

### **The Devil Made Her Do It: Satanic Possession and Nunsplotation**

Naturally if *The Exorcist* had not had been successful, no one would have thought of *L'Anchrist*.

—Italian Director Alberto de Martino<sup>229</sup>

The worldwide success of Ken Russell's *The Devils* (1971) and William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) gave Italian filmmakers new story ideas in which to exploit. Creating two distinctive sub-genres, Nunsplotation and Devil Possession films, Italian filmmakers

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<sup>229</sup> Alberto De Martino interview. The Antichrist DVD. Anchor Baby Entertainment. 2002

were able to successfully exploit a topic that was rarely defamed prior to the '70s, religion.

Italy's strong connection to Roman Catholicism ensured that the church had a powerful influence over the content of Italy's films. The modernization process begun in 1962 with Pope Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council mirrored the social changes that were going on during the era. The changes involved everything from new design for clerics to choice of language at sermons. This modernization had an effect on films that had religious subjects<sup>230</sup> Critics and filmmakers could now start to criticize religious themes as well as produce films with mature subject matter, subjects the church would often disapprove of. By the early '70s, though government censorship still had to be dealt with, the Church could rarely come up with enough influence to interfere with a film release.<sup>231</sup> It was in this atmosphere that "nunsplotation" began to proliferate. Films such as *Suor Omicidi* (*Killer Nun*, 1978) and *Le Scomunicate di San Valentino* (*The Sinful Nuns of St. Valentine*, 1973) showcased nuns indulging in the most lewd behavior whether it was sex outside of marriage, rampant lesbianism or just plain murder. The films' modus operandi was to convey the "truth" of what was perceived to go on behind convent walls as well looking at forbidden acts within the clergy.<sup>232</sup>

If the nuns of Italy were sinfully bothered then the virginal daughters of pious Italian fathers must have had the same target on them. It was these women that the devil himself liked to possess in a series of Exorcist rip-offs. Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) was a huge

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<sup>230</sup> Bertolino, M. and E. Ridola. Vizietti All'Italiana: L'Epoca D'oro Della Commedia Sexy. Florence. 1999

<sup>231</sup> Tamao Nakahara. Barred Nuns: Italian Nunsplotation Films. In *Alternative Europe: Eurotrash and Exploitation since 1945*. Edited by Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik. Wallflower Press. London. 126

<sup>232</sup> Nakahara. 129-130

hit in Italy sending Italian filmmakers scurrying to find suitable scripts in which to exploit this sub-genre. Two of the first films were Berruti's *L'Antichristo* (*The Anti-Christ*, 1974) and Assontists's *Che Sei* (*Beyond the Door*, 1974). Each of these films showcased young, pious women who were possessed by Satan, or in the case of *Che Sei* impregnated with his child. Characters in these films are often made to perform a myriad of sexual acts including on young teenage boys and in some cases animals.<sup>233</sup> With the requisite green pea soup vomit and cursing that would make a truck driver blush, these films used religious iconography to express a twisted view of the conflicts of sexual freedom.

*L'Antichristo* (1974) stars Carla Gravina as a young, crippled woman who under hypnosis becomes possessed by spirit of her former life, a nasty heretic. She begins having visions of black masses involving her performing anallingus on a goat. Soon after that she seduces her brother and kills some locals before finally being 'exorcised' by an Irish priest (Arthur Kennedy). Producer Giulio Berruti saw the film not as indictment of religion but of sexual frustration,

This film was different because it displayed a sexual frustration that the audience can identify with. My film doesn't have shocks like you would expect from a horror film, the audience does not scream. Instead they see the sexual frustration and understand the feeling.<sup>234</sup>

This may be so but what the devil possession films of Italy show us is a hegemonic view from a point in time when the roles of women were changing. The women of these sub-genre films are only cured of their sexuality and blasphemy by strong, conservative men. *The Exorcist* (1973) channeled its evil through a young girl with the statement that it can

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<sup>233</sup> Troy Howarth,. *DVD review of The Antichrist*. DVD Maniacs website [http://www.dvdmaniacs.net/Reviews/A-D/anti\\_christ.html](http://www.dvdmaniacs.net/Reviews/A-D/anti_christ.html) April 25, 2002

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Giulio Berruti. *Raising Hell*. The Antichrist DVD. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2002

reside in the most innocent of youth. For Italian's though, these films are much more about female subjugation. They showcase the confusion and conflict of an era where sexual expression was looking for an outlet and Italian men had to adjust.<sup>235</sup>

### **Sexploitation-Italia style**

Because that's what its like to be a woman.

—Black Emanuelle (Laura Gemser) explaining her reason for leaving the man who loves her. This conversation is just prior to getting on a train and being gang banged by a local soccer team in *Emanuelle Nera (Black Emanuelle, 1975)*<sup>236</sup>

The feminist movement began its ascent in Italy later than other Western countries. The male dominated, church enforced, Italian society seemed unable to reconcile the change in women's roles with their long established patterns of social behavior. In the '60s, Italian feminists began to challenge the rigid Catholic morals of society and a legal system that gave women little defense against male oppression, rape, or even murder. The feminists also challenged the male dominance of politics right across the spectrum and even within the far-left political movements. Their strategies began to sway the public. By the early and mid-70s, this began to change. Divorce was finally legalized in 1970 and confirmed by popular referendum in 1974. Abortion was legalized in 1978.<sup>237</sup> The agitation caused by Italian feminists was to have an impact on they way women were portrayed in exploitation films.

Italian filmmakers up to the '70s had never been successful in integrating strong independent women in their films without there being some form of violent catalyst.

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<sup>235</sup> Nakahara, 132

<sup>236</sup> *Emanuelle Nera*, Dir. Bitto Albertini 1975 The Black Emanuelle Box Set. Severin films. 2007

<sup>237</sup> Italy. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. May 23, 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/eb/article-258867>>.

Roles like Sophia Loren's in *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*, 1960) showed the dichotomy of a strong woman in a man's world. These roles were few and far between though. For Italian (men) filmmakers, women were relegated to sexy, kittenish roles in the fun-loving sex comedies that Italians were known for. As the '70s began, exploitation filmmakers began to take advantage of the changing society within Italy and the world. Under the guise of feminism, these filmmakers would show female characters being independent and free to explore their lives, careers and their sexuality. This is only a guise though as the women in these exploitation films are made to suffer for their independence. Raped, abandoned, and even in some cases murdered, the women of this sexually explicit sub-genre are exploited completely. This is not to say that the men of these films are honored. Quite the contrary, many times the men of these films are seen as without conscious, evil, and completely focused on dominating women.

One of the most successful Italian entries of the exploitation market was the *Emanuelle Nera* (*Black Emanuelle*) series of soft-core films in the late 70s. Capitalizing on the international success of France's *Emmanuelle* in 1974, Italian producers tried to come up with a similar product that could be made cheaply. This was difficult because *Emmanuelle* adopted an air of sophistication as opposed to the usual bump and grind of other erotic films. This forced European producers to scout exotic locations around the world, employ expensive clothes and maintain the feel of an affluent society.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> David Flint. The Emmanuelle Phenomenon. DVD supplement. *Emanuelle in America*. Blue Underground. 2003

Using Indonesian actress Laura Gemser in the title role, the *Emanuelle Nera* series created some of the most disturbing mixtures of sex and violence.<sup>239</sup> The first film in the series *Emanuelle Nera (Black Emanuelle, 1975)* starts off innocently enough. Playing a newspaper reporter, Gemser sets out for Africa where she embarks on several sexual conquests including a train full of traveling soccer players and a wealthy husband and wife.<sup>240</sup> Director Bitto Albertini downplays the violence and plays up a kittenish, decidedly male gaze, sexuality. Commenting on her role in one of her last public interviews in 1996, Gemser discussed embarrassment of filming of erotic scenes, “The first time yes, but in the end you get used to it. Of course, everyone is looking at you stripping! But you treat it like a job and I got paid for doing it.”<sup>241</sup> Released around the world with such titles as *Black Emanuelle* or *Emanuelle in Africa* the film was a resounding hit prompting producers to come up with a quick sequel.

With *Emanuelle Nera Orient Reportage (Emanuelle in Bangkok, 1976)*, Aristide Massaccesi replaced Albertini as director and upped the exploitation factor. Utilizing some Mondo filmmaking techniques such as traditional cultural dancing, Thai boxing, cock-fighting and a mongoose and a snake fighting whilst trapped together in a glass tank Massaccesi also began to showcase the cruelty that men inflict on the women of an *Emanuelle Nera* film. Rape seems to be the only outlet for male/female relations. In the film, Emanuelle (Gemser) is raped by a group of guerillas only to conduct a jovial conversation with them when the deed is over. Becoming a part of a ménage-a-trois with

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<sup>239</sup> Mendik. 147. The dropping of the ‘m’ in the name Emmanuelle was to escape copyright infringement leaving producers free to create as many films as they liked. The fact that Gemser is Eurasian and not truly black was never explained. Gemser had previously had a small role in Emmanuelle’s sequel Emmanuelle L’Antivierge (1975) playing a masseuse.

<sup>240</sup> Black Emanuelle “Emanuelle Nera” Prod. Mario Mariani, Dir. Bitto Albertini Italy/Spain 1975

<sup>241</sup> Manilo Gomasca and Davide Pulici. Audio interview with Laura Gemser. Nocturno Magazine. 1996

an engaged couple, she becomes the object of scorn by Roberto, the male, who is threatened by his fiancée's growing attraction to her. Unable to control his rage he finally blows his top after he finds young Debbie watching him on the job with Emanuelle. "You think I'm going to rape the slut? She'd love to be fucked!" he snarls, before casting dispersion on their muddled sexual orientation with, "God, I hate lezzies!"<sup>242</sup> This type of interaction permeates throughout the entire series as Emanuelle moves from partner to partner.

Massaccesi's next film *Emanuelle in America* (1976), released strategically during America's bicentennial, incorporated almost every element of exploitation filmmaking including, rape, graphic snuff footage, both hard and soft-core sex, and bestiality into a jaw dropping classic. A synopsis of the film showcases the frenetic narrative that plays out in exploitation films as Emanuelle (Gemser) flits from one outrageous sexual scenario to another with a frenzied pace. Introduced as a fashion photographer, Emanuelle is first held at gunpoint while driving through NYC by the boyfriend of one of her nude models. The gunman plans to murder her to purify his girlfriend. When she tries to fellate him to spare her life, he enjoys it and runs away ashamed. Emanuelle goes on assignment all over the world, infiltrating a millionaire's personal harem, witnessing an orgy at a high society party, tracks down a snuff film ring, visits an exclusive club for women who pay for sex with men while they are paraded around like cattle, and many more misadventures, all designed to satisfy her need for sex.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Emanuelle in Bangkok "Emanuelle Nera Orient Reportage" Prod. Fabrizio De Angelis, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1975

<sup>243</sup> Emanuelle in America Prod. Fabrizio De Angelis, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1976

What made the film so shocking was Massacessi's belief that the more you showed graphically the better the film would be. He spared no visual expense whether it was a young woman masturbating a horse or the horrific snuff footage that was screened. Commenting on the inclusion of hardcore sex in the film, Massacessi said,

During that period we had French distributors and they asked us to put harder material into our films. So if a movie was originally soft-core they asked us to add hardcore. Back then there was just theatrical distribution, we weren't even thinking about TV. Now they are shown on television (edited).<sup>244</sup>

The hardcore sex scenes did not go over so well with Gemser who did not participate in them. That doesn't mean that her character did not. Gemser related,

*Emanuelle in America* contains scenes that I refused to act. They shot scenes with another girl; scenes that I refused to do. I don't know if the scenes were cut from the Italian version but they were put in foreign versions. They were hard-core scenes that I refused to do. They hired body doubles for those scenes.<sup>245</sup>

The violence of *Emanuelle in America* (1975) is even more shocking. The snuff footage that *Emanuelle* is forced to watch includes impalings, acid torture, whippings, breast slicing and well as rape with large sharp objects. Massacessi having heard of these so-called 'snuff' movies shot in 8mm in which people were tortured and eventually killed wanted to recreate this shocking atmosphere for the screen. Shooting in 35m, he scratched up the negative so it would appear to have a 8mm look. So good was the effect that most of the audiences believed that they were watching an actual snuff film. This attention to detail not only traumatized audiences but performers in the film. Massacessi was consequently sued by the actress who played in the faked snuff portion of the film.

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<sup>244</sup> Manilo Gomasca and Davide Pulici. Joe D'Amato Competely Uncut.

<sup>245</sup> Manilo Gomasca and Davide Pulici. Audio interview with Laura Gemser.

Citing extreme mental cruelty she tried to take her case to an Italian court. The case was dismissed with Massecesi believing that “she only wanted money”.<sup>246</sup>

Money was what was being made as series cranked along in the late ‘70s. *Emanuelle Perche’ Violenza Alle Donne? (Emanuelle Around the World)* and *La Via Della Prostituzione (Emanuelle and the White Slave Trade)* were released in 1977, *Emanuelle e Gli Ultimi Cannabali (Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals)* in 1978 all starring Gemser as the sexually liberated journalist.

This conjecture between the sexual freedom of women and price she must pay is at the heart of these films. Looking at the treatment of Emanuelle in her films it’s clear that most of the violence is directly aimed at her. Because most of the Black Emanuelle films have a Mondo feel to them, the violence is magnified. Black Emanuelle is forced at gunpoint (*Emanuelle in America* (1976), raped by a train of soccer players (*Emanuelle Nera* (1975), gagged, tied up, subjected to animal invasions and almost cannibalized (*Emanuelle e Gli Ultimi Cannibali* (1978) and beaten within an inch of her life in prison (*Emanuelle Fuga dall’Inferno* (1983). All of these examples are instances in which sexual liberation of women is tied to violent acts. Shockingly though, violence is not used as the aphrodisiac to get one in the mood but to actually get one off.<sup>247</sup>

While there were many different Em(m)anuelle films in the late ‘70s (*Yellow Emanuelle* (1977), *Nea, a Young Emmanuelle* (1977), *Emanuelle in Japan* (1978) etc.) it was the *Emanuelle Nera* series that pushed the limits of exploitation creating an uncomfortable alliance between sex and graphic violence.

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<sup>246</sup> Manilo Gomasca and Davide Pulici. Joe D’Amato Completely Uncut

<sup>247</sup> Xavier Mendik. Black Sex, Bad Sex: Monsterous Ethnicity in the Black Emanuelle Films. 146-156

## Conclusion

There's nothing quite like an Italian horror film. As a genre, they constitute the missing link of the cinema world; straddling the fence between cerebral art films and base exploitation.

—Historian David White<sup>248</sup>

The history of the Italian Horror/Exploitation film is a fascinating one. It's an example of a truly production line type of industry. From the early days of the 50s where it was only possible to come up with product by copying the popular material of the U.S. and Britain to forging ahead with original new ideas such as the Giallo in the mid-60s only to lose out to better funded industries in the 70s. They represent a distinct social, political and economic viewpoint of their era as they pushed the envelope on taste. Regardless whether one is shocked, titillated, or outraged, Italian exploitation films are the benchmark in their genre. They continue to this day to make a strong impression on new audiences that are viewing these films for the first time.

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<sup>248</sup> White, History of the Italian Horror Film pt. 1, <http://www.horror-wood.com/italianhorror1.htm>

## CHAPTER 3 SPAIN

Spanish cinema lives in a state of isolation. It is isolated not only from the world, but from our own reality.

—Juan Antonio Bardem, 1950s Spanish filmmaker<sup>1</sup>

This chapter looks at the history of the Spanish horror and exploitation film from its beginning with Jess Franco's film *Gritos en la Noche* (*The Awful Dr. Orlof*) in 1962 to the advent of home video in 1980. More so than Italy, Spain's horror and exploitation output was tied to its political environment. The end of General Francisco Franco's dictatorship precipitated the arrival of the exploitation filmmaking in Spain. Spanish exploitation filmmakers had to subvert overt sexuality and violence due to governmental censorship, producing films that relied on traditional monsters, vampires, werewolves and mummies, to frighten. My conclusion will show the Spanish filmmakers were able to express their criticisms of the government and of society by producing films in which the audience had to decipher at a later date. By isolating and defining many of sub-genres within the category of Spanish horror/exploitation cinema and by looking at many of the auteurs involved, Jess Franco, Paul Naschy, Armando De Ossorio etc., it will show a film industry that was as culturally significant as its fellow Italian and French exploitation filmmakers.

Though not as prolific as the Italian output, Spanish exploitation films were a popular mainstay to grindhouses, drive-in's and television stations in the late '60s and '70s. Utilizing evocative visual imagery on smaller budgets, the Spanish exploitation industry blurred the line between reality and fantasy. The industry offered up traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Cathall Toehill and Pete Toombs. *Immoral Tales*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin. 1994 63

horror characters like the Wolfman, Frankenstein and Dracula and fused them with Spanish sensibilities and increasingly adult themes as well as creating new types of horrors like the Templer Knights of Amando de Ossorio's *Blind Dead* entries that have gone on to become classic icons around the world. Due to heavy political pressure, Spanish exploitation was forced to sublimate overt criticism of Spanish society giving rise to films, like Eloy De La Iglesia's *La Semana del Asesino (Cannibal Man)*, whose political message was entrenched within the subplot of an exploitation film.<sup>2</sup>

The genre proliferated during Spain's move to democracy in the '70s. As censorship imposed by dictator General Francisco Franco waned, a new era of Spanish film emerged resulting in worldwide exposure and acceptance.<sup>3</sup> Before the oppressive Franco regime, Spain enjoyed a profitable film industry dating back to 1886. Spanish films up the mid-'30s had mostly consisted of operettas and literary adaptations that were filmed in a rich visual style. These became the most popular form of entertainment to the Spanish audiences.<sup>4</sup> After Franco took office via a coup d'etat in 1936, the Spanish film industry went through a complete transformation. Studio's had to conform to the extremist nature of the ruling party, which in film was referred to "Francoist", and had a strong intolerance towards outside politics and religion leading to the official and social banning of sexuality.<sup>5</sup>

Due to Franco's strict and sometimes violently enforced codes, the Spanish exploitation film was relatively non-existent in the '40s and '50s. As other European

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<sup>2</sup> *Cannibal Man* "La Semana del Asesino" Prod. Jose Truchado, Dir. Eloy de la Inglesia Spain 1971

<sup>3</sup> Marsha Kinder. "Spain After Franco" in *The Oxford History of World Cinema* Oxford University Press, London. 1997 596

<sup>4</sup> Jay Slater. "Hispanic Horror, A Brief History" *Rue Morgue*, July 2005. 26

<sup>5</sup> Carlos Aguilar. *Jess Franco, El Sexo del Horror*. Italy: Glittering Images, 1999. 23

countries were beginning to explore genres, including exploitation, that were more modern in approach, the Spanish film industry was forced to adhere to Franco's ultra conservative stance that rendered films passé. The Spanish film industry itself lamented the state of its movie industry. In 1955, a 4-day national conference held in the university town of Salamanca gave Spanish filmmakers the opportunity to deliver a harsh critique of the Spanish state of cinema. Written by filmmaker Juan Antonio Bardem, the conclusion was that "After 60 years of film, Spanish cinema is politically ineffective, socially false, intellectually worthless, aesthetically non-existent, and industrially crippled." This and subsequent conferences began to galvanize Spanish filmmakers into making more quality pictures while trying to come to grips with the heavy censorship of the Spanish government.<sup>6</sup>

Things began to change by the mid-50s. A behind the scenes movement was started to move Spain away from its isolationist tendencies and to be reaccepted into the international community. Events like U.S. President Eisenhower's trip to Madrid in 1959 as well as a burgeoning of tourism within Spain began to break down cultural barriers.<sup>7</sup>

In film, this movement of modernization translated into the introduction of outside influences to Spanish audiences. Italian comedies that were slightly more risqué than their Spanish counterparts began to seep through the censors as well as consumer orientated "holiday" pictures, which featured fashionable sports cars, pop-music and the newest fashions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kinder. 597

<sup>7</sup> Tohill and Toombs. 63

<sup>8</sup> Tohill and Toombs. 63. In addition, westerns, spy dramas and comedy thrillers also were popular staples of the Spanish moviegoer.

In addition to the influx of foreign material, the '50s and '60s was also the time Spain began experimenting with co-productions with outside filmmakers. Epic films with strong American and British backing like *King of Kings* (1960), *El Cid* (1961), *55 Days in Peking* (1963) and *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) brought a new professionalism into the Spanish movie industry as well as educating them on the newest technologies. The sharing of production costs that these films afforded offered Spain the chance to recoup their financial expenditures with little or no risk. It also opened the door to future collaborations with these outside film industries.<sup>9</sup> These collaborations were to have a profound impact on the exploitation genre in Spain as it began with the first true Spanish exploitation film, Jess Franco's *Gritos en La Noche* (*The Awful Dr. Orloff*) in 1961.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Gritos en La Noche*, Genre Beginnings**

It (*Gritos*) strikes an underlying harmonic of progress and innovation, heralding a new age of erotic and sado-masochistic permissiveness within the genre. If ever there was such a place as a museum for horror classics, *The Awful Dr. Orloff* (*Gritos en La Noche*) would be placed proudly on a pedestal therein.

—Tim Lucas, liner notes of the 2000 DVD release of *The Awful Dr. Orloff* (*Gritos en La Noche*)<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Britain, the U.S. or even Italy, Spain does not have a rich historical tradition of horror literature. Though the classic works of Spaniards Miguel de Cervantes and Francisco de Quevedo have slight horrific themes, Spain as a whole did not have the

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<sup>9</sup> These international collaborations would continue into the 1970s with such high profile films as *Nicholas and Alexandra* (1971) and many westerns.

<sup>10</sup> David Kalat. French Revolution: The Secret History of Gallic Horror Movies." In *Fear Without Frontiers*. Ed. Steven Jay Schneider. London: Fab Press. 2003. 277

<sup>11</sup> Tim Lucas. *The Awful Dr. Orloff* (*Gritos en La Noche*). Liner notes on DVD. Image Entertainment. 2000

gothic literature tradition that provided other countries with the rich source material for horror and exploitation films. Because of this, as well as a political system, which eschewed violence and sex on screen, horror and exploitation films were virtually non-existent before 1961.<sup>12</sup>

Those few films that contained horrific elements prior to 1961 relied on fable type themes. *La Torre de Los Seite Jorobados* (*The Tower of the Seven Hunchbacks*) in 1943 is generally considered to be the first Spanish horror film.<sup>13</sup> Set in 19th century Madrid and based on a Spanish novel by Emilio Carrere, the film incorporated the style of the gothic American Universal horror films that were popular at the time. Directed by Edgar Neville, the story of a ghost (Félix de Pomés) who enlists the aid of a young man (Antonio Casel) to protect his niece from a secret society of counterfeit hunchbacks hiding in an underground Jewish bunker, the film utilizes a myriad of different horror stereotypes including ghosts, sinister hunchbacks, secret societies, old abandoned houses, hypnotism and murder, themes that was popular in gothic horror films from America.<sup>14</sup> Unlike those horror films, it also incorporated humor to soften the violent and horrific themes that Spanish audiences had not been used to. The film was not a huge success in Spain. Added to that a government that was extremely unsupportive of these types of movies made the horror/exploitation market in Spain virtually non-existent for the next 15 years.

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<sup>12</sup> Alan Jones. Spain. *The Rough Guide to Horror Movies*. New York: Rough Guides. 2005. 245

<sup>13</sup> Jones. 245

<sup>14</sup> *La Torre de Los Seite Jorobados* "The Tower of the Seven Hunchbacks" Prod. Luis Judez, Dir. Edgar Neville Spain 1943. The plot device of having the sinister hunchbacks holed up in an underground Jewish bunker is interesting from a historical viewpoint. Though the film makes it clear that it was an abandoned bunker left over from the Inquisition, it is easy to see the correlation between the Spanish mistrust of the Jews and the events happening within Germany and Eastern Europe during the early 1940s.

Those other films from the '40s and '50s, *El Crimen de la Calle de Bordadores* (1948) also directed by Neville, *El Huesped de Las Tinieblas* (*The Monster of Las Tinieblas*, 1948) and *La Corna Negra* (*The Black Crown*, 1951) all followed the same traditional formula, historically based, with a ghost or monster avenging social wrongs. The horror element in each of these films was played down, as was the violence with most of murders happening off screen. None of these films garnered much success, which in turn did little to convince Spanish filmmakers to look at the horror genre with anything but indifference. It would take 10 years before Spain discovered a winning formula for the horror/exploitation film and that would be at the hands of Spain's most prolific filmmaker Jesús (Jess) Franco and character by the name of Dr. Orlof.

Released in 1961, *Gritos en la Noche* became the first internationally successful horror and exploitation film from Spain. Gleaned from a popular story from Central America that director Jess Franco knew from childhood, *Gritos* tells the story of Dr. Orlof, (Howard Vernon) a madman whose sole purpose is to repair his sister's burned, ravaged face with skin grafts from local young women.<sup>15</sup> With the assistance of a blind bug-eyed monster named Morpho, Dr. Orlof carries out his experiments by kidnapping and torturing the young woman before being brought down by a police chief (Conrado San Martin) and his beautiful fiancée (Diana Lorys).

Franco got the idea for a filmmatic version of the story while shooting *Vampiresas 1930* (*Vamps of 1930*, 1960) a big budgeted homage to the Hollywood

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<sup>15</sup> Lucas. *The Awful Dr. Orlof*. Liner Notes. The name of Dr. Orloff comes from the Edgar Night novel *The Dead Eyes of London*. Howard Vernon would go on to become Franco's most prolific actor starring in over 35 films for the Spanish director. Born in Baden, Switzerland in 1914 to an American father and Swiss mother, Vernon grew up in the U.S. before returning to Europe to finish high school. Specializing in playing German officers during the early 1950s, Vernon became well known later by playing shady, smooth characters like Dr. Orloff. In addition to his work for Franco, Vernon worked with such talent as Orson Wells, Rita Hayworth, Fritz Lang, Woody Allen and Michael Powell. Vernon died in Paris in July 1996.

musical. While in the south of France, Franco persuaded his producers to see the British release of *Brides of Dracula* (1960). Franco related that it was not easy getting them to see it because the producers “it was a new experience for both of them. I had to show the possibilities for them. They just thought it was some shit they saw when they were children.”<sup>16</sup> After screening *Brides*, with his co-producers, Franco believed he could make a movie similar to the popular Hammer horror films infiltrating the continent at the time.

When the screening (for *Brides*) ended I proposed him (sic) to make a movie in the same vein, but with a different style. He became a little nervous because making a terror movie in Spain, in 1961, sounded like a Surrealist provocation, but I insisted so much that in the end, he agreed to make it with the same French co-producer of *Vampiresas 1930*.<sup>17</sup>

While *Gritos* liberally borrows plot elements of other films that were popular of the day (Brahm’s *The Lodger*, 1944, Summer’s *Dark Eyes of London*, Ferroni’s *Il Mulino delle Donne di Pietra*, 1960 and Franju’s *Les Yeux sans Visage*, 1959), Franco modernizes the story with liberal doses of violence and for the first time, nudity. Female breasts now peak out of the scared, helpless victims of Dr. Orlof’s. This teasing kind of nudity predated the British horror films use of it by 9 years. Franco was confident that his story of a mad scientist (Howard Vernon) who tries to restore the beauty of his sister would be a hit.<sup>18</sup> His concern was that he may not get that censorship difficulties might stop the film from being made. In order to accommodate the censors, Franco produced two versions of the film. One, a complete version, would play in countries like France (under the title *L’Orrible Dr. Orlof*) whose society had a higher acceptance of nudity and

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<sup>16</sup> Andy Stark and Pete Tombs. *The Diabolical Mr. Franco*. Dvd Documentary. Boum. The Diabolical Dr. Z Dvd. Mondo Macabro 2001

<sup>17</sup> Aguilar. 154

<sup>18</sup> *The Awful Dr. Orloff* “Gritos En La Noche” Prod. and Dir. Jesus Franco Spain 1961.

violence. The other version was an edited version that would play in countries like Spain and England where nudity was not yet an accepted form of public entertainment.

According to Franco, he was worried that the uncut version would have had a disastrous effect with the Spanish censors. When asked about creating a tamer, Spanish version, Franco relied “If I hadn’t they’d killed me, push me out of Spain or something.”<sup>19</sup>

The film was a huge success. In France, the uncut version of the film was met with acceptance. As was typical for international exploitation films in the U.S., it took a while for *Gritos* to make it to American shores. Retitled *The Awful Dr. Orlof*, the film was released 3 years later in 1964 as the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of a double bill with Riccardo Freda’s 1962 classic Italian gothic, *The Horrible Dr. Hitchcock*.<sup>20</sup> Franco reflects back on the success,

It was a wonderful directorial experience without any problems whatsoever, everything went just right. The critics weren’t bad, and the film, from a strictly commercial point of view, was rather successful, since it was somehow, distributed all the world over, so much so that, to date, I’m still reading several American magazines where my name is usually reported as Jess “The Awful Dr. Orlof” Franco.<sup>21</sup>

The success of the Dr. Orlof character translated into the good doctor becoming a horror staple in Spain and the rest of Europe, appearing in a slew of sequels from 1962 to early ‘80s, many of them directed by Franco himself.

Dr. Orlof was not the only mentally unbalanced character hanging around Spanish soil in the early ‘60s. In the U.S./Spanish co-production *Fuego* (Pyro, 1963), Spanish

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<sup>19</sup> Tohill and Toombs. 84-85

<sup>20</sup> Lucas. *The Awful Dr. Orlof*. Because both films had narratives set in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there is little problem with releasing the films much later than they were produced. Had either one been set in early 1960s there may have been some problem as society and culture had changed dramatically in the period between 1961 and 1964.

<sup>21</sup> Aguilar. 154

locales were used to tell the story of an adulterous engineer (American, Barry Sullivan) who breaks off an affair with the mentally unbalanced Laura (Martha Hyer) only to find out that she is pyromaniac. Sullivan's face is completely burned off while trying to save his wife and daughter from a fire set by Hyer. This sets the stage for a murderous confrontation. With the aid of a naïve carnival worker (Soledad Miranda), Sullivan enacts revenge on Laura resulting in both their deaths.<sup>22</sup> Illicit sex and violence between a married man and his mistress were the focal points for the film making it a precursor to films like Lyne's *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and Edel's *Body of Evidence* (1993).

*Fuego's* director American Sidney Pink was no stranger to procuring European production companies to co-produce his exploitation films.<sup>23</sup> Using a Spanish production company and employing Spanish supporting actors, Pink found the experience of making the film a joy. Unfortunately, the heads of American International Pictures (A.I.P.) saddled the film with a difficult title to understand, resulting in audience apathy. In one of his last interviews before his death in 2002, Pink related the joys and pains of exploitation filmmaking,

I would say that *Pyro* is probably one of the best I've ever done. The Spanish cast was absolutely perfect and the backgrounds of Spain were so gorgeous. Everyone loved it, but nobody came to see it. It was a bad title job. Jimmy Nicholson and Sam Arkoff (heads of A.I.P.) gave it that title, and I asked them if you asked 90% of people what the title means they couldn't tell you.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Sullivan's death as a result of a fall from a Ferris wheel is symbolic of the European fascination, yet mistrust of traveling carnivals.

<sup>23</sup> Previous to *Pyro* he co-produced two Danish sci-fiction films *Journey to the Seventh Planet* (1962) and *Reptilicus* (1962), Denmark's answer to the Godzilla films.

<sup>24</sup> Sidney Pink. Interview by Sam Sherman. *Pyro* Dvd. Troma Team Video. 2001. In England the original name, *The Phantom of the Ferris Wheel* was used. AIP changed the title to the more lurid *Pyro* for American audiences.

Pink's assessment may be a bit optimistic. While the film is certainly entertaining *Fuego* falls in with the batch of revenge movies with scarred protagonists. The British version of *Phantom of the Opera* (1962), *Circus of Horrors* (1962) and the Italian *La Vergine di Norimberga* (*The Virgin of Nuremberg*, 1963) all had the same general storylines and were competing for audience attention. There was little in *Fuego* that distance itself from the others.

The lack of financial success of *Fuego* in 1963 meant that most Spanish filmmakers would not participate in a genre that was becoming extremely lucrative for their Italian and British counterparts. It would be another 4 to 5 years before the Spanish horror boom took off and Spanish filmmakers could profit from this type of entertainment. The one lone exception though to this was Spanish filmmaker Jess Franco.

### **Jess Franco: El Maestro**

I'm find myself very comfortable in my skin and I love my work. If there's a minority who doesn't like me, too bad for them.

—Jess Franco, July 2005<sup>25</sup>

If exploitation were to have a king, it would have to be Franco. I mean nobody can be as passionate about filth and filmmaking as Franco.

—Nigel Wingrove, *Salvation Films*<sup>26</sup>

With over 200 films to his credit and more being produced every year, Jess Franco is in the Guinness Book of World Records as one of the most prolific filmmakers

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<sup>25</sup> Chris Alexander. Spain's Sweet Sadist. Interview with Jess Franco. *Rue Morgue* July 2005. Ontario Canada. 21

<sup>26</sup> Andy Stark and Pete Tombs. *The Diabolical Mr. Franco*. Dvd Documentary. Boum. The Diabolical Dr. Z Dvd. Mondo Macabro 2001

of all time.<sup>27</sup> Ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous, Franco's films run the gamut from edgy horror to outright hardcore pornography. His films have played around the world in a variety of different versions, languages and titles. No other filmmaker has been as exulted or decried than Franco. Critics have been split on Franco calling his films everything from "perversely naughty",<sup>28</sup> "entertainingly bizarre",<sup>29</sup> to "torturously slow and painful to watch."<sup>30</sup>

Moving with social times of the late '60s and '70s, Franco called upon his Spanish upbringing to produce films that were surrealistic, horrifying and erotic. Unfortunately, the devotion to this type of subject matter did not sit well with the Spanish censors forcing Franco to flee Spain and produce films throughout all of Europe.

Europe's foremost rebel, Jesús Franco Manera was born in Madrid on May 12, 1930. The son of a medical colonel father and a Cuban mother, Franco spent his early life in Spain dealing with the cruelty of General Franco's (no relation) regime. The enforced conformity, extremist ideology, general intolerance for outside politics and religion and repression of sexuality were to have a profound impact on Franco and helped shape his rebellious tendencies.<sup>31</sup>

Franco's only outlet from the oppressive Spanish society of the time was cinema. Related his early love of cinema Franco recalled,

I first thought to give myself to cinema when I was 9. In 1939, I would often imagine myself dressed like the directors used to back then; loose-fitting trousers,

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<sup>27</sup> Andy Stark and Pete Tombs. The Diabolical Mr. Franco.

<sup>28</sup> Succubus DVD. Review by Vincent Canby. The New York Times. Blue Underground Dvd. 2006

<sup>29</sup> All Movie Guide review. Two Undercover Angels & Kiss Me Monster. Blue Underground Dvd. 2006

<sup>30</sup> James Marriott. Horror Films. London England. Virgin Press. 2004. 66

<sup>31</sup> Aguilar 22-23

peeked cap and megaphone. When I was 11 or 12, my younger brothers and I used to play with newspapers, guessing the names of the movie actors and directors listed within.<sup>32</sup>

Later as Franco moved through boarding schools and universities he discovered his love of music, particularly jazz.<sup>33</sup> Playing several musical instruments, Franco moved through a variety of different jobs throughout the '40s ending up in Paris in 1952. To Franco, Paris represented all the freedom and culture that was not available in Madrid. Studying at the I.D.H.E.C, the French Government's film school, Franco immersed himself in the French, as well as the entire European, culture, learning six languages and becoming knowledgeable with classic literary works.<sup>34</sup>

In 1953, Franco was called back to Spain to work on a film project with Juan Antonio Bardem, a friend he met at school. Working as a 2<sup>nd</sup> assistant director for the film *Cosmicos* (1953), Franco got his feet wet in a business that would consume the rest of his life. Working his way up through the industry, he directed his first film, a documentary produced for the Spanish Ministry of Industry, *Arbol de Espana* in 1957.<sup>35</sup>

After producing more documentaries in the late '50s, Franco decided to make the jump to feature films with the comedy, *Tenemos 18 anos* (*We are 18*, 1959). The film was a complete departure from his previous efforts as well as departure from typical Spanish narratives at the time. Talking about the innovation, Franco has said,

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<sup>32</sup> Aguilar. 23

<sup>33</sup> Franco restless spirit prevented him from actually graduating from these universities which included the I.I.E.C., an institute designed to teach aspiring filmmakers the profession and the Royal Academy of Music in Madrid.

<sup>34</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 80

<sup>35</sup> Aguilar. 23

It occurred to me that I could make a film without any storyline. It had to be shot with the basic equipment that I carried with me, that's a van, a small group of people and an electric generator.<sup>36</sup>

While this cinema verite approach to filmmaking would soon be accepted throughout Europe in the 60s, the film was not a hit with the Spanish censors. Citing a scene involving an escaped prisoner, the Spanish authorities slapped the equivalent of a NC-17 rating on it, meaning it could only play in a few areas of Spain. Franco recounts, "They did it just to fuck me up, you know. They didn't like it from the political point of view." So few, if any moviegoers saw the film that Franco thought would be a "revolution in cinematic narrative".<sup>37</sup>

After the censorship battles with *Tenemos*, Franco decided to go mainstream combining his love of cinema with his love of music. He began directing musicals. His first, *Le Reina del Tabarin* (1960) was inspired by American musicals with its rags to riches story and big, brassy musical numbers. His other musical *Vampiresas 1930* (1961) is even more a throwback to the Busby Berkeley style of musicals from the '30s.<sup>38</sup> Both of these films have little in common with gothic horror *Gritos en La Noche* (*The Awful Dr. Orloff*) that Franco would direct in 1961 and forever change his course in film.

The worldwide success of *Gritos* did not immediately translate into success for Jess Franco in Spain. His next three horror productions *La Mano de un Hombre Muerto* (*The Sadistic Baron Von Klaus*, 1962), the sequel to *Gritos*, *El Secreto Dr. Orloff* (*Dr. Orloff's Monster*, 1964) and *Miss Muerte* (*The Diabolical Dr. Z*, 1965) were all exercises in fighting a film industry that was not interested in producing the kind of films Franco

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<sup>36</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 81

<sup>37</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 81

<sup>38</sup> Les Vampiresas 1930 Prod. Marius Leseour, Dir. Jess Franco Spain 1962

wanted to make.<sup>39</sup> These films constituted a trilogy to which Franco refers to as “museum pieces”, a term for old-fashioned style of filmmaking and traditional narratives.<sup>40</sup>

While revenues for *Gritos*, especially in France, were high, the Spanish film industry saw little advantage to producing more in the same genre. As Franco relates, “*El Secreto del Dr. Orloff* could have been a good movie, at least as good as *Gritos en la Noche*, but the filming was a disastrous experience.” Citing the lack of money available, Franco puts the problem squarely on the Spanish filmmakers mentality,

It was a cooperative society which wanted to get into cinema and when I proposed to make another “Orloff”, they asked me, dumbfounded, “what’s that?”, as a matter of fact Spanish producers see no other films except their own. It was such a poor production I couldn’t even hire back Howard Vernon as the leading character since we didn’t even have enough money to pay his air-ticket much less his cachet.<sup>41</sup>

Money problems aside, Franco made the films more marketable by pushing the sleaze and sex factor. *La Mano de un Hombre Muerto* (*The Sadistic Baron Von Klaus*, 1962) contains as historian Tim Lucas puts it, “horror cinema’s first sequence of 100-proof erotic horror”.<sup>42</sup> The story of a young man (Argentine actor, Hugo Blanco), who returns to his hunted family estate for the death of his mother, *Le Mano* spends most of its running time being the standard ‘is he/isn’t he nuts’ in a haunted house scenario. The murders for 3/4ths of the film are either off-camera or low-key. It’s the final 20 minutes where Franco pushes the envelope. Margaret (Gogo Robins/Rojo) the local barhop is secretly carrying on with Blanco. It’s a bad move being that he is the protagonist with a penchant for torturing his victims. In a climatic scene, Blando takes her, drugged, to his

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<sup>39</sup> The name Dr. Orlof transformed to Dr. Orlof(f) in the sequel *El Secreto del Dr. Orloff* (1964) and its subsequent sequels.

<sup>40</sup> Dr. Orloff’s Monster DVD Liner Notes. Image Entertainment. 2001

<sup>41</sup> Aguilar. 154

<sup>42</sup> Tim Lucas. The Sadistic Baron Von Klaus DVD. Image Entertainment. 2001

torture chamber where he undresses her on a bed, kissing and fondling her naked body. He then proceeds to whip her with a large steel chain before tying her up and taking a hot machete and eviscerating her.<sup>43</sup> With the exception of the final gutting, all the nudity and torture is shown on the screen. This is significant because for the first time it gives audiences a visual representation of violent acts that have only been implied previously.

*El Secreto*, while not as graphic, is just as disturbing. Oddly the film does not focus on Dr. Orloff but on Dr. Conrad Fisherman (Marcelo-Arrotia-Jauregui) a scientist driven mad by an adulterous affair of his wife. Things come to a head when Melissa (Agnes Spaak) comes to spend the Christmas holidays with her uncle Dr. Fisherman. The audience learns from the beginning that Dr. Fisherman's madness had led him to kill Melissa's father (Hugo Blanco) and electronically reactivated his body via remote control in order to carry out his will. This being an exploitation film, his will means killing assorted prostitutes and other not-so-virtuous characters.<sup>44</sup>

Franco's favorite of his 'museum pieces' was *Miss Muerte (The Diabolical Dr. Z)* in 1965. Keeping the same framework, medical thriller, mad scientist, scantily clad half-naked woman, as the previously two other films, *Miss Muerte* is the point in which Franco's filmmactic style begins to solidify, setting a template that would play itself out throughout the late '60s and '70s. Changing the protagonist from male to female, Franco explores the story of a revenge-minded surgeon (Mabel Karr) who creates a machine that turns people into her slaves. She uses the machine on a young dancer/stripper named Miss Muerte (Estella Blain) to take revenge on the doctors who drove her father to ruin.

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<sup>43</sup> Sadistic Baron Von Klaus "Le Mano de la Hombre Muerto" Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/France 1962

<sup>44</sup> Dr. Orloff's Monster "El Secreto de Dr. Orloff" Prod. Marius Leseur, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Austria/France 1964

Muerte kills her victims with long black fingernails all the while wearing her dancing outfit, a see through black lace garment, causing her to look like a spider.<sup>45</sup>

The audience new search for adult fare in the mid-60s allowed Franco to explore more sexually adventurous terrain. Muerte's dance in the nightclub consists of her slowly moving across the floor like a spider, the spots resembling a web, to a male mannequin sitting in the chair. She moves slowly, seductively until she crawls up the mannequin, straddling it then killing it, viciously with her long poisoned fingernails. Erotic scenes like this with varying degrees of explicitness would show up over and over again throughout Franco's filmography.<sup>46</sup> It shows that Franco equates the violence of death with female eroticism. In Franco's films to become sexually aroused is to be close to death.

*Miss Muerte* (1965) was also produced during the height of Franco's discontent with the Spanish film industry. When talking about the film Franco comments, "In truth, it was born out of a frustration of mine. *Miss Muerte* shouldn't have even been made. Censorship was causing me troubles."<sup>47</sup> The oppressive Spanish censors were beginning to take a large toll on Franco whose work was increasingly become more adult and subversive as the '60s rolled on. In addition, the "business only" side of producers was also a problem to an artist like Franco. Continuing his discussion from a 1991 interview Franco related the bartering system that a director had to navigate and the pressures that producers made in content,

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<sup>45</sup> Diabolical Dr. Z "Miss Muerte" Prod. and Dir. Jesus Franco Spain 1965

<sup>46</sup> *Necromonicon* (Succubus, 1967) opened with a scene similar to this as star Janine Reynauld performs a S&M scene with a male/female couple. *Vampiros Lesbos* (1970), *Eugenie De Sade* (1970) and *Exorcism* (1974) all had similar scenes of performance.

<sup>47</sup> Aguilar. 154

They wouldn't forbid me to do them (stories Franco was intending to film), but they'd impose me every type of rearrangement. Then I grew obstinate and I told them I refused to change anything. They replied "you should compromise, somehow" and I said to them "no, I'd rather not make the movie then."<sup>48</sup>

The rebellious nature of Franco may be another reason that he was drawn to the exploitation genre. Instead of making requisite changes to the Spanish censors, Franco made horror films as a way to get back at producers citing that he believed that they thought the movies were silly and un-lucrative.<sup>49</sup> The Spanish government did not appreciate Franco's rebellion toward its policies. They could deal with him not making the movies they had wanted but couldn't handle the movies he WAS making. Sexuality, explicit or implied was taboo still in 1965 and though the rest of the world had begun to loosen censorship. Spain's iron-fisted approach remained. Relates Eurociné's producer Daniel Lesoeur,

You have not to forgot the context of the life at this time in Spain. (With) General Franco, there was no way to say one word to say against the church, no sex. And he was one of the first who were able to speak of sex or show a little sex, which at the time it was really something.<sup>50</sup>

Franco's career got a potential boost in mid-60s when he teamed for a series of projects with the legendary Orson Wells. Wells, like Franco, was a rebel. He had built a career on being exacting to his ideals on filmmaking. They also shared a spirit of rebelliousness had alienated many within their prospective film industries. By 1963, Wells was unable to raise money for projects in the U.S. and moved to Spain in hopes of filming *Chimes at Midnight* and a version of *Treasure Island*.<sup>50</sup> An assistant to Franco

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<sup>48</sup> Aguilar 154

<sup>49</sup> Andy Stark and Pete Tombs. [The Diabolical Mr. Franco](#)

<sup>50</sup> Andy Stark and Pete Tombs. [The Diabolical Mr. Franco](#)

<sup>50</sup> Wells had had some success getting funding in Spain previous to this with the film, *Mr. Arkadin* (1955). Unfortunately, the film labored in post-production for years and did not find a distributor until 1962.

from film school, Juan Cobos, put Franco's name forward as a possible collaborator and was subsequently hired by Wells as a second-unit director for *Chimes*.<sup>51</sup> The two filmmakers became fast friends and plans were formulated for Franco to direct a version of *Treasure Island* with Wells starring. Unfortunately, the collaboration did not work out as intended due to a series of logistical and financial problems with *Chimes* being completed through immense difficulties and *Treasure Island* being shelved.<sup>52</sup>

The brief collaboration with Wells and the growing discontent over dictatorial Spain began to weigh heavily on Franco in the mid-60s. He decided that if he were going to make the pictures he wanted, he would have to leave Spain. Connecting again with the previous French producers of *Miss Muerte* (1965), Franco directed a wacky science fiction film called *Cartas Boca Arriba (Attack of the Robots)* in 1966. Franco's last black and white film showcased his creativity in the pulp cinema genre. Starring Eddie Constantine, *Cartas* rips off the successful James Bond genre in a Euro/Spanish way. Devised as a satire, Franco tried to invest in the film with all the fun and whimsy that the movies *Goldfinger* (1964) and *Thunderball* (1965) employed. Ultimately though the budget restrictions prevented the film from being fully realized and the lack of finances propelled Franco on a search for international backing.<sup>53</sup> The search for outside financial backing was essential not only for the extra production money but more importantly an opportunity for Franco to get passed the Spanish censors.

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<sup>51</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 86-87

<sup>52</sup> Aguilar. 54-56 Wells did appear in a version of *Treasure Island* in 1972 directed by Italian Andrea Bianchi, who directed such exploitation classics as *La Notte del Terrore*, and British director John Hough.

<sup>53</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 93

Franco found financial backing with German production manager, Karl-Heinz Mannchen in 1966. After producing, the fast-paced, comic strip concoction *Lucky, el Intrepido*, (*Lucky, the Inscrutable*) in 1967, Franco came to Mannchen with an 8 page script for a mythical erotic/horror feature what would go on to be considered one of his finest films, *Necronomicon*.

*Necronomicon*, or *Succubus* (1967) as it was called in the U.S. would be the film that forever cemented Jess Franco as a premier exploitation filmmaker. Fusing all the ingredients that make up a Franco picture, the haunting jazz score, non-linear narration, beautiful, exotic women with murderous minds, as well as a international social climate that was much more permissive in regards to sexuality, Franco created a film that was true to his vision. The film follows Lorna (Janine Reynaud), an upscale S & M nightclub performer, as she surrealistically slips slowly into madness. Is this madness psychological or is it a pack her manager (Jack Taylor, making the first of many appearances in a Franco film) made with the devil? The film contains large does of nudity, murder and public. For Franco this subject matter was, not surprisingly, a difficult process to get through the Spanish censors,

I was aware that this film would be harder to make than my other horror films so I was trying to make a film that I liked. Because I had to make co-productions with Spain, but the censors had taken their red pen and crossed everything out, even the title, yes! At the time, all co-productions with Spain, and remember Spain was cut-off from the rest of Europe, had the prerequisite that the film had to be shot in Spain. It didn't matter if you had a completely Spanish crew, you had to shoot there and prove that you did or else you wouldn't get the co-production money.<sup>54</sup>

Sensing the film could not be made to his vision, Franco made a bold decision to forgo Spanish investment and went completely with his German investors.

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<sup>54</sup> David Gregory and Bill Lustig. From Necronomicon to Succubus. Interview with Jess Franco. *Succubus* DVD. Blue Underground. 2006

The decision to shoot entirely outside of Spain meant Franco and producer Mannchen would have to scrounge up more money. As is typical with exploitation films, friends, friends of friends, and business acquaintances were scouted and called upon. The process of producing *Necronomicon* offers a good example on how the exploitation films of the '60s and '70s were financed and produced. As Jess Franco puts it,

I started scouting locations in Spain and Berlin and its there I met my second co-producer of the film because my partner was Adrian Hoven, but he had an associate a co-producer named Pier Maria Caminnecci. He was very rich, the main stockholder in Siemens. So he had quite a bit of money. And he had a magnificent house. And on his bookshelf, I discovered a book entitled *Necronomicon*.<sup>55</sup>

Looking for ideas, Franco found a short story he felt should be translated to film. The problem was the story was only 3 pages long. Fusing it with a script from a horror movie he'd previously written, Franco came up with a complete screenplay. After securing enough money to begin shooting, he began to look for a lead that could play voluptuous, schizophrenic, Lorna. Looking for someone with a strong presence and personality, Franco found his muse sitting in a bistro in Rome, when French star Michel Lemoine with his wife, model Janine Reynaud. "I looked up and saw her," related Franco, "and said "Damn, she's the one!"<sup>56</sup>

Though she was 37 at the time, Reynaud had only worked in a few films. Having the open mind it took to take part in an adult themed movie that contained a lot of nudity and violence, Reynaud set about inhabiting the hallucinogenic world of woman who may or may not be a tool of the devil. Her Lorna, is an evil temptress who spends her nights as an S&M performer, Franco's idea of a legitimate dancer, haunted by dreams that she is a

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<sup>55</sup> Gregory and Lustig, Adrian Hoven was both an actor and producer. He was a matinee star in Germany before working with Franco. Later he would produce one of the most successful European exploitation films, *Mark of the Devil* in 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory and Lustig

tool of the devil. Whether she is or not is left deliberately up to the audience.<sup>57</sup> Reynaud's screen presence was electrifying. She projects an aura of deviant sexuality that is marked with vulnerability making her sympathetic to the audience. Not only was the public enamored but she also had same effect on co-producer Caminnecci resulted in the films success.

Franco's earlier statements about working with the millionaire Caminnecci while true, is missing one important component. During the making of the film, the German backers pulled out of the film. Without any capital to finish the film, co-producer Hoven desperately called Caminnecci to see if he'd like to take part. Charging a plane ticket they could not pay for, they flew him to the set in Lisbon to gain his interest. His interest was gained not by the film itself but by its star. As an affair developed between producer and star, the money was secured to not only finish the film but to promote it as well.<sup>58</sup>

*Necromonicon* (1967) was a smashing success in its initial run. Fusing sexuality with dreamlike violence seemed to be exactly what 1967 audiences was looking for. German auteur Fritz Lang heralded the film at the Berlin Film Festival as an erotic masterpiece and the film was a financial success. Released in the U.S. as *Succubus*, the film utilized an exploitation marketing approach offering a phone number in which curious audiences goers could call if they didn't know the definition of a succubus. The ploy worked and U.S. audiences also flocked to see this very strange non-linear movie. Coming at a time when films like Ahlberg's *I, A Woman* (1966) and Sjoman's *I am Curious Yellow* (1967) were enjoying phenomenal success with the art house crowds,

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<sup>57</sup> *Succubus* "Necromonicon" Prod. Adrian Hoven, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1967

<sup>58</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 94 Reynaud's husband French actor Michel Lemoine did not seem that bothered by the affair of his wife. Lemoine had roles in the three Franco films produced by Caminnecci and by all accounts pretty much kept a low profile during the affair.

*Necromonicon (Succubus)* rode the wave of sexually explicit international films and allowed American audiences to experience and sex and violence scenario without feeling ‘dirty’.

Franco found the process of shooting outside of Spain to be joyous. Commenting on his new independent status, Franco said,

It took me awhile to realize that I was free. Because I wasn’t used to being free. When I became aware of this freedom, I decided to adopt a new approach, one different from the point of view of a regular horror film. I tried to broaden the scope. *Necromonicon* was the first opportunity I had to make a film the way I wanted to make it. I’m rather astonished that the film did as well as it did.<sup>59</sup>

Looking to cash in on the success of *Necromonicon* (1967), Franco, Hoven and company produced two back-to-back sexy, spy movies under the moniker of *Red Lips* featuring Reynaud, Lemoine and Argentine actress Rosanna Yanni. Both *Sadisterotica (Two Undercover Angels, 1968)* and *Besame Monstruo (Kiss Me Monster, 1968)* cashed in on the comic strip spy genre (James Bond, Flint, Matt Helm, Diabolik) that was popular in the ‘60s. A modern day precursor to show’s such shows as *Charlie’s Angels*, both films were a hodgepodge of different styles throwing in elements of horror, action, comedy and sex. As gun-toting, sexy, psychedelic detectives, Reynaud and Yanni, spend both movies playing up the movies running time chasing after monsters and dead bodies in a high camp way. Talking in an interview in 2006, Franco related his thoughts about using comic strips as influences for his films,

I don’t make films that will be relegated to the history of culture. The director is entertainer, he is not Pascal. He’s just a guy who does something to please the audience. And comic strips are great for that.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Gregory and Lustig.

<sup>60</sup> David Gregory and Bill Lustig. *The Case of the Red Lips*. Interview with Jess Franco *Two Undercover Angels and Kiss Me Monster DVD*. Blue Underground. 2006

Though Franco classifies the films as a comic strip, they are comic strips for adults only. Sexuality is main weapon that these women use. The two hapless characters are tied up, bound, chased after and made to do outlandish things in various states of undress. They walk around bubbly, saying stupid things, a situation not helped by the awful dubbing the movies received around the world.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, both films were not financial successes. By the late '60s the spy genre had become over-saturated and Franco's fun-loving detectives were not received well by audiences in any country.

The failure of the *Red Lips* films forced Franco to look for another producer. In 1968, he teamed with legendary British movie producer Harry Alan Towers for a series of films in which many consider the most consistent of the Franco canon.<sup>62</sup> The 9 films produced between 1968 and 1970 utilized both classical literature sources and popular fiction of the time, while providing Franco with some of the highest budgets he would ever have. The films included two Dr. Fu Manchu films, a retelling of Bram Stoker's Dracula, a couple of works inspired by the Marquis De Sade as well as a couple of original films that cemented Franco's career as the ultimate exploitation filmmaker. For the first time, Franco was able to secure bankable stars (Christopher Lee, George Sanders, Klaus Kinski, Jack Palance, Maria Schell, Mercedes McCambridge) to play alongside Franco regulars (Howard Vernon, Jack Taylor, Rosalba Neri). He was also able to shoot in some of the most exotic locations around the world (Rio de Janeiro, Portugal). The result of these films is weird hodgepodge of classy styling mixed with exploitation

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<sup>61</sup> Two Undercover Angels "Sadisterotica" Prod. Adrian Hoven, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1967, Kiss Me Monster "Besame Monstro" Prod. Adrian Hoven, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1967. Dubbing can destroy any intricacies of pitch and intonation in a actors original performance disposing of any wit that the writer intended.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Nelhouse. Saturday Night with Jesus (Franco). [http://www.coffeecoffeeandmorecoffee.com/archives/2005/09/saturday\\_night.html](http://www.coffeecoffeeandmorecoffee.com/archives/2005/09/saturday_night.html). September 4, 2005. Accessed October 17, 2006

that leaves the viewer feeling slightly disorientated. When else but in the but in the late '60s could you see Oscar winner Mercedes McCambridge, (*99 Woman*, 1968), overseeing the whipping of half naked girls in a island prison, Christopher Lee (*Eugenie, the Story of Her Decent into Perversion*, 1970) reading from De Sade as a young girl is drugged, stripped and beaten as a party game for a sadistic brother and sister combo or George Sanders cavorting with nude Brazilian women (*The Girl from Rio*, 1968).

Traditional moviegoers had to accept that their beloved stars of yesteryear were now making their livings in the international exploitation market. This situation arose in the late 60s as traditional studios were faltering and film actors were left to find their own vehicles and appeal to audiences that were radically changing in their tastes.<sup>63</sup> Exploitation offered quick money; short shooting schedules and worldwide travel opportunities for stars whose box office had dwindled significantly.

The stars and as well as settings for films like Franco's were made possible by producers like Harry Alan Towers, who was infamous in filmmaking circles. Born in 1920, he began producing radio shows during his stint in the RAF in the '40s. Moving to television in the '50s, he produced a slew of unsuccessful series for ITV in Britain. Broke and out of work by the end of the decade, he moved to New York and operated a prostitution ring which was busted in 1961. Fleeing back to Europe to avoid jail, he successfully developed a scrupulous system of financing films involving tax breaks, a system that is now illegal.<sup>64</sup> To finance his films, Towers set up, according to author David McGillivray, "high-class prostitution rackets for politicians or, anyhow, very

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<sup>63</sup> Joe Bob Briggs. *Profoundly Erotic: Sexy Movies that Changed History*. New York Universal Publishing 2005. 9

<sup>64</sup> Aguilar. 69-70

powerful men, he'd use to close movie financing deals offering to the various co-producers his wife sexual attractions, the Austrian actress Maria Rohm."<sup>65</sup>

It is actress Rohm who is the link between all the films Franco directed for Towers. Starring in 8 out of the 9 films, *Castle of Fu Manchu* (1969) being the exception, Rohm was able to secure not only star status but have her choice of the best roles in the films. Franco for his part was thrilled because he saw Rohm as a great actress giving the actress better parts with each consecutive movie.<sup>66</sup>

The collaboration began with *Kiss and Kill (The Blood of Fu Manchu)* in 1968. The famous evil Sax Rohmer character had already been played in the cinema many times by such stars as Boris Karloff and Warner Oland. By the 60s, British actor Christopher Lee had donned Asian makeup to play the role in a series of films for producer Towers and Warner Brothers. As the films did increasingly less business, Towers looked to Franco to spice things up a little. Franco, a fan of Rohmer's books, did just that incorporating nude scenes in what was typical family fare. Having a typical dungeon cell where the hero and heroine await their fates is not a new concept in the genre. Having the dungeon filled with topless women hanging from their wrists in blood was.<sup>67</sup> This adult approach befuddled many of the stars of the film including Asian actress Tsai Chin who portrayed Fu Manchu's evil daughter, Ling Tang,

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<sup>65</sup> David McGillivray. Harry Alan Towers. Film and Filming. No. 400. London, England. Orpheus Publishing. January 1988

<sup>66</sup> Ironically, Maria Rohm turned out to be one of the best actresses in the entire filmography of Jess Franco. Though many argue, including Franco himself, that Soledad Miranda was his favorite muse, Rohm handled herself superbly in these films. From the jailed innocent in *99 Woman* (1968), the Brazilian maid and feminist crimefighter in *The Girl from Rio* (1968) to the vicious, manipulative Juliette in *Justine* (1969) and Wanda, a transcendental ghost in *Venus in Furs* (1969), Rohm played each of these characters with surprising depth not found in most films of these types.

<sup>67</sup> Blood of Fu Manchu Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco. Spain/U.S

That was the day all these woman were just kinda hanging there and Christopher came in, and Christopher is not a womanizer, bless his heart and he was so (complete surprise) OH MY GOD WHAT IS THIS? (laughing) And I'm just standing there laughing so much about his reaction. As an actress, you did what you had to do. By the time I did the 4<sup>th</sup> one, the Fu Manchu films. I didn't really read the script with enormous carefulness.<sup>68</sup>

Though not as well received as the earlier Fu Manchu films, *Kiss and Kill* (1968) did make enough money to leave the door open for future sequels.

After *Kiss*, Franco and Towers went to Rio to shoot *The Girl from Rio* (*La Ciudad Sin Hombres*, 1968). Another comic strip concoction from Sax Rohmer and starring former Bond girl Shirley Eaton (*Goldfinger*, 1964) as Sumuru, the evil, diabolical mastermind bent on world destruction, *Girl* was Franco's most adult film to date.<sup>69</sup> Featuring a bevy of topless woman in space age uniforms, the film played like a feminist version of James Bond complete with mythical lairs, exotic locations and gadgets. Of course this being 1968, the male protagonist, played woodenly by Richard Wyler, would have the upper hand soundly defeating Sumuru in her city of women. The film is not meant to be taken seriously. Like the comic books that it was inspired from it is an obvious male fantasy that may have been the inspiration for many such soft-core Euro porn movies as the German *5 Madchen Blasen Zum Angriff* (*2069 A Sex Odyssey*, 1974) and the French *Spermula* (1976).

Star Eaton had some of the same problems with exploitation filmmaking as Christopher Lee did. Not told that there were lesbian scenes involving her character,

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<sup>68</sup> David Gregory. *The Fall of Fu Manchu*. Interview with Tsai Chin. *The Castle of Fu Manchu DVD*. Blue Underground. 2003

<sup>69</sup> The name of Eaton's character is somewhat confounding. She is called both Sumuru and Sumitra throughout the film.

Eaton was surprised to see a lesbian love scene in the film. As she puts it in a 2004 interview,

I sorta make love with the leading man, like a spider catching a fly in her web, as a normal woman, that was fine, there were two little scenes like that. But they managed to shoot a double, obviously cause I knew it wasn't me, from behind, they just had a woman, a blond, with hair much longer than mine, which was one clue, not the same quality as mine. Then a girl comes in, presumably, for them have a love scene, you see her face and you just see my character looking up and they begin to embrace and then they cut it. But I was a bit cross about it, I think it's a liberty actually.<sup>70</sup>

Franco's quick shooting style resulted in the film being completed well before the anticipated stop date causing major problems for Towers. Central to the theme of the movie were shots of the Brazilian carnival. Franco managed to finish the film about a week before the celebration was set to commence. Not having the luxury that a major studio would have of keeping a crew on paid standby, Franco and Towers had to come up with an idea that would justify paying the crew. Spending the weekend writing, Towers came up with an idea for a script for a women's prison picture called *99 Women* (1968) that could go into production immediately.<sup>71</sup> As Franco relates,

We thought, "what are we going to do during this time?" So I understand the problems of production. I understand it's natural to think, "Shit! I'm going to have to pay all your salaries during this time." Harry explained to me that he wanted to make *99 Women*. He gave it to me to read, I read it and thought it was superb.<sup>72</sup>

Using a local Brazilian jungle as a backdrop, Franco shot 25 minutes of film in one week, utilizing some of the same actors, Rohm, etc., that were in *The Girl from Rio*

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<sup>70</sup> David Gregory. *Rolling in Rio*. Interviews with Jess Franco, Harry Alan Towers and Shirley Eaton. *The Girl from Rio*. DVD. Blue Underground. 2004 Whether Franco really believed that he was putting one over on the audience is open to debate. The body double looks nothing like Eaton and lesbian scene seems more like an afterthought that adds nothing to the film.

<sup>71</sup> Harry Alan Towers wrote film scripts under the *nom de plume* of Peter Welbeck

<sup>72</sup> David Gregory. *Rolling in Rio*.

(1968). He finished *Rio* and returned to Europe while Towers, with the 25 minutes of footage in hand, went about securing funding for *99 Women* (1968).

*99 Women* (1968) became the first successful “women in prison” movie, a cinematic staple in the exploitation genre. Previously relegated to a few lower budget Hollywood exploitation films like *Caged* (1950), *Women's Prison* (1955), *Girls in Prison* (1956), and *House of Women* (1962), women in prison movies, or WIPs, appealed to an audience looking for the vicarious thrill of seeing strong willed women either overcome their adversity or be punished for the forsaking their domesticity in a masculine world.<sup>73</sup> Franco’s *99 Women* (1968) updated the sub-genre with a generous portion of nudity, lesbianism and sadomasochism in his tale of a young woman (Rohm) sent to a Spanish prison island for killing the men who gang raped her. Run by an evil overseer (Mercedes McCambridge) and warden (Herbert Lom), the women are bound, raped and used by the state’s vicious penal system. With a haunting title track sung by popular American artist Barbara McNair, the film is never less than entertaining as it quickly races through its running time.<sup>74</sup>

Like the other films done with producer Towers, *99 Women* has a variety of different international stars from Oscar winner McCambridge, Former Bond girl Luciana Paluzzi (*Thunderball*, 1965) and Maria Schell appearing to various degrees.<sup>75</sup> For Franco,

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<sup>73</sup> Ann Morey. The Judge Called Me an Accessory. Journal of Popular Television and Film. Summer 1995

<sup>74</sup> 99 Women “99 Mujeres” Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco. Spain/U.S. 1968

<sup>75</sup> Like a lot exploitation films, the appearances of the stars is somewhat deceiving to audiences. Star Luciana Paluzzi is given 3<sup>rd</sup> billing in the film though only appearing in a total of 5 minutes. It is obvious that her appearance was filmed after principal photography because she shown only in close up and in the scenes with the other actors, her character is shot from the back by an actress who is clearly not Paluzzi.

the theme of a woman stuck in a female prison appealed to the anarchist in him, giving him a somewhat romantic outlook on the genre,

In a prison film, naturally one is disturbed by defenseless women at the mercy of a group of bastards. It's something that afterwards you may think "Oh shit, they went too far". But while you're watching it you're watching something beautiful.<sup>76</sup>

Whether one thinks of women behind bars as beautiful, it is a theme that Franco returns to time and time again with such films as *Les Amantes de la Isla del Diablo* (*Devil's Island Lovers*, 1972), *Frauengefangnis* (*Barbed Wire Dolls*, 1975), *Frauen fur Zellenblock* (*The Women of Cellblock 9*, 1977), *Greta*, *The Mad Butcher* (*Ilsa, The Wicked Warden*, 1977) and *Sadomania* (1981). All of these films were produced at time of European history when people were facinated by devient behavior in women.

Infamous female gangs like the Baader-Meinholf in Germany and Switzerland captured the imagination of the people in the '70s. It was these audiences who flocked to WIP films as a vicarious thrill of seeing what may happen to female activists who go too far.<sup>77</sup>

*99 Women* set the standard for these types of films. Released around the world in 1968 and 69 the film was a phenomenal success. With the exploitative teaser "99 women..without men!", the film received an "X" rating in the U.S from the newly formed MPAA and became the highest grossing film of Franco's career topping the Variety list of top box office earners in 1969.<sup>78</sup>

The success of *99 Women* (1968) inspired Franco and Towers to produce more literary adult entertainment. After finishing the final and much more family friendly Fu Manchu film, *Castle of Fu Manchu* (1969), they began to look closely at the works of the

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<sup>76</sup> David Gregory. *Jess' Women*. Interview with Jess Franco. *99 Women Unrated Directors Cut*. DVD. Blue Underground. 2004

<sup>77</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 115

<sup>78</sup> Gregory. *Jess' Women*

Marquis de Sade.<sup>79</sup> Relating to Franco that he wanted to make an erotic movie, producer Towers went ahead and wrote a lavish script for one of De Sade's most famous novels, *Justine or The Misfortune of Virtue* (1791). Franco loved the script but knew the dangers of producing a film based on the works of someone so infamous. "I thought (the script) was very good" related Franco in a 2004 interview, "because it was quite difficult especially back then, you really had to be careful, it was like playing with fire."<sup>80</sup>

Though the film cost less than 1 million dollars to produce it was Jess Franco's most expensive film to date. With stars like Klaus Kinski, playing the Marquis De Sade in a non-verbal role, Jack Palance, Mercedes McCambridge as well as Franco regulars, Maria Rohm, Howard Vernon, and Rosalba Neri, Franco created an exploitation spectacle. Long and a bit plodding, the film plays like a Cecil B. DeMille film on crack. Watching stars like Palance sexually torture the heroine Justine or McCambridge inciting violence in a god awful prison cell (clearly Franco was making her pay cinematically for her turn in *99 Women*) is alienating to audiences expecting a typical epic.<sup>81</sup> For Franco, it was an epic but even he understood that this exploitation epic was not on par with Hollywood stating,

It was a very costly film because there were an enormous number of costumes, sets, horses, carriages and stuff. It wasn't a real film but it was what the guys at American International at the time called "a fake big film". Only we knew it was fake!<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Castle* was the least acclaimed entry into the Fu Manchu series. A strangely watered down plot taking away any of the previous films exploitation factor as well as a patchwork of scenes from different films effectively killed the franchise.

<sup>80</sup> David Gregory. *The Perils and Pleasures of Justine. An Interview with Jess Franco and Harry Alan Towers. Marquis De Sade's Justine. DVD Blue Underground. 2004*

<sup>81</sup> *Justine* Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. Blue Underground

<sup>82</sup> Gregory. *The Perils and Pleasure of Justine.*

Because of the high budget for *Justine* (1969) some concessions had to be made to foreign distributors, most notably that of leading actress in the film, Romina Power. The daughter of American actor Tyrone Power, Romina was forced upon Franco in order to receive funding. Originally set for actress Rosemary Dexter who had prepared and rehearsed for the role, Franco was stunned when a Hollywood financier announced the change to Power,

All of a sudden the boss in Hollywood proclaimed “The time has come for our actors’ children.” I said, “What is that supposed to mean?” “Romina Power is going to do it.” recalled Franco, “I said, “Fuck! I can’t do it with Romina Power.” I will never be able to do the story of a young girl who gets involved, who becomes a masochist, who starts to truly feel pleasure when being treated so atrociously.<sup>83</sup>

Franco’s problem with Romina was not only a lack of experience but a lack of sensuality that the role required. Reframing it as more of a ‘Alice in Wonderland’ type story, Franco diluted the essence of DeSade’s story making few fans happy. Critics found the film lacked personality and was both amateurish and dull.<sup>84</sup>

Franco made sure that after the experience on *Justine* (1969) that no outside financier would have full control picking a leading performer if he wasn’t convinced they would be suitable. One actress he was impressed with was Towers wife, Maria Rohm, and in his next film, the De Sade flavored, *Venus in Furs* (1969) it is her leading performance that elevates the film as one of Franco’s best. *Venus* stars American singing and acting idol James Darren as a jazz (what else considering this is a Franco movie)

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Matthew Coniam. The Trouble with DeSade. *Journal of Horror and Erotic Cinema*. Edited by Andy Black. Hereford: Noir Publishing. 123

musician who finds the body of a woman, Wanda (Rohm) on a beach and is subsequently pulled into a psychedelic world of murder, sex and death.<sup>85</sup>

Originally called 'Black Angel' and conceived as a bi-racial love affair between a black trumpeteer and a white woman, Franco was forced to make some changes to appease U.S. distributors who worried about the racial aspects of the story. Franco couldn't believe the racist attitudes of American producers stating,

The producers wouldn't allow it because they said the American public are not ready to see a black man and a white woman in bed. But the thing they were fine with was a white man sleeping with a black woman, but never a black man sleeping with a white woman. Because its a shame on her race. (disgusted) Impossible!<sup>86</sup>

Having to rewrite the story, Franco focused on creating a relationship he thought jazz legend Chet Baker might have with one of his black mistresses. African-American 60s pop star Barbara McNair was brought in as James Darren's long suffering mistress who tries to keep Darren with one foot into reality.<sup>87</sup> What he did not change was the non-linear narrative of the film. Like a bad acid trip, *Venus* spins the characters and audience into a dream-like environment where reality is hard to distinguish. Like his previous *Necromonicon* (1967), *Venus* played to audience that was engrossed in the counterculture. The obsessional love, sex, sadomasochism and jazz of the story were in

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<sup>85</sup> Venus in Furs Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. 1969.

<sup>86</sup> David Gregory. *Jesus in Furs*. Interview with Jess Franco. *Venus in Furs* DVD. Blue Underground. 2005

<sup>87</sup> McNair had some minor chart success in the mid 60s with such songs as *Honeymoonin* (1962) and *Your Going to Love My Baby* (1965). She was one of the first African-American artists to have her own television series (1969) and appeared on such shows as *Hullaboo* and *Toast of the Town*. She can also be heard singing the theme song to Franco's *99 Women* (1968).

perfect tandem for a crowd that was experiencing the bitterness of differing wars, experimenting with drugs and a complete social upheaval that was occurring in real life.<sup>88</sup>

The acceptance of the surrealistic aspects in *Venus in Furs* (1969), prompted Franco and Towers to push the envelope again with another effort by the Marquis De Sade. *Eugenie, The Story of Her Decent into Perversion* (1969) was Franco's most adult film to date. Taken from De Sade's *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1795), *Eugenie* contained themes, corruption of a minor sexually via violence, drugs and rape, that are even more shocking in the politically correct atmosphere of today than they were in 1969. Starring Swedish actress Marie Liljedahl as Eugenie, the plot concerns a sadistic brother and sister (Maria Rohm, Jack Taylor) who bring young, Eugenie to their lavish island estate only to drug and rape her every night.<sup>89</sup> Christopher Lee shows up in the final reel to add more sinisterness to proceeding as Dolmance, the De Sadean narrator who may or may not be the devil himself. The film is a shocker mostly because Liljedahl looks and acts about 16. She spends the last 10 minutes of the movie rolling around on a deserted beach completely nude, bleeding from the whipping she received earlier in the film. *Eugenie*, also carried on the psychedelic approach that Franco mastered in *Venus in Furs* (1969). Is Eugenie's plight a real one or this innocent young girl capable of such horrific fantasies? To Franco, it's all in the realm of possibility. He shies away from none of the difficult situations in the film; a father who happily sells his daughter to his mistress, a brother and sister whose incestuous longings involving drugging and torturing innocent young girls,

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<sup>88</sup> This hunger for surrealistic fantasy has carried on to today. *Venus in Furs* (1969) has many of the same plot devices found in many modern day movies like Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999) and Lyne's *Jacob's Ladder* (1990)

<sup>89</sup> Marie Liljedahl was no stranger to adult themed movies having starred in Joe Sarno's Swedish classic soft porn *Jag en Oskud* (Inga, 1967) and its sequel *Någon att älska* (The Seduction of Inga, 1970)

mute servants who need violence and pain to feel their doing their jobs all reside in the screenplay.<sup>90</sup> The film remains one of Franco's most praised works. Franco and eurocult scholar Tim Lucas called *Eugenie*, "Intellectual, sensual, transgressive, literate and literal" going on to say that film is "like nothing else in the annals of horror or erotic cinema."<sup>91</sup>

As literate and respected as the film may be, the subject matter and exploitation process of making the film caught some of the actors off guard. Calling the original text "an atrocious story", Franco knew the subject matter was too explicit to be shot the way De Sade had written it. "We had a hard time adapting the story, not for me but for the actors." said Franco in a 2002 interview, "Because back then Shakesperarian actors refused to act in "*Philosophy in the Boudoir*".<sup>92</sup> One of the actors who had a problem with it was again Christopher Lee who accepted the film at the last minute when the original actor, Bernard Peters, was killed in a plane crash only days before shooting began. Promising that he did not have to participate in any sex scenes Lee agreed.

Commenting on the proceedings, Lee relates,

So I went out there, put on my red, velvet smoking jacket which I wore in Sherlock Holmes, a previous film, and I stood there with these people all around me and I did the various speeches and bits and pieces that were required of me over the period of two day period in a studio in Barcelona. All the people around me weren't doing anything at all, they were just standing around listening to me. I subesquently discovered, there was a friend of mine who said you're on in a cinema on Compton street (an area in London known for its adult theatres) which shook me slightly to say the least. You must be joking, he said "no, no, no, your name is up there starring in this film" and of course I wasn't starring, I did 2 days.

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<sup>90</sup> Eugenie, The Story of Her Journey into Perversion "Philosophie De L'Boudoir" Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. 1969

<sup>91</sup> Tim Lucas. Eugenie, The Story of Her Decent into Perversion liner notes. Eugenie, The Story of Her Decent into Perversion DVD. Blue Underground. 2002. 3

<sup>92</sup> David Gregory and Bill Lustig. Perversion Stories. Interview with Jess Franco, Marie Liljedahl and Christopher Lee. Eugenie, The Story of her Decent into Perversion DVD. Blue Underground. 2002

The point is, after I left they reshot my point of view and everybody took their clothes off. So now I guess you can say that I've been in nearly every kind of film one way or the another!<sup>93</sup>

What Lee found out was, similar to Shirley Eaton in *The Girl from Rio* (1968) was that distributors had the right to cut a film to their preferences, which occasionally meant they would add scenes not produced during initial production. Many times, especially as the '70s progressed this meant the inclusion of hard core pornography inserts. *Eugenie* was one the first films to 'benefit' from the practice much to the horror of many of its actors. Because exploitation films are sometimes released throughout the world years after their production, Lee probably did not experience this deception until after he completed two more films for Franco and Towers, *El Conde Dracula* (*Count Dracula*, 1969) and *The Bloody Judge* (1970). These two films represent the final pictures that the Franco would make with Towers. *El Conde Dracula* (1968) was an attempt to film an authentic version Bram Stoker's novel unlike the watered down version Britain was producing at the time with Hammer studios. By the time *El Conde* went into production, Hammer was on its third sequel to the popular *Horror of Dracula* (1958) and Christopher Lee who had starred in all (*Brides of Dracula* (1960) notwithstanding) had grown tired in the role. He accepted the role only because he wanted to see the story done right. Franco assembled the usual cast of actors including Klaus Kinski, Herbert Lom, Maria Rohm, Paul Mueller as well as an actress who would be closely associated with Franco in the next two years Spanish actress Soledad Miranda.

Downplaying the exploitative aspects of his previous films (There is no nudity and only one very brief scene of violence) Franco went for a more gothic approach in

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<sup>93</sup> Gregory and Lustig, *Perversion Stories*. Producer Towers concurred in a later interview that they probably did deceive Lee in order to secure his accepting the role.

keeping with original source material. Unfortunately, the film turned out to be mixed bag for fans expecting a faithful translation of Stoker's novel. The biggest problem with the film was the budget. Obvious sets, including a pair of fake rocks that rivals anything Ed Wood Jr. could come up with, a lethargic screenplay and overall dullness marred the film. Performances were all over the map as well ranging from the sublime (Klaus Kinski as Renfield) to the ridiculous (Fred Williams as Jonathan Harker). For the first time, Franco seemed bored. Traditional scripts and themes no longer seem to appeal to the Spainard. The film ended up a box office disappointment.<sup>94</sup>

By the end of 1969, Franco began to tire of his association with Towers. After the dullness of *El Conde Dracula* (1979), he began to look around for funding of his own brand of films that more deeply explored his non-linear narrative style. One of the first, *Les Cauchemars Naissent la Nuit* (*Nightmare Come at Night*, 1970) was produced for a reported \$20,000 and shot in the down time between *El Conde* and *The Bloody Judge* (1970).<sup>95</sup> Starring raven-haired Diana Lory's as a bi-sexual woman being driven mad by those around her, *Les Cauchemars* allowed Jess forgo the conventions of traditional film. The plotline of the film was downplayed; long deliberate pauses by the actors accentuate the dreamlike quality of the film. In addition, full nudity is shown shot in crazy, psychedelic ways befitting a 1970 film.<sup>96</sup> Even the presence of actress Soledad Miranda, who played a small role in the film, could not ensure its success. The completed film was

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<sup>94</sup> Count Dracula "El Conde Dracula" Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany/France 1970

<sup>95</sup> Alain Petit. Jess Frano's Eugenie de Sade Liner Notes. Eugenie de Sade DVD. Wild East Productions. 2001

<sup>96</sup> Nightmare Comes at Night "Les Cauchemars Naissent la Nuit" Prod. Karl Heinz Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/France/Germany 1970

never shown in most countries around world, playing only in Belgium 3 years after it was shot.<sup>97</sup> Though not a financial success, *Les Cauchemars* would set the template for Franco's films of the '70s.

After *Les Cauchemars*, Franco returned to producer Harry Alan Towers for another big budget exploitation romp. *The Bloody Judge* (1970) was based on exploits of Judge George Jeffreys, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century British witch finder. The film was meant to cash in on the success of the British Michael Reeves' film, *Witchfinder General (Conqueror Worm, 1968)*. These types of films, period pieces with themes of uprisings and demonstrations, held a special attraction with the young audiences. Referring to *Witchfinder*, scholar Tim Lucas said "the film resonated with young people because it was a film of righteous youthful rebellion released at a time of righteous youthful rebellion."<sup>98</sup> *The Bloody Judge* (1970) also followed in *Witchfinder's* path upping the exploitation factor of the earlier film. Beheadings, nude floggings, forced-lesbian jailhouse groping and people being burned alive followed stars Christopher Lee, Maria Rohm, Leo Genn, Maria Schell and Howard Vernon as they act out the cruelty of the 17<sup>th</sup> century England. In the film innocence, in the form of Rohm and her sister (Margaret Lee), is powerless against dictatorial rule of a government enslaving the population via religious persecution.<sup>99</sup>

The problem distributors had with the picture was that they couldn't define the genre in which they could sell it. Franco asserted that confusion was because of the

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<sup>97</sup> Lucas Balbo. *Nightmares Come at Night* DVD Liner Notes. *Nightmares Come at Night* DVD. Shriek Show/Media Blasters. 2004

<sup>98</sup> Tim Lucas. *The Bloody Judge* liner notes. *The Bloody Judge* DVD. Blue Underground. 2003

<sup>99</sup> *The Bloody Judge*. Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jess Franco Spain/Germany/France/Italy/U.S/British 1970

distributors themselves. Working with Harry Alan Towers meant for Franco working with a variety of co-producers. Explained Franco,

The only problem was that he liked to do co-productions with everyone, this was going to be an Anglo/American/German/Spanish/French/Italian co production. The producers in each country had their comments, especially when it came to what they wanted in the movie. Not about the things that were not in the movie. There was a certain amount of confusion about the style of the film. At first it was supposed to be a horror film with a historical background. But it became more of a historical film with a background of the inquisition. Then it became a film primarily about the inquisition with a harsh negative take on the inquisition, then an erotic film! And each co producer wanted something different. These things happen!<sup>100</sup>

By 1970, Franco had had enough of the interference and split amicably with Towers. For Franco, the bigger budgets were fine; it was the loss of creative control that he found too stifling. Rebellious by nature due to his Spanish upbringing, Franco sought out to do his own projects in his own frame of mind.

Cinema in 1970 had changed drastically allowing new perspectives and filming styles. Audiences, no longer content with big budget Hollywood style films, were looking for the new thrills that offered nudity, sex and violence regardless of the budget.<sup>101</sup> Independent filmmakers like Jess Franco could now take their cameras out and begin shooting anything under the thread of a simple plotline and have that film shown and distributed in some part of the world.

After leaving Harry Alan Towers, Franco embarked on a series of films starring his most famous muse, Soledad Miranda. It was the films with Miranda that defined the Franco film of the early '70s. With her long black hair, beautiful body and face that could change from innocence to cruelty in a matter of seconds, she personified all that was

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<sup>100</sup> David Gregory and Bill Lustig. *Bloody Jess*. Interview with Jess Franco. *The Bloody Judge*. Blue Underground. 2003

<sup>101</sup> Biggs. 9

female to Franco. Her performances in 7 of his films are considered by many critics as his greatest achievements.<sup>102</sup>

Born in Seville, Spain in July 1943, Miranda came from a Spanish acting and singing family. With the acting bug in her soul she moved to Madrid at the age of 16 to pursue her goal. Small parts came her way including a small cameo in the earlier Franco musical *Le Reina del Tabarin* (1960) as well as a few Spanish westerns, most notably *100 Rifles* (1968). Many times her appearances would be solely as a way to show off her incredible figure and big Spanish brown eyes. Her only exploitation film previous to her work with Franco was in the American/Spanish co-production of *Pyro* (1963) where she played a carnival waif in love with a man bent on revenge.

With very few good roles going to her, Miranda decided to slow down and married a Portuguese race car driver. After having a child, she decided to go back to acting, trying out and receiving the role of Lucy in Franco's *El Conde Dracula* (*Count Dracula*, 1969). Her performance startled many in the cast including Christopher Lee who thought the vampirism scenes with Miranda were some of the most effective of his career.<sup>103</sup>

Franco took notice of Miranda's performance and began to formulate a series of films utilizing her,

I told her before leaving (from shooting *El Conde*) I probably would be making foreign films, meaning non-Spanish, would you like to play parts more or less good. "Oh yes, Jess, yes! So when the moment arrived, I asked for her and she

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<sup>102</sup> Tim Lucas. *Vampyros Lesbos* liner notes. *Vampyros Lesbos* DVD. Synapse films. 1999

<sup>103</sup> Lucas. *Vampyros Lesbos*.

came. I asked her about the problems with nudity and she said “woof..my god I have no problems.”<sup>104</sup>

Franco must have been relieved that Miranda had no problems with nudity because his first starring role was full of it. Going back to the works of the Marquis De Sade, which had been fruitful for him and producer Harry Alan Towers, Franco decided to make *Eugenie de Sade* in the winter of 1970. Inspired by DeSade’s *Eugenie de Franval* (1800), *Eugenie* is the story of a young girl (Miranda) who seduces her stepfather (Franco regular, Paul Muller) and takes part in his sadistic, sociopathic games. As a duo, they travel across Europe killing prostitutes and hitchhikers. From the beginning of the film in which Miranda seducing her stepfather by laying half naked in bedroom, to the end where confessing her sins she dies in a hospital bed, *Eugenie* is vehicle in which Franco is allowed to let loose all his sexual fantasies. The bleak European winter landscapes add to the cold, perverse atmosphere of the film. Though story was modernized, *Eugenie de Sade* has been cited as one of the most faithful adaptations of a De Sade novel.<sup>105</sup>

In the spring of 1970, Franco embarked with Miranda and crew on *Vampyros Lesbos*, a lesbian vampire movie that personified early ‘70s filmmaking. Shot in Turkey and awash in long pan shots, slow plot development, sitar music and the zoom lens shots that would become a Franco standard, *Vampyros* is a Franco classic. Miranda plays Countess Nadine Carody, a vampire bent on seducing businesswoman Linda Westinghouse (Ewa Stromberg). This film in reality defies such simple synopsis as

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<sup>104</sup> Reuban Arvizu. Interview with Jess Franco. *Nightmares Come at Night* DVD. Shriek Show/Media Blasters 2004. One thing that Miranda did request was that her original name not be used in those versions that would show nudity. She and Franco settled on the name Susan Korda as a moniker for the more adult versions of their films.

<sup>105</sup> Petit. 1

Franco produces it in an almost dreamlike fashion. Using many of the devices of previous films, the long strip club sequences as in *Miss Muerte* (1965) and *Necromonicon* (1967), the female protagonist etc. Franco paints a surrealistic cinematic portrait of Miranda while she runs around nude in a black cape with the rest of the actors who walk around nearly catatonic.<sup>106</sup> The lesbianism aspect of the film is played up more than in any other previous Franco film allowing him to express his freedom with regards to sexual preference. Next to the evocative images, it is the music that is most memorable about the film. Forsaking the typical jazz of his previous films, Franco comes up with a psychedelic sound that is as strange as the events on the screen. European audiences ate it up causing the film to be a big success in Europe when it was released in late 1971. The soundtrack was so evocative that 20 years after it was first released it became a Top 10 hit on the British Alternative Music charts.<sup>107</sup>

Like the Harry Alan Towers films, Franco and crew would shoot one film right after the other. Less than a month after wrapping *Vampyros* they began shooting the revenge picture *Sie Tötete en Ekstase* (*She Killed in Ecstasy*, 1970) for German producer Artur Brauner. Again, following plots recycled from his previous films (*Miss Muerte* (1965), *Venus in Furs* (1969)) Franco took the standard revenge picture to new surrealistic heights. As a woman seeking revenge for the suicide death of her doctor fiancé (Fred Williams), Miranda plays the film with an intensity not seen in her earlier work. She is feral, afraid and utterly destroyed when Williams is killed yet turns cold and calculating when she begins to put in motion her revenge scenario. In the final scene, she

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<sup>106</sup> *Vampyros Lesbos* Prod. Artur Bauner, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1970. Synapse Entertainment 90 min

<sup>107</sup> Lucas. *Vampyros Lesbos*. 3

torments her final victim, Dr. Houston, by tying him to a chair then seducing and stabbing him viciously.<sup>108</sup> The fact that the actor in the film was played by Jess Franco himself helped blur the line for audiences between reality and fantasy.

With no time off, the crew started their next film for Brauner, the third in 3 months, called *El Diablo que Vino de Akasawa* (*The Devil Came from Akasawa*, 1970). With *Devil*, Franco took a different approach then previous films cutting back on the horror and going for a more comic book approach that he perfected in the late 60s. More James Bond then exploitation, the film follows Scotland Yard detective Rex Forrester (Fred Williams) as he searches for a professor who may have discovered a supernatural rock. Along the way he meets up with Jane Morgan (Miranda) who helps him recover the stone.<sup>109</sup> The film is mildly entertaining but its lack of button pushing subject matter makes the film seem like a comedown from the previous *Lesbos* and *Sie Tötete*.

With 7 movies in a period of a year and half, things seem to be going well for the Franco/Miranda partnership. German producer Brauner was more than willing to sign Miranda up for a 5-year extension and her career finally looked like it was going places. Unfortunately, it was not to be, one month after the completion of *Devil*, traveling with her husband, Miranda was killed in an auto accident on August 18, 1970, at the age of 27.

For Franco the loss of Miranda was devastating. He was not only invested in Miranda in a professional sense but in a personal one as well, seeing himself as an uncle of sorts to this whimsical girl. Related Franco years after Miranda's death,

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<sup>108</sup> *She Killed in Ecstasy* "Sie tötete in Ekstase" Prod. Karl Heinz-Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1970

<sup>109</sup> *Devil Came from Akasawa* "Der Teufel kam aus Akasawa" Prod. Karl Heinz-Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1970

She was a unique person. She had no knowledge of the stuff (sex and violence scenes) she was doing. She was transformed during the period in which she and I worked, because she loved the parts.<sup>110</sup>

With no muse to work with, Franco threw himself into a series of uninspired projects in 1970 and '71 for the German producer Brauner. After completing a couple of action/adventure *Krimi*'s based on the novels of Edgar Wallace and the Dr. Mabuse film, *Dr. M. Shalgt Zu* (1971) Franco and Brauner split paving the way for Franco's return to the horror/exploitation genre.

Producing for the first time, Franco filmed the surrealistic *Une Vierge chez Les Morts Vivants* (*A Virgin Among the Dead*) in 1971.<sup>111</sup> Starring French actress Christina von Blanc as a young woman returning to her ancestral home after the death of her father. Finding her extended family in an extremely dysfunctional state, von Blanc realizes that they are ghosts bent on taking her soul. While the narrative sounds distinctly linear and familiar to the gothic genre, Franco fills the screen with surrealistic images that shock and disturb. A beautiful cousin (Britt Nichols) who ties up her blind housekeeper stabbing her gently while licking the blood from near her pubic region, the "idiot" servant (played by director Franco) who ambles around the castle sets chopping off the heads of chickens or the uncle (Howard Vernon) who takes to slapping von Blanc whenever displeased are among the cast of characters who inhabit Franco's strange world.<sup>112</sup> Film and exploitation historian Tim Lucas interprets this surrealistic, non-emotional

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<sup>110</sup> Arvizu

<sup>111</sup> Though many sources state that Franco did indeed produce the film himself, some French money was also used, explaining why the film was shot in French.

<sup>112</sup> *Virgin Among the Living Dead* "*Une Vierge chez Les Morts Vivants*" Prod. Robert de Nesle, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/France/Germany 1971. *Une Vierge* is another film that has been shown in many different forms with a variety of names. One version eliminated the violence for soft core sex, one edited down the sex and in 1980, with the height of the 'zombie' film, sequences were added by French horror auteur Jean Rollin and film was distributed as a zombie picture.

production as a “ruminating on Soledad Miranda’s early death”, with its images of the dead cast trying to cross over to the netherworld but being stuck in this un-emotionally in this world.<sup>113</sup>

Franco’s next films were among his most strange. Capitalizing on the popularity that fellow Spaniard Paul Naschy was experiencing by revitalizing traditional Universal monsters (Wolf Man, Frankenstein, etc.), Franco decided, with producer Robert de Nesle, to film a string of original stories involving these traditional monsters. These being Franco films though, meant that any resemblance between traditional, classic narratives would be thrown out in favor of nudity, violence and surrealistic settings. The films, *Dracula Contra Frankenstein* (*Dracula, Prisoner of Frankenstein*, 1972), *La Maldicion de Frankenstein* (*The Erotic Rites of Frankenstein*, 1972) and *La Fille de Dracula* (1972) were produced with some of the smallest budgets Franco had worked with.

The results show on the screen as Franco is forced to rely on his patented ‘zoom’ camera effect and cheap makeup effects to relay his modern ‘70s screenplay. In addition, the production crew and actors had to deal with Franco’s ‘fly by night’ style of writing scripts. Franco would often write the days shooting scripts the night before a scene was to be shot, meaning actors had very little idea how the stories were going to progress to. In *Dracula Contra Frankenstein* (1972), scripting doesn’t matter as the first half hour is almost without dialogue focusing on an atmosphere that, quite frankly, looks cheap and grainy.<sup>114</sup> While off putting for traditional audiences who wanted to see something akin

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<sup>113</sup> Tim Lucas. A Virgin Among the Dead linear notes. A Virgin Among the Dead DVD. Image Entertainment. 2002

<sup>114</sup> Things aren’t helped by the fact that Franco recycles many of the music of previous films to these. *Dracula Contra Frankenstein* (1971) for example uses the same score as *Justine* (1969) and *El Conde Dracula* (1970)

to Universal's *House of Frankenstein* (1945) or *House of Dracula* (1945), Franco loved the baroque nature of the film. "As a matter of fact," related Franco in a 1991 interview, "the first half hour of *Dracula Contra Frankenstein*, until the dialogues begin, is one the parts of my filmography that I like the most."<sup>115</sup> Franco may have had optimistic hindsight when it comes to the film but it's hard to imagine that audiences understood what he was trying to accomplish. The film is a mess, making no comprehensive sense. Though filmed with no budget there is a sense of visual style. Unfortunately, it's the only thing to recommend about the movie. Actor Dennis Price in the twilight of his career not only seems inebriated throughout but also acts as if it were a high school play. The final showdown between the monsters, including a werewolf, is sadly pedestrian.<sup>116</sup>

With its metallic green, horny Frankenstein monster, *La Maldicion de Frankenstein* (1972) is even stranger than *Dracula Contra* (1972). Containing characters like the 'birdlady' (Anne Libert), a blind, half-naked woman who screeches like a crow, an evil sorcerer (Howard Vernon) and the usual mad scientist (Dennis Price), *Maldicion* threw in all elements of the genre and came out with a psychedelic hodgepodge that mirrors the sanity of a bad comic book plot. With heavy doses of nudity and scantily clad women, the exploitation factor of the film is the only reason to view the film.<sup>117</sup>

*La Fille de Dracula* (1972) fared no better. As a modern updating of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's classic lesbian vampire novel, *Carmilla* (1872), the film contained all

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<sup>115</sup> Aguilar. 155

<sup>116</sup> *Dracula, Prisoner of Frankenstein* "Dracula Contra Frankenstein" Prod. Arturio Marcos, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1972

<sup>117</sup> *Rites of Frankenstein* "La Maldicion de Frankenstein" Prod. Robert de Nesle, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/French 1972. This depends on what version you see. The 2006 Image Entertainment DVD entitled *The Rites of Frankenstein* omits all the sexuality of the film leaving only the violence and plot. Fortunately, the erotic scenes are included as a supplement.

of the cheap machinations that plagued Franco's previous outings with De Nesle. Franco's hold on the linear began to spin out of control as each new movie became more far-out. Reality held very little place in the story as the films became one outlandish scene of hedonism to another.

As the 70's progressed Franco alternated between sub-genres of exploitation. After his second women-in-prison movie *Quartier de Femmes (Devil's Island Lovers, 1972)*, another Dr. Orloff movie, *Los Ojos del Dr. Orloff (The Eyes of Dr. Orloff, 1972)* and a semi-sequel to *The Bloody Judge (1970)*, *The Demons (1973)* Franco's material became more rooted in sexuality. The legalization of pornography in Denmark and Sweden in the late 60s as well as the popularity of hardcore pornography in America by such films as *Mona (1970)*, *Deep Throat (1972)* and *Behind the Closed Door (1972)* offered exploitation filmmakers like Franco an opportunity to explore new themes not previously seen in their films.<sup>118</sup> It, also, allowed him the opportunity to crank out more scripts. Sex scenes serve as "pad" for a movies running time which means writers don't have to write as many scenes per movie if they include long lovemaking sessions. It is this era that gave rise to the Franco "genital" zoom. Many of his films of the mid 70s showcase a fascination with the female sex. Close-ups and zooms of female genitalia constitute a large portion of screen time. Franco admitted his fascination calling the area "the first place my eye looks."<sup>119</sup>

In order for Franco to fully exploit this obsession with female genitalia, he had to find an actress that would be willing to give herself completely to the Spanish director.

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<sup>118</sup> David Flint. *Babylon Blue: An Illustrated History of Adult Cinema*. London. Creation Books 1998. 18

<sup>119</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 113

He found this actress in Lina Romay. Born Rosa Maria Almirall in Barcelona in 1954, Romay filled the gap in Franco's professional career left by the early death of Soledad Miranda. Similar to Miranda in looks, (dark eyes, dark black hair in keeping with traditional Spanish looks), Romay was far more open about her sexuality than Miranda. This allowed Franco to exploit her willingly and sometimes quite shockingly. In her first starring role, *Le Comtesse Noir* (*The Female Vampire*, 1973) the 18 year old was cast as the Countess Irina, a vampire who roams around Europe searching for fresh blood. Mute and habitually undressed, save for black cape, she finds nourishment not in the necks of her victims but via the sex organs. Consequently, men are given fellatio, women cunnilingus then each die after climax. After the blood draining, Irina is then able to achieve her own orgasm via some disturbing necrophilia.<sup>120</sup>

Though certainly pornographic by most standards, Franco believed the film more erotic than pornographic.<sup>121</sup> Franco related his thoughts about in your face sexuality,

I prefer what a story asks you for, what the scene asks you for. Look at the Japanese film by Oshima, (*In the Realm of the Senses*, 1976) for instance, there are lots of hardcore shots, but nobody would say "oh, it's a porno film!" No. It's a very important story. I felt in *The Black Countess*<sup>122</sup> I did the same thing. There was a need to show it, like you must show how Dracula sucks the blood, you *need* to show how this Countess sucks the semen.<sup>123</sup>

Actress Romay had no problems with showing how that procedure was done. She became Franco's muse throughout the rest of his career appearing in over 100 movies for

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<sup>120</sup> Female Vampire "La Comtesse Noir" Prod. and Dir. Jesus Franco French/Belgium 1973

<sup>121</sup> Harvey Fenton and Bill Lustig. A Conversation with Jess Franco. Flesh and Blood: A Compendium. London. Fab Press. 1996. Franco believed the difference between the two genres is camera point of view. In an 'erotic' film the camera shoots from above, in a 'porno' film, it is shot in close-up.

<sup>122</sup> Another one of the many names for *Le Comtesse Noir* (1973)

<sup>123</sup> Fenton and Lustig. 240

Spanish director.<sup>124</sup> During the '70s she'd been asked to perform every type of possible exploitation throughout her career. From light comedy to hardcore pornography with both men and women, she was Franco's most durable asset who reveled in exploitative world.

Not all of Franco's films in the '70s were completely without artistic merit. *Le Journal Intime d'une Nymphmane (Sinner, 1973)* was seen by some critics as a film that "lies somewhere between trash and social commentary".<sup>125</sup> Exploiting the open sexuality of the '70s and the alienation such behavior caused, *Le Journal*, was awash in heavy metal music, outlandish retro clothes and copious amounts of nudity, a factor which Franco could employ his 'genital' zoom shot. But behind the overtly pornographic film was a stinging indictment of '70s and the loss of innocence that was present in earlier decades. The film's predominately lesbian plot device was used consistently throughout the rest of the decade. Films like *Tendre et Perverse Emmanuelle (Tender and Perverse Emmanuelle, 1973)*, *La Comtesse Perverse, (1973)* and *Lorna L'Exorcist (Lorna, 1974)* all looked at a corruptive sexuality with an eye for decade it was posited in.

The cinematic and social environment of the mid-to-late '70s, allowed Franco to delve into all areas of exploitation. With the popularity and acceptance of hardcore pornography, he was able to make a successful jump into that realm. Working on a mixture of hardcore and soft exploitation, his films of the era contained some of the most shocking scenes in the genre. The complete abandonment of censorship allowed Franco to film the basest of actions. Lina Romay making a prisoner perform anilingus on her after using the toilet in *Greta, the Mad Butcher (Ilsa, The Wicked Warden, 1977)*, her being whipped mercilessly by a sexually frustrated priest (played by Jess Franco) in

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<sup>124</sup> She has since become his wife and has loyally stood by Franco for over 3 decades.

<sup>125</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 113

*Exorcism* (1974) or catholic nuns being tortured and made to perform lesbian acts in *Die Liebesbriefs Einer Portugiesischen Noone* (*Love Letters to a Portuguese Nun*, 1976) are all examples of the depravity that Franco filmed during the time. Ultra low budgets, very little participation from major production companies, audience indifference or in some cases shock led to the decline in quality of productions to the point where they became no better than home movies.

For the Spanish Franco though none of it mattered. Brought up in lifestyle of censorship and persecution, he reveled in idea of creating an art form on a moments notice without regard to confinement. He continued to produce the movies that he wanted to make throughout the '80s, '90s and into the new millennium where scholars and film critics have begun to re-examine his filmography and his genius. Jess himself is bemused by this re-examination,

After being set aside and scoffed at for so many years, what can I say....I find it funny. And, naturally that pleases me. Even though it reminds me that glorious phrase by Oteiza: "After I spent my whole life going through one failure to the next, now these people come along to pay homage to me?!"<sup>126</sup>

### **Werewolves, Vampires and Frankenstein Spanish Style: Paul Naschy**

What is the Paul Naschy trademark? Why is it that my movies lasted so long? I believe there is a very powerful reason, which is honesty. I always believed in what I was doing.

—Spanish actor and writer, Paul Naschy<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Aguilar. 159

<sup>127</sup> Gary Hertz. An Interview with Paul Naschy. *Werewolf Shadow* DVD. Blue Underground in association with Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2002

With Jess Franco traversing the continent producing his own outlandish style of exploitation films, Spain was experiencing a financial windfall from an artist that preferred to stay within its, sometimes unfriendly, borders. Jacinto Alvarez Molina (Paul Naschy) was along with Spanish director/producer Amando de Ossorio, the true founders of Spanish exploitation. Staying away from the esoteric concepts that dotted Franco's work, Naschy preferred to use the familiar to shock and delight both Spanish and worldwide audiences. A huge fan of the old Universal horror films, Naschy used the traditional wolf-man, vampire and Frankenstein characters to bring a refreshing change to the Spanish filmmaking industry. With the success of the film, *La Noche de Walpurgis* (*Werewolf Shadow*, 1969), he single-handedly opened the door to exploitation in Spain, creating a genuine horror film character in Waldemar Daninsky and allowing other Spanish filmmakers to experiment with the genre. With over 75 films to his credit, Naschy has become one of most successful and visible artists from Spain.

Born on September 6, 1934 in Madrid, Naschy was born into a traditional catholic family. His father was a leather and fur cutter whose ambition led him to the top of the industry.<sup>128</sup> His mother, a huge film buff, would take him to the movies on a regular basis fuelling the fantasy life of the child. Like Jess Franco, Naschy grew up within the oppressive confines of Franco regime. Movies with overt horror or adult themes were not permitted to be shown. Some foreign films though slipped through the cracks. One of these films was to have a profound impact on the young Naschy. Universal's *Frankenstein vs. The Wolf Man* (1943) was attempt by the studio to cash in on its two biggest moneymakers by pitting them against each other. Less serious than previous

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<sup>128</sup> Paul Naschy. *Memoirs of a Wolfman*. Translated by Mike Hodges. Baltimore. Luminary Press. 2000. 229

entries in the series, the film touched something in Naschy. Becoming obsessed with the werewolf character, Naschy found himself drawn to the tragic nature of Larry Talbot, someone whose soul was cursed and whose fate was to destroy those he loved the most. It was the duality between hero and villain that most interested the young boy.<sup>129</sup>

Before embarking on a career in film, Naschy had to survive his own childhood. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1938, the violence left an indelible mark on the young Spaniard. Remembers Naschy,

I can clearly remember a great many things about the time. From the balcony of our summer residence I saw a man's head blown off by a shell and saw how the headless body took a few steps before collapsing in a macabre, twisting heap. Opposite the house, there was a little square with a fountain and a crumbling stone cross. Many unfortunates were executed by firing squad at this place and I remember seeing the rigid, shattered corpses like puppets with broken strings.<sup>130</sup>

Naschy's father was faced with firing squad during the time as well. Accused of having right-wing sympathies and being an avid churchgoer, Enrique Molina, was forced to flee on a motorcycle hidden in a haystack while military officials shot the mayor, the local priest and other officials accused of such crimes.<sup>131</sup>

Naschy remained fatherless for the next couple years as his wanted father traveled around Spain securing whatever job would keep him out of the way of the militia. He was taught gothic literature by his tutor, a kindly Austrian/Prussian woman and indulged in his love for movies and the escape that they offered. By the late '40s, Naschy with his family reunited, he began to take both his physical body and creative mind more seriously.

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<sup>129</sup> Todd Tjersland. *Cinema of the Doomed: The Tragic Horror of Paul Naschy*. In Fear Without Frontiers. London Fab Press. 2003. 69

<sup>130</sup> Naschy. 16

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 17-19

A lover of sports as a young child, Naschy had begun to develop an interest in weight training in his late teens. Blessed with natural quickness and stamina, he segued from gymnastics to wrestling before settling upon weightlifting as his sport of choice. Working throughout the '50s, Naschy became the lightweight champion of Spain in 1958.<sup>132</sup> With a body rivaling that of actors in the popular 'gladiator' films that were coming out of Italy in the late '50s and early '60s, producers were beginning to take notice of the young Spaniard.

Initially Naschy was not looking for a role in front of the camera. His aspirations were behind it. Taking a cue from his father, he looked at a film set as an artistic endeavor. His initial objective in the movie business was to be a set designer or art director.<sup>133</sup> For producers, Naschy's body was too good to keep behind the camera. Getting a small role in the mega-budget Hollywood epic *King of Kings* (1960) filming in Spain, he could begin to see how quality filmmaking is accomplished.<sup>134</sup> While enjoying the experience of *Kings* and the other film he played a small role in at the time, *El Principe Encadenado* (1960), Naschy decided to concentrate full time on his bodybuilding career securing a spot on the Spanish team for the 1964 Olympics. Set to represent his country, Naschy was the target of some behind the scenes manipulations by

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<sup>132</sup> Naschy. 78

<sup>133</sup> Hertz. An Interview with Paul Naschy

<sup>134</sup> Naschy began develop lifelong professional friendships with cast and crew including director Nicholas Ray and star Jeffrey Hunter.

Spanish officials who thought he was an inappropriate choice. Subsequently forced out of his position, Naschy decided to take another shot at filmmaking, this time as a writer.<sup>135</sup>

By the mid-60s, Naschy was growing tired being a premiere Spanish athlete. The physical as well as political strain of the sport was being to take a toll on him. His body and photogenic face still brought in movie and television offers from around the world. After appearing in a 1966 episode of the popular American television series *I Spy* (1965-1968) with veteran horror film actor Boris Karloff, Naschy was determined to write a screenplay that would bring horror cinema into Spain.

Going back to the film that most affected him the most, *Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman* (1944), Naschy began to write a script for *La Marca del Hombre Lobo* (*Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*<sup>136</sup>, 1968) that encompassed all the fun and thrills he found from such movies as a child. Seeing that character of the Wolfman had never been done in Spain prompted Naschy to construct a homegrown version of the tragic figure. In addition, he pushed the limits of his story by mixing in other famous monster themes such as vampires and mad scientists into a singular plot. All of these elements could have produced an innocuous, sterile monster movie aimed at kids had Naschy decided not to incorporate some of the taboos of Spanish society.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Naschy would continue his love affair with weightlifting throughout the 60s retiring from the sport in 1971.

<sup>136</sup> The film was released in other parts of the world as *The Mark of the Werewolf*. In the U.S. American distributors were looking for a Frankenstein film. Unhappy that the Frankenstein character does not appear in the film, producers added a cartoon of the monster during the short credits then had a 20 second prologue explaining that through a curse the Frankenstein family had become wolf monsters and changed the family name to Wolfstein! After the short prologue no other references to Frankenstein are mentioned.

<sup>137</sup> John Sirabella, Interview With a Werewolf. *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror* DVD. Media Blasters/Shriek Show. 2005

Though the political climate of Spain was not oppressive in 1968 as it had been earlier in the decade, General Franco still ruled the country with an iron fist causing problems for anyone who opposed his ideals. Naschy ran into problems immediately with Spain censors over *La Marca* due to the main character himself. The Spanish were not too happy about the idea of a killer being Spanish, Related Naschy,

The character of Waldemar Daninsky was Spanish, I even remember his Spanish name, his name was Jose Bubidorro. I had to change his name because of the Spanish censorship of the time, which was strange and harsh. They told me that if he was a Spanish werewolf I wouldn't be able to do the movie. There were no werewolves in Spain. And if there were, they would never do a movie about a character so sinister.<sup>138</sup>

Naschy was able to circumvent a possible trouble by changing the name and ethnicity of Jose Bubidorro to Waldemar Daninsky, a Polish aristocrat who rambled throughout Europe seeking refuge from his lycanthropy.<sup>139</sup> Naschy had other problems with the censors as well. Spanish censors frowned heavily on the mention of cults, witchcraft and other things supernatural. In order to shoot the film, Naschy had to cut scenes involving these themes out. Believing some of these shots were essential, Naschy shot them regardless then edited them out of the prints that played in Spain or in any other country in which they might offend.

As filming was set to commence, another problem arose. Who would play the title character? Initially Naschy wanted Lon Chaney Jr., who had popularized the character in U.S. in the '40s. But by the mid '60s, Chaney was battling chronic alcoholism and was in no condition to fly to Spain. With no actors interested, producers offered the role to

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<sup>138</sup> Sirabella. Interview with a Werewolf

<sup>139</sup> Naschy chose Poland as Waldemar's ethnicity because he has said he always had a love for the people and culture.

Naschy himself. Excited by the prospect of living out his childhood fantasy with a character he had invested much heart and soul; he happily accepted playing the part.<sup>140</sup>

*Le Marca del Hombre Lobo (Frankenstein's Bloody Terror, 1968)* sets up the origins of Daninsky and his accursed condition. Bitten by a local werewolf during a hunt, Daninsky is forced to come to grips with his condition. Enlisting the aid of the girl he loves (Dianik Zurakowska) and her ex-fiancée (Manuel Manzaneque) he tries to find a cure. Unfortunately for him, this brings him in contact with a vicious vampire (Julian Ugarte) and his nymphomaniac wife (Rosanna Yanni) whose only interest is furthering his lycanthropy. Daninsky destroys the vampire in the end, losing his own life at the hands of his girlfriend via a silver bullet.<sup>141</sup>

Shot in wide-screen and filled with colorful gothic images, *La Marca* was a modest hit in Spain. Local critics ravaged the picture but audiences found something sympathetic in Naschy's portrayal. In addition, the sexual tension throughout the film was palpable giving Spanish audiences a hint at the sexual revolution that was to come. Most importantly, the film sold well outside of Spain causing Spanish filmmakers to take notice that perhaps horror and exploitation could in fact be moneymakers.

Riding the modest success of *La Marca*, Naschy went immediately into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Daninsky film, *Las Noches del Hombre Lobo (Nights of the Werewolf, 1968)*. Unfortunately the film, which centered on a Parisian scientist trying to conduct research on Daninsky, was never released in Spain or around the world. It was impounded after

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<sup>140</sup> Naschy. 92

<sup>141</sup> *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror* "La Marca del Hombre Lobo" Prod. Maximilliano Pérez-Flores, Dir. Enrique López Eguiluz Spain 1968

the death of its director Rene Govar and has since vanished from existence.<sup>142</sup> Undaunted by the problems of *Les Noches*, Naschy filmed a short bit as Daninsky in *Los Monstruos Del Terror* (*Assignment Terror*, 1969) a Spanish, German, Italian co-production. This monster free-for-all starred Michael Rennie as an alien bent on taking over the earth by using those monsters that strike fear into the population. Resurrecting the traditional Universal monsters from the '30s, Frankenstein, the Mummy, Dracula and, of course, the Wolfman, Naschy unleashed them on an unsuspecting populace causing mayhem.<sup>143</sup> While not a big success in Spain, the film sold well enough around the world to prompt Naschy to film a fourth sequel in Daninsky saga. This sequel's success would ignite the Spanish exploitation industry and spark the Spanish horror boom of the '70s.<sup>144</sup>

*La Noche de Walpurgis* (*Werewolf Shadow*, 1970<sup>145</sup>), the 4<sup>th</sup> installment of Naschy's Daninsky's werewolf saga, is generally credited by most scholars to be the film that broke down Spanish resistance to producing horror/exploitation films.<sup>146</sup> Adapting the formula a bit from the previous films, Naschy and fellow writer Hans Munkel enhanced the violence and added gratuitous amounts of nudity. By 1970, Spanish censors were starting to cave to filmmakers who put adult themes in their films. Though the censors began to allow it they put in some very interesting caveats. For Naschy and company to get the extra violence and nudity his films required for success past the

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<sup>142</sup> Tjiersland. 70

<sup>143</sup> Assignment Terror. "Los Monstruos del Terror" Prod. Jamie Prades, Dir. Hugo Fregonese Spain/Germany/Italy 1969

<sup>144</sup> Tjiersland. 71

<sup>145</sup> As per most exploitation films different titles were used in different countries. *La Noche de Walpurgis* was also known as *The Werewolf vs. The Vampire Woman*, *Night of the Walpurgis* and *Blood Moon*.

<sup>146</sup> Werewolf Shadow. Liner Notes. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2002

censors, they simply had to change plot locals and dance around sensitive issues.

Explained Naschy,

If a story happened in another country, in Transylvania or wherever, things like lesbianism, as there is *Night of the Walpurgis*, or even sex and violence, it was all okay if it was set in another country. (Though) we shot double versions much of the time, you were subject to luck. But you had to be careful. They were not only cutting nudity and erotic scenes. When you had delicate subjects such as religion, eroticism became more permissible. And they allowed more violence, with limitations of course.<sup>147</sup>

Violence and nudity is what may have gotten audiences into cinemas' but it was the stories that kept their attention. *La Noche* finds Daninsky doing battle with an evil vampire queen (Paty Shepard), a figure dressed in black that moves in an eerie slow motion. As in the other films, he saves the girl he loves (Gaby Fuchs) before being killed, yet again, by a silver cross through the heart.<sup>148</sup> The slow-motion camera work struck a chord in Spanish audiences who had enjoyed a long history of nightmarish stories of ghosts. This nostalgia made the film a huge hit, the first of its kind for a horror film in Spain.

The success of *La Noche de Walpurgis* (1970) brought a whirlwind of activity for Naschy. Spanish producers were begging him to star in their next pictures. Not content that the world had seen the last Waldemar Daninsky, Naschy rushed into *La Furia de Hombre Lobo* (*The Fury of the Werewolf*, 1970) and *Dr. Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* (*Dr. Jekyll and the Werewolf*, 1971). Unfortunately each of these films, while successful, were pale comparisons to the previous *La Noche*. So quick were producers' intent on getting

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<sup>147</sup> Hertz. Interview with Paul Naschy

<sup>148</sup> *Werewolf Shadow* "La Noche de Walpurgis" Prod. Salvadore Romero, Dir. León Klimovsky Spain 1969. In practically all of the Daninsky films, the character is killed off in some way only to get resurrected at the beginning of the next one. This could attest to the fact that Naschy seemed more distant as each successive film was made.

these films in the theatres, that they re-used previously seen footage from earlier films to pad the new plots. This meant that while audiences were getting new stories, they were seeing the same old werewolf footage.<sup>149</sup>

Looking to break away for a bit from Daninsky, Naschy wrote Jack, *El Destripador de Londres (Jack the Ripper)* in 1971. Filmed almost entirely in England, the film found Naschy playing a crippled, ex-trapeze artist who may or not be Jack the Ripper. With the softening of censorship, the violence of the murders could be exploited showing off a gruesome amount of bloodletting. Happy with his performance and the success of the film, Naschy threw himself into a slew of projects away from El Hombre Lobo. Two of the most successful were *El Gran Amor del Conde Dracula (Count Dracula's Great Love, 1972)* and *El Jorobado de la Morgue (Hunchback of the Morgue, 1973)*.

*El Gran Amor del Conde Dracula (1972)* is a throwback in story to both the Universal and Hammer horror films of previous decades with a decidedly 70s twist. In the film, Naschy plays Count Dracula who needs a victim to vampire in order to resurrect his daughter. The story takes on a strange twist when one of the women (French actress Haydee Politoff) falls in love with Dracula and actually contemplates giving him what he wants. In the end she refuses eternal life sending Dracula into a strangely suicidal tailspin.<sup>150</sup> Though critics had problems seeing Naschy as Dracula (his physical presence was far too robust to playing a vampire), the film is a favorite of horror and exploitation

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<sup>149</sup> Naschy. 103

<sup>150</sup> *Dracula's Great Love* "El Grande Amor del Conde Dracula" Prod. and Dir. Javier Aguirre Spain/Italy 1972

aficionados.<sup>151</sup> Bare breasted young ladies getting their throats ripped out, vampires bringing their victims to orgasm prior to death and the usual graphic staking were all a part of the new direction that Naschy was taking Spain in the exploitation realms and early '70s audiences around the world loved it.

*El Jorobado de la Morgue* (*Hunchback of the Morgue*, 1973) saw Naschy play Gotho, a hunchback morgue assistant whose murderous deeds are only in response to an unrequited love. When his childhood sweetheart is killed, Gotho looks to Dr. Orla (Alberto Dalbes) to resurrect her. Needing bodies (a standard plot device for all these types of films), Dr. Orla uses Gotho's love of the woman to make him commit hideous murders. Realizing that he is being used and horrified that the reanimated love of his life is now a monster, Gotho kills himself and his love in an acid pit.<sup>152</sup> The films violence, especially towards animals (live rats were set on fire) was shocking but only added to the realism of the story. Naschy acquitted himself nicely in the role winning several awards for his performance including Georges Melies award for best actor at the International Festival of Paris.<sup>153</sup>

Following these two successful turns, Naschy's films became more and more exploitative. In order for films to be successful in the early-to-mid '70s, a heavy dose of violence and sex had to be included. Censorship in Spain was on its last vestiges and while edited versions of films (minus the sex and violence) were those shown in Spain, the government now allowed filmmakers to shoot any type of scene as long as they did

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<sup>151</sup> Burrell and Brown. 12

<sup>152</sup> Hunchback of the Morgue "El Jorobado de la Morgue" Prod. Carmelo Bernaola, Dir. Javier Aguirre Spain 1973

<sup>153</sup> Naschy. 114

discreetly. *El Espanto Surge del la Tumba* (*Horror Rises from the Tomb*, 1973) took advantage of the new system. The film was released as a “clothed” version in Spain and Mexico while varying degrees of violence and nudity were shown throughout Europe. The U.S. had its own version, which was a composite of the both versions, obtaining a PG rating in the end.<sup>154</sup> The film itself was one of Naschy’s most successful, telling the story Alaric de Marnac (Naschy) who comes back as ghost to haunt the ancestors of those who executed him. He is defeated in the end by a modern day hero (Naschy again, in a dual role) who sends the evil de Marnac to hell.<sup>155</sup> Much like Amando De Ossorio’s *Blind Dead* films, *El Espanto* tapped into the psyche of the Spanish audience, which takes its history seriously. Audiences around the world were thrilled and horrified for a different reason seeing Naschy tear and eat the hearts of his victims. They also had the opportunity to see beautiful B-movie Spanish actresses in various stages of undress adorning the screen.

The list of Naschy’s mid-70s films plays like a scorecard for the different sub genres of exploitation as he tried his hand at a variety of projects. There was the *Zombie* movies, *La Rebelion de Las Muertas* (*Vengeance of the Zombies*, 1973) and *La Orgia de Los Muertos* (1974), *Giallo*’s, *Los Ojos Zules de la Muneca Rota* (*Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll*, 1973) and *Una Libelula Para Cada Muerto* (1975), *Mob* movies with horrific twists like *Las Ratas No Duermen de Noche* (*Crimson*, 1973), *Exorcist* rip-offs like *Exorcismo* (1975), *Inquisition* and *nunsploitation* film like *Inquisicion* (*Inquisition*, 1976) in which Naschy directed and even an occasional throw back to his love of old

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<sup>154</sup> Mirek Lipinski. *Horror Rises from the Tomb*. Dvd Notes. *Horror Rises From The Tomb*. Mondo Crash Entertainment. 2004. The American DVD contains all the differing clothed and unclothed releases.

<sup>155</sup> *Horror Rises From the Tomb* “El Espanto Surge de la Tumba” Prod. Modesto Pérez Redondo, Dir. Carlos Aured Spain 1972

Universal horror films as he revived the Mummy in *La Venganza de La Momia* (*Vengeance of the Mummy*, 1973). This being exploitation though meant that instead of slowly chasing the damsel in distress, this Spanish mummy would slit the throats of its naked victims and drink their blood.<sup>156</sup>

While experimenting with all types of exploitation genres, Naschy still found time to write and star in films with his most famous character Waldemar Daninsky. Not relying on the standard formula of the previous films, Naschy tried to inject the series with new ideas that would take Daninsky on a variety of different adventures. El Hombre Lobo returned in 1973 with *El Retorno de Walpurgis (Curse of the Devil)*, which not only had a thrilling medieval prologue but also explored the Daninsky family and the curse that he passes on to his son. *La Maldicion de La Bestia (The Werewolf and the Yeti*, 1975) had the werewolf fighting the Abominable Snowman in the Himalayas. Like his other films of the time, these Daninsky adventures contained ménage-a-trois', female cannibals, beheadings and torture.

Naschy's films are a reflection of an imagination that was fueled with fantasy stories as a child as well as the real violence that surrounded him everyday. The Franco regime had a profound impact on his films and showcase the rebellious attitude the young filmmaker had on conservative society as well as affection for the new generation in Spain.

Naschy continued writing, starring and directing throughout the early '80s. The death of his father in 1984, a heart attack in the early '90s and the shift in Spanish filmmaking away from horror/exploitation films led to serious bouts of depression. This depression was magnified by some of the low budget movies he was forced to appear.

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<sup>156</sup> Vengeance of the Mummy "La Venganza de La Momia" Prod. and Dir. Carlos Aured Spain 1973.

Since the advent of DVD, Naschy's films are being re-examined and the actor is experiencing a renaissance appearing in some more expensive productions such as *Mucha Sangre* (2000) and *The Vampyre* (2006) that capitalize on his reputation as Spain's favorite cinematic horror actor.

Naschy is sentimental about his career in the genre. He sees himself as Spanish storyteller carrying on the historic tradition set by his ancestors. As he explained in this 1997 autobiography *Memoirs of a Wolfman* (1997, 2000),

My role has always been like that of some wizened old villager, recounting tales of terror in front of a blazing fire inside a darkened kitchen while the wind howls and screams outside. To quote Lord Dunsany: "Men tell tales and the smoke rises. The smoke departs and the tales are told."<sup>157</sup>

### **Spanish Nightmares: Exploitation 1970s Style**

A country of opposites and extremes, Spain's penchant for sleaze exploitation and polished art house has given it one of most intriguing resumes in the genre.

—Author Jay Slater<sup>158</sup>

Spain in late '60s and '70s was experiencing as much social and political upheaval as the rest of Europe. Spain was rapidly becoming a modern industrialized country. As poverty began to take a toll on the rural, agricultural citizens, they began to make a trek to larger cities. From two-fifths in 1960 to about one-fifth by 1976, Spain's rural population immersed itself into urban culture. This presented social, economic and cultural conflicts, as immigration became a major issue in Spain. Traditions and cultures that had prospered in rural areas were now conflicting with a Spain that was

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<sup>157</sup> Naschy. 229

<sup>158</sup> Slater. 26

modernizing.<sup>159</sup>

Not all members of Spanish society accepted the adjustment to a modern lifestyle. Many of the government's policies were fiercely resisted by more conservative members who claimed that the new policies were a surrender to neocapitalism. All attempts at a limited liberalization of the regime by reformist wings were blocked by conservative elements. The lone exception being Manuel Fraga's Press Law of 1966, which gave the press greater freedom and influence.

Regardless of the pressure by conservatives to halt modernization, Spain began to experience huge economic growth. This growth led to both the enlargement of the middle class and a revival of the workers movement. The middle class was now able to enjoy more freedoms than earlier generations. They could afford more luxury items, take more vacations and enjoy entertainment. Workers, set up Workers' Commissions (Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras; CC.OO.) to negotiate wage claims outside the official framework and called serious strikes. The church, still a major influence in Spanish culture, was sympathetic to claims for greater social justice and responsive to the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, many younger priests were sympathetic to the Workers' Commissions. Although the bishops generally felt that the church should support the regime, they were increasingly aware of the long-term dangers of such an alliance.<sup>160</sup>

All of these new social issues were to influence the generation of Spanish exploitation filmmakers as they grappled with the new society and culture that was

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<sup>159</sup> Spain. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Accessed on May 29, 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/eb/article-70445>>.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

emerging in Spain in the '70s. These filmmakers were able to take those issues that the general population feared and exploit them as entertainment.

As prolific and popular as Jess Franco and Paul Naschy were, they were not the only Spanish filmmakers indulging in exploitation filmmaking. Names such Armando De Ossorio, Jorge Grau, Eloy de la Iglesia, and Claudio Guerin Hill were all responsible for producing some of the most bone chilling, titillating, innovative horror and exploitation to come out of Spain. Each one dealt in their own way with the loosening of censorship in Spain in different ways. Each created original films that have become classics in the genre. Though their overall input did not rival that of Italy during the '70s, where hundreds of exploitation films were produced within the decade, they still managed to make a strong impact on theatre going audiences around the world.

1968 was a watershed year for Spanish horror as it saw the release of the first bona fide Spanish Horror films. In addition to Paul Naschy's *La Marca de Hombre Lobo* (*Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*, 1968), Amando de Ossorio released *Malenka*, *La Sobrina del Vampiro* (*Fangs of the Living Dead*, 1968). Both films are credited, along with Paul Naschy, for beginning the Spanish boom that proliferated throughout the '70s.<sup>161</sup>

*Malenka* (1968) was the brainchild of producer/director Amando de Ossorio. Born in Coruna, Galicia in 1918, Ossorio was born of a middle class family whose only dream for their son was to study business and get engaged. Fuelling his love of film, a young Ossorio would rush to the film studios every day after working in the local bank. At age 30, he decided to relocate to Madrid and indulge his love of filmmaking fulltime. Producing some of the first travelogue cinemascope films in Spain, Ossorio quickly

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<sup>161</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 65

mastered moviemaking and began looking for commercial projects that he could direct. His first film, *Bandera Negra* (*The Black Flag*, 1956) was banned outright by Spanish censors who vehemently rejected the film's critique of the state's death penalty.<sup>162</sup>

Spending another 8 years without making a film, Ossorio began making westerns in the early '60s. Utilizing foreign backing and distribution, he began to see avenues outside of Spain that could fund his projects. As each western became more successful, Ossorio got the idea of producing a horror film. Securing Swedish actress Anita Ekberg, Ossorio developed the gothic vampire drama, *Malenka* in 1968. A copy of both the Italian and British vampire movies that were being produced in late '60s, *Malenka* was the story of woman (Ekberg) who goes back to her ancestral home only to discover that she is the descendent of a vampire witch.<sup>163</sup> The film is almost quaint in its execution. A mixture of Italian gothic and Universal horror (much like Naschy's *Le Marca* of the same year) there is very little in the film to offend. Outside of Ekberg's heaving buxom, the film has relatively little blood and its violence is cartoon like. Shot in record time with many scenes being improvised, *Malenka* confounded Spanish audiences who were not used to the subject matter. Ossorio scholar Rafa Calvo summed up issue,

In the 70s, Paul Naschy had great success with a film on werewolves called *La Noche de Walpugis*, because it provided a kind of forbidden pleasure. Can you image that generation of Spanish men watching these types of films, including vampires, lesbians, sadism and many other different elements? It caused long queues at all the cinemas. After this, many people began to produce horror films in Spain.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Kose Zapata. Amando de Ossorio: The Last Templer. Amando de Ossorio: Director. The Blind Dead Collection. Blue Underground. 2005

<sup>163</sup> Fangs of the Living Dead "Malenka" Prod. and Dir. Amando de Ossorio Spain/Italy 1968

<sup>164</sup> Zapata. Amando de Ossorio: The Last Templer

While *Malenka* was a modest success, probably owing more to Ekberg's presence than anything else, it was Ossorio's next film, *La Noche del Terror Ciego* (*Tombs of the Blind Dead*, 1971) that really captured the imagination of both the Spanish and worldwide audience. Relying on traditional Spanish history and folklore as well as modern day influences such as American George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), Ossorio concocted a story that introduced the Templar Knights to moviegoers. As a group of long dead, horse riding, skeletal zombies dressed in traditional, religious garb, Ossorio created a world akin to a terrible nightmare. The historic Templars riding in slow motion in the dreary, abandoned, graveyards denoted complete sense of isolation and add to the nightmarish concept of the films. The film concerns a young girl (Maria Elena) who runs away from her cheating boyfriend and lesbian past to find herself in an abandon town overrun by the Templars. After her death, her boyfriend (Cesar Burner) and girlfriend (Lone Fleming) search her out only to discover the same fate.<sup>165</sup> For the Spanish who had grown up with historical stories about the Templars, *La Noche* represented the worst of Spain's nightmares.

*La Noche* and its sequels was not only a tie to the religious persecution of the past but the current climate of fear under the dictatorship of General Franco. After 40 years of rule by Franco, Spain was looking not only for democratic freedoms but for sexual ones as well. The film, containing scenes of rape and lesbianism, was sometimes hard on the Spanish actresses who had to not been exposed to this type of entertainment. The star of the film, Lone Fleming explained the difficulty,

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<sup>165</sup> *Tombs of the Blind Dead* "La Noche del Terror Ciego" Prod. José Antonio and Perez Giner, Dir. Amando De Ossorio Spain/Portugal 1971.

Of the two most difficult scenes which I had to do. One was with Helen Harp. It was a scene in which I had to seduce Helen because I was a lesbian schoolgirl. To kiss and touch a woman when you fancy men is quite difficult. So I asked Amando if he could bring us some wine. We drank half the bottle and the scene turned out fantastic!<sup>166</sup>

So successful were the bloodthirsty Templar Knights of *La Noche del Terror Ciego* (1971) that Ossorio brought them back in 3 other movies throughout the 70s. Each of these films was set in different locations and had different plots as to excite audiences who were constantly looking for new thrills. *El Ataque de Los Muertos Sin Ojos (Return of the Blind Dead*, 1973) saw a town in the midst of an annual festival overcome by the living dead as penance for atrocities committed by their ancestors. *El Buque Maldito (The Ghost Gallion*, 1974) saw the Templars transplanted to a ghost ship where a group of unlucky boaters happen to land. The final film, *La Noche de las Gaviotas (Night of the Seagulls*, 1975) found the Templar Knights back on land and conducting periodic sacrifices of the local townspeople to appease their god. All of these films had to be shot with the different foreign distributors in mind. Ossorio himself related the creative and political problems that this could bring,

I was asked by the French producer, “Why don’t they kiss on the lips?” “Why don’t they undress a little bit more?” “And why doesn’t Esperanza Roy appear totally nude?” and things like that. What if they put me in jail? I had to obey. They’d have only shown it in France, not here in Spain. And the German producer was exactly the same. He wanted the horror films to be very erotic. That’s how it had to be<sup>167</sup>

Ossorio also contributed other films in genre throughout the ‘70s. Each one had the same nightmarish quality that Blind Dead movies had. *Las Garras de Loreley (The Lorelei’s Grasp*, 1972) mixed lycanthropy and eroticism as a man falls in love with a

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<sup>166</sup> Zapata. Amando de Ossorio: The Last Templar.

<sup>167</sup> Amando de Ossorio: The Last Templar. Ossorio’s ‘jail’ statement was probably a comment that distributors could have producers thrown in jail for breach of contract if they did not deliver a movie to specifications.

murderous reptile woman who consumes human hearts. *La Endemoniada* (*Demon Witch Child*, 1975) was one of the first rip-offs from Spain of *The Exorcist* (1973). Ossorio's followed American director William Friedkan's vision closely with the twist of having the young girl (Marian Salgado) possessed by an old witch whose father had her thrown in jail and not the devil himself. *Los Noche de las Brujos* (*Night of the Sorcerers*, 1973) combined jungle adventure with pure exploitation as a group of elephant researchers meet a cannibalistic tribe who captures young women and turns them into vampires. All of these films are overflowing with blood and sex. The decapitations of *Los Noche*, the heart eating sequences of *Las Garras* or the young girl spitting out sexual profanities in *La Endemoniada* are exploitation gimmicks designed to bring in audiences who were looking to be shocked. More importantly though his pulse on the things that frightened 70s audiences made him one Spain's most influential writer and director.

The social and political unrest that was occurring in Spain in the early 70s had a profound impact on the exploitation industry. Directors were using horrific stories to subvert their thoughts about the government. Violence was the tool within the plots that served as a catalyst for political change. Film Scholar Andrew Wills wrote that violence in Spanish movies brought a potential to operate subversively, flying in the face of Francoist censors who wanted a skewed wholesome image of the country.<sup>168</sup> Eloy de la Iglesia's *La Semana del Asesino* (*Cannibal Man*, 1972) takes full advantage of these subversives presenting a story of a man, Marcos (Vicente Parra) driven insane by the cultural and political situation in Madrid. A butcher by trade, Marcos is an outcast in society that is firmly run by the police. Losing his temper, he accidentally kills a man,

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<sup>168</sup> Andrew Wills. *The Spanish Horror Film as Subversive Text*. Horror International. Detroit. Wayne State University Press. 2005. 166

which sets off a murderous rampage in which Marcos kills most of his friends and family.<sup>169</sup> Iglesia contrasts Marco's life with that of an acquaintance Nestor (Eusebio Poncela), a much more affluent man who is clearly posited as homosexual. The homoeroticism between the two characters is seen as the only thing that brings Marcos any peace. If showcasing the difference in classes was radical enough, infusing a homoerotic subplot to an audience that valued male machismo was groundbreaking. Not a success during its initial run, *La Semana* was different type of exploitation film than the werewolves and vampires coming out of Spain.

Also appearing in 1972, Vincent Aranda's *La Novia Ensangrentada* (*The Blood Spattered Bride*) focused more on the changing dynamic between men and women. Another story based on Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) the story focuses on a young married couple whose haunted by the ghost of Mircalla, a lesbian with a severe hate for men. As the new wife (Maribel Martin) struggles to accept her new role, she finds herself drawn to the alluring Mircalla. With dreams of being raped haunting her, she resorts to violence, as Mircalla spirit engulfs her.<sup>170</sup> Thought written by Aranda, the film is full of subversive feminist ideology that could have been penned by any of the leading feminists of early '70s. With scenes that included the constant rape of Martin by her husband and the heavy dose of violence, *La Novia* was produced in a time when traditional roles were being challenged and the confusion that resulted from it.

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<sup>169</sup> Cannibal Man "La Semana del Asesino" Prod. Jose Truchado, Dir. Eloy de la Iglesia Spain 1971 He disposes of the bodies in the meat grinder at the butcher shop, sending human flesh out with the rest of the meat, hence the title.

<sup>170</sup> Blood Spattered Bride "La Novia Ensangrentada" Prod. and Dir. Vicente Aranda Spain/Italy 1972

Claudio Guerin Hill's *La Campana del Infierno* (*The Bell from Hell*, 1973) was another film that examined the dynamics of the Spanish family. Returning home after some time spent in an insane asylum, John (Reynaud Verley) sets out to destroy his remaining family Aunt Marta (American actress Viveca Lindfors) and three beautiful cousins (Maribel Martin, Nuria Gimeno, Christine Betzner). The heavy mixture of incest, insanity and violence culminates in John hanging his naked young cousins on meat hooks before going after the man he most wants, the wealthy neighbor next door.<sup>171</sup> Director Guerin utilizes the bleak winter landscape to add to the somber of the proceedings as he films a story of youth alienation and a family's disintegration into violence.<sup>172</sup>

Not all horror/exploitation movies out of Spain were so serious. *Necrophagus* (*Graveyard of Horror*, 1971) found a young man returning home to find his scientist brother has turned himself into a fish looking monster with a desire for human flesh. With an assorted cast of oddball characters, the film is severely hampered by a low budget in which the fish-brother is only seen briefly at the end looking similar Kermit the Frog with teeth.

In 1973 and 1974 the Spanish film industry produced 29 horror/exploitation films, far more than any period in its existence.<sup>173</sup> The worldwide acceptance of these films gave Spanish filmmakers the opportunity to travel outside of Spain with a full Spanish crew. One successful example of this is director Jorge Grau's seminal zombie film, *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (*Non Si Deve Profanare il Sonno dei Morti*, 1974)

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<sup>171</sup> A Bell From Hell "La Campana del Infierno" Prod. and Dir. Claudio Guerin Hill Spain 1973

<sup>172</sup> Tombs and Tohill. 66. Director Guerin was killed prior to end of the shoot when he fell off a scaffold that held the church bell of the title.

<sup>173</sup> Mirek Lipinski. Castillion Crimson. Spanish Horror Filmography. Latarnia website. <http://www.latarnia.com/castiliancrimson.html>

which was shot throughout the English countryside. Taking George Romero's initial concept and updating it with a '70s perspective, Grau blames the raising of the living dead on man's dependence on technology. The story concerns a rebellious young artist (Ray Lovelock) who leaves a polluted London for some rest and relaxation. Meeting a young woman (Christina Galbo) who inadvertently runs over his motorcycle, the young couple find themselves fighting for life and death against flesh eating zombies. Accidentally mobilized by supersonic sounds emitting from a new piece of farm equipment, the living dead munch their way through the cast.<sup>174</sup> Though purely meant for entertainment, Grau's political leanings came through via the inclusion of a fascist police detective played by Arthur Kennedy. Kennedy's hatred for the younger generation pits our heroes not only against the horde of zombies but by the establishment as well. Thought by critics to be one the most effective zombie movies, *The Living Dead* was well received around the world perhaps paving the way for the success of Romero's/Argento *Zombi (Dawn of the Dead)* 4 years later.<sup>175</sup>

1974 also brought José Ramón Larraz ultra-erotic, *Vampyres*. Like *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (1974), the film was shot in the English countryside. Turning up the sex and violence factor, Larraz presented the story of two bisexual vampires (Marianne Morris and Anulka) who pick up men, seduce them, and then drink their blood.<sup>176</sup> Awash in blood, the ladies blood-letting activities are filmed in close up. The sex also pushes the soft-core limits of the genre. *Vampyres* was well received by

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<sup>174</sup> Let Sleeping Corpses Lie "Non Si Deve Profanare il Sonno dei Morti" Prod. Manuel Pérez, Dir. Jorge Grau Spain/Italy 1974

<sup>175</sup> Jay Slater. Hispanic Horror: A Brief History. 27 In the U.S. the film received the full exploitation treatment being renamed *Don't Open the Window*.

<sup>176</sup> Vampyres Prod. Brian Smedley-Aston, Dir. José Ramón Larraz Spain/Britain 1974

mainstream critics. Playboy magazine said the film “had more sex appeal than any other Dracula film.”<sup>177</sup> This isn’t a surprising review from Playboy as the film is nothing but a male fantasy that plays both as sexual one, the lesbian female vampire, as well as to male fear of strong women, the blood sucking aspect. Another reason for success of the film was Larraz insistence that the film be shot in English. For U.S. audiences watching both *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (1974) and *Vampyres* (1974), the cognitive dissonance that goes along with watching a foreign film was kept at a minimum due to films being shot in English with English actors.

In 1975, General Franco died leaving an uncertainty within the filmmaking community and the country itself. Instead of sweeping reforms though, the country’s censorship policies remained in limbo. After decades of iron rule, there seemed uncertainty on how to proceed. Two of the Spanish produced exploitation films of the period *Quien Puede Matar a Un Nino?* (*Who Can Kill a Child?*, 1975) and *Escalofrio* (*Satan’s Blood*, 1976) were caught in this political limbo, each took a new step into more adult themes while still being subversive with their politics.

Narciso Ibanez’ anti-abortion tale *Quien Peude Matar a Un Nino?* (*Who Can Kill a Child?*, 1975) depicted a young pregnant couple (Lewis Flander and Prunella Ransome) on holiday at a small island in Spain. Finding no one there but children, the couple is stunned to learn that the town’s children have risen up to kill all the adults and that they are next on the list.<sup>178</sup> The reactionary tone of the movie is a response to the problem of abortion. The children are amazed and awed by our female heroine and Ibanez takes the

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<sup>177</sup> *Vampyres* Liner Notes. *Vampyres* DVD. Blue Underground Entertainment. 2003

<sup>178</sup> *Who Could Kill a Child?* “*Quien Peude Matar a Un Nino?*” Prod. Manuel Salvador, Dir. Narciso Ibáñez Serrador Spain 1975

stance that it is nothing short of child-murder. This position is not surprising as Spain is heavily catholic and the ingrained resistance to such procedures is taught by the church from day one.<sup>179</sup>

Pregnancy also figures into Carlos Puerta's *Escalofrio (Satan's Blood, 1976)*. Another pregnant young couple (Jose Maria Guillen and Mariana Karr) decides to take a break in the country. Ending up in a dark castle of friends they may or may not know, the couple end up the victims of Satanists who have their own plans for their unborn baby.<sup>180</sup> Forsaking many of the political overtones of Ibanez' film, Puerta prefers to pile on one violent killing after the next in a safe way. Though prolific, the nudity and violence could still be taken out with a plot remaining making it palatable for those countries that had stronger censorship.

## Conclusion

In 1977 with the abolishment of censorship, the fuse was lit for an explosion of exploitation.

—Author Jay Slater<sup>181</sup>

It never happened.

By 1976, the horror/exploitation industry in Spain had waned considerable. From 29 films produced in 73-74 to 15 in 76-77 to 8 in 78-79, horror films no longer held

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<sup>179</sup> Burell and Brown. 42

<sup>180</sup> *Satan's Blood* "Escalofrio" Prod. Juan Piquer Simón, Dir. Carlos Puerto Spain 1977

<sup>181</sup> Slater. *Hispanic Horrors*. 26

allure for Spanish producers as they did in the beginning of the decade.<sup>182</sup> With Italy and U.S. producing the bulk of exploitation, the Spanish film industry moved into what was called the ‘destape’ or stripping era, which saw the rise of risqué comedies in place of cheap horror.<sup>183</sup>

Censorship was finally abolished in Spain in 1977. A new system of classification was established similar to the MPAA in the U.S. ‘Clasificada S’ was the rating given to those films that had strong violence, horror or sex.<sup>184</sup> Given the freedom to now produce all types of adult fare, many Spanish producers chose to forsake horror and move to the lucrative sex film. This movement had a severe effect on the genre essentially shutting down the market in Spain for the next decade and a half. There has been a recent some resurgence in Spanish horror/exploitation filmmaking with release of films by such directors as Nacho Cerda, Alejandro Amenabar, Agustin Villaronga and Alex de la Iglesia but the glory days of Jess Franco, Paul Naschy and Amando de Ossorio have disappeared like dictatorship that helped give birth it.

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<sup>182</sup> Lipinski. *Castillion Crimson: Spanish Horror Film Filmography*

<sup>183</sup> Tombs and Tohill. 67

<sup>184</sup> Pete Tombs. *About the Film. DVD Notes. Satan’s Blood DVD. Mondo Macabro. 2006*

## CHAPTER 4 FRANCE

The problem with the French is they don't trust their own language (when it comes to horror). American horror movies do well, but in their own language, the French just aren't interested.

—French Director Alexandre Aja<sup>1</sup>

This chapter looks at the history of the French horror and exploitation film from its beginning with Georges Franju's film *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (*Eyes Without a Face*) in 1959 to the advent of home video in 1980. While the French may not have trusted their instincts on the pure horror aspects of exploitation during the '60s and '70s, French filmmakers were able to contribute more than their fair share of exploitation by producing films with a subject matter they were most comfortable with, sex. Fusing hard edge exploitive narratives with soft, erotic, sensual visuals, the French contributed to the boom of European exploitation films that were popular throughout the world during the '60s and the '70s. Instead of focusing on extreme violence like the Italians or relying on traditional monsters and folklore like the Spanish, the French exploited the crumbling world censorship rules that governed sensuality on the screen and created exploitation movies that were novel and daring.

Films like Just Jaeckin's *L'Histoire D'O* (*The Story of O*, 1974) or the entire output of Jean Rollin's films of the decade all played up the sexuality of the characters while dealing with the same themes violence and exploitation as their European counterparts. By isolating and defining many of sub-genres within the category of French horror/exploitation cinema and by looking at some of the auteurs involved, Rollin, Just

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Jones. [The Rough Guide to Horror Movies](#). London: Rough Guides LTD. 2005. 226

Jaeckin, Mario Mercier etc., it will show a film industry that used its distinctive identity to thrill and shock audiences around the world.

Though the French film industry was the leading European filmmaking country in quantity and quality between 1960 and 1993, its producers seldom saw exploitation as legitimate form of the profession.<sup>2</sup> Traditional French audiences had been used to a nationalized cinema system that promoted a degree of state control over the industry. This did not have a serious effect of the quality of French films as audiences enjoyed adventures and dramas, with such French superstars as Jean Gabin, comedies with the likes of Jacques Tati and costume dramas with Michèle Morgan.

What made the French film industry different from its Italian and Spanish neighbors was its readiness to explore subjects that were more adult in nature. Films like Becker's *Casque D'or* (1950) with its story of prostitutes and pimps and Audry's study of a lesbian relationship in *Olivia* (1950) showcased the willingness of French auteurs to tackle the seamier side of life.<sup>3</sup> Though many of these adult themes played out subliminally in the frameworks of grand epics, some played overtly in the gritty poetic realism genre from filmmakers like Carné. Audiences did not have to look hard to find subplots and images that were nowhere to be seen in other cinema around the world.

One commonality that France shared with some of its European counterparts was the control over its industry by the government. Not nearly as oppressive as Franco's control of Spain, the French film industry still had grapple with the demands of a fluctuating government that looked to both control the industry and see it prosper. As

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Graham. New Directions in French Cinema. In The Oxford History of World Cinema. London. Oxford University Press. 1997. 576

<sup>3</sup> Ginette Vincendeau. The Popular Art of French Cinema. In The Oxford History of World Cinema. London. Oxford University Press. 1997. 352

Hollywood became the main competitor to French films in the early '30s, the French filmmakers looked to the government for help in keeping U.S. films out of France or at least controlling how many films could legally be shown. Realizing at the time that there wasn't much the government could do about the importing of these films, French filmmakers began to concentrate on making films that would appeal directly to the very nationalistic French. Films embracing the French culture and language proliferated in the 30s and were among the most successful of the decade.<sup>4</sup>

German occupation of France during the early 40s had a profound impact on French cinema. Contemporary and adult themed films were sidelined, American and British films were banned outright and many French filmmakers left the France for the U.S. or Britain. The establishment of the Comité d'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique (COIC) during the Vichy government attempted to reverse the decline in profitability caused by the war from the French side. Establishing yearly quotas that limited the number of French films produced, it required that the French government approve all film financing. These quotas, combined with guaranteed financing for approved projects, virtually assured the profitability of French movies. The French government was allowed to finance up to 65 percent of cinematic projects that were deemed worthy by the COIC, usually at very low interest rates.<sup>5</sup>

After liberation, the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC) was founded that carried on what the COIC had begun. A degree of state control, a tax at the box office, an assist to independent or non-commercial cinema and the rebuilding of the

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<sup>4</sup> Vincendeau. 345,347

<sup>5</sup> Tyler Cowen. French Kiss Off: How Protectionism Hurt French Films. Reason. Resason Online. July 1998. <http://www.reason.com/news/show/30691.html> Accessed Jan. 3, 2007

nations cinema's were all a part of getting the French film industry back on its feet after World War II.<sup>6</sup>

By the late '50s, French cinema was growing increasingly stale. Though audiences were turning out in record numbers (400 million in 1957), there was a general lethargy in the industry creatively.<sup>7</sup> The arrival of de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic at the same moment that filmmakers were re-examining long held customs ushered in a new, modern age of cinema referred to as 'The New Wave' in 1959. Government took a more active role in funding French cinema than they had previously. A small levy was charged for each ticket that was bought. French filmmakers could petition the government for these funds to make their films. This process allowed young unknown filmmakers to have access to money they wouldn't normally have.

The New Wave grew out of more than just government regulation. It was reaction by filmmakers to the stale, formulaic offerings that were doled out by French studios. Young filmmakers wanted to see important, political works that showcased the true spirit of what was happening in France not big budgeted empty epics. Spearheaded by such filmmakers as Francois Truffaut and with its opinions found in the respected *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the New Wave ushered in true auteur filmmaking. Directors began to feel free to experiment with subject matter that was complex, rebellious and adult. Films by Chabrol, Resnais and Rivette revealed a darker side to French society that played out during the tumultuous '60s.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Vincendeau. 349

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 350

<sup>8</sup> Graham. 576-577

In 1959, one of these New Wave directors, Georges Franju created one of the first and most influential examples of exploitation/horror the world cinema had seen, *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (*Eyes Without a Face*, 1959). Not only would the film be France's first true foray in the exploitation market but would go on to leave an indelible mark on all European exploitation films for the next 20 years. Though French critics were apt to ravage any French filmmaker for adding to the field and the film artists themselves shunned the genre, the French contribution to the exploitation market in 60s and 70s was sizable and, without a doubt, influential.

### ***Grand Guignol et Les Yeux's: French Genre Beginnings***

To return to what I said about the fantastic, the spectacle. I don't like it. It doesn't interest me. It doesn't move me and I don't believe it.

—George Franju discussing his film *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (1959) and his abhorrence of its inclusion in the horror (fantastic) realm.<sup>9</sup>

The French distaste of violence, horror and exploitation has been historically balanced by its interest in the subject. Classic French fairy tales, *Les Contes de Fées*, like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *The White Deer* were all derived in France as tales for adults. Many of these classic stories involved a mixture of death and mayhem. Like their filmmatic exploitation counterparts of the '60s and '70s, these fairy tales often relied on subverted texts to get passed court censors. Works by Madame d'Aulnoy, Countess de Murat and Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon all contained those themes present in authors' own lives including sex, murder and debauchery. Also similar to exploitation films, these stories were considered vulgar and suitable only for the local peasants although members of the upper classes often heard such tales via their own nurses and

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with Georges Franju. *Le Fantastique ep. Ciné-parade*. *Eyes Without a Face* DVD. Criterion Collection. 2004

servants.<sup>10</sup> This disapproval of controversial material would continue throughout the centuries and form the main criticism against exploitation films in France.

As the popularity of fairy tales faded, first being relegated in edited form to cheap popular press and then disappearing back into oral tradition, the French found new, vicarious thrills at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Grand Guignol. Opening in 1897 in *Le Théâtre du Grand Guignol*, the Grand Guignol specialized in violent, bloody horror shows.<sup>11</sup> Audience members would come to see acts of beheadings, stabbings as well acts of infanticide and insanity played out on a stage. Playing on their fears, they would be treated to the first plays that featured an actual prostitute or pervert character that would then be either raped or guillotined. With occasional sex farces thrown in the mix, the Grand Guignol threw French audiences into tailspin creating an atmosphere of uncertainty where a sexy play would end with a horribly graphic murder.

Not surprisingly, French censors were appalled by the material and sought to have the theatre closed down on many occasions. Unfortunately for police though, the Grand Guignol was a huge success in Paris. Audiences would come throughout Europe to see the bloody goings on stage. Efforts to close the theatre only resulted in more interest by a populace looking to escape the realities of real life and indulge in a little bloodletting.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Terry Windling. *Les Contes de Fées: The Literary Fairy Tales of France*. Realms of Fantasy. 2002 <http://www.endicott-studio.com/rdrm/forconte.html> Accessed Jan 13, 2007

<sup>11</sup> To obtain a more realistic bloodletting, theatre producers often procured the local butchers to supply the blood needed for each production.

<sup>12</sup> Agnes Peirron. *House of Horrors*. Grand Street. Summer 1996 <http://www.grandguignol.com/history.htm> Accessed Jan 14, 2007. Though the Grand Guignol somehow managed to keep its doors open, its touring productions were seldom allowed to be shown. Local censors from around Europe were successful in barring many of the Guignol's productions from appearing in local theatres.

Coinciding with the rise of the Grand Guignol was the beginning of France's film production. The first film shown in France was by the Lumière brothers in 1895.<sup>13</sup> Among its earliest pioneers, Georges Méliès produced some of the first films that showcased the fantastic in cinema. Never overtly exploitative, Méliès nevertheless founded the French horror movement with his 'trick' films of the late 1800s. These films would rely on camera tricks that showed audiences' things like a woman turning into skeleton (*Escamotage d'Une Dame Chez Robert-Houdin*, 1898) or a bat turning into the devil himself (*Le Manoir du Diable*, 1896). These early films with an emphasis on the fantastic were to have an impact on the future French filmmakers who were to take the genre one step further with longer narratives.

One of those filmmakers inspired by the work of Méliès was Louis Feuillade. The founder of the suspense thriller, Feuillade created a series of serials in early 1900s that utilized supernatural themes and balanced them with modern day French society. Serials such *Fantômas* (1913-14) and *Les Vampires* (1915-16) created dreamlike worlds where superheroes thwarted the evil geniuses preying on French families. While these films were somewhat popular with the French audiences, they were not with French critics who were beginning to look at film as an art form. French critics wanted to see intellectual statements from film and were not finding it in the comic book styling of *Les Vampires*. Feuillade for his part saw himself in the role of entertainer. Wanting to keep his audience happy, he composed those storylines that would appeal to a mass audience. The critics

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<sup>13</sup> David Kalat. French Revolution: The Secret History of Gallic Horror Movies. In Fear Without Frontiers. Edited by Stephen J. Schneider. Fab Press 2003. 265 The film was a series of shorts that the Lumière brothers created utilizing the new medium.

were not impressed and dismissed his work outright. It wouldn't be until the dawn of the New Wave in the early '60s that his work would be revisited and found favor with.<sup>14</sup>

Very little horror/exploitation was produced in France from 1920 to 1959. With no historical tradition in the popular horror genre of the time, gothic, the French went about creating a formidable film industry with genres they were familiar with. Though the French developed a strong resistance and mistrust to the exploitation/horror genre, a few filmmakers still tried to their hands at it. Using classical literature, films such as Epstein's *La Chute de La Maison* (*The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1928) or Duviver's *Le Golem* (*The Golem*, 1936) tried to find audiences by creating visual works of art to cover up the horror aspects. Unfortunately, neither French audiences nor critics were buying it. In each case, filmmakers received such a critical lambasting that their careers suffered from the effects for years.<sup>15</sup>

In order to have some success in the horror/exploitation genre, French filmmakers had one of two choices they could make. They could either leave France completely or gloss over the horror to please the French audience. Jacques Tourneur, who created some of the '40s best horror films (*Cat People*, 1942, *I Walked with a Zombie*, 1943), had to shoot his films within the confines of Hollywood to have any success with them. His father, Maurice had tried his hand at the genre in France with *Le Main du Diable* (*The Devil's Hand*, 1942) at the same time of his son's success. The resulting film about a hand that gives its owners great manual dexterity at the price of one's soul, is completely

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<sup>14</sup> Kalat. 267

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 269

lacking in horror.<sup>16</sup> So afraid was Maurice to receive a critical drubbing that he toned down all the major horror elements. Similar was Cocteau's *La Belle et La Bête* (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1945) which retained the cinematic wonder began with Méliès and the subliminal themes of ancient fables but downplayed any overt horror aspects.<sup>17</sup>

The international success of Alfred Hitchcock in the late 40s and 50s inspired French filmmakers to refine the suspense thriller. While not overt exploitation, the genre began to dig deep into the French cultural fabric and expose a seamy side that would be played up in the future by exploitation filmmakers. Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (*Diabolique*) in 1955 helped usher in the period. The story of an abused young woman (Vèra Clouzot) who concocts a plan to murder her lecherous husband (Paul Meurisse) with the help of her husband's mistress (Simone Signoret), shocked and riveted not only the French audience but an international one as well.<sup>18</sup> Intertwining supernatural events with a tawdry plot opened the door to a new genre and allowed a few brave filmmakers to test the water of exploitation. The first director to do attempt this was Georges Franju and his film *Les Yeux Sans Visage* (*Eyes Without a Face*, 1959) scandalized the French nation and the world.

France, like the rest of Europe was changing considerably in the '50s. By the time Charles De Gaulle's government came in 1959 making sweeping political and economic reforms, France had undergone a metamorphic change. A long series of crises, including German occupation, had shaken the nation since 1930 and had left a deep imprint on French attitudes. The routines and the values of the French people had been shaken up

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<sup>16</sup> The Devil's Hand "La Main du Diable" Prod. and Dir. Maurice Tourneur France 1942

<sup>17</sup> Kalat. 268

<sup>18</sup> Diabolique "Les Diaboliques" Prod. and Dir. Henri-Georges Clouzot France 1955

and subjected to challenge by a generation of upheaval. As a result, there was much less public complacency. Many of the new men who had emerged from the Resistance movement into political life, business posts, or the state bureaucracy retained a strong urge toward renovation as well as to a reassertion of France's lost greatness.<sup>19</sup>

Known primarily for his work in documentaries, Georges Franju was no stranger to showcasing the rougher side of life in his films. His intense and angry views of society seeped through his camera lens. His first documentary, *Le Sang des Bêtes* (*The Blood of Beasts*, 1948) showed the insides of a Parisian slaughterhouse. Not shying away from any of the actual violence that occurs in these establishments, Franju subjected his audience to extreme animal slaughter.<sup>20</sup> Using animal slaughter as a metaphor for human waste and corruption, he spent the majority of '50s creating nihilistic stories of society with such topics as abandoned dogs (*Mon Chien*, 1955), worn down Veteran hospitals (*Hôtel des Invalides*, 1952) and corruptive modernization (*En Passant par le Lorraine* (1950)).<sup>21</sup>

By the late '50s, Franju decided to branch out into fictional films. Looking to tap the same anger and attention to violence that marked his documentaries, he began toying with the idea of creating a suspense thriller. The opportunity arrived when French producer Jules Borken presented Franju with the rights to a novel written by Jean Redon. The novel focused on a mad scientist who kidnaps local girls and tries to graft their faces onto his scarred daughter. Stories such as this had never been attempted in France but the success of Britain's *Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) and *Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958)

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<sup>19</sup> France. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Accessed May 30, 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/eb/article-40472>>.

<sup>20</sup> *Les Sang des Bêtes* Prod. and Dir. Georges Franju France 1948

<sup>21</sup> George Franju. All Movie Guide. 2007 [http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/filmography.html?p\\_id=90345&mod=bi](http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/filmography.html?p_id=90345&mod=bi) Accessed. Jan 20. 2007

across the European continent gave Borken hope that a film such as this could be successful in France.

Before the film could be shot though, Franju had to strictly adhere to Borken's request that certain subjects be shied away from. Recalled Franju,

When I made the film the producer told me, "You're going to make a horror film. I want a horror film, but no blood, that would cause problems with the French censors. No animals tortured-that would cause problems with English censors. No mad doctors- that would cause problems with the German censors because it brings back bad memories."<sup>22</sup>

Promising to adhere to these standards Franju hired the screenwriters of Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques* (1955) to give the film a little extra kick. They began by taking Borkon's request and slightly altering the characters and situations to appease the worried producer. Dr. Génessier (Pierre Brasseur) would not be just a mad scientist but a man wracked with guilt for causing the disfigurement to his daughter, Christiane (Edith Scob). Blood would only be used within the confines of surgery and not as violent act within the story and no animals would be harmed at all. With the producer satisfied, Franju went about a creating his suspense drama.

The final product shocked and thrilled audiences while confusing French critics. Filmed in black and white, *Les Yeux* begins on a dark, cold night as Louise (Alida Valli) drives recklessly to a remote part of the Seine. In her car the audience sees a slumped figure. Upon closer examination we see that the body has no face. Louise has been aiding Dr. Génessier in finding suitable candidates for skin grafting a face on to his daughter's. Wracked with guilt for the automobile accident that caused her disfigurement, Génessier tries to restore her beauty. Adding to his guilt is his daughter Cristiane who becoming more depressed, sadly glides through the doctor's chateau wearing an

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Georges Franju. [Le Fantastique ep. Ciné-parade](#)

emotionless white mask.<sup>23</sup> After finding and kidnapping a suitable young girl, the doctor performs a live facial skin graft and seemingly restores his daughter's face. But time and increasing mental illness only prove the futility of the endeavor.<sup>24</sup>

Released in 1959, the film packed a wallop. Not only was the subject matter extraordinarily distasteful, but also Franju refused to turn his camera away from the horrific surgery performed. Franju made good on his promise that he would not show any violent bloodletting but surgical procedures were something else. For the first time audiences could actually see a facial graft performed on camera. Using a realistic looking dummy, the entire procedure is shown mid-shot with a variety of chocolate syrup used as blood.<sup>25</sup> The surgery scene caused a huge uproar throughout Europe. In Edinburgh Film Festival, 7 viewers fainted provoking Franju to testily proclaim; "Now I know why Scotsmen wear skirts."<sup>26</sup> In the U.S. where the film was released with the highly exploitive title *The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus*, the censors demanded cuts to the scene and tried to market the film as an art film to scare away young children.<sup>27</sup>

If the worldwide audience reaction to the film was strong, it was nothing compared to the intensity of the French critics. With a clear bias toward anything resembling a

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<sup>23</sup> After viewing the film, one could reasonable make the leap that the film inspired director John Carpenter for his mask of Michael Myers in *Halloween* (1978). Both mask are haunting, white, devoid of any emotion and utterly terrifying in their execution.

<sup>24</sup> Eyes Without a Face "Les Yeux Sans Visage" Prod. Jules Borkon, Dir. Georges Franju France 1959

<sup>25</sup> The use of color in scene like this would have probably led to its complete omission from the final print. Black and white is often a much tamer way of showcasing blood. Both George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003) benefited rating wise from filming extreme bloodletting scenes in black and white.

<sup>26</sup> David Kalat. The Unreal Reality. DVD Linear Notes *Les Yeux Sans Visage*. Criterion Collection. 2004

<sup>27</sup> It is ironic that U.S. distributors would take the 'art film' approach with *Les Yeux* as the film was double billed with the Japanese exploitation classic *The Manster* (1960) which laughingly featured a man growing another head on his body. That film was marketed to and for children directly.

horror film and without any previous entries in the genre, French critics immediately tore into the film. Criticized for its exploitation factor, its subject matter and its daring, most French critics tried to deny the film's existence let alone its artistic merits. Those that did find the film evocative had to reclassify the film in another genre in order to give it praise. Cahiers du Cinéma critic Michael Delyhe argued that *Les Yeux* must actually be a noir film rather than a horror film since "it was beyond question that no serious artist would lower himself by making a horror picture."<sup>28</sup>

The success of *Les Yeux* could have opened the doors for new types of French horror and exploitation but sadly, didn't. Though the film had an enormous effect and lasting effect on other European filmmakers like Jess Franco and Antonio Margheri, it did nothing to jump-start a genre in an industry that wanted no part of it. Some films that were exploitive by nature though did slip through. In 1961, French director Roger Vadim, who had previously directed the smash international hit *Et Dieu Créa la Femme* (*And God Created Woman*, 1956) catapulting sex goddess Brigitte Bardot to stardom, brought one of the earliest incarnations of lustful female vampires to world audiences. *Et Mourir de Plaisir* (*Blood and Roses*, 1961) was based loosely on Sheridan Le Fanu's vampire classic *Carmilla* (1871). Unlike the in-your-face realism of Franju's *Les Yeux*, *Et Mourir* took a decidedly softer approach preferring to film in classy surroundings and strong colors. A cross between the Hammer Dracula films of Britain and the classy epics of France, *Et Mourir* toned down all the violence making it more a psychological film than a horror film. The film involves a young woman (Vadim's wife at the time, Annette Vadim) who's haunted by the ghost of the female vampire, Carmilla. Driven by jealousy at her cousin's (Mel Ferrer) upcoming wedding, she becomes a pawn to the murderous

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<sup>28</sup> Kalat. [The Unreal Reality](#). 1

spirit and finds herself committing unspeakable acts of violence.<sup>29</sup> Though the lesbian subtext of novel is played down, Vadim still manages to create a highly charged sexual air that was shocking to many in the early '60s. The sexual tension between Carmilla and her cousin Leopoldo as well as her attraction to his fiancée (Elsa Martinelli) is palpable and Vadim plays this out as much as censors would allow. In addition by playing up the psychological aspects of the story instead of the outright horror (Is there really a vampire or is it all just in Carmilla's head?), Vadim is able to walk the line between the French film critics who eschew the horror genre and the worldwide audiences that loved it.<sup>30</sup>

Between 1963 and 1967, the French film industry was content to co-produce outside productions of horror and exploitation movies. Working with Italians like Mario Bava (*Il Frusta e Il Corpo*, 1963, *Sei Donne per l'Assassino*, 1964) and Spaniards like Jess Franco (*Miss Muerte*, 1965), France filmmakers showed very little inclination to produce their own brand of exploitation. This may have continued throughout the late '60s had not a young filmmaker from the suburbs of Paris had the guts to produce wildly experimental exploitation films that caused a furor with the French critics.

### ***Les Pensées de Sang*, The Cinema of Jean Rollin**

Some people say I'm a genius, others consider me the greatest moron who ever stepped behind a camera. I have heard so many things said about me and my films, but these are just opinions. I am perfectly happy with what I do.

—Jean Rollin<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Blood and Roses "Et Mourir de Plaisir" Prod. Raymond Eger, Dir. Roger Vadim France 1962

<sup>30</sup> Vadim would return to erotic horror in 1967 when he directed one of the stories in *Histoires Extraordinaires* (Spirits of the Dead). In the Vadim's story Metzengerstein based on Edgar Allen Poe, he cast his then wife Jane Fonda as a countess in lust with her cousin. played by real-life brother Peter Fonda.

<sup>31</sup> Blumentstock. , Interview with Jean Rollin. <http://www.shockingimages.com/rollin/interview.htm> May 1995

Jean Rollin was born on November 3, 1938 in the Paris suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine in an artistic family. His father was a theatre director and actor, his younger brother a painter. It was the first film he remembers seeing, Gance's *Captaine Fracasse* (1942), that had a profound effect of him. The film's storms on the ocean sequences solidified the aspiring filmmaker desire to, "become an orchestrator of storms, creator of images"<sup>32</sup> This love of the sea was to translate into a lifelong fascination for Rollin. Said Rollin of his early inspiration:

My first short film was an evocation of Corbiere on a beach near Dieppe. I was young, no money, no material, etc. But I was there, on a strange beach covered in stones deserted with the "falaise" and the seagulls.<sup>33</sup>

Rollin's love of the tragic irony within the French landscape showcases his fond affection to filmmakers Luis Bunuel and Georges Franju. He compares Bunuel, the filmmaker to an artist like Trouille, who paints people and objects in a realistic, some would say ultra realistic manner. It is the imagery in Bunuel's films; independent of the story that leaves Rollin full of exaltation. In addition, Rollin complete admiration of Franju's *Les Yeux sans Visage* (*Eyes Without a Face*, 1959) is the "greatest film in the genre". With it's haunting, atmospheric visuals combined with a tragic plot and horrific overtones, *Les Yeux* mined the atmosphere of dream, poetry and madness, subjects that Rollin tried capture again and again through his works.<sup>34</sup>

After school, Rollin became increasingly political. He aligned himself with anti-Franco groups from Spain who were looking for someone to produce propagandist documentaries. Working as a TV and sound editor at the time, Rollin eagerly took up the

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<sup>32</sup> Blumenstock

<sup>33</sup> Andy Black. Clocks, Seagulls, Romeo and Juliet *Kinoeye* Vol. 2 Issue 7 [www.kinoeye.org/02/07/black07.php](http://www.kinoeye.org/02/07/black07.php) Accessed on April 2, 2006

<sup>34</sup> Black

challenge and headed to Madrid to shoot the film. Immediately the Spanish police got wind of the endeavor and began to hunt down the young filmmakers. After 10 days of cloak and dagger maneuvering the young filmmakers fled back to Paris to edit their movie.<sup>35</sup>

By 1966, Rollin had begun to associate himself with some of the avant-garde intellectuals surrounding Paris based Eric Losfeld. The group was beginning to be influenced by the burgeoning hippie movement. Rollin saw this social change as a way to indulge his revolutionary spirit and break free from the conventions of the French critics who were enforcing their own antiquated beliefs on the arts. Indulging in his love for the fantastic and with the influence of Losfeld, Rollin began to write comic books. These comics were in the spirit of Feuillade and contained strong sexuality and revolutionist ideas, shocking to mainstream audiences.

For Rollin though, these comics were a temporary diversion from his real love, cinema. Hooking up with American patriot producer Samuel S. Selky, he decided to create a short film that would serve as a 2<sup>nd</sup> feature to distributor Jean Lavie, re-release of *Dead Man Walk* (1943). Assembling a small crew of enthusiastic young filmmakers and a budget of 100,000 francs (\$15,000) Rollin wanted to create an avant guard style of film that was primarily composed of images from artists that had had an impact on him. Realizing that it couldn't be done from a budget point of view, Rollins concocted a sexy horror story that would take place in his most inspirational locale, the beach.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 138. The resulting film, *Mourir a Madrid* (To Die in Madrid, 1962) was shown during anti-Franco conferences and meetings around Europe.

<sup>36</sup> Tombs and Tohill. 140-141

It is this beach near Dieppe where a majority of Rollin's first film would be shot. Filmed in black and white, *Le Viol de Vampire* (*The Rape of the Vampire*, 1968) is an ethereal look at the vampire legend and was proclaimed as the "first Vampire movie in France."<sup>37</sup> Shot in two parts, the film serves as homage to the adventure serials that were popular in early cinema.<sup>38</sup> The first story of the film, *Le Viol*, deals with 4 vampire sisters residing in a dilapidated chateau that are hounded by the local peasants. When three headstrong college students (Bernard Letrou, Marquis Polho, Catherine Deville) arrive, love, passion and some revolutionary idealism collide with inevitable results. The 2<sup>nd</sup> story *Les Femmes Vampires* deals with a society of vampires on the beach ruled by an African queen.<sup>39</sup> Overall, *Le Viol de Vampire* (1968) was a patchwork of concepts and execution that resembled the serials of the '40s. It works only in historical context. For 60s audiences who had long given up serial filmmaking techniques found the movie hard to follow. For Rollin this was intentional. Rollin relates,

When I was about 13 or 14 I became really obsessed with American serials. The cinema and comic books were our whole lives! We were playing them, talking about them, living them. I remember *Jungle Jim* (1948) with Johnny Weissmuller, also *The Shadow* (1940) and *The Mysterious Dr. Satan* (1940). These were serials, always to be continued next week, so once an episode was over, nothing mattered but getting through the next week as quickly as possible! The serials were not just a special piece of culture; they also had a real spirit to them, which changed our lives and attitudes.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Marc Morris. *The Rape of the Vampire*. DVD Liner Notes. Redemption video. Image Entertainment. 2002

<sup>38</sup> The film is actually a serial of sorts, i.e. *The Vampires* (1915) or *Judex* (1918). The first section, "Le Viol" ran 38 minutes. When screened the producer asked if Rollin would go back and film enough to make it a complete picture. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the film is entitled "Les Femme Vampire". The two parts combined to make the one film.

<sup>39</sup> *The Rape of the Vampire* "Le Viol de Vampire" Prod. Sam Selky, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1968

<sup>40</sup> Blumstock.

The effect of these serials in addition to the classic Feuillade French serials *Les Vampires* (1915) or *Judex* (1917) had a profound impact on Rollin as an auteur,

I certainly know, that these events are the source for most of the ideas that recur throughout my films. The spirit, structure and contents of the serial is the key to my type of cinema. I work from childhood memories, and even if I sometimes cannot name a film in particular, I know that all my ideas originated from that time.<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately, *Le Viol De Vampire (The Rape of the Vampire, 1968)* was not released in during an idyllic, relaxed period where serial type escapism mixed with erotic horror could be enjoyed. The film was released in May of 1968 during the social and political revolution that was taking place in Paris.

Student unrest at the universities in Paris exploded on May 3, when a rally of student radicals at the Sorbonne became violent and was broken up by the police. This minor incident quickly became a major confrontation. Police barricaded the Latin Quarter, street fighting broke out, and the Sorbonne was occupied by student rebels who converted the university into a huge commune. The unrest spread to other universities and then to the factories as well resulting in a wave of wildcat strikes that rolled across France. Several million workers were involved virtually paralyzing the nation. Prime Minister Pompidou ordered the police to evacuate the Latin Quarter and concentrated on negotiations with the labor union leaders.<sup>42</sup>

This political unrest had an unexpected consequence for Rollin. With the lack of new films in the theatres at the time critics came out to view Rollin's experimental film. They were universal in their opinion. The French newspaper *Le Figaro* wrote that film

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<sup>41</sup> Blumstock

<sup>42</sup> France. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2007. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Accessed May 30, 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/eb/article-40474>>.

was made “by a team of drunks who had escaped from the mental asylum”<sup>43</sup> *Midi-Minuit Fantastique*, a respected magazine devoted to fantastic cinema, found it awful as well as every other critic in France. Adding to the discord, 1968 French audiences were in no mood to put up with experimental cinema in a genre unfamiliar to them. The effects the 1968 revolution on the film going audience may never be known but the scandalous impact that it had on Rollin and his film career has not abated,

People were really mad when they saw it. In Pigalle, they threw things at the screen, the principal reason was that nobody could understand the story. But there was a story, I swear it! The audience knew only Hammer vampires and my film disturbed their classical idea of what such a film should be. And outside it was the revolution, so people were able to exteriorize themselves. The scandal was a terrible surprise for me. I didn't know I had made such a “bizarre” picture.<sup>44</sup>

It was the “succes de scandale” of the film that forever pegged Rollin as a maker of sexy vampire films.

Though the film was blasted for belonging to genre unsuitable for French filmmakers it did have a decidedly political sensibility (the 3 university students representing the new generation of the populace looking to banish outmoded superstitions). In a 1995 interview with Peter Blumenstock, Rollin expresses his ideas about the mixture of politics with the intricacies of the horror genre. Said Rollin,

The fantastic cinema is always a good vehicle for discussing certain political ideas in the form of symbols and metaphors. In general, the fantastic cinema is always political, because it is always in the opposition. It is subversive and it is popular, which means it is dangerous. I made films with sex and violence at a time when censorship was very strong, so that was certainly a political statement as well, although again, not a conscious one. I just happen to have an imagination, which doesn't correspond with those of certain conservative people.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 142

<sup>44</sup> Black. 3

<sup>45</sup> Blumenstock.

*Le Viol* also served as Rollin's initial foray into a modern poetic realism structure, which was very much a French film construction. The film is poetic in practically all of its manifestations of French culture. The townspeople, gripped in terror by their fears, the students and their abhorrence to status quo but most importantly by the four "vampire" sisters. As shot by Rollin, these characters take on the sadness of those that are persecuted by society yet forced to warily, live in it. Filmed as white ghostly visions (long, flowing white gowns, pale white skin), these women represent purity in an atmosphere decaying, ancient, and cold. Even the sea is of no comfort as our main characters are shot along the sandy shore. The black and white filming offers no warmth to the audience with the water appearing icy as the waves break.<sup>46</sup> France's first vampire film was indeed an alienating affair much in the same way that French audiences distanced themselves from *Le Jour Se Lève* (1939). Perhaps they were not prepared to see an accurate portrayal of their beloved society.

With the complete lambasting of his first film, Rollin continued his work as sound editor for the newsreel company. When the company folded in the late '60s, he decided to pursue his dream of filmmaking again with a few big differences. This time the film would be shot in color, professional actors were used and the serial structure would be abandoned. One thing that would not change though would be his use of nudity and sex. Even from his first film Rollin was always interested in portraying unabashed sexuality,

When I was making my first film (*Le Viol*) my producer thought it would be great if I could somehow find a way to put a naked girl in the film. I said, "Why not!?" replied Rollin in a 2006 interview. "These kinds of films were becoming increasingly popular in America and in Europe, so I did it. For my next picture I

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<sup>46</sup> Adding to the lack of warmth is the fact that the film is shot in the late winter.

decided to explore vampirism and again put in some naked girls...it worked for me, I liked it.<sup>47</sup>

Rollin's second film *La Vampire Nue* (*The Naked Vampire*, 1969) continued the trend of telling strange, ephemeral, non-linear vampire stories. With *Nue*, Rollin set out to introduce fantastic elements into everyday world and push the normal until it becomes super-normal. *Nue* concerns a suicide cult run by The Master who has a dimensional gap into another universe. The film like its predecessor shuns classical Hollywood narrative as Rollin's style is very reminiscent of Feuillade and his "cinema of attractions" approach to story telling. This approach is characterized by the spectator who is external to the story space, an effect created by tableau staging, which uses long takes and the essential autonomy of each shot. The overall strategy of this technique is one of showing.<sup>48</sup> Though more technically proficient than *Le Viol* Rollin's style and non-linear approach was, again, to audiences, alienating. That is not to say that the film does not contain hidden comments on French society of the time. The film borders on science fiction and is very much in the style of the popular French comic books of the day. The "vampire" girl (Caroline Cartier) signifying again the outcast in society is actually, in addition to being an alien, the next link to a higher, more evolved human. Rollin seems fascinated by this dichotomy,

After *Le Viol*, I had to make a more classical film. So in place of the delirious images of *Le Viol*, I tried to put some mystery in to *La Vampire Nue* (1969) mystery of the strange people, the strange girl who is not really a vampire, and mystery with the locations in Paris I found.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Chris Alexander. *Sinema of Flesh and Blood*. *Rue Morgue*. Marrs Media Inc. Toronto Canada. April 2006. 17

<sup>48</sup> Colin Odell and Michelle Le Blanc "Jean Rollin: Le Sang D'Un Poete du Cinema. In Mathijs and Mendix's *Alternative Europe*. Wallflower press, London. 2004 151-159

<sup>49</sup> Black. 4

*La Nue* utilized Rollins idiosyncratic style to build his film around the idea of enigma, mystery. This played out not only in elements of the text but with Rollins mise-en-scene. Rollin explained,

Places had great importance for me in that film. For example, I like the strange meeting in the beginning between the girl and the boy under the pale light. Nothing special, only elements of everyday, except the girl with her strange costume, but the bizarre atmosphere is there. Why? Which? What? I don't know but the mystery is there.<sup>50</sup>

Though not a huge success at the box-office, Rollin's decision to make his vampire films more linear caught the eye of some distributors and producers. After viewing a cut of *La Nue*, female producer Monique Natan found Rollin's view of female vampirism unique. After meeting Rollin, she agreed to produce another film that would be even more appealing to French audiences.

Written over the course of one weekend, *Le Frisson des Vampires* (*The Shiver of the Vampires*, 1970) was Rollins' most assured and commercial film to date. Like his others films, elements become more important to the viewer than actual plot development. Rollin's use of mise-en-scene took on a fascinating context in the film. He is as focused in his films on the environment as he is on his actors. Much like European soft-porn master Radley Metzger, who was experiencing world wide popularity at the time, and *Carnet*, the décor is a character all in itself. He achieves a bizarre world in his films where pulp aesthetics are mixed with art aesthetics to create a surrealistic nightmare world.

What Rollin is most interested though is not décor, but in the 'hippie' movement of the early '70s. What begins as a typical horror movie device, newlyweds forced to spend the night in a haunted castle, becomes a manifesto for youth culture as the lead

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<sup>50</sup> Black 4

vampire (Nicole Naciel) spends half the movie spouting off about the history of religion in Europe.<sup>51</sup> Again, decaying decedent castles, filled with the souls of the undead is theme and mining the rebellious nature of France's youth in the early 1970s is where Rollin takes his inspiration. Scenes of semi-nude female vampires rising out of grandfather clocks was a clear signal that Rollin believed the youth of France was waking up. He bathed the film in free-form progressive rock including everything from guitars to organs and flutes.<sup>52</sup>

*Le Frisson* did achieve some commercial success in France and was one of his first to find distribution abroad. Critics though, were not pleased that a new Rollin film had been released and subsequently refused to review the film. Producer Natan was happy with films popular acceptance and immediately began to formulate another vampire movie. Unfortunately, she was killed in an automobile crash in late 1970. Rollin returned to Sam Selky and with his previous success he tried to find a film that would explore both the commercial side of filmmaking as well as his own personal concerns.

The resulting film, *Requiem Pour un Vampire (Requiem for a Vampire, 1971)* was like getting a peek inside Rollin's mind. The first real words of dialogue are not spoken in the film for 40 minutes. "I wanted to create the ultimate naive film, to simplify story, direction, cinematography, everything. Like a shadow, an idea of a plot." Said Rollin.<sup>53</sup> The story of two young on the run in a stolen car forced to stay in a "typical" Rollin

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<sup>51</sup> The Shiver of the Vampires "Le Frisson des Vampires" Prod. and Dir. Jean Rollin France 1970

<sup>52</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 145. The films heroine, the virginal bride was played by Sandra Julien who had starred in 2 of Max Pécas' most famous euro soft porn films, *Je Suis Une Nymphomane* (I am a Nymphomaniac, 1970) and *Je Suis Frigide....Pourquoi?* (I am Frigid, Why?, 1972).

<sup>53</sup> Black.

castle inhabited by vampires is filmed poetically, where one situation melds into the next situation without attention to linear development.

Though the on camera sex is played down in *Requiem*, the exploitation factor is still high. The two main protagonists, (Marie Pierre Castel and Mireille D'Argent) are young, adolescent, criminals that ooze sexuality. Their sexuality is represented very much in comic book style where they appear, wide-eyed, in various stages of undress and completely open to new experiences. For Rollin, this type of sexuality was important to the horror aspects of the story not for titillation effect. He has eschewed the idea that these vampire films are sex films,

I don't think my horror and fantasy films are sex films, I think they are erotic. I think of them as a kind of poetry, fantastic and sad. For example, an image that I have used often (and one that resonates in *Requiem*) is that of an old graveyard with cold grey stones and so on. By having a beautiful nude woman walking through that graveyard, through the crosses and statues, perhaps holding a torch or lantern, she is a symbol of light and beauty in the dark. Very poetic.<sup>54</sup>

Most genre authors agree that *Requiem* remains a consolidation of the experimental Rollin period.<sup>55</sup> His craftsmanship solidified, he begins to incorporate standardized commercial forms of film with the integration of more personal concerns. Not surprisingly, these concerns focus on the decaying social structure of not only France but of Europe. Looking at his first 4 vampire films of the late '60s and '70s, it is easy see the completion of the war that was waging within society. From impossible odds in *Viol de Vampire* (1968) where society in the form oppressed villagers and historical precedent win out to *Requiem Pour un Vampire* (1971) where the head vampire is old, dying and looking to pass along his power, the films complete a progression. That the object of his

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<sup>54</sup> Alexander. 17-18.

<sup>55</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 149

transference is two young nubile French girls, who happen to be criminals, is significant in itself. These girls represent the future of horror, young, pretty yet complaisant about death or violence. They are French Lolita's who will be as vicious in their self-indulgence who represent a modern day revamping (no pun intended) of the 'femme fatale'. It is in these girls' hands that Rollin places the future of France.

*Requiem Pour un Vampire* (1971) became the first Rollin film to receive distribution in the U.S. Distributor Harry Novak who saw some potential in the drive-in and grindhouse circuit for the film. Unfortunately this partnership didn't work out. Taking exception with film being retitled *Caged Virgins* (1972) producer Selsky thought the film was marketed all wrong. Quipping sarcastically that "Americans probably don't know what requiem means anyway." he watched one of the few Rollin films to receive distribution in the American market fizzle to vast indifference.<sup>56</sup>

In 1972, French filmmakers were beginning to find another source of inspiration for their films, pornography. The release of *Deep Throat* (1972) and *Behind the Green Door* (1972) in the U.S. interested the French in so much as they could see a big return on a small investment. Added to that, the French producers felt fairly comfortable with the subject of sex. By the early '70s, French producers already begun to 'splice' in bits of hardcore to liven up their soft-core features. Censorship rules around France, as well as Europe were beginning to crumble. Distributors began offering buyers two versions of movies, one with the hardcore added, one without.

Jean Rollin was one of the first to make movies that allowed this practice to flourish. His first attempt at a non-vampire/sex film was *Jeunes Filles Impudiques*

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<sup>56</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 148

(*School Girl Hitchhikers*) in 1972. He was unsure if he could make a straight-ahead sex picture. Related Rollin in 1995,

Lionel obliged me to put some sex scenes in *Requiem (Pour Une Vampire, 1971)* during the dungeon sequence. I told him that I wasn't too fond of that kind of thing, and he answered: "But you do that kind of thing very well. If we made an entire film like that, I bet it would be successful. You may not like it, but you know how to do it. Okay, I'll do it, but I won't invest any of my own money into it." Well, he raised the money, we made the film, and he was right. The two sex films I made, *Jeunes* and *Tout le Monde il en a Deux (Bacchanales Sexuelles, 1973)* were very successful.<sup>57</sup>

Again Rollin found inspiration in the film serial of old as he wove the tale of two female hitchhikers who get involved with jewelry thieves. The girls in the film hop from one bed to the next with a carefree sexual abandon that saturated the early 70s. Fearing that his non-hardcore films may suffer, he adapted the pseudonym Michel Gentil for this and his subsequent sex pictures. Rollin's second soft-core film, under the Michel Gentil moniker, was *Tout le Monde il en a Deux (Bacchanales Sexuelles)* also in 1973. This film nothing more than a comic book romp. French beauty Joelle Coeur stars as Malvina, the leader of a gang of hedonists that live in an elegant French chateau. Like a sexualized version of Batman, members of Coeur's gang slink around comically trying to kidnap a young woman (Marie-France Morell) whose cousin has some incriminating evidence about the sex cult.<sup>58</sup> Executed as an outlandish comedy, the film pushed the boundaries of soft-core. Rollin became uncomfortable with genre and surprisingly expressed more comfort in directing hardcore. As he put it,

It's strange, but it was much more embarrassing for me to shoot my first (sic) soft-core film, *Tout le Monde (Il en a Deux, 1973)* I walked off the set one day, because

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<sup>57</sup> Blumenstock. The budgets for these soft-core films were even lower than for his vampire films resulting in cheap, amateurish visuals.

<sup>58</sup> Bacchanales Sexuelles "Tout le Monde Il en a Deux" Prod. Lionel Wallmann, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1973

I just couldn't direct phony lovemaking. When it became real, I had no problem at all. I really don't know why. Maybe because in soft-core films, the only person revealing his obsessions is the director, because he has to call the shots while the actors simply do as they are told. In porno, both the actors and director are in the same position. One reveals his obsessions, and the actors live them out, so there is nothing to be ashamed of.<sup>59</sup>

*Tout le Monde* performed fairly well in French theatres.<sup>60</sup> Its relative success propelled Rollin to write another horror movie this time without vampires. *Les Démoniaques* (*The Demoniacs*, 1974) allowed him to incorporate his love of the Hollywood swashbuckler and pirate film into an exploitation film. *Les Démoniaques* is a story of revenge as two young girls (a theme in practically all of Rollin's films) are raped and murdered by a group of shipwrecked pirates led by Tina (played by *Tout le Monde*'s Joelle Coeur). After making a pact with the devil, the two girls return as ghosts to inflict some payback on the evil crew.<sup>61</sup> Even more 'out there' than his other films, *Les Démoniaques* (1974) relies on the expressionistic way that Rollin shoots the film. Dialogue and characterization take second place as the atmosphere is played up.

Though Rollin had intended the film to be larger in scope, the budget problems and outside meddling from outside co-producers caused some radical reshuffling of ideas. Shooting exploitation pictures during the early-to-mid '70s relied ingenuity and tenacity. According to Rollin,

Even with the Belgian money involved, we were close to leaving it unfinished. There was one week of shooting ahead of us, and we had absolutely no money left. We were in despair and really didn't know how to go on. So, we all went into a little bar where the director of photography got drunk every night. They were

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<sup>59</sup> Blumenstock

<sup>60</sup> The film was also released in the U.S. with the name *Fly Me the French Way*. It was edited down from 102 minutes to 77 to make it perfect for the grindhouse viewing.

<sup>61</sup> The Demoniacs "Les Demoniacs" Prod. Lionel Wallmann, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1974

selling lottery tickets there, and that night, they had only one ticket left. Lionel bought it, just for fun, and he won about 100,000 Francs! We were saved!<sup>62</sup>

Budgets weren't the only problems an exploitation filmmaker had to deal with.

Reputation of both the genre and filmmakers could have a large effect on the proceedings. Explained Rollin,

I also had a lot of problems with two actresses who were supposed to play the leading parts. We found two very attractive, young girls who worked in an office near mine, and I offered them the parts. Everything was fine until somebody told them that, if they made a film with me, I would make them walk the streets as prostitutes to raise money for the film's financing! And they believed it! I never found out who did it. As you can see, I had a very bad reputation at that time, and my films were also infamous, which certainly did not help.<sup>63</sup>

Feeling dismayed by the lack of respect for his films, Rollin looked to escape the exploitation genre entirely and create a thought provoking film about two people lost in a strange environment. *Le Rose de Fer (The Crystal Rose, 1974)* was his attempt to present to French audiences something different. Without any horror or sex involved financial backers shied away causing Rollin to put up his own funds to get the film made. Typical exploitation troubles aside (problems with locations, actors, etc.) Rollin did manage to show the completed film to a group of horror fans at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convention of Cinéma Fantastique in Paris. Critics as well as fans were horrified. French magazine, *Cinématographe* recounted gleefully how Rollin had been booed by the audience “in a way that the writer had ever seen a director booed in his life”.<sup>64</sup> Rollins was completely devastated. Not only had he invested a substantial financial investment in the film, he saw it as a way to branch out of the exploitation genre. The French critics would have none of it and were unimpressed.

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<sup>62</sup> Blumenstock.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Tombs and Tohill. 152

Forced to work for financial reasons, Rollin relegated his filmmaking talents primarily within the hardcore porn industry producing 12 films under the name Michel Gentil.

Movies like *Deep Throat* (1972) became very popular in Paris and distributors were free to screen it wherever they wanted.” Rollin stated, “So, all the little cinemas that would show my vampire films immediately stopped showing them because they were too tame and instead showed only porno films. So in order to live, I started making X-rated films. I did what I had to do, as did many other small European filmmakers at the time.”<sup>65</sup>

Of the 12 sex films he produced between '74 and '78, only one was strong enough to warrant his real name, *Phantasmes (The Seduction of Amy, 1975)*. Trying to successfully blend horror and porn, the film again felt the wrath of French critics. Now that Rollin was doing porn, the critics felt they had a scapegoat in which to blame a rapidly changing French film industry. So vehement was their ire that one magazine, *Écran* blamed Rollin himself for the whole wave of French porno that was being produced thanks to abolishment of censorship in 1975. Citing that it was his “half dozen turds a year” that led to the proliferation of a genre that was killing the indigenous French film industry.<sup>66</sup>

Rollin’s final three vampire themed films, *Levres de Sang (Lips of Blood, 1976)*, *Les Raisins de la Mort (The Grapes of Death, 1977)* and *Fascination (1979)* were all filmed in between his porn projects. Each one had the typical, lyrical female who in some way was forced to confront the unnatural state of being a vampire or in the case *Les Raisins* a contaminated zombie. Each film piled on the nudity and gore than his other previous non-porn films. In addition, each film attempted to branch out new avenues of

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<sup>65</sup> Alexander. 18

<sup>66</sup> Tombs and Tohill. 155

introspection about French culture and society that has always marked Rollin's work, By the late '70s, France had adjusted to the new film landscape and freer sensuality standards, Rollins films of the era showcased this freedom. While the films had commercial aspirations they still were deeply invested by his quixotical mind and his use of color and imagery to promote the kind of vision of what he saw within the French social culture.

Working as a "beautiful macabre poem", *Levres de Sang* (Lips of Blood, 1976) is considered by many, including Rollin, to be his best.<sup>67</sup> The story of a man (Jean-Lou Philippe) obsessed with discovering the location of a castle that he remembers from his childhood. At a party, he sees a photograph that looks surprisingly similar to the castle. He wants to find out more about the castle, but no one can help him. The woman who took the photograph was sworn to secrecy. After Philippe pushes her for an answer, she turns up dead. As Philippe continues to search for clues, he unwittingly releases several female vampires from their tombs who in turn begin stalking the streets of Paris.<sup>68</sup> Though the plot reads like simple horror melodrama, what Rollin was really looking at is the subversion of rational order to boyhood fantasies and romantic longings. Film scholars such as Doug Sparks who have reexamined the film find that employed that confusion and terror can (related to a downtrodden existence) evoke a childlike simplicity or even romance in the traditional sense.<sup>69</sup> This statement can also describe Rollin himself who sees each of the fears of childhood manifested in the simplicity of his films.

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<sup>67</sup> Brumestock

<sup>68</sup> Lips of Blood "Levres de Sang" Prod. Jean-Marie Ghanassia, Dir. Jean Rollin France, 1975

<sup>69</sup> Sparks, Doug. The Romance of Childhood. Kinoeye Vol. 2 Issue 7  
[www.kinoeye.org/02/07/sparks07.php](http://www.kinoeye.org/02/07/sparks07.php) Accessed on Jan 15, 2007

Rollin's next non-porno film was an entry into the zombie movie genre. The zombie film was enjoying much popularity in Europe with films like Jorge Grau's *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (1974) and Dario Argento's European version of *Zombi (Dawn of the Dead)*, (1978), playing to full audiences around Europe. Surprisingly it was the disaster movie genre that first enticed Rollin to film *Les Raisins de le Mort* (1977). The success of disaster films like, *Towering Inferno* (1974) and *Earthquake* (1974) had interested European producers who were looking for a quick buck. Rollin determined that a disaster movie of any quality could not be achieved with such low budgets and began to focus his ideas on a biological disaster. Looking to find some horror in everyday life, Rollins developed a story that took the French national beverage (wine) and turned it into a device to drive the local country folk mad.

*Les Raisins* is Rollin's ode to poetic realism. In his hands it becomes exploitative. As he summed up the movie in 1995, Rollin replied, "The key to my story is the guy who cuts off the head of his girl with an axe, yet he says, "I love you" in doing that, because he is conscious".<sup>70</sup> Forsaking the traditional vampire storyline, *Raisins* instead deals with a young woman, Elizabeth (Marie-George Pascal) trying to escape the French countryside that's been overrun with decaying, infected locals who've been poisoned by pesticides in the wine.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the themes still remain the same with the purpose of assimilation. Rollin shoots the entire film against the dead, depressing backdrop of the volcanic mountain region of Cevennes in southern France. The delineation between Rollin's foggy oppressive atmosphere and say the dark harbor town of *Le Quai des*

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<sup>70</sup> Nigel J. Burrell. *The Grapes of Death Liner Notes*. The Grapes of Death DVD. Synapse Entertainment. 2001

<sup>71</sup> *Grapes of Death* "Les Raisins de le Mort" Prod. Claude Guedi, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1978

*Brumes* (1938) is slight. Like *Quai*, Rollin fills the screen with the trappings of lower class life. Suicide, desertion, flight, alcoholism are set patterns in the existence of the villagers. Their contamination only seeks to magnify their longings as well as their hidden animosity against the ruling establishments.

Yet, for all their madness, Rollin sees this group of zombies as happy. They do not kill each other, in fact their condition liberates them to those emotions that remained under the surface. They are able to free these emotions up so they can express more love, hate, and desire. It is only with those not contaminated that they harbor violent feelings.

Said Rollin,

The idea was to do a “living dead” film with the horrors you would in a Romero film, but with a different story. Romero’s style is claustrophobic...I tried a contrary approach; people are running in the vast countryside area, and, more importantly, my zombies are part of the living, with consciences, they know what they are doing but can’t stop themselves. So the sequence where the actor becomes mad and cuts off the head of his girlfriend, telling her at the same time that he loves her, is very dramatic!<sup>72</sup>

Clearly Rollin is again positing blame on the power structure of French society. It is they who have poisoned the wine, it is they who must suffer.

Filmed in just 2 weeks, *Fascination* (1979) signaled a return to a somewhat more traditional vampire narrative. True, there was no fangs or bats and the blood drinking was done in wine houses by the nouveaux riche, it nevertheless conveys a story of longing by those oppressed. Marc (Jean-Marie Lemaire), a petty thief on the run from the law finds himself within the confines of an elegant castle inhabited by a group of well-to-do women who feast off the blood of local inhabitants.<sup>73</sup> The story served as Rollin’s take on the class warfare raging within France. Marc represents the poor man whose presence

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<sup>72</sup> Black. 58

<sup>73</sup> Fascination Prod. Joe De Lara, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1979

among the French elite, drags down the atmosphere. Clearly, he does not belong and must pay a price for his intrusion. Yet, the longing is still there. In the beginning he pushes his way through the castle doors, manhandles the beautiful French maid, (French porn star, Brigitte Lahaie) and prepares to take control of the domain. The arrival of the rich blood drinkers puts Marc in his place. He is from the lower class and his desire to reach above his station will never be fulfilled.

Rollin had to constantly battle his producer during the making of the film. “My co-producer wanted me to make a very explicit sex film--straight exploitation fare without too much emphasis on the fantastical elements--so we had a constant battle during the shooting (which I won eventually, much to the disappointment of my "enemy") [LAUGHS]!”<sup>74</sup> For Rollin, *Fascination* (1979) was considered one his finest achievements.<sup>75</sup> Making good use of his porn star cast and using what little written script he had, he used his decade of producing exploitation films to create a piece of art that he could be proud.

Life for Rollin did not get any easier. Though he produced some evocative films in the early 80s (*La Nuit des Trachees*, 1981, *La Morte Vivente*, 1983) Rollin’s reputation had tarnished him completely from legitimate French filmmakers. After producing films of lessening quality, Rollin gave up on the film industry in late ‘80s, returning to it in 1993. The recent interest in his work stems from the release of his films on DVD. What was considered far-out and un-redeeming socially now seems evocative and deep.

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<sup>74</sup> Blumenstock.

<sup>75</sup> Kalat. 278

## **Le Sexe Terrible: Exploitation French Style in the 70s.**

So what if they're just B films? These guys with their shoestring budgets have created incredible films. Just because they loved cinema, they were mad for it. They didn't care about being rich. They just loved what they did.

—French actor and director Michel Lemoine<sup>76</sup>

Though Jean Rollin had made inroads in French exploitation film with his lusty vampires, the French film industry as a whole was unimpressed. Very few avenues for exploitation were made available those French who wanted to compete with Argento, Fulci and Franco. Without any previous historical precedent, the French were not acclimated to take traditional horror film characters like Frankenstein, the Mummy or the Werewolf and exploit their potential in film like the Spaniards did. Nor were they predisposed to the Gothic horror traditions that the Italians and English mined in the '60s and '70s. Proud and original, they also never felt the need to rip-off popular movies from abroad; the basis of a majority of exploitation films. For the French there were only two horrific characters that appealed to them, the vampire and the witch. Both characters resonated something in common which was extremely appealing to the French public, sex.

Jean Rollin had mined the vampire territory by focusing on the erotic nature of vampires. His vampires played up their sexuality via nudity and erotic movements and beauty. To the French, the vampire signified a perverse eroticism. The witch itself, historically, is not known as an erotic character. In the hands of French filmmakers though, witchcraft became an exploitation tool that mined to some modestly successful results.

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<sup>76</sup> Andy Starke and Pete Tombs. Formidable: The Michel Lemoine Story. Seven Women for Satan DVD. Mondo Macabro. 2003

In the early '70s groups of young people were forming communes around Europe. Like those in the U.S. these communes were source of mistrust with leaders of society. Without knowing what really went on in them, people used their active imaginations to vilify those residing in the communes. Filmmakers took advantage of this mistrust to exploit these groups, giving mainstream audiences exactly what they wanted.

Bruno Gantillon's *Morgan et Ses Nymphes (Girl Slaves of Morgana Le Fay)* in early 1971, began a short but prolific period of sexual witchcraft movies in France. Shot in six weeks the film is more linear than a Rollin picture but only slightly. The opening scene sets up what viewers can expect; a young naked girl is tormented by a handicapped dwarf (Alfred Baillou, in blue eye shadow no less) and a slew of middle-aged ladies who wish to make her a sexual slave. It seems the girl has offended the queen of witches Morgana and must pay for her insurrection with her youth. The rest of the film involves 2 young girls (Michele Perella, Mireille Savnin) who become unwilling slaves to the witch and her libidinous desires.<sup>77</sup> The film is a complete male lesbian fantasy as the dwarf does not participate in any of the sexuality. For director Gantillon, whose previous work include a stint co-directing the popular French television show *Dim Dam Dom*, the change to do an erotic horror film was exciting and challenging.<sup>78</sup> "I wanted to do a movie that we don't see very often. Only women and a dwarf." Gantillon told film scholar Pete Tombs about the process of filming an erotic movie with exploitive undertones,

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<sup>77</sup> *Girl Slaves of Morgana Le Fay* "Morgan et Ses Nymphes" Prod. and Dir. Bruno Gantillon France 1971

<sup>78</sup> Pete Tombs, *About the Movie*, DVD Notes. *Girl Slaves of Morgana Le Fay*. Mondo Macabro DVD. 2005. *Dim Dam Dom* was a trailblazing TV magazine show in France that attracted stars like Jimi Hendrix and Rolling Stones while also containing burlesque type numbers.

We wrote it without thinking that we will do this because there is this book or there is this painting or theatrical play. We write it as we wanted to see this ..nice... story...with only women and a dwarf. I saw a lot of girls, and of course when I say some of them there is nudity, they say NO. Okay. So I find only people that were not ashamed. And I loved to film them. I loved to direct the younger student actors. But it was soft and tender and not vulgar and this is what I wanted to do.<sup>79</sup>

Soft and tender as the film may be, French censors still had problems with the film's sexuality and demanded cuts.<sup>80</sup>

Mario Mercier's *La Goulve* (*Erotic Witchcraft*, 1972) and *La Papesse* (*A Woman Possessed*, 1975) also mined the erotic witchcraft themes. *La Goulve* revolves around a young man (Hervé Hendricks) who, being raised by a sorcerer, taps into magic to win the love of a local girl. Unfortunately, calling on the Goulve, a witch with power over snakes, brings a terrible price.<sup>81</sup> Shot with no budget and utilizing amateur actors who happily cavort nude, the film plays like a French version of an Ed Wood film. Clumsily handling the sexual fulfillment angle, the film resembles an amateur high school production complete with topless models. Mercier seems to be trying to out-obscure fellow countryman Jean Rollin, no easy feat. *La Papesse* (*A Woman Possessed*, 1975) is a bit more conventional. Using real witches from a local sect, it is the story of a young woman (Lisa Livanne) who is haunted by strange occurrences that seem to be connected with her husband. She's not wrong, as her writer husband has become involved with a ritualistic witch coven.<sup>82</sup> Though easier to comprehend than *Goulve*, the film retains all the violence and nudity of Mercier's earlier film. Naked men and women are tied to stakes in the

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<sup>79</sup> Pete Tombs. Interview with Bruno Gantillon. *Girl Slaves of Morgana Le Fay*, Mondo Macabro DVD. 2005

<sup>80</sup> The film was able to find foreign distribution being shown in both Spain and Britain in its severely edited forms.

<sup>81</sup> Erotic Witchcraft "Le Goulve" Prod. Bepi Fontana, Dir. Mario Mercier France 1972

<sup>82</sup> A Woman Possessed "La Papesse" Prod. Robert Pallardon, Dir. Mario Mercier. French 1975

wilderness and beaten into unconsciousness. Blood rituals, including the requisite orgies, are all performed ably by the amateurs. Though audiences showed some interest in these films, the critics were merciless. *Écran*, the magazine so critical of Jean Rollin, found comparison in the two. Review *Papesse*, they decried “Rollin, you are not alone! (Mercier) is a disciple of this Master in the creation of a pompous naiveté and genuine French camp.” For Mercier, the critical drubbing was enough. After *Papesse* he quit the movie business to focus on his writing.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to witches, there were a few examples of other types of exploitation coming out of France in the early 70s. *Mais ne Nous Délivrez Pas du Mal (Don't Deliver Us from Evil, 1972)* was one of the more shocking. Based on the same true story that inspired Peter Jackson's *Heavenly Creatures* (1994), the film looks at two young girls (Jeanne Goupil, Catherine Wagener) in a Catholic boarding school whose cruelty spirals out of control. Influenced by erotic novels, they delight in seducing older men and inflicting torture on the nuns of their school. Soon the girl's plots turn murderous.<sup>84</sup> Director Joel Séria script plays up all the exploitation angles. A student himself of a strict religious school in France, Séria invests all the torment that he felt during his youth into the film. The outcome is a shocking story of youth gone bad and religion partially to blame for it. From the beginning Séria had problems getting the film made. Related Séria,

People who read the script were shocked by it. In France we have to send scripts to the National Cinema Centre. They wrote back a terrible letter. They said that if we

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<sup>83</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 61 Mercier became even more notorious with his books. Both *Le Journal de Jeanne* (Jeanne's Journal, 1998) and *Le Nécrophile* caught the ire of French sensors with *Le Nécrophile* being banned outright.

<sup>84</sup> *Don't Deliver Us From Evil*. “*Mais ne Nous Délivrez Pas du Mal*” Prod. Bernard Legargeant, Dir. Joël Séria. France 1972

made this film it would be banned. So we were unable to get any money from the distributor.<sup>85</sup>

Getting money from friends and business acquaintances Séria was able to begin filming. When completed, the French censors were even more convinced that the public should not see the film. In addition to the blasphemy, the most shocking images of the film revolve around the girls themselves. Guapin and Wagener, look like 15 year olds (both were legally over 18) and the scenes with them seducing an older sheep herder bordered on child pornography. As the girls literally go up in smoke in the end so too went Séria's chance to have the film released. The film was banned completely for 8 months. Even worse French authorities would not allow the film to be exported meaning no money could be made from distribution.<sup>86</sup> Forced to take financial stock, Séria acquiesced and made some cuts to film allowing it to be shown. The film became a huge hit in both England and Germany, due primarily because of its 'banned in France' notoriety.

Another film banned outright in France was Michel Lemoine's *Sept Femmes Pour un Sadique* (*Seven Women for Satan*) in 1974. Lemoine, an actor who had appeared in many Jess Franco, Mario Bava and Antonio Marheriti films, began to turn his sights to directing in the '70s. *Sept Femmes* borrows heavily from both the giallo films of Italy and the Krimi's from Germany.<sup>87</sup> Lemoine came up with idea for the film when walking along the Champs Elyseés with one of the founders of *Midi Minuit Fantastique*, France's premier horror journal. Commenting that its difficult to get inside peoples minds and that anyone could be thinking murderous thoughts at any time, he constructed the story of

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<sup>85</sup> Pete Tombs. Interview with Joel Séria. Don't Deliver us From Evil DVD. Mondo Macabro. 2006

<sup>86</sup> Tombs. Interview with Joel Séria.

<sup>87</sup> Its no surprise that Lemoine felt at home in these types of genres having spent 15 years in Italy working on the same types of films there.

Count Zaroff (Lemoine playing lead), an affable, nice man who rapes, tortures and murders women on his family estate.<sup>88</sup> Explained Lemoine,

I always wanted to make a horror film. Sadly, when I started to direct, it was hard to make such a film here. The idea of a French horror film is not really accepted. One day I found a producer showed her some scenes I'd shot in an old castle and managed to convince her to put up half the money for Zaroff.<sup>89</sup>

Much like Séria's film, *Mais ne Nous Délivrez Pas du Mal* (*Don't Deliver Us from Evil*, 1972) two years earlier, Lemoine's finished film was immediately banned by the French censors. Citing the uneasy blend of unabashed eroticism mixed with hardcore violence, the censor board made it impossible for Lemoine to show the film for years after its completion. Eventually the film was shown in England with extensive cuts and ironically won the silver medal at the 1977 Sitges Festival of Horror Cinema in Barcelona Spain.

*Sept Femmes Pour un Sadique* (*Seven Women for Satan*, 1974) was one of the last true horror/exploitation films to be produced in France in the '70s. By the mid-70s French filmmakers were already switching their perverse eyes to the soft-core sex industry that rapidly competing with the rise of hardcore pornography. France has always been a country that was synonymous with romance and sexuality. Historically from literature, culturally by nature, eroticism was naturally a big part of the nation's film industry. Beginning with Roger Vadim's *Et Dieu Créa la Femme* (*And God Created Woman*) in 1956, French films were the outlet for the worlds foray into sexuality. Both the art house AND grindhouse audiences accepted the romantic, eroticism of them. Worldwide audiences came to expect some unabashed sexuality when viewing these films. Filmmakers from around Europe began to film their productions in France in order

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<sup>88</sup> Seven Women for Satan "Le Weekend Malafique de Count Zarkoff" Prod. Denise Petitdidier, Dir. Michel Lemoine. France 1974

<sup>89</sup> Starke and Tombs.

to tap some of the erotic spirit of the country. Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1973) became a world wide hit in the early '70s from just such an expecting audience. Unashamedly erotic, the film reaped major acclaim from film critics who found it deep and introspective.<sup>90</sup> For audiences though, it was thought of seeing Marlon Brando in an 'X' rated film. Movies like *Tango* made it respectable to attend adult films. So long as they weren't overtly pornographic and had artistic merit, early to mid-70s audiences were open-minded to the possibility of erotic works of film. This is where the French film industry excelled. They were the masters of taking tawdry subjects and filming them in beautiful surroundings. Soft lighting, beautiful women and men, classical haunting music were all tools the industry used to export palatable erotic product around the world.

Exploitation audiences had already discovered the attraction of France. Exploitation filmmakers like Radley Metzger (*Dirty Girls*, 1964, *Therese and Isabelle*, 1968, *L'Image*, 1973) were already regularly shooting in Paris to give their sex films an air of respectability. Foreign audiences ate these films up. It was okay to watch them allowing them to indulge in material that would never be produced in their own countries while feeling no guilt because 'well, that's just the way the French are.'

For the most part, these sex films were fairly low on the violent levels. Most involved the awaking of (usually) a young woman to her sexuality. They contained happy scenarios where the main protagonist was liberated by no longer being a virgin. Very much playing into the rise of the Women's Liberation movement that was beginning to

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<sup>90</sup> Briggs. 271

sweep the world during this period these films offered a male gaze view of female sexuality.<sup>91</sup>

Though most of the sexually charged material coming out of France was fairly tame, by the mid-70s a disturbingly violent trend was beginning to creep into the films. While still giving the impression that they were about the discovery of sexuality, they were employing devices that exploitation filmmakers around Europe were using in horror films to get people into the theatres. One of the most successful of these subliminally violent movies happened to be the most successful erotic film ever made, Just Jaeckin's *Emmanuelle* (1974).

Based on the scandalous novel by Emmanuelle Arsan, a Eurasian/French actress who was the wife of a Diplomat, *Emmanuelle* caught the imagination of the French as well the world.<sup>92</sup> The story of sexually liberated women who indulges in sexual adventures around the world, the book was an unabashed scandal when released in Paris in 1957. President Charles DeGaulle condemned the book as an "outrage" and convicted the publisher, Eric Losfield for offending public morality. Though officially the book was banned until 1967, it made the underground circuit creating a cult following. Loosening censorship and a change of publishers allowed the book to be distributed in the mainstream where it immediately grossed millions.<sup>93</sup> A sequel, *Emmanuelle 2, L'Anti-Vierge*, was released a year later making the original even more successful. An initial

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<sup>91</sup> It must be seriously noted that many feminist and film theorists (Linda Williams, etc.) believe these films to just as exploitative as the other films in this study. Though I believe that there is much relevance in that statement, the focus of this work is on a more violent sexual exploitation. Many a dissertation could be and have been written about the exploitative tendencies of porn films.

<sup>92</sup> Arsan, whose real name is Marayat Bididh, had a co-starring role in the Steve McQueen movie *The Sand Pebbles* (1965)

<sup>93</sup> Garrett Chaffin-Quiray. *Emmanuelle Enterprises*. In *Alternative Europe: Eurotrash and Exploitation Cinema Since 1945*. London Wallflower Press. 2004. 136

version, *Emanuelle* (1968) was unsuccessfully produced by Jean-Pierre Thorn. The story was too erotically charged for late '60s audiences resulting in a water downed version of the highly pornographic novel. By the mid '70s events made producers believe the time was right to mount a more accurate version of the book. The rise of hard-core pornography and the success of Bertolucci's *The Last Tango in Paris* (1973) showed producers that there was a market for adult material and that audiences could be persuaded to come to theatres without embarrassment. In addition, the social mores of the world were changing too. Commenting on the culture that made *Emmanuelle* (1974) a success, feminist writer Polly Toynbee commented,

A lot of things came together in the 70s. You had a whole new generation that had money. Money to be free. To buy things like motorbikes, to go to other places, to be free of their parents houses. And with freedom came, inevitably, a moment of sexual liberation. For a brief time it looked like you could have pleasure without responsibility, sex without consequences.<sup>94</sup>

*Emmanuelle*, producers thought, would fit perfectly into this new sexualized popular culture.

Looking for an "intellectual alibi" producer Yves Rousset-Rouard, bought the rights to *Emmanuelle* in 1972 and immediately began looking for the right director that could give a classy look to the film. He offered the job to photographer and artist Just Jaeckin. Jaeckin, who had never directed a feature film before, was shocked and daunted by the project. "I read the novel and said 'my goodness' what can I do with a book like that?" Calling Rousset-Rouard to beg out, they developed a compromise. "So we decided to do something soft and beautiful with a nice story."<sup>95</sup> After coming up with a scenario that was suitably erotic yet not hardcore, the filmmakers next had to find a suitable

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<sup>94</sup> Jan Wellmann *Finding Emmanuelle*. The Dark Side of Porn. Firecracker Films. Channel 4. London 2006

<sup>95</sup> Jan Wellmann

actress to play the part. Casting sessions were held throughout Europe with no luck. Many actresses were justifiably suspicious of creating a role that based primarily on sex. After viewing a short film by a European director, she came upon 21-year old, Dutch actress Sylvia Kristel. Convent educated, Kristel had the innocence and elegance that producers were looking for as well as an obvious sensuality important to the type of film. Kristel described the initial meeting with director Jaeckin,

I met with Just and I did some things for the camera. And since he told me there would be nudity involved I had a dress with spaghetti tie ups and um in this one movement, I didn't even have to touch it and the entire dress just fell to my waist and I just went on talking, where I lived, my hobbies, why I could do this film..da da da..and Just said "I want to do some nude photography" and that was fine. It was fun and he could see that I would have no problems with the nudity.<sup>96</sup>

With the cast set, the crew embarked for Thailand to film all the outside shots. Finishing interior shots in Paris, *Emmanuelle* was ready to premier in Paris in June, 1974. The film tells the story of Emmanuelle (Kristel), the young 21-year old wife of an open-minded diplomat Jean (Dan Sarkey).<sup>97</sup> Jean, interested in his wife's emotional growth, propels the young girl to sexual affairs with his male and female friends. Entrusting herself to an elderly gentleman (Alain Cuny), Emmanuelle learns the true spirit of eroticism.<sup>98</sup> While presenting itself as a fairly straightforward soft-core sex film, several elements of the film fit squarely into the exploitation realm. Hidden behind the beauty of Jaeckin's photography is an ugliness within the story. Rape, racial discrimination and misogyny all play out within in the plot to varying degrees. Emmanuelle first tender love scene with Jean under a mosquito netted bed in inter-cut with a man servant chasing

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<sup>96</sup> Jan Wellmann

<sup>97</sup> In the next two sequels *Emmanuelle 2* (1975) and *Goodbye Emmanuelle* (1977), the occupation of her husband (played in both by Italian actor Umberto Orsini) turns to an architect.

<sup>98</sup> Emmanuelle Prod. Yves Rousset-Rouard, Dir. Just Jaeckin France 1974

another maid through the Thai jungle and forcibly raping her. In one of the films most talked about scene, Jean frequents a Thai bar and watches a young Thai girl smoke a cigarette out of her vagina.<sup>99</sup> In addition to that, Emmanuelle herself is forcibly raped by two drugged natives in a Bangkok opium den. Kristel herself was not happy with the scene nor in the way the scene was carried out. Commenting on the exploitative aspects of filming the scene she said,

I couldn't see how a rape would be pleasurable. These two Thai people were not actors. I really had to fight for my life there. They were rough. It seems like they enjoyed what they were doing. And I kept my underwear on because I knew otherwise things would go absolutely berserk. I really had no choice. Thank god he's a really good director and used many different cameras. I only had to do that scene once and I came out black and blue.<sup>100</sup>

By the summer of 74, Emmanuelle was ready to be shown in France. Because the book garnered such extreme controversy, both government and society kept a close eye on its production. The Pompidou government, in the midst of change itself, was trying to control the onslaught of sexually explicit material that was beginning to infiltrate the French market. To the government, *Emmanuelle* looked like the perfect film for Pompidou to make an example of. They refused to grant the film a certificate allowing it to be shown. The death of Pompidou in April of 74 made it possible for the film to be shown as the change signified some dramatic changes in French censorship laws.

With the blessing of the government, *Emmanuelle* (1974) was now ready to open. Capitalizing on the public's desire to see sexual explicit material, the film was an instant

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<sup>99</sup> Jaeckin denies any involvement with shooting this scene. In the true spirit of exploitation filmmaking it seems that producer Rousset-Rouard shot the short clip without Jaeckin to add some 'spice' to the film. Jaeckin claims that he first saw the scene sitting in the theatre.

<sup>100</sup> Jan Wellmann

smash in France. Commenting on the first week of its premiere co-producer Alain Sirtzky recalled,

“I peeked my head around the corner on the Champs D’Elysees and all of a sudden I saw there is a crowd. So, I ran to the lobby of the theatre and said to the cashier what was going on. She said “Oh everything is fine, we’re almost full:” so I ran back the restaurant and knew we had a success on our hands.<sup>101</sup>

Almost instantly, the name Emmanuelle became synonymous with French sexuality. The picture struck a chord throughout the world. So popular was the film that Columbia picture in the U.S. decided to take a chance and release the film as its first ‘X’ rated film. Even with the critical drubbing the film received by U.S. critics, the film became one of the biggest foreign film blockbusters in the U.S.<sup>102</sup>

The success of *Emmanuelle* (1974) opened up the floodgates to a variety of knockoffs.<sup>103</sup> For French producers, the pressure was on to create another film that pushed the boundaries even more. *Emmanuelle 2, L’Anti-Vierge (Emmanuelle, The Joys of a Woman, 1975)* had to be more explicit and more daring than the previous outing to beat all the worldwide competitors. For producer Rousset-Rouard, getting financing for the film was easy. Sylvia Kristel would return to the role, as her initial contract called for a 3 picture deal playing the title character, the film had Emmanuelle Arsan’s second novel as literary inspiration and a built in audience had already been established. The only problem was that director Jaeckin did not want to film the second installment. Not wishing to be a series director, he had been approached to film Pauline Reage’s *L’Histoire D’O (The Story of O, 1974)* and was interested in what he could do with that

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<sup>101</sup> Jan Wellmann.

<sup>102</sup> So successful was the film that it helped Columbia recoup most of its costs for the big budgeted G-rated remake of *Lost Horizon* (1973), which was a huge financial failure for the company.

<sup>103</sup> The most successful of these were the Black Emanuelle films from Italy discussed in depth in chapter 2.

erotic classic. Roussett-Rouard took Jaekin's advice and hired French fashion photographer Francis Giacobetti. Giacobetti, like Jaekin, had not directed a feature film before and was known more for his mise-en-scene than for his work with actors.<sup>104</sup>

Filmed in Hong Kong, the film follows the further adventures of Emmanuelle and her husband Jean (Umberto Orsini) as they sleep their way through their friends and strangers. Like the first film, there's a strong exploitation factor. In the film, Emmanuelle is given an exotic acupuncture that leads to sexual fulfillment. She had brutal intercourse with a polo player (Vanatino Venatini) as well as dressing up as prostitute and having group sex.<sup>105</sup> For Kristel, the exploitation aspects of plot seemed overplayed by director Giacobetti,

It definitely had something to do with Giacobetti's tastes, particularly the scene in the brothel. I don't know, at the time I didn't question it lot because I go along with ideas of my director and with the script. I thought it was here and there more misogynist. I felt more used in number two than in number one.<sup>106</sup>

If the first *Emmanuelle* film had problems with the censors the second films battle was even more intense. In April of 1975, the first hardcore porno film was released in Paris to thunderous success. This frightened members of the government and film community who did not want to see the French film industry go down the path that the German film industry went down in the early '70s where a large majority of films were nothing but erotic comedies.<sup>107</sup> They tried to develop ways to put a stop to French filmmakers doing the same thing. Though the censor board passed *Emmanuelle 2* (1975)

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<sup>104</sup> This would end up being Giacobetti's one and only film.

<sup>105</sup> *Emmanuelle 2, L'Anti-Vierge* Prod. Yves Rousset-Rouard, Dir. Francis Giacobetti France 1975

<sup>106</sup> David Gregory. *The Joys of Emmanuelle pt. 2*. The Emmanuelle Collection. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 2003

<sup>107</sup> Tohill and Tombs. 55

by saying it was erotic, not pornographic, the government declared the movie unsuitable.<sup>108</sup> Angered by the government's interference, Rousset-Rouard boldly decided to sue the government and not show the film in France. Looking to teach the government a lesson, he released the film around the world to a smashing success. Even in countries that were more restricted about sexuality, the film played to packed audiences. In the U.S. Paramount Pictures outbid Columbia and released *Emmanuelle 2* (1975) as a legitimate 'X' rated movie. 2 years later, Rousset-Rouard won his suit against the French government and was able to release his film. By then though events in France had made it easier to delineate between erotic and pornographic and such controversies were few and far between.

One of the biggest film successes to take advantage of delineation was the film Just Jaeckin's chose instead of *Emmanuelle 2* (1975), *L'Histoire d'O* (*The Story of O*, 1974). Released later in the same year as the popular *Emmanuelle* and based on another scandalous book, by Pauline Reage, *O* cemented France's reputation for literate, pretty exploitation. Looking within the confines of a sadomasochistic relationship, *O* tells the story of a young woman O (Corinne Cleary) who allows her boyfriend (exploitation regular, Udo Kier) to take her to a strange castle where she is made to submit to torture and debasement in order to prove her love. Whipped, beaten, forcibly raped, O emerges a stronger woman who surrounds herself with those who believe that punishment is the best proof of love.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Erotic movies could be shown in any movie theatre in France. Porn films could only be shown in small designated movies usually in unseedy parts of town.

<sup>109</sup> The Story of O "L'Histoire d'O" Prod. Roger Fleytoux, Dir. Just Jaeckin. France 1974

Though extreme in its exploitation, women are made to walk around bare breasted and with harnesses for instantaneous subjection to men, Jaeckin shoots the film like it was a Vogue cover shoot. Beautiful elegant women, opulent locales, soft pretty lights and an evocative score, all the things that made *Emmanuelle* (1974) a successful film with middle class society was perfected in the film.<sup>110</sup> For Jaeckin, the course, exploitative nature of the story was tempered by the fact that he saw the film as an adult version of Alice in Wonderland,

It is an imaginary story that could have started with anything. It is important to remember this because the *Story of O* is a fantasy. Its an imaginary story and absolutely not in the first degree but the third degree. It's the power of imagination, it's a fantasy, at no time can this story be taken to the first degree. That would be catastrophic. It's a wonderful love story.<sup>111</sup>

Love story or bondage picture, the film fascinated both European and U.S. audiences. Though Radley Metzger's *L'Image* (*The Image*, 1973) dealing with a sadomasochistic ménage-a-trois was filmed a year earlier, it was *O* that captured the audience's imagination.<sup>112</sup> Adult filmmakers began to mine the territory S & M more thoroughly because of its success. Hardcore films like Gerard Damiano's *The Story of Joanna* (1975) and others paved the way for a new deviant genre of filmmaking that continues to this day.

## **Conclusion**

Emmanuelle could not cause a tingle in the Achilles tendon of a celibate scoutmaster. Why it is turning on the French is a matter of the most melancholy sociological conjecture.

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<sup>110</sup> The films star Cleary went on to become a Bond Girl in *Moonraker* (1979)

<sup>111</sup> Just Jaeckin. *The Story of O*. Director's Commentary DVD. Somerville House Releasing. 2000

<sup>112</sup> Radley Metzger was the premiere filmmaker for erotic films in the late 60s and 70s. *L'Image* (*The Image*, 1973) was his first foray into more hardcore material. Less misogynistic than *L'Histoire d'O*, the film is considered to be the classic S & M movie. In many instances the film was released after *L'Histoire* in Europe causing some to think of it as ripoff.

—Time Magazine movie reviewer, Jay Cocks<sup>113</sup>

The success of both *Emmanuelle* (1974) and *L'Histoire d'O* (1974) opened the floodgates for French filmmakers to make adult films. The world market was flooded with sexually charged films with one word female named titles like Guy Casaril's *Emilienne* (1975), *Felicity* (1978) and *Nea, A Young Emmanuelle* (1976) or *Laure* (*Forever Emmanuelle*, 1977) which was ironically written, directed and co-starred by Emmanuelle Arsan herself. This influx caused a strain on the French government both morally and financially. In October of '76, the so-called 'X Law' was passed by the French legislation. The law, actually a finance bill, was designed to limit the production of sexually explicit films. Producers of sexually explicit material could no longer petition the government for funds in creating their pictures. Worse, those who made sex pictures had to pay a tax that would go into a general fund to fund legitimate films. Filmmakers were quick to catch on the bandwagon and not push the limits of sexuality any further. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and final installment of the original *Emmanuelle* sage, *Goodbye Emmanuelle* (1977) was good reflection of this period. In the film Emmanuelle (Kristel) finally tires of her hedonistic husband (Orsini) and lifestyle and finds monogamous love with a French filmmaker. So little was the explicit sex in the film that when released in 1980 in the U.S. the film carried an 'R' rating.

The 'X' law effectively killed what little exploitation filmmaking that was being done in France. With the exception of the films by Jean Rollin, no other exploitation movies were produced. The French with their complete mistrust and artistic snobbery of the genre were content to enjoy and criticize those films that were produced abroad. Its been only in the last 5 years has there been a re-awakening of the French horror genre.

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<sup>113</sup> Danny Peary Cult Movies New York Delta Press 1981. 80

Successful films like Delplanque's *Promenons-nous dans les Bois* (*Deep in the Woods*, 2000) and *Haute Tension* (*High Tension*, 2004) have made it somewhat acceptable to create new entries into a genre that the French have never felt comfortable in.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The Eurocult genre is coming up on its 50<sup>th</sup>-year anniversary. Yet, it is only now that we are beginning to compile a complete history of the genre. Issues of intellectual snobbism, a distaste of much of the subject matter and a limited exposure to the relevant primary sources have stunted the exploration of this topic. Recently, academic acceptance of Eurocult as a legitimate art form, the new global economy and the advent of home entertainment technologies such as DVD have made Eurocult a viably commercial prospect, as well as an legitimate field of study. Looking at European exploitation films from 1960 to 1980 serves an important role in helping us understand some of the social and political culture upheavals that were occurring in Western society at that time.

Looking at Eurocult from a cultural studies standpoint or even an entertainment standpoint is not always an easy task. Not only is the subject matter frequently untasteful, the chronic low budgets in which these films were made hamper a natural viewing experience. Whether it's the dubbing, which is often atrocious, poor sets or simple stories, Eurocult is easy to dismiss as irrelevant or amateurish. Examination of this genre is difficult because of the investment it takes by an audience member to understand its meaning. Eurocult viewers must make a stronger investment in a film navigating its contents more thoroughly than mainstream films. The modern day viewer may view a film like *La Semana del Asesino* (*Cannibal Man*, 1971) as simply a story of a murderous man who takes his victims to the slaughterhouse where he works and makes meat pies of them. But under examination, the film is a statement on the class warfare system that was

raging in Spain in the '70s. Without a proper history to put these films in context, the messages carried within them may be lost.

One of the most important conclusions that this work has unearthed is the true multi-national spirit in which these films were created. Long before there was a European Union or before cinema developed into the multi-production/distributional business it has become today, Eurocult films were managing to exist on cooperation between varying countries with completely different social, political and moral standards. Nowhere in recorded film history is the standard of production so varied and multinational. This is important because it speaks to mutableness of culture, especially culture's that were in complete experiencing profound transformation as they were in the '60s and '70s. Those traits which make a film intriguing to a particular country or culture, for example a film by Trauffaut in France or Fellini in Italy, traditionally resonate strongly within that country while acting as an educational opportunity for understanding outside its borders. Eurocult operates differently. Its production is designed from the beginning to appeal to as many different populations and cultures as possible in order to ensure its success. Its difficult to image auteurs like Antonioni being made to edit their films accordingly to different countries tastes, cast outside non-speaking Italians for ensured success or hand over rights to distributors with no input on the final versions shown. With Eurocult films, these were standard demands were happily met in order for excited exploitation film directors to continue indulging their passion for film production. The outcome of this is a hodgepodge of perspectives that are not French per se or Spanish but European as a whole. Their patchwork production denies the cultural imperialism that is found in each

individual countries film industry and settles for a broad, overarching identity that is European.<sup>1</sup>

Social scientists with an eye to cultural studies often examine the ideology behind cultural products like film. Every film carries, either explicitly or implicitly, ideas about how the world is, how it should be and how both men and women see themselves in it. Author Terri Corrigan states that “movies are never innocent visions of the world” and this study shows that Eurocult films and their specific sub-genres are indeed strongly political texts.<sup>2</sup> Each country’s film output shares a common rebellion of its traditional government as well as society. This rebellion is usually manifested in violence. In Spain traditional notions of family life are obliterated in films like *La Campana del Infierno* (*A Bell from Hell*, 1972) and *Quien Puede Matar a Un Nino?* (*Who Can Kill a Child?*, 1975) where brothers hang their sisters up on meat hooks and children kill all their parents. In Italy, mistrust of religion, a powerful influence in Italian politics, produced films in which nuns behaved in overtly sexual acts (*Suor Omicidi*, 1978) or with priests abusing then killing young boys (*Non si Sevizia un Paperino*, 1971). France paid the price for traditionalism as its social cultural artifacts (local wine) decimated the country turning normal people into mindless killers (*Les Raisins de la Mort*, 1978).

This study also concludes that the political atmosphere of Europe in the ‘60s and ‘70s had an untold effect on those producing exploitation films. Many of the auteurs of the genre were shaped by the events in their own countries and most rebelled by what

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<sup>1</sup> It must be mentioned that some exploitation films from France eschewed this overarching identity preferring to remain a decidedly French product. Soft-core erotic films like *Emmanuelle* (1974) were successful based on the assumption they were from France and not Europe as a whole. These were exceptions to the rule though as most French exploitation filmmakers were happy to settle for any identity to ensure success.

<sup>2</sup> Corrigan. 98

they viewed as dictator governments and conservative social pressures. Jesus (Jess) Franco growing up in Francoist Spain and literally having to leave the country in order to escape persecution, Frenchman Jean Rollin spent his youth working against Franco then premiered his first film in Paris in May of 68 to universal commendation. Aristide Massaccesi (Joe D'Amato) and Dario Argento spent their early lives under the tutelage of their filmmaker fathers, as was the social structure in Italy, before rebelling and producing their own extremely violent shockers that scandalized the world.

All the European exploitation filmmakers of the era had to successfully navigate the challenges to censorship that were occurring during the period. In 1960, very little explicit gore could be shown and nudity, in European versions only, would consist of brief breast shots that were only meant to titillate. By 1980, everything was permissible from hardcore violence to hardcore pornography. Each exploitation filmmaker had to adapt to changes in some way. Traditional filmmakers like Italian Mario Bava, who eschewed much of the blood and gore of the early '70s poured it on in an explicit, sarcastic way in *Ecologia del Delitto* (*Twich of the Death Nerve*, 1972) or simply left it to others to shoot material he found offensive. Spainard Jacinto Molina (Paul Naschy) incorporated more nudity and outlandish violence in his tradition werewolf films that managed to be both homage's to the Universal Pictures monster movies of the past as well modern retellings. Some auteurs like Italian Lucio Fulci completely embraced the lax censorship codes and produced ultra violent films that shocked and disgusted audiences. What they all had in common was a responsibility to bring in an audience for their producers. Whether they enjoyed pushing the envelope (Italian Aristide Maseccesi) or were uncomfortable with overtly violent and sexual themes (French Georges Franju),

the directors of Eurocult did what they had to in order to produce a product that fans would want to see.

Unfortunately, Eurocult directors found that the subject matter of their films were at the hands of overzealous censors that were under governmental control. This forced many of them to sublimate their message into the confines of a plot of a monster movie or sexual comedy. The initial reaction to these films by critics and the mainstream filmmakers was swift and negative. Many Eurocult directors found themselves completely ostracized (France's Jean Rollin) by their countrymen or worse the target of criminal investigations (Italian Ruggero Deodato). These filmmakers were not reproducing Shakespeare and most of them knew it. They did however have a respect for their craft and for their product. With very few exceptions Eurocult filmmakers have taken pride in their accomplishments delivering a product that has stood the test of time. They have withstood the initial critical lambasting and are now experiencing a positive revision that looks at these films with importance to history and culture.

This study is only the beginning of a very long road of research and discovery. Though Italy, Spain and France were some of the most prolific producers of European exploitation films they were by no means the only ones. A true comprehensive history would need to cover those remaining European countries that contributed to the Eurocult phenomena. The largest of these would be Germany. Though German exploitation producers gained most of their Eurocult credentials by co-producing many other countries' films, they still managed to have produced a large variety for themselves. Whether it was violent crime/adventure stories based on the works of Edgar Wallace (Krimi's) or pure horror/exploitation like *Ein Toter hing im Netz* (*Horror's of Spider*

*Island*, 1959), German contributions to the genre bears future examination. Sweden contributed a staggering array of erotic films that frequently crossed the line into exploitation. Directors such as Joe Sarno (1921-) produced sexy softcore features like *Inga* (1967) that predated the *Emmanuelle* (1974) phenomena by 7 years. In addition, countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Greece all made forays into the field. These, along with filmmakers who were so multinational they carry no national influence, such as U.S. Radley Metzger (1929-) and Polish born Walerian Borowczyk (1923-2007) need to be examined for their influence.

Many studies have been conducted on why people watch horror, violent or sexually explicit material. Uses and Gratifications research, Entertainment theory and others have all been born from studies such as this one. The Eurocult phenomenon requires the same type of examination helping us answer questions not only about our responses to such material but also about topics of cognitive dissonance, cultural imperialism and interpersonal relationships. Future studies either with experimental, survey or ethnography research should be conducted in both the country of origin and outside to gauge reactions. Also of importance is age of participants. Are those who were living within in the time of this study more predisposed to certain reactions than those younger? This would aid in understanding if the reactions of a movie going audience change with time or if simple horrors/titillation transcend both time and geography.

Eurocult has been frequently criticized, as well as the horror genre itself, as being extraordinarily misogynistic. While that may be true for a sizable portion of films future research should look at the roles that women and minorities played in these films. Did they perpetuate negative stereotypes or did they offer something more substantial than

mainstream European or U.S. filmmakers were producing? Using either a content or textual analysis and applying a legitimate theory, for example feminist theory, answers to these questions may be found. In addition to women and minorities, these films took a rather jaded view of the cultures around the world. Future research should include some in-depth analysis on issues of cultural hegemony and how these types of films visually represent that divide.

In addition to gender and roles, a more thorough examination of the genre's influence on modern day society needs to be addressed. This study attempts to put a history to the phenomena and showcases a few examples of modern day filmmakers who have stated their love of and the influence of Eurocult films on their own works. More research is needed to see exactly how deep this genre is ingrained on the psyche of modern day filmmakers. Also, how has the genre affected our modern daily entertainment life? This study shows that certain subgenres have mutated into other forms of entertainment. Using a content or textual analysis, it is possible to make the correlations between, for example, the Italian Mondo films of the early 60s and the reality based television of today. This type of a study would be advantageous because of its historical value.

Another very important study to be purposed is an analysis of the promotional material that accompanied these films. Eurocult has had a worldwide audience that required each film to be advertised in a different way for each country. Some films like *Zombi* (*Zombie 2*, 1979) or *Profondo Rosso* (*Suspiria*, 1976) were shown in all European countries, bar a few in Eastern Europe, and throughout the U.S. and Asia. Each country had a different advertising scheme sometimes resulting in over 25 different posters/ads

for one movie alone. A content analysis would allow researchers to look at the different signifiers and iconography in the ads perhaps shedding some light on the culture itself or dispelling any cultural assumptions that are not true.

The study of European exploitation films of the '60s and '70s has brought fascinating new insight into the social, political and artistic pulse of Europe during a turbulent time in history. Filmmakers, focusing on subject matter that had never been explored so publicly before, have provided a fascinating and sometimes frightening look at the human psyche. Pushing all the buttons, fear, revulsion, excitement, that make audiences flock to films. They have given all those around the world a platform to visually indulge in their perverse titillations.

## Filmography/Primary Sources

Due to the nature of this study's focus, those films imperative to the development of Euro-cult film from 1960 to 1980 will be used as primary sources. In addition, those films that have had an historical impact on the industry prior to 1960 will also be utilized.

They include:

*4 Flies on Grey Velvet* "Quattro Mosche di Velluto Grigi" Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy/U.S. 1972. Paramount 98 min. VHS

*5 Dolls for an August Moon* "Cinque Bambole per Luna D'Agosto" Prod. Luigi Alessi, Dir. Mario Bava Italy/Germany 1969. Image Entertainment 78 min. DVD

*99 Women* "99 Mujeres" (Unrated and X rated) Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco. Spain/U.S. 1968. Blue Underground 90 min. DVD

*Africa Addio* Prod. Angelo Rizzoli, Dir. Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prospero Italy 1966. Blue Underground 128 min. DVD

*All The Colors of the Dark* "Tutti I Colori Del Buio" Prod. Mino Loy and Luciano Martino, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy/Spain 1972. Shriek Show 91 min. DVD

*Anthropophagus* Prod. George Eastman, Edward L. Montoro, Aristide Massaccesi, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1980. Shriek Show 88 min. DVD

*The Antichrist* "L' Antichristo" Prod. Edmondo Amati, Dir. Alberto de Martino Italy/Spain 1974. Anchor Bay Entertainment 112 min. DVD

*Autopsy* "Macchie Solari" Prod. Leonardo Pescarolo, Dir. Armando Crispino Italy 1973. Anchor Bay Entertainment 100 min. DVD

*The Awful Dr. Orloff* "Gritos En La Noche" Prod. and Dir. Jesus Franco Spain 1961. Image Entertainment, 83 min. DVD

*Baba Yaga* Prod. and Dir. Corrado Farina Italy/France 1973. Blue Underground, 83 min. DVD

*Bacchanales Sexuelles* "Tout le Monde Il en a Deux" Prod. Lionel Wallmann, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1973. Synapse Films 102 min. DVD

*Baron Blood* "Gli Orrori del Castello di Norimberga" Prod. Alfredo Leone, Dir. Mario Bava Italy/Germany 1971. Image Entertainment 100 min. DVD

*A Bell From Hell* “La Campana del Infierno” Prod. and Dir. Claudio Guerin Hill Spain 1973. Pathfinder Home Entertainment 92 min. DVD

*Beyond the Darkness* “Buio Omega” Prod. Marco Rossetti, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1979. Shriek Show 91 min. DVD

*Beyond the Door* “Che Sei” Prod. and Dir. Ovidio G. Assonitis Italy/Spain/U.S 1974. Sevrin Films 109 min. DVD

*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* “L’Uccello Dalle Piume di Cristallo” Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1970, Anchor Bay Entertainment, 96 min. DVD

*Black Belly of the Tarantula* “La Tarantola dal Ventre Nero” Marcello Danon, Dir. Paolo Carva Italy/Germany 1971. Blue Underground 98 min. DVD

*Black Emanuelle* “Emanuelle Nera” Prod. Mario Mariani, Dir. Bitto Albertini Italy/Spain 1975. Severin Films 94 min. DVD

*Black Sabbath* “I Tre Volti Della Paura” Prod. Paolo Mercuri, dir. Mario Bava Italy 1963, Image Entertainment, 92 min. DVD

*Black Sunday* “La Maschera del Demonio” Prod. Massimo De Rita, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1960, Image Entertainment, 87 min. DVD

*Blood and Black Lace* “6 Donne per L’Assassino” Prod. Massimo Patrizi, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1964. VCI, 90 min. DVD

*Blood and Roses* “Et Mourir de Plaisir” Prod. Raymond Eger, Dir. Roger Vadim France 1962. Paramount Home Video 74 min. VHS

*Blood for Dracula* “Dracula Cerca Sangue di Vergine” Prod. Andy Warhol, Dir. Paul Morrissey U.S./Italy 1974. Image Entertainment 103 min. DVD

*Blood of Fu Manchu* Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco. Spain/U.S. 1968. Blue Underground. 94 min. DVD

*Blood Spattered Bride* “La Novia Ensangrentada” Prod. and Dir. Vicente Aranda Spain/Italy 1972. Anchor Bay Entertainment/Blue Underground 101 min. DVD

*Bloodstained Shadow* “Solamente Nero” Prod. and Dir. Antonio Bido Italy 1978. Anchor Bay Entertainment 109 min. DVD

*Burial Ground-Nights of Terror* “Le Notte del Terrore” Prod. Gabriele Crisanti, Dir. Andrea Bianchi Italy 1980, Shriek Show 85 min. DVD

*Cannibal Apocalypse* “Apocalypse Domani” Prod. Maurizio and Sandro Amati, Dir. Antonio Margheriti Italy/U.S./German 1980. Image Entertainment 96 min. DVD

*Cannibal Holocaust* “Holocausto Canibal” Prod. Franco Di Nunzio, Dir. Ruggero Deodato Italy 1980. Grindhouse Releasing 96 min. DVD

*Cannibal Man* “La Semana del Asesino” Prod. Jose Truchado, Dir. Eloy de la Inglesia Spain 1971. Anchor Bay Entertainment 98 min. DVD

*Case of the Bloody Iris* “Perche Quelle Strane Gocce di Sangue Sul Corpo di Jennifer?” Prod. Luciano Martino, Dir. Anthony Ascott Italy/Spain 1972. Anchor Bay Entertainment 94 min. DVD

*The Case of the Scorpion’s Tail* “La Coda Dello Scorpione” Prod. Luciano Martino, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy/Spain 1971. No Shame Films 90 min. DVD

*Castle of Blood* “Danza Macabra” Prod. Marco Vicario, Dir. Antonio Margheriti Italy/France 1964. Synapse Films 89 min. DVD

*Castle of Fu Manchu* Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. 1969, Blue Underground. 94 min. DVD

*Cat O’Nine Tales* “Il Gatto e Nove Code” Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1971. Anchor Bay Entertainment 112 min. DVD

*City of the Living Dead* “Paura Nella Citta dei Morti Viventi” Prod. Fabrizio De Angelis, Dir. Lucio Fulci Italy 1980, Anchor Bay Entertainment, 93 min. DVD

*Cold Eyes of Fear* “Gli Occhi Freddi della Paura” Prod. José Frade, Dir. Enzo Castellari Italy/Spain 1970. Image Entertainment 91 min. DVD

*Contamination* Prod. Charles Mancini, Dir. Luigi Cozzi Italy 1980, Blue Underground. 95 min. DVD

*Count Dracula* “El Conde Dracula” Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany/France 1970. Dark Sky Films 94 min. DVD

*Crimson* “Las Ratas no Duermen de Noche” Prod. and Dir. Juan Fortuny Spain 1973. Image Entertainment 89min. DVD

*Curse of the Devil* “El Returno de Walpurgis” Pro. Luís Gómez, Dir. Carlos Aured Spain 1973 Anchor Bay Entertainment 84 min. DVD

*Daughters of Darkness* “Les Lèvres Rouge” Prod. Alain C. Guillaume and Pierre Drouot, Dir. Harry Kumel France/Belgium/Italy/Germany 1971. Blue Underground 100 min. DVD

*Dawn of the Dead* “Zombi” Prod. Claudio Argento and Richard P. Rubinstein, Dir. George Romero U.S./Italy 1978. Anchor Bay Entertainment 98 min. DVD

*Death Walks at Midnight* “La Morte Accarezza a Mezzanotte” Prod. and Dir. Luciano Ercoli Italy/Spain 1972. No Shame Films 102 min. DVD

*Death Walks in High Heels* “La Morte Cammina con I Tacchi Alti” Prod. and Dir. Luciano Ercoli Italy/Spain 1971. No Shame Films 108 min. DVD

*The Demoniacs* “Les Demoniacs” Prod. Lionel Wallmann, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1974, Image Entertainment 95 min. DVD

*Deep Red* “Profondo Rosso” Prod. Salvatore Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1975. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 127 min. DVD

*Devil Came from Akasava* “Der Teufel kam aus Akasava” Prod. Karl Heinz-Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1970. Image Entertainment 84 min. DVD

*Devil’s Island Lovers* “Quartier de Femmes” Prod. Arturio Marcos, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/France 1974. Image Entertainment 80 min. DVD

*Devil’s Nightmare* “La Terrificante Notte del Demonio” Prod. Pierre-Claude Garnier, Dir. Jean Brismee Italy/Belgium. Image Entertainment 93 min. DVD

*Diabolical Dr. Z* “Miss Muerte” Prod. and Dir. Jesus Franco Spain 1965. Mondo Macabro, 84 min. DVD

*Diabolique* “Les Diaboliques” Prod. and Directed Georges-Henri Clouzot France 1955. Criterion Collection 116 min. DVD

*Don’t Deliver Us From Evil.* “Mais ne Nous Délivrez Pas du Mal” Prod. Bernard Legargeant, Dir. Joël Séria. France 1971. Mondo Macabro, 102 min. DVD

*Don’t Torture a Duckling* “Non si Sevizia un Paperino” Prod. Renato Jaboni, Dir. Lucio Fulci Italy 1972. Anchor Bay Entertainment 102 min. DVD

*Dr. Orloff’s Monster* “El Secreto de Dr. Orloff” Prod. Mariouis Leseur, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Austria/France 1964. Image Entertainment 85 min. DVD

*Dracula’s Great Love* “El Grande Amor del Conde Dracula” Prod. and Dir. Javier Aguirre Spain/Italy 1972. Sinister Diable 83 min. DVD

*Dracula, Prisoner of Frankenstein* “Dracula Contra Frankenstein” Prod. Arturio Marcos, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1972. Image Entertainment 82 min. DVD

*Eaten Alive* “Mangiati Vivi” Prod. Mino Loy and Luciano Martino, Dir. Umberto Lenzi  
Italy 1980. Shriek Show 87 min. DVD

*Eerie Midnight Horror Show* “L’Ossessa” Prod. Riccardo Romano, Dir. Mario Garriazo  
Italy 1974. Sinema Diabla 86 min. DVD

*Emanuelle and the Last Cannibals* “Emanuelle e gli Ultimi Cannibali” Prod. Gianfranco  
Couyoumdjian, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1977. Shriek Show 91 min. DVD

*Emanuelle Around the World* “Emanuelle, Perché Violenza Alle Donne” Prod. Fabrizio  
De Angelis, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1976. Severin Films 94 min. DVD

*Emanuelle in America* Prod. Fabrizio De Angelis, Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1976,  
Blue Underground, 100 min. DVD

*Emanuelle in Bangkok* “Emanuelle Nera Orient Reportage” Prod. Fabrizio De Angelis,  
Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1975. Severin Films 91 min. DVD

*Emmanuelle* Prod. Yves Rousset-Rouard, Dir. Just Jaeckin France 1974, Anchor Bay  
Entertainment, 94 min. DVD

*Emmanuelle 2, L’Anti-Vierge* Prod. Yves Rousset-Rouard, Dir. Francis Giacobetti France  
1975, Anchor Bay Entertainment, 91 min. DVD

*Erotic Nights of the Living Dead* “La Notti Erotique de Morti Viventi” Prod. and  
Directed by Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1980. Shriek Show 112 min. DVD

*Eugenie, The Story of Her Journey into Perversion* “Philosophie De L’Boudoir” Prod.  
Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. 1969, Blue Underground, 87 min.  
DVD

*Eugenie de Sade* Prod. Karl Heinz Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/German/French  
1970. Wildeast Video 86 min. DVD

*Exorcism* “La Sadique de Notre Dame” Prod. Marius Lesquier & Daniel Lesquier, Dir.  
Jesus Franco French 1974. Synapse Films 94 min. DVD

*Exorcismo* Prod. and Directed by Juan Bosch Spain/Italy 1975. Sinister Diabla 90 min.  
DVD

*Eyes Without a Face* “Les Yeux Sans Visage” Prod. Jules Borkon, Dir. Georges Franju  
France 1959, Criterion Collection 90 min. DVD

*Faceless Monster* “Gli Amanti d’Oltretomba” Prod. Carlo Caiano, Dir. Mario Caiano  
Italy 1965. Retromedia 100 min. DVD

*Fangs of the Living Dead* “Malenka” Prod. and Dir. Amando de Ossorio Spain/Italy 1968. Brentwood Home Video 88 min. DVD

*Female Vampire* “La Comtesse Noir” Prod. and Dir. Jesus Franco French/Belgium 1973. Image Entertainment, 101 min. DVD

*Fifth Cord* Prod. Manolo Bolgnini Dir. Luigi Bazzoni Italy 1971. Blue Underground 93 min. DVD

*Flavia the Heretic* “Flavia, la Monaca Musulmana” Prod. and Dir. Gianfranco Mignozzi Italy/France 1974. Synapse Films 101 min. DVD

*Flesh for Frankenstein* “Il Mostro è in Tavola Barone Frankenstein” Prod. Andy Warhol, Dir. Paul Morrissey Italy/U.S. 1974. Image Entertainment 95 min. DVD

*Forbidden Photo's of a Lady Above Suspicion* “Le Foto Proibite di Una Signora per Bene” Prod. Alberto Pugliese and Luciano Ercoli, Dir. Luciano Ercoli Italy/Spain 1970. Blue Underground 86 min. DVD

*Four Times that Night* “Quante Volte...Quella Notte” Prod. Alfredo Leone, Dir. Mario Bava Italy/U.S./Yugoslavia 1968. Image Entertainment 83 min. DVD

*Frankenstein's Bloody Terror* “La Marca del Hombre Lobo” Prod. Maximilliano Pérez-Flores, Dir. Enrique López Eguiluz Spain 1968. Shriek Show 91 min. DVD

*French Sex Murders* “Maison de Rendez-Vous” Prod. Dick Randell, Dir. Ferdinando Merighi Italy 1972. Mondo Macabro 90 min. DVD

*The Ghost* “Lo Spettro” Prod. Luigi Carpenteriri, Dir. Riccardo Freda Italy 1963. Retromedia 97 min. DVD

*Ghost Gallion* “El Buque Maldito” Prod. J.L. Bermudez Castro, Dir. Amando De Ossorio Spain 1974. Anchor Bay Entertainment 90 min. DVD

*The Girl from Rio.* Prod. Harry Alan Towers. Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. 1968 Blue Underground, 98 min. DVD

*Girl Slaves of Morgana Le Fay* “Morgan et Ses Nymphes” Prod. and Dir. Bruno Gantillion France 1971. Mondo Macabro, 86 min. DVD

*The Girl Who Knew Too Much* “La Ragazza Che Sapeva Troppo” Prod. Lionella Santi, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1962. Image Entertainment, 88 min. DVD

*Goodbye Uncle Tom* “Addio Uncle Tom” Prod. and Dir Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Proserpi Italy 1971. Blue Underground 123 min. DVD

*Grapes of Death* “Les Raisins de le Mort” Prod. Claude Guedi, Dir. Jean Rollin France 1978. Synapse Films, 90 min. DVD

*Graveyard of Horror* “Necrophagus” Prod. Tony Recoder, Dir. Miguel Madrid Spain 1971. Image Entertainment 86 min. DVD

*Hatchet for the Honeymoon* “Il Rosso Segno della Follia” Prod. Manuel Cano, Dir. Mario Bava Italy/Spain 1968. Image Entertainment 86 min. DVD

*Horror Rises From the Tomb* “El Espanto Surge de la Tumba” Prod. Modesto Pérez Redondo, Dir. Carlos Aured Spain 1972. Mondo Crash 89 min. DVD

*Horrible Dr. Hitchcock* “L’Orribile Segreto del Dr. Hitchcock” Prod. Emmano Denato, Dir. Riccardo Freda Italy 1962. 88 min. Television Broadcast

*House of Exorcism* “La Casa dell’Exorcismo” Dir. Alfredo Leone, Dir. Mario Bava Italy/U.S.1975. Image Entertainment 91 min. DVD

*House on the Edge of the Park* “La Casa Sperduta nel Parco” Prod. Franco Di Nunzio, Dir. Ruggerio Deodato Italy 1980. Shriek Show 89 min. DVD

*The House With Laughing Windows* “La Case Dalle Finestre Che Ridono” Prod. Antonio Avati, Dir. Pupi Avanti Italy 1976. Image Entertainment, 106 min. DVD

*I Vampiri* Prod. Massimo DeRita, Dir. Riccardo Freda Italy 1956. Image Entertainment, 78 min. DVD

*Ilsa, The Wicked Warden* “Greta, The Mad Butcher” Prod. Erwin C. Dietrich, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Switzerland 1977. Anchor Bay Entertainment 94 min. DVD

*Images in a Convent* “Immagini di un Convento” Prod. and Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1977. Exploitation Digital 94 min. DVD

*Inferno* Prod. Claudio Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1980. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 107 min. DVD

*Jungle Holocaust* “Mondo Cannibale” Prod. Georgio Carlo Rossi, Dir. Ruggero Deodato Italy 1977. Shriek Show 96 min. DVD

*Justine* Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. Blue Underground, 124 min. DVD

*Kill Baby Kill* “Operazione Paura” Prod. Luciano Catenacci, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1966. Anchor Bay Entertainment 87 min. DVD

*The Killer Must Kill Again* “L’ Assassino è Costretto ad Uccidere Ancora” Prod. Umberto Lenzi, Dir. Luigi Cozzi

*Killer Nun* “Suor Omicidi” Dir. Giulio Berruti Italy 1978. Blue Underground, 87 min. DVD

*Kiss Me Monster* “Besame Monstro” Prod. Adrian Hoven, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1967. Blue Underground 79 min. DVD

*Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* “Non Si Deve Profanare il Sonno dei Morti” Prod. Manuel Pérez, Dir. Jorge Grau Spain/Italy 1974 Anchor Bay Entertainment. 92 min. DVD

*Lips of Blood* “Levres de Sang” Prod. Jean-Marie Ghanassia, Dir. Jean Rollin France, 1975. Image Entertainment 87 min. DVD

*Lisa and the Devil* “Lisa e Il Diabolo” Prod. Alfredo Leone, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1973. Image Entertainment 95 min. DVD

*Lizard in a Woman’s Skin* “Una Lucertola Con La Pelle di Donna” Prod. Edmondo Amati, Dir. Lucio Fulci Italy/Spain/France 1971. Shriek Show 95 min. DVD

*Macabre* Prod. Gianni Minervini and Antonio Avati, Dir. Lamberto Bava Italy/Britain 1980. Anchor Bay Entertainment 90min. DVD

*Make the Die Slowly* “Cannibal Ferox” Prod. Luciano Martino, Dir. Umberto Lenzi Italy 1980. Grindhouse Releasing 93 min. DVD

*Mill of the Stone Women* “Il Mulino delle Donne di Pietra” Prod. Giampaolo Bigazzi, Dir. Girgia Ferrani France/Italy 1960. Mondo Macabro 96 min. DVD

*Mondo Cane* Prod. and Dir. Paolo Carvara Italy 1962, Blue Underground, 105 min. DVD

*Mondo Cane 2* Prod. Mario Maffei and Giorgio Cecchini, Dir. Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prospero Italy 1964. Blue Underground 95 min. DVD

*Monster of Venice* “Il Monstro de Venzia” Prod. Christian Marvel, Dir. Dino Tavella Italy/Germany/France 1964. Retromedia 77 min. DVD

*Mountain of the Cannibal God* “La Montagna del Dio Cannibale” Prod. Luciano Martino, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy 1978. Anchor Bay Entertainment 103 min. DVD

*My Dear Killer* “Mio Caro Assasino” Prod. and Dir. Tonino Valeri Italy/Spain 1971. Shriek Show 102 min. DVD

*Night of the Seagulls* “La Noche de Las Gaviotas” Prod. Francisco Sanchez, Dir. Amando De Ossorio Spain 1975. Anchor Bay Entertainment 89 min. DVD

*Night of the Skull* “La Noche de los Asesinos” Prod. Arturo Marcos, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain 1976. Image Entertainment 82 min. DVD

*Night of the Werewolf* “El Returno del Hombre Loco” Prod. Modesto Pérez Redondo, Dir. Jacinto Molina. Spain 1980. BCI Eclipse 93 min. DVD

*Night Train Murders* “L’Ultimo Treno Della Notte” Prod. Guiseppe Buricchi and Paolo Infascelli, Dir. Aldo Lado Italy/France 1975. Blue Underground 94 min. DVD

*Nighmare City* “Incubo Sullà Citta Contaminata” Prod. Luis Méndez, Dir. Umberto Lenzi Italy/Spain 1980. Anchor Bay Entertainment 92 min. DVD

*Nightmare Comes at Night* “Les Cauchemars Naissent la Nuit” Prod. Karl Heinz Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/France/Germany 1970. Shriek Show 83 min. DVD

*Nude for Satan* “Nude per Santana” Prod. Reno Angioli, Dir. Luigi Batzella Italy 1974. Image Entertainment 82 min. DVD

*Pajama Girl Case* “La Ragazza dal Pigiama Giallo” Prod. Giorgio Salvioni, Dir. Flavio Mogherini Italy/U.S. 1977. Blue Underground 102 min. DVD

*Planet of the Vampires* “Terrore Nello Spazio” Prod. Fulvio Lucisano, Dir. Mario Bava 1965. MGM 86 min. DVD

*Playgirls and the Vampire* “L’Ultima Preda del Vampiro” Prod. Tiziano Longo, Dir. Piero Regnoli Italian/German 1960. Image Entertainment 80 min. DVD

*Porno Holocaust* Prod. and Dir. Aristide Massaccesi Italy 1980. Exploitation Digital 113 min. DVD

*Pyro* Prod. Sidney Pink and Richard C. Meyer, Dir. Julio Coll Spain/U.S. 1963. Troma Team Video 93 min. DVD

*The Rape of the Vampire* “Le Viol de Vampire” Prod. & Dir. Jean Rollin France 1968. Image Entertainment 91 min. DVD

*Reincarnation of Isabel* “Riti, Magie Nere e Segrete Orge nel Trecento” Prod. Romolo Forlai, Dir. Renato Polselli Italy/Spain 1972. Image Entertainment 98 min. DVD

*Requiem for a Vampire* “Requiem pour un Vampire” Prod. Sam Selsky Dir. Jean Rollin France 1971. Image Entertainment 86 min. DVD

*Return of the Evil Dead* “El Ataque de Los Muertos Sin Ojos” Prod. Ramon Plana, Dir. Amando De Ossorio Spain 1973. Anchor Bay Entertainment 91 min. DVD

*Rites of Frankenstein* “La Maldicion de Frankestein” Prod. Robert de Nesle, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/French 1972. Image Entertainment 85 min. DVD

*S.S. Hell Camp* “La Bestia en Calore” Prod. Xiro Papas, Dir. Ivan Kathansky Italy 1977. Exploitation Digital 86 min. DVD

*Sadistic Baron Von Klaus* “Le Mano de la Hombre Muerto” Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/France 1962. Image Entertainment 95 min. DVD

*Satan’s Blood* “Escalofrio” Prod. Juan Piquer Simón, Dir. Carlos Puerto Spain 1977. Mondo Macabro 82 min. DVD

*Seven Blood Stained Orchids* “Sette Orchides Macchiate di Rosso” Prod. Horst Wendlandt, Dir. Umberto Lenzi Italy/Germany 1972. Shriek Show 92 min. DVD

*Seven Death’s in the Cat’s Eye* “La Morte Negli occhi del Gatto” Prod. Luigi Nannerini, Dir. Antonio Margheriti Italy/France 1973. Blue Underground 95 min.

*Seven Women for Satan* “Le Weekend Malafique de Count Zarkoff” Prod. Denise Petiddier, Dir. Michel Lemoine. France 1974. Mondo Macabro 84 min. DVD

*She Killed in Ecstasy* “Sie Tötete in Ekstase” Prod. Karl Heinz-Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1970. Image Entertainment 74 min. DVD

*The Shiver of the Vampires* “Le Frisson des Vampires” Prod. and Dir. Jean Rollin France 1970. Image Entertainment 96 min. DVD

*Shock* Prod. Turie Vasile, Dir. Mario Bava Italy 1977. Anchor Bay Entertainment 92 min. DVD

*Short Night of Glass Dolls* “La Corta Notte Delle Bambole di Vetro” Prod. Enzo Doria, Dir. Aldo Lado Italy/Germany/Spain 1971. Anchor Bay Entertainment 97 min. DVD

*Slaughter Hotel* “La Bestia Uccide a Sangue Freddo” Prod. Tiziano Longo and Armando Novelli, Dir. Fernando Di Leo Italy 1971. Shriek Show 95 min. DVD

*Slaughter of the Vampires* “La Strage dei Vampiri” Prod. Dino Sant’Ambrogio, Dir. Roberto Mauri Italy 1962. Retromedia 80 min. DVD

*The Sinful Nuns of St. Valentine* “Le Scomunicate di S. Valentino” Prod. Gino Mordini, Dir. Sergio Grieco Italy/Spain 1974. Image Entertainment 93 min. DVD

*Spasmo* Prod. Ugo Tucci, Dir. Umberto Lenzi Italy/Germany 1972. Shriek Show 94 min. DVD

*The Story of O* “L’Histoire d’O” Prod. Roger Fleytoux, Dir. Just Jaeckin. France 1974. Sommerville House Releasing 100 minutes

*The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh* “Lo Strano Vizio Della Signora Wardh” Prod. Luciano Martino, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy/Spain 1970. No Shame Films 94 min. DVD

*Strip Nude for Your Killer* “Nude per L’Assassino” Prod and Dir. Andrea Bianchi Italy 1975. Blue Underground 98 min. DVD

*Succubus* “Necronomicon” Prod. Adrian Hoven, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1967. Anchor Bay Entertainment. 76 min. DVD

*Suspira* Prod. Claudio Argento, Dir. Dario Argento Italy 1977, Anchor Bay Entertainment, 98 min DVD

*Tombs of the Blind Dead* “La Noche del Terror Ciego” Prod. José Antonio and Perez Giner, Dir. Amando De Ossorio Spain/Portugal 1971. Anchor Bay Entertainment 97 min. DVD

*Torso* “I Corpi Presentano Tracce di Violenza Carnale” Prod. Carlo Ponti, Dir. Sergio Martino Italy/France 1973. Anchor Bay Entertainment 92 min. DVD

*Twitch of the Death Nerve* “Ecologia Del Delitto” Prod. Guiseppe Zaccariello, Dir. Mario Bava. 1971. Image Entertainment. 90 min. DVD

*Two Undercover Angels* “Sadisterotica” Prod. Adrian Hoven, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1967. Blue Underground 79 min. DVD

*Vampyres* Prod. Brian Smedley-Aston, Dir. José Ramón Larraz Spain/Britain 1974. Blue Underground 88 min. DVD

*Vampyros Lesbos* Prod. Artur Bauner, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1970. Synapse Entertainment 90 min. DVD

*Vengeance of the Zombies* “La Rebellion de las Muertas” Prod. Ricardo Muñoz Suay, Dir. Leon Klimovsky. Spain 1972. BCI Eclipse 90 min. DVD

*Venus in Furs* Prod. Harry Alan Towers, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/U.S. 1969. Blue Underground. 86 min. DVD

*Virgin Among the Living Dead* “Christina, Princesse de L’Érotisme” Prod. Robert de Nesle, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/France/Germany 1971. Image Entertainment 79 min. DVD

*Virgin of Nuremberg* “La Vergine di Norimberga” Prod. Marco Vicario, Dir. Antonio Margheriti Italy 1963. Shriek Show 90 min. DVD

*Virgin Report* “Jungfrauen-Report” Prod. Karl Heinz-Mannchen, Dir. Jesus Franco Spain/Germany 1971. Image Entertainment 67 min. DVD

*Violence in a Women’s Prison* “Emanuelle Fuga dall'Inferno” Dir. Bruno Mattei Italy 1982. Shriek Show 99 min. DVD

*Werewolf in a Girls Dormitory* “Lycanthropus” Prod. Guido Giambartolomei, Dir. Paolo Heusch Italy/Austria 1962. Retromedia 83 min. DVD

*Werewolf Shadow* “La Noche de Walpurgis” Prod. Salvadore Romero, Dir. León Klimovsky Spain 1969. Anchor Bay Entertainment 95 min. DVD

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Danny Shipka was born on June 15, 1967 in Harvey, Illinois. He grew up primarily in Chicago's south suburbs. Drawn to the media at an early age, Danny was a voracious reader of film books. He also immersed himself in the popular TV horror film programs that came out of Chicago in the '70s and '80s. He received his B.A. in Broadcast Journalism from Oklahoma State University before working in TV news in Ft. Worth, Texas. Returning to OSU, Danny ran the Digital Media department for the university from 1994 to 1999. He moved over to the School of International Studies in 2000 where he worked in public relations both on a national and international scale. Danny received his M.S. in International Studies from OSU in 2003. During his tenure there he has been able to travel and teach in such places as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and London.

Leaving OSU, Danny entered the Ph.D program in Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Florida in 2003. Discovering his love of teaching, Danny has taught a variety of public relations courses including International Public Relations. He received both the College of Journalism and Mass Communication and University of Florida Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher of the Year Award in 2006.

Upon completion of his Ph.D. program, Danny will be joining the faculty of the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University. He will teach a variety of courses in public relations, mass communications and film.