

THE PEREGRINATIONS OF HORROR AND THE SERIAL KILLER GENRE TOWARDS THE SUBLIME OF MODERNITY

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Cinema, which entails a post-modern apparatus, has a potential function: to be a medium of the sublime. Sublimity is a moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought or sensation is defeated, and how the postmodern sublime is defined is through its confirmation of immanence, the sense in which the highest of the high is nothing more than an illusion bright through our misconception of reality, as described by Philip Shaw in his book, "*The Sublime*."

The sublime, somewhat ironically, given its extremely metaphysical ambitions, functions as a form of materialism after all. This paper critically examines the notion of the sublime staged at the nexus of modernity and how, through cinema's technological, formal, and receptive features, it is able to handle and maneuver the sublime. This entails its innate features, such as assembling motion picture images through the art of cinematography, the camera as cinema's integral instrument of expression and perception, its multilayered soundscapes, and the multimedia interplay through which they all install cinema and a substantial medium for cinematic experiences. I shall further discuss how genre conventions and codes are redesigned all throughout in order to position the modern subject, wherein he/she learns to come to terms with the sublime of modernity. And finally, through my analysis of the horror genre and the serial - killer genre, I shall surmise by categorizing these two genres as specific routes to handle and experience the sublime.

The whole point of the genre classification game in cinema is the game itself, which cinephiles have enjoyed playing since the 1970s. It's to them that the notion of genre is like a crystal, endlessly productive of digressive points of view, which in turn

renders genres as iconic as they are recognized by their specific figurative features that allow us to set up the laws of genre. The more automated the genre is, the more pure it is, as is the synergy between the generalized circumscription of cinema as a model suggesting reality and the genre's own circumscription in iconicity. Cinema models the vast world into an encompassing and comprehensible world tolerable to us, genre positions itself on the edge of this homely model of the world, cinema; in the tense transience of iconicity. Hence, genre overdoes the compression of the world by cinema, and it's that moment when the homeliness state of cinema threatens to rupture and vacillate over into the crevasses of the excess in this world. This is literally the kind of engagement with the excess of the world that Kant describes as sublime. Genres have an ineluctable relationship with the sublime, and they are aligned in a line with other genres of language enunciations concocted by humans to make the sublime endurable through ritual, magic, sorcery, conjuration, and Chinese geomancy (feng-shui) as its home. I shall highlight in this paper how each genre that the spectator experiences in cinema is a magical mode of thinking about the sublime, and it's a paradigm wherein we categorize genres according to our psychic needs against the sublime, which will guard us through its broodingnagian affect. Firstly, I shall take on the genre of horror, which is the most powerful and industrialized format where the horror of the vastness of the sublime as both space and assortment of detail is coded as an excess that the senses can't consume. It's also to note that the road movie genre could be classified as the most sublime response to horror, wherein the protagonist is both running away from reality and redeeming a heroic dimension to life. In modern times, we must accept our modernized freedom

fate, which has to accept the horrors of the sublime. This freedom attained from the service to symbolic orders of hierarchy into the arms of sublime horror becomes the genre of our times, wherein hallucinations of the uncanny are squarely the measure of this erupted excess of the sublime over rationality, and it is to be observed that the horror of the sublime is a force which can't be contained. Freedom in the 20th century is marked by ethics as both maximally liberating and similarly constrictive. The sublime of our time is actually when we get maximally liberated; that's when we are maximally plagued by ethics and thus maximally paralyzed too. Genre cinema responds to this sublime and also curates a measure of our sensory freedoms through its confrontational setup with the sublime.

A- THE HORROR GENRE

Looking at the current release programming of A-24, Netflix, and Mubi, it's quite evident that the genre of horror is a remarkably successful genre in the time and space we exist in and how it makes us confront the sublime around our reality in a negative effectual impulse, which is an excessive reaction to the shock of the sublime, wherein this genre and its mode take our sensorium by surprise. This paper seeks to critically examine the genre of horror and the schematic play of several cinematic components (mise-en-scene, sound-design, camera angles & magnifications, performance style, and SFX makeup), which following a corniche track allows spectators to either let go of things or resolve them, sometimes resulting in throwing up our anxieties, what Barbara Creed describes as "defilement rites."

The horror genre has further entered a critical space that is more than just genre classification and codes but rather a form of pop-cultural work that canvasses complex things in contemporary times. The provocative templates of Jordan Peele, through his films *Get Out* (2017), *Us* (2019), and *Nope* (2022), deal with racial subtexts, and Ari Aster, through *Hereditary* (2018) and *Midsommar* (2019), revokes the myth and ritual back into the modern world with its hovering evils.

Whereas the film *Suspiria* (2018), directed by Luca Guadagnino and a remake of Dario Argento's dreamy 1977 masterpiece, precipitates the horrors of rituals and witchery through a physical choreography of bodily impulses while instilling allusions to Germany's guilty past.

To further discuss horror as a genre that is conditioned by the sublime itself, one needs to understand how this sublime-gone-bad, which is in full mode of confrontation with the sublime, interacts with its spectator and gets percolated through a sensorium wherein a breakdown of reason causes such a state. The sublime rushes in as a horrific excess without our ability to contain it, so the supremacy of this genre with the spectator is a condition of failed reason, and this genre reminds the spectators about their human nature and its frailties as it addresses them through its entirety of vastness.

One of the cliches of this genre is its play with the territory of darkness and night, wherein the unconscious of humans seeps in and the senses are down, making one extremely vulnerable. At this point, the excess of the horror genre rushes in. Pretty much all of James Wan's horror filmography is a testament to that, but it's intriguing to understand how, after its trail permeated through modernity and into the current era, the concept of night has changed. The horror is everywhere, and it seems like one is living entirely in the night as the refulgence of day has faded away. In the present digital and technocratic times, Halloween costumes are stylized as sublime (a reference to the bulbous worm costume of Heidi Klum) to the big data surveillance happening around the clock. The technology has become haunting, and the network panic revolving around the found footage phenomenon is illustrated within the frames of contemporary horror cinema. The rampant transition from cinema's photographic ontology to computational microtemporality and furthermore to velocious real time processing of images in a digital media ecology has churned several anxieties within the masses and the critics, but according to Shane Denston, in his seminal work "*discorrelated images*," he responds to these

anxieties by offering a framework channeled through the discorrelation of post-cinematic images from phenomenological human embodiment and its subjective perception. He further explains how in contemporary digital horror genre, this new processuality of images unbinds its viewing subject, thereby violating our sensorium with an instant stimuli that supersedes our perceptual capacities, which reside outside the temporal frame of conscious cognition. This horror of discorrelation is performed through a whole array of pervasive cameras and surveillance mechanisms. Digital glitches, cloud- the metaverse- network, and the obnoxious social media concatenation basically manufacture a slippage between diegesis and the medium. The apparatus of the digital media ecology becomes sublime itself, and films like *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) utilize “found footage” horror while confusing the diegetic and apparatic cameras, finally tapping into the perceived dangers of an explosion of images that are unauthorized, pirated, and proliferating out of control. A similar trope can be carefully examined in the *Paranormal Activity Series* (2007-15).

Recent films reflect and exploit the technological anxieties of our times through their excessive usage of hand-held camera techniques and in their motifs of surveillance. Digital haunting films and even the sub-genres of CCTV horror footage, snuff films, torture porn, etc. are characterized by transnational technologies, their subsequent security paranoia, and the omnipresent social alienation. This sonic genre, which gives the utmost importance to silences and eerie soundscapes, inhabits the uncanny through a vibratory refraction of fear and sound within the spectator. The historical arc of horror cinema spans from the conventional bogeyman (created through our own guilt and fear of punishment) to the sensation of fear through the social and furthermore to the self. This genre is marked by queerness within this transformative realm, wherein the protagonists of such films are constantly on the verge of metamorphosing into monsters. It's essential to note that horror is foremost an internalization of an ambiguous object

that simultaneously seduces us in our voyeurism. Thus, horror can be classified as this ambiguity, which, as Joan Copjec explains in her essay *Vampires, Breast-feeding, and Anxiety*, is a prompt to suspend anxiety that has no cause. But this anxiety is rendered if we drift away from it in shock; conversely, if it's observed carefully, it can furthermore transform into what Todorov calls fantastic.

An event occurs that can't be explained through the logic of reality or your state of being. Todorov explains how the person who experiences this event must either be a victim of an illusion of the senses or of a product of the imagination, and the laws of the world stay unchanged, or else that event has happened in a realm of reality wherein this reality is controlled by unknown laws to the person. This domain of the fantastic is occupied for the very duration of this uncertainty, where we either leave the fantastic for an uncanny sensation or a marvelous one. This brutal intrusion of mystery into the context of real life is described as fantastic by Louis Vaux. In Na-hong-Jin's 2016 horror film, the occurrence of a similar intrusion by a Japanese man in a small Korean village creates a premise for the fantastic and its further horrors to be unleashed in the film. As thoroughly discussed by Carol Clover, slasher films, another subset of the horror genre, develop a relationship between male killers and their sexual spleen towards female victims. She explains that cinema has given a visual expression to Edgar Allan Poe's formulation that the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetical topic in the world. Or even how Hitchcock follows the advice of the playwright Sardou, where he says, “Torture the women”! And the trouble is such that we don't torture women enough.’ Well, I guess films like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1985) seem to completely disagree with this logic. Clover points out the assumption that the spectator takes in the sexes as they are seen—that screen males represent the male and screen females the female—and that this bifurcation along the gender lines dictates a spectrum of violent impulses in men and victimization in females. She

also highlights that the "last girl standing" motif of the slasher film marks a historical conjuncture in western social gender distributions, thereby allowing men to identify with a girl hero. Through this character, the spectator registers her horror as she stumbles on the dead bodies of her friends and family and how her momentary paralysis in the face of death mirrors those moments of universally nightmarish experiences. In *Texas Chain Saw II* (1986), when Stretch disembowels ChopTop towards the end, she is literally the only character left alive, on either side.

The gender of the killer and its spectatorial association also generate a discussion where the killer who composed in a cinematic framework produces the sublime, but in *Friday the 13th*, Part 1, directed by Sean S. Cunningham, wherein during its final sequences it's revealed that the killer is not a man but a middle-aged mother, how does this align the framework as discussed above? This is something to further think about as to why we do not witness more and better female killers. Similarly, in the 1976 film *God Told Me To*, the killer is showcased as a male in its text, but it's revealed through his birth-doctor that he did embody an ambitious sexuality from birth: "I truly couldn't tell whether the child was male or female." Copjec further highlights that this anxiety is correlated with the infantile fantasy of the maternal breast drying up and its successive decay. Through this logic, the infant's breast decays in real time, creating the fantasy of a decaying breast. Herein, the zone of the sublime doesn't deplete itself simultaneously but rather functions as a force field that pushes the psyche into the decay of terror within itself and gets interlocked within it. The movement of horror from the reigns of *Frankenstein*, *Nosferatu*, and the *Bride of Frankenstein* moves to the social symbolic order as Copjec elucidates the same through her argument of Irma's rejection dream, wherein Freud confronts the horror of the sublime and returns back to his social order of Viennese society. In response to anxiety's signal of danger, one tends to avoid the real, but one also flees into the symbolic, whose hedge against the real is conditioned only through its

negation of the real. She explains how the subject of horror, similarly to the Frankenstein monster, is the failure that maintains the symbolic while preventing it from collapsing. In *Spirit of the Beehives* (1973), a Spanish horror film directed by Victor Erice, in the middle sequence of the film, James Whale's enigmatic Frankenstein is shown in the town hall of the community, and for Ana, the film erupts from the screen, entangling the fabric of her days and launching her into a concatenation of mystical adventures and hallucinations that proffer themselves as a kaleidoscope of exciting, incredible alternatives to the dull mental regimentation. This is how the sublime of the uncanny is converted into the sublime of the fantastic, as deciphered by Todorov and discussed above. Horror can also be deciphered as an extremely temporal genre, which involves letting go of one's impatience for ambitions or narcissistic demands for power. The ebullition of the sublime into dreams, as observed in Andres Muschietti's *Mama* (2013), is also a measure of the sublime. The industrialization of the horror genre into several media formats in modern times is what Copjec calls a function of modern freedom, where the defenseless human encounter with the sublime is a resultant source of trouncing. She calls horror the return of the repressed abject to great vastness that suffocates us in its totalizing of our experience. Through this logic, digital constructivism and horror can be reimagined by coming to terms with the ontological vastitude of experience that's farther away from our capabilities in the freedom of senses during our time. The foundational mechanical principle of horror cinema is its sinister gaze and/or camera angle.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, in his essay *Monster Culture (seven theses)* lays out a new modus legendi: a mode of reading that conjures the monsters they engender— "The monster's body is a cultural body; the monster always escapes; the monster is the harbinger of category crisis; the monster dwells at the gates of difference; the monster polices the border of the possible; fear of the monster is a kind of desire; the monster stands at the threshold of becoming." These seven transitional states of the

monster and its inhabited characteristics explain how the horror genre is in love with the presence of monsters to provoke a sublime through visually framing a sublime. These states also aid in understanding the foliated presence of the monster waiting at the beat to be in transit. Films like *Mist*, *Babadook*, *It*, *Thing*, *Frankenstein* archives that quite well. The slasher genre can also be read as the return of the repressed, where both individuals regress and create collective repression. In this format of horror films, sex is punished through death, a transgression of sorts, although the slasher emerges as a container of these guilts that punish, and this guilt is not only about the fact that you're being killed but also about our individual mental health. Psychoanalysis comes into this template to democratize ambiguity, and in the horror genre, ambiguity is at the heart of it. Cinema, through its mechanical apparatus, creates distance through its axiomatic function, and through camera compositions, it brings in ambiguity and initiates the horror machine. The logic of horror comes from the speed of reality and how reality arrives too fast, which causes a sensory burnout, which is where horror crawls in. Signals are a mode of the horror genre that could point towards magic, appearance, disappearance, or the uncanny, to name a few, and horror begins with a feeling of letting go. Horror usually starts with a choice: *Do I follow this sound? Do I not? Do I enter this basement? or not?* This shapes itself when one isn't aware of their own finitude, especially in modern times where the secular individual is exposed directly to the sublime without any symbolic work. The peripheries of speed, consumerism, ambition, and fatigue sense fatigue and consecutively fall into horror. Horror cinema enters the home and takes a modern urban turn in Polanski's "*Rosemary's Baby*" and Friedkin's "*The Exorcist*," wherein the actualization of the ghost or monster is imperative to the genre codes of horror; otherwise, it might move in the direction of a psychological thriller.

Barbara Creed, in her important essay on *Kristeva, femininity, and abjection*, suggests a route for positioning the monstrous and feminine in the

horror film with respect to the maternal figure and what she characterizes as "abjection," which doesn't "respect borders, positions, or rules and instantaneously derails identity, system, and the symbolic order." She further delineates how ritual becomes a means by which societies both renew their primary contact with the abject component and then finally exclude that component. Organized religion, cults, and clergy have long been the source of material for horror filmmakers. The pomp and aesthetics of religious ceremonies, rites, and rules of any religion can create a perturbing tableau while simultaneously offering a clear path for salvation and safety. It's important to note that there is something extremely terrifying about the extremities of belief and what can be generated from the intensity of someone's belief. Rose Glass's *Saint Maud* (2019) illustrates the above-mentioned framework through the character of a troubled young nurse, Maud, who has sublimated her overpowering sense of guilt and masochistic tendencies into a neurotic, quasi-physical relationship with God, himself. She says, "It's like he's physically in me, and that's how he guides me." Barbara Creed further explicates as to how in modern horror the text is rooted in ancient religious and historical notions of abjection, especially w.r.t. the following religious abominations: "sexual immorality and perversion; corporeal alteration, decay, and death; human sacrifice; murder; the corpse; bodily wastes; the feminine body; and incest."

Films like *Blood Feast* (1963), *Motel Hell* (1980), *Blood Diner* (1987), and *The Corpse Grinder* (1971), to name a few, are various representations of food loathing as a major source of abjection through eating human flesh. Creed's reading of the abject oscillates between the symbolic repulsion of the patriarchal order and the resultant pleasure in defiling things in maternal semiosis, wherein it might undergo a shift with the medicalization of child care or in the ubiquitous nanny figure in contemporary horror cinema. She also stalks about the queering of the patriarchal symbolic order that persists through the revealing of blood and fluids, the corporatization

of the mother figure through the troubled nanny, and her sexual threat to her husband, all of which are curated in the plot line for such horror templates. I shall now move to the sub/genre of body horror that has been brilliantly encompassed by David Cronenberg through his oeuvre: (A) In *Crimes of the Future* (2022), a performance artist, Saul, played by Viggo Mortensen, grows new organs inside his body and exhibits their removal through medical procedures while making art inscriptions on them along with his partner Caprice (Lea Seydoux). (B) In *Fly* (1986), Cronenberg creates a fusion program in its protagonist Seth's (played by Jeff Goldblum) body that acquires fly genes in the body along with human DNA and transforms him into a monstrous insectoid-human creature. This finally brings me to the 2013 film *Upstream Color*, directed by Shane Carruth, which augurs the politics of the future of human body organs and how they'd be warring with each other, passing through each other to produce exotic flowers, and as to how the logic of "I" shall disappear from these organs for a greater extended truth. In the digital work located amidst the locus of the dark web, websites such as House of Digital Horrors, Nightmare Machine, and Fright Find render digital horror visuals through deep learning algorithms and artificial intelligence. These elements of this new code of horror cinematic are contained within: the surveillance nexus; gaming (*The Resident Evil Village*, *Outlast*, and *Dark Wood*, to name a few); and serial killer misogyny (as brilliantly showcased in John Dowdle's 2007 documentary, *The Poughkeepsie Tapes* (2007)).

In conclusion, for the analysis of this sublime genre, horror, it's evident that it forces the spectator to finally submit to the ultimate unknowability of reality and the sublime, which emerges in excess when reason attains its limitations and baits us with the bogeyman of horror, which can finally be resolved in the sublimation of Eros (love). Copjec describes certitude as a sort of name and says not to claim the excess of sublime as a fundamental principle of surviving in a similar context. Julia Ducournau and her three films (*Junior* (2011), *Raw* (2016), and *Titane* (2021)) clearly

project the notions of abject, body horror and enthralling spectatorial positioning at various intervals, as discussed above in the paper. Meanwhile, Japanese films like *Kwaidan* (1964), directed by Masaki Kobayashi, and *Ju-on* (curse of the grudge) horror films like *Katasumi* and *444444444*, directed by Takashi Shimizu, recall the ritual and ancient myth to resurface cinematically as the horrific sublime. Another Japanese Guinea Pig film series based on a manga is directed by Hideshi Hino and was removed from the video market in Japan and the United States. It depicted the gruesome killing and dismemberment of women, taking Hitchcock's idea to a different scale while resulting in the formation of snuff video in contemporary times, which, according to the law enforcement officials, was so well simulated that the horror is in the impression it creates. This also introduces us to another genre that handles the sublime of modernity, which is the serial killer genre.

B- THE SERIAL KILLER GENRE

Recently in New Delhi, 35 pieces of Shradha Walker, who was brutally killed, were thrown all across the national capital by her partner, Aftaab Amin Poonawalla, who ran a food blog account on the social media platform Instagram. After a series of questioning with the accused the Delhi police wrote in their official complaint" that Aftaab said, " that I was inspired by the serial killer show Dexter (which was based on Dexter Morgan, a psychotic man with intense homicidal behavior living a double life). This is in fact a horrendous crime, a national shame, and despite the major media channels branding this as a religion issue, it's a cue for film scholars to investigate and ponder upon this spectatorial drive that's generated by the medium of audio-visual i.e. cinema, and to what extent the serial killer genre helps us to investigate the understanding of " the boy next door," who could induce a media reaction in the above-mentioned case as " brutality curdles India's blood" and "the digital age of serial killers"

*This world doesn't need no opera, we're here for the
operation*

We don't need a bigga knife (a bigga knife)

*'Cause they got guns, we got guns, we got guns (we
got guns)*

*We got guns, you betta run (ya betta run, ya betta
run, ya betta run)*

We're killin' strangers

We're killin' strangers

*We're killin' strangers so we don't kill the ones that
we love*

- Killing strangers by Marlyn Manson.

This song is completely on point with adroitly planted serial killers in our society, at this very moment. The serial killer figure is an absence in the midst of society who performs the ultimate mimicry camouflage performance where he becomes “air” regarding his social setup. Serial killers attain a hyper-normal person category filled with complete unanimity, and they stand outside the erotica of seduction that mark the everyday modern urban. The ritual of storing mutated bodies hints towards a ritualistic slowness and deconstruction of time and serves a storage function that is brilliantly illustrated in the Netflix series *Dahmer* and his showcased lobotomies where he zombified his victims. The quest for knowing more about the human body as embodied by young Dahmer is what creates a zodiac planetary thought of organs, a theory of reality, and an obsession to alter it while comprehending how it works. Serial killer genre connects the mainstream with occult practices and how the passage to society lies outside the peripheral vision of an individual charged with anxieties of modernity. This underground quality also poses another veil of identity, as he could be a detective, a surgeon, a scientist, an occultist, or an artist—one never knows.

“ The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist.” - *Usual Suspects*(1995)

This is exactly the logic on which the serial killer functions. In 1969, Masao Adachi directed a documentary film called *Ryakusho Renzoku Shasatsuma (AKA serial killer)* that delineated the land space theory as it was a psych-geographical account of the serial killer, who’s never present as a figurable entity like something that can’t be recorded on camera. This film is a testament to the fact that showing a serial killer is ontologically impossible, and several Hollywood serial killer films are merely pop constructs of our fantasy, which is obsessed with violence, voyeurism, gore, sexual transgression, and proximity to evil.

Oriana Binik, in her book *The fascination with violence in contemporary society*, discusses when crime is sublime. She talks about a sympathy “for the (D)evil and spectators’ fascination with crime.” The notion of proximity with crime is being sold to consumers through channels like Groupon, which conducts a tour for two people in Milwaukee for 25 dollars that includes a visit to all the gay bars in which Jeffrey Dahmer picked his black, Latino, or Asian victims. This story of a monstrous serial killer is cinematically rendered in a new Netflix show that, while focusing on cannibalistic serial killer *Jeffrey Dahmer*, “*Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*” depicts themes of childhood trauma, torture, rape, murder, and necrophilia, the sexual attraction towards corpses. Binik elucidates in her book about several such cases, including that of Sharon Tate, whose corpse photos are exhibited in the L.A. Museum of Death alongside artworks produced by serial killers, videos like those from the *Poughkeepsie tapes (2007)*, and their recorded executions and autopsies. These arguments highlight the celebrity status and symbolism attributed to the serial killer figure by the media industries and its constant re-usage to develop profits. In the film *AKA the Serial Killer*, there’s a rendered situationism of psychogeographies that map the site of all that the serial killer went through while producing the serial killer as a gaze, and he subsequently becomes an allusive figure, a modern urban terror who, without any fear, emerges from the silhouettes of a city’s blind spots and warps spaces to produce the

uncanny. It's essential to note that a serial killer's sly trick is to play the normative lover and take revenge on society's standardization of erotica through the sexual nature of his violence. He simultaneously unmask the facade of a sexuality from the social fabric while becoming the boy next door, which enables the serial killer to create an elaborate ritual of murder planning, gathering information for the next kill, mapping of spaces, and fantasies of ritualistic killings of long duration. How in a modern digitalized world, according to Macdonald, serial killers become a metaphor for our anxieties under state surveillance run by patriarchal social codes and also how the figure of the serial killer is a bureaucratic force of sorts, wherein its ideal frisson is being an absolute and all-pervasive presence as the social in its ubiquity as a ritual requirement for the satisfaction of their murders.

The special relationship that the serial killer poses with her mother is emphasized by several psychoanalytic approaches, and the magnificently bedizened violence that the killer showcases is definitely linked to the conviviality of the maternal object. These serial killers seem to be engrossed in returning to their pre-Oedipal relationships with their mothers alive, whereas they tend to screen off the paternal presence, but this is also what explains the cloak of hyper-normality that the killer carries, who is in reality a properly oedipalized individual. Films like *Psycho* (1960), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, Chantal Ackerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23, Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), and the character of Ed Kemper in David Fincher's *Mindhunter* (2017) signify the presence of strong, overbearing maternal figures and how that presence permeates the whole narrative. The mother problem and this peregrination to become the mother are embodied in Ed Kemper, who's one of the serial killers who has devoured his own mother and has resolved his mother issue by cannibalizing the same. He has ingested his mother's love and completely resolved the anxiety of her having sex with anyone else, and he's consumed her and gone back to his infantile phase and gone back to the mother's breast. whereas the detective Holden Ford has

concealed his mother's issue as a modern issue. Ford, by not resorting to eating his own mother, has defeated it by becoming an epistemological detective.

Another troupe for serial killing can be observed through Jame Gumb, played by Ted Levine in the 1991 film *Silence of the Lambs*. He murders overweight women and skins them alive to make an impeccable body suit; one could speculate as to whether he had a mother who did long, durational stints of stitching clothes with the intensity of a Vermeer painting.

Human skin is "in."

"That's according to Urban Outfitters: PETA's new "store," featuring products made from human-derived leather, is a James Gumb fantasy brought to reality by capitalistic high-end consumerism and fashion." This "becoming mother" logic is empirical to the turnover of the serial killer and moving to Garry Shiple's moment of frenzy, which substantially mimics the frenzy of sexual intercourse and a simultaneous ecstatic function, producing an orgasm through violent ruptures of escalated behavior, into a convergence to obsessive-compulsive behavior, which instead is a variant of the BDSM temperament. He furthermore calls orgasm a constituent function of the brain and describes how a serial killer can stay in the same space but also go into a mode of reverie where he's missing while making the person a great body without borders. The game of hide and seek, where the person hiding feels she or he can never be discovered, is something that constantly reappears as a defense strategy for victims of Edward Carver, aka the Water Street Butcher, until he catches them. He recorded 800 tapes of his gruesome crimes and performance pieces, with his victims wearing a peculiar mask in all of them, hence concealing their identities and becoming sublime through the process of their performance in the footage, as brilliantly directed by John Erick Dowdle in his 2007 documentary *The Poughkeepsie Tapes*. This whole trail of argument, wherein finally the serial killer finds you and his function becomes seeking out gaps in the panopticon, where he is an imaginary figure

invented in a post-modern society, allegorizes the post-modern paranoia and the sublime of this concurrent anxiety within the masses. The dead-leveling, depersonalization, and ambivalent dread that characterize serial killing unshackle its art from well-worn media tropes and map the incomprehensibility of its methods onto questions of ontology, phenomenology, biology, ecology, economy, etc. through corporeality, connecting individual dynamics of hope, fear, and horror to larger-scale environmental, planetary, and cosmic dynamics of the same order.

Our obsession and fascination with characters like Dexter Morgan, Paul Spector, and Hannibal Lecter exhibit all the characteristics of successful psychopaths who are actively regimenting their violent impulses while cultivating a facade of humanity. David Roden further highlights how this psychopathy is manifested in different ways through impulsiveness (Ted Bundy), fearlessness (Jeffrey Dahmer), insensitivity to social norms (Jack the Ripper), and a tendency for attention to be fixed on a current activity (Harold Shipman, aka Dr. Death). Roden elaborates in his essay, *Aliens under the Skin: Serial Killing and the Seduction of Our Common Inhumanity*, "on how in psychopathy risk-taking, lack of empathy, reduced stress responsiveness, and uncooperativeness are acclimated while these highly functional individuals congruently develop the skill set of the hyperbolically successful serial killers."

Moving on to the victims of a serial killer and their several modus operandi to kill these victims, which are usually isolated women, children, and cultural others, the serial killer unconsciously carries out the undefined secret dream of all societies to get rid of the weaker sections from its landscape.

- a) Jack the Ripper - who was contemplated to be a hyper-socialised vigilante who was liberating London by slaying prostitutes of the city.
- b) Charles Manson - explains in *Mindhunter(2017)* as to how America is failing its children and he has to replace the

head of the family to take better care for his children.

The crimes that society wants to commit and all of its murderous impulses are shifted onto the serial killer to finally manifest and conclude them. The serial killers create and imprint their subjective presence with a series of "corpse-shaped self disclosures," and Shipley calls this internecine transmutation of the inner self into the outer self the rationale why we perceive these killers less as people and more as amoral processes. These cognitively threatening social monsters tend to make society feel guilty after their acts of serial killing and frame it as a conscience raising activity while becoming an idol of destruction in a trauma society. Amidst the temporality of modern times, through a rupture, the serial killer image emerges, which exemplifies the modern ideal of free willed individualism dropping the mic in front of the masses who repress their desires, 24 hours a day, round the clock, for free action in order to exist in accordance with the law. This serial killer figure thus turns into a diabolical superhero who doesn't need to be chemically transformed yet still pursues their transgressive impulses by lingering in their hypernormalized and hypersocialized states. Moving on to the massive spectatorship for this genre, one needs to understand the relief that is presented to the spectator through the conversion of guilt impulses into a cinematic flow of sublime. The most fascinating thing—I suppose the element of the sublime resides in the question of how such a normal thing having similar goal spectrum and time invested to achieve things can possess such a grotesque nature. Serial killers exhibit manic obsessiveness towards their victims' bodies as they let themselves lose in a manic "absent" moment of violence. Postmodern motivelessness is also attributed to the serial killer's demeanor while going back to Adachi's film and how it related to the proliferation of contemporary serial killers in consumerist society.

Mark Seltzer, in his essay *Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere*, discusses how the convening of the public around scenes of

violence -- "the thrill of rushing to the scene, grinding around the point of impact -- has come altogether to formulate a wound culture," which can be described as a public fascination with torn and opened bodies, a collective gathering like a performance art piece in Cronenberg's latest film *Crimes of the Future* (2022) incorporating shock, trauma, and the wound. He further explains that this wound is that of technology opening up bodies and wounding the skin by plugging into our bodies, and that this rupture in turn creates a breakdown in the distinction between the individual and the masses, and between private and public registers. This creates a public spectacle of the torn and opened body and how we are always faced with cataclysmal fears of being consumed by the machines ascertained in Cronenberg's videodrome and Ballard's crash. Seltzer also elucidates in his essay that serial killers, towards the end, want to destroy and annihilate themselves, but rather they end up destroying others as their skin merges with other skins so intimately via maniacal technological mediation. Donnie, played by Jake Gyllenhaal in Richard Kelly's 2001 film *Donnie Darko*, illustrates the above-mentioned argument trail of Seltzer through the figurine of Frank the rabbit and the story of time travel wherein free will versus determinism takes place. The manga otaku is a figure in contemporary new media who parallels the figure of a serial killer in their obsessive BDSM format with the self. This self-reflexive mechanism is marked by an over-idealization of the female form as illustrated in *Outbreak Company* (2013) and *Wotakoi* (2014), and this figure can be attributed to the framework offered by Seltzer, wherein the individual is trying to contain organs bursting out in obsessive manga work plugged frantically into technology.

Diana Fuss has explained that "the tales of serial killers in our newspapers have been converted into new serial literature, with regular installments, stock characters, behavioral profiles, and a fascinated and loyal readership." This same logic applies to the digital outburst of this serial killer genre. Mark Seltzer further denotes that the killer's experience of his own identity is absorbed in an

identification with the personality type "the serial killer." And it's this looping effect that's completely shattered by David Fincher's *Mindhunter* (2017), which is based on the work of the FBI men who galvanized criminal profiling and thus a slow burn thriller highlighting cutting edge sociological theory for understanding the serial killers and monsters behind these men. In Alexandra Warwick's influential essay, "The Scene of the Crime: Inventing the Serial Killer," she marks the Whitechapel murders of 1888–1891 as the identifiable moment of origin for serial killing and how Jack the Ripper represents the first example of this criminal type, embossing the age of sex crime as a particular effect of and response to modernity. The dangerous isolation of an individual in a faceless urban mass where the modern subject is consecrated with anonymity results in periodical attacks of homicidal and erotic mania.

In conclusion, for my analysis of this genre, I'd like to go back to Seltzer, who describes in his essay "the exorbitant analogism .. something that structures the experience of serial violence." This, he further explains, is "a violent literalization of the analogies between bodies, people, and landscapes: one identity and another, one body and another, one death and another." It's through these violent literalizations that offer the reasoning for attraction towards violent scenes of crime and also a new and complex distinction between public and private existence. This serial killer genre enables society to sublimate the uncanny spaces within itself, through which a specific cartography of terror and fear can be generated. In his films *Zodiac* (2007) and *Mindhunter* (2017), David Fincher elucidates on the fact that it's this very same figure of a serial killer that the surveillance society is tightening itself around in order to further solidify in its structure. Thus, the serial killer is transformed over the years into a commodified and techno-urbanized form of the sublime, and it is a denser Baudrillardian sign economy than other archaic forms of the sublime. The special feature of the serial killer is that it binds this whole logic through an obscure screen of "boy next door" performance in the process of becoming

his mother. From corporate sociopaths as announced in *American Psycho (2000)* to various renditions of Sherlock Holmes, a plausible serial killer, and finally to the uncanny Hannibal Lecter, serial killers have developed this OCD-generated acupuncture wherein their conquest is culminated through an edifice of serial killers in a modern society. Even after numerous media companies have illustrated a serial killer narrative, they've not been able to compose this framework yet, which is the notion of smell. And how the serial killer can't be understood through the cognitive process but through a new divide in the chemical horizon wherein we want to become our mother in search of the smell of her perfume that's connected to the womb, and finally, devour her.

In conclusion, I would like to extend the argument and point out the framework of spectatorial magic that these two genres, i.e., horror and serial killer, effectuate into the psyche of our generation. What does that explain about the cognitive and psychogenic configuration of the modern digitalised citizen and how then a citizen is either turned into a serial killer trying to straighten out social burdens while the same citizen as brilliantly portrayed in Jeffrey Dahmer series how Dahmer had a liking for horror films, his favorite the *Exorcist* directed by William Friedkin. In the first episode, Jeffrey explains to his date/paid muse in the first episode, "What's so scary about this film, this is part of life (pause) Death is uh.. Just a part of life." What I mean to reflect here is how the horror genre, through its gut-churning aesthetics, can instigate a psychological upstream of horror in its spectator, which can furthermore, in his quest to find more of that slice of "truth" (well, truth is nowhere to be found in the modern world), turn him into a serial killer, traumatized by the play of digital age with that of society's failing symbolic order. Cinema impacts everyone to an extent of remembering the plot as an anecdote for small talks in society and to some embodying the protagonist (Aftaab Poonawallah becoming Dexter Morgan), curating a serial killer troupe in real life, not on screen. And finally, it is the horror genre, which is

reshaping its aesthetics in our times, that creates a sensory affect in the psyche of the "serial killer- the boy next door"—where he gets terrified by the sublime of it and maybe is scared to perform his own sublime.

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