



*New
Leaf*

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Halloween Edition*

Witchcraft All Around the

World: The Salem Witch

Trials and Lemgo's Witch

Hunt

*Ten Super Short Horror
Stories*

Encomium of Halloween

*Horror Fiction v. Horror
Film: King v. Kubrick*

Encomium of Halloween

Brian Levine

When it comes to holidays, many have not stood the test of time. Due to changes in cultural values and what this paper will define as ‘Hallmarking’ (the commercialization and excessive promotion of a holiday that perverts the true intentions of said holiday and turns them into corporate, commercial events), these holidays are no longer recognized on a national level as anything other than a money-grabbing scheme by corporations. Holidays like these are not difficult to identify. Thanksgiving is hardly recognized due to historical atrocities and cultural insensitivities, Christmas was once celebrated as the birth of Jesus Christ but now serves as both a glorified gift-giving ceremony and a reminder of the death of religion to capitalism, and Valentine’s Day was shamelessly invented by Hallmark for the purpose of profiting from feelings between lovers. Many people are inclined to add Halloween to this list of dead holidays, but, irony aside, this paper shall attempt to prove its cultural value in the face of its many flaws.

One of the fundamental arguments against Halloween lies in its history. Many anti-Halloween advocates cite its Pagan founding as anti-religion, and, as such, demand its abolition. However, if all holidays were held to the standards of their founding, many well-celebrated events would be celebrations of genocides. Holidays like Columbus Day, St. Patrick’s Day, and Thanksgiving all have historical ties to the mass-murder of both culture and people, but they are still practiced throughout much of America. According to some people, these holidays have transformed throughout time and no longer represent the genocides and practices associated to their name. Rather, these holidays now celebrate acts of nationalism, drinking, engorgement, and debauchery. However, Halloween is still held to the absurd standard of its founding despite a clear cultural shift away from the “godless” practices it may have enforced in the past. Furthermore, regardless of its roots, Halloween is no longer some Satanic ritual of eternal damnation (or whatever people would have you believe). It is hardly reasonable to think that children are running

around in their witch costumes in the attempt to raise hell. Ironically, certain religious practices are far more effective in raising hell and spreading fear. Christian Hell Houses exist scattered throughout much of America and Europe for the sole purpose of putting pure terror into the hearts of children and adults alike. These houses feature a depiction of “sin” that is both scarring and stomach-turning. On the other hand, Halloween features the occasional convincing scary costume and a stomach-turning amount of candy. No, if anything, thorough Hallmarking has succeeded in killing this holiday’s traditional practices, but it has also created new cultural traditions in its place. People today are not pre-gaming Halloween with a night of mischief followed by more mischief on the night of Halloween like they had done for years in the past. Halloween now features the selling of candy and the embracing of cultural icons.

Halloween today is not about respecting or summoning the dead like some cheap Día de los Muertos knock-off. Today, Halloween is a holiday that celebrates individual expression. For one night a year, children and adults alike are justified in being who they want to be – and everyone is fine with it! Recall those videos of kids who dress up as police officers, super heroes, or fire fighters. Recall how these same children get into character. Recall how they light up when people (especially adults) treat them as their costume indicates. It literally makes those kids year. Lo and behold the essence of Halloween, the ability to forgo physical limits in order ‘pretend’ for one night. In a world constantly gripped with tragedy after tragedy, the benefits of having one night as a reprieve from reality is substantially important – especially for children.

It would be remiss to defend Halloween and not counter the argument that it is one of the many Holidays that have suffered Hallmarking. Many aspects of Halloween do appear to be the result of corporate greed. These aspects seem to be staples of the holiday – expensive costumes, candy, and overpriced Halloween Horror Nights tickets. However, these traditions are merely the surface of the many different expressions of Halloween that are practiced by friends, families, and communities. Halloween has no set rules for how it is practiced. Some people take the time to

Trick-or-Treat, others go to spooky parties or simply stay inside with their families and friends to carve pumpkins and binge movies like Hocus Pocus. A holiday with no set practices and no set guidelines is not something that should be feared, but rather embraced. If Hallmarking it up with money spent on candy, decorations, and costumes is how you wish to celebrate, then power to you, but Halloween is less about what you do and more about who you spend it with. The benefits of a holiday structured like this is that it gives people an excuse to escape the monotony of everyday life and do something different, fun, unique, and idiosyncratic.

Unlike most holidays, there are no religious or social pressures associated with Halloween. The holiday is not bound by historic traditions, what is 'mature' and 'adult,' or by the practices of others. It is whatever you want it to be. Halloween serves as an outlet of childlike individuality and fun for quite literally no purpose, and that should not be a problem. The world takes itself so seriously, and having a day in which it is acceptable to not be so serious, has inherent value both socially and mentally. Ideally, expression would not have to be a concept saved for one day out of the year, but, until that day, Halloween is a necessary escape in which people can be free to have fun. My suggestion to you is this: sit back, relax, and carve some pumpkins, or go out there and Trick-or-Treat, or take the time to do something you normally would not. Use Halloween as an excuse to have fun with your friends and families without worrying about what other people are doing. Halloween is a holiday all about you, and anyone who would say otherwise is clearly missing the point.

Super Short Horror Stories

The Waterfall

John Thompson

The boys listened to the sounds that beautifully hit their ear drums while intermittently sticking their heads out of the window like dogs in the wind; the pills were kicking in. It might've been an hour on regular time, but this was not any kind of regular moment. For them, this moment was an everlasting euphoria. Life had never felt so much more freeing and enjoyable. For what seemed like a lone hour, the boys had actually driven three and ended up at the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest.

Carter pulled off the road for the boys to admire the sign that read "Glory Hole Waterfall Trail Ahead". The afternoon slowly melted away until the summer night sky took over and darkness cloaked everything but the headlights of the car. They pulled up to the head of the trail and ran out down the beaten dirt paths.

Johnny was ahead of Carter, sprinting as fast as he could in the darkness, listening for the smacking of the waterfall and looking for any opening where the moonlight could glaze an open area away from the wooded trail.

"I found it! Check this waterfall out! Look for my phone light and come here!" Carter yelled from behind Johnny. Johnny stopped in his tracks and turned back around running up the trail until he saw the flicker of Carter's phone light. He stepped through the brush, and at the side of Carter the

two looked into a small flowing waterfall that fell down into a cave hole about nine feet in diameter. Under the hole there was about a ten foot drop that went into about three feet of crystal clear water.

“C'mon let's jump down.” said Johnny.

“No way, we wouldn't be able to climb out” answered Carter.

“Yes we could, we can easily hoist ourselves up. Plus look how awesome it is down there the water is going to feel amazing.”

The boys both hopped down into the cave, however the height was too much to stick on their feet and they both fell backward into the water and became soaked.

“Carter, my phone's broke. It would turn on, fuck.”

“Same, we will just get rice when we get back” said Johnny laughingly.

They splashed around in the cave, and sat under the waterfall for sometime, letting the drugs heighten their senses. Johnny walked to the side of the cave to follow the walls. It seemed to be circular, but their seemed to be a weird smell coming from 20 feet down the sidewall.

“Carter come here, hurry dude hurry!”

On the ground in front of them lay a dead body. Legs submerged into the water and his torso lay out supported by the wall, the man looked to be about mid twenties and had been dead there for sometime. Flesh had been picked off in chunks from several different animals and mold grew up along his neck spurring from under his wet clothes. The smell was vile and Carter turned to throw up.

The boys ran back to the entrance, trying to hoist themselves up to the hole but they could not get the other up to reach the ledge.

“Hoist me up cmon!” Yelled Johnny.

“Im trying!”

Humphhh!

The boys fell into the water.

“Ahhh! My arm, it's broken.” Carter yelled in pain. Holding it up, you could see the obtuse angle of the fracture. Johnny winced at the sight of it.

“Somebody help us! Help!” the boys screamed, but nobody was there to listen.

They were at times mercy.

We Always Die in Our Nightmares

Daniel Wright

I wake up everyday and time goes by with no purpose. The days get longer and longer. Every day is like a broken record. Steve and Sarah watch over me and my 20 brothers and sisters, yet I am alone. I usually stay in my room all day playing with shoe strings I took out of my shoes. I like to learn how to tie different knots from a book Mr. Paul gave me. Mr. Paul comes a couple times a week to keep me company, I guess. He always asks me questions with pen in hand, but I never speak. I don't want him to be my friend, I just want to go back to my room and be isolated from the world.

My fifteenth birthday is coming up in a few days. Mr. Paul said he would bring me a cake. I always get a cookie cake. My mom and dad haven't been able to make my last few birthdays because they have been traveling the past couple years helping sick people across the world. Mr. Paul told me they wouldn't let me come along because they were afraid I would get sick.

Night time arrives, and I am in bed thinking about my next dream. I like to dream, it is an escape from reality. I hit the pillow and close my eyes. I dream of my parents, I miss my mom.

Suddenly, I wake up. An abnormal hand has grabbed me and pulling me under my bed. The monster takes me to a different dimension. The monster is human-like with bright yellow eyes and a scar that goes down the side of his face. the creature never speaks. He only laughs. The laugh scared me more than anything. his laugh reminds me of a Stephen King character. I scream and shout at him in fear, but he just kept shrieking.

“What do you want with me,” I shouted

He says nothing.

A home appears around us. We are inside. There is a man, woman, and child in the living room. They cannot see or hear us as if we are ghosts. It looks to be a family. The man and woman

are arguing as the boy watches. The boy is the monster that abducted me. The boy is bleeding and is covered in bruises. The father and mother start to fight violently. Punches and objects are thrown. the monster would not let me look away. I was frozen in place. The father picks up a knife from the kitchen and stabs the mother in the stomach. The monster laughs. The boy cries. Policemen show up and break down the door. The scene goes dark.

The monster then opens a scene in a warehouse like we are watching his memories. The father is strapped in a chair with law enforcement surrounding him. An officer flips the switch and the father struggles in agony until his body goes limp. The monster laughs as the steam rises from the father's body. The scene goes dark again.

We then watch the boy as he resides in a group home. The boy is about 18 years old. The boy is with an older gentleman. It seems to be the boy's birthday as the man gives him a cookie cake. The man tells the boy that the group home can no longer support him because he is an adult now. We watch the boy in his room. The boy pulls out a box and opens it. The box is full of blood-stained rodents. The monster laughs. The boy pulls out a large knife and grins. He cannot get the gruesome death of his parents out of his memory. The boy wants to forget his traumatic past. The scene suddenly goes black again.

The monster now shows me the boy's first kill. The boy uses his large knife to stab a woman walking the dark streets. He stabs her 20 times. I cry as her body is covered in blood. The boy begins to laugh like the monster. The trauma of the murders helps the boy forget his past. The boy finds pleasure in killing. Multiple short clips begin to pop up in front of me. The clips are of the boy murdering more and more innocent people on the streets. The monster shrieks at every clip. I cry out to make it stop. My hands are covered in the blood of his victims. I sob and beg the monster to make it stop. It gets dark again.

The monster now takes me to a mental hospital. We are in an operation room. The boy is strapped in a chair, unable to move. The doctor inserts a large needle behind the boy's ear. The boy goes limp, but the heart monitor says he is still alive.

"why are you showing me this," I begged

The monster laughed and pointed to a mirror.

The reflection in the mirror is the monster, but, where am I? I wave my hand side to side and the monster reflects the same motion. I break down in tears and scream in horror.

I am the boy. I am the monster. The scene goes dark.

I suddenly awake in my bed. My head is turning in all different directions. It feels as if there is a bug inside my brain. I realize that my parents are not traveling. They have been dead for 5 years. My father killed my mother. My father beat me, cut me, tortured me. It traumatized me so much that my brain stored the memory somewhere else until now. I can't handle the reality. How can I make it stop! I look up at the ceiling fan and grab my bed sheet.

*Ruffling of sheets

* Chair squeaks

* Chair collapses

* Struggling

* Silence

When the tides turn

“Curious, Anxious, speculation, you just have no idea what’s in there. Who cares, its not like anything bad will happen it’s just a house. Three boys stood engulfed by the entrance of the house as it loomed over them. There was Sam, a friend of Jakes sense childhood, and Jakes little brother Max. Max was always with Jake sense he looked up at him, following his footsteps. Sam and Jake had been planning this for days, weeks even, to stay overnight at the house. They stood for a while, Seconds, then minutes go by, finally a decision. Jake pulled the bolt cutters out of his backpack, moonlight shined on the metallic objects as he pulled out the cutters. The clank of the chains echoed throughout the yard as they landed on the asphalt. “OPEN SESEMY” says max. The large wooden doors open, It’s quiet. Staircases stand on either side of the room, welcoming the guests. “Race you to the top!” little feet run up the steps. “Guys! Check this out!” (max) A bed lays at the far end of the room, Demonic sounds came from inside the room. “We shouldn’t be here, we shouldn’t be here,” repeated under jakes breath, “dude chill its just the window that was open.” (sam) “We’ve been planning this forever.” (sam) “No man you don’t understand! This Place is Haunted! Legend has it, there’s a ghost In here that kills kids. I never told you because I didn’t want to scare you.” (Jake) laughter fills the dead silence, “you’ve got to be kidding, do you not hear yourself? Ghosts, Haunted, kills kids, please if this ghost was real he definitely isn’t doing a good job.” (Sam) Still the uneasiness in his voice couldn’t go unnoticed. Resting their belongings on the ground the three take out their flashlights and go exploring. Jake and Max lock eyes on one another, and turn to leave. Nervously the boys proceed down the hall, twenty feet from the room Max curses as the flash light doesn’t turn on. “be right back, going to get another flashlight.” Max returns seconds later and said he’s ready to go as he high fives Jake. As they walked down the hall they couldn’t help but be reminded of the sound from the window as they scurried along. Finally they reached the end where there was one room, they open the door and enter a bathroom, shadows move along the peeling painted walls casing life like images on them, the stark white tubs looked

out of place on top of the unmaintained, broken, filthy tile floor. Sam walks into the room followed by Jake and Max. Click. The sound fills the room as Sam whips around to find Max turning the bolt lock on the door. Sam turns his flashlight to Jake who holds a grimace look, eyes piercing through him. Knife in his hand.

Alyssa Louk

I Made Them Stop

I can't remember exactly how it started. When I was 13 I went to the doctor for a buzz in my ear, but they weren't able to make it go away. At about 15, the buzz turned into whispers. I could hear them in the bathroom or at the dinner table. The words were low enough I could ignore them if I wanted to, but I listened to them. "Karen, don't eat too much." "Karen, don't you want to wear make-up?" "Karen, don't hang out with the losers." The whispers weren't mean until after. At first it felt like they wanted to help me, whoever they were. Now, they're as loud as someone standing next to me, and they sound so clearly even though I'm the only one who can hear them. When the radio or the tv is on, they get louder.

"Karen, don't be stupid." "Karen, why are you such a failure." I tried to make the voices stop by giving them what they wanted. That didn't help. I was never good enough for them. Sometimes they yelled, and made me change. My parents stopped believing me, and wanted me to get help for schizophrenia. The voices in my head were not a mental illness, and wasn't hallucinating. How could I prove to my parents I wasn't crazy? I thought about how I could show them and myself the voices were real. I wasn't going to allow them to send me to a hospital or prescribe medication for an illness I didn't have. I found a solution, and I just had to do a simple thing.

I found it online. How to cut off my ears. Losing an ear was a common punishment years ago without killing people. Nowadays, people get into accidents all the time and lose their hearing. They live without being able to hear which sounds great to me. So, I took the sharpest kitchen knife, sterilized it, and cut off my ear. The bleeding was worse than the pain, but I it was finally quiet. No voices in my head. I succeeded.

My parents still wanted to check my mental state, but I tried to tell them I stopped hearing the voices. After they took me to the hospital and the doctor put bandages where my ears used to be, I was happy. No ears and no voices for the rest of my life. I was staring at my reflection in the mirror of my hospital room, and it was odd, as if my reflection had become a stranger.

When my parents came back into the room I couldn't see them, but I imagined what they were seeing. Their crazy, deranged, and maimed daughter who cut off her ears and took out her eyes with a plastic spoon smiling on the bed. Even if they sent me to a mental rehabilitation center, I couldn't stop grinning because I didn't see or hear them anymore.

Grace M. Highsmith

2052

A blaring siren interrupts Jane's slumber. She rolls over and detaches herself from her satin bedding in order to place her two feet on the weight activated scale beside her bed that will allow her alarm to cease. The coldness of the metal scale greets her skin at the same time that her speaker addresses her, "Good morning Jane, it is 9:00 A.M. Today is Monday, October 14th, 2052. You have your first meeting in one hour."

Jane gets ready and hops into her autopilot coupe which leaves her parking garage and heads to her office. Her heels clack against the marble floors as she makes her way to the elevator that will take her up to the 50th floor. She greets the people scurrying through the halls with curt nods. As she waits for her client to arrive, she marvels at the orange sea of leaves spanning across central park just outside of the layer of glass that comprises an entire wall in her office. Her assistant rolls into her office with a hot cappuccino. The gulp warms her body. She starts to fan her face hoping that her temperature has not risen. She stands up from her seat just in case. Wipes the foam from her mouth and immediately reapplies her lipstick. She looks down at the time stamp lit up on her square wrist watch. Her client is 5 minutes late. She's been waiting for this particular client for the past 6 months.

Since February, Jane has received a lengthy email from her client every month apologizing for cancelling. Jane does not mind the wait as the mysticism of her client "Mr. Z", has both excited her and unnerved her. Jane receives several interesting cases as she practices criminal law. However, this client claimed that he was dealing with a case that was related to Jane on a personal level.

The setting sun across the New York skyline is met with disappointment as Jane decides that it's time to go home. Her phone ding reveals that Mr.Z had to cancel again. As her car drives her home, she stares out the window observing the silver people rolling along the sidewalks. Two fighting siblings go mute as their mother presses their auto-pilot buttons found on their shoulders. "That will shut you two up for a bit", she squeaks.

Jane enters her apartment and heads to the sink to wash off the silver makeup smeared across her face. She hurries over to the windows of her living room to draw the curtain before anyone is able to notice her porcelain complexion.

While in bed, her mind wanders to Mr.Z and his whereabouts. Another month of aching curiosity has gone unresolved. She recalls one sentence from the email that he sent her last month, “you need not your façade for my face is like yours”.

Noah McGahagin

Questions in Rain

I remember how dark it was that mid-afternoon in October, how I huddled in front of my computer typing as though it were the middle of the night, and how cold the house was in dim light. Weather from the past week told me the downpour wasn't far off. From my place at the back windows of the house, I could see the pines ringing the neighborhood swaying in the wind.

It was hard to focus on my writing despite the assurances of my sister that use of her quaint little home would be the spark I needed. But my desk, pushed up against the windows was orderly from boredom, and the computer sat blankly, cursor winking. Not a single literary magazine wanted my work, and I considered quitting again when the thunder started rolling in. The damn power was sure to go out, my old computer battery was sure to dry up in less than an hour, and without the television I'd have nothing to drown my frustration. Rapidly approaching was the vicious rain. A rain- so heavy- so steely- so cacophonous- that appeared malicious to all things. And seeing the way the wind sent leaves into the street, ripped at trees, and lifted at shingles I remembered my Camry in the driveway. Considering how ugly things were getting, the best place for my only means of escape was the snugness of the garage.

Outside, flecks of water sprayed my shirt as I fumbled in my pockets for the key, stealing glances over my shoulder, feeling the wind fill my ears, and slamming the car door behind me when lightning split the sky. On instinct I turned the radio on.

“Reports are coming in of wolf or wild dog activity in the area. Animal control and city officials are warning citizens to remain indoors. So far there are no reported injuries. Please stay tuned for further updates.” I could hardly see out the windshield to my front door, let alone any dogs. Running a hand above my head, I fumbled for the garage door opener. Coming down empty, the search moved between the seats, then to the darkness underneath. About ten minutes passed with my forehead pressed to the wheel before the drone of the radio sharpened.

“Listeners have been calling in to report missing pets, and we’re taking your calls as I speak. Please bring all pets indoors...” It should have been obvious to bring pets inside at a time like this. I rubbed at the driver’s side window with my arm and squinted out. The rain appeared to be slackening, but just barely. Now was the time to make a break for the house.

And this is where I struggle to understand. I remember making it to the front door, panting, feeling the strain of a mile, letting the relief of the awning wash over me, and then hearing the barking. A shrill bark and then the sound of heavy paws. The radio was still on in the car, but that worry was fleeting. A man stood in the street, holding something in his hands. I peered out at him through the rain, but his jaw was long and arms hairy. The thing looked to me, and I slammed the door.

Jordan King

À la carte

I woke up alone in a dank, dark, cell. I was battered and bruised, with no recollection of how I'd gotten here. The cell is filthy, with a tiny slit of a window on one wall and a tarnished metal box in one corner. No toilet, no bed, no sink, nothing else but dead silence and a persistent odor. I shake my head in an attempt to clear my thoughts, the movement was too abrupt however, and I fall to my knees in pain and curse. What have I done to deserve this, I wonder? Am I cursed? First I was fired from my job as a butcher, next my wife left our home in a rage, our son ran away after this hoping to find her, almost three weeks ago by now, and finally this. As I ponder on my predicament, I drag myself over to the slit in the wall and peer through. I recoil in horror as I see my wife and son lying naked on the floor, clearly malnourished. I can't believe my eyes! I call out to them. My son picks up his head and whispers "We're hungry, so hungry." I see that their cell is empty except for a large jug of water. I've got to do something to save my family! I look around my cell again and decide to search the box in the corner. I run over to the metal box and peer inside. Inside the box I find a large meat cleaver, a butane torch, two plates, some utensils, and a menu. Scratched on the inside of the tarnished box are the words "You can save them." Confused, I open the menu. There is no writing, only a mirror.

Brian Levine

A Visit at Work

I hung up the phone as he came in. He wore a black baseball cap and a grin as he walked in with a brief gesture of acknowledgement towards me, the person behind the cash register.

"H-hello, welcome to 711," I called out with my best attempt at a smile, fully aware that I had stuttered such a simple line. He walked past me and into the nearest aisle. My foot tapped uncontrollably as I watched the man walk through the fluorescent-lit store. The occasional blinking of the industrial lights flashed every few seconds.

Looking away, I glanced at the television screen to my right, showing a bird's-eye view of the entire store. I watched intently as he grabbed an assortment of items and placed them into a nearby basket.

Water. Duct Tape. Beef Jerky. Pliers. Trash Bags. Beer. Closing the door to the refrigerated goods, he turned around and stood there. I watched from the video screen, wondering what he was looking at. Seconds passed – long, agonizing seconds. The hair-standing dread that I felt came a moment before the realization. He was watching me.

Shaking as I struggled to remain composed, I glanced down at my hands – I had driven my nail through the skin of my thumb, drawing blood. I felt it: the tension, the anxiety, the terror. Clutching the injured hand with my free one, I turned to the cash register, fidgeting with the drawer and making it look like I was caught up in work. Was he *still* watching me?

Footsteps. He approached the counter with his basket full of goods and quite a few more items underneath his arm.

“Are you okay, miss?” He asked from across the counter. I hadn't moved yet.

I shook myself to the present. “What? Oh. Lost in my thoughts I guess!” I gave a nervous laugh, unable to break eye-contact – his lightless, hollow eyes were locked on mine.

“Then could I buy my things...?” He replied with a toothy smile, gesturing towards the items splayed across the counter.

“Yea, yea, of course! Sorry,” I smiled once more, shaky hands scanning the goods one by one. I made short work of an agonizingly long 45 seconds, packaging the groceries into a few bags. At that moment, I was sure I had bitten a hole in my lip.

“If it isn't too much trouble, could I have help with my bags?” His smile sapped me of my strength, made my insides feel like mush.

I was standing outside of his truck with bags in my hands.

“You can just put those on the seat,” he called over from the back of the truck. “Thank you so much by the way.”

I was paralyzed, staring at the passenger seat. I couldn’t take my eyes off it. Hands caressed my shoulders, rubbing them. “I know you called them,” he cooed, his sickly warm breath on my cheek. “I know you recognized me – I know you know *what* I am – I know you called them, but the police won’t arrive for another three minutes. That gives me plenty of time.”

My Final Reflection

Robert Bunting

I don’t remember the events that led up to this, but I awoke dazed and confused in the passenger seat of my own car. It took me a little while to process what situation I had gotten myself into. I gazed out the window at a seemingly endless dark, wooded path.

I recognized this area from a hike I went on just a couple days earlier. I was by myself enjoying the serene environment, away from the world and my troubles. Though I was at peace, I couldn’t shake the feeling I was being watched, but every turn I made was to an empty forest, just as every call to anyone present was left only answered by the songs of the birds and the echo of my own voice. I managed to feel at ease with this until I decided to make my way back to my car and head home. I could’ve sworn I saw someone watching me through the brush whispering something to me.

Startled, I quickly fled.

This once peaceful area has now transformed into one of malice and fear. I managed to turn my gaze to my captor and, from what I could tell it was a man. He was a broad, bearded fellow with a distant eyes. There was a familiar earthy musk emanating him that set my hairs on end.

He met my stare and responded a trancelike, deep, raspy voice, "If man must venture, man must remain."

I had no doubt this was the person who was watching me on the day of my hike. I was horrified, but I brought myself to question him, "Where are you taking me? What do you want?"

"If man must venture, man must remain." I was confused and unsatisfied with this retort, but petrified in fear of his appearance and his elocution.

I could tell we were taking the same path I had on my hike. I knew where this path ended and began to plea and bargain before we got too close. "I'll give you anything you want, you don't have to do this! Just tell me what you want from me!" Panic was beginning to set in. The trees thinned and the path grew wider. The eerie darkness of the forest was replaced with an even more unsettling moonlit dirt path.

Once again, he replied, this time more stern and conscious, "If man must venture, man must remain."

I could see it now. The car sped up as the path cleared. In my final moments I tried to make peace with God to assure my untimely death would be met with safe passage to a better life. As we approached the edge the car screeched to a stop. I was drenched in sweat from anticipation of the drop yet felt no relief from the sudden halt.

The man got out of the car and opened my door, with a bright, white smile under his distant eyes, he encouraged me to get out. I walked alongside him to the cliff I had stared at with amazement just two days past. I took a brief look over the edge, then up at the moon, beautiful and full, illuminating

this horrid night. As I glanced down I heard his voice one more time in a familiar whisper, “If man must venture, man must remain,” and he sent me down towards the lake below.

I quickly jerked around one more time to view he who decided to cast me out, but he was nowhere to be found. Headfirst I continued downward taking in my last sight as a man, when I caught a glimpse of my captor again. He was getting closer and closer as I fell. I glared at him with disgust and he returned my glare. With the moonlight reflecting off the lake, I crashed into him and with the little life I had left I brought myself to take in my captor’s face one last time. I pushed my torso up from the shallow water and looked down at him as he stared back at me. We met each other’s final smile before I collapsed into him.

A Walk In Someone Else’s Shoes

Its midday but the wind still has a bite to it, my body was numb as snow landed on my eyelashes, but it has an appealing feel to it. My wife called me inside for some hot chocolate, and we talked about how crazy it will be to drive into work today. Our lives were average and boring. I worked as a banker, and she practiced family therapy. I listened to people yell at me all day about financial problems they have acquired, and she listens to unhappy families place the blame for problems on each other. Fun. That’s when it hit me, “Hey honey, how about we do something crazy and go skydiving.” She replied, “that seems really dangerous, but if you’re going I won’t let you do it alone.” It was settled, we were going skydiving. The day finally came to have some fun, and after along work week I needed this. We went to a small airfield that had skydiving courses, and we

made an appointment. We were loaded into a helicopter that made me realize I might have a fear of heights. It was made worse by the fight my wife and I had before getting to the airfield. She told me that “she never wanted to speak to me again”, and I was hoping that she would have a change of heart, the fight was over such a stupid topic. We jumped out of the plane together, screaming at the top of our lungs, her more than me. The ground was coming so fast, and after landing I didn’t even remember most of it. At home my wife was crying and upset about the argument we had earlier, and she still wouldn’t talk to me. She spent the whole day cleaning and talked to the dog more than me. I’ve never been so jealous of my dog. Night fell and we went to bed, she was still upset and I felt terrible. This was the longest she has ever ignored me in my whole life. The dog jumps on the bed on top of me whining, I tell the dog “there’s plenty of room why do you always have to sit on me”. My wife tells the dog between sobs, “I know, I miss him too.”

Amber Biron

Horror Story (Schemes/Tropes)

I am standing in the entrance to the abandoned house down the street, its ancient walls surround me, strong but shaky.

“Sixty, fifty-nine, fifty-eight...” And so it begins. I hold my breath as I step forward into the dark. Time is already running out. I need to hide. Frantically I turn down the next hallway I come to. Light from the full moon filters in through window at the end of the hallway and illuminates my path. The floor creaks as I make my way towards the doorway at the end of the hall.

“...forty-five, forty-three, forty-two...” The counting seems to be getting fainter as I reach out and twist the knob. I push the door open and step inside, pausing to let my eyes readjust to the total darkness. I place my hand on the wall to my left, and let it guide me around the room.

“...thirty-six, thirty-five, thirty-three...” I find a closet door at the back of the room, and I slowly fold the door open, revealing a staircase leading upwards. I take the first step then hear the door behind me click shut.

“...twenty-one, twenty, nineteen...” I try to open the door, but it’s no use. It has been locked from the outside. There’s no turning back now. I walk slowly up the steps and find myself in the attic.

“...fourteen, thirteen, twelve...” I step blindly into the space in front of me, trying to find another exit. This is a childish game. I never should have agreed to play. But it is too late now.

“...nine, eight, seven...” The counting, though it is quieter, seems to be just as clear as it was at the beginning, as if the voice has gotten closer in all the time that I have been try to run away, and now it is a whisper, just behind me.

“...three...” I slowly turn around.

“...two...” The lights flash on, then off—just long enough for me to see a figure standing in front of me, arm extended towards me, with a glistening knife in their raised hand. I take a step back when I feel the cold metal on my skin.

“...one.”

Horror Fiction v. Horror Film: King v. Kubrick

Delia Murray

Horror novels and their film adaptations have captivated audiences for decades. Literature and screenplay alike both stimulate creativity; making this sector of the entertainment industry known for perpetual input. There must be mystery, suspense, and shock factors to craft the ideal thriller, but ways of doing so involve contrasting techniques. When translating literature to cinema, certain aspects may be omitted or changed to reflect the vision of the filmmaker. However, when this is done, the movie could potentially miss key points presented in the novel. Condensing elaborate themes while simultaneously providing theatrical scares is not an easy task. Many authors and directors struggle to find the perfect balance. This especially applies to Stephen King’s and Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*. King depicted the hardships of alcoholism while making readers fear the monsters within and Kubrick directed an iconic psychological thriller by emphasizing the disturbing progression of Jack Torrance’s own insanity.

In 1977, King’s *The Shining* was published. He had previously written *Carrie* and *Salem’s Lot*, but this bestselling third novel truly established his lasting presence in the horror fiction genre. The story is an impressive mixture of King’s own experiences and gothic imagery, giving readers insight to a personal journey while also making them afraid. In the beginning, Jack Torrance is

interviewed by the Overlook's manager, Stuart Ullman. Ullman warns Jack about the previous caretaker, Delbert Grady, a murderous drunk who killed his two daughters and wife last winter. Ullman wants to be sure the cabin fever will not be problematic, especially because Jack is a recovering alcoholic with an irrepressible temper. He assures Ullman this behavior will not continue. Prior to the interview Jack has lost his teaching job and broke his own son's arm during a fit. Despite this horrific incident, his son Danny still loves him, and wishes Jack will stay sober so Wendy doesn't divorce him. The underlying terror throughout the novel is the family breaking apart; not necessarily the demons. Danny asserts his true father isn't a monster when Jack tries to strike him with a mallet. This remark frees Jack from his possession briefly to let Danny safely escape. The apparitions represent Jack's irritable behavior while drinking. This novel was a statement that King would never let booze divide his family; similar to how Jack eventually sacrifices himself because he loves his son. When the Overlook explodes, overtaken by the blaze, there is still hope for Danny and Wendy following the compassionate closure.

In 1980, Kubrick's production of *The Shining* was released. While the film's reception was phenomenal, the adaptation didn't match King's vision. The movie wiped away the emotional appeal of the novel by removing references to alcoholism. Instead of showcasing Jack as a loving father attempting to heal, Jack is too far gone from the start. However, this movie gives us a glimpse at the horrors of unexplained psychotics. Danny's ability to shine (power of telepathic communication) and Jack's aggravation isn't further explained, which allowed Kubrick to effectively create the hedge maze, the blank spacious hotel, and the axe wielding killer. He glossed over King's animal shaped hedges, restrictive Victorian style rooms, and the mallet weapon to give the situation on-screen seriousness. Ghastly monsters haunt the Torrance family and expose the murderous tendencies of Jack; a man who was never a plausible father figure or redeemable soul. The Overlook freezes over to finalize the cold-blooded, unforgiving plotline.

While books contain elaborated themes, revealing the deeper purpose through description and vivid imagery, filmmakers are given the task of condensing the author's original intent while sharing their own ideas. A novel that is hundreds of pages must be essentially be reanalyzed to determine significant aspects within the plotline, deconstructed and reinterpreted, to fill the typical ninety-minute running time of a movie. While literature provides enjoyable phrasings, explanations, and alleviates the fear of accidentally omitting a crucial detail; cinematic approaches create a clear picture to watch, using points of view of the protagonists and antagonists, soundtracks, and jump-scares to give people a memorable experience. Both are able to generate classics and leave their artistic mark; both King and Kubrick provided a renowned horror.

Witchcraft All Around the World

The Salem Witch Trials and Lemgo's Witch Hunt

Where It All Took Place: Salem

Salem is a small town in Massachusetts. In the 17th century it was originally called the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Mostly people called Puritans were living there. The first group of 400 Puritans had left England in the 1620s to Massachusetts Bay. In England the Puritans were forced to follow a particular church. The problem was that they had a different believing. Therefore, they tried to escape from situation. By the year 1631, already 2000 Puritans had been living in this new colony.

The Citizens of Salem

The people, who were living in Salem, all believed in "Puritanism." The Puritans were a very strict religious group. They wanted to be morally pure, so they always tried to act in a good way.

Good was, what they thought the Bible preached. To do so, they obeyed religious rules, dressed simply, and lived a life without any luxury. They thought only Puritans, were chosen by God and were saved.

In their opinion, the life was not pleasure, but hard work. Any fun like celebrations, dancing, play, pubs was forbidden. They were controlled by eloquent but fanatical amateur preachers.

The Puritans saw the devil behind all worldly activities, behind everything that made life a pleasure and created fun. This was also expressed in the moral lectures where the infernal fire was a popular subject. The devil threatened their community!

Conflicts with the Native Indians: The Danger from the Outside

The relations with Indian natives were really peaceful in the beginning, but soon they turned into bloody conflicts. At the end of the 17th century the colonists could venture only with weapons through the country. They were afraid of the Indians who had become enemies now. Even farmers, who worked in the fields, always had a gun with them. The citizens lived in fear.

Since the Indians looked different from the Puritan Preachers from Europe, it was easy for the Puritans to accuse them of being devils and demons.

Conflicts in the Colony: The Danger from the Inside

The Indians were not the only circumstance the Puritans were afraid of.

Problems within the puritanical society also existed. Salem became more and more a commercial colony. This means that Puritans as well as non-Puritans earned a lot of money. On the one hand, it was necessary for the Puritans to take part in the economy, but on the other hand, it felt like a sin for them. The respect for businessmen grew, but respect for the priests sank.

In the village, half of the farmers supported the priest Samuel Parris. He wanted to free themselves from the town of Salem and form their own independent village. The other half of the villagers wanted to remain a part of the existing village. Therefore, they refused to support the priest and his family.

They made political changes in the contract of Salem and had a rebellion in the year 1689. All in all, the colony was in a politically insecure situation.

Beginning of the Witch Trials

In the winter, 1691/1692, Elizabeth "Betty" Parris and Abigail William, the daughter and the niece of the priest Samuel Parris started to speak in particularly strange way. They hid under things and crept on the ground. None of the doctors could explain the suffering of the girls medically. One doctor stated that they could only have been possessed by the devil. Besides the two girls, Betty and Abigail Ann Putnam, Mary Warren and others were pressed to mention names of people by whom the girls are "bewitched."

They first accused three poor defenseless women: Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne and Tituba. Sarah Good was a beggar. She was said to talk to herself. Sarah Osborne was a bedridden older woman. She should have given her inheritance to her children from her first husband. Instead, she had given it to her new husband. Tituba was an Indian or black slave of the priest Samuel Parris. During this time the small village was still without formal government. It had neither a president, nor a king or any sort of leader. The people living in Salem governed themselves.

They were also constantly living in fear of the Indians. Therefore, they believed the accusations made by the girls.

The court condemned to death all accused women because of witchcraft. Those who refused to confess, who denied everything, were executed. Those who confessed were spared, but needed to accuse further "witches." There was no way to escape. Ordinary citizens were convicted to death. Only the executions of pregnant Elisabeth Proctor and another woman were shifted to the time after the birth. With four executions in the course of the summer, a total of 19 people were hanged by the rope.

On the 3rd of October 1692, Boston priests raised objections against the witch trials. They declared that it is better if ten suspected witches escaped punishment than if one innocent person were executed. Therefore, the witch trials ended in January, 1693. In the spring of the next year the last arrested person was released.

The Salem Witch Trials- Not a Unique Occurrence

Another example of witch hunting: The Witch Trials in Lemgo (Germany)

The Witch Trials in Salem were not the first and only ones. In Europe, Witch Hunts have taken place before and even for a much longer time period than the witch trials in Salem.

Lemgo (Germany)

In comparison to Salem, Lemgo is a much, much older town. It was founded around the year 780.

Lemgo grew in the following centuries and became a wealth town. The growing wealth strengthened also the self-confidence of Lemgo's citizens. The self-confidence was also reflected in the Church and the sovereign, who was in possession of the power over the land. Unfortunately, the Thirty Year's war (1618-1648) weakened the economy a lot and led to huge discontent in the society.

The Witch Hunt and the "Witch Hammer"

Since the 14th century the idea of witchcraft has been around. In the next century a more and more specific image of witches and wizards was created. In the year 1487 a book called "Witch Hammer" was published. The book was written by the Dominican Heinrich Kramer (that means that he was a member of the Dominican Order). This Order is very famous for fighting against everybody, who does not follow the official teachings of the Church. To fight

the people, who were against their denomination, they formed groups that carried out so called inquisitions. Kramer started writing the book when he was in Innsbruck during such an inquisition. He had just lost a witchcraft case. The book was therefore an attempt to reinforce his position and power. In total 29 editions of the book existed. All editions were written in Latin. Therefore, the original title was “malleus maleficarum.”

The “Witch Hammer” is separated into three main parts. The first part defines what is a witch. Most of the time it talks about witches and not wizards. Women were seen as being in greater danger of becoming a witch. In the second part, Kramer describes how the witches work. He thought that they would be able to make men become impotent. In addition, it shows that men are defined by their knowledge and women by their magic. Therefore, the women were more likely to cause damage. He also explains how people could protect themselves from getting bewitched.

The third part is most probably the cruelest. He describes very detailed how a “witch” has to be questioned (juridical proceedings) and what the prerequisites and rules for torture have to be.

To provide his ideas and thesis being right, he used a lot of quotes from famous people and referred to the Bible. In addition, he gave a lot of examples. Everybody who denied witchcraft and the need to hunt witches was seen as an enemy of Church.

A total of 272 people including 38 men were executed between 1583 and 1681. Most of them burned at the stake. The last woman, who was accused of being a witch, was Maria Rampendahl, in 1681. She had the strength to withstand the torture and stayed alive, but she had to leave the town.

Very special about Lemgo’s Witch Hunt is that the town received the right to decide about his live and death itself. Lemgo also received the nick name “The Witches’ nest.”

What Lasts

All in all, the extension of the Lemgo trials far exceeded that of Salem, both in the number of innocents executed and the far longer timeframe. In addition, in Lemgo you can still see some places, which reminds one of this cruel chapter of history, a public space and a street called “Rampendahl” in Downtown Lemgo and also the historical building called “Witches Mayoral Residence”. His building is now a museum and tells the story of Lemgo’s Witch Hunt.

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