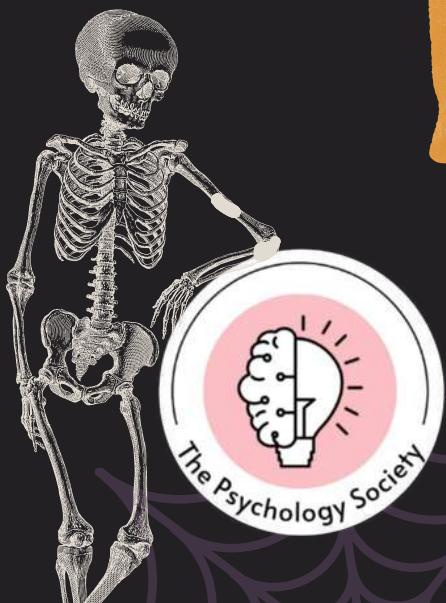




PSYCH!

Halloween Edition!



Edition #9

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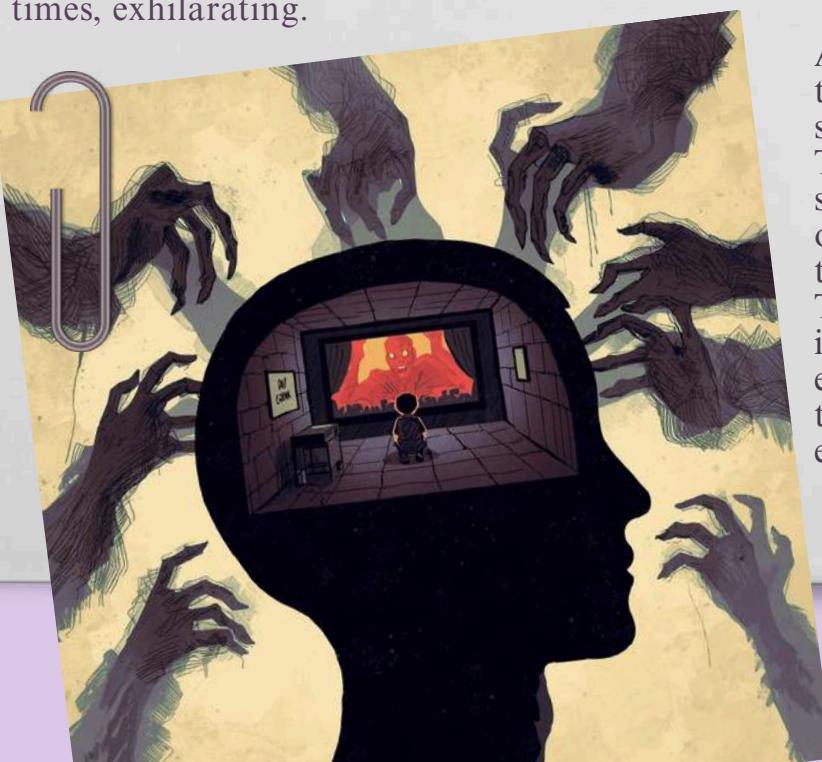
INTERSECTION OF CONTROLLED FEAR, TRAUMA AND HORROR MEDIA



Consumption of horror media offers an unanticipated therapeutic effect; this therapeutic effect is rooted in the same mechanisms as exposure therapy—often used to address anxiety, phobias, panic disorders and PTSD—wherein clients repeatedly encounter anxiety-provoking stimuli until their emotional responses become less intense. Horror media supplies this exposure with a safety net of choice and separation—engaging with fictional fear or anxiety-provoking situations unexpectedly brings real relief.

The emotional rollercoaster that horror provides serves as a medium of catharsis, allowing viewers to deal with other fears: a means for viewers to feel intensity of emotions without the danger. In a Johns Hopkins University Magazine article, renowned director Wes Craven, said that most of us come to horror already acquainted with real fear—arguing that the real value of horror is not bringing new terror but caging existing chaos in a narrative we can grasp, and where safety is ultimately assured (Kim, 2008). In CBC's collection of interviews of individuals dealing with PTSD, there is a consensus of how horror provides an outlet for some of the emotions that are being repressed and the form of media was understood as a safe space to explore “terrible emotions that we all have the capacity to feel.”

Horror also fosters community—a basic antidote to the isolation that often accompanies trauma. Group scares in theaters or online communities create a shared space within boundaries of safety and choices. The aftermath of such experiences, experienced collectively, can lead to fostering a possible community—with isolation giving way to connection. Yet this approach is not a blanket cure. The risks are real: for some, horror may intensify symptoms or trigger traumatic memories. Many who have dealt with long-term issues pertaining to anxiety, phobias, or PTSD find amazement that others actively seek out and even find a sort of solace. Individualized screening, the integration of established therapies like CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) and EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), and professional guidance are essential. It's not about replacing therapy, but enhancing it—leveraging the unique psychological affordances of horror to make fear manageable, narratively bounded, and even, at times, exhilarating.



As Craven observed, the urge to experience, narrate, and survive darkness is ancient. Through horror's dreamlike stories, we marshal the chaos of reality into ritual—perhaps to a more digestible format. The foundation of choice here is of utmost significance—enabling clients and survivors to rediscover certain experiences and emotions.

Written by Srishti Ladha
Edited by Rhea Dhole

WHY DO WE ENJOY WATCHING HORROR MOVIES?

Fear is an uncomfortable emotion for most of us, as we are biologically hardwired to avoid it. In fact, we invest a significant amount of cognitive and material resources to minimize risk and ensure comfort. You might wonder, then, why people eagerly spend money on the horror genre to feel terrified or just to experience a sense of chilling danger. This is where logical explanations seem to fail us. The horror genre is exceedingly popular among its audiences so there must be some compelling psychological mechanisms operating beneath the surface. As the spooky season comes to an end, let us reflect on why we enjoy watching horror movies.

When we witness a terrifying scene in a horror movie, our body reacts immediately, often before our conscious brain catches up. This is a classic example of the fight-or-flight response, which is extremely crucial for survival. When we feel scared, our body releases stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. As a result, the heart beats faster, breathing quickens while the body prepares itself for action. This is the simplified neurobiology of fear. But when you are in a cinema or lying on your couch or bed, your brain holds an important piece of information: you are safe. This conscious awareness creates a secure environment for experiencing the thrill of horror.

The paradox lies in the coexistence of two opposing states: where the intense physical arousal stimulated by fear wrestles with the mental awareness of being situated in a safe and stable environment. But how do we reconcile this physical and mental conflict within us? The Excitation Transfer Theory (Zillmann, 1983, 1996) explains how the physical arousal caused by fear gets relabelled as excitement or thrill. The arousal energy from fear amplifies the positive feeling of relief and euphoria once the supposed danger has passed. Therefore, the temporary and instantaneous jump scares are accompanied by an exhilarating feeling of relief following horror scenes.

But this phenomenon is not solely a chemical response. The love for horror films also stems from a safe way to practice for real-life, threatening situations. The Threat Simulation Hypothesis (Clasen, 2017) postulates that scenarios of extreme danger in horror clips give us an opportunity to engage our natural survival instincts. Our ancestors lived in a far more threatening world, where having a finely tuned threat-detection system was crucial. When presented with fictitious dangers, we experience and process negative emotions in a safe environment, which helps build resilience and coping skills. Similarly, horror movies allow us to mentally explore dangerous scenarios without bearing the actual risk.

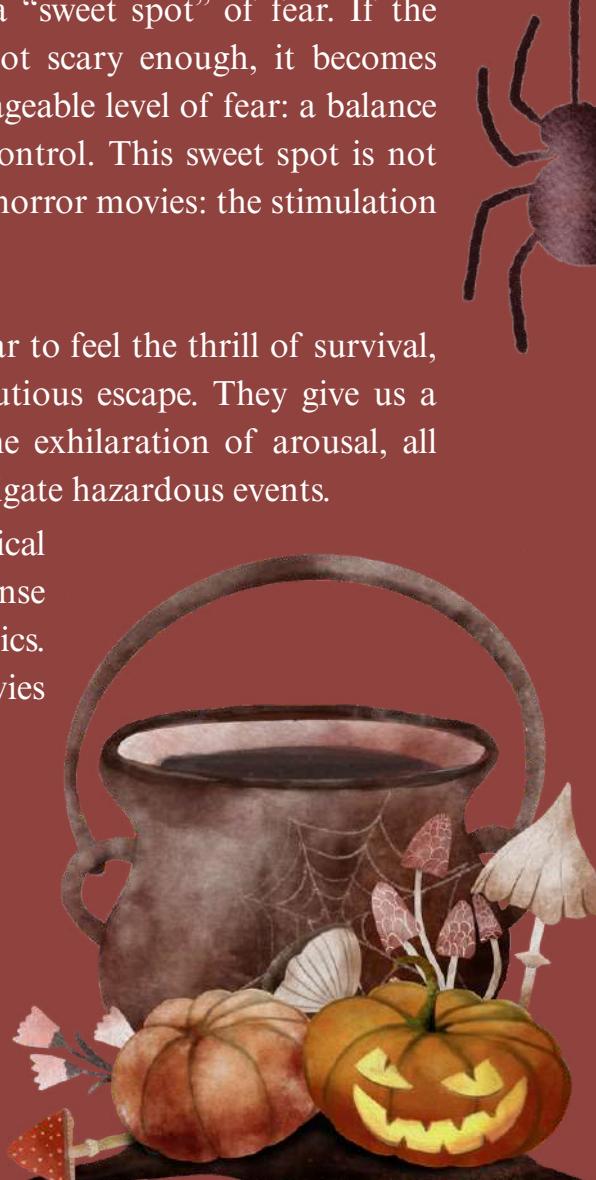
This vicarious experience leads to a sense of mastery once the perceived threat is overcome, i.e. we prove to ourselves that we are capable of surviving fearful situations. However, not everyone enjoys this emotional turbulence, and this is where personality plays a role. Literature suggests that people who score high on sensation seeking—a personality trait that reflects the desire for novel and intense experiences—are far more likely to enjoy the horror genre. They actively seek experiences that maximise arousal and are drawn to the intense stimulation that horror provides instantly.

For most fans, the perfect horror experience exists in a “sweet spot” of fear. If the movie is too intense, the pleasure decreases; if it is not scary enough, it becomes boring. So, what exactly is this sweet spot? It is the manageable level of fear: a balance between being thoroughly scared yet feeling firmly in control. This sweet spot is not the same for everyone, which is why some people dislike horror movies: the stimulation is simply too much for them.

In conclusion, the paradox is demystified. We pursue fear to feel the thrill of survival, and movies with horror elements provide a unique, cautious escape. They give us a chance to push our emotional limits and experience the exhilaration of arousal, all while practising resilience and training our bodies to navigate hazardous events.

Beneath all the media consumption lies a psychological system that allows a controlled level of excitatory response—a way to feel intensely alive and rehearse survival tactics. Who would have thought that watching horror movies could actually be helpful? Well, now you do!

**Written by Mohadisa Rizvi
Edited by Sarah Sodi**



NOTES TOWARD AN ESSAY ON DEATH (OR MAYBE NOT DEATH. MAYBE WHAT REMAINS AFTER.)

1. The absence (and its absence)

- We speak of death as departure; but do the dead really leave? They move into playlists, old sweaters, the way someone still says your name. Memory is just haunting with better manners.
- If you've ever mourned- the loss of a family member, a friend, a pet, your favourite pen, and if you've ever seen a shrink who can, you believe, shrink your grief away- then you'd know to mourn is called a process of "detachment". That assumes we want to detach. Maybe we don't.
- Freud thought mourning was the ego's attempt to withdraw its energy from what was lost. But withdrawal feels wrong. We don't withdraw, we don't abandon homes- we build shrines of them, we repaint, we restructure, we rehouse.
- Derrida wrote on this through something called hauntology: the persistence of what is no longer here, the way time folds over itself when we grieve. To mourn, he said, is to live with an impossible presence - someone who is both gone and still unbearably near. Grief, in that sense, is as narcissistic as it is human: we mourn the dead, but we also mourn the version of ourselves that existed when they were alive.
- Paradoxically, an absence speaks through its own absence- for there is always a residue.

2. The body

- The mind may understand death, but the body keeps reaching. A text pops up and you think it's them, you half-turn at a familiar voice, you hear their name and instinctively smile. They say grief lives in the muscles- so you set that extra plate on the table, so you reach for the phone to call them, so you talk about them as if they are alive. These are continuing bonds- by the 1990s, psychologists like Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silverman, and Steven Nickman argued that maintaining a relationship with the dead is natural. We don't need to "move on", we just need to evolve our relationship with the dead from physical to symbolic and from everyday to spiritual.



3. The residue

- Man is a species obsessed with residue. If I ask you to look toward your arms, and ask you if you think they'll decompose, you might say yes I'm mortal after all, but what if your immortality has simply shifted mediums? The anthropologist Ernest Becker wrote that culture itself is a "death-denying symbolic system"- everything from art to academia functions as a buffer against mortality. For our generation, this takes the form of pictures, songs, stories, chats that might echo our beloved. We curate our deaths without meaning to.

4. The boulder

- Camus began The Myth of Sisyphus by saying there's only one serious philosophical question: whether life is worth living. All due respect to our very dear philosopher, but I think in his existentialism, he forgot expiration. How to live while constantly dying. Now that's a boulder even Sisyphus can't bear to push up the hill- that every moment is a shedding of selves, roles, and attachments. The death of the physical body is only a little worse than our daily deaths.

5. The phantom

- Carl Jung once said what we call "ghosts" are really parts of the psyche that haven't been integrated. The unacknowledged desires, regrets, and forgotten versions of self that return in dreams, jokes and (a term he might not really like) Freudian slips. Nicolas Abraham called this the phantom. To be haunted, then, is not to be followed by the dead but to be in conversation with the unfinished. A half-finished infinity, looping in on itself endlessly but never to completion.

6. The remembering

- There's something radical in choosing to remember, death demands slowness, presence, the humility of the finite. In our endless deadlines, tasks, and assignments, it's easy to forget that finitude is what makes meaning possible. To remember is to honor the phantom, the boulder, the body and the residue. It's to add sanctity to dissolution- to celebrate those who walk beside us but not among us, those who did once and always will.

7. Closure, or something like it.

- Maybe to live well isn't to conquer mortality, but to let it haunt us- to be aware, always, that this moment right now will not return- it will too pass us by, die and dissolve- but not tragically, never tragically. I urge the living- listen to your ghosts, hear them whisper, watch them hum, and when they call out your name- know that they are not "the dead", for they remain long after death.

CYANIDE IN THE CHALICE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL DISSECTION OF THE JONESTOWN MASSACRE

Don't Drink The Kool Aid; it may just choke you.

Have you heard this neologism before? Perhaps seen it on a sign carried by an anti-Trump protester at a rally, or heard in your favourite sitcom episode? This seemingly esoteric phrase has seeped its way into our daily vocabulary as a shorthand for revolt, for questioning superiority, for urging people to think critically. But it has a deeper, darker meaning - a murky, heinous backstory to an innocuous idiom.

The Jonestown massacre cemented itself into the zeitgeist as one of the deadliest, creepiest mass murders to ever take place.

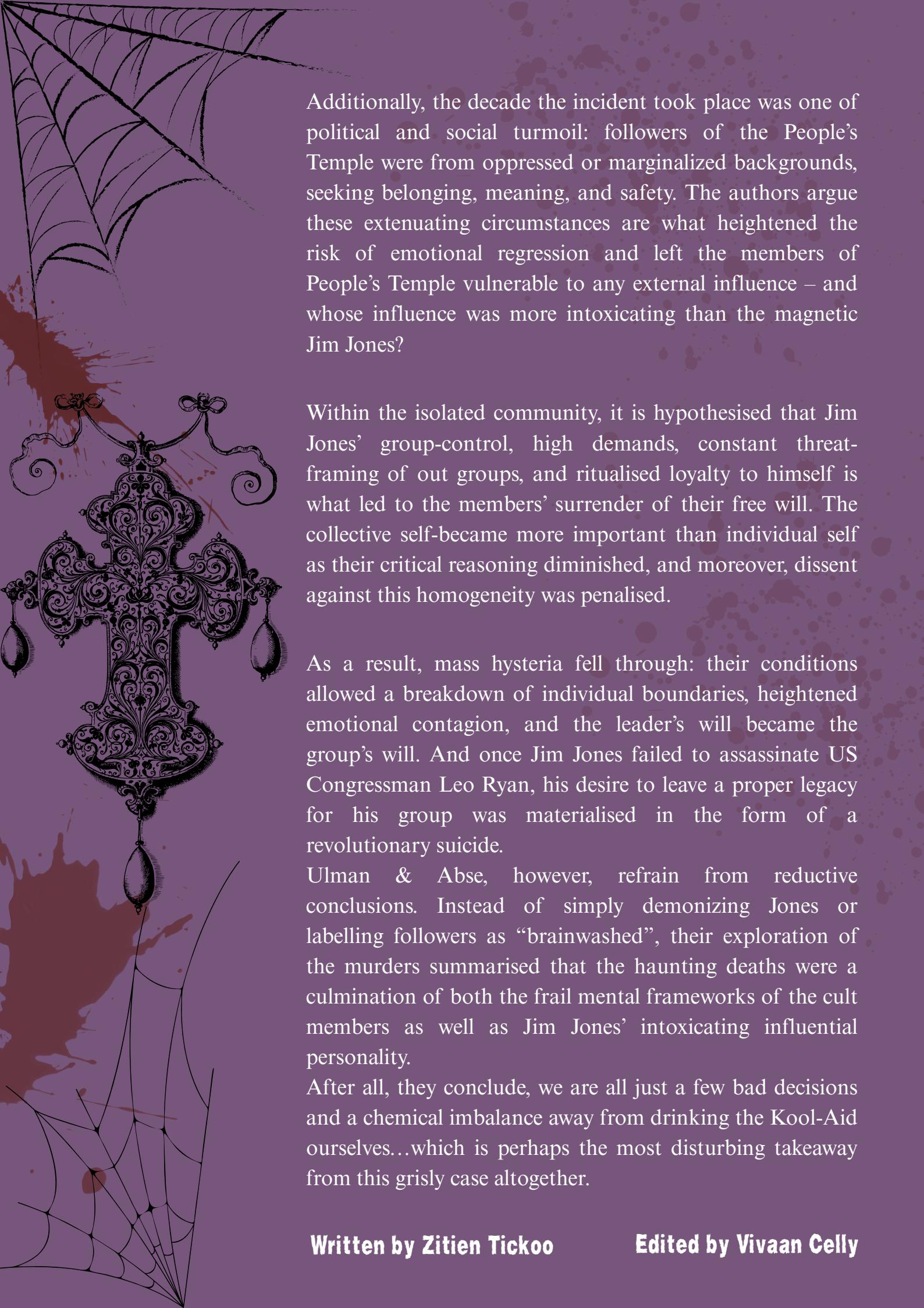
How so?

Back in the 1970s, 900 members of the cult People's Temple, led by their charismatic preacher Jim Jones, drank Kool-Aid laced with cyanide and perished soon thereafter. Those who refused to drink the Kool-Aid were injected cyanide forcefully.

And thus the largest mass death of the decade materialized – all at the hands of one cult leader.

This incident begs the question, what could have motivated hundreds of people to willingly follow a man to hell – quite literally? A psychological exploration into the Jonestown massacre can try to explain the reasons behind the most ominous cult and its deaths.

According to a study by Ulman & Abse in 1983, Jim Jones exhibited strong charismatic leadership; he was able to mobilize followers, promise a utopian community, frame a narrative of persecution/out-group threat, and demand high loyalty.



Additionally, the decade the incident took place was one of political and social turmoil: followers of the People's Temple were from oppressed or marginalized backgrounds, seeking belonging, meaning, and safety. The authors argue these extenuating circumstances are what heightened the risk of emotional regression and left the members of People's Temple vulnerable to any external influence – and whose influence was more intoxicating than the magnetic Jim Jones?

Within the isolated community, it is hypothesised that Jim Jones' group-control, high demands, constant threat-framing of out groups, and ritualised loyalty to himself is what led to the members' surrender of their free will. The collective self-became more important than individual self as their critical reasoning diminished, and moreover, dissent against this homogeneity was penalised.

As a result, mass hysteria fell through: their conditions allowed a breakdown of individual boundaries, heightened emotional contagion, and the leader's will became the group's will. And once Jim Jones failed to assassinate US Congressman Leo Ryan, his desire to leave a proper legacy for his group was materialised in the form of a revolutionary suicide.

Ulman & Abse, however, refrain from reductive conclusions. Instead of simply demonizing Jones or labelling followers as "brainwashed", their exploration of the murders summarised that the haunting deaths were a culmination of both the frail mental frameworks of the cult members as well as Jim Jones' intoxicating influential personality.

After all, they conclude, we are all just a few bad decisions and a chemical imbalance away from drinking the Kool-Aid ourselves...which is perhaps the most disturbing takeaway from this grisly case altogether.

EMBODYING ANOTHER

Have you ever wondered why the forbidden intrigues us? Or why is it that even though we cover our eyes while watching horror movies, we still peek through our fingers? Why do we even watch horror movies in the first place? What is this innate desire that lurks just beyond our sensibility, prying us to indulge these urges that trespass conscious logic? The answer lies within that understanding itself. It is no overt influence but something entrenched deep within the folds of the subconscious mind, that bubbles onto the surface, spilling, or revealing itself in a variety of ways from enjoyment in someone else's failures to the ever wondrous psyche of criminals who commit crimes for the sake of pleasure.

In attempts to explore the root of such desire, one can perhaps take some direction from Julia Kristeva's *POWERS OF HORROR: An Essay on Abjection* where she introduces the reader to the idea of the abject, which she exclaims, "radically exclude[s] and draws [her] toward the place where meaning collapses" (2). The notion of meaning falling apart in the space of abjection allows us to extrapolate the idea of abjection to make sense out of the perverse, grotesque, sometimes even sinister nature of our desires.

The relatively modern tradition of the celebration of Halloween derives from Samhain. The Celtic people have celebrated the festival of Samhain. It is a day to pay homage to departed spirits and considers the transition from the end of October to the beginning of November a period where the line between life and death blurs (History.com Editors, 2009). It is a celebration of liminalities.

Halloween is a day of inhabiting something you cannot otherwise. It is a day of celebrating impersonation, whether it be outrageous, gory, scary, or borderline problematic. There is something to be inquisitive about here: What is this fascination with the unsettling and a desire to inhabit—and celebrate—it in socially acceptable spheres?



Kristeva, very brilliantly, on the topic of the abjection of self writes, "[t]here is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded" (5). The idea of the abject as revelation of innate desire draws out, even to the point of discomfort, that what plays out as an excuse to dress up is much beyond just an occasion to party, but also this disconcerting need to embody another. An excuse to abandon one's semblance of self, and take on another's.

Written by Gurnoor Kaur

Edited by Sourish Grover

Fear, Fascination, Grudging Acceptance:

What the Vampire Reveals About Us



Have you ever wondered about the strange duality of fear and fascination that monsters breathe into our lives? The vampire's bite, the witch's curse, the zombie's apocalypse—they sound like the titles of low-budget horror movies we would never bother to watch. And yet, every Halloween, their characters return to haunt us. We carve pumpkins and debate whether we'll be going as a witch, a zombie, or a half-baked potato. Relax, I kid you not. And lo! we emerge in our costumes, proud and ecstatic, as if we've mastered control over the very things that once frightened us. Perhaps some of us have, but many of us are still trying to. In a way, then, don't these monsters tell us more about ourselves than baby pictures or mirrors ever can? They reflect our fears and fascinations, and so we find ourselves in them, in the truest way possible, unrestricted by society and its so-called rules.

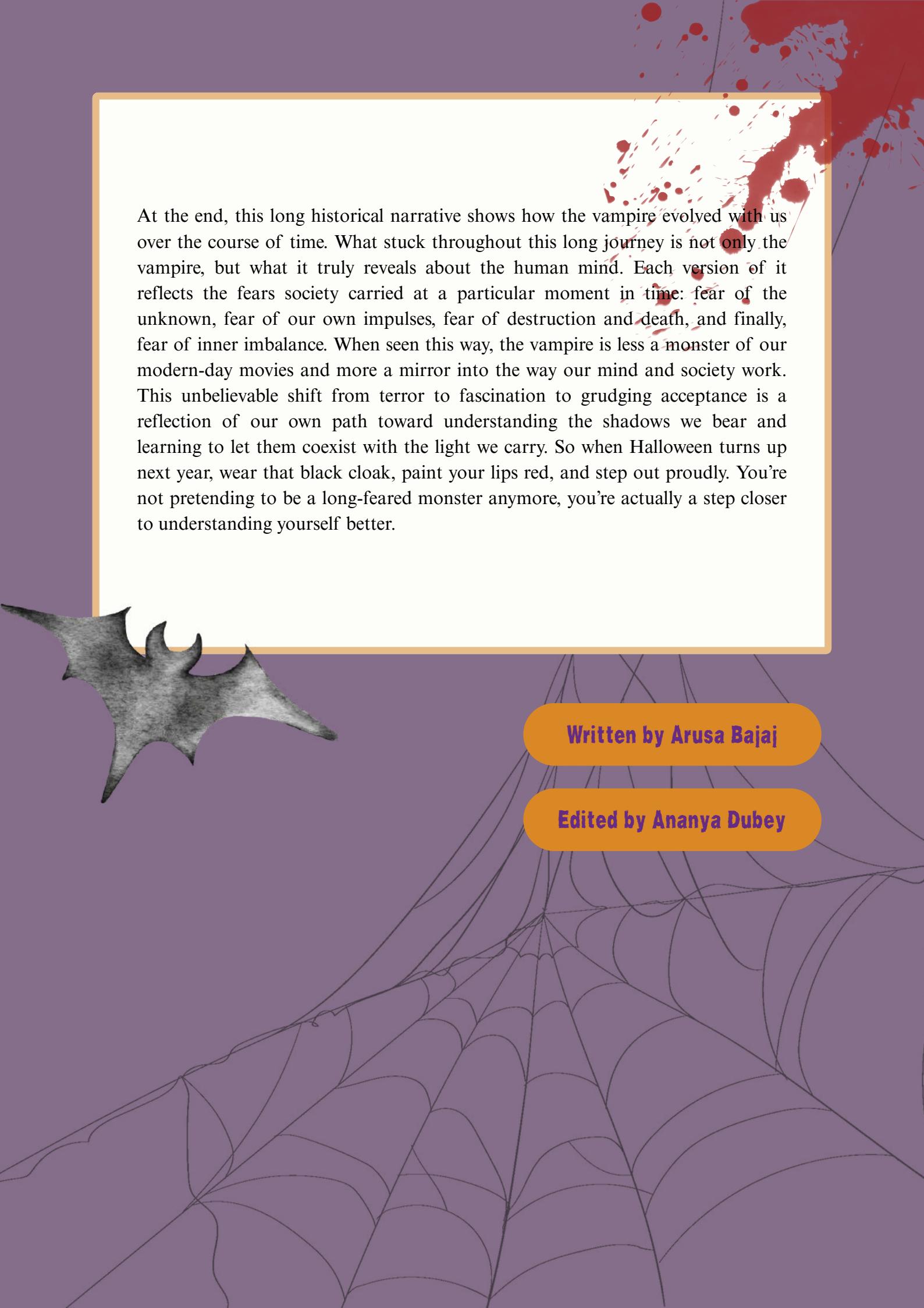
Among all these, the vampire's evolution is one of the most compelling. Generally characterised by their craving for blood, pale luminous skin and aversion to sunlight, the vampire was not always defined so. One of the earliest recorded cases wasn't a literary creation, but a panic encountered in the course of history. In the 1720s, the grave of a Serbian soldier, Arnold Paole, was dug up after villagers claimed that he had returned from the dead to suck their blood. When they found his forty-day-old body, there was a fresh trace of blood on his lips, and his body looked alive. Horrified, a wooden stake was then plunged into his heart, a desperate attempt to control what they couldn't understand. Yet, in the decades to come, the region saw many such untimely deaths. At its heart, this makes a gruesome tale, but what it brings to the table is the human tendency to fear what it can't explain. And so this fear of death was given the name and figure of a vampire.

Over the next century, following this episode, the myth of the vampire found a space in Gothic literature, where it was shrouded in darkness and charisma. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) portrayed the figure of the vampire as both terrifying and seductive. Freud's ideas of repression and projection bring light to this tension. The Victorians, unable to give voice to their sexual desires or break free from the strict moral codes of their society, pushed these "unacceptable" desires out of conscious awareness.

But repression did not erase them; it only buried them deeper in the unconscious. These desires soon made themselves known through projection. Trapped in moral quandary and unconscious anxiety, the Victorians attributed their forbidden fantasies to figures like Count Dracula, convincing themselves that he was immoral and sexually dangerous, not they, themselves. Seeing him this way let them reject and renounce the very impulses inside them. Dracula thus becomes the literary embodiment of everything the Victorians had tried to hide within and from themselves, a projection of the gruesome desires they refused to accept but could never truly escape.

As time went by, our understanding of vampires evolved. It was the 1920s when the movie Nosferatu was released. Count Orlok no longer possessed Dracula's seductive charm, but was rather monstrous, skeletal and rat-like in appearance. For the world reeling from the misery and pain of the First World War and the deadly influenza Virus, Orlok seemed more a representation of death and decay, infecting whatever touched him, like a plague contaminating all the good the world had to offer. Through him, therefore, people sought a way to make sense of their own anxiety, grief and fear as the world around them changed for the decades to come. The vampire no longer symbolised any temptation or forbidden desire, but rather showed the fragility of life itself and the fear of its destruction.

In the 2000s, with the Twilight series, the vampire was again reimagined for a new generation. Edward Cullen was presented as the selfless vampire, the one who longed for love rather than human blood. Carl Jung's idea of the shadow holds those parts of ourselves that we do not want to acknowledge, qualities that often clash with the image we consciously present. Jung believed that when we try to push these unwanted traits away, we usually end up projecting them onto others. Yet when we confront them, we move towards individuation, that is, a deeper state of psychological wholeness. Unlike the Victorians, who were frightened of their own desires and projected them onto figures like Dracula, the twenty-first century saw a different scenario unfold. Despite being a vampire, Edward's restraint and constant struggle to protect and adapt show an acknowledgement, and even a grudging acceptance, of the darker sides of human nature. In him, the vampire becomes a symbol not of forbidden hunger but of a balance between that hunger and love. Through him, society's relationship with desire also shifts. What was once considered monstrous and shameful, the shadow in our lives we refused to accept, is now brought into balance in the search for a more integrated self.



At the end, this long historical narrative shows how the vampire evolved with us over the course of time. What stuck throughout this long journey is not only the vampire, but what it truly reveals about the human mind. Each version of it reflects the fears society carried at a particular moment in time: fear of the unknown, fear of our own impulses, fear of destruction and death, and finally, fear of inner imbalance. When seen this way, the vampire is less a monster of our modern-day movies and more a mirror into the way our mind and society work. This unbelievable shift from terror to fascination to grudging acceptance is a reflection of our own path toward understanding the shadows we bear and learning to let them coexist with the light we carry. So when Halloween turns up next year, wear that black cloak, paint your lips red, and step out proudly. You're not pretending to be a long-feared monster anymore, you're actually a step closer to understanding yourself better.

Written by Arusa Bajaj

Edited by Ananya Dubey

WATCHING THE WATCHER: HOW SCREAM TURNS HORROR INSIDE-OUT

If you think the Scream series is merely about Ghostface going around and chasing random people, or the saucy Instagram reels that have been made with the mask, you're in for a real treat this Halloween. Amidst all the laughs at a ghost so goofy, and the jumpscares that catch you off-guard, the franchise has more to offer – it also delivers a fascinating look at the psychology of trauma, survival, and even the way horror movies reflect our deepest fears.

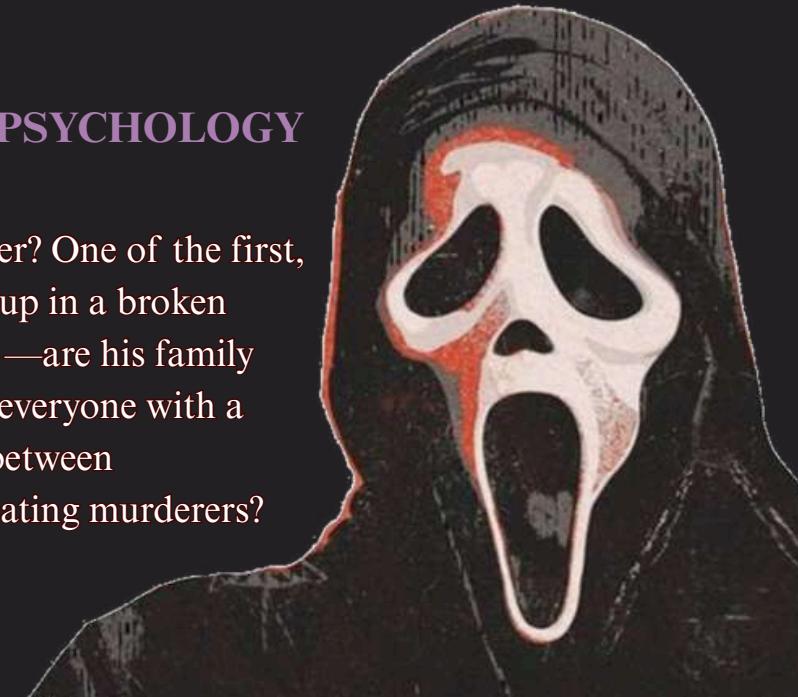
Boo? Consider yourselves warned: This might bring up some shifts in the way you watch the movies, or peer at your fears — who knows, what if you end up in a horror movie soon, unsuspecting and just a little too aware?

TRAUMA & SYDNEY PRESCOTT

The iconic “final girl”, Sydney Prescott, highlights the main theme of the Scream series - trauma, and how it shapes us, haunts us, and sometimes even fuels cycles of violence. Her journey isn’t just about running from killers; it’s about addressing everything that happened with her mother, her boyfriend (spoiler?) and facing the trust issues they left her with head-on. The killers, meanwhile, often justify their twisted acts by seeing themselves as victims, caught in a web of past hurts. Trauma isn’t just a backstory; it’s a powerful force that shapes life.

NATURE VS. NURTURE IN KILLER PSYCHOLOGY

What pushes Ghostface into becoming the killer? One of the first, and more famous, villains, Billy Loomis, grew up in a broken home with betrayal in place of love, and meals —are his family issues the reason behind his urge to kill? Does everyone with a messy past then turn lethal? Where is the line between environment and genetics when it comes to locating murderers?



REDEFINING ‘STEREOTYPED’ HORROR AND THE STUPID ‘MAIN CHARACTER’

Scream does not follow the horror rules that other films hold on so desperately to as a blueprint; rather, it critiques and mocks them. The movies bring viewers into questioning why they pick out horror movies in the first place—the meta-horror aspect is like raising a mirror to ourselves as we watch. It pushes us to explore our own relationship with fear and suspense. In the latter movies, the killers move from just physical harm to psychological warfare, using manipulation, gaslighting and deception, which makes the main characters rethink their own lives. Sometimes, the real jumpscare is not being able to trust your own experience, over scary faces and loud, startling sounds.

Sydney is not a survivor by accident; she learns how to live and deal with the messy life she’s been given. Sam Carpenter struggles to reframe her identity and reclaim her story amidst her family’s dark history, showing us that female strength isn’t about being perfect, pretty or pure — it’s about facing the world even when you’d rather hide away and sticking up for yourself. The franchise plays with the “final girl” trope, making these female leads more complex and relatable than the typical scream queens of old.

MENTAL HEALTH AND BREAKING STEREOTYPES

The Scream franchise has also shifted how killers are portrayed in horror movies, steering clear of “crazy killer” stereotypes and the blame game that just claims individuals go off the rails sometimes (although, I’d argue that’s scarier. Never knowing what to expect, or who.) Instead, it digs into the real human emotions behind violence and survival, showing characters like Sam struggling with not just external threats but internal fears about family legacies and identity.

At the end of the day, Scream is a clever mix of thrills and thought-provoking questions about trauma, fear, and resilience. Its blend of horror, humour, and psychology keeps us hooked — and a little on edge —while reminding us that surviving our own fears might be the greatest scream of all.



Written by
Mihika Sangtani

Edited by
Anuja Paul



Mirror Mirror on the Wall

Who's in the Darkness after all?

Have you ever turned the lights off in your room and immediately regretted it because the pile of clothes on the chair looks eerily similar to a demon? If you have, congratulations, you just witnessed the **PAREIDOLIA PHENOMENON**, the tendency of the brain to discern faces that are not really present. It's why we feel that a particular potato chip resembles a judgmental relative, the sauce spilled on your shirt looks like a weirdly shaped amoeba, or that there's something lurking in the shadows.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND PAREIDOLIA

Pareidolia is the illusion of familiar patterns, especially faces, in random stimuli. It is the enthusiastic attempt made by our mind to organize visual disorder. Instead of admitting that the burnt patch on the wall is just that, the brain goes, *“Ah, yes. A sinister man smiling back at me. Delightful.”*

On a psychological level, pareidolia is the product of our highly socialized brain. Our temporal lobe has a fusiform face area (FFA) that recognizes faces with compulsive zeal and would rather give a false alarm than fail to recognize a face. Scans using functional MRI have demonstrated that the FFA activates not just for real human faces, but also for toasts, clouds, or plug sockets even with a faintly humanoid appearance.

From a neuroscientific standpoint, this tendency is rooted in threat bias—the evolutionary principle that it's better to mistake a shadow for a predator than overlook the real thing. For our ancestors, a false alarm was harmless, but a missed threat could be fatal. Thus, the brain evolved a hypervigilant system tuned to detect agency and facial patterns, especially in low-visibility or uncertain environments. However, the system that once kept us alive now makes us jump at oddly shaped furniture.

Evolution, it appears, has a strange sense of humour.



HOW THE BRAIN MAKES ITS VERY OWN MONSTERS

Beneath the spooky thrill lies the serious science of perceptual completion and top-down processing. The first refers to the brain's ability to fill in missing visual information—when you are given incomplete cues, for example, a shadow or a reflection, your brain perceives a coherent, if occasionally terrifying, image. The latter, top-down processing entails our perception being influenced by expectation and emotion. When you're anxious or in a dark environment, your brain becomes primed for threat detection. The context biases what you perceive: the same curtain that seems harmless in the morning transforms into a lurking figure at night. It has been demonstrated that both the visual cortex and emotional centers (amygdala) are activated whenever there is some ambiguity in stimuli. What this means is that our brain not only sees, but also interprets, integrating sensation with imagination. That's why horror movies work best in the dark, and why your bathroom mirror feels suspicious at 3 a.m.

THE VENN DIAGRAM OF PAREIDOLIA AND HORROR

Horror, as a genre, thrives on pareidolia. Filmmakers exploit our perceptual shortcuts to make us feel like we're seeing something more than what's there. The brain's greatest fear is not what it sees, but what it almost sees. Classic horror movies also follow this same principle. *The Shining* uses symmetrical hallways and eerily patterned carpets that tease the FFA into finding faces where there are none. *The Blair Witch Project* never shows the witch because your brain will always imagine something worse.

Directors understand that ambiguity is their sharpest weapon. They dim the lights, use visual noise, and create symmetrical or human-like shapes just enough for your FFA to misfire. Your brain does the rest of the work, constructing faces, figures, and menace out of nothing.

Horror is familiar with the golden rule: Don't show the monster, have the viewers construct it in their minds. It is creepier and much more effective.

TRICK OR TREAT?

At its heart, pareidolia is both the trick and the treat of perception. It is what makes us creative, careful, and a teensy bit paranoid when we find ourselves in dark rooms.

*Now, go and light a candle, put on *The Conjuring*, and when you think there is a ghost under your bed, keep in mind – it's not a ghost, it's neuroscience. And honestly, isn't that a little more frightening?*

Written by
Kavya Marwaha

Edited by
Esha Dalal

WORD SEARCH



PAREIDOLIA
APOPHENIA
UNCANNY
PHOBIA
PARANOIA
DISSOCIATION

HALLUCINATION
NIGHTMARE
INSTINCT
SUBCONSCIOUS
REPRESSION
TRAUMA

RECOMMENDATIONS

Movies

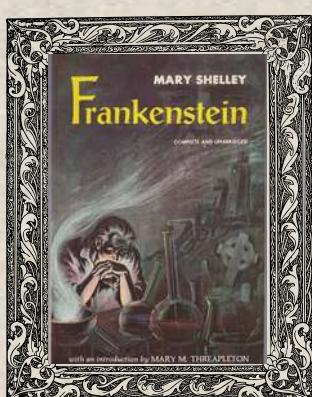
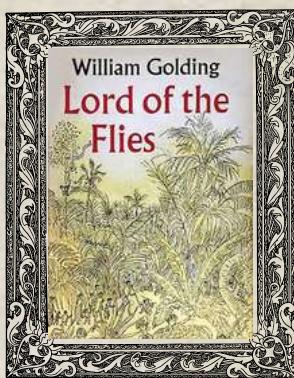
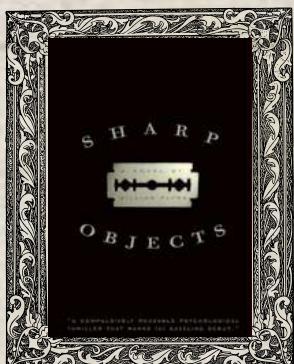
Black Swan



Silence of the Lambs



Gone Girl



Books

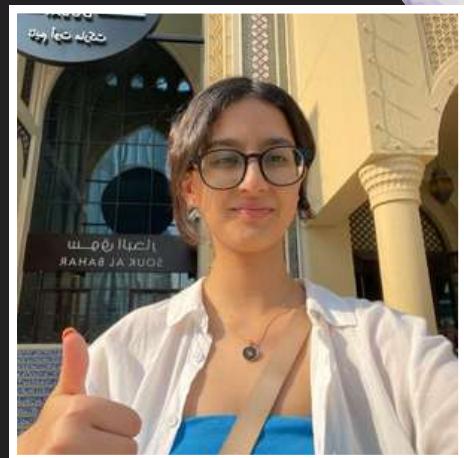
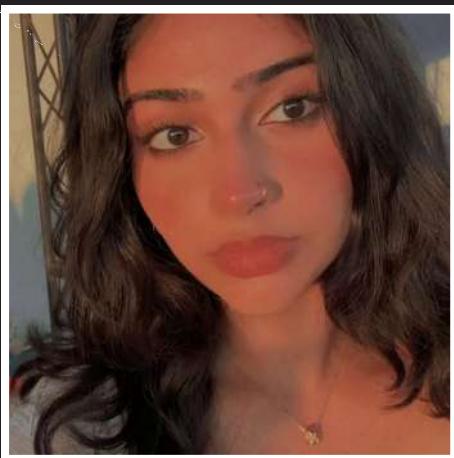
**Sharp Objects –
Gillian Flynn**

**Lord of Flies – William
Golding**

**Frankenstein – Mary
Shelley**



MEET THE TEAM

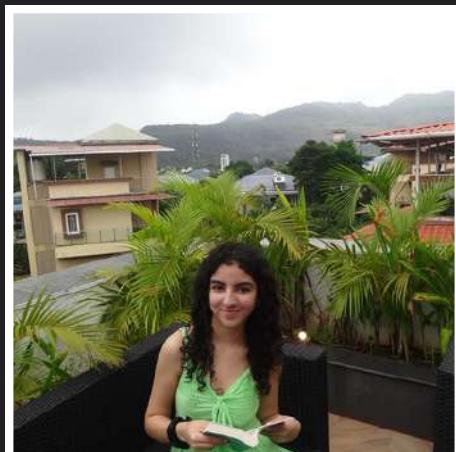


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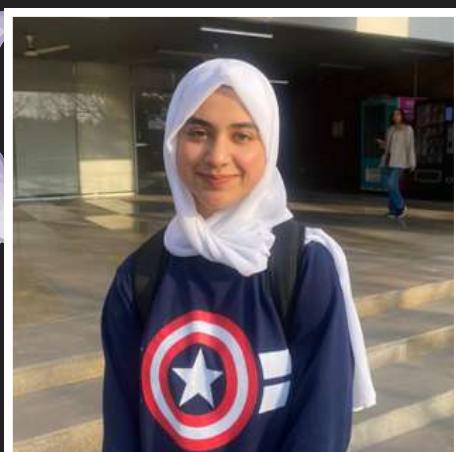
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