

Shadowplay: Philosophy and Psychology of the Modern Horror Film

Willy Greer



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As adults we like to know when the bounds of reality have become blurry; we like to maintain control, and there's an abundant element of control in the movie-going experience. The plot isn't a mystery, nor is the suspension of disbelief as intense as it is in dreams (sensory deprivation is limited to the dimming of the theatre lights, only submerging us so far in the fantasy). The outcome isn't ruled by chance, as it is in role-playing games (or real life, for that matter). But we can still lie to ourselves enough to believe in what's happening onscreen. We still have the ability to escape into the world of movies. Therefore, we can rest assured that adulthood hasn't fully sunk its claws into us yet. By the same token, we can exit if we are unsatisfied with the movie we're watching, or if we have to go to the bathroom. Therefore, we can rest assured that we have control over our delusions. And, sitting in a special room with the lights off, gathered among a group of friends and strangers who are all watching two-dimensional people play make-believe, we can rest assured that we aren't weird. Author Willy Greer delves into the dark psychology of the modern horror film to scare up those terrifying images that still manage to make us afraid of things that go bump in the night.

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