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THE SUBSTANCE IS A FILM ABOUT ADDICTION

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WARNING: SPOILERS AHEAD!

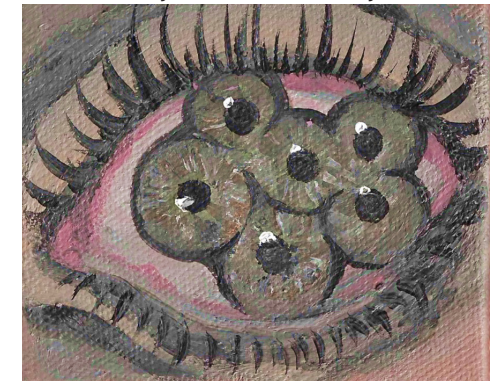
In Coralie Fargeat's *The Substance*, an uncanny Hollywood is used as a mere vehicle to tell a story of addiction. In fact, Fargeat's Hollywood is a complete caricature: the Walk of Fame is shown being snowed on, the biggest live television show of the year is simply called "The New Years Show", and the most famous entertainers seem to be fitness celebrities. The humorous mockery of Hollywood and all of the sleazy, gluttonous network executives puffing their cigarettes in your face, disposing actresses over the age of 35 is delightfully absurd and shallow, as no one needs to be told that the entertainment industry is corrupt. This is not the focus of the movie, however—it's addiction.

Elisabeth Sparkle was adored when she was a young award-winning actress. She graduated to a 1980s-style aerobics show that she was eventually removed from in pursuit of the network finding a younger lead. This is when she is offered "The Substance", an answer to her rejection and a way for Elisabeth to achieve the adoration that was stripped from her all at once. When she takes The Substance, she immediately returns to the network that treated her as disposable as a form of self harm. She knows the adoration isn't "real", in that if she loses her beauty and youth, she is no longer valuable. But when the false sense of love is all that you know, who's to tell you it's not real? Who can get in the way of you trying to achieve it again?

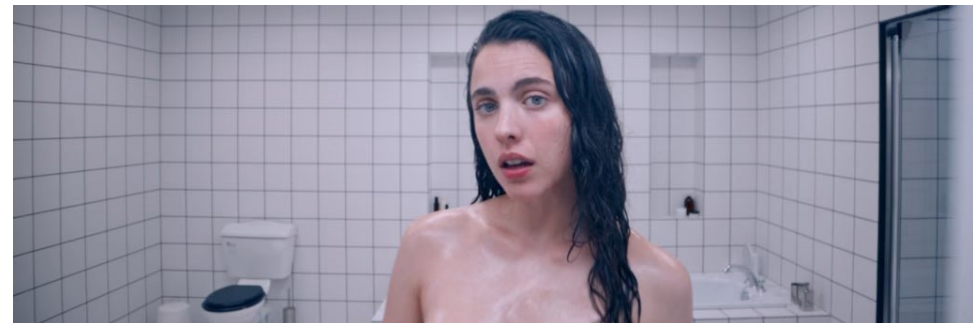


Elisabeth and her clone seem to be two separate consciousnesses, resenting each other. Elisabeth resents Sue's success and Sue resents Elisabeth for holding her back from it. The film's repeating message of "YOU ARE ONE" serves to remind the audience that they aren't separate entities. In terms of substance use, Sue is the high and Elisabeth is the comedown. Sue drains Elisabeth's stabilizer fluid to extend her gratification despite knowing (and experiencing) the risks of doing so. It's a problem Elisabeth will deal with later. Consequences don't matter when you don't care about yourself. Your body, your future, and your wellbeing doesn't matter when you have a substance to give you temporary relief from your own self-hatred. The film's poignant depiction of self hatred hits its peak when Sue beats and batters Elisabeth in a bloody, extremely literal display of absolute disgust toward oneself.

The addict will reach higher highs and subsequently lower lows just as this film does. When you think Elisabeth can't get worse, she does. Eventually the addict cannot keep up their facade of normalcy and their sickness is on full display, and in *MonstroElisaSue*'s case, it is very much on display at the biggest live television show of the year. Sadly for Elisabeth, self hatred led to her demise, and addiction brought her there swiftly and disastrously.



Art by @haleyharmicartaccount



"On the Bride"
By: Kino Finnegan

I'm never not thinking of the Bride created by Victor Frankenstein, at least in some way.

In this lens of Femininity within Horror, I find myself only thinking of her. Within less than 120 seconds, I find myself enraptured by her existence. I want to be her. I am jealous of her. I am not her.

The story of Frankenstein's Monster is one about self-definition in spite of societal tradition. In a christian world, what is a more perverse existence than that of a whole person created by Men (not god) out of the desecrated remains of those no longer living? How does that subject then navigate their identity within that world where you are its very Antithesis? Inherent to this, is isolation. In isolation, companionship is desired and then demanded.

So then, what would one do if they are this societal Antithesis, and burdened with rigid purpose. Born out of necessity. Born out of obligation. Forced to live only to then have your gift of definition stripped of you. I want to believe we can all choose our own lives. If there is god, it would have been gifted by them. Yet, to a creature born of man, what is afforded to them in their birth? To her, only expectation is given to her.

A horror often felt.

In the face of external definition, Bride waits. She hisses. She screams. She denies her purpose.

No, she rejects it.

Tragedy still finishes her. No consideration, no debate. Her story ends, all the same.

But I revive her, often. Myself, the artist. The idiot.

Like Victor, I create. I breathe life into unreal beings for my own curiosity and pleasure.

Like Victor, I am selfish. I define her in my own terms. I give her a body and a story and I wish to live it. To make fiction is to make fantasies of things I'd love to see, to feel, to understand. But, always my fantasies. Never hers.

I am real. She is not. This is obvious to me and I don't suffer delusions that she is. But my obsession with artistic creation affords me a semblance of stupidity that I feel sorrow for her role in all of this. No matter what she does, by virtue of existence, will always be an extension of someone else's desire to deal with their own inadequacies.

To Victor, his hubris.

To The Creature, his selfishness.

To me, my fantasies.

I once believed in the beauty of creation, it's still there somewhere. I find it in her. In the broken heart I have for her.

DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

JULIA DUCOURNAU

Since her breakout hit, *Raw*, in 2016, French filmmaker Julia Ducournau has been making waves in the horror genre with her truly unique blend of gruesome body horror and coming-of-age themes. Being the second-ever woman to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 2021 for her dark and unsettling film *Titane*, Ducournau's work has resonated with audiences with her unapologetic storytelling methods. Her films are absolutely not for the faint of heart but they are deeply empathetic explorations of young women navigating their chaotic worlds.



Violence, Eroticism, and Unconditional Love: Julia Ducournau's "Titane"

by Emily Applewhite (@mathgoblin)

If there is one thing intimately understood by filmmaker and writer Julia Ducournau, it is the trauma and horror inherent to female adolescence, growing into a body that bleeds and feels, the brutish nature of sexual desire both placed upon a woman and emanating from a woman. Ducournau's films are nasty and brutal, grotesque and unflinching. The concept of a "scream queen" generates in the mind the image of a woman persevering, fighting off captors and surviving terrifying circumstances. Older horror films often highlighted a woman's purity and decency as virtues. However, Ducournau's protagonists create horror and embrace sexual desire.

Her 2021 film *Titane* explores a woman embracing her own sexual and physical identity through acts of violence against others and against herself. The movie begins with the protagonist Alexia suffering from a skull injury as a result of a car crash. As a result, she has a metal plate fit into her head. We later cut to adult Alexia, now a showgirl at a motor show, brutally killing a predatory man. She has sex with a car, resulting in pregnancy. The film understands pregnancy as a form of body horror itself: what other human process distorts and destructs a human body, violently changes it, and brings about episodes of severe pain?

Pregnancy is a politicized topic, with lawmakers still attempting every day to further restrict women's rights to bodily autonomy and freedom. In *Titane*, we later see

Alexia perform a botched abortion with a hair stick: the same hair stick she used to stab the predatory man to death. Here we see Alexia's weapon of choice as a continuation of her agency. The brutality of the murder emphasizes how women must fight with blood and sweat to preserve their autonomy from the men who seek to control them. It also draws into mind the real life horrors women still endure all over the world when their healthcare systems fail them and they are forced to bring abortion into their own hands.

As the film progresses, we see Alexia on the run for several counts of murder, when she takes refuge in a fire station, pretending to be the fire captain's long lost son Adrien. Alexia adopts the role of Adrien by taping down her breasts and her heavily pregnant stomach. By showcasing this, the film shows the pain that women go through exploring their identities within a rigid binary system of gender. Alexia does not fit within the societal convention of what a woman should be: she is part machine, part mechanical, and the being growing inside her is the same. When she adopts the identity of Adrien, she is not just hiding out from the cops, she is finding her role within a family of outcasts.

Her assumed father figure, Vincent, refuses a DNA test for his so-called son Adrien, accepting Alexia as his son. Like Alexia, Vincent is deeply traumatized. He injects steroids regularly and nearly dies from doing so. However, at this moment, Alexia chooses to care for him. Although Alexia is not really Vincent's son, Vincent accepts Alexia anyway, creating a powerful image of unconditional love. Vincent speaks to Alexia: "whoever you are, you are my son."

At the end of the film, we see Alexia giving birth to a mechanical child, an infant born of metal and machine. She dies in the process, and her newborn is embraced by Vincent. In this moment, we see Vincent offering this child the acceptance Alexia never had: acceptance of the metal inherent to the female form, a metaphor for the eroticism and brutishness that exists within women, that society tries to shut out. Although Vincent's belief that Alexia was his real missing son was a delusion, there is a level of delusion inherent to unconditional love, in radically accepting people in their true forms. *Titane* is a movie about the relationship between the body and a woman's identity, it destroys the idea of purity and femininity by showcasing a bloody, brutal killing spree at the hands of a sexually deviant part-machine woman. It is a radical film, expressive, violent, feral, yet tender and sensitive, with a beating heart at the core of its shock and awe. It is, to me, the quintessential film exploring womanhood in horror.

Art by @mathgoblin



Reflecting Change: Transformation in “Raw” and “Titane”

By Owen Bradford

Julia Ducournau's films *Raw* (2017) and *Titane* (2021) both feature young women going through brutal transformations firmly rooted in the body horror subgenre. While each film features plenty of interesting and horrific scenes, what I want to focus on in this essay is how both films make use of a mirror motif, and how this reflects their leading characters' transformation and self-identification. Through the mirror motif and the endings of the films, I seek to show that both films offer hopeful themes of self-determination through their protagonists, Justine and Alexia.

Both *Raw* and *Titane* do not revert their protagonists back to their original state by the end of the film, yet they each still offer endings that are hopeful, but in tone with the rest of the film, horrific in their own ways. After a fight with her sister in front of the school, Justine visits Alexia in jail who has been arrested for murder. The two sisters look at each other through the thick glass, and Justine presses her scarred cheek against the glass, which Alexia had bitten. They smile and Alexia jokingly flips off Justine with the finger that she lost to the scissors earlier in the film. After this, Justine eats with her parents and listens to her father talk. Her father reveals that Justine's mother also had cannibalistic desires, and unbuttoning his shirt reveals his scarred chest and stomach, which her mother has presumably been eating pieces of to deal with her desires. He assures a horrified Justine that he believes she will find a way to deal with it as well. This ending is undoubtedly hopeful for Justine, as she is presented with a possibility of living and dealing with her cannibalistic desires.

An important motif appears in both films, which is reflections and mirrors. In *Raw*, this first happens with Justine having a sexual awakening in front of the mirror. This self-image perceived by Justine is a working through of her identity and understanding of her sexuality for herself. However, towards the end of the film when she and her sister talk in jail, their images are reflected onto one another in the glass, signaling a coming together and understanding between the two. Although they had fought, their identification of each other's bodily transformations through the scars they left on each other, relates to their understanding of each other's self-image. Their love for each other allows them to move forward in their lives and prompts the father's discussion on the possibility of a future for them.

Further, the traditionally monstrous and socially taboo act of cannibalistic consumption itself is not wholly condemned in the film text itself. As the final scene reveals, Justine's parents have been living with this cannibalistic desire as her mother takes from father and father gives to mother in an act of love. Justine's cannibalistic desire is continuously linked to her growing sexual desires and coming of age in her formation of self, identity, and body. Because of

this link, refusal to completely condemn this cannibalistic desire then stands in as a further refusal to condemn Justine's nonconformity. Just as the rashes and wounds on her body and the socially taboo cannibalism appear monstrous to the viewer, so too does Justine in her earlier refusal of femininity and exploration of her sexual desires appear monstrous to the heteronormative society.

The most significant mirror scene in *Titane* occurs during Alexia's transformation of herself into the missing boy. She looks into the mirror as she cuts her hair, binds her chest, and inspects her face for further changes she can make. After breaking her nose, she looks back into the mirror and smiles at her new face, showing that she identifies the new image of herself as she changes. This also marks the beginning of her shift away from the violent murders of the first part of the film. Later in the film we see Alexia about to murder Vincent, the man whose missing son she has disguised herself as in order to avoid being caught for her murders. She holds the same metal hairpin that she used previously, but hesitates, then decides against it and cares for him instead. Her developing feelings of affection, and even love, separates her from the emotionless sex and violence of the first half of the film. *Titane* ends with Alexia and Vincent coming together and accepting each other, Vincent no longer cares that she is not really his son but is rather grateful that he has somebody to love anyway. The pregnancy that has been rapidly changing Alexia finally comes to its conclusion as she goes into labor, her skin splitting apart and revealing metal underneath. While Alexia presumably dies from giving birth, the baby lives, and is revealed to have a metal spine before the film cuts to its credits.

While Alexia does not live through the end of the film, the birth of her part metal baby signals the success and completion of transformation. Vincent now has someone else to love and care for, and Alexia's life ends with her creating new life contrasting against the violent murders that she commits in the beginning. Alexia's gendered change is not challenged, she is still in her masculine presentation while giving birth, though she no longer hides her full identity from Vincent. The baby that she gives birth to is both metallic and human, neither one or the other but both, reflecting Alexia's own challenge to her gender identity as she embraces both her femininity and masculinity.

These films mark a shift in the horror genre, as they do not just reimagine gender roles and presentations, challenging patriarchal hegemony of their society, but they also allow their characters to work through their identities. Their monstrosities become not just negative aspects to create horror and violence, but as a way for them to reassert their power and subjectivity, and craft their own identities without strictly following the binary guidelines of gender identity. On *Raw*, Ducournau explains that “I wanted it to be clear at the end that there is a solution, and that the solution is in (Justine) [...] when you open your eyes to who you are and your humanity, then there is a solution, and the solution is in you” These films are ultimately about not just challenging and observing the destructive objectification that the New French Extreme forcefully engages with, but looking towards the possibility of creating a new identity focused on love, a different path for its protagonists, and hopeful endings.



Art by @candycolorclown



SHERYL LEE

A DEAD GIRL WALKING

By Mayra Lopez

Letterboxd - maylop
Instagram - mayraalopez

Content warning: Mentions of sexual assault and violence
Major "Twin Peaks" spoilers ahead!

In the FBI's Philadelphia branch headquarters, Special Agents Dale Cooper and Albert Rosenfield sit at their respective desks, discussing their latest investigation: the unsolved murder of Teresa Banks in Deer Meadow, Washington. Struck by a supernatural premonition, Cooper warns Albert that Teresa's murderer will strike again, both of them powerless to stop it. Testing the accuracy of his foresight, Albert interrogates Cooper about the details of his predicted murder victim. "Woman...blonde...she's in high school, she is sexually active, she's using drugs," Cooper senses. His face darkens, and he mutters, "She's crying out for help." Less than a week later, a dead body washes up on a cloudy riverbank in Twin Peaks, Washington. This is the body of Laura Palmer: woman, blonde, in high school, sexually active, using drugs—her cry for help never answered.

In 1992, David Lynch and Robert Engels released their co-written film, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*, as a prequel to Lynch's 1990 murder mystery television series, *Twin Peaks*. As is usual with prequels, one would expect *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* to merely supplement its predecessor. With *Twin Peaks'* winding "whodunit" storyline, a prequel would seem appropriate to fill in any



contextual gaps left unexplained in the show and to build anticipation for the show's driving question: "Who killed Laura Palmer?" However, *Twin Peaks'* ominous approach to its central murder investigation appears to instead build anticipation for its prequel: a psychological horror where the show's most twisted subject matter is explored with free reign, delving into the dark, hidden world of the tragic Laura Palmer, played by Sheryl Lee. Laura Palmer, murdered by her own father at 17 years old, has been a regular victim of underaged prostitution, rampant cocaine addiction, and sexual abuse from her father, who is supposedly possessed by a malevolent spirit that threatens her life. Under the radar of television censorship and production conflicts, the grisly details of Laura Palmer's life and death are heavily muted in the original series. Though they are frequently acknowledged, they are buried under innuendos and softened television-friendly phrasing. Thus, after *Twin Peaks'* on-air cancellation, Lynch felt it was essential to flesh out Laura's story by means of a more liberating platform of expression: an R-rated feature length film, with Laura in the front and center.



Regarding Laura Palmer, there is almost nothing in *Fire Walk With Me* that we do not already know. Capturing the days leading

up to her gruesome murder, the film serves to visualize elements of Laura's life that are gradually unfolded postmortem—during the town's investigation of her death in *Twin Peaks*. From Laura's explicit after-school activities, to the dynamics shared between her and other *Twin Peaks* residents, to her very final moments of life, practically nothing shown throughout the film should come as a surprise to any *Twin Peaks* viewer, as every single detail had been previously uncovered by the dedicated probing of Special Agent Dale Cooper and other involved townspeople. However, despite prior knowledge and anticipation of the film's events, *Fire Walk With Me's* depiction of Laura's final days is nothing less than jarring. A great deal of the film's shock value is attributed to the aforementioned lessening of content restrictions, with the vast jump from a TV-MA rating to an R-rating. However, the true heart of *Fire Walk With Me's* horror lies in Laura Palmer herself—in Sheryl Lee's masterful embodiment of our tragic homecoming queen.

Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me is the very first installment of the *Twin Peaks* narrative that portrays Laura Palmer before her death. Although Sheryl Lee assumes her vital role within the very first few minutes of the series pilot, her presence throughout *Twin Peaks* is restricted to that of a haunting memory—a looming tragedy, whose ghost remains forever imprinted onto the town's history. We see Laura, but only in morgues, flashbacks, photographs, or dreams. We hear her voice, but only through grainy tape recordings, or warped riddles echoing throughout Dale Cooper's mind. The closest thing we get to a living Laura Palmer is the character Maddy Ferguson: Laura's cousin, also played by Sheryl Lee, who bears an uncanny resemblance to her deceased relative. Thus, *Fire Walk With Me* is Sheryl Lee's very first chance to fully step into her iconic role—outside of the police file, outside of the body bag. We are pulled away from a previously detached view of her life, and become witnesses to a situation unbearable for anyone, let alone a high school girl. After only hearing of these matters from police investigation reports, Laura's everyday horrors finally play out before our very eyes. They become real to us, and Sheryl Lee makes them heartbreakingly unforgettable.

About halfway through *Fire Walk With Me*, Laura is shown lying on a sofa, staring at her living room ceiling with her best friend, Donna Hayward. The two chat about Laura's high school admirers, Bobby Briggs and James Hurley, a conversation not unusual for two teenage girls. After a beat of silence, Donna asks Laura, "Do you think that if you were falling in space, that you would slow down after a while, or go faster and faster?", posed as nothing but a curious little question. Laura responds: "Faster and faster," a numb glaze passing over Lee's eyes, her voice faint and floaty, as if trapped inside a dream. "And for a long time

you wouldn't feel anything. Then you'd burst into fire—forever. And the angels wouldn't help you, because they've all gone away." As Laura speaks, Lee's deadened gaze emanates a helpless sense of dissociation, as if she has drifted away from her moment with Donna and fallen back into her everyday horrors; she displays similar dissociative episodes throughout multiple interactions with other characters. With Donna's question, she finds unsettling familiarity with the hopeless feeling of "falling in space", as Laura herself feels she is falling aimlessly and uncontrollably amidst her unbearable reality of sexual abuse and addiction.



Alongside portraying her dissociative tendencies, Lee depicts Laura's rapidly corroding sense of security and trust in her environment. Upon finally realizing that her father, Leland Palmer, played by Ray Wise, had been sexually abusing her since she was 12 years old, Laura snaps, completely. Previously, Laura had attributed her abuse to a malevolent spirit known only as "Bob", who would climb into her bedroom window at night. However, she discovers the horrifying truth during her very last bedroom encounter with "Bob". "Who are you? Who are you? Who are you?" she pleads, as he has his usual way with her. She closes her eyes, opening them to find that the figure of "Bob" has transformed into that of Leland, his eyes inhuman and vacant, as if possessed. Lee meets Wise's eyes with a look of pure, unmitigated terror, and releases a shrill, blood-curdling scream—a scream that has never left my mind since I first heard it over two years ago. In that single scream, Lee unleashes every single one of Laura's fears: her futile chances of escaping her dreadful situation, her inability

to find comfort anywhere she goes, not even her childhood home. In that single scream, she depicts the full extent of Laura's shattered state of mind—her final breaking point as any sense of safety she has ever had crumbles before her eyes.



Lee's scream fades into the background, echoing into the next scene, which depicts the following morning—the final morning before Laura's murder. Laura sits for breakfast with her parents. Lee keeps her head down. She holds back tears, her eyes fixed on her trembling hand, too weak to lift a mere cereal spoon. "Laura, honey?" Leland calls, with no apparent memory of the previous night. Her

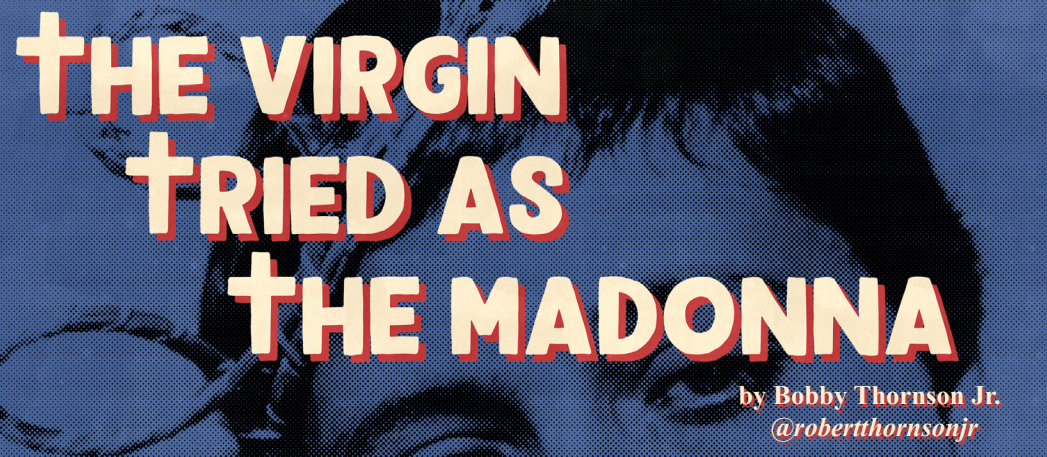


eyes cautiously dart to him before immediately retreating back to the safety of her hand, as even just looking at her father has become unbearable. Laura's parents gently try to catch her attention until she dashes into the next room, breaking down into sobs. Leland follows her. "Is something wrong this morning?" he worriedly asks as Laura gathers her school belongings. "Stay, away from me", Lee hisses, piercing through Wise with a hostile, animalistic glare. Laura trudges to school and sits at her classroom desk, unable to withstand the motions of her everyday routine. Lee displays Laura's visible agony as her face becomes streaked with tears. She stares off into the classroom amidst unbothered peers, her face lost in confused devastation as the room blurs and spins around her. As the day goes on, Lee's behavior as Laura becomes increasingly unsettled: she weakly sobs over Bobby Briggs as she begs him for another hit of his cocaine supply, she slurs confusing, self-deprecating strings of thought at James Hurley in the darkened woods, seamlessly alternating between expressions of apathy, hopelessness, and utter delirium. Throughout her final hours, Lee's demeanor pushes Laura deeper and deeper into a state of anguished disorientation, as if, in Laura's bewildered grief, she has nothing left but to await her horrific, impending death. The remainder of the film speaks for itself, burning the final living image of Laura Palmer into our minds as she is bludgeoned to death by her own father: Sheryl Lee frozen in a muted, horrified scream—her face erratically lit by harsh flashes of light, smeared with blood and makeup, shrieking until she becomes still and lifeless

Sheryl Lee's unrestrained portrayal of Laura Palmer in *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* introduces a sense of psychological horror previously absent from Laura's story. She

depicts Laura's eroding state of mind amidst a heartbreaking crisis in a manner almost too unsettling to endure. She dissolves any sense of distance we had previously developed with her character, forcing us to become witnesses to a tragedy we know must occur, but cannot bear to watch. Here, she is no longer a smiling picture frame on the couch-side table of a grieving household. She is no longer an identical cousin, dropping by for a family funeral. She is no longer a pale figure, "dead, wrapped in plastic" on a cloudy Washington riverbank. She is no longer a mystery, speaking backwards in a red-curtained dream-scape. Here, Sheryl Lee is Laura Palmer, in flesh and blood—a dead girl walking.





Where Dreyer and Rudolph Maté (cinematographer of *Joan of Arc* and *Vampyr*) distinguish themselves is in their presentation of perspective that isolates a cramped human experience within uncomfortably close and sometimes distorting closeups that incorporate the emphasized shapes of the surrounding architecture. The giant concrete set made to represent the Rouen prison where Joan was held, the harsh lighting design (which Maté would utilize later in his career, shooting dozens of Noir classics), and a lack of makeup for the actors would further implement the grim and grotesque aesthetics.

While German expressionists relied on a fantastical almost storybook look for many of their films with elaborate set design, there exists a stark difference between that and the sense of horror created through the sets used in *Joan of Arc*. That difference, in a nutshell, is realism. Most films of the silent era, if not original stories, were based on fictional texts such as novels and stage plays while Dreyer's film is adapted from and takes lines directly from the historical record of the trial of Joan of Arc. The film opens with a shot of a set of hands flipping through the physical copy of the record of the trial, which is explained by the intertitles as belonging to the library of the Chamber of Deputies in Paris and as the source material for the depictions in the film, and from the very start this establishes the filmmaker's attempted dedication to realism in the portrayal of this historical event. This and the accurately modeled sets remove the elements of illusion and fictitious grandeur that are the basis for the spectacle in films such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and other expressionist films. To achieve such horror within an accurate set, the camera angles and perspectives would do much of the heavy lifting in distorting the viewer's perspective of space. Extremely low or high-angle shots create unease as each character seems to exist in a vacuum, with little to no visual background information to ground them within the setting of the courtroom or prison, and many of these shots focus solely on the faces of characters and allow them to take up the entirety of the frame. This closeness creates a feeling of angst and dread, as there exists no buffer space between the visceral emotions of the characters and the audience during the length of this seemingly unjust trial.

One of the works most widely accepted as a remarkable accomplishment of the silent era of cinema is Carl Theodor Dreyer's historical film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Based on the actual record of the trial that persecuted and led to the execution of the French patron saint, the film depicts her final days as a captive as she is coerced and deceived by the priest and clergymen. I will argue that *Joan of Arc* is one of the earliest, experimental horror films and Renée Jeanne Falconetti is, if not the first, one of the original and most influential Scream Queens.

The very beginning of Cinema in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was filled with its share of horror films, and these Nickelodeon and Penny Machine films all fell into the same line as films by illusionists such as George Méliès. They were known as "trick films" and mostly demonstrated a series of illusions and visual tricks around a loose concept or story. In a way, it was Cinema designed to be a handful of punchlines. While visual storytelling was still in early development and much closer to the format of live theater, films like the Thomas Edison-produced adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* treated audiences to various practical and filmic effects during scenes such as the creation of Frankenstein's monster. In films such as these, the cinematic language of the silent era can be seen as slightly developing to focus on the terror and horror of moments or creatures that would become the visual language we are more familiar with today.



What sets *Joan of Arc* apart from illusion-based films and early horror films is its rejection of most of the cinematic language accepted or used in films from that time. While visual tricks, style, visual language, and effects had already bettered tenfold during the 1920s with the likes of *Häxan*, *Battleship Potemkin*, and all of the German Expressionist movies that furthered stylistic distinctiveness by country or region, there is a similar thread that can be drawn through all of them. Key differences such as location shooting versus elaborate and gothic sets, source material for adaptation, and soundtrack (among others) made the films from each nation during this decade unique. Despite that (and the leaps and bounds done by Soviet filmmakers and theorists in what visual language is and what constitutes its structures and boundaries) there is a relative sameness in perspective and camera angles that mostly centers on large crowds or an individual's experience from eye level (with the occasional landscape shot from above).

This supposed declaration of realism serves as another form of horror, one that is separate from our understanding of horror having to do with the inexplicable or inhuman. There is a horror and terror that comes from the understanding of these events, as brutal and inhumane as they seem, as historical events that have taken place in the history of humankind. Behind the guise of famous serial murderers in film, before the many messy additions of supernatural lore that the popularity of the genre and sequel fodder has given us, is this same horror. Films like *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Halloween* are built on the horror of the real and factual, whether through a basis on real-life accounts and criminal cases or settings that are familiar and suburban, and at their original cores question the depravity of humanity. *Joan of Arc* portrays the abuse and eventual murder of a figure beloved in their time for their actions, deceived by the false aid of priests and holy men who prod her on and off the record. The religious figures meant to be saviors have become demons, and are filmed so close and nauseating that every imperfection is on display. It is the reality of the case and its claustrophobic depiction that gives *Joan of Arc* the gravity that it carries. It has left a legacy that has inspired many filmmakers who follow, such as Robert Eggers who focuses much of his energy on historical research so that he may flesh out his worlds with period accuracy and extend the effect of his supernatural horror.

Some of the film's most crucial visual assets, and one of the most influentially haunting images within the entirety of silent cinema, are the closeup shots of Renée Jeanne Falconetti. The wide-eyed Falconetti with a single tear streaming down her face is one of the most recognizable images from the silent era, and arguably in the whole of cinema, as it has been imitated countless times and influenced shots in films such as David Cronenberg's *Crimes of the Future*. When one thinks of a "Scream Queen", the most common examples might be Shelley Duvall in *The Shining*, Jamie Lee Curtis in *Halloween*, Janet Leigh in *Psycho*, and many others throughout the last fifty or so years. While the connotation of the trope term has varied in its many years of popular usage, the visual legacy of the Scream Queen includes widely disseminated and recognizable images of an actress within a horror movie screaming at the horror she is attempting to survive. For example, two of the most notable would be the aforementioned Shelley Duvall yelping as her bathroom door is being axed down and Janet Leigh shrieking as she is stabbed in her motel shower. I argue that in the vein of the Scream Queen, Falconetti and her close-ups in *Joan of Arc* maintain the earliest spot in this legacy. Despite a lack of sound and therefore screams, the sorrowful stares and tear-filled eyes of Falconetti as she is harassed in court and eventually burned alive at the stake convey a constant terror and dread as she is filmed almost exclusively in close-ups for the duration of the film. The constant presence of her expressive face forces recognizability onto the audience, as her stares filled with numb fright stick with the viewers long after. Falconetti's image in this historical and realist horror has undoubtedly left a visual mark in the canon of cinema and the visual language of fear, designating her as one of the earliest and quite possibly the original Scream Queen.

Art by Jen McLean (@jenni.flower)



THE FASHION OF SCREAM QUEENS THROUGH THE CLOSET OF CORALINE JONES

BY: BRIAN LY

A CHILDREN'S FILM LIKE CORALINE TYPICALLY FALLS OUTSIDE OF THE GENRE THOUGH IT COULD BE CATEGORIZED AS HORROR ADJACENT, BUT I'D LIKE TO ARGUE ALL THE SAME THAT THE CHARACTER OF CORALINE JONES HERSELF IS VERY MUCH A SCREAM QUEEN. HER EXPERIENCES THROUGHOUT THE FILM MIRROR THE SORT OF PERSONAL JOURNEY AND ARC SHARED BY MANY ICONIC SCREAM QUEENS THROUGHOUT HORROR FILM HISTORY. PERHAPS MOST EMBLEMATIC OF THIS ARE HER LITERAL THREADS THAT ACT AS FASHION STATEMENTS HAND-SCULPTED METICULOUSLY BY THE TALENTED ARTISANS AT LAIKA STUDIOS, WHICH STEM NATURALLY FROM THE TRADITION OF ICONIC OUTFITS AND STYLES THAT HAVE COME TO DEFINE THE RECOGNIZABLE LOOK OF THE SCREAM QUEEN.

LOOK 1: THE YELLOW RAINCOAT

PERHAPS THE MOST INSTANTLY RECOGNIZABLE OUTFIT SPORTED BY CORALINE IS WHEN SHE DONS HER YELLOW RAINCOAT, A COMMON MOTIF SEEN ACROSS HORROR FILMS FROM THE EYONYMOUS KILLER OF ALICE, SWEET ALICE TO SWEET GEORGIE WHO GETS OBLITERATED BY PENNYWISE THE CLOWN IN THE VARIOUS ITERATIONS OF STEPHEN KING'S IT. THE BRIGHT COLOR OF THE GARMENT IS INHERENTLY REPRESENTATIVE OF A SORT OF CHILDLIKE INNOCENCE AS THE DEFAULT STATE OF CORALINE IN HER NEW HOME IN A NEGLECTFUL FAMILY SITUATION WHERE SHE TOO IS TO FACE UNMENTIONABLE DANGERS WRAPPED IN FANCY PACKAGING. IT'S KEY TO REMEMBER THAT DESPITE SHARING A COMMON ARTICLE OF CLOTHING AND SOME CIRCUMSTANTIAL BACKGROUND SIMILARITIES, SHE IS NEITHER ALICE NOR GEORGIE, SHE IS CORALINE JONES WHO MANAGES TO SUBVERT THE TROPE AND TAKE FATE INTO HER OWN HANDS.

LOOK 2: THE PAJAMAS

AS MUCH OF THE STORY OF CORALINE TAKES PLACE IN THE CONFINES OF HER HOME AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITY AT NIGHT, YOU'LL OFTEN SEE HER DRESSED UP IN HER ICONIC ORANGE PAJAMAS. SLEEPWEAR HAS LONG BEEN A STAPLE OUTFIT FOR THE SCREAM QUEENS OF HORROR, FROM THE EARLY DAYS WHEN UNIVERSAL HORROR MONSTERS AND OTHER CREATURES OF THE NIGHT PREYED ON WOMEN IN LONG FLOWING NIGHTGOWNS TO THE COMFY

SPORTING WEAR WORN BY THE SCREAM QUEENS IN ICONIC 80S SLASHER FILM FRANCHISES SUCH AS SLEEPAWAY CAMP AND SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE. WHAT MAY PREVIOUSLY HAVE BEEN A SYMBOL OF VULNERABILITY HAS SLOWLY SHIFTED TO FUNCTIONAL GEAR IN A MIRROR TO THE AGENCY OF WOMEN IN HORROR FILMS, WHO NO LONGER HAD TO BE CAPTIVE VICTIMS POWERLESS TO THEIR SITUATIONS AND INSTEAD COULD TAKE FATE INTO THEIR OWN HANDS.

LOOK 3: THE OVERALL SHORTS

THE FILM ENDS WITH CORALINE WEARING A COMFORTABLE OUTFIT WITH OVERALL SHORTS IN THE GARDEN AFTER ALL THE EVENTS OF THE FILM THAT HAVE TRANSPIRED IN THE OTHER WORLD COME TO A CONCLUSION, AND SHE IS FINALLY ABLE TO RELAX AND EMBRACE HER NEW ENVIRONMENT WITH NEWFOUND FRIENDSHIP AND APPRECIATION FOR HER PARENTS. THIS STANDS IN DIRECT CONTRAST TO ANOTHER FAMOUS OVERALL SHORTS WEARER IN PEARL, WHO LAMENTS HER SITUATION ON THE FAMILY FARM AS SHE ASPIRES TO BE A STAR. THOUGH THEY MAY SHARE AN OUTFIT, THEY COULDN'T BE ANY MORE DIFFERENT IN THEIR RESPECTIVE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THEIR FILMS. LET IT BE KNOWN THAT CORALINE ROCKED THE OVERALL SHORTS FIRST.

IT'S UNDENIABLE THAT CORALINE IS A FASHION ICON IN HER OWN RIGHT WHO USES CLOTHES TO EXPRESS HER INDIVIDUALITY AND CONTEND AGAINST CONVENTION, IN A DRAB WORLD THAT DEMANDS CONFORMITY AND COMPLIANCE, BUT IT'S HER AGENCY THAT ULTIMATELY ALLOWS HER TO PREVAIL IN THE END. HER FASHION IS AS MUCH STYLE AS IT IS UTILITY AND EMPOWERMENT, OSTENSIBLY THE SUPERHERO COSTUME THAT HAS ALLOWED SCREAM QUEENS THROUGHOUT HISTORY TO DEFINE THEMSELVES ON THEIR OWN TERMS AND NOT REMAIN CAPTIVE TO THEIR PREDETERMINED FATES, ALLOWING THEM TO OVERCOME THE SCARIEST AND MOST THREATENING VILLAINS IN EVEN THE MOST FUTILE SITUATIONS TO STAND STRONG AS FINAL GIRLS. THEY ARE SURVIVORS OF TRAUMA BUT NOT INHERENTLY DEFINED BY THEM. THEY CAN BE BADASS AND LOOK GREAT DOING SO.

THE MOTION PICTURE CODE & RATING ADMINISTRATION
HAS RATED THIS MOTION PICTURE



Persons Under 18 Not Admitted
Unless Married (Proof Required)

PARANOIA



Poster design by Riley Siegler



Cover art by Jesse Camacho (@candycolorclown)

The Frida Cinema is a gathering place for movie lovers of all kinds. The lobby is a place of film discussion and friendly gathering, a venue of its own where perspectives from all backgrounds are welcomed and engaged with. We have started the Frida Zinema to replicate this experience in printed form. We welcome all who love film to submit their artwork, writings, and thoughts, and to connect to other artists in a space of creativity and understanding. We love films, and we love people who love films. Please, share your thoughts and artwork, and enjoy the ones within.