

Tanja Jurković, University of Stirling, Scotland

Blood, Monstrosity and Violent Imagery: Grand-Guignol, the French Theatre of Horror as a Form of Violent Entertainment

Abstract

During the sixty-year period of its existence, Grand-Guignol, the French theatre of horror, gained a status of a legendary theatre which dealt with horrors and terrors of human mind, successfully connecting faits divers (common, everyday facts) with the erotic and titillating scenes of violence on stage. The performance style, the writing, the special effects, and the directorship over the course of years, made this theatre a legendary place where blood flowed in streams and people fainted during performances, in this way making its indelible mark in horror genre today. In this paper, the author is trying to focus the attention on the theatre of Grand-Guignol as a form of violent entertainment and the way the representations of violence and horror enacted on its stage affected the audience, through Goldstein's theory of the importance of visual imagery in different media today. Furthermore, through comparison of violent acts presented on the stage of the Grand-Guignol and the atmosphere they create in the viewer's mind with some of the aspects of Artaud's vision of his theatre of cruelty, the author attempts to show how this form of violent entertainment in the theatrical media influences the vision of that same violence within the audience, with the sense of security as the main idea in which the viewers feel safe to enjoy, envision and in a way become the participants in the performances enacted on the small stage of the Grand-Guignol.

Keywords: French theatre, Grand-Guignol, violence, performance, entertainment

Hidden amongst the decadence and sleaze of Pigalle with its roughnecks and whores, in the shadows of a quiet, cobbled alleyway, stands a little theatre. The spectators take up their seats in

the auditorium eager for the show to begin, if only to escape the eerie mood of their surroundings. At last the curtain rises... But this is no ordinary theatre, this is the Théâtre du Grand-Guignol: A prostitute is trapped in a bedroom with a psychopathic killer... A man embraces his daughter before blowing out her brains... A woman's face smokes and melts as it is covered in vitriol... A woman is skinned alive while another watches in sexual ecstasy... Members of the audience begin to lose consciousness while a desperate house-doctor attempts to revive them..." (Hand, Wilson 3)

Much like most melodramatic theatres, Grand-Guignol, the French theatre of horror, captured the attention of the audience with its genuine performances of intelligently written plays and various acting styles. Differing from its counterparts in explicit representations of violence on stage, this theatre, one of the first of the kind, has set in a small, confined space, a new thematic dimension. In dealing with the exploration of human monstrosity and violence, this otherness encourages viewer engagement through violent and bloody imagery presented on stage. This dimension offers the audience a unique chance to unintentionally and uncontrollably shift from the role of a viewer to the role of a witness and a doer of violent acts represented on stage of the Grand-Guignol. The sublime note of this relationship between the audience and the actors on stage forms the obscure and claustrophobic atmosphere to the limit where the viewers safely distance themselves from the blood and gore witnessed on stage. This entangling process can be described as a point from which the creation of the sense of security starts to develop, from the beginning to the end of the play, as it is crucial for the audience during their emotional and at times physical involvement and exposure to this kind of violent entertainment. During the sixty year period of its existence, Grand-Guignol gained the status of a legendary theatre which dealt with horrors and terrors of the human mind, successfully connecting faits divers (common, everyday facts) with the erotic and titillating scenes of violence on stage. A very small theatre, situated in the dark alley of Pigalle in the most notorious part of Paris, came to life in a former chapel, which gave it a certain claustrophobic atmosphere, and made the audience a part of the crimes skillfully enacted on a small stage. Whether as the victim or killer, the actors' gaze during the performances pulled the audience into this dark world of the human psyche, inviting them to discover the monster hidden deep inside their hearts and minds. Thereby creating a new form of violent entertainment in theatre, which takes us back to its beginnings rooted in the depictions of violence from Roman times onward.

When talking about the term violent entertainment, there is obviously much supposition about morbid curiosity and our primal instincts. What is it then that makes people willingly succumb to the horrific scenes of violence represented in all kinds of media, release repressed feelings and the monstrous nature that all of us possess and force us to face the fears that haunt us in real life as well?

“The willing suspension of disbelief, the leap into imaginary worlds, whether through literature, film, television, play, or sport, appeals on many levels. This potential inheres in all entertainment, of course, but it helps explain the tolerance for, if not the attraction of, violent imagery” (Goldstein 275). To be able to experience any kind of pleasure from exposure to violence, horror and terror, the audience needs to have a sense of security and safety in the surroundings they experience these violent images presented to them. After all, the greatest characteristic of violent imagery in every media is its emotional strike on the human psyche. Furthermore, there must be an exchange of cues which show that the violent images are “produced for purposes of entertainment and consumption” (Goldstein 278). In that way, the appeal for violent entertainment can express its potential, while at the same time implying the unreality of horrors and violent acts that people, in this case, see on stage.

Of course, the image makers, whether we are talking about film or theatre, have the most difficult task to put violence in perspective, to emphasize “the unacceptability of random, arbitrary, anarchistic, and plain sadistic violence, and to portray violence that ultimately serves justice and the good of humanity” (Goldstein 281). The audience can and does influence the limits of acceptable displays of violence on stage by being involved in the performance through the invisible relationship created by the actors enacting gruesome scenes in front of their very eyes. The audience willingly becomes a part of the violence performed, drawing a parallel with reality and the very possibility of real horror. “And theatre not confined to any fixed language or form, destroys false shadows because of this, and prepares the way for another shadowed birth, uniting the true spectacle of life around it” (Artaud 7). Therefore, to show the theatre of Grand-Guignol as a form of violent entertainment with the use of real life facts represented on stage, one needs to give an overview of the performance and production style which the theatre of horror is known for, the interactive relationship of the actors performing on stage and their audience. It is also crucial to

show the importance of the writing of the plays and their violent narrative within the theatrical mode.

The Grand-Guignol theatre was a writer's theatre, depicting the sublimity of the whole theatrical experience through the writings of Andre de Lorde, the Prince de la Terreur, and his unusual approach to the theme of violence and monstrosity. As defined by Burke in his essay on the sublime:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment: and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force" (Burke, Section I).

De Lorde used these emotions that lead to the moment of horror in order to describe the ultimate emotion of fear.

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain or death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain.

Whatever therefore is terrible, with regard to sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror be endued with greatness of dimensions or not... (Burke, Section II)

He called attention to the creation of a new ground for violent entertainment in the theatre of horror as he accentuated how the potential of fear manifests itself in the audience's reaction to the explicit scenes of violence and pain.

The Grand-Guignol theatre opened its doors in 1897, and changed the course of artistic expression on stage. Oscar Méténier, a former chien de commissaire^[1], took over the venue from his partner André Antoine, the founder of Théâtre Libre and a legendary persona in theatrical circles, especially when it comes to directorship and an exquisite sense for detecting new and outstanding representations. His partnership with Antoine included the performances of naturalist plays which Méténier wrote for the Théâtre Libre until its bankruptcy. This style of naturalist plays formed the foundations for the Grand-Guignol theatre in the way of melodramatic performances,

which consisted of les douches eccossaises, hot and cold showers of comedy and horror exchanged during the plays to make the audience jump off their seats. “The rapid alternation between registers-between something like “real” horror on the one hand and a camp, self-parodying horror on the other - is by now one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the tradition.^[2] (qtd. in Goldstein 277) Indeed, the beginning of the film industry was one of the possible reasons for the fall of Grand-Guignol, which pushed this theatre of horror into the abyss of oblivion. The alternation between registers was usually followed by the criticism of the bourgeois society, which Méténier, as a police officer who accompanied prisoners on a death row, offered in a form of comédies rosses. These short dramatic pieces consisted of faits divers, in-your-face facts from the Parisian political situation and social life of the time. He incorporated a mixture of comedy and horror in the performances, in order to embellish all emotion that the audience might feel, offering them a sense of security, in spite of the violence they witness on stage. In one of his first performed plays, *En famille* (1887), Méténier gave his critical view on the theme of an affluent family sitting in their secure home and discussing the future of their youngest daughter over dinner. At a later moment, the daughter comes into the room and declares that she wants to contribute financially to the household by becoming a prostitute, like her older sister. The decision was greeted by the rest of the family members with enthusiasm and approval. This kind of addressing often produced a state of shock in the audience, in a way that it directly criticized the viewers and indicated the deviancy of human nature as well as the society and its members. His experiences as a man of law that were embedded in his plays gave way to a new and different style of naturalism. “Naturalism...is equally the return to nature and to man, direct observation, exact anatomy, the acceptance and depicting of what is. Thus, no more abstract characters...no more lying inventions, no more of the absolute; but real characters, the true history of each one, and the story of daily life” (Zola 695-696).

When Méténier took over the directorship from André Antoine because of the previously mentioned bankruptcy of Théâtre Libre, this form of naturalism had already become popular in all levels of society, thus the reason for his handing over the directorship to another man, Max Maurey, was vague and much unexpected. While Méténier gave a critical insight into the bestial nature of humanity under post-colonial capitalism, Maurey was focused on the exploitation of contemporary

fears, and wanted to titillate and frighten. With Max Maurey, the theatre of horror was born, a place where blood flowed in buckets and people fainted during the performances. Asking help from a resident doctor was both a marketing trick and a possible necessity in this genuine theatre. Max Maurey incorporated Méténier's legacy into new forms of representation. He found a formula for the success of the horror theatre by developing the performance style and employing two of the most famous actors, Paula Maxa and L.Paulais. They shared a talent and interest in the genre and formed a long lasting relationship on stage. Furthermore, as stated above, Grand-Guignol is a writer's theatre because of the extraordinary talent of André de Lorde, le Prince de la Terreur (The Prince of Terror), whose writings explored the depths of human nature and inner monstrosity. These representations wouldn't have been possible without the ingenious special effects created by Paul Ratineau. His methods in performing special effects on stage are considered today to be a valuable contribution to the film industry and he has influenced most of today's popular filmmakers. In addition, Max Maurey's own contribution in the area of production also formed the success of the Grand-Guignol. As in production, Maurey was involved in the rehearsals as well: "What made Max Maurey's job easier was the spirit of discipline and commitment, the flexibility and endurance of the actors under his direction" (Hand, Wilson 14). The performance style and the delivery of special effects were closely connected. The Grand-Guignol relied on the technical aspect of performances, in which "Paul Ratineau developed an enviable reputation and secondary career for himself as a designer of stage tricks and technical effects, earning recognition as "the third bandit of horror" in the creative team that shaped and defined the characteristics of the form" (Hand, Wilson 53).

Moreover, it defined the moment of violence and the centrality of the witness which became the most important characteristics of acting styles on the Grand-Guignol stage. Primal instincts, plots obsessed with death and suffering, scenes of sex, violence and insanity full of grotesque or haunting situations are the turning points and the main themes of this horror theatre. The moral man becomes a human animal in the finest naturalistic tradition, a murderer of his own brother and at the same time becoming a witness of his own crime and therefore a victim of his own insanity, struggling with the monstrosity of which he himself is the main source. The motives of monstrous-paternal in a world where the motif of the mother is absent, motives of obsession, political

circumstances of the time, and the guillotine as an instrument of eroticism and death invoke the deviousness in a character whose moral and dignified nature turns into a masochistic or sadistic beast who enjoys inflicting pain and suffering onto others, while at the same time causing the deterioration of his own character. In its natural environment, the moment of violence enacted on stage becomes the moment of horror, using the audience as a tool in the representations of realistic violence, simultaneously creating the witness and the victim, as well as the potential doer of the crime, which can be described more accurately as the centrality of the witness, where the shift from the audience as the witness to the crime into the doer of the same act becomes visible and relevant to the performance of the actors on stage. Accordingly, a connection is formed between the unrealistic monstrous characters presented in the performed plays and the potential monstrous identity within the role of the audience in general.

Grand-Guignol drama is a form of realism, which has an effect on the performance style of the actors and the execution of special effects in the moment of violence:

[The] actor must contend with two primary opposing problems in order to pull off the moment of violence. They must completely inhabit the psychology and physicality of the violence as though it is real. At the same time, they must disengage from the moment, in a sense, in order to execute the technical demands of the stage violence (performing elaborate stage – fight choreography; bursting blood bags on cue; manipulating blood – rigged knives and other specialty props etc.) While doing all this, each actor must maintain the arc of the play and remain aware of and open to the other actors on the stage. (Hand, Wilson 34)

Goldstein reports that real violence activates aggressive associations, images, and emotions (278), so the question that arises from this notion is does realism represented on stage enhance or diminish the acceptance or appeal of violent images.

He also states that McCauley offered two possible answers to that question in his extensive study on gruesome works in the media. First, that the “emotions elicited by drama are weaker than everyday emotions. So the arousal accompanying fear, disgust, and pity can be experienced as pleasurable. Within a dramatic or protective frame, violent imagery becomes exciting rather than anxiety provoking” (qtd. in Goldstein 280), thus creating a sense of security. Furthermore, he states that “the emotions experienced in drama are qualitatively different from their real-life counterparts.

Perhaps when the violence is almost real, so too are the emotions it elicits” (qtd. in Goldstein 280). The violent images and the emotions that result from them, as two sides of the same coin, differ from the original subjects and therefore the intensity of anguish is reduced and there is no danger of spoiling our delight.

This also implies the importance of pace during the plays, or the manipulation of time. Hand and Wilson argue the moment of violence to be the moment of horror. The moment of violence only indicates the psychological aspect of performances, while the moment of horror suggests both the psychological and physical aspect of representations present in the Grand- Guignol plays. Through the course of these plays, there exists a subtle tendency to rush through the violence and hence toward the end of the plays themselves, the process which deprives the viewer of the violence played out in its full form.

When this happens, the climax is perceived in performance as a brief anti-climax, despite the company’s intentions. Only time to rest in the violence-to fully explore it, not only as it relates to the character, to the text, and even to the audience, but equally as it relates to the actor personally in the physical, emotional and psychological way-will allow the moment its real boldness, its real immediacy and its real terror. (Hand, Wilson 38)

Therefore, the actors have to be aware of the moment of horror during their performances in order to fully enact the moment of violence without the difficulties they may encounter through this manipulation of time, which again brings forth their acting skills and the building of the climax on stage.

For instance, this manipulation of time can be found in the play *Au Telephone* (On the Telephone), (1901), which gives us a very valuable insight in the moment of horror enacted on stage. The play shows the typical behavior of a person exposed to fear. In this case, we can see the character at the end of the play become more distracted, his mouth wide open, while he is holding the receiver with “ever – increasing tension with his right hand while, eventually, the fingertips of his left hand are pressed against his temple...”(Hand, Wilson 35), as he witnesses his wife and child being murdered at the other end of the telephone. The performer’s gaze here doesn’t meet the eyes of the audience, which contributes to the “slice-of-life realism of the play” (Hand, Wilson 35), thus

enhancing claustrophobia and creating an atmosphere of fear and hopelessness in which the audience transforms itself and becomes a part of the theatrical violent entertainment, while at the same time consuming violent imagery. In contrast to this, the eye contact with the audience brings forth the understanding of how and where the horror is exactly situated in the theatre, and the centrality of the witness, which is usually considered as the main role of the audience. "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary" (Burke, Section III). The audience in this small, dark and claustrophobic space, in an ecclesiastic and tense atmosphere, becomes a witness to the horrors enacted on the stage. It is, though, necessary to distinguish between the audience as a witness and the character as a witness. For example, the actor on the stage performs the moment of horror, in a play *Le Baiser dans la Nuit* (The Final Kiss), (1912). He plays Henri, a man whose destiny is to become the victim of his jealous lover Jeanne. Pouring vitriol acid on his face, she disfigures him for the rest of his life. The recurrent themes of jealousy, love and death serve as a guide to the final act of revenge and violent conflict between the two. The moment of Henri's revenge, when he pours the acid on Jeanne's face, becomes the moment of violence and through his mimicry we can see that he is becoming a witness of his own crime. Prior to Henri's act of pouring vitriol acid on Jeanne's face, the moment when he opens a bottle of acid, he makes eye contact with the audience, and thereby entangles them into the act of violence. They become the witnesses as well as potential doers of the crime; at the same time discovering the inner potential monster performing an act of revenge on his/her loved one. In most scenes, the horror of the act is firmly represented in a build-up to the climax, rather than the delivery of the moment of horror itself, and as much as all this enhances and brings forth the importance of pace, it also brings forth the writing in the spotlight.

As stated previously, the Grand-Guignol holds the secret to success in writing in the character of André de Lorde, who was one of the most prolific writers involved with this type of violent entertainment and a dark personality who wanted to explore human nature through the written form. He had a fascination for the macabre from an early age and developed a passion for the theatre, which was encouraged by his step-father, a famous actor of that time, Mounet-Sully. De Lorde sent his manuscripts to Antoine and soon his name became known in the theatre community. But his talent flourished under Maurey's directorship. The opportunity emerged to fully

engage in the writing process for the Grand-Guignol, and he debuted on stage with his comedy *Le Post-Scriptum* (*Post-Scriptum*) in 1900. After that, he collaborated with numerous scientists, which made his plays even more realistic. The themes he dealt with have grown in intensity and have significantly influenced the audience. His most fruitful cooperation was with Alfred Binet, the inventor of the Binet Intelligence Test. These two outlandish personalities have found themselves in the perpetual darkness that they both shared equally through similar experiences in childhood. The only possible result of this experiment was the success and the diversity of themes in the plays of the Grand-Guignol. Binet always knew that he wanted to work with de Lorde. He considered him an exquisite personality with the taste for the weird. In five years, they wrote five plays together, three of which were characterized as the most gruesome plays in the repertoire. They depicted the monstrous other in the processing of the themes through bloody scenes of sadistic violence forced upon the individual as well as the society. This is rather interestingly and elegantly portrayed in *L'Obsession* (*Obsession*), (1905), for example, a one - act drama which is just one in a series of plays manufactured from this fertile collaboration. This play vulgarizes the problem of psychiatrists which emerged with the law from 1838. Psychiatrists were allowed to exceed their right by depriving the patient of freedom, which comes from the desire to be the judge of someone else's life. On the contrary, if the law permits arbitrary detention, it leaves the mad free. An in-depth analysis of the theme of the monstrous indicates problems of experimental psychology which started to develop rapidly at the time. It implies that the Monster does not have to appear just in the form of a man or a being with monstrous features, but the system and occurrences in which it is used create a monster of a different kind, impenetrable from the outside and deviant from the inside. This is the case in their second play as well, *Crime dans une maison de fous* (*Crime in a Madhouse*), (1925), which also deals with the incompetence of the medical staff in a mad house and the sufferings and tortures performed on patients because of this kind of behavior. Again the mad ones become the victims of the system, a monster that consumes everything and everyone in the pit of darkness. Here one can see the fragility of the genre, the boundary between the man as a monster and the system to which the man is subordinate, that can be easily crossed.

On the other hand, in the play *L'horrible Experience* (*Horrible Experience*), (1909), the main character, doctor Charrier, scientifically explores the reanimation of corpses. When his daughter dies in a car accident, he can't prevent himself from bringing her to life. But the rigidity of her corpse brings her father to death. If the mad scientists and the living dead are the recurrent themes in Grand-Guignol, the theme of the experimentalist is then haunting Binet. This semi-autobiographical piece is based on Binet's experimental methods that he performed on his subjects; mainly his own two daughters, which brings forth the mad scientist and possibly a sadist in Binet's figure. It is the fantasy of the maniac that makes this piece one of the most horrifying ones in the Grand-Guignol repertoire: "Is it because of the fear that emerges from this play? No, it is because of the unfortunate doctor who suffers from a scientific mania; we feel compassion and we help him in a famous operation, feeling nausea and pity more than terror." (Pierron 372)

André de Lorde and Alfred Binet had a relationship without rivalry. Together, they created a new genre within an existing one, the *Théâtre médical*, envisioned as a form of art. As Andre de Lorde says: "I think that the *Théâtre médical* belongs to the dramatic art just like Rembrandt's painting, *La Leçon d'Anatomie* (*The Lesson of Anatomy*), belongs to painting – because art resides in the emotion like it resides in the color – and all the critics in the world can't break down my vocation to study "physiological cases" in front of which our spirit excites, frightens or revolts, and examines me – like a doctor examines a patient – with painful curiosity, infinite pity for all human sufferings" (Pierron, *Préface* XXXVIII). De Lorde imagined the structure of the plays to be macabre and bloody in general, while Binet offered an extensive study of characters in those plays. He was interested in the mental processes of the actors performing on theatre stage, thus connecting the psychology, which was experimental at the time, and his interest for the theatre. For Binet, a hysterical character and a mad person were the same. He thought that these processes were successive more than they were happening in a certain order. An actor playing a madman is an individual with two sides of his character who functions in this double manner: it has a normal and a mad appearance, whether it is made by consequence or is it just something that the actor possesses. He nourished his interest for the theatre through this collaboration, away from his usual employment, but still using all the methods in order to understand the performance of the actor, digging his way into the human mind. On the other hand, André de Lorde satisfied his taste for

science and medicine through this peculiar relationship, and his desired environment was precisely the one of medicine and science. Certainly, this collaboration, unique in the history of the theatre and not typical for the Grand-Guignol, became the most successful formula of the horror theatre and enriched the repertoire immensely, because the dramatic author and physiologist were present together on stage and outside of it.

Therefore, the things dictating the psychological motivation of the Grand-Guignol protagonist/antagonist, in all the plays, whether comedies or horror, are primal instincts, erotic scenes, violence and insanity full of grotesque or haunting situations which create the grounds for the development of different kinds of monsters hidden inside the most devious part of human nature. The moment of horror and the centrality of the witness dictate the moment of creation of ambiguity of the monster represented in all kinds of shapes and forms. Whether we are talking about an individual or the society, violence is present in all aspects of our lives, haunting the reality as well as the ingenious metamorphosis of the actors which succumb to the acts of violence on the Grand-Guignol stage. All the elements of this type of violent entertainment would not be possible without an element of cruelty, as Artaud concludes:

“Without an element of cruelty at the root of every spectacle, the theater is not possible...” (Artaud 99).

“It is a question then of making the theater, in the proper sense of the word, a function; something as localized and as precise as the circulation of the blood in the arteries or the apparently chaotic development of dream images in the brain, and this is to be accomplished by a thorough involvement, a genuine enslavement of the attention” (92).

The concept of violent entertainment does precisely that. It influences the mind and actions of the public through different forms of media, whether we are talking about film, theatre, or literature. It is present in everyday life, forming a world where real horrors are shrouded with the veil of artistry. The popularity of this kind of entertainment rises with social and political circumstances through centuries, in times of war and chaos, which gives the audience a kind of reassurance that good will prevail over evil, and that the horrors enacted on stage or in film are just representations of their own fears which the times that they live in can, and will, possibly bring in the future. It is, indeed,

like Artaud states, the idea of a perpetual conflict within us that manifests through theatrical representations, which are like dreams, bloody and inhuman, and yet so similar to that which we call *la bete humaine* (a human beast), or the monster within us all. The representation of the monster that exists in the Grand-Guignol theatre is also present in contemporary film and media. The influence of the theatre of horror is greatly visible in such contemporary works, where a set of gruesome scenes in the Grand-Guignol fashion clearly depicts the influence of the performance style and the contemporary use of special effects, while, on the other hand, it gives a visual approach of the atmosphere of obscurity and fear.^[3] That is the sublime which revolves around the whole experience, whether we are talking about the theatre performance or film production. The protagonist shifts from the stereotypical monster such as the vampire, the man, the ghost to an atypical higher force that runs people's lives. Death^[4], in its supernatural, immaterial form, which was never a great part of the Grand-Guignol theatre, still brings forth its tradition into contemporary time and space, with more blood and gore than ever, and more demanding styles of performance transferred on the big screen. "The contemporary Horror film knows that you've seen it before; it knows that you know what is about to happen...And none of this means a thing, as the cheapest trick in the book will still tense your muscles, quicken your heart and jangle your nerves..." (qtd. in Hand, Wilson 70). This universal appeal of the Grand-Guignol, as Hand and Wilson state, primarily came from the content represented to the audience, and to them "...the Grand-Guignol offered a chance to be scared in complete safety. Audiences enjoy being frightened, as the movie box office has continued to prove. People went to Grand-Guignol to be scared, to be able to hug their girl friend or boy friend, to laugh, to release their own sadism and/or masochism. It was a good night out. People have enjoyed, and always will enjoy, being stimulated and shocked" (qtd. In Hand, Wilson 68).

Like Mulvey suggests in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), the cinema, which is today closely associated with the theatre of horror, is the place of the look and this place defines it, "the possibility of varying it and exposing it" (Mulvey 3), to be more exact, and "this is what makes cinema quite different in its voyeuristic potential from, say...theatre..." (Mulvey 3). The theatre of Grand-Guignol is the place of emotional shock induced by fear, and a place of the performer's gaze which leads the viewer through the vertigo of laughter, screaming and

excitement. It controls the audience with this exchange of emotions during the plays. Therefore, it differs from cinema by omitting all possible chance for the audience to control the course of violent imagery, as well as time and place of the action. They become the puppets whose strings are reorganized by the representations of horror and terror in *Grand-Guignol*, with the thought in mind “that the idea of pain, in its highest degree, is much stronger than the highest degree of pleasure; and that it preserves the same superiority through all the subordinate gradations” (Burke Section I), especially in the French theatre of horror.

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[1] A police officer who accompanied prisoners sentenced to death on a death row.

[2] The author considers that the characteristics of this tradition that Clover refers to in *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1992), although applied to horror film, have emerged from the representations of violence and horror in the theatre of Grand-Guignol.

[3] *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (Burton, 2007)

[4] The *Final Destination* film series (Wong, Ellis, Quale, 2000-2011)



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