

1968: A Global Perspective

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Looking Through the “Terrorscope”: The Horror Cinema Turn of 1968 and the Function of Horror as Illuminating Trauma

Scholars have argued that each generation gets the horror stories that it deserves. Since their inception, horror films have acted as a reflection of social fears and functioned as a process of “working through” social traumas for those that create and consume them. From the tumultuous times of 1968, two horror films are born that mark, for many, a turn to the modern phase of the current horror cycle: George A. Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* and Roman Polanski’s *Rosemary’s Baby*. Both films hold a mirror up to the political unrest of the times and move the location of terror from the margins, and into the place where we used to feel the most secure. Using a psychoanalytic perspective, this paper argues that these two films from 1968 create a “terrorscope” that allows us to illuminate the unconscious traumas of 1968, and that their continued popularity today unmasks a social trauma that persists.