

DISABILITY IN FILM

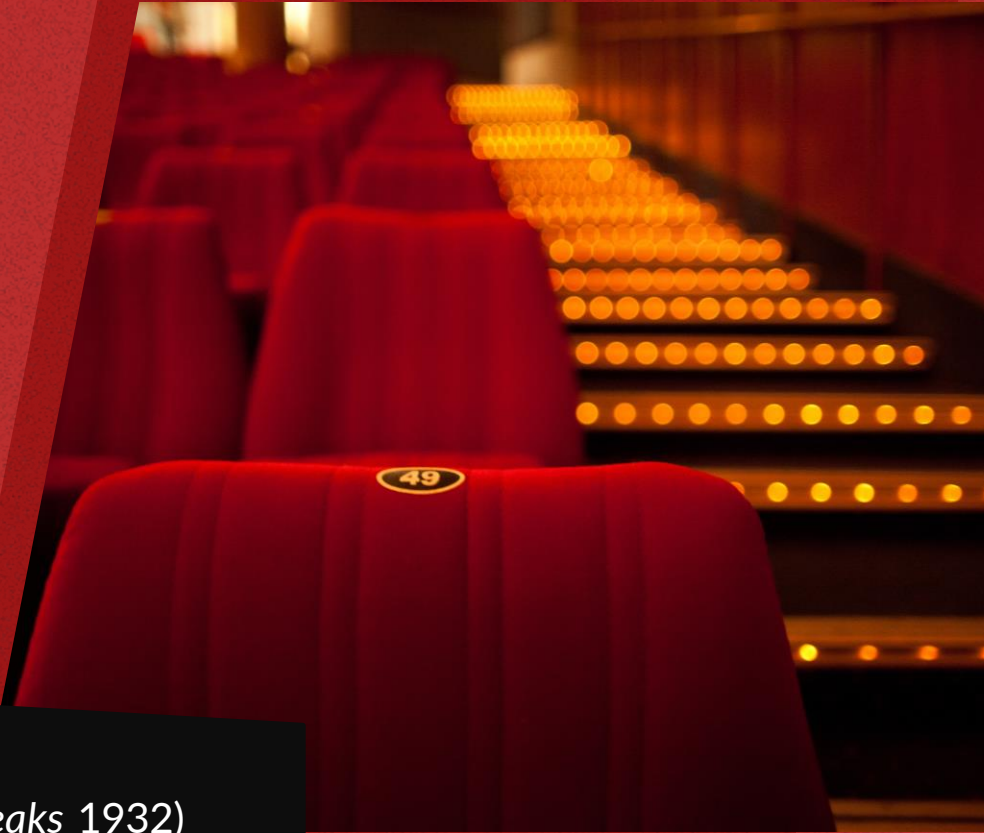
Ursinus College Office of Disability and Access

HORROR: SHARED FEARS

Genre capitalizes on shared cultural fears:

- *Psycho*: attacked when vulnerable
- *The Exorcist*: God, religion, punishment
- *28 Days Later*: life after death, deconstruction of society

Disability: discomfort and ignorance → horror (e.g., *Freaks* 1932)





**“DISABLED BODIES HAVE
BEEN CONSTRUCTED
CINEMATICALY AND
SOCIALY TO FUNCTION AS
DELIVERY VEHICLES IN THE
TRANSFER OF EXTREME
SENSATION TO AUDIENCES”**

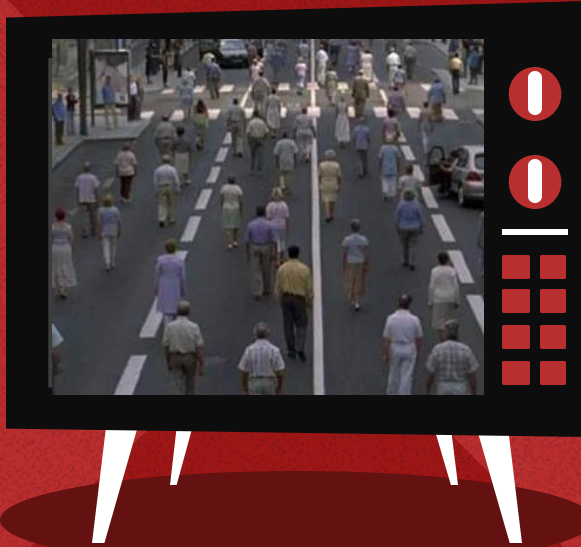
Hathaway in *The Witches* (2020)



VIRTUE SIGNAL

“Visible disabilities—scars, disfigurement, blindness, limps, prosthetics—and mental disabilities, especially conditions associated with ‘madness,’ have been used repeatedly, or rather, excessively, as symbolic shorthand to signify evil, or to signal villainy”

They Came Back (2004)



Severe concussion / PTSD

PLOT DEVICE

"When a body does not conform to pre-determined notions of "normal," we...feel the need to identify what is different about the body, why the body is affected in this way, and how to avoid experiencing this difference in our own bodies. Narrative prosthesis serves the nondisabled mass by affirming their normalcy in relation to the Other"

PLOT DEVICE

Get Out (2017)



"...viewers come to understand that the other Black people...have become shells, occupied by formerly aging, disabled white people. Peele lays out the logic of ableist white entitlement, where enhancement and cure for the white wealthy class depends upon the sacrifice and disposability of Black bodyminds."

Jarman (2021)

CHARACTERS

Peter Pan (1953)



- Obsessive Avenger
- Immoral Other
- ~~Sweet Innocent~~

Sutton (2014)

IMMORAL OTHER

Don't Breathe (2016)



"While the sentence is cut from the final film, one YouTube trailer has the "Blind Man" say "now you're gonna see what I see" ... before the screen turns dark. To attract a voyeuristic horror audience, the trailer constructs a monstrous "Other" point of view and thus exploits disability for shock effect in a fetishized spectacle of affect."

Jarman (2021)



THANKS!

Do you have any questions?
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