

Paranormal "U"**Movies and Their Impact on the Paranormal**

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I had recently written an article about the history of paranormal television shows for the Bumps in the Night newsletter, and I had wondered what a look at the history of paranormal/ghost movies would show. Not surprisingly, a review of these types of movies shows a long history both in cinema and in movies made from plays and novels depicting paranormal activity.

As early as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, shows the use of a spectral character illustrating the beliefs and fears of the times. Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, has four ghosts prominent in the story. So obviously, ghosts in literature has been a common occurrence through the ages. So what about ghosts or paranormal activity in a more current media: cinema?

Possibly the first paranormal film done was the silent black and white film, *Nosferatu*, an adaptation of Bram Stoker's, *Dracula*. The main character, Graf Orlok, is definitely creepy yet engaging. In my thinking, much scarier than the Bela Lugosi Dracula character.

A recent review of a Wikipedia page on the subject of Ghost Films showed over 180 movies that have been released in the United States over the past 75 years. Also found in Wikipedia, is a listing of more than 800 movies that are considered to be, "Supernatural Horror films."

I think through out the ages people have been interested in the things that they cannot explain, the things that fear them, and are hoping to unlock the mysteries of what happens to us, if anything, after we die. Certainly books, films, and television are a great way to satisfy those desires.

TnT Paranormal Investigators has a long history of doing library presentations on the subject of the paranormal and paranormal investigating. We have worked hard at being sure that the information we present is accurate, understandable, and even usable to the participants. It has become clear to me that the paranormal movies have certainly had a significant influence on what many people believe that the paranormal and paranormal investigating is.

Demons. There, I said it. One of the most frequent topics of discussion at our library presentations is on that topic. Many people are interested in this and bring along with them their own point of view on this subject. We are very clear that yes, we believe that there are demons and that they can be very dangerous. However, we are quick to point out that demonic activity is very rare and people need to be more aware of the more common types of hauntings.

Poltergeists. One of our discussion points is on the subject of poltergeists; also described as "noisy ghosts." We use the accurate description and the etiology of poltergeists; easily said it is the manifestation of negative emotions and behaviors that often happen during the adolescence years or during tumultuous times in a family. I have seen the movie *Poltergeist*, several times over the past years and enjoy it. But, that movie is nothing like a poltergeist type of haunting. Honestly, I am not sure what that was. But it was really nasty and very intelligent.

Bumps in the Night!!!!

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Lots of movies show terrifying things involved with hauntings and paranormal activity. Again, there seems to be a thirst for these types of movies to scratch that itch we have. And yet, so many times, at our library presentations, people will share heart warming stories about paranormal activity in their home and how they believe it is connected to a deceased family member. They are not afraid but show a real sense of comfort believing this to be the case. I am grateful when those individuals share their story because it is helpful for others to begin to "reframe" how they are experiencing things in their own homes.

And maybe the most significant influence that movies have had on how people perceive the paranormal and ghosts in general, involves the origin of those spirits and other worldly activities. It is funny on how often the television shows and movies show that the most common place for these events to be happening are found in places that have experienced horrible and painful events. How often is there the discovering of people having died on the premises due to disease or due to maltreatment such as in prisons, hospitals, or psychiatric facilities? The fact that six children may have died in someone's home in the late 1800's should not be a surprise to anybody and/or a confirmation that there is something unholy in your home. It is only in the last 80 years or so that people pass away in places other than the homes that they were living in. Just because someone died in your home does not make it a hot spot for paranormal activity.

So, relax. Enjoy the movies. Yet realize that what they present is more there to put "butts" in the seats than to show a true portrayal of the paranormal. If you need a reality check on this topic, just ask a paranormal investigator!

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