

# IF THERE IS A GOD, HE'S PROBABLY ON WALL STREET: A GENRE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL CRITICISM IN HORROR AND MELODRAMA FILMS

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## Purpose

This project aims to analyze the presence of social critique themes within horror and melodrama films. My discussion of these themes strives to examine each genre's use of associated filmmaking techniques or styles to generate public interest and reinforce the director's intended meaning. Specifically, I examine a connection between the social critique theme and each film's discussion of personal identity in order to communicate a larger critique of class division in society. My claims are then reinforced through an analysis of color, aesthetics, setting, lighting, and editing techniques within each film.

## Rationales

1. I find it imperative to better understand how popular media intends to engage and communicate with audience members.
2. I believe that cultivating a better understanding of genre filmmaking and it's associated conventions will allow me to further understand the importance of genre on audience interest.

## Method

This research utilizes the methodology of genre analysis to compare and contrast four films categorized by the horror or melodrama genres: *American Psycho* (2000), *The Platform* (2019), *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), and *Parasite* (2017). More specifically, I examine each film to better understand their reflection of collective social thinking through visual filmmaking conventions. My process is defined by analyzing each film through the lens of its respective genre and creating a specific focus on prevalent themes or motifs within its overall narrative. Additionally, I contrasted each film's use of prevalent filmmaking techniques to reinforce their portrayal of social critique themes and facilitate discussion around personal identity.

My research method is governed by repeatedly watching my selected films and examining them through the context of their generic categorization, year of release, and relationship to each other.

## Analysis

- ★ In *American Psycho*, *The Platform*, *Requiem for a Dream*, and *Parasite*, the social critique theme is a central defining point of their narrative structures. Each film demonstrates a critique of larger society through their discussion of the individual experience of critical social issues. In their stories, social criticism can be attributed to the trauma experienced by each character, especially regarding the effects of larger class structures. The overall success of these films explains that the critique of society as a theme is transnational and relevant across genres due to its reflection of collective social experience. Additionally, both the horror and melodrama genres lend themselves to the inherent critique of social structures when considering their reliance on real-life characters in extraordinary situations to drive their respective narrative structures.
- ★ *American Psycho*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *The Platform*, and *Parasite* each consider the theme of personal identity by depicting real-life characters and their individual struggles. This theme, which regularly appears in films that additionally aim to critique society, is typically used to showcase the adverse effects of prominent political or social issues. *American Psycho* and *Requiem for a Dream* utilize identity as a primary theme to cultivate conversation surrounding the impact of consumer culture on regular people. Each film's representation of these themes directly lends itself to their popularity by producing a relatable narrative and redefining the notion of promised success

## Literature Review

Genre Studies

Audience

Narrative

Mise-en-scène

Color Theory

Melodrama

Horror

## Major Conclusions

1. Each film adapts social criticism as a primary theme and utilizes its presence to implore personal perspectives towards late-stage capitalism.
2. Each film's categorization under a specific genre aims to attract audience attention through the channel of individual preferences. This lends itself to the overall popularity of each film, which ensures a larger reach for the filmmaker's intended message.
3. The presence of particular filmmaking techniques associated with the Horror and Melodrama genres further reinforce each film's critique of larger social structures. This is especially true concerning each film's use of visual filmmaking conventions to cultivate a certain tone or aesthetic environment.



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