

*This series of newsletters on theology and film is created by Fuller's Brehm Film Initiative and FULLER studio. We hope you will find these focused emails both informative and inspiring.*

Earlier this month, Kutter Callaway and I did on-camera interviews for a documentary on the subject of evil. The filmmakers were especially interested in how evil is presented in the Bible compared to how it is depicted in the movies. In the Bible, evil is rarely presented as the work of an individual. Evil is a communal act. It's what happens when a group of people fail to live up to God's mission for them to be the caretakers of creation. When we sow disorder and disunity, when we neglect or harm those who cannot take care of themselves, we do evil—emphasis on the *we*.

In the movies, evil is often concentrated in the actions of an individual. Mustache-twirling villains are one of the highlights of cinema. Many times, they are more interesting than the heroes who defeat them. We should note though that villains rarely act alone. What's the Wicked Witch of the West without her flying monkeys? Hans Gruber without his "Ode to Joy"-humming henchmen? Scar without his hyenas? Typically, the only villains who act alone are the boogeymen in horror movies. Magnified by the supernatural, horror movie monsters don't need help to accomplish their evil schemes.

Interestingly, horror movie monsters are usually manifestations of communal evil. Recall Freddy Kreuger. He is the victim of communal injustice. His neighbors burned him alive after a mistrial (another act of communal injustice) saw him released from prison. He is a nightmare manifestation of the Elm Street neighborhood's secret guilt. Or consider *Halloween's* Michael Myers, a specter of suburban society's penchant for sexual repression, a paradigm that pretty

much every slasher film since *Halloween* has copied.

The only purely evil movie villain I can think of is *The Silence of the Lambs*' Hannibal Lecter, and he's not really the antagonist of the movie. Like Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*, Lecter becomes the color-inverted image of a hero because he is the only character who doesn't mask his desires. He flaunts them, pursues them, and achieves them. Horrifyingly, his desire is to eat other people. Lecter is pure evil because he is the ultimate divisive power—he desires to rip apart and consume the world.

Below, you'll find reviews for a few films that deal with evil in interesting ways. *Blonde* is a pseudo biopic of Marilyn Monroe that uses the conventions of horror movies to portray the men who used and abused her and the crowd that cheered all the while as an amalgamate demonic force. We also have a review of *Hocus Pocus 2* in which we consider the origin of the magical phrase the witches use and what it suggests about what we hope for when we say "hocus pocus." A hint: it has to do with a Christ-centered communal life. Finally, the Rock plays an antihero in *Black Adam*. Some would call him evil, but that probably depends on your citizenship.

With fear and trembling,  
Elijah Davidson  
Co-Director, Brehm Film



## Review: *Blonde*

*Blonde* is an aesthetically provocative deconstruction of our culture’s conceptions of Marilyn Monroe and of society’s willingness to sacrifice people on the altar of celebrity and consumerism.

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## Review: *Hocus Pocus 2*

*Hocus Pocus 2* does that thing that Disney has been doing for the last decade or so and tries to offer its villains a measure of redemption.

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## Review: *Black Adam*

You probably just want to watch the Rock make things go boom, but we’re going to slip in a lesson about the incarnation anyway.

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### IF YOU WANT TO GO DEEPER



## *The Resilient Artist and Mental Health*

Much less terrifying, *Hocus Pocus 2*’s Tony Hale recently talked with Shannon Sigler about how artists of faith might tend to their mental and spiritual health.

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## *Story Table: Faith and Fear*

Community leaders gather around the Story Table in Chicago to share personal stories about what faith looks like in a culture of fear.

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