



Malacological representativeness in eco-horror movies

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Humanity has always found ways to manifest and remember its culture and history. Films, as audiovisual productions, are an important tool for dealing with complex issues, critically portraying reality, and allowing reflection on social, political, economic, and environmental issues. In addition, when linked to scientific education, they play an important role in expanding the worldview of society (Arroio, 2010).

Film productions of the horror genre illustrate the fears and anxieties that plague a particular generation at some specific moment in history, metaphorically and allegorically establishing a relationship between the real and fictional world (Marchi, 2010).

During the Cold War period (1947–1991), several films starring giant monsters represented the atomic threat (a.k.a. *Godzilla*, 1954; Fig. 1), while at the end of the 1970s, with the growth of the environmental movement, the approach took on another focus and reflected man's concern about its impacts on the environment, represented by films in which animals and plants take revenge on the human race for the abuses against the planet (a.k.a. *The Day of the Triffids*, 1962; Fig. 1), establishing the eco-horror subgenre (Chagas & Almeida, 2015).



Figure 1. Left: poster of *Godzilla* (1954). Right: poster of *The Day of the Triffids* (1962). Source: IMDb.

METHODOLOGY

To verify the malacological taxonomic representativeness (that is, mollusks) in eco-horror films, a survey was carried out in five cinematographic database sites: Internet Movie Database (IMDb); Movie Monster Fandom; The Movie Database (TMDb); The TV Database (The TVDB); and Rotten Tomatoes. The following keywords were used for the search: Octopus; Tentacles; Squid; Molluscum; Mollusk; Slug; Snail; Oyster; Clam; Mussel; and Shellfish. Words

were searched for both in English and Portuguese.

Movies from horror, thriller, and science fiction categories were selected, which contained some of the keywords chosen in their titles, and/or in which mollusks were graphically present in their publicity poster, and/or, still, in which the synopsis of the film demonstrates the participation of a mollusk in the plot. The searches were closed when the results started to be repeated in the consulted databases.

The films found were organized in a

spreadsheet containing the following indexed information: Original title of the work, year of release, country of origin, genre, director(s) and the represented mollusks in the movie.

RESULTS

Thirty films were found that fit the eco-horror genre in which mollusks were present (Table 1). Cephalopods were the most represented mollusks in 90% of the analyzed films (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Posters of movies released in the 50s, and 70s starring cephalopods. Left: *Monster from the Ocean Floor* (1954). Center: *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1955). Right: *Tentacles* (1977). Source: IMDb.

Table 1. Relation of movies found, sorted by release date.

Title	Year	Country	Genre	Director(s)	Represented animal
Monster from the Ocean Floor	1945	USA	Sci-fi	Wyott Ordung	Octopus
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea	1945	USA	Sci-fi/Adventure	Richard Fleischer	Squid
It Came from Beneath the Sea	1955	USA	Horror/Sci-fi	Robert Gordon	Octopus
The Monster That Challenged the World	1957	USA	Sci-fi	Arnold Laven	Gastropod
Kingu Kongu Tai Gojira	1962	Japan/USA	Sci-fi/Action	Ishiro Honda	Octopus
ManClam - The Shell Form Hell!	1962	Canada	Horror	Huw Evans	Bivalve
Gezora, Ganime, Kameba: Kessen! Nankai no Dakaiju	1970	Japan	Horror/Sci-fi	Ishiro Honda	Cuttlefish

Table 1 (cont.)

Title	Year	Country	Genre	Director(s)	Represented animal
Octaman	1971	Mexico/USA	Horror	Harry Essex	Octopus
Tentacoli/Tentacles	1977	Italy/USA	Horror	Olvidio G. Assonitis	Octopus
Slugs: The Movie/Slug, Muerte Viscosa	1982	USA/Spain	Horror	Juan Piquer Simón	Slug
Shark Rosso Nell'oceano	1984	Italy/France	Horror/Sci-fi	Lamberto Bava	Hybrid octopus
Deep Rising	1998	USA	Horror/Sci-fi	Stephen Sommers	Octopus
Octopus	2000	USA	Horror	John Eyres	Octopus
Octopus 2: River of Fear	2001	USA	Horror	Yossi Wein	Octopus
The Thing Below	2004	USA	Horror	Jim Wynorski	Octopus
Kraken: Tentacles of the Deep	2006	USA	Comedy/Horror	Tibor Takács	Octopus
Eye of the Beast	2007	Canada	Horror	Gary Yates	Octopus
Monster	2008	Japan	Sci-fi	Eric Fosberg	Octopus
Mega Shark Versus Giant Octopus	2009	USA/England	Horror/Sci-fi	Jack Perez	Octopus
Sharktopus	2010	USA	Horror/Sci-fi	Mike MacLean	Hybrid octopus
Grabbers	2012	Ireland/England	Comedy/Horror	Jon Wright	Creatures with tentacles
Squid Man	2013	UK	Comedy/Sci-fi	Charlie Cline	Squid
Bermuda Tentacles	2014	USA	Horror/Sci-fi	Nick Lyon	Octopus
Sharktopus vs. Pteracuda	2014	USA	Horror/Sci-fi	Kevin O'Neill	Hybrid octopus
Spring	2014	USA	Horror/Drama/Romance	Justin Benson	Hybrid octopus
Sharktopus vs. Whalewolf	2015	USA	Horror/Sci-fi	Kevin O'Neill	Hybrid octopus
Night of Tentacles	2016	USA	Horror	Dustin Mills	Octopus
Attack of the Cyber Octopuses	2017	Estonia	Sci-fi	Nicola Piovesan	Octopus
Godzilla: King of The Monsters	2019	USA	Action/Sci-fi	Michael Dougherty	Hybrid octopus
Dà zhangyú (Big octopus)	2020	China	Sci-fi	Frank Xiang	Octopus

Among the countries with highlights in releases, the United States produced more than half of the films found, followed by Japan. In the early decades, films were released briefly and most animals showed gigantism.

The vast majority of analyzed films were released from the 2000s and 2010s onwards,

still using mainly gigantism narratives, but now with the plot linked to the impact of human actions on the environment.

Bivalves and gastropods had a punctual presence in the observations, represented in only 3.4% and 6.6% of the films, respectively (Fig. 3), while for the remaining groups of Mollusca, there is no production available.



Figure 3. Posters of movies with the least represented mollusks in eco-horror movies. Left: *Slugs* (1988); source: IMDb. Right: *ManClam! The Shell from Hell* (1962); source: Behance.

DISCUSSION

Regarding the most producing countries, the leadership of the USA, followed by Japan, may be associated with the historical context of the Cold War and the fear of the advancement of science linked to the war industry. The greater production of films from the 2000s is related to the growing concern with environmental issues resulting from the relationship between humanity, the environment and its organisms, in addition to also being related to the advancement of computer graphics technologies, which made it possible to explore new audiovisual resources in the film industry.

Most selected films have direct representations or refer to organisms of the Cephalopoda class. The predilection for these an-

imals may be linked to greater knowledge accumulated about the group by society, in addition to their presence in different types of cultural manifestations, such as food, literature, music, and their presence in cinema. This represents yet another reflection of the fascination that these animals exert on us, whether when linked to intelligent, dark, or dangerous beings, such as the species *Vampyroteuthis infernalis*, *Dosidicus gigas*, and *Architeuthis dux* (Fig. 4).

CONCLUSION

Cinematographic narratives carry great potential for disseminating and popularizing the impacts of human action on the environment. Also, when it comes to mal-



Figure 4. Three species of cephalopods commonly associated with dangerous and dark animals: Left: illustration of *Vampyroteuthis infernalis* (vampire squid). Top right: *Dosidicus gigas* (Humboldt squid). Bottom right: *Architeuthis dux* (giant squid). Source: Wikimedia Commons.

acology, they offer the opportunity to learn about the groups of mollusks in opposition to their fictional versions, also allowing a reflection on their diversity and preservation.

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