



IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Cronos

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

In this early hit from horror master Guillermo del Toro, an elderly antiques dealer Jesús Gris (Luppi) finds an ancient gold scarab that punctures his hand and draws blood. It's not long before Jesús feels reinvigorated: his hair grows thicker, his skin looks more youthful, and he has a heightened sexual appetite. He also develops an insatiable taste for blood, which gradually overcomes him. Del Toro's feature debut is a startling take on a familiar sub-genre that heralded the arrival of a major horror visionary.

Kelli Weston, bfi.org.uk

A contemporary review

Turning away from the erotics of vampiric desire, *Cronos* rather surveys need, a banal thirst for blood which reaches its extraordinary climax with Jesús licking up blood from the floor of a men's toilet on New Year's Eve. 'I am Jesús Gris,' he announces. The names have to be translated for this film to really work for an English-speaking public: 'I am Grey Jesus.' *Cronos* tells the story of how the main character comes to embody his name, and die (so that she – Jesús's granddaughter Aurora – may live). It is a film about the ruin of Jesús's body.

The young Mexican director Guillermo del Toro has insisted on how important Catholicism is to his story of ordinary vampirism (addiction). Thus, rather than merely falling into sentimentalism, the end of *Cronos* arguably remains faithful to the structure of the plot on which it is modelled – the death and resurrection of Christ revealing the melodramatic dimension of the central story of Christian religion. The twist in the tale is that the symbolically cannibalistic relationship to Christ practised in Catholic liturgy is here pressed into the service of del Toro's film about a now vampiric Jesús (is vampirism to cannibalism what soup is to the main meal?). In this sense, del Toro's 'copy' interestingly transforms our relationship to the 'original'.

The connections between cinema and religion are well-known, but rarely have they been presented so pointedly in film – although this has always been an important dimension of the vampire genre, most recently in Coppola's version of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. This is where the character of the young Aurora becomes so important, and not merely as a symbol of future hope or the object of Jesús' desire. Aurora is an onlooker: she stands by, witnessing the action of the film and the transformation of her grandfather. More than anything else, Aurora looks on, mesmerised and hardly comprehending what she sees. From this point of view, she stands in for the viewer, infantilising his or her gaze. And as a potential 'blood donor', she also represents the colour – red – that Jesús's white body lacks: when he finally dies, and gives himself up to the light, his white skin is confused with the screen with which the film ends. If Jesús represents religion, Aurora might represent the cinema – and its most important colour, as both Godard and Polanski know very well. From the point of view of *Cronos*, and vampire films in general, film is essentially red and white, not black and white. It is this aspect of the cinematic experience –

childish and religious – that cultural critics like Adorno warned against (and which filmmakers like Spielberg market).

As is evident, like many contemporary films, *Cronos* is a film about film. It also, however, tells a movingly simple story about ageing, the yearning for more time, the fragility of the body and addiction. It quotes Cronenberg's study of addiction, *Videodrome* – as Jesús inserts his hand under his grey skin before peeling it off – but its slightly lighter, humorous tone for some reason recalls another film about obsession, Patrice Leconte's *The Hairdresser's Husband*. The film's simple story line and slowed-down pace already distance it from the production values of conventional genre movies: it feels like an art-house film. More important, however, is the melancholic humour which Federico Luppi, who plays Jesús, displays towards this obsession with youth. In *Cronos*, however, this humour is eventually pushed to macabre extremes as the now resurrected Jesús, dressed up for his funeral, wanders the city streets with his black suit, white shirt and tie on back-to-front – as if his head had been twisted around (perhaps by Aurora) one hundred and eighty degrees: Jesus, un-dead and fragile, becomes a scruffy doll.

In this sense, *Cronos* remains a genre film, and like most vampire and horror movies from the American continent, it exhibits both the concerns of a postcolonial present unreconciled with the past (has the Cronos device been made from Aztec gold melted down by the Conquistadors? Is it Aztec sacrifice rather than Catholic ritual that makes its claim on Jesús?) and the perceived fragility of the body in a technologically changing world in which the machine-human interface is seen as increasingly blurred. The Cronos device is some kind of pre-industrial cyborg experiment gone horribly wrong.

John Kraniauskas, *Sight and Sound*, October 1994

CRONOS

Director: Guillermo del Toro

Production Companies: Iguana Producciones, Ventana Films, IMCINE, University of Guadalajara

Producers: Berta Navarro, Arthur H. Gorson

Co-producers: Alejandro Springall, Bernard L. Nussbaumer

Associate Producers: Rafael Cruz, Jorge Sánchez, Julio Solorzano Foppa

Production Administrator: Lourdes Pérez Nido

Production Co-ordinators: Sachiko Uzeta, Yvette Brestyanszky, Sunil Perkash

Location Manager: Pablo Buelna

Assistant Directors: Sebastián Silva, Joaquín Silva, Andrés Ortega

Continuity: Mariana Gironella, Valentina Leduc

Screenplay: Guillermo del Toro

Director of Photography: Guillermo Navarro

Special Effects: Laurencio Cordero

Graphics: Ria Lewerke

Editor: Raúl Dávalos

Associate Editor: Paul O'Bryan

Production Designer: Tolita Figueroa

Art Director: Brigitte Broch

Art Designer: Maria Figueroa

Art Co-ordinator: Terry Fernandez

Costumes: Genoveva Petitpierre

Wardrobe Supervisor: Federico Castillo

Make-up: M. Carrajal, Julieta Napoles

Special Make-up Effects: Necropia

Hairstylist: Julieta Napoles

Titles/Opticals: Mercer Titles and Optical Effects

Music: Javier Alvarez

Music Supervisor: Steven Soles

Music Producer: Ian Dearden

Music Editor: Kevin Kern

Choreography: Esther Soler

Sound Manager: Matthias Ehrenberg

Sound Supervisors: Claudia Becker, Marissa Iglesias

Sound: Fernando Cámara

Dubbing Mixer: John F. Reiner

Sound Re-recordists: David E. Fluhr, George R. Grooves, John B. Asman

Supervising Sound Editor: Burton M. Weinstein

Foley Artists: Dean P. Minnedey, Robert Muchnicki

Foley Mixer: Paul Aronoff

Dubbing: Miguel de Luna, Nerio Barberis

Stunt Co-ordinator: Gerardo Moreno

Narrator: Jorge Martinez De Hoyos

Cast

Federico Luppi (*Jesús Gris*)

Ron Perlman (*Angel de la Guardia*)

Claudio Brook (*Dieter de la Guardia*)

Margarita Isabel (*Mercedes Gris*)

Tamara Shanath (*Aurora Gris*)

Daniel Giménez Cacho (*Tito*)

Mario Iván Martínez (*Fulcanelli, the alchemist*)

Juan Carlos Columbo (*funeral director*)

Farnesio de Bernal (*Manuelito*)

Luis Rodriguez (*buyer*)

Javier Alvarez (*bleeding man*)

Gerardo Moscoso (*drunk*)

Eugenio Lobo (*stoned man*)

Adriana Olivera, Clementina Rojas, Tzinia Salgado, Luis de Icaza,

Jorge Bolada, Ignacio Raiz Oviedo (*tango students*)

Francisco Sánchez (*Mimo*)

Laurencio Cordero (*watchman*)

Mexico 1993

94 mins

IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Cronos

Fri 4 Nov 18:30; Sat 19 Nov 12:10; Sun 20 Nov 18:30

Fright Night

Fri 4 Nov 20:50; Tue 22 Nov 20:40 (+ intro)

Possession

Sat 5 Nov 20:20 (+ intro by author Kier-La Janisse); Sun 27 Nov 15:30

Ganja & Hess

Mon 7 Nov 18:00; Sat 26 Nov 15:20

La Llorona

Mon 7 Nov 21:00

Frankenstein

Tue 8 Nov 18:20; Sun 27 Nov 13:00

Viy

Tue 8 Nov 20:50

Inferno

Wed 9 Nov 20:40; Sat 26 Nov 18:20

The Entity

Fri 11 Nov 17:55; Tue 15 Nov 20:30

Nightbreed – Director’s Cut

Sat 12 Nov 20:35

Nosferatu (Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens)

Sun 13 Nov 15:50 (+ intro by Silent Film Curator Bryony Dixon); Sat 19 Nov 14:10

The Skeleton Key

Mon 14 Nov 20:45

Def by Temptation

Wed 16 Nov 18:10 (+ intro); Sat 26 Nov 18:10

Candyman

Thu 17 Nov 20:50 (+ intro)

Kuroneko (Yabu no naka no kuroneko)

Fri 18 Nov 18:15

Us

Sat 19 Nov 15:10; Tue 29 Nov 20:40

Let’s Scare Jessica to Death

Sat 19 Nov 20:45

Jennifer’s Body

Sun 20 Nov 15:15; Mon 21 Nov 18:00; Fri 25 Nov 20:45

Pontypool

Mon 21 Nov 20:30; Sun 27 Nov 12:20

Under the Shadow

Wed 23 Nov 20:40; Tue 29 Nov 18:10

Ouija: Origin of Evil

Thu 24 Nov 20:40; Mon 28 Nov 18:10

Pet Sematary

Fri 25 Nov 18:15; Mon 28 Nov 20:40

Blacula

Sat 26 Nov 13:00

The Autopsy of Jane Doe

Sat 26 Nov 20:40

28 Days Later

Sat 26 Nov 20:45

Good Manners (As Boas Maneiras)

Sun 27 Nov 18:10; Wed 30 Nov 20:25

A Nightmare on Elm Street

Wed 30 Nov 20:50

IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS EVENTS

City Lit at BFI: Screen Horrors – Screen Monsters

Thu 20 Oct – Thu 15 Dec 18:30-20:30

Matchbox Cine presents House of Psychotic Women

Sat 5 Nov 17:50

Son of Ingagi + Panel Discussion

Wed 9 Nov 18:10

Live Commentary with Evolution of Horror, Brain Rot and The Final Girls

Sat 19 Nov 18:00

Big Monster Energy

Tue 22 Nov 18:30

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