Found footage and the gothic conventions

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Abstract: Social, historical, political and economic changes somehow are invariably reflected in the cultural and artistic manifestations of their time. In Gothic literature this is noticeable in elements such as medieval settings when they were more frequent (*The Castle of Otranto*), or the questionings regarding the creationist thought suggested in *Frankenstein*, materialized in *The Origin of Species* and revisited in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula,* works that also display the technicism and scientific advancements in the second phase of the Industrial Revolution. Nonetheless, one recurrent element in the literary Gothic convention regardless of its time is the claims to truthfulness, understood here as an effort to convince the reader/viewer that the story told indeed happened, as incredible as it seems. Therefore, this article verifies the ways in which the claims to truthfulness appear in *found footage* movies, observing how the classical Gothic characteristics are replicated or subverted in this subgenre of horror movies. The conclusion points out that convincing the reader/viewer that the story is real still is a priority in the Gothic agenda. The theoretical support comes from texts present in seminal companions to the Gothic (Hogle, 2002; Punter, 2006; Botting, 2004), from Jenkins (2009), through the notion of convergence culture, from Baudrillard (2002), through the notion of the three postmodern phantasies, and from Aufdenheide (2007), through the concept of claims to truthfulness.

Key words: Gothic literature. Claims to truthfulness. Horror movies. *Found footage*.

"We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document. [...] We could hardly ask any one, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story". These are words found in the last chapter in *Dracula*, a novel with several first-person narrators. The character who gets to put these words to paper is Jonathan Harker, the same character whose account opens the narrative in Bram Stoker's novel, as he describes his trip to Transylvania to encounter a nobleman who wishes to purchase a house in London. The documents Harker refers to are diary entries that transcribed phonograph entries, telegrams, newspaper articles and a ship log. The chapter quoted in the beginning of this text is intended to be a sort of note to whoever has access to the story told in these documents. How potential readers are supposed to come

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across the documents and the note is never explained, but the quotation above indicates that Jonathan and the other narrators expect others to read their writing.

In the context of *Dracula'*s epistolary narrative, it is ironic that the closing of the text consists of a note which intends to excuse its authors from any connections to the truth. If the story is a collection of lies, why do they bother to gather materials? Why does his diligent wife Mina go through all the trouble of transcribing materials that are not originally in writing? The answer to these questions is simple: the story sounds like a huge lie, but it is not. And what corroborates the truth behind is the very material whose credibility Harker questions.

When we look for reasons why stories are scary or horrible, somewhere on the top of the list there is the connection of these stories to the real world, or the possibility that they have been or could be true. Not by coincidence, two other works of literature in the horror canon – Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stevenson's *The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – share *Dracula*'s structure based on personal accounts of the facts.

If the Gothic "must necessarily be a flexible genre, filled with different historical contents in different periods" (KAVKA in HOGLE, 2002, p. 213), then it is only natural that some features of the so-called Classic Gothic will be noticed in more contemporary ways of telling Gothic stories. The need of reinforcing the veracity of a story, or the "claims to truthfulness", as Aufdenheide puts it (2007, p. 2), is the main basis of *found footage*, a subgenre within horror movies which has gained significant strength over the past decades through blockbusters such as *The Blair Witch project* (1999) and *Paranormal activity* (2007). Having in mind the genre's recent notoriety and the identification of artistic Gothic parameters in it, this article aims at identifying how these parameters are reproduced or subverted in found footage movies, with the notion of claims to truthfulness as the main basis for the analysis here presented.

Found footage is a sort of metafilm, where the makers are not just makers, but also characters in the stories. There are usually scenes in which the mastermind behind the movie goes through the process of moviemaking, discussing it or explaining to another character – and the audience as well – certain filming choices. In *The last exorcism* (2010, directed by Daniel Stamm), that figure is Father Cotton Marcus, whose aim is to make a documentary to unveil the charlatanism there might be behind the process of exorcism; in *Diary of the dead* (2007, directed by George A. Romero), the ultimate movie maker is Jason Creed, and his objective is to make sure that the whole world knows what is going on suring the zombie

apocalypse without the media's biased filter. But it is arguable that no character in the history of found footage personifies the moviemaker as well as Heather Donahue, from *The Blair Witch project* (1999, directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez). Like Jason Creed, Heather is a cinema student whose filming initially aims at fulfilling the pre-requisites for an undergraduate course. Due to that, both Jason and Heather become too technical in their talking sometimes. Heather's behavior, however, leads her two fellow students to see her as a primadonna. She is the major decision-maker, and when things start going south, she takes full responsibility for everything, in what could be considered the most famous scene in the movie, when she looks at the camera, apologizes to the families, and cries.

These examples suffice as evidence that the auteur tends to play a central role in found footage movies, which, according to Badley, works as a link to the Gothic: "As recognized in metafilms […] the horror auteur exposes the theory's psychoanalytic and Gothic assumptions, thus interrogating auterism while lending it levels of mystique" (in SCHNEIDER, 2009, p. 222).

If the postmodern Gothic attributes significance to the auteur, representative writers of the Classical Gothic preferred to focus on the stories they told and how they told them. In the preface to the 1765 edition of *The castle of Otranto*, Horace Walpole defends a "blend [of] the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern", being the former "all imagination and improbability", and the latter focused on rules of probability in connection to common life. This shows that from its very beginning, the Gothic has toyed with all sorts of boundaries, or as Hogle puts it, "the Gothic is about its own blurring of different levels of discourse while it is also concerned with the interpenetration of other opposed conditions – including life/death, natural/supernatural, ancient/modern, realistic/artificial, and unconscious/conscious" (2007, p. 9). We might complete this list of binary oppositions with the duo reality/fantasy, and it is interesting to observe how they have spread in contemporary production by taking advantage of the social conjunctures and cultural characteristics of the time; such adaptability seems to be one of the reasons for the genre's survival.

Walpole's statement somehow pinpoints the clandestine status the Gothic (has) had, a factor it shares with found footage. Such clandestinity is perceived in the lack of systematization of the genre found footage, which leads us to the necessity of establishing a framework based on the features seen in the documentary and the false documentary, a genre also known as *mockdocumentary*, *mockumentary*, *faux documentary* or *cinema vérité with a wink*, among others (ROSCOE; HIGHT, 2001, p. 1). Aufdenheide (2007, p. ix) points out the

difficulty of developing a concrete definition for the term "documentary", as this genre is deeply rooted on how reality is perceived, represented and interpreted, both on the part of makers and viewers. What could be said with relative security is that the documentary is a predominantly – not solely – cinematographic genre about an aspect from real life. In his studies on reality shows, Andrejevic (2004, p. 7) affirms that what contributes towards keeping this particular TV genre alive is its appeal to the real which is applicable to the documentary, the false documentary and its subgenres, such as found footage.

The documentary has an informative character and is intended to be a serious genre. When a movie is sold as a documentary, it possesses a certain "aura of credibility" around it, which is probably going to influence the way viewers perceive it. More often than not, viewers believe that the documentary "tells the truth" not only due to its claims to truthfulness, but also because the footage itself tends to be seen as irrefutable evidence that something has happened: "[t]he claim that documentary can present a truthful and accurate portrayal of the social world is not only validated through the association of the camera with the instruments of science but also depends upon the cultural belief that the camera does not lie" (ROSCOE; HIGHT, 2001, p. 11).

And it is precisely based on this premise that found footage has lurked into viewers' imaginary – or at least part of them– as a scary genre. Found footage is a movie genre built in a way supposed to lead the audience to believe that what is on screen was not shot on location or in a studio; it displays video and sound elements which purposely highlight the homemade aspect, such as abrupt cuts, ruffled sound, and irregular filming. Most or all of the footage is filmed by one or more characters in the story, which makes it a sort of filmic first-person narrative. The story of how the rolls of films have been found is not always revealed, although two of the most famous examples within the genre do that: *Cannibal holocaust* (1980, directed by Ruggero Deodato) tells the story of a group of explorers hired to investigate and document the habits and culture of a cannibal Indian tribe in the Amazon forest. The rolls of tapes are found in the forest, and come to the possession of those who commissioned the investigation. In *The Blair Witch Project,* the footage made by the three cinema students is found in the middle of the Burkittsville forest one year after their disappearance.

If the Gothic is indeed a writing of excesses, which challenges rationality and morality (BOTTING, 2004, p. 1), found footage fits in as a Gothic variation of the documentary – with an advantage classic Gothic in print did not have: the support of technology. Plots such as the ones in *Cannibal holocaust*, *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal activity* (2007, directed

by Oren Peli) are only possible due to the evidence provided by the camera that the uncanny or supernatural facts have, indeed, happened. The challenge to rationality mentioned by Botting is then boosted in a way impossible centuries ago. The documentary relies on the idea that the camera does not lie; found footage, conversely, relies on the fallacy underneath such statement, thus taking advantage of both the credibility a so-called real movie brings and of the innumerous technological resources existing today which make any lie look true. This becomes clear in movies such as *Cloverfield* (2008, directed by Matt Reeves) or the *[REC]* franchise (started in 2007 directed by Jaume Balagueró, with three installments so far and the fourth one promised for 2014, according to the International Movie Database). The former presents the invasion of alien forces, while the latter describes the spread of a demonic virus in an apartment building in Barcelona, both of which scenarios reproducible on screen only with the help of technology. It is precisely against that kind of moviemaking that one of John Grieson's 1932 basic principles for moviemaking goes: he states that "the materials and stories thus taken from the raw can be finer (more real in the philosophic sense) than the acted article. […] Add to this that documentary can achieve an intimacy of knowledge and effect impossible to the shim-sham mechanics of the studio" (apud MCLANE, 2012, p. 17-18).

The notion of reality, central to the documentary as pointed out by Grieson in the early 1930s, becomes unattainable within the found footage universe. However, in the back of part of the audience's minds, it is possible for rolls of film to be found and turned into a commercial movie that depicts tragic events. This is evidenced by Ruggero Deodato taking the cast of *Cannibal holocaust* to national broadcast in order to show they were alive, and also by the many online forums debating the veracity of the scenes displayed in *Paranormal activity*. Jean Baudrillard believes that

> [...] the camera is thus a machine that vitiates all will, erases all intentionality and leaves nothing but the pure reflex needed to take pictures. Looking itself disappears without a trace, replaced by a lens now in collusion with the object – and hence with an inversion of vision (2002, p. 56).

Another reason why the Gothic has survived as an artistic manifestation is that it feeds on fears and anxieties, both on individual and collective levels. Those fears and anxieties are constantly renewed, and are unconsciously adapted by us to the social and cultural realities of our time. For the postmodern societies – thus for the postmodern Gothic – one of the main sources of anxiety is the overwhelming access to information, an idea stated by Bruhn (2002, p. 259), when he affirms that one of the main concerns of the classical Gothic (which remains for its postmodern variety) is the cultural effect of technology. Ours are times in which we are

constantly connected, looking for information and spreading it, often times without worrying whether that information is true. In *The transparency of evil,* Baudrillard affirms that the postmodern world is haunted by three phantasies, which are sorts of phantoms: the *transvestite*, which focuses on images, the symbolic or concrete destruction of the body and the excesses and deficiencies in our sexual codes; *terrorism*, which is related to our constant fear of something, even if most of the times we do not know exactly what we fear and even if the enemy is invisible, such as a virus, corroborating the idea the Gothic is about paranoia (KAVKA, 2002, p. 210); and *cancer*, thus named based on a series of analogies involving the silent, massive and dangerous ways it affects our society, just like a cancer affects an organism. Its effects are noticed in our "modes of conceiving and perceiving communication, information, art and interpersonal relationships" (ZANINI, 2012, p. 197). The three phantasies have three core motifs that are recurrent in the Gothic, and the three of them are identifiable in found footage movies.

The transvestite is identified in found footage movies through the fascination exerted by images. This fascination, according to Baudrillard, is viral, and its virulence is "reinforced by their images, for the modern media have a viral force of their own, and their virulence is contagious" (2002, p. 36-7). Allied to such virulence is the *spectacle*, which Kavka (2002, p. 209) claims to be the main way in which Gothic on screen "tantalizes us". The recipe seems to be simple: the power the media in spreading information, its virulent aspect, the spectacle typical of an extremely visual society like ours, and the ancestral morbid curiosity which fulfills the vicarious pleasure (extensively discussed by psychoanalysis) we have when coming across somebody else's disaster. It is in that framework that the found footage has established itself, as it necessarily promises real horror.

This destruction of the body Baudrillard points out is part of a bigger picture within the Gothic aesthetics: "[h]orror, mutilation, and loss thus become more than shock effect; they constitute the very aesthetic that structures the human psyche in the twentieth century" (BRUHN in HOGLE, 2002, p. 265). In found footage movies, it comes in several different ways: *a.* implicitly, as in the final scene in *The Blair Witch Project*, when Mike is rendered silent in the corner of a room and Heather, the camerawoman/first-person narrator at that moment, drops the camera on the floor, leaving us with the lack of movement and perspective of salvation; *b.* explicitly but without gore, as in *Paranormal activity*, when Micah's body is thrown against the surveillance camera and Katie's face appears distorted, possessed by the entity whose activities the camera registers; *c.* explicitly with gore, as in *[REC]* or its

American remake, *Quarantine* (2008, directed by John Erick Dowdle), where the people attacked by the virus appear possessed and, in many cases, subsequently shot in the head. The shootings are invariably recorded, which makes the police and members of the disinfection team highly uncomfortable; and *d.* beyond explicitness and with a polemic sort of gore, as in *Cannibal holocaust*, in which the group of researchers is seen being cannibalized by the Indians – not without killing animals, setting things of fire and raping an Indian girl before.

Terrorism comes across in found footage through the apparatus that supports the claims to truthfulness in these movies. While found footage is supposed to be ultimately understood as the work of fiction it actually is, there is the sparkle of confusion and doubt, and the branch of the audience which indeed believes, even if for just a moment, that the images on screen are real. If that is the case, then spirits do haunt houses, demons do possess people, cannibal Indians do eat outsiders nonchalantly, and witches do live in cabins in the middle of the forest.

This phantasy, in Baudrillard's view, is rooted on the audience's relationship with media and information. From a rational or scientific point of view, it is impossible for the events on found footage movies to happen in reality; nevertheless, not all members of audiences are imbued with such point of view. Masses, according to Baudrillard (2008, 47), are characterized by "hyperconformity": passivity, high tolerance to events and catastrophes, and obeisance. Within the pantheon of found footage, an example worth mentioning here is the independent franchise *V/H/S* (2012, directed by Matt Bettinelli-Olpin & David Bruckner; 2013, directed by Simon Barrett & Jason Eisener), which exploits urban legends. Therefore, the alliance between people's belief that the facts on screen are or could be real and the easy ways to both spread and come across such belief (the "virulent" character of information) constitutes a fair argument towards found footage's "scary aura". The hybridity present in the genre is a paramount feature in magic realism, one of the main forms of expression in contemporary Gothic: "a disruptive, foreign, fantastic narrative style […] what we find in magic realism (particularly at the dark end of its spectrum where it meets the Gothic) is a double-edged *frisson* which oscillates around the disturbing aspects of the everyday". (ARMITT, 2006, p. 306).

In her analysis of Gothic aspects in contemporary magic realism in literature, Lucie Armitt(2006, 307) points out that the genre is, in a way, 'foreign' to the real while being part of it. The efforts and intentions in found footage movies are meant to have the same effect: the very strangeness it brings forth is derived from the sense of familiarity the homemade

movies bring. The typical beginning of a found footage movie displays the making-of, or preparation for the main shooting: characters feel comfortable, are seen in their homes or workplaces, talk humorously to the camera, and are generally depicted as "normal" people, who could be our next-door neighbors, our relatives, or us.

The third postmodern phantasy proposed by Baudrillard, *cancer*, manifests itself in found footage in two main ways: the emptiness in communication and information associated to the notion of virulence, and the banalization of a certain aesthetic standard established by the genre.

Fictional genres are not necessarily committed to objectivity. Classical Gothic, for instance, focuses on the characters' amplification of feelings and sensations. That is what happens to Emily St. Aubert during her life in the Castle of Udolpho, and to Catherine Morland during her walks inside Northanger Abbey. Conversely, what found footage does is to narrow down – perhaps extinguish – the possibility of explaining things based merely on twisted perceptions of reality: events are recorded on camera, which should suffice as proof they have necessarily happened. That premise contradicts one aspect the vast majority of the audience is aware of: found footage is not a documentary, it is simply a work of fiction whose format evokes reality. The blurred boundary between fiction (something invented) and information (something concrete) invites to the reflection upon how information circulates today: the number of sources is inversely proportional to how reliable they are. People repeat what they hear without thinking critically, which leads to rumor dissemination, invented stories sold as real and sensationalism in communication – three basic pillars in the spread of found footage over the past two decades.

Baudrillard (2002, p. 16) affirms that "[n]o matter how marginal, or banal, or even obscene it may be, everything is subject to aestheticization, culturalization, museumification". The banality perceived today within the found footage realm, expressed through the development of franchises (*Paranormal activity* has had an average of a little less than one new film a year since 2007), remakes (*Quarantine* as the American version of *[REC]*), and the presence of some found footage movies into the blockbuster list has led to two phenomena: the banalization of the found footage aesthetics and the disgust of hardcore horror movie fans towards the genre.

The Blair Witch Project is partially responsible for the aestheticization of found footage. With an estimated budget of $60,000, it grossed over $140 million on Halloween 1999, according to the Internet Movie Database. Due to such impact, the movie industry has

tried to repeat the financial and media success by revisiting the formula: a character with a camera in hand, a homemade-movie feel, and terrible things on screen. In 2007, Paramount Pictures was looking for a potential match to Lionsgate's successful *Saw* franchise, at this point in its fourth installment; that is when Oren Peli proposed a movie about a couple haunted by a spirit and whose house would be filled with surveillance cameras. With a budget estimated in $160,000, *Paranormal activity* satisfied the company's financial requirements, and between 2010 and 2012, the release of a new movie from the franchise around Halloween time became a tradition. The abundance in the *Paranormal activity* franchise and the consequent increase in the production of found footage movies (in 2012, Oren Peli alone was involved with *Paranormal activity 4* and *The Chernobyl Diaries*) has led to a decrease in quality as far as plot and horror are concerned, leading to the second phenomenon mentioned before.

It seems that the spread of found footage started being considered vicious by everybody: usual detractors of horror movies have their reasons, and so do more demanding fans of the genre. The stories became less creative and more predictable, thus less scary. Censorship as a whole decreased the minimum viewing age, leading to theaters a share of the audience regular horror film viewers were not used to. In sum, found footage had become too mainstream and its overall quality was too low. The viciousness in its spread is so blatant that when it was rumored on the internet that the *Friday the 13th* movie promised for 2015 could be in this format, fans immediately responded negatively. If found footage was a mediocre horror subgenre in itself, that was no reason to contaminate slasher, a subgenre with far more prestige and relevance in the history of horror film.

Producers will probably not continue telling the story of Jason Voorhees in a found footage movie. If that indeed happens, it is due to the veto imposed by fans online. If on the one hand found footage will be denied an opportunity of a (perhaps historic) genre crossover because of the internet, on the other hand it is on the internet that lie two aspects of postmodern life which account for the pertinence of found footage movies today. One of them is what Henry Jenkins calls the *convergence culture* (2009, p. 30), characterized by an overwhelming flow of contents spread throughout diverse media platforms and means of communication and the elimination of the boundary between content producers and content receivers. Audiences today are more in charge of their entertainment experiences, and enjoy producing and divulging contents as much as they enjoy receiving them. Ours are times in

which recording equipment and the means to share such recordings have become more easily available, which consolidates the "participatory culture" (JENKINS, 2009, p. 235).

In George A. Romero's *Diary of the Dead*, the final girl Deb describes the process her deceased boyfriend Jason went through in order to make all of their recordings of the zombie apocalypse available to potential survivors. Jason is both a compulsive recorder, a fact explained by his being a cinema student, and a compulsive uploader, which is partially explained simply by the fact Jason is a young man who is part of a generation more naturally technological. This cultural frame of thought, described by Romero with his typical dose of criticism, is characterized by participatory culture: if you make the video, there is no reason to keep it to yourself.

Part of the negative criticism the genre has received is voiced by significant part of the audience of horror movies. Their taste and artistic parameters is possibly originated in more orthodox ways of looking at terror, horror, gore and darkness, which somehow leads us to the old-school Gothic. Interestingly, found footage and the Gothic share a feature related to their beginnings that defines both of them: within literary canons in general, the Gothic has usually been either on the bottom or outside it (when Oxford University Press announced that *Dracula* had been chosen to be published as the one-hundredth title in its World Classic Series, they added that many of the other authors in their series, such as "Dickens, James, Tolstoy, and the like, would 'no doubt turn over in their graves'" (BYRON, 1999, 12)); concomitantly, found footage movies have occupied the same underdog position within the horror movie canon, despite its relatively short existence. Nonetheless, as far as their origins are concerned, the Gothic and found footage do not share only the status of underdog: it seems that the movie genre learned from the Gothic how to adapt to different times and circumstances.

Jenkins states that screenwriters and creators conceive narratives aiming at providing the consumer with as many opportunities of involvement as possible (JENKINS, 2009, p. 235). If we take that into account, *Paranormal ctivity*, *The Blair Witch Project* and *Diary of the Dead* could be considered the three found footage movies that best understand and represent Jenkins' convergence culture. Those movies were conceived from the beginning to be discussed, speculated about and cause doubt, acts made much easier by discussions online, tweets and posts on social networks.

In *Paranormal activity*, as Katie and Micah adopt the surveillance cameras, not only does the movie retain the essential features of the found footage, but it also allows the viewer

a firmer image, without the trembling that characterizes the cameraman/character/first-person narrator. By doing so, the movie explores a concrete aspect of our reality: we are constantly under surveillance, the Big Brother is indeed watching us – what is worse, sometimes we are the ones who want that. In movies such as this, *Diary of the Dead* or *Halloween 6*, the footage is not only lost, but it is also institutionalized by protective organizations, such as the government or security companies.

Another important feature found footage shares with the Gothic is the complicity it establishes with its spectator. By turning the character into the one who films, the movie brings a unique point of view, pervaded by the intensity of emotions the Gothic has always sought. The viewer is dragged into the story and sees the monster from a close distance – but not too close, as the screen separates "us" from "them". However, what makes this movie genre worthy of a deeper analysis is the effect this complicity causes; as viewers of found footage movies, we become transgressors. Our transgression is something that just concerns us indirectly: we do not commit any crimes, it is always one other person, which reminds us of Sartre's famous idea that "hell is other people". Yes, hell is other people, but found footage reminds us that in relationship dynamics, be it human/human or human/non-human, we are the other one in relation to somebody else: "[t]he "we" who needs the Gothic is by no means a unified, homogeneous group" (BRUHN in HOGLE, 2002, p. 260) This otherness, as it is expected from the Gothic in whatever age, frequently involves supernatural dimensions, which somehow leads to a curious situation: an analysis of any found footage movie indicates that the supernatural or monstrous element in the story, always responsible for killings and other tragedies, might also be seen as the oppressed in the story, rather than the oppressor: if the Blair Witch had not been disturbed by a trio of nosy cinema students, would she have killed again? If we had taken better care of the world, would we need to deal with forces of nature, such as natural disasters or the good old end-of-the-world zombie apocalypse? The same conclusion might be reached – perhaps even more easily – from a religious perspective based on guilt: if *Paranormal activity*'s Micah and *The last exorcism*'s Cotton had not meddled with spirits and demons directly involved with other people (Katie and Nell, respectively), they would not have died.

Thus, found footage is imbedded in a moralizing discourse – yet another strongly Gothic feature which time has not erased – which goes back to Perrault's fables, Victorian fiction (not by coincidence, one of the peaks of the literary Gothic) and even Greek theater:

watch the movie, read the book, learn what not to do, and simply do not do it. This seems to have been, for a long time, the safest way to survive.

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Os filmes *found footage* e as convenções do Gótico

Resumo: Mudanças sociais, históricas, políticas e econômicas invariavelmente se refletem de alguma forma nas manifestações culturais e artísticas de seu tempo. Na literatura gótica isso se percebe em elementos tais como cenários medievais quando eles eram mais comuns (*O castelo de Otranto*), ou nos questionamentos acerca do pensamento criacionista sugeridos em *Frankenstein*, concretizados em *A origem das espécies* e revisitados em *O médico e o monstro* e *Drácula,* obras que também evidenciam o tecnicismo e os avanços científicos da segunda fase da Revolução Industrial. Entretanto, um elemento recorrente na convenção literária gótica, independentemente de seu tempo, é a reivindicação da veracidade, entendida como um esforço para convencer o leitor/espectador de que a história contada de fato aconteceu, por mais inacreditável que ela pareça. Assim, este artigo verifica de que maneiras a reivindicação da veracidade aparece em filmes do gênero *found footage* ("filmagem perdida"), observando de que maneira as características do Gótico clássico são replicadas ou subvertidas neste subgênero do cinema de horror. A conclusão aponta que convencer o leitor/espectador de que a história é real ainda é uma prioridade na agenda gótica. O suporte teórico vem de textos presentes in compêndios seminais sobre o Gótico (HOGLE, 2002; PUNTER, 2006; BOTTING, 2004), de Jenkins (2009), através do conceito de cultura da convergência, de Baudrillard (2002), através da noção dos três fantasmas da pós-modernidade, e de Aufdenheide (2007), através do conceito de reivindicação da veracidade.

Palavras-chave: Literatura gótica. Reivindicação da veracidade. Filmes de horror. *Found footage*.