Today on across the fence blood and guts sin and salvation of book by a UVM professor takes a stand on the films of Stephen King. That afternoon thanks for joining us I am Keith Silva in for Judy Simpson. At least two of Stephen thing stories have been haunting the big screens and small screens since 1982. They range from classics like Carrie and The Shining to forgettable fare like graveyard shift and children of the corn three urban harvest. Not since Charles Dickens as some would argue has there been an offer with as much impact on the culture of Stephen King. I think that's the first time that urban harvest and Charles Dickens were ever mentioned in the same breath. Tony Magistrale is our guests he's been a UVM faculty member for over 25 years. I altered several books about the gothic and horror literature and he's also written a book about poetry which will talk about in a minute. Welcome back Tony.

Tony.: Nice to be here.

Keith.: Is there a time that you can imagine where we will not be seeing a Stephen king book movie or anything on the big screen or small screen?

Tony.: Good question and it's hard to imagine that. It seems to me that Stephen King has become a very bankable commodity. When directors or production companies find something they like it usually makes money. I remember once I was interviewing King and he told me he doesn't quite understand this phenomenon how this has happened is foreign to him. He says even though he spends a lot of time in Hollywood looking at the production that's being done on his work the adaptations he says he always feels like I need a passport every time he goes to Hollywood..

Keith.: He's going to need a passport there's no stopping. There are 10 films of news that are in development now our children's children's children will be watching the stories right?

Tony.: It's really remarkable teeth when you think about it. If you were to look at the corpus let's say there are 80-90 films done of his work and of those 80 or 90 films perhaps 1/4 are films that are going to last beyond urban harvest. Think of the director think of an actor think of a production company that would be delighted to have 25 films of the level of the shining stand by Me shawshank redemption misery the green mile. If you look at it with that kind of equation you come down with folks like Alfred Hitchcock Steven Spielberg jack Nicholson remarkable company.

Keith.: You're the editor of the films of Stephen King from Carrie to the Mist is this a behind the scenes book is this gossipy stuff or something more academic?
Tony.: No none of that not gossip at all. An interesting collection of essays. I wrote the one on the Shawshank redemption and I talk a little bit about race. What I found so interesting was that many of the other riders because it's an added collection many of the other riders were really fascinated with the issues of race and Stephen King. I would say a preponderance of the essay is not all but a preponderance of them focus on this theme in films like the shining Shawshank redemption and the green mile.

Keith.: Is it true that King sells the rights to his stories to young filmmakers for a $1.00? And when are we starting our Stephen king movie?

Tony.: It is true. The explanation he's given me over the years is because he wants to see his work adaptive. He likes the movies he likes what happens when his work gets adapted he's fascinated by the whole process so he gives people a chance and sometimes he gives people who have a couple credentials like Stanley Kubrick an opportunity to do his work and on other occasions he does somebody who's doing the first film.

Keith.: Of all his films what is your favorite?

Tony.: I'd probably say the Shawshank redemption.

Keith.: Shawshank redemption is your favorite?

Tony.: It is some people seem to feel this is not it's a-typical from Stephen King the Shawshank redemption and one of the things I like to talk about it is the way in which the Shawshank redemption is very much a typical Stephen King work.

Keith.: What makes it typical?

Tony.: I think you have the main protagonists which is the archetypal Stephen King character. His name is Andy Dufrane while he's very successful financially and is accused of murdering his wife he's also put in a position where he passed to somehow survived of what has happened to him. That's survivalist mentality and survivalist mentality has to rely on is his wits and his ability to work the system. I think it's a big part of what I see as a characteristic of a Stephen King protagonist.

Keith.: So a survivor whether it's in and of the world apocalypse vampires zombies whenever it is survivor is a survivor? Inside a prison or outside dealing with monsters.

Tony.: And usually a survivor that pass to rely on his intellect more than his physicality.

Keith.: You are also fond of the movie apt pupil. This is sort of a lesser known Stephen king story. What do you give apt pupil a grade of.

Tony.: I would say it's definitely in a it's a wonderful film adaptation of one of those gems. In the great collection of Stephen King the best collection of his work is the different seasons. Some of his best writing in there and I think apt pupil is the lesser known of the film adaptations that have come from the collection. Certainly you have a lot of attention that was paid the Shawshank redemption obviously but also stand by me and apt pupil is this kind of quiet film about the pervasiveness of evil and the power of evil.

Keith.: Dealing with a NAZI war criminal and a young boy who becomes fascinated with that man. Another one speaking of the lesser King but big in stature is Dolores Claiborne. A lot of folks know misery you mentioned a little bit earlier Kathy bates winning an Oscar for that but this is another movie that she's in. What is it about Dolores Claiborne for you?
Tony.: Dolores Claiborne continues a trajectory I think of female characters that took place in
Stephen king's cannon where he addresses the issue of women in his fiction in a very positive way.
Misery starts it misery is of course an unfortunate characterization of a female but she's a very
powerful woman and you need to pay attention to Annie Wilkes or you risk losing body parts. King
tries to address a problem that he's had up until that point with creating powerful viable women
characters who are not just mothers.

Keith.: Let's shift gears from the sublime to the ridiculous perhaps. There was only one movie that
Stephen King has ever directed. Maximum overdrive. What to say about maximum overdrive that
that poster can say in itself.

Tony.: It was a mistake but it was a mistake that was fueled I think by Kings drug problem at the
time and I think that it's a mistake that a lot of people make when they're addicted to drugs and they
start to behave in a way that exceeds what they're capable of doing. Whether the driving a car or
directing a multimillion dollar film.

Keith.: We shouldn't always judge him on his worst. There's a very funny cameo we just saw a
picture of Stephen Kane and maximum overdrive. If you have an hour to have to kill you could do it
and worst ways pun intended. You spent your entire career championing Stephen king's work
whether it be his films his works his novels at some point you feel like you're rooting for Exxon or
some major corporation here?

Tony.: Well it wasn't always that way. I remember when I first arrived in UVM and want to write
about Stephen King that many of my colleagues said whatever for? This isn't worthy of serious
literary criticism. At the time Stephen King was at the same level has Jacqueline susann or john
Grisham one of those multimillion dollar bestseller writers that had no literary credibility. I would
like to think I was one of the first people to recognize the importance of talking about this man has a
cultural force and that the new yorker followed suit. And the Atlantic magazine and a lot of other
places where Stephen King is published consistently now.

Keith.: Is there still that feeling that you're dealing with 1000 pound gorilla or hey we have to deal
with this guy because it keeps putting out books he keeps putting of movies of his work. Is it too
much to say as I said in the open a Dickens of our
time?

Tony.: I think that's a fair comparison for a lot of reasons that we really can't go into right now to talk
about the comparison between King and Dickens. Still in many ways he's the underdog he still
fighting for respectability. This is not an academic modelist finally. He's much more interested in
talking about other issues than the typical academic novelist which seems to be always somebody
who are contemporary academic novelist likes to talk about domestic relationships where somebody's
wife is cheating on somebody else and that's the center of the text. Stephen talks about those issues
but I think he goes way beyond that too and there's still critics out there like Harold bloom who think
that Stephen King is unworthy and that he will be forgotten 15 years after he's dead. I'm still trying
to prove Harold bloom wrong.

Keith.: We don't want to be accused of typecasting across the fence. What is what she says about
love?

Tony.: O we're going in another direction altogether. Before I was anything I was a poet. This goes
back to when I was in high school really and I've always written poetry and within the last 10 years
is so it's become more of a focus in my life. A lot of the reading I've been doing has been of a political
sort and what she says about love is my first book of poems. I've had a lot of columns published in
poetry magazines and journals that this is the first time I've had a collection and I have another one
coming out in 2012.
Keith.: One of the unique aspects of this collection is each poem comes with an Italian translation on the facing page. Why did you decide to present the poem this way?

Tony.: That wasn't my choice. This won an award from the Italian American cultural foundation at Cooney college in New York City. When it won the award it won the award from the Italian American Society there and that department and it came with a prize but it also came with the publication and a translation of my work into Italian. The idea being is to keep the Italian language alive and well.

Keith.: You don't speak Italian correct fluently?

Tony.: Not fluently but I speak well enough to be able to get pizzas.

Keith.: OK. We have a few minutes left could you read us a poem or a couple quick lines

Tony.: Yes sure. Do you want something funny?

Keith.: I want something within a couple minutes. Do you have a short funny poem? What are you going to read?

Tony.: One thing you need to know about these poems is that half of these poems were written in Italy about Italy. I'm going to read your column about an Italian woman that I actually encountered on the streets of Milan.

Keith.: We have about 1½ minute left.

Tony.: This is all it needs. It's called beware the bible warns of fallen women. She is rounding off vowels faster than the turning of traffic tires. Faster too then the high heeled foot that fails to bridge the urban chasm between concrete sidewalk and ash fault street. I helped to reassemble cartoons spillage aftermath. Keys and cosmetics gold wrapped boxes from expensive shops. The damage is assessed. One snapped burgundy heel. One slightly bloodied kneecap. One pair of black pantyhose shot. And I offer humble apologies for indolent street. She gives back a splintered mix more soul then appreciation. Limps off into the crowd and is almost swallowed whole but for that red hat bobbing up and down in and out of sight like some stranded buoy in an angry sea.

Keith.: We're going to have to leave it there. Tony Magistrale thank you very much for coming on across the fence. If you would like to read what she says about love or the films of Stephen King from Carrie to the Mist both by our guests Tony Magistrale please look them up with your local library or ask for them at your local bookshop. I want to thank everyone here at WCAX for making this program possible and as always thank you for stopping by across the fence.

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