

# FORUM

University of Edinburgh  
Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts  
Issue 02 | Spring 2006

<b>Title</b>	Notes on the Terror Film
<b>Author</b>	Keith Hennessey Brown
<b>Publication</b>	FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts
<b>Issue Number</b>	02
<b>Issue Date</b>	Spring 2006
<b>Publication Date</b>	05/06/2006
<b>Editors</b>	Joe Hughes & Beth Schroeder

*FORUM claims non-exclusive rights to reproduce this article electronically (in full or in part) and to publish this work in any such media current or later developed. The author retains all rights, including the right to be identified as the author wherever and whenever this article is published, and the right to use all or part of the article and abstracts, with or without revision or modification in compilations or other publications. Any latter publication shall recognise FORUM as the original publisher.*

## Notes on the Terror Film

Keith Hennessey Brown (University of Edinburgh)

Horror is, without question, among film's most enduring genres; audiences in search of thrills have been able to find a chiller to attend since the turn of the century. Even the studio of film pioneer Thomas Edison produced a 16-minute version of the Frankenstein story in 1910. The remarkable longevity of the genre does not, however, guarantee that a near century's worth of fans have all been lining up for the same motion picture show. (Lake Crane: 23)

As Jonathan Lake Crane's perceptive comments indicate, the horror film is a remarkably resilient and adaptable film genre, one that has been able to meet the needs of successive generations of audiences in a way that others, like musicals and westerns, apparently have not, in the light of their declining production in recent decades. Whereas the horror fan can almost always find something to go see, western and musical fans increasingly only have a few genre productions a year to attend. They have become endangered species, the release of an *Open Range* (Dir: Kevin Costner, 2003) or *Chicago* (Dir: Rob Marshall, 2002) more an event than an everyday occurrence. Yet, the profusion of descriptive terms—"horror", "thrills", the "chiller"—perhaps suggest another more interesting possibility: rather than audiences queuing up for an endless succession of horror variants, might they also sometimes have been lining up for *something else*? Specifically, for a different, distinctive, yet equally enduring and adaptive genre; one that we might tentatively term the *terror film*?

The purpose of this paper—perhaps really more a set of somewhat informal notes, in the manner suggested by David Bordwell (28)—is to provide a broad brushstroke picture of the terror film from its beginnings, arguably coeval with cinema itself, to the present. It will be suggested that the terror film may be seen as something of the horror film's repressed double, going beyond horror in terms of what it has to say about the existential realities of—to borrow Hannah Arendt's term—"the human condition" in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The first step, I would venture, is thus to reach an adequate working definition of the horror film, allowing us to situate the terror film in differential relation to it. While there is obviously some circularity here, in that horror could also be defined negatively—albeit perhaps to a lesser extent—by its differences from terror, this strategy seems justified by the

pre-existence of a set of horror film discourses to draw upon. The most obvious issue here is the considerable degree of overlap between horror, science fiction and fantasy. To give a concrete example, two frequently cited reference books, widely acknowledged for their attempts at providing comprehensive genre overviews, are the *Overlook Film Encyclopaedias*<sup>1</sup> of *Horror* and *Science Fiction*. Numerous films, particularly those featuring Frankenstein and similar colloquial 'mad scientists,' are found in both volumes, albeit usually with different analyses emphasising horror and science fiction specific points.

Tzvetan Todorov's work on *The Fantastic* (1973) is of value in drawing some initial lines of demarcation here. Looking at literary rather than cinematic narratives, Todorov proposes that they can be classified as marvellous, marvellous/fantastical, fantastical, fantastical/uncanny or uncanny, with the point of distinction lying in the attitudes taken towards phenomena beyond our everyday experience—let us say a unicorn. In the marvellous the existence of a unicorn is not to be called into question—it simply *is*. In the marvellous/fantastical, the real existence of a unicorn would initially be questioned, but ultimately accepted, other explanations having been exhausted. In pure fantasy, the existence or non-existence of our unicorn remains undecidable. We cannot be certain that it is, but nor can we prove conclusively that it is not. In the fantastical/uncanny—as the obverse of the marvellous/fantastical—we would wonder if this really was a unicorn, then find a natural explanation to prove it was not. Finally, in the uncanny, we would be in no doubt from the outset that unicorns do not exist, such that our putative unicorn must, in fact, be something else.<sup>2</sup>

Though recognising the usefulness of Todorov's scheme, with the taken-for-grantedness of the marvellous within science fiction and fantasy narratives offering an obvious point of distinction from the more questioning approaches prevalent within horror, Noël Carroll begins outlining his *Philosophy of Horror* (1990) with a discussion of the genre in and of itself. He immediately distinguishes between "art horror" and "natural horror," the former referring to horror as it is mediated through cultural forms and the latter to horror as it is directly experienced (12), before defining the scope of his work: "It is not my task... to analyse natural horror, but only art-horror, that is horror as it serves to name a cross-art, cross-media genre whose existence is already recognised in ordinary language." (12) While there are potential problems here, insofar as Carroll looks to be conflating a second-order

---

<sup>1</sup> Formerly the *Aurum Film Encyclopaedias*.

concept of his devising—i.e. art-horror—with a first-order concept—i.e. horror—located within everyday discourse, his notion of art-horror does emerge as something largely coherent and useable and which, on reflection, the typical member of society could likely accept and thereby bring into wider use.<sup>3</sup> Carroll's next step is to suggest that horror is first and foremost a genre of emotional affect. That is to say, the artist's intention, within his or her work, is to instil the feeling of horror in the audience;<sup>4</sup> as far as the terror film goes it seems reasonable to simply commute horror for terror here. Carroll suggests that the primary way in which sensations of horror are produced is via the presence of a monster of unnatural or otherworldly origin. This, crucially, is something that overtly distinguishes works of horror from works of terror, "which, though eerie and unnerving, achiev[e] their frightening effects by exploring psychological phenomena that are all too human." (15) In other words, going back to Todorov, we may say that, whereas the domain of horror is the marvellous/fantastic, that of terror is the fantastic/uncanny and the uncanny—those narratives in which the existence of the supernatural is posited only in order to be denied or plays no part; or, in fact, that the domain of terror is that of 'reality'. Another formulation might be that where horror emphasises the transgression of the 'natural', terror foregrounds that of the human or social. At least as far as Carroll's project is concerned, Todorov's description of the marvellous and marvellous/fantastic is, however, inadequate. It fails to account for the way audiences are supposed to react to different unnatural beings: a unicorn may be unnatural, but is unlikely to be depicted and regarded as monstrous, in terms of instilling sensations of fear and—"of the utmost significance" (22)—disgust. The latter of these is more problematic as far as terror is concerned. Drawing on the work of Mary Douglas (1970), Carroll suggests that disgust arises from the way in which horror monsters and situations blur categorical boundaries. While some of these boundaries can be accepted as part of the domain of horror alone, others will be held in common with terror. The flesh-eating ghouls of George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) are figures of horror, for instance, because they blur the boundary between living and dead in a way that cannot be accounted for in natural terms, whereas the figure of The Creeper in *The Brute Man* (Dir: Jean Yarbrough, 1946) blurs the boundary

---

<sup>2</sup> Carol Reed's 1955 film adaptation of Wolf Mankowitz's story *A Kid for Two Farthings*—the tale of a boy who purchases a young goat believing it to be a young unicorn, as in the story told him by his neighbour—provides a delightful illustration of some of these processes and positions.

<sup>3</sup> For more on first and second order concepts, membership and the reflexive construction of social reality see, for example, Berger and Luckmann and Garfinkel.

<sup>4</sup> Though there are issues of artistic intentionality and reader response here, the formulation nevertheless also allows us to account for a film like the 1910 *Frankenstein*—probably now more likely to induce laughter than horror amongst a typical audience—within the context of art-horror.

between human and animal on account of his grotesque, deformed features, but is natural and thus a figure of terror.<sup>5</sup>

With there being far more to Carroll's theory than we have space to discuss here, one final point remains to be made about the key distinctions between terror and horror. The problem of belief, of “fearing fictions”, is far less pronounced in terror: a terror film does not need to work to convince us that a psychopathic killer, say, is really ‘out there’. This, I would suggest, sometimes affords it in turn an additional ‘edge’ over the horror film. Being closer to reality it gives filmmakers more opportunity to devote their attention to broader concerns beyond the instilling of fear.

In the light of Crane's situating *Frankenstein* as the first horror film, it is tempting to situate the first terror film even earlier. Indeed, were it not for fact that the *actualité L'Arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat* (Dir: Auguste and Louis Lumière, 1895) was not intended to terrify the audiences who supposedly recoiled from its image of an onrushing locomotive, we might even say the first film was a terror film.<sup>6</sup> In truth, however, searching for a single original source in this way is futile. We have to remember that the “cinema of attractions”, as discussed by Tom Gunning (1990) and others, operates under a different set of assumptions than its successors. Two pertinent points for our discussion can be identified. First, as an “attraction” it was part of the world of the carnival or fairground, rather than the (more) legitimate theatre. Second, it was fundamentally exhibitionistic and sensationalistic in nature, with shocking and awing the spectator more important than engaging them with a narrative. Indeed, the 1910 adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus* in all likelihood also functioned in these terms: running barely a quarter-hour, it could hardly present the entirety of the novel nor engage with its philosophical questions, instead giving some of the more spectacular highlights and relying upon these to be enough and/or upon an audience which knew the source material and could fill in the gaps.

What can be said, however, is that horror and terror cinema, insofar as they are examples of Linda Williams's (1991) “body genres”—so-called “low” genres emphasising physical responses—were likely to better function within the context of the cinema of attractions. Indeed, contemporary horror and terror filmmaker John Carpenter frequently talks of the genres in “attraction” terms: “Why do people want to see these things they are afraid

---

<sup>5</sup> The actor who played The Creeper, Rondo Hatton, suffered from acromegaly and specialised in playing monster roles without the need to be made up.

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, if this story is more than apocryphal, the fact that spectators responded as they did because of an inability to distinguish between ‘real’ and ‘reel’ would make this an instance of natural rather than art terror.

of? ... People pay to be strapped into rollercoaster rides too. It's like taking a drug. You're jacked up. The adrenaline surges."<sup>7</sup>

While perhaps more indebted to the cinema of attractions than later entries in the genre, a solid starting point for our outline history of the terror film would seem the various crime serials directed by Louis Feuillade in the 1910s, such as *Fantômas* (1914) and *Les Vampires* (1915). Although these pulp tales featured arch-criminals whose attributes might stretch credibility, they were never explicitly spelled out as being in any way supernatural. Likewise they made use of real locations, giving the terrifying prospect that the viewer might encounter a *Fantômas* or *Irma Vep*—the femme fatale leader of the gang that gives the series its title, her own name also being an anagram for vampire—on the way back from the theatre at night. In terms of their legacy these “sensation films”—the significance of the term in relation to the “cinema of attractions” hardly needs remarked upon—were to exert a considerable influence over key terror film director Fritz Lang (Gunning, 2000: 88-92).

The next major landmark for the terror film is Robert Weine's enormously influential *Das Kabinett des Dr Caligari* (1920). The most important aspect of the film as far as situating it as horror or terror film is, again, the nature of its threat. What we find here is that, while *Caligari* makes extensive use of the doubling motif, what it does not do is present us with overtly supernatural doppelgänger figures, as found in, say, *Der Student von Prag* (Dir: Stellen Rye, Paul Wegener; 1913). Though it could be argued that the double narrative structure of the film leaves its ontological status ambiguous (did this really happen or is it all in a madman's imagination?) it can be recalled that such a sense of hesitation, vacillation and undecideability is the hallmark of the purely fantastic. The framing story may not definitely make *Caligari* a terror film, but nor does it strengthen its claims to be horror. In terms of the enigmas posed within the framed narrative, however, the answers presented are of the fantastic-uncanny rather than the marvellous-fantastic sort. A natural explanation is found, for instance, to explain how Cesare can apparently be in two places at once: the Cesare at rest in the box is a dummy. Likewise, following the dictum of Occam's Razor, it seems unnecessary to invoke the supernatural to account for the fairground showman Caligari's hypnotic control over the somnambulist when a quasi-medical/scientific explanation would suffice. Indeed, in terms of the historical context, we can also note the increasingly widespread use of hypnosis as a treatment for neuroses and conditions such as shell shock

---

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Carpenter found at <http://www.lovefilm.com/static.php?tpl=john-carpenter>; visited 5 January 2006

around this time.<sup>8</sup> Nor is there any definite need to resort to supernatural explanation to account for the way in which Cesare's premonition of death at the fair come true when—albeit under Caligari's instruction—he is the assassin, in contrast to a later horror film like *Sette note in nero* (Dir: Lucio Fulci, 1977) where psychic premonitions must be taken at face value. *Caligari's* other main contribution to the development of the terror film is its emphasis upon an anti-naturalistic aesthetic via expressionist distortions. This might seem a contradiction: if terror is more about reality than horror, does it not also follow that it would be better served by a more naturalistic or realistic aesthetic? Are these approaches not more likely to create the desired affect, situating events within the film narrative closer to the everyday world of the spectator? Although there may be some truth to this, it is also the case that most people will opt to experience the terrifying realities of insanity, say, through a more comfortable, if still discomfiting, fictional narrative such as *Caligari* or *Shock Corridor* (Dir: Sam Fuller, 1963) than via the comparable but too-close-for-comfort documentary *Titicut Follies* (Dir: Frederick Wiseman, 1967). Indeed, it is also notable how terror films that arguably go too far in blurring the boundary between fiction and reality, like Ruggero Deodato's notorious *Cannibal Holocaust* (1979), appeal to a relatively narrow audience—whom Carroll would in any case characterise as a Grand Guignol one, motivated by sadistic impulses rather than a desire to be experience sensations of terror or horror (15)—and frequently encounter difficulties with the censors and authorities. Deodato, for instance, was taken to the Italian courts on account of several scenes of all-too-real animal cruelty within his film and, while ultimately acquitted, found himself largely *persona non grata* as a consequence: “if you see this man, cross over the street,” as one reviewer put it.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, although expressionist techniques soon became a key part of the aesthetic vocabulary of terror and horror cinema, it is important to recognise few, if any, subsequent films deployed them to the same extents as *Caligari*. Thus, for instance, in the 1922 art-horror film *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens*, F. W. Murnau also makes great use of the natural landscape as part of his overall aesthetic vision.

The same year also saw the release of Lang's *Dr Mabuse der Spieler*, combining expressionist visuals with a pulp story by Norbert Jacques whose protagonist—perhaps of the German terror-cinema's most enduring figure<sup>10</sup>—resembles nothing as much as a combination of Fantômas and Caligari. Also of note is the way *Mabuse* is grounded in the

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the Wikipedia entry on the history of hypnosis at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_hypnosis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_hypnosis); visited 2 January 2006.

<sup>9</sup> For an analysis of the film see Brottmann.

context of Weimar Germany, the four-hour plus film being released in two parts with the telling subtitles “*Ein Bild der Zeit*” and “*Inferno - Leute der Zeiten*”. While more crime drama than terror film, the likes of G. W Pabst's *Die Freundlose Gasse* (1925) and Joe May's *Asphalt* (1929) also use similar combinations of expressionism and naturalism to paint vivid pictures of the modern city as a place in which corruption, crime, violence and desperation are endemic. Likewise, if Pabst's later *Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (1929) is again more melodramatic in approach, the presence of Jack the Ripper<sup>11</sup> in his adaptation of Frank Wedekind's plays *Erdegeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora* in the latter named film (1929) gives it strong terror credentials. If we often have difficulties placing films like these in popular and genre contexts it is because their canonical status as examples of German Expressionism and Weimar Cinema—too often they are conflated—frequently leads to an over-emphasis upon their *sui generis*/art cinema aspects at the expense of everything else (Elsaesser: 18-60).

Jack the Ripper was also a key figure in the first of Alfred Hitchcock's numerous contributions to the terror genre, *The Lodger – A Story of the London Fog* (1927), adapted from the novel by Marie Belloc Lowndes. Incorporating Soviet Montage alongside German Expressionism, Hitchcock's film departed from its source by making the lodger into the hero, pursuing his own private quest against the killer, known as The Avenger—an instance of doubling occasioned by star Ivor Novello's unwillingness to play a murderer. This did not, however, prevent his character from becoming involved in Hitchcock's first double-pursuit narrative, as his strange behaviour and night-time peregrinations lead his landlady to suspect him of being The Avenger. That Novello's character is only ever identified as “The Lodger” is also of note for the way it signals his anonymity and commutability with his nemesis. Indeed, this frequent inability to differentiate between monsters and their victims, also seen in—to give two considerably later examples—*Una Lucertola con la pelle di donna* (Dir: Fulci, 1971) and *Frenzy* (Dir: Hitchcock, 1972), might be posited as another terror film characteristic, when we recall Carroll's remarks that the physical appearance of the horror monster is usually sufficient to cement its status *qua* monster.

Though *Blackmail* (Dir: Hitchcock, 1929) is as much drama as terror film, it again illustrates how formalist approaches could successfully be combined with more conventional cinema aesthetics to effectively illustrate the terrifying possibilities of life in the modern city. In the film a young woman, Alice, fights off an attempted rape only to find herself the victim

---

<sup>10</sup> For the history of the Dr Mabuse character see Kalat



of a blackmail plot. Moreover, with the famous sequence where the word “knife” is repeated on the soundtrack at ever-heightening intensity within an otherwise unintelligible speech, to signal Alice’s growing fear, Hitchcock also demonstrated an acute awareness of the potential for using sound non-naturalistically to enhance a terror effect.

Much the same can be said of Lang’s first sound film, *M*, released in 1930. Inspired by the real case of compulsive child-murderer Peter Kürten, the film is also notable for continuing the director’s move away from an expressionist aesthetic, in making as much use—if not more—of the *neue Sachlichkeit*, the movement which had increasingly supplanted expressionism over the course of the 1920s. Following another notable terror film entry, *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (1933), in which the psychiatrist treating Mabuse comes under his spell and continues his campaign of terror, the Nazis assumed power, prompting Lang to leave Germany and eventually settle, like many of his fellow émigrés, in Hollywood.

If we now think of the indigenous US horror film as it was developing around this time in the likes of *Dracula* (Dir: Tod Browning, 1931), *Frankenstein* (Dir: James Whale, 1931), *The Mummy* (Dir: Karl Freund, 1932) and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (Dir: Whale, 1935) in comparison with the European terror film as described above, one of the most striking things is how *unthreatening* it seems. Though Hollywood eagerly adopted expressionistic techniques—it can be noted that Freund, for instance, had actually served as cinematographer on such notable films as Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) and Murnau’s *Der Letzte Mann* (1924) in Germany before emigrating to Hollywood—these were deployed with a fundamentally different agenda. Rather than adding subjective touches to otherwise recognisable representations of modern reality, Hollywood used expressionist techniques to create imaginary settings distanced from contemporary realities in place and time, thereby lessening the extent to which these films offered direct comment on the socio-political concerns of the day. This is not to necessarily say that all Hollywood horror films were reactionary and all European terror films progressive. Rather, it is to say that the American horror film tended to demand more *allegorical* reading. Thus, for instance, to interpret Frankenstein’s monster as an expression of the plight of the poor and disenfranchised during the Great Depression, we first need to make the imaginative leap of recognising him as a proletarian figure adrift in a Ruritanian nowhere created on a studio backlot.

---

<sup>11</sup> We can also note, in passing, that Jack the Ripper had earlier appeared in one of the episodes of Paul Leni and Leo Berinsky’s 1924 horror anthology *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett* which was set, once more, against the backdrop of the carnival.

In a similar manner, if we consider the horror films produced in the latter part of the 1930s and 1940s, these exhibit a decline in quality and affect as a parade of ever more desperate sequels saw Hollywood's monsters team up, as in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (Dir: Roy William Neill, 1943), or suffer the indignities of appearing in would-be horror-comedies, such as *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Dir: Charles Barton, 1948) that had little to say about the wider social world.

A more positive development was the formation of Val Lewton's production unit at RKO Studios in the early 1940s with the resulting films, in part for budgetary reasons, frequently set in a recognisable, contemporary America. While Irena's fear of physical intimacy with her new husband in Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People* (1942) is ultimately given a supernatural justification, in that she does indeed transform into a giant panther when aroused, this is only accepted once natural alternatives like psychological neurosis have been ruled out. But if *Cat People* thereby finally emerges as an horror film, its unofficial sequel, *The Leopard Man* (Tourneur, 1943), functions as a terror film, resolving its enigmas in mundane terms. Another Lewton production, *I Walked with a Zombie* (Dir: Tourneur, 1943) raises similar ontological questions in a way that perhaps causes difficulties for Carroll's theory of horror by raising the issue of different belief systems. While the existence of zombies is taken as superstition by the typical westerner, to the Haitian who believes in voodoo—and, moreover, his or her legal code, with its injunctions against the creation of zombies—it is fact.<sup>12</sup> Depending on the individual's cultural and religious background, the film is thus either horror or terror.

Two other key developments in the American terror film during the 1940s were the arrival of Hitchcock and the emergence of film noir. Among Hitchcock's notable contributions to the terror genre during the decade we can count *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) and *Spellbound* (1945), with the former bringing the figure of the psychopathic killer to small town America through of a reworking of *Nosferatu* (Sterritt: 53-57), and the latter the kind of Freudian concepts previously seen in Pabst's *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (1926) to mainstream American audiences. Film noir, meanwhile, could be argued to represent a large-scale "return of the repressed" in the form of the terror film, the combination of expressionism and realism in films like *Detour* (Dir: Edgar G. Ulmer, 1946) and the carnival-set *Nightmare Alley* (Dir: Edmund Goulding, 1947), once more reminding audiences of the frightening possibilities

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the Wikipedia entry on voodoo at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voodoo>, visited 25 February 2006 and the chapters in Russell pertaining to traditional Haitian zombies.

already present in reality, which in the wake of Hiroshima and Auschwitz, had arguably become even more terrifying.

Indeed, the spectre of the atomic bomb in particular was to spur the emergence of science-fiction horror in the early 1950s, with nuclear experiments creating mutants like the giant ants of *Them!* (Dir: Gordon Douglas, 1954), arousing monsters from the depths like *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (Dir: Eugène Lourié, 1954) or attracting the attentions of alien visitors, as in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Dir: Robert Wise, 1951). Again, however, these films distanced their audiences from the terrors of the nuclear age and Cold War compared to film noirs such as *Pickup on South Street* (Dir: Fuller, 1953) and *Kiss Me Deadly* (Dir: Robert Aldrich, 1955). The latter years of the decade saw Britain's Hammer Studios spearhead a resurgence of gothic horror. Intrigued to know what lay behind the success of another science-fiction horror hybrid, *The Quatermass Xperiment* (Dir: Val Guest, 1955), Hammer commissioned research which indicated horror to be paramount, prompting the production of *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Dir: Terence Fisher, 1957) and *Dracula* (Dir: Fisher, 1958). Returning considerable profits on small budgets, they inaugurated a new wave of gothic horror production, reinterpreting Universal's 1930s films with greater explicitness and in colour.<sup>13</sup> (In passing, we might also note that the attractiveness of many of Hammer's monsters, a quality that led one biographer of the studio's foremost director to entitle his study *The Charm of Evil*, provide several exceptions to Carroll's dictum that the horror monster is invariably monstrous.)

The success of Hammer's productions did not go unnoticed by Hitchcock, whose *Psycho* (1960) is frequently taken as the starting point for the terror film.<sup>14</sup> While this is demonstrably not the case, there is no question that *Psycho* brought terror into the mainstream and gave a fillip to terror film production. Hammer returned the favour by embarking upon their own line of "mini Hitchcock" styled thrillers, beginning with *Scream of Fear* (Dir: Seth Holt, 1960).<sup>15</sup> Perhaps more interesting, however, are films like *Hands of the Ripper* (Dir: Peter Sasdy, 1971) and *Demons of the Mind* (Dir: Peter Sykes, 1972) which place the terror film within gothic settings. Indeed, there is a strong case for considering *Hands of the Ripper*, in which Jack the Ripper's daughter finds herself compelled to kill

<sup>13</sup> For discussions of the British gothic horror cinema of Hammer and others see Pirie and Hutchings.

<sup>14</sup> It is also worth noting that composers working for Hammer and other British horror studios often employed the same sort of experimental and avant-garde techniques as Hitchcock's long-term composer of choice, Bernard Herrmann. See, for example, Larson (1996).

<sup>15</sup> The influence of Henri-Georges Clouzot should also be acknowledged here, with Hammer's earlier psychological thriller *The Snorkel* (Dir: Guy Green, 1958) arguably influenced more by *Les Diaboliques* (Dir: Clouzot, 1955) than anything by Hitchcock to that point.

whenever the suppressed memory of a Freudian “primal scene” (wherein she saw her father murder her mother) is recalled through a specific trigger, as Hammer’s response to Hitchcock’s *Marnie* (1964).

In Italy, meanwhile, director Mario Bava brought the popular crime thriller genre, known as “*gialli*” (yellows) on account of the distinctively coloured covers in which they were published,<sup>16</sup> to the screen with *La Ragazza che sapeva troppo*<sup>17</sup> (1962) and the brutal *Sei donne per l’assassino* (1964) among others. Significantly *Sei donne...* was a West German co-production. This was also the case with arguably the most important continental terror film of the 1960s, Dario Argento’s *L’Uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (1969). Although drawing its actual inspiration from Fredric Brown’s 1949 novel *The Screaming Mimi*,<sup>18</sup> *L’Uccello...* was marketed in Germany as an adaptation of a story by popular thriller writer Edgar Wallace. This in turn highlights the emergence of yet another strain of terror film in the form of “*krimis*” such as *Die Toten Augen von London* (Dir: Alfred Vohrer, 1961) and *Der Hexer* (Dir: Vohrer, 1964), whose use of “sensation film” strategies recalls *Fantômas* and *Dr Mabuse der Spieler*. Indeed, Lang’s final film, *Die Tausend Augen des Dr. Mabuse* (1960) resurrected the character once more in a new, post-war context, while *Scotland Yard jagt Dr Mabuse* (Dir: Paul May, 1963) placed him in the world of the Wallace *krimi*. Though the importance of *krimi* films declined by the early 1970s, the *giallo* continued to grow in popularity and, through such films as *Reazione a catena* (Dir: Bava, 1971), *I Corpi presentano tracce di violenza carnale* (Dir: Sergio Martino, 1974) and *Profondo Rosso* (Dir: Argento, 1975), exerted a noticeable influence upon the subsequent development of North American “slasher” films like *Black Christmas* (Dir: Bob Clark, 1975) and *Dressed to Kill* (Dir: Brian De Palma, 1980). Likewise, if the terror film has rarely been acknowledged by name within contemporary Hollywood, with filmmakers like Jonathan Demme with *The Silence of the Lambs* (1990) and David Fincher with *Se7en* (1995) generally preferring to label their works “psychological thrillers,” there seems little question that it has become increasingly prominent *vis-à-vis* the horror film. What has rarely been recognised, however, is just how long the terror film has actually existed as a genre and, perhaps more significantly, what it has to say to us. It is my hope that these rough notes, though undoubtedly marked by omissions—the recurrence of references to the crime and thriller genres indicating that their relationships with the terror film remain to be worked out, is only

<sup>16</sup> Parallels with *noir* literature are apparent here.

<sup>17</sup> Note the allusion here to Hitchcock’s *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934/1956).

the most obvious—and contradictions—in particular, perhaps, questions of reality and representation—will provide a spur to further investigations.

---

<sup>18</sup> Space considerations prevent a discussion of the relationship between Brown's novel, filmed by Gerd Oswald in 1958, and Hitchcock's *Psycho* here.

## Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1958.
- Bordwell, David. *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP. 1989.
- Berger, Peter and Luckmann, Thomas. *The Social Construction of Reality : A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Penguin. 1967.
- Brottmann, Mikita. *Meat is Murder! An illustrated Guide to Cannibal Culture*. London: Creation. 1997.
- Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*. London: Routledge. 1990.
- Crane, Jonathan Lake. *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE. 1994.
- Dixon, Winston Wheeler. *The Charm of Evil: The Life and Films of Terence Fisher*. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press. 1991.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge. 1970.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany's Historical Imaginary*. London: Routledge. 2000.
- Garfinkel, Harold. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall. 1967.
- Gunning, Tom. 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectators and the Avant-Garde' in Elsaesser, Thomas (ed.) *Early cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*. London: BFI. 1990. 56-63.
- *The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity*. London: BFI. 2000.
- Hanke, Ken. 'The 'lost' horror film series: the Edgar Wallace krimis' in Schneider, Stephen Jay (ed.) *Fear Without Frontiers: Horror Cinema across the Globe*. Godalming: FAB Press. 2003. 111-124.
- Hardy, Phil (ed.). *Overlook Film Encyclopaedia: Horror*. The Overlook Press. 1994.
- *Overlook Film Encyclopaedia: Science Fiction*. The Overlook Press. 1994.
- Hawkings, Joan. *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2000.
- Hutchings, Paul. *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film*. Manchester: Manchester UP. 1993.
- Kalat, David. *The Strange Case of Dr. Mabuse: A Study of the Twelve Films and Five Novels*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland. 2005.

- Larson, Randall D. *Music from the House of Hammer*. New Jersey: Scarecrow. 1996.
- Needham, Gary. 'Playing with genre: defining the Italian *giallo*' in Schneider, Stephen Jay (ed.) *Fear Without Frontiers: Horror Cinema across the Globe*. Godalming: FAB Press. 2003. 135-144.
- Pirie, David. *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema, 1946-1972*. London: Gordon Fraser. 1973.
- Russell, Jamie. *Book of the Dead: The Complete History of Zombie Cinema*. Godalming: FAB Press. 2005.
- Seritt, David. *The Films of Alfred Hitchcock*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1993.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Trans: Richard Howard. Cleveland: Press of Case Western University. 1973.
- Williams, Linda . "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess". *Film Quarterly*. Summer 1991. 2-13.