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# ‘MOST STORIES OF THIS TYPE’: GENRE, HORROR AND MYSTERY IN THE SILENT CINEMA

Mark Jancovich and Shane Brown

*An examination of ‘horror’ in the silent period, one of many genres that is only supposed to have emerged in the 1930s. Through an analysis of press coverage, the article examines a clear vocabulary that was used to describe a specific ‘type’ of film at the time. It also illustrates that ‘horror’ was explicitly used as a generic noun to name this ‘type’ but that, given that ‘horror’ was also a negative term used in censorship campaigns, this term was often avoided, except when ‘horror’ was clearly understood as a ‘hot’ genre. Consequently, this genre was more commonly described as ‘mystery,’ a term that included both ‘horror’ and ‘detective stories,’ terms that were largely seen to be indistinguishable in the period, when both were understood as featuring investigations into the ‘mysterious,’ ‘strange’ and ‘eerie.’ In other words, ‘mystery’ staged a confrontation between rationality and irrationality and in a way that negotiated the perceived transitions from Victorianism to Modernity at the time.*

Genre is usually claimed to be central to Hollywood and other popular cinemas; and although this was no less true of the silent era, there is remarkably little work on genre in this period.<sup>1</sup> Even more oddly, many genres are claimed to be products of the early sound era, with various local explanations being offered for the emergence of each, but little sense being given about why so many genres seem to suddenly appear at the same moment. For example, while the musical is understandably associated with the period after the coming of sound, Richard Maltby claims that the “gangster film” ... was the product of a single season (1930-1) when a series of films were made to exploit a topical issue.<sup>2</sup> However, it is less

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clear why 'romantic comedy' or 'horror' are also supposed to have emerged at the same point.<sup>3</sup> Even in the case of the western, which is generally acknowledged to have existed in the silent period, most research concentrates on the sound period, with Will Wright's classic study explicitly (but inexplicably) starting in 1930.<sup>4</sup> Only the larger and more general categories of 'action/adventure', 'melodrama' and 'comedy' are commonly discussed in relation to silent film.<sup>5</sup>

Conversely, histories of the silent period have paid little attention to genre, partly due to their concentration on 'early' rather than 'silent' cinema, the former term referring to a period prior to the establishment of classical Hollywood norms, and which is supposed to end somewhere between 1907 and 1915.<sup>6</sup> In other words, there is a tendency to keep 'early cinema' separate from Classical Hollywood cinema and to concentrate on periods before 1915, or after 1930, despite the fact that the period 1915-1930 was the Golden Age of Hollywood. Unfortunately, the avoidance of this period has obscured some of the key processes of transition from the 'early' cinema to the Classical cinema of the sound period.

This focus on 'early' cinema is demonstrated by the History of American Cinema series, which has two volumes on the period before 1915, and only one on the period between 1915 and 1928.<sup>7</sup> The first volume hardly discusses film genre, which did not emerge until the 'story film' had become dominant around 1904, but even then the only genres identified are comedy and the crime story.<sup>8</sup> However, even when research on early cinema does tackle genre, it tends to fall into two different trends.

The first trend uses terms that are either far more general, or far more specific, than those usually used in relation to 'film genres' today. For example, there is some talk of animation film, or the cartoon; but elsewhere there are discussions of 'white slavery films', 'prohibition films', 'labour films', 'boxing films', 'sex hygiene films' and 'chase films'.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, these terms may have been in operation within the period, but they are not *genres* in the same sense as musicals, romantic comedies, westerns, science fiction, horror or gangster movies. If this first trend pays close attention to discourses within the period, the second trend uses recognisable genre terms that are drawn from later periods but are then imposed upon the silent period with little or no evidence that these terms were in operation at the time. For example, Miriam Hansen's discussions of horror, melodrama, westerns, the woman's film and gangster movies draws on critical definitions developed in relation to later periods.<sup>10</sup>

One exception to these two trends is Richard Koszarski, probably due to his focus on the period after 1915. However, even here the terms discussed did not have the meanings with which they would be identified later. For example, he discusses a survey which asked audiences to state their preferred genres out of a list that included mystery, melodrama, comedy, historical, sex drama and costume film.<sup>11</sup> Not only has Mark Jancovich demonstrated that, even by the 1940s, mystery was closely related to 'horror', and was associated with the 'mysterious', 'strange' and 'uncanny', but Steve Neale has shown that, prior to the 1970s, melodramas were not family-centred dramas associated with female audiences but usually action stories associated with male viewers.<sup>12</sup> Even then, the sex drama is not a term that seems to resonate today, while later periods usually understand the historical film and the costume film as virtually interchangeable terms, which was clearly not the case in the 1920s, when audiences were asked to state a preference *between* them.

Many of these problems are exemplified by 'horror', given that the genre is not supposed to have emerged until after the success of Universal's *Dracula* in 1931.<sup>13</sup> Horror scholars are therefore divided on how to approach the silent cinema, and many quote Lincoln Geraghty and Jancovich's warning:

If one wants to know how *Trip to the Moon* [Melies, 1902] or *The Phantom of the Opera* [Universal, 1925] were understood within the periods of their original release, one needs to be clear about the precise ways in which they were generically identified at the time, rather than presuming that one can simply draw upon one's own understandings of generic categories.<sup>14</sup>

None the less, as David Annwn Jones points out, few are willing to disown the numerous silent films now seen as 'horror classics' and this has led to various strategies.<sup>15</sup> Some choose to read these films as 'precursors to the Classical Hollywood horror film,' and to explore how they laid the foundations from which the genre would emerge.<sup>16</sup> For example, Gary D. Rhodes offers an account of 'The Birth of the Horror Film' that is careful not to retrospectively impose contemporary understandings of genre onto these films and he explores 'horror-themed' films that 'tried to frighten or shock viewers, or that invoked tropes associated with prior horror-themed entertainment, like haunted houses or ghosts'.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, while he is careful not to read these films teleologically as 'proto-horror' films that are defined in terms of that to which they would give birth, he is not particularly interested in how these films were generically understood in the silent period.<sup>18</sup> An alternative approach is represented by Kendal R. Philips who focuses on the ways in which these films were described at the time, and provides a fascinating history of these 'precursors' and how they related to their social and industrial contexts.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly these critics offer fascinating accounts of the silent period but, as we will demonstrate, they are too quick to accept that the 'horror film' did not exist as a genre until the early 1930s, when it 'gained almost immediate acceptance as the label attached to *Dracula*' and was 'quickly adopted'.<sup>20</sup> However, as Jancovich has argued, *Dracula* was not even the start of a cycle of horror films in the 1930s but it was actually the product of a larger cycle that began in the mid-1920s.<sup>21</sup> Certainly, it transformed this cycle, and gave it greater impetus, but its impact was only ever partial, and later 'horror films' continued to draw on materials from before *Dracula*, such as *The Cat and the Canary* (1927/1930/1939), *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1908/1909/1910/1912/1913/1920/1931/1941), *The Ghost Breaker* (1914/1922/1939), *The Gorilla* (1927/1930/1939), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1914/1921/1929/1931/1939), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923/1939), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925/1943), *The Sea Wolf* (1907/1913/1920/1926/1930/1941) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1910/1913/1915/1916/1917/1945).<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the following essay will explore various questions, the first of which is whether scholars are right in their assumption that 'horror' was not in use as a term before 1931. After all, even Philips concedes that 'horror' was in use but that it had 'only been occasionally used in relation to films before 1931'.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, if horror was used before the release of *Dracula*, this situation raises another question: why didn't it gain 'almost immediate acceptance' before the

release of *Dracula*, given that it was so ‘quickly adopted’ afterwards.<sup>24</sup> This question is given even greater weight given that the term ‘horror’ had long been used in relation to literature and theatre. Furthermore, given the phenomenal success of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1920), and the numerous theatrical horror hits that followed *The Bat* (also 1920), it seems strange that Hollywood took so long to exploit horror materials in the 1920s, and that it was only after 1925 that Hollywood horror production began in earnest. Certainly, there were various individual productions such as Giffith’s *One Exciting Night* and Universal’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* but horror production was tentative until 1925, a situation that needs explanation. Finally, then, whether or not ‘horror’ was used as a term during the silent period, it is still unclear how the ‘precursors’ of the horror film were understood before 1931. If they were *not* understood as horror, how *were* they understood generically; and even if they *were* understood as horror, what did this term mean at the time and which films were associated with it?

To this end, the following essay examines press coverage of the films and the first section follows Rick Altman’s ideas about the difference between ‘generic naming’ and less direct ways in which press discourses ‘imply generic affiliation’.<sup>25</sup> It therefore discusses a clear vocabulary that was at play within the period and the ways in which a series of associated terms were used in relation to a specific ‘type’ of film, a type that, whether or not it was called horror, was associated with a series of novels and plays that were identified as horror at the time. In other words, there is a clear sense that these films were understood generically, even if we still need to be clear about what that genre was called and how it was understood. The second section then moves on to explore the naming of this ‘type’ and demonstrates that the term ‘horror’ had been in use as a generic noun since the early 1910s, at the very least, although it was often used by censors to identify that which they wanted to eradicate.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, it is hardly surprising that the film industry shied away from the term ‘horror’ or that the press did the same, particularly in the early 1920s when the industry was left dangerously exposed by a series of scandals. Nonetheless, there seems to have been two exceptions to this general avoidance. On the one hand, the attack on ‘horror’ was not simply from those external to the industry and some insiders objected to ‘horror films’ on the grounds that it would attract the wrong kind of audiences. On the other hand, as we will show, the term ‘horror’ also appeared at times when explicit naming seemed profitable, i.e. at times when the industry was hoping to cash in on a market *for* ‘horror’ or films marketed *as* ‘horror’.

Finally, the last section explores how these films were understood at the time, and it does so through an examination of the term that was usually used in place of ‘horror’, a term that included horror materials but was not limited to horror – ‘mystery’. In other words, ‘horror’ not only had different meanings from later periods, but it was also associated with materials that would later be seen as separate from it, particularly detective stories. In the silent period, many horror films were investigative narratives; and many detective stories concerned investigations into the ‘mysterious’, ‘eerie’ and ‘strange’. They often featured a confrontation between the modern, scientific mind and traditional, superstitious feelings, between forces of rationality and irrationality. Indeed, this confrontation was a

major issue within the period more generally, given that the period was understood (whether positively or negatively) as one that was moving from Victorianism to Modernity, a process of transformation that was encapsulated in the minds of many by the Scopes Trial of 1926, but was also about new industrial systems and the new consumer culture that was associated with them.<sup>27</sup>

## Genres, types and associations

Of course, one reason that the term 'horror' was 'only used occasionally in relation to films before 1931' may actually be quite simple to answer: as Altman has argued, the explicit 'naming of a genre' is quite rare in marketing and reception materials, given that it 'risks alienating' some viewers even if it might attract others. As a result it is more common for these materials to 'imply generic affiliation rather than actually name a specific genre (excepting films specifically designed to take advantage of a "hot" genre)'.<sup>28</sup> In other words, Altman encourages one not to simply look for the 'naming of a genre' but rather for the various terms through which 'generic affiliation' is implied and for the references to other texts that also suggest a sense of type.

Consequently, when one applies this principle to the silent period, one finds a strong consistency of associated terms and textual references that demonstrates a strong sense of genre, even if this sense is historically specific. For example, numerous films were supposedly designed to generate 'terror' or 'shock', and the term 'shocker' appeared regularly, and clearly seemed to refer to a 'type' that included more films than those to which it was applied. However, the most common series of associated terms were those that identified films as 'eerie', 'weird' and 'creepy'; films that were 'hair-raising', would make your 'flesh creep' or give you the 'heebie jeebies'. The term 'thriller' turned up with considerable regularity but it was not limited to realist crime dramas, but covered a range of films designed to produce a 'thrill', whether this was through vigorous action or the 'shivers' provoked by the 'mysterious,' 'strange' and 'uncanny'. In other words, the 'thriller' was often associated with the 'chiller', both being claimed to make audiences 'shudder' or 'quiver'; or to 'shiver with nerves'. These terms were also linked with a series of others and the bridge was often established through terms such as 'blood-curdling'. Thus, while some films were said to be 'gruesome', this term was associated both with the 'gory', the 'morbid' and the 'macabre' and with the 'shocking', 'grotesque', 'dreadful', 'horrific' or 'horrifying'.

The regularity and consistency of this language suggests that reviewers at the time associated them with a generic 'type', a 'type' with which they were so strongly associated that explicit naming was often unnecessary. On various occasions, however, this sense of generic 'type' became explicit and, as early as 1920, reviewers claimed that this 'type' followed well-established patterns. For example, *One Hour Before Dawn* was supposed to be one of a number of films that 'almost invariably follow the same formula.'<sup>29</sup> Similarly, *The Bat* followed the pattern of 'most stories of this type' while *The Haunted House* conformed to the type but still managed some sense of distinction within it: 'While it is about as impossible as the other stories of its kind, it possesses the virtue of being mildly amusing during

some of its stretches and judging by the demeanour of the audiences at the Paramount it contains sufficient suspense to hold the attention.’<sup>30</sup> Alternatively, *Something Always Happens* (1928) was highly regarded by some reviewers, who claimed that it ‘compares favourably with ‘The Bat,’ ‘The Wizard,’ and other films of the type’: a type which was identified as ‘hair-raising horror’.<sup>31</sup> If this phrase hovers between the adjectival and explicit genre naming, the latter is clearly evident in the title: ‘Horror Film Thrills Audience at Columbia’. *Frankenstein* was also discussed in terms of a ‘type’, with reviewers assessing the ‘audience for this type of film’ and describing it as ‘a stirring grand-guignol type of picture’.<sup>32</sup>

These ‘types’ were also supposed to be distinguished by familiar features that audiences would recognise, whether these were merely presented as features of the ‘type’ or, more pejoratively, as clichés. For example, it was claimed of *The Insidious Dr Fu Manchu* (aka *Dr. Fu Manchu* and *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu*, 1929) that its ‘type and its theme may be seen from the fact that among its props are the before-mentioned [trap] doors, cut telephone wires, peepholes, Limehouse gambling dens, a castle overlooking the sea, poisoned darts, and three Scotland Yard detectives. And, of course, Dr. Fu Manchu.’<sup>33</sup> These features were not simply assumed to be familiar to audiences by the late 1920s but also appear in reviews from the early 1920s, at which point they were already presumed to be familiar. For example, Griffiths’ *One Exciting Night* (1922) was claimed to have ‘a speaking acquaintance with “The Bat”’ and to feature ‘all the mechanics and all the characteristics that go to make’ that kind of entertainment.<sup>34</sup> However, despite its familiar features, *One Exciting Night* was still supposed to be a distinctive film, with a ‘sheer blood-curdling inventiveness’ so that it gave *The Bat* and its theatrical imitators a run for their money: ‘It is just as exciting as “The Bat” and “The Cat and the Canary” and other prize nerve wreckers which have held the American stage in recent years.’ Furthermore, this ‘type’ was also supposed to be recognisable from its familiar features, so that it has ‘everything from creepy hands with long fingers that mysteriously grope at nothing, to doors opening by trick buttons, moving book-cases, door-knobs twisting from unseen hands, and all the other sure-fire motives’.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, *Murder By The Clock* was a tale of ‘secret passages ... and clutching hands galore’; and the hero of *The Spider* was supposed to get his man ‘with the help of disappearing trap doors, sliding panels backstage, groping hands, fire, shadows and a voice from beyond the grave.’<sup>36</sup>

As this discussion indicates, this generic ‘type’ was associated with various literary and theatrical texts, materials that were often explicitly identified as examples of horror within the period; and this raises a further question: if literary and theatrical texts were regularly identified as horror at this time, particularly the texts from which films were adapted, or which they sought to imitate, why was this generic term not used in relation to film before 1931?<sup>37</sup> For example, not only were theatrical horror hits such as *The Bat* and *The Cat and the Canary* cited but other texts were repeatedly used as reference points, too. For example, Edgar Allan Poe’s fiction was frequently invoked, and one review captured the feel of *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* by asking its readers: ‘Do you remember the fear that you felt when you were a guest in “The House of Usher”?’<sup>38</sup> Consequently, while it was conceded that the ‘story of Caligari is entirely dissimilar’, it was claimed that Robert Weine’s film

'awakens the same kind of fear'. Alternatively, *The Gorilla* was associated with Poe in a quite different way, being 'very much as if Mack Sennett in a restrained mood had turned to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and decided to adapt it for the screen'.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, *Alraune* supposedly had a plot 'that would make Edgar Allan Poe hang his innocent head in shame.'<sup>40</sup>

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was adapted several times in the silent period and operated as a common reference point elsewhere. For example, there were three film versions of the Broadway hit, *The Case of Becky* (1915, 1918 and 1922), in which the title character also had a dual personality.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, the 1922 version was said to feature the 'good old Jekyll and Hyde plot', while adverts for the film claimed that it would thrill one 'as completely as "Trilby" and "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" combined!'<sup>42</sup> One reviewer even observed of *The Monster* that it was so similar to Stevenson's story that 'one might as well have a photoplay version of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."<sup>43</sup> Elsewhere, Peter Lorre's child murderer in *M* was described as having 'a Jekyll-and-Hyde nature'; and *The Black Bird* was supposed to 'possess a streak of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'.<sup>44</sup>

Also, it did not go unnoticed that several key films of the period were adaptations of Victor Hugo's fiction. As one reviewer observed of *The Man who Laughs*: 'Carl Laemmle who sponsored "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," and also the French version of "Les Miserables," last night added another pictorial translation of Victor Hugo's work'.<sup>45</sup> Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was also a frequent reference point, as can be seen with *The Golem*: 'like the creature of Frankenstein's creation, the Golem does not remain obedient'.<sup>46</sup> *Metropolis* was said to feature 'something of Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein"', and *The Mad Genius* 'recalls Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein"', although it is even 'more like Du Maurier's "Trilby."<sup>47</sup> Indeed, *Trilby* was not only adapted several times during the silent and early sound periods; but other films were also claimed to resemble it.<sup>48</sup> For example, *The Case of Becky* supposedly had a 'Svengali touch', while the heroine of *The Magician* 'stalks through the picture as Trilby', due to a male villain, whose 'hypnotic force ... compels her to marry him', a villain who 'makes one think of Svengali' whose hypnotic powers dominate Trilby in George Du Maurier's novel.<sup>49</sup>

## Horror, censorship and validation

All of which returns us to a central problem: if 'horror' did not exist as a generic category within the cinema before 1931, this would seem to be an odd situation given its clear currency in relation to other media, media on which films regularly drew for source material. Furthermore, an examination of film reviews from the silent period demonstrates that there were references to 'horror' pictures in the early 1910s, and that the term 'horror' was often placed in inverted commas to stress its status as a term. Of course, it is difficult to go much earlier, given that films were not regularly discussed in print prior to 1910. For example, regular reviews of films did not start until 1907, when *Moving Picture World* started production, although *Variety* began to publish film reviews soon after in 1908. Reviews in the mainstream press started even later. For example, the *New York Times* started to review films in the mid 1910s but only provided regular coverage by the 1920s.



However, as early as 1915, newspapers were using ‘horror’ as a generic term in their reviews. For example, a review of *When The Mind Sleeps* uses ‘horror’ to describe a particular ‘type’ of drama: ‘The failing of horror as entertainment lies in the fact that it is never very far from disgust.’<sup>50</sup> But this use also presents ‘horror’ as a problematic genre. As early as the Gothic novel, Mrs. Radcliffe had also used the term ‘horror’ in a pejorative sense and distinguished it from ‘terror’, which she presented as superior, a distinction that is implied by another review from the same year.<sup>51</sup> This review refers to *The Secret Room*, which is identified as a ‘Picture of Horror’, and praised for its ‘happy ending’, without which the film would have been ‘insufferable from sheer horror’.<sup>52</sup> In other words, the review is a positive one that presents the film as distinctive: ‘We have only seen three or four other film offerings portraying horror that were as effective.’ Furthermore, the film’s horrors are associated with Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, while the term ‘terror’ is used to distance them from the negative associations of ‘horror’: ‘People have thought up situations of terror before this and even put them into pictures – psychological, devilish situations that were born on some blasted heath where the soul loses its grip and becomes the naked play of dominations’.<sup>53</sup>

In this way, these reviews suggest one reason that ‘horror’ was rarely used as a term – its cultural status. If horror was associated with legitimate culture by some, the term ‘horror’ also appears in news stories about campaigns for film censorship. In 1913, one headline, “Cut Out Shudders” Say Film Censors’, implies a generic affiliation, but the article is explicit that censors were targeting something called “horror” pictures.<sup>54</sup> The item concerns the Ohio moving picture censors, and it was reported that they had ‘declared that no ‘horror’ pictures could be shown’ and that this would mean ‘the virtual elimination of pistols and knives, murder scenes, suicides, deathbed struggles, brutality portrayals and all other things that shock delicate sensibilities and leave an unpleasing impression on the mind.’ It also stressed that this attack on ‘horror’ pictures would have a broader impact and that ‘the representation of a disgusting barroom might not be a horror picture but it would be cut out immediately by the ‘no shudder’ rule.’

A similar situation was also reported by *Variety* in 1921, when the New York Governor declared himself in support of film censorship and, while he did not directly target ‘horror’ pictures, he identified them as especially problematic:

The element of sex is used in a vicious way in motion pictures. It makes a vicious appeal to young people. The sex element passes over the heads of younger children, so that they are not harmed by it – but the horror pictures, the blood-and-thunder serials, are just as bad. They have an evil effect on both young and child.<sup>55</sup>

One interesting feature here is the explicit association of horror with the popular serials of the 1910s, particularly given that, as we will see later, the horror films of the late 1920s were overtly associated with these serials.

As a result, many in the film industry learned to associate ‘horror’ with precisely the materials that needed to be avoided so as not to antagonise the censors. In an interview with J Stuart Blackton, vice-president and secretary of Vitagraph, he explicitly stated his belief that the public ‘want red meat and they want it raw’

but he also claimed that the industry no longer ‘yielded to the public clamor for rampant sensationalism’ but instead were working with film censors to manage the handling of violence.<sup>56</sup> For example, he described a scene from a recent western in which a ‘crime is merely suggested’ so that ‘all the horror and brutality’ is ‘eliminated’. However, this article also expresses some ambivalence about this process. While Vitagraph was a company that directly responded to censorship in the later 1900s and tried to court respectable middle class audiences, there was also the sense that censorship might also have its dangers: ‘In Chicago, because there is no well-regulated, intelligent censorship such as we rejoice in in New York, the police department censors the films. All crime is suppressed – “cut out” bodily. They cut out the killing of Julius Caesar. Ye gods!’<sup>57</sup>

In other words, the pressure to clean up the movies did not just come from outside the industry; and many within the industry were actively campaigning for self-censorship in order to achieve respectability and so attract (rather than alienate) lucrative middle class audiences. As one commentator put it: ‘the censors need no apologist. Their work speaks for itself in the betterment of the present production of censored film as compared with the work of those manufacturers who “dare not submit” their films to the body.’<sup>58</sup> However, it was acknowledged that censorship had its own problems and that it was bound to be seen as ‘too liberal to please the narrow-minded, too narrow-minded to please those who demand blood and thunder’. Furthermore, if the former were dismissed as ‘prigs’, and those who ‘demand blood and thunder’ were condemned as ‘degenerates’, the reference to ‘blood and thunder’, as we have already seen, was directly associated with ‘the horror pictures’.<sup>59</sup>

These tensions were explicitly demonstrated in relation to Universal’s production of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*; and Universal’s head, Carl Laemmle, overtly addressed them when he announced that he was filming Victor Hugo’s story. One article therefore quoted him as follows:

‘There’s a storm coming and I have a hunch that I am going to be the center of it, because I am about to commit a crime which probably will bring a storm of criticism and indignation down upon my head.

I am going to take liberties with Victor Hugo!’<sup>60</sup>

Of course, his justification was that, despite being ‘now recognized as one of the literary world’s greatest classics’, Hugo’s novel ‘was written for an age which licked up red meat. So he packed his story full of lust and blood and thunder and gruesome, grisly, ghoulish, to say nothing of gory stuff.’ Interestingly, while he acknowledges that this kind of material was still appropriate in other media, he claimed that it was inappropriate in cinema: ‘today’s conditions are different. The public still likes dripping red meat in its literature and on its stage, but not on its screen.’ In other words, Laemmle recognised that, if he didn’t make changes to *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, he would incur the censors’ wrath; but also that, if he did make changes, he might be accused of violating art.

Inevitably, the film did not please everyone but Laemmle was wrong about those who would object to the film. Indeed, for some critics, the film was ‘conclusive evidence of the motion picture’s indisputable conquest of the realm of real art’ and ‘one of the best motion pictures’.<sup>61</sup> The *New York Times* was less

effusive but still declared it as ‘a strong production’.<sup>62</sup> In fact, the reviewer felt that the story wasn’t even the key feature of the film and that it was ‘subservient to the atmosphere and the acting.’ In short, the film was recommended as one that ‘will appeal to all those who are interested in fine screen acting, artistic settings and a remarkable handling of crowds’, although it did add one condition: it was only for those ‘who don’t mind a grotesque figure and a grim atmosphere.’ Nonetheless, the implication was that most audiences would be more motivated by the former considerations and that those who objected to the grotesque and the grim would not just be missing something but had the wrong priorities.

However, if these reviews praised *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* as an artistic achievement, *Variety’s* review took a quite different position and declared Laemmle’s changes to be insufficient. Also, it did not agree that the virtues of the film outweighed its grotesque or grim features. The film was therefore described as ‘a two-hour nightmare’ that was ‘murderous, hideous and repulsive.’<sup>63</sup> Parents were warned that their children would not be able to ‘stand its morbid scenes’ and *everyone* was warned that the film provided no entertainment but was rather ‘misery all of the time, nothing but misery, tiresome, loathsome misery that doesn’t make you feel any the better for it.’ Laemmle’s changes were therefore seen as inadequate so that, while some ‘gore’ might have been cut, ‘sufficient was retained’ to ensure that it was ‘gory nearly all the way’.

In this context, it is no wonder that marketing and reviews avoided the term ‘horror’ but, despite this avoidance, the term was still in use during the early 1920s. For example, another explicit (and non-pejorative) reference can be found in the British press during the early 1920s. The reference is a small one about an actor, Jack Jarman, who had made ‘an attempt at Grand Guignol, and appeared in one of these “horror” pictures that Screenplays are making.’<sup>64</sup> This reference was made during a relatively brief (but highly influential) period in the UK, during which horror could be described as a ‘hot’ genre in Altman’s terms. It was not only the period during which *The Bat* and *The Cat and the Canary* were huge successes on the Broadway stage but the Grand Guignol were performing at the Little Theatre in London’s West End.<sup>65</sup> Jack Jarman’s ‘attempt at Grand Guignol’ were therefore part of a larger effort by Screenplays, a British production company, which sought to cash in on the notoriety of the Grand Guignol performances with around twenty-five short films that were explicitly branded as ‘Grand Guignol’. Furthermore, although the theatrical performances were soon curtailed due to pressure from the censors, and Screenplays quickly abandoned this brand of filmmaking, its influence was immense in Britain. For example, figures associated with the Grand Guignol films migrated to materials that repackaged their appeals within more respectable materials. One instance is Fred Paul, who directed all of the Grand Guignol shorts and, following their demise, moved straight into the role of Nayland Smith in Stoll’s *Fu Manchu* serials. Stoll also made a series of Sherlock Holmes films, which even had the distinction of achieving cinematic releases in the US, where they were clearly associated with horror. For example, a US review of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* described the film as one in which ‘the master of Baskerville Hall [is] worried over the ghostly hound which has haunted his family for generations’ and claimed that it achieves ‘an intensity of scene sufficient to

thrill everyone'.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, as Laraine Porter claims, these films were crucial to the British film industry in the early 1920s, 'when many small companies and lone producers went bankrupt and the industry was sustained by shorter films and film series', of which she gives special mention to the Grand Guignol shorts, the Fu Manchu series and the Sherlock Holmes films.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the term 'horror' appears in the late 1920s, another period when the genre was, in Altman's terms, a 'hot' one. As we have seen, a series of theatrical horror productions had enjoyed phenomenal success on the Broadway stage in the early 1920s and, by the mid-1920s, the publishing industry also was responding to a burgeoning market for horror materials.<sup>68</sup> But despite the phenomenal success of John Barrymore's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the studios were slow to develop horror productions in the early 1920s. Universal did release *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in 1923 and *The Phantom of the Opera* followed in 1925, but both of these were legitimated through their historical and literary materials. One article was even candid about the censor's leniency towards 'the pictures of historical foundation'.<sup>69</sup> It is therefore likely that censorship was responsible for retarding Hollywood horror production in the early 1920s, particularly given that the industry was desperately trying to repair its reputation after a series of high profiles scandals. Consequently, it took nearly five years before the industry filmed the two key horror plays of the early 1920s, *The Bat* and *The Cat and the Canary*.

After 1925, however, Hollywood's production of horror rapidly gained momentum and reference to 'horror' became increasingly overt. Certainly, an association with horror occurred earlier, with one reviewer praising *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* on the grounds that the 'enthraling horror of it remains with me yet'.<sup>70</sup> Only a year later, *Picture-Play* called *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* a 'tale of horror'.<sup>71</sup> Even more clearly, *A Blind Bargain* was described as: 'Another addition to the "horror" situation so prevalent in fiction, theatre and on the screen for the past year'; while *The Phantom of the Opera* was clearly identified as 'another horror' from Universal Pictures.<sup>72</sup> However, it was not until the late 1920s that critics were starting to regularly use 'horror' as a generic term. Certainly, it sometimes had negative associations and Jones discusses a review of *The Wizard* from 1927 which explicitly used 'horror' as a generic category and was also clear that it was not a new category: 'More horror. Laid on thick. But the great American public brought it on themselves. They "went" for the serials back in the early days of screendom, and it looks as if the cycle has come around again.'<sup>73</sup> Similarly, the year before 'horror' was supposedly coined as a term, *The Cat Creeps* (a sound remake of *The Cat and the Canary*) was explicitly identified as 'the talking version of the horror story'.<sup>74</sup> However, between *The Wizard* and *The Cat Creeps*, 'horror' was increasingly used as a noun term in reviews, even if it sometimes hovered between adjectival description and a generic noun. In 1923, the term was largely used to imply an element within a film, rather than a 'type' of film, so that *Second Fiddle* was commended for its 'trick camera work that puts a touch of horror' to the film.<sup>75</sup> Alternatively, one Italian film, *Through the Shadows*, was attacked in 1924 for being all 'black horror and nastiness' in which 'there is no promise of happiness to come.'<sup>76</sup> Conversely, the sound version of Chaney's *The Unholy Three* was praised for 'its increasing overtone of horror'.<sup>77</sup>

However, by the mid 1920s, 'horror' started to be used to describe a quality that defined films, rather than elements within them. For example, *The Magician* was criticized on the grounds that it does 'not stir the imagination or fill one with horror', the implication being that it *should* have filled one with horror.<sup>78</sup> Alternatively, *The Man Who Laughs* was 'a gruesome tale in which the horrors are possibly moderated but none the less disturbing'; while *Nosferatu* is defined by 'the horror of the chief figure'.<sup>79</sup> This process can be seen most clearly in relation to Lon Chaney's career. As early as 1925, a profile on him in *Picturegoer* featured an illustration with the caption: 'Planning fresh horrors for his victims.'<sup>80</sup> Two years later, the same magazine directly associated him with 'horror':

His new releases clearly accentuate this peculiar quality of Chaney's appeal. They form a gradual accumulation of horror upon horror; a rising crescendo of crime, culminating in a wild orgy of Black Magic.<sup>81</sup>

Here 'horror' is still a 'quality' of the performer, rather than a 'type' of film, but it is a quality that was supposedly central to Chaney's appeal and around which his films were increasingly organised. By 1930, then, his earlier films were directly associated with horror so that the sound version of *The Phantom of the Opera* features 'all the horrors of the ghost who haunted the passages of the Paris theatre depicted with sonorous realism'.<sup>82</sup>

If the term 'horror' was used more explicitly in the period, it was also used nostalgically so that the films of the late 1920s were often explicitly associated with an earlier period of horror productions, the phenomenally successful serials of the 1910s such as *The Perils of Pauline*, *The Exploits of Elaine*, *The Fatal Ring*, *The House of Hate*, *The Iron Claw* and *The Black Secret*. These titles clearly 'imply generic affiliation' with 'horror', but this affiliation is even more emphatic in episode titles. *The Exploits of Elaine*, for example, featured episodes that included 'The Clutching Hand', 'The Poisoned Room', 'The Vampire', 'The Death Ray', and 'The Devil Worshippers'; while *The House of Hate* had episodes entitled, 'The Hooded Terror', 'The Haunt of Evil', 'The Vials of Death' and 'The Death Switch'. Furthermore, Pearl White's adversaries were named Wu Fang, The Iron Claw and the Hooded Terror.

Even the trade press stressed these associations with horror. For example, *Picture-Play* claimed that *The House of Hate* had 'an excellent element of mystery introduced in the person of the *Hooded Terror*, whose counterpart was found in "The Hidden Hand," "The Iron Claw," et cetera.'<sup>83</sup> If horror is not explicitly mentioned here, this is partly because this review was trying to defend the series against criticism, and elsewhere we find comments that also acknowledge criticisms of the serials while also trying to defend them to exhibitors: 'The story is, of course, melodramatic to the last degree, but is melodrama of a sort which has a wide appeal.'<sup>84</sup> Nonetheless, the term 'horror' was used explicitly in attacks on these serials as we have seen; and *Motion Picture Magazine* claimed that 'half-cooked serials are unfit for public consumption' and asked 'why slather the public with tawdry "blood and thunder" ... Practically all the continued plays that are now on arouse all of the baser emotions, such as horror, fear, prejudice and bigotry.'<sup>85</sup> Similarly, a letter to the editor of *Motion Picture Magazine* bemoaned that Pearl

White was condemned to 'the same old succession of dare-devil perils and blood-curdling thrillers', which had reduced 'her formerly expressive face' to only 'two emotions ... horror when she faces danger, and relief when it is done.'<sup>86</sup>

Even by the late 1920s, some commentators used these serials as a stick to beat contemporary films. For example, *The Magician* was described as 'a very slow moving, draggy picture that has but one single thrill and that typical of the old-days when the serials were the feature attractions of the average picture bills.'<sup>87</sup> However, many others remembered the serials affectionately, and compared recent films with them unfavourably:

With the possible exception of Paul Leni's 'The Cat and the Canary,' mystery pictures are invariably rather tame. They don't thrill the spectators as much as the old-fashioned serial, chiefly because the tale tellers of the screen revel in surprises without the vaguest suggestion of possibility.<sup>88</sup>

Here, there is a clear nostalgia for what was now seen as the innocent vitality of the serials, and this nostalgia can also be seen in *Film Daily's* review of *Seven Footprints to Satan*, which also identifies the serials with horror. Consequently, while the paper identifies the 1929 production as a 'Mystery Melodrama', it declares that it is the 'best nightmare we have seen in pictures since they quit making the horror serials.'<sup>89</sup>

## Horror, detection and mystery

If the term 'horror' pictures was present in the silent period, this does not mean that it had the same meanings as in later periods; and the term commonly used in its place was 'mystery'. This term often refers to detective fiction today but, during the early twentieth-century, it was applied to both detective and horror films, which were not seen as separate genres. On the contrary, many horror stories were tales of detection, in which the protagonists investigate mysterious events; while many detectives explored cases that seemed to defy rational explanation, and were therefore mysterious and potentially supernatural. Furthermore, the crimes investigated were not simple breaches of the law but often shocking, horrific and monstrous acts.

This rational investigation of the uncanny can be seen in many films of the period. For example, the pressbook for *The Devil Stone* described it as 'a drama of weird fascination', a 'detective story' about a supposedly cursed jewel. Furthermore, the detective is a scientific one, 'an expert in criminology', and the story warns against the 'world-old stumbling block of man – superstition'.<sup>90</sup> Alternatively, *The Haunted Bedroom* features a supposedly haunted mansion and a 'young newspaper girl' who turns detective when she is 'sent down to find out what the place is haunted by'.<sup>91</sup> In the process, she 'matches wits with a detective' but soon outsmarts him when she 'goes into the haunted house and clears up the mystery.' A similar plot can also be found in *A Midnight Bell*, when the hero gets 'dumped in a country town where ghosts were supposed to inhabit an abandoned church' and, as in other cases, the investigation of the seemingly supernatural reveals that it has a rational explanation – it is an illusion created by criminals

‘planning to rob [the town’s] bank’.<sup>92</sup> This revelation can also be seen in *The Ghost Breaker* and, as a review of the 1922 version claimed, ‘the best of the story’ concerns ‘the hero’s efforts to solve the mystery of the haunted castle’, a mystery that is due to another criminal hoax.<sup>93</sup>

This lack of distinction between detective and horror stories can also be seen in the figure of the criminal. For example, *The Bat* is a key ‘precursor’ of the horror film and revolves around a ‘mysterious criminal’.<sup>94</sup> However, this story is also seen as a key example of crime fiction today.<sup>95</sup> Even at the time, *Variety* suggested of one actor that ‘someone should feature him in a series of detective thrillers for he suggests the bearing, urbanity and lightening mind one usually expects in master criminals.’<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, many criminals were presented as homicidal maniacs. For example, Lon Chaney’s Erik in *The Phantom of the Opera* was claimed to be ‘an insane criminal’, while the heroine of *The Cat and the Canary* was menaced by ‘a homicidal maniac’.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Lon Chaney plays a ‘crazed surgeon’ in *The Monster*; and Paul Wegener plays a ‘doctor of medicine who has gone daft on magic’ in *The Magician*.<sup>98</sup>

In 1928, then, *Motion Picture Classic* featured an article, ‘Gorifying the American Screen’, the subtitle of which claimed that ‘A Murder a Minute is the Goal of the Ghoulish Shriekies’.<sup>99</sup> Not only does this title clearly link detective and horror films but the article featured an interview with S. S. Van Dine, creator of Philo Vance, the gentleman detective. In other words, the article made no distinction between detective and horror films, and discusses a range of films that include adaptations of Van Dine’s *The Canary Murder Case* and *The Greene Murder Case*; an adaptation of Edgar Wallace’s *The Terror*; *The Last Warning*; *The Mad Doctor*; *Seven Footprints to Satan*; and *The Haunted House*. These films were all seen as part of ‘an epidemic of sudden and violent death’ in which ‘murder occurs under mysterious circumstances’, an epidemic of ‘murder, mystery and terror’ that will have ‘fans paying their money to enjoy a restful evening of blood-curdling screams, hair-raising moans, maniacal laughter, shots and the dull thump of falling bodies.’

The reference to *The Last Warning* is particularly useful here, given its status as a classic ‘precursor’ of the horror film that was directed by Leni and ‘is something of the order of ‘The Cat and the Canary,’ with as much mystery and as much excitement.’<sup>100</sup> Nonetheless, it was still seen as a detective story, which not only features a murder, but in which ‘a friend of the murdered man is determined to find the murderer’. Similarly, *The Terror* was an adaptation of an Edgar Wallace play which was claimed to be ‘Griffith’s “One Exciting Night,” United Artists’ “The Bat,” and Universal’s “The Cat and the Canary,” – all rolled into one.’<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, despite the title, it is also a detective story about ‘the efforts of the authorities to learn the identity of a murderer, who mutilated his victims horribly’, although this also means that it ‘sends chills down one’s spine.’ Finally, *The Unholy Three* is yet another classic ‘precursor’ of the horror film and although it was described as ‘a crook melodrama’ on its original release, these crooks were associated with the gruesome and grotesque through their identifications as ‘freaks’ and reviewers praised its ‘exceptionally weird and dramatic atmosphere’.<sup>102</sup>

Elsewhere, some classic ‘precursors’ of the horror film inverted the dynamics of the haunted house films and featured detectives who create an illusion of the

supernatural in order to *solve* a crime. For example, in *London After Midnight*, Lon Chaney 'is perceived in a straight part, Burke of Scotland Yard, the genius who solves a murder mystery five years after he had declared it to be a case of suicide.'<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless, the film is read as a classic precursor of the horror film today and reviews at the time stressed that one character takes 'the form of a vampire' and Lon Chaney's detective 'stages two weird scenes and hypnotises two or three persons, all with the idea of solving the mystery.' Similarly, *The Spider* is a 'murder mystery' but also a 'spookie', and features a key 'scare sequence' in which 'a séance [is] staged by a magician to trap the killer', a sequence 'ghastly enough to tickle most auditor's spines.'<sup>104</sup>

Other films also feature the conflict between the rational and that which seems to defy rational explanation. For example, this conflict is a common feature of Sherlock Holmes films, such as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which one advert for the 1922 version (made by the British company, Stoll) referred to as 'Conan Doyle's Greatest Mystery Story', while reviewers praised the ways in which its director 'handles the more uncanny bits', particularly given the opportunities for 'gruesome touches'.<sup>105</sup> The film is even described as one in which Holmes is 'horror-stricken' and about which exhibitors were advised to stress the 'mystery and thrills' and make 'your atmosphere creepy.'<sup>106</sup> Alternatively, when John Barrymore played the great detective shortly after in another production that was made in the US, reviewers complained that the film 'digresses' from the Conan Doyle stories through its *omission* of 'most of the unpleasant situations', although marketing for the film was clearly aware of this problem and stressed its more gruesome elements through prominent images of human skulls.<sup>107</sup>

The conflict between the rational and irrational is also registered by the frequent reference to investigators as 'scientific detectives.' For example, *The Winged Mystery* features 'a scientific detective', as does *The Devil Stone*; while *Bella Donna* revolves around a detective who is associated with science through his medical training and is described as 'a sort of Sherlock Holmes physician'.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, in *De Luxe Annie*, the criminal's pathology is literally medicalised so that the central female character is not simply described as a 'dual-personality' but one whose husband 'dabbles in detective work', unaware that his prey is also his wife.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, once he has solved the mystery and discovered the identity of the woman whom he has been pursuing, 'he persuades her to give in and undergo the operation necessary to bring her back to her real self.'<sup>110</sup> In other words, her criminal behaviour is a medical condition and science not only identifies the criminal but cures them of their criminality. Even *Dracula's* Van Helsing is referred to as a 'scientist' who 'with his graphic details of the vampirish traits and antidotes almost turns the implausible to the plausible'.<sup>111</sup>

Finally, of course, as has already been implied, most of the detectives are fairly uncanny figures. Many stories, such as those featuring Holmes and Moriarty, or Nayland Smith and Fu Manchu, revolve around detectives and villains that overtly mirror one another. Both are strange and mysterious. Indeed, a brilliant detective's key skill is their ability to see that which is invisible to others. For example, a review of *Sherlock Holmes' Fatal Hour* (the US title of the British-made *The Sleeping Cardinal*) refers to 'the uncanny way Sherlock Holmes has of



unravelling a mystery', while a review of *The Devil Stone* refers to its detective's 'almost uncanny disclosure of circumstances in the investigation'.<sup>112</sup>

In this context then, it should hardly be surprising that Paramount's adaptation of the Philo Vance novel, *The Bishop Murder Case*, was described as an 'occasionally spine-chilling narrative' that was so effective that many in the audience were 'impelled to scream'.<sup>113</sup> This context might also explain why, on *Frankenstein's* original release in 1931, one review assumed that the 'audience for this type of film is probably the detective story readers'.<sup>114</sup>

## Conclusion

Consequently, there were two main reasons that the term 'horror' did not gain 'almost immediate acceptance' before *Dracula*. First, it was associated with censorship discourse and largely avoided as a term; but by the middle of the decade the stigma began to lift and audiences started to celebrate materials that had once been problematic. Second, horror was understood as part of a larger category of mystery, which did not have the same negative connotations and was in common usage across a range of different media. In other words, the use of the term mystery avoided the problematic associations of 'horror' but it was not simply used as a cover. On the contrary, mystery was a key generic category in the period, as Koszarski demonstrates, and even book and theatre reviews at the time used mystery more often than horror, at least until the late 1920s.

This suggests that horror gained 'almost immediate acceptance' and was 'quickly adopted' after the release of *Dracula* due to its status as a 'hot' genre at the time. However, this claim requires qualification: certainly, the term 'horror' was more prevalent after 1931 but it did not gain 'almost immediate acceptance'. On the contrary, mystery continued to be a key terminology well into the 1940s. If there was a process through which horror pictures, detective films and thrillers began to separate from one another during the 1930s and 1940s, this was a gradual process and, we would argue, it is still not a complete one. Academic criticism may present these genres as distinct from one another, but mainstream media continue to associate them through the term mystery. This may happen less often and, when it does occur, it is usually in specific conditions of reception; but it is also the case that the explicit 'naming of a genre' is still quite rare.

As we have seen, then, there was an established vocabulary of terms used to suggest generic affiliations in the silent period, and many of the films now seen as classic silent horror films, or as 'precursors' of the horror film, were discussed in relation to these terms and the generic 'type' of film associated with them. These films were also associated with literary and theatrical materials often described as horror at the time. In other words, the term 'horror' did exist in the silent period, and even in relationship to film, but reviewers and others tended to avoid it, given that it had problematic associations. By the end of the 1920s, however, there was not only a new wave of films that exploited the market for horror but its popularity with audiences meant that both the industry and the reviewers increasingly used the term 'horror' and even began to nostalgically celebrate the materials that censors had attacked previously.

However, while horror may have been in use as a generic term, the more commonly used generic term was ‘mystery’, a category that not only included detective fiction but demonstrates that horror and detective fiction were seen as virtually synonymous within this period. In other words, mystery films frequently involved mysterious events and their investigation, and therefore staged a confrontation between rationality and that which seemed to defy rational explanation. Even *Dracula’s* Van Helsing was therefore described as a ‘scientist’, given that his investigations into vampirism sought to distinguish between primitive superstition and verifiable fact. His presence is therefore an attempt to reconcile science and religion at a time of intense conflict and competition between them.

### Disclosure statement

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### Notes

1. See, for example, Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2003).
2. Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 111. This example is even stranger, given that the ‘topicality’ of the gangster predates this season, and one of the season’s key films was an adaptation of W. R. Burnett’s *Little Caesar*, a novel of 1929 that was itself a response to debates about the gangster that dated back to the early 1920s. In other words, the ‘roaring twenties’ had been the era of the gangster, during which figures such as Al Capone were major public figures. However, by 1930, various events had intensified campaigns against organised crime, and Capone was convicted in June 1931. In other words, the period that Maltby associates with the birth of the gangster genre is not the heyday of the gangster but that of the Federal campaign against Capone: *Little Caesar* was released in May 1931 and *Public Enemy* in April 1931. Once again, then, even if 1930–1931 was the period in which the gangster film emerged as a genre, the gangster was a recognisable figure in films before 1930 and there has been little investigation of how the films associated with this figure were understood generically before 1930. For a notable exception, see Jonathan Munby, *Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster Film from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).
3. For examples related to romantic comedy, see Bruce Babington and Peter Evans, *Affairs to Remember: The Hollywood Comedy of the Sexes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1991); Kathrina Glitre, *Hollywood Romantic Comedy: States of Union, 1934–65* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2006); and Tamar Jeffers McDonald, *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl* (London: Wallflower 2007). For examples related to horror, see Harry M. Benshoff, ‘Horror Before ‘The Horror Film’’, in *A Companion to the Horror Film*, ed. Harry M. Benshoff (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwells 2014), 207–24; Peter Hutchings, *The Horror Film* (London: Longmans 2004); Kendal R. Phillips, *A Place of Darkness: The Rhetoric*

- of *Horror in Early American Cinema* (Austin: J kv University of Texas Press 2018); and Gary D. Rhodes, *The Birth of the American Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2018).
4. Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1975).
  5. See, for example, Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press NJ, 2000); Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press 2001); and Charles Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press NJ, 1989).
  6. See, for example, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge 1988); and Thomas Elsaesser, ed., *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute 1990).
  7. Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990); Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907–1915* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990); and Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990).
  8. Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*.
  9. Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*; Lee Grieveson, *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2004); Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema*; Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls*.
  10. Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press MA, 1991).
  11. Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*.
  12. Mark Jancovich, The Meaning of Mystery: Genre, Marketing and the Universal Sherlock Holmes Series of the 1940s, *Film International* 3, no. 17 (2005): 34–45; and Steve Neale, Melo-Talk: On the Meaning and Use of the Term 'Melodrama' in the American Trade Press, *Velvet Light Trap* 32 (1993): 66–89.
  13. See for example Benshoff, Horror Before 'The Horror Film'; Hutchings, *The Horror Film*; Phillips, *A Place of Darkness*; and Rhodes, *The Birth of the American Horror Film*.
  14. Quoted in Rhodes, *The Birth of the American Horror Film*, 9.
  15. David Annwn Jones, *Re-envisioning the First Age of Cinematic Horror, 1896–1934: Quanta of Fear* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press 2018).
  16. Benshoff, Horror Before 'The Horror Film', 214.
  17. Rhodes, *The Birth of the American Horror Film*.
  18. *Ibid.*, 10.
  19. Phillips, *A Place of Darkness*.
  20. Phillips, *A Place of Darkness*, 2. See also Gary D. Rhodes, 'Horror Film': How the Term Came to Be, *Monstrum* 1, no. 1 (2018), online, no page numbers.
  21. Mark Jancovich, Hollywood Gothic, 1930–1960, in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic Vol. III*, ed. Catherine Spooner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press forthcoming).

22. It should also be noted that this list includes films made within different national contexts and that it demonstrates the international traffic in these materials during this period. For example, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was originally a British novel but was adapted numerous times by British, German and Hollywood companies between 1914 and 1939. Furthermore, as will become clear, many horror films from the UK and the continent were reviewed by the US press at the time, and were clearly understood as key reference points that were crucial to an understanding of Hollywood productions at the time.
23. Philips, *A Place of Darkness*, 2.
24. Ibid.
25. Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute 1999), 128.
26. For more on censorship in the period see, Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making American Cinema, 1900–1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1999); Matthew Bernstein, ed., *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1999); Lee Grievson, *Policing Cinema*; Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*; William Uricchio and Roberta E. Pearson, *Reframing Culture: The Case of the Vitagraph Quality Films* (New Haven: Yale University Press CT, 1993).
27. See for example, Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill 1976); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart 1971); Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1980); Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books 1984).
28. Altman, *Film/Genre*, 128.
29. Anon, The Screen, (Review of *One Hour Before Dawn*), *New York Times*, July 12, 1920, 12.
30. Mordaunt Hall, Sound and Spookery, (Review of *The Haunted House*), *New York Times*, December 17, 1928, 23.
31. Anon, Horror Film Thrills Audience at Columbia, *The Warren Tribune*, August 14, 1928, 3.
32. Rush., Review of *Frankenstein*, *Variety*, December 8, 1931, 14; and Mordaunt Hall, A Man-Made Monster in Grand Guignol Film, (Review of *Frankenstein*), *New York Times*, December 5, 1931, 21.
33. Anon, Movie Melodrama, (Review of *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* aka *Dr. Fu Manchu* and *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu*), *New York Times*, July 22, 1929, 17.
34. Anon, Newspaper Opinions, *Film Daily*, October 2, 1922, 4.
35. Anon, Griffith's Newest Has Thrills, Hokum and a Great Storm, *The Film Daily*, October 29, 1922, 2.
36. L. N., The Art of Murder, (Review of *Murder by the Clock*), *New York Times*, July 18, 1931, 16; and A. D. R., Magic and Murder, (Review of *The Spider*), *New York Times*, September 5, 1931, 7.
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