Horror London

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'What difference!'

The society lady looks down on the city from the balcony of her plush apartment. 'Isn't it romantic to have the Thames lapping at your very threshold,' she tells her companion. 'Sings me to sleep every night, positively.' She looks in a different direction. 'That's the worst district of London over there. Knife you for a shilling, positively. What difference!' A wolf – or rather a werewolf as this is a scene from *Werewolf of London* (1935) – howls mournfully from the streets below.

Welcome to Horror London, or at least to a supremely conventional example of the best-known version of it. Picturesque but dangerous, London streets such as these show up in numerous literary and cinematic horror fictions, where they provide the location for the murderous acts of the likes of Jekyll/Hyde, Jack the Ripper and their many monstrous counterparts, including here a werewolf. It is a version of London that is firmly bound to an idea of the city as a site for jarring juxtapositions, unnerving contrasts and an exciting array of differences. It is also wedded to a sense of the Victorian, even in a modern-set film like *Werewolf of London* in which the journey from comfortably bourgeois locations into London's dark side is presented through encounters with anachronistic Victorian settings and types.

There is more to Horror London than this, however. It is easy to find horror fictions that engage with London in markedly different ways from *Werewolf of London*, both within and outside of a Victorian gothic approach. This arguably reflects the variety and mutability of London itself as a location as well as a changeability within the horror genre as certain types of horror stories come into and go out of fashion. Because of this, Horror London, for all its apparent conventionality and familiarity, is difficult to sum up. It is probably best seen not

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as a specific and distinctive tradition, however one defines this, but instead as a network of associations that are caught up in broader generic and discursive histories. Horror London narratives tend to exist in multiple contexts, relating themselves not just to other non-horror representations of London but also to horror's own strategies for deploying space and location. It is certainly the case, for instance, that horror narratives are, unlike, say, the western or film noir, not dependent on any particular type of location; they can be set anywhere (any country, any city, small town, village, under water, in space) and at any time. Bearing this in mind, lurking within any Horror London story, sometimes explicitly, sometimes less so, is the prospect of an elsewhere, a not-London where the events in question might be played out (or have already been played out in another narrative) instead.

This article will engage with Horror London in terms of particular instances of it, not just because this permits an attention to nuance and detail that is sometimes lost in broader based and more general approaches but also because it is precisely in the particular that Horror London is constantly being created and recreated. There are many examples of Horror London, in the cinema as well as in literature and television, to the extent that the city has acquired an iconic presence within the genre. However, this piece will not attempt to survey all of them or even most of them, and neither will it seek out an 'essential' Horror London. Instead it focuses on specific moments from selected films, using these moments to identify patterns of association that reveal and in part problematise both different notions of London and different notions of horror. Horror London itself emerges as a category that is simultaneously national and international, generic and non-generic, real and fantastic, and, most of all, something more than just 'London' or just 'horror'.

Hyde's London

Mr Hyde is walking down a London street.

This is not, perhaps, the most surprising or unusual occurrence in a horror film, but the particular rendition of it offered by the Spanish horror production *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* (*Dr Jekyll and the Werewolf*, 1972) is, to put it mildly, bizarre. The film, which was shot partly on location in London, has a contemporary setting, yet Hyde himself (played by Spanish horror star Jacinto Molina, who usually works under the name 'Paul Naschy') is dressed in what appears to be a loose approximation of nineteenth-century garb. The fact that he is walking past a gaudily lit modern strip club underlines how

much of an anachronism he is, while at the same time connecting the film with Victorian Gothic conventions that, as noted above, form the most established and pervasive way of representing London as one of horror's leading cities. That *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* evokes this quite so perfunctorily, as if there is no need to elaborate it beyond a few basic visual details, is also of interest, suggesting as it does that by the time of the film's production this way of showing London had become detached from whatever its original meaning might have been and was now deployable within some very different contexts.

This particular version of Horror London connects with a much more extensive sense of London as a site both of danger and of extreme social division, with historically–and especially in the Victorian period–rich and poor areas positioned in very close proximity to each other. The most influential Gothic expression of this is provided by Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novel *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, although the 'Jack the Ripper' killings in the East End during 1888 brought a more detailed geographical specificity to this way of representing London. Subsequent gothic and gothic-inflected writings about London – including work by, among others, Arthur Conan Doyle and Sax Rohmer–have developed and reinforced an emphasis on London's fog-bound mean streets, to the extent that this kind of fiction has sometimes been viewed as a distinctive feature of English culture, as, to borrow David Pirie's phrase, a constituent part of an English 'Heritage of Horror'.

From the 1930s onwards, however, horror cinema's elaboration of this Victorian gothic version of London has exhibited a distinctly international character, with its deployment inflected and reworked according to broader generic and national contexts. For example, much of horror film production during the 1930s and 1940s emanated from the United States, and accordingly most representations of Horror London from that period were American, in films such as *Dracula* (1931), *Werewolf of London*, *Dracula's Daughter* (1936), *Return of the Vampire* (1944) and *She-Wolf of London* (1946), alongside major Jekyll and Hyde adaptations in 1931 and 1941. Seen together, these representations of London do seem to confirm a pre-existing libidinisation of the city, one that is mapped through distinctions between poor and rich, old and new, and public and private/sexual, while at the same time–in a manner that would be maintained throughout much subsequent horror production–being extremely vague about the actual geography of London. However, the generic context here, especially in the 1930s, is one in which London is also placed alongside, and is to a certain extent substitutable for, other

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non-American locations, among them various East European towns and villages, Egypt (for *The Mummy* in 1932), the West Indies (for *White Zombie* in 1932) and rural Wales (for *The Old Dark House* in 1932 and *The Wolf Man* in 1941). In most cases (with the notable exception of the Jekyll and Hyde films), these films are set in the present and feature encounters between modern rational values (which, with varying degrees of explicitness, are rendered as American values) and older, sometimes pre-modern, customs and beliefs. London gets figured in different ways within this. In the 1931 version of *Dracula*, for example, it is a centre of modernity into which an old-world vampire ventures, while, as already noted, *Werewolf of London* – which leans heavily on a Jekyll and Hyde theme in its representation of a respectable older man discovering his inner beast – makes great visual play, as do the period-set Jekyll and Hyde adaptations, of a juxtaposition between a bourgeois lifestyle conceived as modern and what is presented as an older, Victorian-style (especially in terms of costume) and proletarian world into which the scientist retreats to conceal his beastly tendencies. Pre-existing ideas of London obviously support this, especially those structured around oppositions between the modern and the old faces of the city, but the stories being told here in relation to London are not necessarily intrinsic to it.

By the early 1970s, the time that *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* came along, emphases had shifted again. Horror production had become more internationalised than it had been during the 1930 and 1940s, and British horror in particular was an established cinematic category, albeit one that had only sporadically engaged with the Victorian gothic version of Horror London, notably via historical melodramas such as *Grip of the Strangler* (1958) and *Corridors of Blood* (1958) and through two 'Jack the Ripper' films, *Jack the Ripper* (1959) and *A Study in Terror* (1965). Confirming the continuing international currency of this type of Horror London, the most sustained cinematic response to it during the 1960s came from Germany, notably in the form of a popular series of Edgar Wallace adaptations frequently set in and around the city (see Bergfelder 2002; Hanke 2003; Newman 2007). Interestingly, Hammer Films, the main purveyor of British horror from the 1950s through to the mid-1970s, had up until the late 1960s set its period horrors away from London, only really venturing there for the undistinguished *The Two Faces of Dr Jekyll* (1960) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1962). A later cycle of Hammer London-based period horror, which included *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1970), *Hands of the Ripper* (1971) and *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971, which also featured the Ripper), did draw upon the now-established horror iconography of Victorian

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London—fog-shrouded streets down which walk prostitute-victims stalked by upper-class 'gents'—but dispensed with the exoticism that characterised 1960s German 'London' films. More than the American 1930s variant on Horror London ever did, this type of horror also refracted its view of the city through a disenchantment with authority figures that was evident more widely in British horror from the late 1960s onwards. Instead of Victorian London, or areas of it, being shown as a kind of picturesque and anachronistic throwback that helped to define and showcase an American-based modernity, its visible class-based divisions became for the Hammer film-makers signs of social hypocrisy and double standards (Hutchings 1993: 159–85).

As if to underline the mobility of the idea of Victorian Horror London, *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo*, although produced alongside the Hammer London gothic films, seems to be offering something different again. Mr Hyde's walk along a London street full of strip clubs expresses what is best described as a touristic response to the city, one that maintains the international qualities found elsewhere but which articulates this for a period in which London, far from being the exotic, distant location it was in much 1930s horror, was becoming much more accessible precisely as a site of tourism. In this, it can be placed with a number of odd, idiosyncratic horror films made by continental European directors in Britain during the first half of the 1970s—among them Jorge Grau's *Non si deve profanare il sonno dei morti* (*The Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue*, 1974), Jose Larraz's *Vampyres* (1974) and *Symptoms* (1974) and several Italian giallo thrillers, including *Gli occhi freddi della paura* (*Cold Eyes of Fear*, 1971) and *Tutti i colori del buio* (*All the Colours of the Dark*, 1972)—that did not readily fit into British horror traditions but which nevertheless made extensive use of iconic English settings, both rural and urban, in their promotion of a modern, cosmopolitan approach to the genre. (For a discussion of some of these see Fenton and Flint (2001).) In terms of its engagement with London, *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* can also be seen as an extension of the German Edgar Wallace films, which, as Tim Bergfelder notes, 'constructed a topography of Britain, and more specifically of London, which fragmented urban space into distinct units, such as a gothic underworld, famous tourist landmarks (Big Ben, the Tower Bridge), as well as more contemporary and seedy attractions (such as Soho strip clubs...)' (2002: 45–6).

Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo thus offers a view of tourist favourites such as Big Ben and Trafalgar Square and then extends this into a less salubrious sexual tourism in its exploration of strip clubs, this in a manner that restates the sort of dichotomy between the civic and

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the sexual found elsewhere in representations of London but which organises it this time around the touristic experience of a non-English visitor to the city. (In a similar way, the 1981 production *An American Werewolf in London* displays tourist sites such as Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly Circus before retreating with its American protagonist into a seedy porno cinema for its conclusion.) Within such a context, the presence of Mr Hyde – along with the Ripper, who is also referenced in the film – becomes yet another of the landmarks on show, another visible sign among many that we are in a version of London figured through a conspicuous, consumption-centred display of history and pleasure. This is further accentuated by the way in which London as a site of a sophisticated modernity is juxtaposed within *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* against a Hungarian countryside presented as barren and primitive.

One of the oddities of this particular version of Hyde is that he is not actually Dr Jekyll's alter ego but instead a Hungarian werewolf transformed into Hyde by Jekyll in order to cure his lycanthropy. On one level this is just a lunatic plot innovation, but this idea of Hyde as a persona, a role playable by different agents, also highlights a more general sense exuded by the film that it is just passing through London rather than lingering within it. To a certain extent, this can be seen to typify the broader life within horror cinema of the Victorian gothic version of Horror London, which, for all its apparent familiarity as an integral part of English or British culture, is more accurately characterised through an international pattern of development involving a broken series of disorganised, opportunistic and contingent innovations and interventions.

The fallen city

A man walks through an eerily deserted London.

The film this time is Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later* (2002), and the particular moment that merits our attention is the one in which the protagonist walks towards Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. Charlotte Brunsdon has identified this as an example of 'landmark London' of the sort that is also, in a different way, evident in the touristic likes of *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* and *An American Werewolf in London*. However, Brunsdon also finds in one of the sequence's details – miniature souvenir Big Bens scattered at the man's feet – a self-consciousness about the landmarking process that she connects with a similarly ironic sightseeing excursion into London that takes place in Boyle's earlier *Trainspotting* (1996) (2007: 49–51). Arguably, this detail

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has another significance as well, one that is potentially less London-centred, for as the camera moves from the toppled Big Bens up to the genuine article, the idea that this is a fallen city is rendered chillingly literal.

This way of showing London can be connected with a cluster of 1950s and 1960s British films that similarly depopulated or destroyed the city in narratives that often involved apocalyptic nuclear or Cold War anxieties. One thinks in particular here of the Boulting Brothers' *Seven Days to Noon* (1950), in which London is evacuated after a scientist threatens to detonate a stolen nuclear weapon, and Val Guest's *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961), in which the Earth is accidentally sent towards the sun as a result of superpower nuclear tests and London's population vanishes off the sweltering streets (Guy 2000; Hunter 1999). Alongside these were various monster movies in which London was spectacularly laid waste – including *Gorgo* (1961) and *Konga* (1961) and, to a certain extent, *The Day of the Triffids* (1962) – and the *Dr Who* television series 'The Dalek Invasion of Earth' (1964), subsequently adapted into the cinema film *Daleks – Invasion Earth 2150 AD* (1966). (For a discussion of 'trashing London' films see Conrich (1999).) Images of deserted cities are not, of course, the sole property of British culture; they can readily be found elsewhere. However, there are certain features which manifest especially clearly in the British version and which arguably help to express the films' own peculiarly British response to a Cold War context. These include the general helplessness of authority figures in dealing with the crises at hand, which might be seen as registering a broader sense of a national lack of influence in the world, as well as a frequent invoking of the Blitz (and sometimes a reusing of footage of the Blitz as well) as a means of characterising the present trouble in the city (Hutchings 1999).

Some of the London elements in *28 Days Later* clearly resonate with these earlier stories. The scene in which the hero wakes up in a deserted hospital replays a similar moment in *The Day of the Triffids*, while scenes of the protagonist walking along deserted streets are comparable with the opening and closing sequences in *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*. In fact, the general realist tenor of *28 Days Later*'s London scenes accords with the earlier emphasis on location shooting in these fallen city films, with the prominence of famous landmarks functioning in this respect as a guarantor that the story's events are being played out in relation to a real city (as opposed to the often highly stylised representations of London found in the Victorian gothic version). At the same time, *28 Days Later* offers a canny refreshing of the fallen city format. Nuclear anxieties are replaced

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with anxieties about infectious disease – also a theme evident earlier in British culture, in Val Guest's *80,000 Suspects* (1963), which depicts a smallpox outbreak in Bath, and the television series *Survivors* (1975–7), in which the majority of Britain's population is wiped out by disease. References to the now historically distant Blitz have also been replaced by more recent and globalised models of societal collapse. On the DVD commentary, Danny Boyle points out how some of the details in the London part of his film were inspired by news footage of the aftermath of genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda, while the scene in which the protagonist finds a large public notice board covered with messages for lost relatives, something that is now commonly associated with the aftermath of 9/11, was apparently inspired by news reports of the aftermath of an earthquake in China.

While the idea of the fallen city is a potent one and is of some significance within British culture, it tends to be more a science fiction conceit than a horror one. For this to become a viable Horror London, the city's emptiness needs to be revealed as deceptive, with something monstrous lurking behind the scenes. *28 Days Later* duly obliges with the hero's discovery of a rampaging horde of crazed disease victims out to infect or kill anyone they can find. While not technically zombies – they are still very much alive – these creatures do possess many of the thematic and iconographic properties of movie zombies, especially in their association with narratives depicting social collapse, and their presence within this film and its London-set sequel *28 Weeks Later* (2007) helps to align both films with a horror tradition that, significantly, had not been at all British in its earlier development.

The key originating text here is arguably American writer Richard Matheson's groundbreaking 1954 novel *I Am Legend*, which depicts a post-plague world where the one surviving human is besieged in his townhouse by vampires, albeit vampires who, in their animalistic and savage qualities, stand closer to the state of zombiedom than they do to the more civilised model of vampirism embodied by Dracula and his ilk. Matheson's novel has been seen as an important early expression of a modern approach to horror themes in its refusal of the traditional gothic trappings of horror and its evocation of an escalating and unstoppable social disorder (Jancovich 1996: 129–65). *I Am Legend* has been filmed three times – first as the Italian production *The Last Man on Earth* (1964) and subsequently as *The Omega Man* (1971) and *I Am Legend* (2007). It is also an acknowledged influence on George Romero's series of zombie films (beginning with *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and continuing with *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985), *Land of the Dead* (2005) and *Diary of the Dead* (2008)) which

relocated the zombie away from the West Indies settings with which it had become associated and into modern America, addressed issues relating to the idea of social collapse, and often featured small bands of normal humans besieged by overwhelming hordes of the undead. Romero's films in turn inspired the development of a yet more gory and visceral version of the zombie in Italian cinema during the 1980s, and again *28 Days Later* contains scenes highly reminiscent of those Italian zombie movies (not least in its presentation of the running infected, first introduced in the 1980 Italian production *Incubo sulla città contaminata* (*Nightmare City*) in place of the slow-moving American zombie).

It seems from this that the innovatory distinctiveness of *28 Days Later* derives from its enactment of an already established modern horror scenario within a setting relatively unused to this kind of drama. The 'landmark London' sequence – which was used extensively in the film's promotion – becomes in this respect something of a lure, and it is interesting to see how the film articulates a relation between it and the horror that is to come. After walking past some famous London landmarks, the protagonist enters a church only to find it full of corpses along with some of the infected who proceed to chase him out into the street. The church itself seems to function here as a kind of liminal zone, a space of transition between the idea of the fallen city and the more internationalised horror elements that dominate the film thereafter. Indeed the eruption of the infected outwards from the church correlates not just to the process of infection but also to the transformation of London itself into a city much like those other horror cities invaded by zombies and other versions of the undead. According to Danny Boyle, the firebombing sequence that immediately follows on from the church scene, which culminates in a spectacular garage explosion, was the most expensive part of the film and designed to secure the film's status as a mainstream multiplex entertainment comparable with American genre product. It is perhaps no surprise that after the explosion, any sense of 'landmark London' becomes diminished, with the film abandoning the city entirely at the halfway mark.

By contrast, the sequel *28 Weeks Later* positions London more consistently within a modern horror idiom, partly because the city has already been established thus by the first film, and partly because the later film (which was written and directed by Spanish film-makers) is yet more self-consciously international. This time some of the key protagonists are American (part of an American-led UN force supporting the reoccupation of London), and the narrative yet more

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reminiscent of those American-based horrors where the military turn out to be as dangerous to the main characters as the ostensible monsters (a convention arguably established by George Romero's own 1973 plague story, *The Crazies*).

Meanwhile London itself is presented in a manner that tends to subordinate it more forcefully to the generic narrative. The fact that the main base for the American occupying forces is on the Isle of Dogs might be seen as entailing a none-too-subtle satirical presentation of the Dockland redevelopment as a centre for international capitalism guarded by American might. However, the film places much greater emphasis on the generic function of this base, which is to act as the site for a complacency that is soon to be dispelled, with this culminating in the film's most spectacular sequence, the firebombing and destruction of the base. In this respect, the Dockland redevelopment is comparable with, say, the shopping mall in Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* or the city complex in his *Land of the Dead*. Both are archetypal modern structures formed of glass and shiny surfaces that turn out in actuality to be extraordinarily fragile and vulnerable and which at best offer only a temporary protection. Similarly, the older London locations into which the characters escape carry residual associations of both the touristic and the gothic, but in a fast-moving, chase-based narrative their main function is to offer a series of potential shelters and traps with minimal recognition of them beyond this. We are always obviously in London, and the location is still important to the originality of a kind of film which has been made before but not here. However, that this is the kind of narrative that can effectively take place elsewhere is made clear by a coda in which we see a gang of the infected advancing on the Eiffel Tower. The change in landmark indicates that Paris has replaced London, but the horror story essentially remains the same.

Disturbances of the ground

Kate falls asleep in Charing Cross tube station.

The film is *Creep* (2004), and Kate's subsequent journey into the menacing world of the Underground offers yet another transformation of London into an appropriate site for a horror narrative. It is a version of Horror London that is not entirely separate from the Victorian gothic version inasmuch as this, too, often juxtaposes locations marked as modern against those marked as old. Kate's movement from the relative safety of the bright platform into the danker, older and more dangerous hidden parts of the rail network is therefore comparable with, say, the lycanthropic scientist in *Werewolf of London*

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passing from locations of bourgeois modernity into a thoroughly anachronistic Victorian London. However, while the propinquity of old and new in *Werewolf of London* and its ilk tends to produce a sense of the city as a perpetually fascinating site of contrasts and differences, the kind of subterranean horror offered by *Creep* works to confound or collapse distinctions and differences. The city thus becomes the location for crises of self-confidence, scenarios of dispossession and – inasmuch as this involves the familiar topography of London rendered strange – uncanny effects. (For a discussion of uncanny horror landscapes see Hutchings (2004).). This Horror London undoubtedly lacks the volume of stories associated with the Victorian gothic or even the Fallen City versions. Yet it does represent a way of thinking about the city that manages to be very distinctive while still connecting with broader generic themes and imperatives.

Writer Nigel Kneale's SF/horror story *Quatermass and the Pit*, which was initially a television series in 1958–9 and subsequently a 1967 film, is arguably the first major expression of this kind of Horror London. It involves the discovery of a buried alien spacecraft on a Knightsbridge building site in the television version and in a tube station in the film. The story's central conceit is that millions of years earlier an insect-like Martian race altered the then evolving human species in order to endow it with aggressive Martian characteristics – hence, as one character memorably puts it, 'We're the Martians now.' The transformation of human identity that this involves also entails a reworking of London's identity through a presentation of its long history in terms of a series of compulsions and repetitions, evident in the reports of supernatural events on the site which date back to the fourteenth century and which are ultimately revealed as deriving from a conditioned repetition of Martian behaviour.

In this Horror London, the modernising change represented initially by the urban redevelopment that causes the discovery of the spaceship also becomes associated with the ancient Martian project itself. However, rather than offering a simplistic critique of a modernity viewed as intrinsically dehumanising (as is the case, say, for the similarly themed 1949 Ealing comedy *Passport to Pimlico*), *Quatermass and the Pit* evokes instead a more radical uncertainty that avoids both the overwhelming pastness of the Victorian gothic Horror London and the eerie presentness of the Fallen City. The point of the story is that the kind of modernity evident in both the Martian project and the rebuilding of parts of London has always been present in the city, and that the 'disturbances of the ground' – to borrow a phrase used by Quatermass himself – that inaugurate Martian interventions are

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therefore events that through their repetitive nature are simultaneously atavistic and evolutionary. Critics have with some justice accused Kneale of 'mystical pessimism' for his putting the blame for societal ills on an extraterrestrial intelligence, but in doing this *Quatermass and the Pit* also foregrounds a haunted, uncanny experience of London (Hunter 1999: 110). Regardless of the ideological message offered by the story, the city, while remaining visibly itself, becomes in the course of the narrative something other than what we believed it to be. Accordingly, the climactic destruction of parts of London – which in both television and film versions has clear Blitz-like qualities – is figured not as an assault from outside but instead as a violent revelation of a kind of perpetual stasis which collapses distinctions between past and present and which cannot be overcome by positive action. In line with this, the television series concludes with Quatermass urging the human race to be on constant guard against its Martian compulsions while the film version finishes more atmospherically with the eponymous scientist lost and exhausted as the city burns around him.

The 1972 British horror film *Death Line*, to which *Creep* owes more than a little in its Underground setting, produces a comparable subterranean, anxiety-ridden treatment of London, albeit one wrapped around a modish early-1970s anti-establishment critique. Here the subterranean space, which is located in the vicinity of Russell Square tube station, is occupied by the cannibalistic descendents of nineteenth-century construction workers who were trapped in an industrial accident and abandoned by their employers. Despite the indifference of the contemporary establishment, which turns out to be just as callous as its nineteenth-century predecessor, a truculent working-class police inspector and a young student couple eventually uncover the grisly truth.

As was the case with *Quatermass and the Pit*, *Death Line*'s hidden underground space represents a forgotten past that gradually infiltrates the present in a manner that weakens a confident modern urban identity, one that in this instance is gendered emphatically as masculine. (By contrast, the stereotypically intuitive and emotional qualities of the principal female characters in both *Quatermass and the Pit* and *Death Line* seem to render them less suitable as vehicles for what are essentially dramas of disempowerment.) *Death Line* begins with a bowler-hatted gent exploring various strip joints – in a manner not dissimilar to Hyde in *Dr Jekyll y el Hombre Lobo* – but, in a sign of things to come, this confident parade is abruptly terminated by his being dragged into the darkness by a cannibal. When the

streetwise and more than a little complacent American boyfriend of the film's heroine enters the cannibal realm, he too is transformed, rendered both mute and animalistic as he doles out violence as brutal as anything offered by the film's ostensible monsters, while in the film's surprisingly understated conclusion the cocky and bullying police inspector becomes uncharacteristically subdued on entering the cannibal home. 'What a way to live,' he mutters, a statement that might well be applied to life above ground, now finally revealed as being similar in its atomisation and indifference to the isolated, desperate lives of those trapped underground. Like the film version of *Quatermass and the Pit*, *Death Line* finishes with images of exhaustion, loss and abandonment, as characters wander listlessly through the cavernous and dark space of the cannibals and the last surviving cannibal screams in the distance.

Creep inflects this in a different direction. It still involves a powerful sense of subterranean London as an unknown and mutable space, beginning as it does with a scene in which maintenance engineers working underground discover a new tunnel about which they know nothing. However, it replaces the public accident that provides the back story for *Death Line* with something more secretive and quasi-familial, as the monster here is revealed as a child-victim of mysterious experiments who has survived into adulthood and repeats these experiments on his unfortunate victims. The film also offers a different take on contemporary London, one that is less focused on the social establishment but which still dramatises relations between the well-off and the poor and also introduces, as do many post-1980 horror films, a strong and resourceful female hero.

In *Creep*'s early scenes, Kate, a German living and working in London, self-confidently defines her relation to the city through which she is moving in a manner that makes her comparable with the bowler-hatted gent from *Death Line*, with her trajectory similarly sexualised (she is heading for a party where she hopes to pick up George Clooney). In Kate's case, this confidence is signalled most clearly through her possession of money. A visit to a cash till leads to the first of several encounters with beggars, with the unfortunate peremptorily dismissed this time with 'This machine dispenses notes. If you're looking for change, why don't you hang around a phone box?' Later, in Charing Cross Station, Kate pays Mandy, a female beggar, to help her get a ticket and later yet, when trapped in the station, she pays Jimmy, Mandy's partner, for assistance. The fact that these two Charing Cross indigents quite literally live inside a hidden space within one of the walls of the station underlines their social invisibility, and Kate's

entering into that space represents the beginning both of her own traumatic personal transformation and of an opening up of previously unseen spaces that helps to signify her increasingly uncertain position within this world.

Subsequently Kate finds herself in the subterranean realm of a killer still fixated on his own childhood trauma, a realm where her money has no meaning and cannot save her. After undergoing a protracted ordeal, she manages to kill the killer and returns to the platform just as the first early morning commuters are arriving. Filthy and bedraggled, she slumps onto the floor, in the same position as Mandy (who has since become one of the killer's victims) at the film's beginning; the parallel is underlined through the presence of Mandy's dog on Kate's lap during the final sequence. One of the commuters walks up to her and, mistaking her for a beggar, drops some coins onto the ground. Kate, it seems, has re-entered the world of financial transactions, albeit in a different position from that which she had earlier occupied. This might be seen as providing a moralistic closure, with Kate effectively chastised for her earlier lack of consideration for others less fortunate than herself. However, Kate's blank look into the camera – which provides the final shot of *Creep* – suggests shock more than it does self-realisation and, as was the case with the film version of *Quatermass and the Pit* and *Death Line*, we are presented with a climactic image of exhaustion to contrast with earlier, confident journeys across the city.

One of the most striking visual elements in *Creep* is Kate's changing appearance. She begins pretty and unblemished in a bright-yellow party dress but as she proceeds into what might be called the film's horror zone, and is forced to stumble and crawl through tunnels and sewers, is submerged in filthy water and has to fight for her life, she becomes covered in dirt and in the final sequence brings that dirt back with her. In fact, the changes that she undergoes, and the movement of the film itself from normality into a realm of horror, can be seen to be mediated by dirt. Something similar can be said of *Quatermass and the Pit* and *Death Line*, both of which devote considerable effort to representing not only the filthiness of, respectively, the pit in which the spacecraft is buried and the cannibal lair strewn with rotting corpses, but also the ways in which these locations make dirty the clean characters who venture there.

That this relation between dirt and cleanliness is figured in terms of pollution arguably helps to bind these stories to the horror genre, which has often focused on the visible defilement of purity. This opens up *Quatermass and the Pit*, *Death Line* and *Creep* to readings of them in terms of the abject. For example, Marcelle Perks' analysis of *Death Line*

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claims that it 'is a particularly rich repository of these abject images' (Perks 2002: 152; also see Creed 1993 for a fuller discussion of the abject in horror cinema). Such an approach certainly addresses the way in which the dirtiness of particular locations and characters is offered as being more than just literal dirtiness, and it does help to connect these stories with other horror texts that have nothing at all to do with London but equally rely on imagery that might be described as abject in nature. At the same time, it is a rather abstract approach that seems to cancel out precisely what, in part at least, makes these stories distinctive, namely their London settings.

However, this dirt can also be considered in terms of its relation to London's history, and indeed it is frequently presented in these stories as a trace or residue of that city's long history. Digging through it in *Quatermass and the Pit* helps to reveal the city's origins, while the dirt in the London Underground and the sewers in *Death Line* and *Creep* is presented as the product of the historical making of the city's modern support systems, be these related to transport or waste disposal. Perhaps inevitably, this dirt becomes associated with the working class whose labour fashioned and continues to maintain these systems, and accordingly the real trauma of being made dirty tends to be reserved in these stories mainly for middle-class characters who inadvertently stray or are dragged unwillingly into these previously unknown areas of the city. Ultimately then, this is London dirt. While it can effectively befoul you in a manner that is highly conducive to horror fiction, it remains at all times irreducibly site-specific, the product of a particular place and a particular time. In this, it becomes an effective symbol for Horror London itself as a category that reaches beyond London in so many ways while remaining, in so many other ways, specifically local.

Conclusion

If London is one of horror's cities, it is not because it is essentially or necessarily so. Instead the idea of London – which has occasionally intersected with the actuality of London – has in various ways and in different times and places proved attractive to the makers of horror fictions. The result has been a gradual accretion of London-set horror stories and imagery designed to thrill, shock and scare. Within this, the Victorian gothic version of the city, whether this be played out in period or contemporary settings, is clearly weightiest, although its influence has waned from the 1970s onwards as other models of horror have become more popular (although the 2001 production

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From Hell has shown that Victorian gothic still retains a hold on the public imagination).

It is clear that Horror London films have tended to articulate their own particular – and sometimes peculiar – relationships between ideas of London and horror conventions that are not in themselves necessarily British. Even a limited survey of some of them can draw our attention to the impurity, fragmentation and dispersal of Horror London itself as a category. In fact, the undoubted richness and fascination of Horror London as a cultural resource arguably derives from the variety of approaches it encompasses. Perhaps, the best way of identifying what is distinctive and striking here is through tracing the routes of horror films through the city, following them as, sometimes travelling in groups and sometimes going their own idiosyncratic ways, they explore what it might mean to be a horror story at large in London.

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