

## “Horror Film”: How the Term Came to Be

By Gary D. Rhodes

Though it was based on the infamous death sentence of 1587, the Edison Manufacturing Company’s film *Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots* (1895)—which was also distributed under the less-specific titles *Execution* and *Execution Scene*—features no historical context, its narrative consisting solely of brutal capitol punishment that lasts fewer than fifteen seconds.<sup>12</sup> It remains arresting cinema, and certainly it predated the work of George Méliès. An 1895 newspaper advertisement publicized *Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots* as being the very first “Chamber of Horrors” moving picture to be “seen on the kinoscope,” adding that it was “blood-curdling in the extreme.”<sup>3</sup>

Twenty years later, when reviewing Kalem Company’s *The Secret Room* (1915), the *Moving Picture World* wrote:

It is one that demanded some relief at the close, for it builds up a veritable nightmare and would have been almost insufferable if one couldn't wake up from it—insufferable from sheer horror. [...] People have thought up situations of terror before this and even put them into pictures ... but in this picture showing is made real. We have only seen three or four other film offerings portraying horror that were as effective. When the spectator sees it he will know whether he has strong nerves or not.<sup>4</sup>

This description could be easily applied to many horror movies of the twenty-first century. And, as in the ad for *Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*, the word “horror” is clearly articulated.

Despite these early references, there is an enormous gulf between the application of a term and the naming of a genre that conjures recognizable codes and conventions. In the case of the Edison film, the “Chamber of Horrors” reference invoked the popular nineteenth-century tradition of

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**Gary D. Rhodes**, PhD, is MA Convenor for Film Studies at The Queen’s University of Belfast, Northern Ireland. He is the author of numerous books on Bela Lugosi, as well as of *White Zombie: Anatomy of a Horror Film* (McFarland, 2002), *The Perils of Moviegoing in America* (Continuum, 2012), *Tod Browning’s Dracula* (Tomahawk, 2014), and *The Birth of the American Horror Film* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018). Rhodes is also the writer-director of such documentary films as *Lugosi: Hollywood’s Dracula* (1997) and *Banned in Oklahoma* (2004).

waxwork exhibits that depicted tortures, murders, and executions. And in the case of the Kalem film, the adjective “horror” was used somewhat interchangeably with the word “terror.” It was not the label of a distinct category.

Discussing the importance of terminology, Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Jancovich advise:

If one wants to know how *Trip to the Moon* [Georges Méliès, 1902] and *The Phantom of the Opera* [Rupert Julian, 1925] were understood within the periods of their original release, one needs to be clear about the precise way in which they were generically identified at the time, rather than presuming that one can simply draw upon one's own understanding of generic categories.<sup>5</sup>

For Geraghty and Jancovich, it is important that, while *The Phantom of the Opera* is regularly included as a canonical text in the history of the horror film genre, it predated the term “horror film,” which, as they note, “did not enter common usage until almost a decade later—at some point in the cycle of films that followed the success of *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931).”<sup>6</sup> To label a film retroactively, they argue, “can do violence to our sense of history by abstracting it from its original contexts or “emphasize some details and ignore others.”<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, Rick Altman writes, “Throughout the 20s and 30s, Universal had been the uncontested king of the horror film genre.”<sup>8</sup> He specifically cites *The Phantom of the Opera* as one of his examples, thus applying a generic term to it that did not yet exist. Disagreement exists. On the one hand, Charles Musser has importantly re-examined Edwin S. Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), not as a western, as the term was not in usage at the time of its original release, but instead how it activated the contemporaneous travel, crime, and re-enacted news genres.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, many scholars, critics, and audiences have regularly imposed the label “film noir” onto movies that were never conceived or originally publicized with such terminology.<sup>10</sup>

To reconcile the views of Geraghty and Jancovich with those of Altman, it is important to understand that—as *Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots* and *The Sealed Room* illustrate—the term “horror” had descriptive meaning for fictional entertainment long before the term “horror film” (and variants like “horror movie”) came into common currency, first in literature and then in the cinema. Indeed, a full-page photomontage of *The Phantom of the Opera* published in the fan magazine *Motion Picture Classic* in April 1925 was headlined with the single word: “Horrors!”<sup>11</sup> And when

**HORRORS!**  
From "The Phantom of the Opera"

Of course, you know who this terrifying apparition is. It couldn't be anyone else but Lon Chaney. That master of make-up has achieved another masterpiece

Chaney's flair is a peculiar one—he has given the screen a series of grotesques, monsters, freaks and atrocities absolutely unparalleled elsewhere

He originated this revolting mask especially for his latest picture, Universal's "The Phantom of the Opera," in which he stars with Mary Philbin and Norman Kerry. An odd lighting naturally enhances the horrible effect

It is no wonder poor little Mary Philbin registers fright so realistically in the center oval. She probably was scared to death. These are from among the famous make-up to appear in print, since Mr. Chaney wanted to "surprise" his fans

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Published in *Motion Picture Classic* in April 1925.

reviewing Paul Leni's *The Last Warning* (1929), a critic for *Variety* described it as being "much in the manner" of *The Phantom of the Opera*.<sup>12</sup> Recognizable tropes emerged prior to the film genre's name.

But the arrival of the name, “horror,” possessed power and meaning that resonate to the present day. A careful and rigorous review of the archive reveals that Universal Pictures intentionally tried to avoid adjectives that evoked horror and the supernatural when initially promoting Tod Browning’s *Dracula* (1931). And yet three groups—critics, exhibitors, and audiences—wrested power from the studio once *Dracula* was released, drawing upon earlier contexts and descriptive terminology to rebrand it a “horror film.” The term came to the fore not as the result of a Universal’s marketing strategy, but rather in spite of it, thanks to its organic usage in the early months of 1931.



Published in the *Baltimore Sun* on September 25, 1932.

Grasping *Dracula*’s success and apparent reasons for it, Universal rapidly embraced the label, so much so that they produced and advertised upcoming releases with it. Other studios followed, with the term “horror film” becoming increasingly common in late 1931 and early 1932, used and readily understood by those creating, publicizing, viewing, and even decrying the genre. In Chapter IV of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the first Gothic novel, Hippolita asks, “What means the horror imprinted on each countenance?” The naming of the horror genre was an attempt to answer that question by use of the very same word, a single term that could invoke a wide range of codes, conventions and tropes.

## Literature

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, American readers were well aware of British literature. In 1825, for example, an American magazine described Horace Walpole’s aim in *The Castle of Otranto* as being the “art of exciting surprise and horror.”<sup>13</sup> *Otranto*’s text includes the word “horror” ten times. It appears in Matthew Gregory Lewis’ *The Monk: A Romance* (1796) on more than sixty occasions, including in such sentences as “What was my astonishment my horror, at finding the sheets crimsoned with blood,” and “I gazed upon the Spectre with horror too great to be

described. My blood was frozen in my veins.”<sup>14</sup> Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) uses the term over eighty times, sometimes to express a character’s emotion, as in “chilled with horror,” and sometimes to describe a location, as in “The horror of the chamber rushed on her mind.”<sup>15</sup>

It is difficult to pinpoint the birth of the American Gothic, but the most likely candidate is Philip Freneau’s graveyard poem *The House of Night*, published in 1779 and then in revised form in 1786. It features the famous verse, “I sing the horrors of the *House of Night*,” and includes two subsequent uses of the word, one of which reads “Of coffins, shrouds, and horrors of a tomb.”<sup>16</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, America’s first major novelist, likewise employed the term in such works as *Wieland; or, The Transformation* (1798). That novel includes the word over thirty times, its purpose ranging from such phrases as the “horrors of war” to those that conjure the supernatural: “I leaped from the floor: I dashed my head against the wall: I uttered screams of horror: I panted after torment and pain. Eternal fire, and the bickerings of hell, compared with what I felt, were music and a bed of roses.”<sup>17</sup> Brown’s subsequent novel *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (1799) also relied on the term, including in the sentence, “My hairs rose and my teeth chattered with horror.”<sup>18</sup>

Within the complete tales and poems of Edgar Allan Poe, the word “horror” appears approximately 125 times. For example, in *Berenice* (1835), Poe writes, “its memory was replete with horror—horror more horrible from being vague, and terror more terrible from ambiguity.”<sup>19</sup> In *The Conqueror Worm* (1838): “And Horror the soul of the plot.”<sup>20</sup> In *Ligeia* (1838): “But why shall I minutely detail the unspeakable horrors of that night?”<sup>21</sup> In *The Raven* (1845): “On this home by Horror haunted.”<sup>22</sup> And in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841): “a grotesquerie in horror absolutely alien from humanity.”<sup>23</sup>

“Horror” appeared with regularity in American murder literature as well, including in the titles of Charles Wesley Alexander’s *The Five Fiends, Or, The Bender Hotel Horror in Kansas* (1874) and Goldsmith B. West’s *The Hawes Horror and Bloody Riot at Birmingham* (1888). And Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), published in America in 1899, features the word 36 times, including in the famous quotation “It is only when a man feels himself face to face with such horrors that he can understand their true import.”<sup>24</sup>

In her 1826 essay “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” Ann Radcliffe notably observed a distinction between the words “horror” (which “nearly annihilates” the reader) and “terror” (which is marked by its “obscurity”).<sup>25</sup> But many other writers and critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used the two terms synonymously. In 1813, for example, M. Carey of Philadelphia published Matthew Gregory Lewis’ *Tales of Terror*,

*with an Introductory Dialogue*.<sup>26</sup> It featured stories of ghosts, goblins, and sprites. Then, in 1833, Charles Gaylord of Boston published Henry St. Clair's collection *Tales of Terror, or the Mysteries of Magic*, a "selection of wonderful and supernatural stories, translated from the Chinese, Turkish, and German."<sup>27</sup>

To these terms we could add various others that were regularly used in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including "weird" (sometimes spelled "wierd") and "gruesome" (sometimes spelled "grewsome"). Likewise, there were variations on the word "horror," as in the notable case of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1803), in which the character Catherine Morland relies on "horrid" to describe certain Gothic novels.<sup>28</sup> In each of these cases, the purpose was descriptive, rather than categorical.

During the nineteenth century, though, the word "horror" began to be used as a generic designation, albeit on rare occasions. In 1857, a newspaper in New Orleans notably described John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-13) as a "horrors play."<sup>29</sup> In 1892, a different New Orleans newspaper reviewed E. Phillips Oppenheim's *The Peer and the Woman*: "One of the horror novels this, that tries to heap horror on horror, murders, suicides, mysteries, secrets, but somehow one's hair refuses to stand on end at the reading and the frightened chill won't crawl down his back, and he puts it down in disappointed disgust."<sup>30</sup> In 1893, a teenager in Oakland, California allegedly committed suicide after reading "penny horror novels."<sup>31</sup> And an 1899 newspaper article on Rudyard Kipling suggested that he was "almost, if not quite" as successful at writing the "horror story" as Edgar Allan Poe had been.<sup>32</sup> Then, in 1900, a critic for *The Bookman* noted that the distinguishing feature of the "horror story of today from the horror story of the past" was its ability to use realism to create ambiguity, to make it difficult to comprehend "where the commonplace and the probable ends and the impossible and the supernatural begins."<sup>33</sup> Put another way, to him the "horror story" was a literary category, still recognizable even though it had experienced notable evolutions.

## Early Cinema

Many terms were used to describe potentially horrifying imagery during the early cinema period. "Trick picture," which referred to special effects, had common currency, but American Mutoscope & Biograph sometimes used the term "fantastic" to describe the same.<sup>34</sup> Selig Polyscope called such moving pictures "Mythical and Mysterious," Vitagraph categorized them as "Mysterious" and, separately, as "Magical,"

Maguire and Baucus used “Mysterious” and, separately, “Sleight-of-Hand,” whereas Edison and the Chicago Projecting Company chose the single word “Mysterious.”<sup>35</sup> In 1901, an Indiana newspaper used the phrase “mysterious or ‘spook’ pictures” to describe the same.<sup>36</sup>

With regard to particular films, American film catalogs applied the adjective “weird” to describe American Mutoscope & Biograph’s *The Ghost Train* (1901), Pathé Frères’ *The Revolving Table/La table tournante* (1904), and Méliès’ *The Inventor Crazybrains and his Wonderful Airship/Le dirigeable fantastique ou le Cauchemar d’un inventeur* (1905).<sup>37</sup> Edison claimed *The Mysterious Urn* (1902) was, “one of the most mystifying of the black art pictures.”<sup>38</sup> And, using perhaps the boldest language of all, an ad for Méliès’ *The Mysterious Retort/L’alchimiste Parafaragamus ou la cornue infernale* (1906) called it a “terrifying film in its grotesqueness.”<sup>39</sup>

During the nickelodeon era, exhibitors also used the term “weird” to label such films. For example, in one advertisement, Edison’s *Frankenstein* (1910) was “weird and wonderful.”<sup>40</sup> Ambrosio’s *The Mask of the Red Death/La maschera tragica* (1911) was a “weird story.”<sup>41</sup> Similar publicity terms included “blood curdler,” “blood and thunder,” and “thriller,” the latter being elastic enough to describe various types of films.<sup>42</sup> For example, in 1912, *Moving Picture World* called one film a “thriller” because it depicted blood “running like a stream through the floor down into the basement.”<sup>43</sup> Three years later, the same publication declared the “western drama” *The Parasite’s Double* (1915) to be a “real live ‘thriller.’”<sup>44</sup>

None of this is to suggest that the word “horror” was absent in the years after the aforementioned “Chamber of Horrors” ad of 1895. In 1900, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote:

A real man sets a camera up on a railroad track. As the train approaches, the dummy is deftly substituted. The dummy is, of course, struck by the engine and thrown to one side of the track. A thrill of horror runs through the audience, but the real man takes the place of the dummy, gets up with the greatest unconcern, and leisurely brushes himself off.<sup>45</sup>

Two years later, another newspaper article spoke of a similar situation, with a film depicting a character hit by a train provoking an “invariable groan of horror” from viewers.<sup>46</sup>

In 1907, the *Chicago Tribune* indicted the moving picture, warning readers, “All [nickelodeons] Have Horror Shows,” and adding: “In a round of these places on South State street, Milwaukee avenue, and Halsted street, not one show could be found that did not furnish for its patrons, mostly children, a series of horrors such as murder and hanging and

madhouse scenes and burglaries.”<sup>47</sup> The article mentioned scenes in which a baby put a loaded revolver in its mouth and in which a milkman fought with a drunk. It also recounted Ferdinand Zecca's *From Jealousy to Madness/Jalousie et folie* (1907), in which a wife and her lover drive her husband to madness. He eventually escapes from an asylum and strangles his wife to death.<sup>48</sup>

Such usage indicates the variety of meanings that the word “horror” could summon. Complaining about inappropriate images on film posters in 1913, *Moving Picture World* defined their “horrors” as depicting “striped convicts, murderous Indians, grinning ‘black-handers,’ homicidal drunkards, etc.”<sup>49</sup> That same year, a newspaper in South Dakota complained, “A moving picture exhibit of horrors was gratuitously given at the Temple auditorium Saturday.” What was its horrifying content? “Ghastly views of maggots and flies” screened as part of a program of “health subjects.”<sup>50</sup>

Another example of the word’s various applications is evident in film titles as the early cinema period ended. Edison’s *The Hand of Horror* (1914) was a melodrama about a thief who steals from his own sister.<sup>51</sup> In Lubin’s *The Gray Horror* (1915), a crook is hired to “haunt” an old house in an effort to scare its stubborn owner into selling.<sup>52</sup> The lead character in Biograph’s *The House of Horror* (1915) is an alcoholic wrongly accused of murder.<sup>53</sup> And Pathe’s *The Horrors of War* (1916) depicted World War I.<sup>54</sup>

To be sure, some writers did understand “horror” in the cinema to be akin to the “horror story” as deployed in *The Bookman* in 1900. Consider Gaumont’s *The Vengeance of Egypt/L’anneau fatal* (1912). Its story tells of a scarab ring stolen from a “vindictive mummy” who takes revenge on its subsequent owners.<sup>55</sup> According to the *Moving Picture World*:

If some scenes seem loosely connected, others ring right in the center with the impression desired and build up a horror that grips in the strongest way. [...] The story is in the Maupassant school; its object is horror, always a new horror and, in many of its scenes, it is astonishingly effective.<sup>56</sup>

The same trade publication believed *The Tiger* (Vitagraph, 1913) to be one of the “pictures belong[ing] to the Maupassant school of art that makes its ideal of terror and horror, knowing that these leave a deeper impression on the audience than almost anything else.”<sup>57</sup> In both of these instances, the term “horror” was augmented by the name of Guy de Maupassant, an author associated with what *The Bookman* would have described as horror stories.

Nevertheless, the term “horror film” was not used in the early cinema



period, nor was “horror movie” (the slang word “movie” coming into increasing usage during and after 1911).<sup>58</sup> The only known instance akin to *The Bookman’s* term “horror story” appeared in *Variety* in 1909, when George M. Young’s column in *Variety* notably referred to D.W. Griffith’s *In the Watches of the Night* (American Mutoscope and Biograph, 1909), in which a poverty-stricken husband attempts to murder his wife and child before committing suicide, as a “champion horror picture.”<sup>59</sup>

## The Silent Era

During the silent film era, writers continued to use the term “horror” to describe everything from battle scenes in war movies to cinematic tales of drug addiction. Consider, for example, *The Folly of Desire* (1916), which chronicled the exploits of a South African cattleman whose “favorite diversions are reading the Bible and beating his young wife.”<sup>60</sup> *Moving Picture World* speculated, “it is doubtful if an audience will take some of the most of the intense scenes seriously, so thickly are the horrors piled on.”<sup>61</sup>

*Moving Picture World* also observed the “horror of the apparently supernatural” in the serial *The Crimson Stain Mystery* (1916).<sup>62</sup> Of Rex Ingram’s *Black Orchids* (1916), *Variety* said, “Here are presented a series of scenes that for fine, artistic horror have seldom been outdone, in which the woman is shown gradually going mad.”<sup>63</sup> In 1919, *Wid’s Daily* warned readers that there were “many elements in [D. W. Griffith’s *The Greatest Question*] but horror is the dominating one ... and it is horror—not well wrought drama.”<sup>64</sup> Then, in 1920, *Variety* judged, “The naked realism of showing the murdered body float away into the river [in the film *While New York Sleeps* is] an unnecessary detail of shuddering horror.”<sup>65</sup>

“Horror” also proved an occasional adjective for Lon Chaney. “Chaney would simply revel in the chamber of horrors at Madame Tussaud’s,” *Picture Play* magazine wrote in 1927.<sup>66</sup> That same year, the *New York Times* told readers that there was “enough horror” in *The Unknown* (1927) to appeal to Chaney and director Tod Browning.<sup>67</sup> In 1928, *Variety* believed the Chaney film *West of Zanzibar* (1928) registered “horror, disgust, despair and sorrow.”<sup>68</sup> Of the same film, one exhibitor complained it featured “too much horror.”<sup>69</sup>

And, in spite of its elasticity as an adjective, or perhaps because of it, “horror” did become incorporated into two new terms, albeit very infrequently: “horror movie” and “horror film.” A 1918 article published in Oregon told readers, “Hun Audiences Enjoy U-Boat Horror Movie,” meaning that Berlin filmgoers had applauded footage that showed the “sinking of an English merchantman.”<sup>70</sup> In 1921, an Iowa newspaper

reported that German censors had banned a “Rhine Horror Film” entitled *The Black Pest*, which depicted black French troops stationed on the Franco-German border.<sup>71</sup>

A 1918 advertisement for *Alimony* (1917), a drama about marital divorce, promised readers, “This is not a horror film.”<sup>72</sup> Then, in 1920, the Washington, D. C. *Evening Star* told readers that “‘Horror’ Films May Be Barred [in] Transit,” a reference to US Senator Thomas Gore’s bill that would have prohibited interstate transportation of “movies that depicted the “activities of ex-convicts, bandits, train robbers or other outlaws.”<sup>73</sup>

The first occasion on which “horror film” was applied to narrative content later associated with the genre seems to have occurred in 1916, when the Censor Commission of Santa Ana, California announced its desire to “hold down the exhibition of pictures that send children and nervous people home with the shivers.” It expressed a moral and judgmental “disapproval” of “the horror film” a potential “menace to the frail and nervous from a physical point of view.”<sup>74</sup>

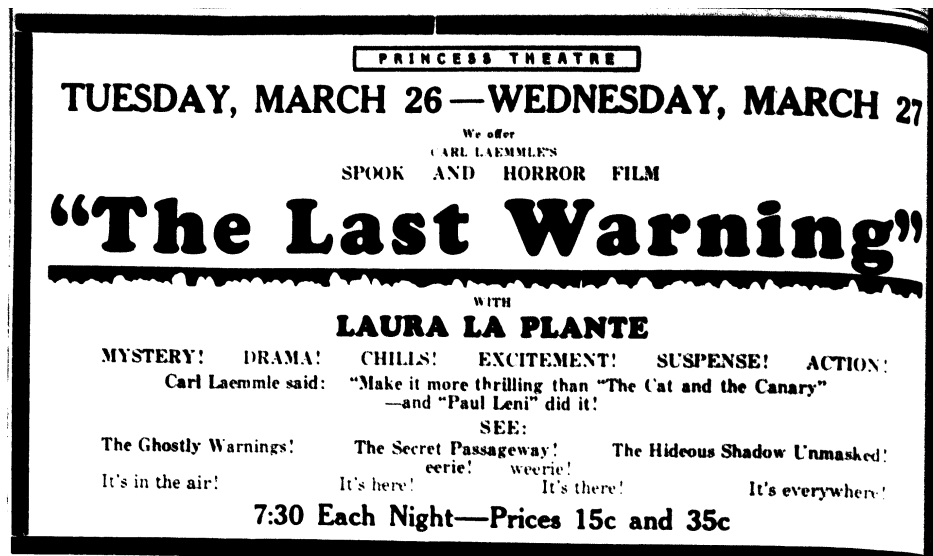
The Censor Commission might well have been referring to some of the serials then popular with filmgoers. When reviewing the feature *The Wizard* (1927), *Variety* said, “More horror. Laid on thick. But the great American public brought it on themselves. They ‘went’ for the serials back in the early days of screendom, and it looks as if the cycle has come around again.”<sup>75</sup> And of Benjamin Christensen’s *Seven Footprints to Satan* (1929), *Film Daily* declared it to be the “best nightmare” seen in “pictures since they quit making the horror serials.”<sup>76</sup>

Though seldom used, this type of categorical terminology appeared on more occasions in the late twenties than in any previous era. According to the *New York Times*, Edward Sackville West’s novel *The Ruin* (1927) was a “horror story” in the lineage of Walpole and Radcliffe.<sup>77</sup> For the *New Yorker*, the Broadway version of *Dracula* (1927) was a “horror play” that could send “chills down your spine.”<sup>78</sup> In 1928, the *New York Times* used the same term to describe the play *A Man with Red Hair*; the following year, the *Times* repeated “horror play” to describe *Rope’s End*.<sup>79</sup>

In 1928, the *Warren Tribune* of Pennsylvania reviewed the film *Something Always Happens* (1928) and compared it to *The Bat* (1926) and *The Wizard* (1927) and “other films of the same type”: the article was titled, “Horror Film Thrills Audience at Columbia.”<sup>80</sup> The following year, a newspaper ad for *The Last Warning* (1929) clearly promoted it as “Carl Laemmle’s Spook and Horror Film.”<sup>81</sup> As a critic at another publication said, “The distinguished talents of Paul Leni for the manufacture of cinema horror tales are being demonstrated once more.”<sup>82</sup> In 1930, the *New York Times* described *The Cat Creeps* (1930), a remake of *The Cat and the Canary*, as a “horror film”; that same year, the newspaper announced, “It is probably

simplest to discard all formulas and to describe *Un Chien Andalou* [1929] simply as a horror film, which it truly is.”<sup>83</sup>

Then, shortly after Lon Chaney’s death in 1930, Dan Thomas remembered some of the actor’s “greatest horror pictures,” the language in the journalist’s syndicated article not dissimilar to the phrase used by George M. Young in *Variety* in 1909.<sup>84</sup> While definitely infrequent, such terminology was not unknown.



Published in the *Keota Eagle* (Iowa) on March 21, 1928.

### *Dracula* (1931)

To be clear, different descriptions were used for films like *The Bat*, *The Wizard*, and *The Cat and the Canary*. Most commonly they were referred to as “mystery” films. Despite its title, for example, *Variety* believed that Benjamin Christensen’s feature film *The House of Horror* (1929) was “one of the weakest and most boring afterbirths of pseudo mystery-comedy grinds out of Hollywood.”<sup>85</sup> And when *Film Daily* suggested *The Last Warning* “rehashes all the old stuff,” the old stuff in question was the “mystery melodrama.”<sup>86</sup>

Describing the proliferation of the mystery films in December 1928, *Motion Picture Classic* told readers:

Hollywood is in the midst of an epidemic of sudden and violent death. Almost every day a new murder occurs under mysterious circumstances in one of the movie studios. [...] The first result of the talkie panic has been a flood of mystery thrillers on the screen. [...] So

every studio lot these days finds foul deeds being committed, quarts of prop blood being shed, bodies being discovered behind secret panels and in haunted houses, and clues scattered about everywhere. Instead of the usual studio orchestra, weird devices for producing uncanny noises have taken their place.<sup>87</sup>

The journalist concluded that “murder” was the “watchword of the motion picture studios for the moment.”

That “moment” continued through 1929 and 1930, and it included Universal Pictures’ decision to adapt *Dracula*. Carl Laemmle, Junior’s cousin Carla once recalled that, “All the studios, including Universal, considered the story too horrible to film [in the 1920s].”<sup>88</sup> Her memory was correct, as surviving Universal paperwork from June 1927 makes clear. Four of five readers were against the idea. Here are two contradictory opinions on the matter, both of them relying on similar terminology:

ABSOLUTELY NO!! In the first place, it would be impossible to transcribe this novel of horrors to the screen. And, if it were possible, who would want to sit through an evening of unpleasantness such as a picture of this type would afford?<sup>89</sup>

For mystery and blood-curdling horror, I have never read its equal. For sets, impressionistic and weird, it cannot be surpassed. This story contains everything necessary for a wierd [*sic*], unnatural, mysterious picture.<sup>90</sup>

When Universal obtained the rights to *Dracula* in June 1930, nearly three years after it had proved successful on Broadway, *Variety* announced “U Takes horror play.”<sup>91</sup>

But Universal opted against such descriptions, envisioning *Dracula* as something that transcended a singular genre. “There’s more than just mystery to this classic tale and famous stage play,” the studio argued in an advertisement in August 1930.<sup>92</sup> The industry press reported that Carl Laemmle, Jr. and director Tod Browning puzzled for over one week as to whether the film “should be a thriller or romance” before finally deciding “to make it both.”<sup>93</sup> Laemmle later said the same in an interview: “We decided to hype it as both, and I’ve never regretted it.”<sup>94</sup>

Not everyone at the studio agreed. Ed Thomas’ early draft of the *Dracula* pressbook, dated November 15, 1930, suggested a number of “catchlines,” including:

Nameless horrors of the night.

Shuddering horrors! Shrieks in the night! Death!  
The terrifying story of the weirdest character in fiction.  
The shuddering terrors of the blood-sucking vampires.  
Moldering graveyards, and the drip-drip-drip of blood.  
Dripping blood, and the dismal howling of wolves!  
The crowning mystery drama of the screen.<sup>95</sup>

But none of Thomas' ideas survived the autumn to appear in the final studio pressbook or any of its publicity materials in 1931. The studio generally avoided all mention of words like "horror," "terror," "blood," and even "mystery" in the lead-up to *Dracula's* release, presumably to preempt or at least temper backlash from censors and audiences. Instead, in November 1930, Universal ran an advertisement for *Dracula* on the cover of *Film Daily*, offering for the first time its preferred tagline: "The Story of the Strangest Passion the World Has Ever Known."<sup>96</sup> Another ad announced, "He Lived on the Kisses of Youth!"<sup>97</sup> As for theatre decor, the final studio pressbook for *Dracula* advised exhibitors to "keep it weird" without becoming too "gruesome."<sup>98</sup>

In January 1931, only a few weeks before *Dracula's* premiere, Carl Laemmle, Sr. deviated from the Universal's carefully considered publicity materials in one of his "Straight from the Shoulder Talk" ads. After briefly referring to the film as "strange kind of love" story, Laemmle proudly announced that Tod Browning:

Produced it ruthlessly, Boldly, Brutally.  
He deliberately made it to shock!  
And it will shock. It will stun. It will stick in your memory.<sup>99</sup>

Though Laemmle instructed exhibitors not to advertise the film as a "mystery," he also advised them not to "pussyfoot" about describing the film as a "straight, blunt, direct, and vivid story on a subject that every living man, woman and child thinks about and wonders about."

### 1931 and 1932

Counter to advice in the prepared studio publicity, numerous theatre advertisements in 1931 referred to *Dracula* as a "mystery," as did some critical reviews.<sup>100</sup> In the *New York Times*, Mordaunt Hall suggested *Dracula* "can at least boast of being the best of the many mystery films."<sup>101</sup> *Time* called it a "a cut above the ordinary trapdoor-and-winding-sheet type of mystery film."<sup>102</sup> *Photoplay* recommended *Dracula* for the "mystery

mindful.”<sup>103</sup> *Film Fun* commended the movie to moviegoers who “like mysteries.”<sup>104</sup> And *Picture Play* wrote, “of all the mystery melodramas, this probably is the best because it is more outlandish than the others.”<sup>105</sup> Some audience members also relied on the same terminology, as can be seen in this quotation from a published fan letter: “Give us more pictures like *Dracula*. It is the best murder mystery I’ve ever seen.”<sup>106</sup>

A few exhibitors used such adjectives as “creepy” and “terrifying,” and even publicized particular screenings of *Dracula* as “spook shows.”<sup>107</sup> In February 1931, the *Seattle Times* called it a “weird, creepy drama on [an] unusually big scale.”<sup>108</sup> That same month, an ad in Oklahoma City promoted the word “Haunting.”<sup>109</sup> In March, newspaper advertisements in Cleveland opted for the word “terror.”<sup>110</sup> That same month, the *Providence Journal* warned readers that *Dracula* “brings terror,” while the city’s *Evening Bulletin* referred to it as a “completely scarey [*sic*] study in the supernatural.”<sup>111</sup>

As early as January 5, 1931, over one month before *Dracula*’s release, a column published in the *Washington Post* used the word “horror” as a description.<sup>112</sup> When the film premiered in February, the *New York Herald Tribune* praised Tod Browning’s “gift for pictorial suggestion and almost Poe-like horror.”<sup>113</sup> And *Variety*’s critique of *Dracula* relied on “horror” six times in the space of nine paragraphs.<sup>114</sup>

In March, Wilfred Beaton’s review in the pages of the *Film Spectator*, chose “creepy horror” to describe the film.<sup>115</sup> A review in Cleveland headlined *Dracula* as a “horror story.”<sup>116</sup> And the *Binghamton Sun* claimed:

It has remained for the talking picture—so very definite in its portrayals of horrors—with actual moans and shrieks to be ‘heard’ which hitherto we could only imagine—to make chillier chills rush up and down vertebraes [*sic*] and goose flesh rise to the surface of our trembling selves.”<sup>117</sup>

That same month, *Variety* observed that a Chicago theatre had accentuated the film’s “gruesomeness” rather than downplaying it, as the studio had advised.<sup>118</sup> The result brought \$26,000 to the theatre’s box-office, their average business at the time being \$24,000.<sup>119</sup> Not following the studio’s advice seemed financially advantageous.

The trend continued into April and May of 1931. A critic at the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* praised *Dracula* as follows: “Until such time as a movie producer manages to descend into the pit of Acheron and emerge with a film depicting home life along the banks of the Stygian creek will *Dracula* remain the most amazingly weird chronicle of gruesome horrors ever to thrill a theatre audience.”<sup>120</sup> Fan magazine *Hollywood* used “terror

and horror” when describing the film’s “photography and settings.”<sup>121</sup> As a term, “horror” even became preferred amongst those who did not like the film. In the June issue of *Photoplay*, a fan letter complained, “Why can’t pictures of frenzied horror such as *Dracula* be eliminated entirely from the screen? Life is hectic enough without tormenting us with pictures of this kind.”<sup>122</sup>

By the middle of March 1931, Universal announced plans to produce a version of *Frankenstein*.<sup>123</sup> At the end of the month, the studio also revealed plans for *Murders in the Rue Morgue* to be the third film in their cycle, with *Film Daily* using the word “horror” as a description for those two films and for *Dracula*.<sup>124</sup> The studio had good reasons to proceed, not least because of the concern that competitors might encroach on their newly named genre. Here is an important point in *Dracula*’s evolution to becoming understood primarily as a “horror” film, with Universal appropriating terminology initiated by others.

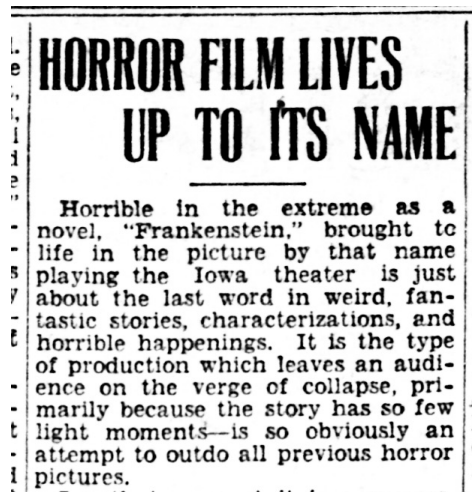
As a result, *Variety* declared that Universal had the “horror cycle” all to itself.<sup>125</sup> That assessment was temporary. The *Hollywood Reporter* told exhibitors in April that they would get a “flock” of “horror pictures” in the near future from a variety of studios.<sup>126</sup> In May, for example, an advertisement in *Variety* promised Paramount’s unproduced project *The Strange Guest* would mix “love, mystery and horror.”<sup>127</sup> And in June, *Variety* announced *The Monster Killer* (later retitled *The Monster Walks*) would mark Tiffany’s first “horror film.”<sup>128</sup> Not to be bested, in November, *Film Daily* announced that *The Suicide Club* would become the fourth production “in the ‘horror cycle’ being turned out by Universal.”<sup>129</sup>

That said, the term’s meaning remained imprecise, as well as at times perhaps intentionally elastic, with producers hoping to align their films with the likes of Browning’s *Dracula*. For example, in November 1931, *Film Daily* relied on the word “horror” to describe *The Guilty Generation* (1931), a drama about bootleggers.<sup>130</sup> And Universal claimed that audiences gasped “with horror” after watching a newsreel that pictured the real-life death of a pilot.<sup>131</sup> By contrast, in late December 1931, Paramount advertised *Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde* (1931) as the “Thriller of all Thrillers—plus a great love story,” even though most critics and audiences seem to have understood it as being a horror movie.<sup>132</sup>

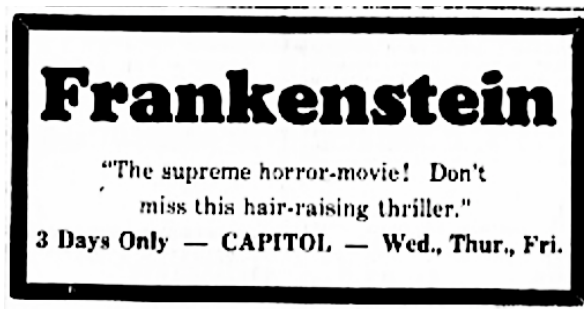
No such confusion surrounded James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931). “*Frankenstein* is Horror Film,” Brooklyn’s *Standard Union* informed readers in December 1931.<sup>133</sup> And *Variety* heralded the fact that the “horror film” *Frankenstein* was “smothering” its competition during its opening week in Pittsburgh.<sup>134</sup> The film’s success prompted producers who had earlier ignored the nascent cycle to take an interest. On December 22, 1931, *Variety* observed:

Hollywood free lance writers who haven't found story-telling so hot lately are now attempting to peddle their rarebit dreams to the studios. They're sure of getting by the portals when telling the keepers of the gate that they have a horror story in their bag of tricks. It's because of *Frankenstein*.<sup>135</sup>

The same article added the fact that Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932) "is getting a horror slant," a suggestion that *Frankenstein's* success was encouraging studios to heighten the horror content of projects already underway.



Published in the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette and Republican* (Iowa) on January 25, 1932.



Published in the *Bend Bulletin* (Oregon) on June 27, 1932.

On December 28, 1931, newspaper journalist William Gaines informed readers of his "About New York" column:



Movie fans with a fondness for the so-called ‘horror film’ are going to have plenty of opportunities to enjoy their shudders. Jacob Wilk, head of the eastern story department of one of the major companies, tells me he expects the market to be flooded with weird and scary pictures in the next four months.<sup>136</sup>

At roughly the same time, the President of the Motion Picture Theatre Owners of America made ominous warnings to the studios, admonishing them not to produce “too many horror films.”<sup>137</sup> Concerns over potential backlash from moral groups and parents with hysterical children were real. Once again, those against the genre appropriated the new term for it.

The terms “horror film” and “horror movie” moved into relatively common usage in the industry and American popular culture during 1931. The sheer number of times these phrases appeared in the trade press, fan magazines, and city newspapers increased dramatically in 1932, resulting in far too many examples to list. Some of this was due to ongoing screenings of *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and some of it was due to the proliferation of 1932 releases, including *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *Freaks*, *Behind the Mask*, *White Zombie*, *Doctor X*, *The Old Dark House*, *Island of Lost Souls*, and others. Nowhere is its recognition and acceptance more evident than a newspaper report published in March 1932:

In order to cash in on the current taste of the public for horror films, one studio is making a ‘horror western,’ titling it *Ghost City*. There’ll be phantom horseman [*sic*], invisible musicians and eerie noises. Shades of Sleepy Hollow!<sup>138</sup>

Here was something entirely new, at least in terms of generic labels: a cross-genre horror film, one that could be understood by the two words “horror western.” And yet here was also something old, at least in terms of historical and literary context, meaning the reference to Washington Irving’s *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820).

## Conclusion

As early as 1932, many newspapers and trade publications declared that *Dracula* had inaugurated the “horror movie.”<sup>139</sup> For example, the *Washington Post* described *Dracula*’s “overwhelming box office success” as causing a cycle of related films.<sup>140</sup> The *National Board of Review Magazine* wrote that an “avalanche of horror pictures” hit movie theatres after

*Dracula*.<sup>141</sup> And the *New Movie Magazine* reported Carl Laemmle, Jr.'s belief that "*Dracula* started the field."<sup>142</sup> To these persons, the earlier use of horror as an adjective to describe a film like *The Phantom of the Opera* was not enough to date to genre's origins to an earlier era.

Though referencing some silent films, a history of horror movies published in the *New York Times* in 1936 maintained that the "real triumph of the spectral thrillers was reserved for the arrival of sound," with *Dracula* acting as the catalyst.<sup>143</sup> Then, in 1944, the same newspaper claimed Universal "gave celluloid birth to the original 'horror' pictures [thanks to] *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and sundry tales of werewolves and invisible men."<sup>144</sup> During the decades that ensued, most accounts tended to repeat and emphasize the chronology, anchoring the birth of the horror film to the birth of the genre's name in 1931.

Universal Pictures had appropriated the term "horror film" from others, meaning exhibitors, critics, and audience members, an important example of nomenclature resulting not from studio hierarchy or even with its initial approval. Rather, the term "horror film" and such variants as "horror movie" emerged organically from old adjectives and from persons outside of the confines of the Hollywood system. Here is a triumph of the influence that can be exerted on production hegemony by the power of those involved in the screening and viewing of films. Witnessing its currency throughout America and potential power at the box-office, Universal adopted the genre name with great speed.

The studio's triumph came not only from producing *Dracula*, but also in its choice of subsequent films for the original "horror cycle," meaning following a supernatural vampire film with a mad scientist tale (*Frankenstein*) and a murder mystery (*Murders in the Rue Morgue*), all co-existing within a new label that resulted from an old description.<sup>145</sup> As Altman observes, "genre, it would appear, is not your average descriptive term, but a complex concept with multiple meanings."<sup>146</sup> The "horror film" could thus encompass the natural and the supernatural. The term could conjure recognizable but still varied codes and conventions, the terms being less elastic than the mere adjective "horror," but flexible and durable enough to encompass a range of tropes that extended well beyond the confines of the gothic or ghost stories or mysteries, whether the later science fiction films of the 1950s or the slasher films of the 1980s. It was a singular term with many meanings imprinted on its countenance.

*Acknowledgments: The author would like to thank Kristin Dewey, Bill Kaffenberger, Robert J. Kiss, Michael Lee, Robert Singer, and Tony Williams for their assistance.*

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue: Edison and International Photographic Films* (New York: Maguire & Baucus, April 1897), 7. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908: A Microfilm Edition* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985), Reel 1.

<sup>2</sup> [Editors' note: Due to the nature of the research for this article, requiring many citations from multiple sources, we have opted to use end-notes rather than in-text citations.]

<sup>3</sup> Advertisement, *The Evening Star* (Washington, D. C.), October 19, 1895.

<sup>4</sup> Hanford C. Judson, "The Secret Room," *Moving Picture World*, February 20, 1915, 1146.

<sup>5</sup> Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Jancovich, "Introduction: Generic Canons," in *The Shifting Definitions of Genre: Essays on Labeling Films, Television Shows and Media*, edited by Lincoln Geraghty and Mark Jancovich (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2008), 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Musser, "The Travel Genre in 1903-1904: Moving Towards Fictional Narrative," in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, edited by Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 127-131.

<sup>10</sup> James Naremore, "American Film Noir: The History of an Idea," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Winter, 1995-1996), 12-28.

<sup>11</sup> "Horrors!," *Motion Picture Classic* (April 1925), 25.

<sup>12</sup> "The Last Warning (Dialog)," *Variety*, January 9, 1929, 34.

<sup>13</sup> Sir Walter Scott, "Life and Character of Walpole," *The Museum of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art*, April 1, 1825, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1907): 83, 126.

<sup>15</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho, A Romance*, Volume II (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1799): 470, 233.

<sup>16</sup> Philip Freneau, *The Poems of Philip Freneau, Poet of the American Revolution*, Volume 1, edited by Fred Lewis Pattee (Princeton, New Jersey: The University Library, 1902): 217.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland; or, The Transformation* ([1798] Philadelphia: David McKay, 1887): 192.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (Philadelphia: M. Pollock, 1857): 168.

<sup>19</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: The Modern Library, 1938): 647.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 961.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 665.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 945.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>24</sup> Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1899): 12.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *The New Monthly Magazine*, No. 7 (1826), 145-152.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Tales of Terror, with an Introductory Prologue* (Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1813).

<sup>27</sup> Henry St. Clair, editor, *Tales of Terror, or the Mysteries of Magic* (Boston: Charles Gaylord, 1833).

<sup>28</sup> Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1892): 24.

<sup>29</sup> "The St. Charles," *Daily True Delta* (New Orleans, Louisiana), December 12, 1857, 3.

<sup>30</sup> "Recent Publications," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), April 10, 1892.

<sup>31</sup> "Read Penny Horror Novels," *The Record Union* (CITY, STATE?), November 1, 1893.

<sup>32</sup> "About Rudyard Kipling," *The Indianapolis News* (Indianapolis, Indiana), March 10, 1899.

<sup>33</sup> "Chronicle and Comment," *The Bookman*, November 1900, 216.

<sup>34</sup> *Film Catalogue, Supplement No. 1* (New York: American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, April 1903), 27. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 2.

<sup>35</sup> *The 1903 Complete Catalogue of Films and Moving Picture Machines* (Chicago: Selig Polyscope Company, 1903), 14. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 2. *List of New Films, American and Imported* (New York: American Vitagraph Co., 1900). Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 4. Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, January 6, 1900, 20. *Edison Films for Edison Projecting Machines* (Orange, New Jersey: Edison Manufacturing Company, July 1, 1904), 26. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 1. *Catalogue No. 120, Chicago Projecting Co.'s Entertainers Supplies* (Chicago: Chicago Projecting Company, 1907), 233. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 6.

<sup>36</sup> "It's a Winner," *Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), January 16, 1901.

<sup>37</sup> *Picture Catalogue* (New York: American Mutoscope and Biograph, November 1902), 72. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908: A Microfilm Edition*, Reel 2. *Complete Catalogue of Genuine and Original "Star" Films* (New York: Star Films, June 1905), 93. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 4. It is important to note that this Star Film catalog bears a June 1905 date, but pages from 81 to 148 detail films from the July 1905 to June 1908 period. Either these later pages were appended to the catalog, or the catalog dates to June 1908, with the first eighty pages reprinted and the 1905 date not being revised. *Lubin's Films* (Philadelphia: Lubin, June 1904), 10. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 3.

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- <sup>38</sup> *Edison Films, No. 135* (Buffalo, New York: J. F. Adams, September 1902), 96. Available in *A Guide to Motion Picture Catalogs by American Producers and Distributors, 1894-1908*, Reel 1.
- <sup>39</sup> Advertisement, *New York Clipper*, December 15, 1906, 1151.
- <sup>40</sup> Advertisement, *Austin Daily Herald* (Austin, Minnesota), June 2, 1910, 3.
- <sup>41</sup> Advertisement, *Galveston Tribune* (Galveston, Texas), November 20, 1911, 9.
- <sup>42</sup> The term “blood curdler” appears in Facts and Comments,” *Moving Picture World*, August 30, 1913, 935.
- <sup>43</sup> “Facts and Comments,” *Moving Picture World*, November 30, 1912, 856.
- <sup>44</sup> “*The Parasite’s Double*,” *Moving Picture World*, April 24, 1915, 642.
- <sup>45</sup> “Moving Pictures Are All the Rage,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 18, 1900, 5.
- <sup>46</sup> “By Camera Tricks,” *Grand Rapids Press* (Grand Rapids, Michigan), July 12, 1902, 10.
- <sup>47</sup> “Film Shows Busy; Panic Stops One,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 15, 1907, 1.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 4.
- <sup>49</sup> W. Stephen Bush, “Arms and the Film,” *Moving Picture World*, July 26, 1913, 404.
- <sup>50</sup> “Ghastly Vermin Horrors Shown Mere ‘Babes,’” *Aberdeen Daily News* (Aberdeen, South Dakota), January 11, 1913, 2.
- <sup>51</sup> “*The Hand of Horror*,” *Moving Picture World*, June 13, 1914, 1580.
- <sup>52</sup> “*The Gray Horror*,” *Motography*, May 15, 1915, 801.
- <sup>53</sup> “*The House of Horror*,” *Moving Picture World*, January 16, 1915, 416.
- <sup>54</sup> Margaret I. MacDonald, “*The Horrors of War*,” *Moving Picture World*, February 5, 1916, 792.
- <sup>55</sup> “*The Vengeance of Egypt*,” *Moving Picture World*, October 19, 1912, 251.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 251.
- <sup>57</sup> “*The Tiger*,” *Moving Picture World*, September 27, 1913, 1391.
- <sup>58</sup> Gary D. Rhodes, “‘Movie’: How a Single Word Shaped Hollywood Cinema,” *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Summer 2016), 43-52.
- <sup>59</sup> George M. Young, “Philadelphia,” *Variety*, November 13, 1909, 31. Young’s column mistakenly refers to *In the Watches of the Night* by the title *The House of Despair*, the latter being an intertitle seen in the film. He was speaking about *In the Watches of the Night*, as is apparent from his column two weeks earlier. See George M. Young, “Philadelphia,” *Variety*, October 30, 1909, 24-25.
- <sup>60</sup> Lynde Denig, “*The Folly of Desire*,” *Moving Picture World*, August 19, 1916, 1238.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1238.
- <sup>62</sup> “*The Crimson Stain Mystery*,” *Moving Picture World*, December 9, 1916, 1551.
- <sup>63</sup> “*Black Orchids*,” *Variety*, December 29, 1916, 22.

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- <sup>64</sup> “Many Elements in This But Horror Is the Dominating One,” *Wid’s Daily*, January 4, 1920, 5.
- <sup>65</sup> “*While the City Sleeps*,” *Variety*, September 3, 1920, 46.
- <sup>66</sup> Aileen St. John-Brenon, “Manhattan Medley,” *Picture Play* (September 1927), 55.
- <sup>67</sup> Mordaunt Hall, “Mr. Chaney’s New Role,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1927, X5.
- <sup>68</sup> Mollie Gray, “Gray Matter,” *Variety*, January 16, 1929, 49.
- <sup>69</sup> “Seattle Slides with Flu and Christmas,” *Variety*, December 26, 1928, 6.
- <sup>70</sup> “Hun Audiences Enjoy U-Boat Horror Movie,” *Oregon Sunday Journal* (Portland, Oregon), September 15, 1918.
- <sup>71</sup> “German Censor Bans ‘Rhine Horror Film,’” *Creston Daily Advertiser* (Creston, Iowa), August 11, 1921, 1.
- <sup>72</sup> Advertisement, *The Evening News* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), January 30, 1918, 15.
- <sup>73</sup> “‘Horror’ Films May Be Barred Transit,” *The Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), January 8, 1920, 15.
- <sup>74</sup> “Censors Are to Squelch Rough Jokes, Also Horrors,” *Santa Ana Daily Register* (Santa Ana, California), February 17, 1916, 3.
- <sup>75</sup> “*The Wizard*,” *Variety*, November 30, 1927, 19.
- <sup>76</sup> “*Seven Footprints to Satan*,” *Film Daily*, April 14, 1929, 13.
- <sup>77</sup> “*The Ruin* and Other Recent Works of Fiction,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1927, BR9.
- <sup>78</sup> Untitled, *The New Yorker*, December 3, 1927, 12.
- <sup>79</sup> “*Man with Red Hair* Is a Horror Play,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1928, 19; Patrick Hamilton, “Some Thoughts, Probably Apostate, on ‘Thriller,’” *New York Times*, September 15, 1929, X2.
- <sup>80</sup> “Horror Film Thrills Audience at Columbia,” *Warren Tribune* (Warren, Pennsylvania), August 14, 1928, 3.
- <sup>81</sup> Advertisement, *Keota Eagle* (Keota, Iowa), March 21, 1929, 8.
- <sup>82</sup> Quoted in “Newspaper Opinions,” *Film Daily*, January 13, 1929, 6.
- <sup>83</sup> “In the Broadway Area,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1930, X5; Morris Gilbert, “Parisian Cinema Chatter,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1930, X6.
- <sup>84</sup> Dan Thomas, “The Life Story of Lon Chaney,” *Centralia Evening Sentinel* (Centralia, Illinois), September 3, 1930, 7.
- <sup>85</sup> “*House of Horror*,” *Variety*, June 19, 1929, 32.
- <sup>86</sup> “*The Last Warning*,” *Film Daily*, January 13, 1929, 8.
- <sup>87</sup> Dorothy Donnell, “Gorifying [*sic*] the American Screen,” *Motion Picture Classic* (December 1928), 18-19.
- <sup>88</sup> Carla Laemmle, “Preface” in *Dracula (The Original 1931 Shooting Script)*, edited by Philip J. Riley (Absecon, New Jersey: MagicImage, 1990), 16.

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- <sup>89</sup> Copies of the original reader responses appear in Riley, *Dracula*, 30.
- <sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.
- <sup>91</sup> “U Takes Horror Play,” *Variety*, June 18, 1930, 46.
- <sup>92</sup> Advertisement, *Variety*, August 27, 1930, 24.
- <sup>93</sup> “Universal’s *Dracula* to Have Romance and Thrills,” *Exhibitors Herald-World*, October 4, 1930, 58.
- <sup>94</sup> Rick Atkins, *Let’s Scare ‘Em: Grand Interviews and a Filmography of Horrific Proportions, 1930-1961* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1997), 18.
- <sup>95</sup> The original copy of Ed Thomas’ draft pressbook for *Dracula* dated November 15, 1930 exists in the Universal Pictures collection at the Cinematic Arts Library at the University of Southern California.
- <sup>96</sup> Advertisement, *Film Daily*, November 9, 1930, 1.
- <sup>97</sup> Similarly, Universal published an advertisement for *Dracula* on the cover of *Film Daily* on January 11, 1931. It depicts an image of Dracula looming above a photograph of Mina (Helen Chandler) and Lucy (Frances Dade).
- <sup>98</sup> The pressbook for *Dracula* is reprinted in Riley.
- <sup>99</sup> Advertisement, *Motion Picture Daily*, January 21, 1931.
- <sup>100</sup> For examples of ads using the term “mystery,” see: Advertisement, *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky), February 28, 1931; Advertisement, *State Center Enterprise* (State Center, Iowa), March 5, 1931, 5; Advertisement, *The Chronicle-Telegram* (Elyria, Ohio), April 15, 1931, 4. For examples of journalists using that term, see: “*Dracula* Rated Hit as Wierd [*sic*] Mystery Drama,” *Woodland Daily Democrat* (Woodland, California), July 29, 1931.
- <sup>101</sup> Mordaunt Hall, “The Screen,” *New York Times*, February 13, 1931, 21.
- <sup>102</sup> “Cinema,” *Time*, February 23, 1931, 62.
- <sup>103</sup> “The Shadow Stage,” *Photoplay* (March 1931), 56.
- <sup>104</sup> “Talkie Tips,” *Film Fun* (June 1931), 58.
- <sup>105</sup> “*Dracula*,” *Picture Play* (May 1931), 71, 96.
- <sup>106</sup> “Brickbats and Bouquets,” *Photoplay* (June 1931), 146.
- <sup>107</sup> For an example of the word “creepy” used in conjunction with *Dracula*, see: Advertisement, *Sunday Times-Signal* (Zanesville, Ohio), May 17, 1931, 9. For examples of the word “terrifying,” see: Advertisement, *Seattle Times*, May 2, 1931, 2; Advertisement, *Twin Falls Daily News* (Twin Falls, Idaho), June 26, 1931, 4. For examples of the term “spook show,” see: Advertisement, *Coshocton Tribune* (Coshocton, Ohio), April 25, 1931, 6.
- <sup>108</sup> “At the Theatres,” *Seattle Times*, March 1, 1931: 20; Everhardt Armstrong, “Ghostly Classic Finely Pictured,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 28, 1931.
- <sup>109</sup> Advertisement, *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), February 15, 1931.
- <sup>110</sup> Advertisement, *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio), March 5, 1931.

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- <sup>111</sup> “Albee,” *Providence Journal*, March 15, 1931, 7; “*Dracula*–Albee,” *Providence Evening Bulletin*, March 14, 1931, 13.
- <sup>112</sup> Hubbard Keavy, “Hollywood Screen Life,” *Washington Post*, January 5, 1931, 9.
- <sup>113</sup> Crewe, “Shivery Cinema on View at Roxy is Capably Acted”; Watts, “On the Screen.”
- <sup>114</sup> Rush, “*Dracula*,” *Variety*, February 18, 1931, 14.
- <sup>115</sup> Wilfred Beaton, *The Film Spectator*, March 28, 1931, 13.
- <sup>116</sup> W. Ward Marsh, “*June Moon* Is a Nice Comedy; *Dracula*, Well Done, Is Horror Story,” *The Plain Dealer, Women’s Magazine and Amusement Section*, March 8, 1931, 11.
- <sup>117</sup> “Power of Screen as Thrill-Producer,” *Film Daily*, March 27, 1931, 8.
- <sup>118</sup> “Making It Tougher,” *Variety*, March 25, 1931.
- <sup>119</sup> “\$23,000 Big for Chaplin in Auto City,” *Motion Picture Daily*, April 1, 1931, 18.
- <sup>120</sup> “Eerie Adventures of Vampire Count Make Thrilling Film.” *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), April 11, 1931, 10.
- <sup>121</sup> “*Dracula*,” *Hollywood* (May 1931), 36. The words “terror and horror” appear in this review, which was longer than the “brief” review that *Hollywood* ran in the June issue.
- <sup>122</sup> “Brickbats and Bouquets,” *Photoplay* (June 1931), 146.
- <sup>123</sup> “*Frankenstein* Will Be Next Universal Thriller,” *Hollywood Reporter*, March 16, 1931, 2; “Production Activities,” *Hollywood Reporter*, March 20, 1931, 5.
- <sup>124</sup> “*Murders in [the] Rue Morgue* Third U Horror Film,” *Film Daily*, March 27, 1931, 10.
- <sup>125</sup> “U Has Horror Cycle All to Self,” *Variety*, April 8, 1931, 2.
- <sup>126</sup> W. R. Wilkerson, “Tradeviews,” *Hollywood Reporter*, April 16, 1931, 1.
- <sup>127</sup> Advertisement, *Variety*, May 13, 1931, 28.
- <sup>128</sup> “Hollywood,” *Variety*, June 2, 1931, 6.
- <sup>129</sup> “Last of U Horror Cycle,” *Film Daily*, November 19, 1931, 2.
- <sup>130</sup> “*The Guilty Generation*,” *Film Daily*, November 22, 1931, 10.
- <sup>131</sup> Advertisement, *Film Daily*, December 17, 1931, 3.
- <sup>132</sup> Advertisement, *Film Daily*, December 28, 1931, 4.
- <sup>133</sup> “Shrieks at the Albee; The Corsair Pleases,” *Standard Union* (Brooklyn, New York), December 14, 1931, 11.
- <sup>134</sup> “*Frank* Smothering All Pitt This Week on \$32,000, Stanley,” *Variety*, December 15, 1931, 8.
- <sup>135</sup> “Hollywood Tries to Turn Horror into Monotony,” *Variety*, December 22, 1931, 3.
- <sup>136</sup> William Gaines, “About New York,” *Lockport Union-Sun and Journal* (Lockport, New York), December 28, 1931, 12.
- <sup>137</sup> “Warning Is Issued by Lightman Against Too Many Horror Films,” *Film Daily*, December 28, 1931, 1, 8.



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<sup>138</sup> “Another Horror Film Goes into Production,” *The News and Courier* (Charleston, South Carolina), March 27, 1932, 7B.

<sup>139</sup> Shaffer, George. “Movie Studios Busy with New Horror Films,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 22, 1932. It is true that at least one newspaper article attributed the genesis of the horror film cycle to *Frankenstein* (1931). See “Frankenstein Stars Era of Terror Films.” *Los Angeles Times* 12 Jan. 1932.

<sup>140</sup> Nelson B. Bell, “Thoughts on Horror Era, Renaissance, and Miss Ulric,” *Washington Post*, February 21, 1932.

<sup>141</sup> “Freaks and Monsters,” *National Board of Review Magazine* (March 1932).

<sup>142</sup> Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., “Pardon Me – But Have You Heard?,” *New Movie Magazine* (April 1932), 108.

<sup>143</sup> “Vampires, Monsters, Horrors!,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1936.

<sup>144</sup> Fred Stanley, “Hollywood Flash,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1944, X3.

<sup>145</sup> *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932) does feature a mad scientist, but that character did not exist when Universal first announced its plans to adapt Poe’s story in March 1932.

<sup>146</sup> Altman, 14.

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- 2018 -

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