ROUTLEDGE MUSIC AND SCREEN MEDIA SERIES

MUSIC IN THE HORROR FILM

LISTENING TO FEAR

Edited by Neil Lerner

ROUTLEDGE

Music in the Horror Film

Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear is a collection of essays that examine the effects of music and its ability to provoke or intensify fear in this particular genre of film. Frightening images and ideas can be made even more intense when accompanied with frightening musical sounds, and music in horror film frequently makes its audience feel threatened and uncomfortable through its sudden stinger chords and other shock effects. Scholars in film studies have tended to downplay the audible over the visual, to overlook if not the presence of music in horror films then its potency within them. The essays in this collection—some of which take a thematic approach, some of which focus on a particular film—strive to address that lacuna with respect to the particular genre of film known for its ability to terrify us, the horror film. With contributions from scholars across the disciplines of music and film studies, these essays delve into blockbusters like *The Exorcist*, *The Shining*, and *The Sixth Sense*, together with lesser known but still important films like *Carnival of Souls* and *The Last House on the Left*. By leading us with the ear to hear these films in new ways, these essays allow us to see horror films with fresh eyes.

Contributors: Julie Brown; James Buhler; David J. Code; James Deaville; K. J. Donnelly; Ross J. Fenimore; Janet K. Halfyard; Claire Sisco King; Neil Lerner; Stan Link; Joe Tompkins; Lloyd Whitesell.

The *Routledge Music and Screen Media Series* offers edited collections of original essays on music in particular genres of cinema, television, video games and new media. These edited essay collections are written for an interdisciplinary audience of students and scholars of music and film and media studies.

Neil Lerner is Associate Professor of Music at Davidson College where he teaches courses in music as well as film and media studies. His work on film music has been published in numerous journals, essay collections, and encyclopedias. He is co-editor of *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music* (Routledge, 2006).

Routledge Music and Screen Media Series
Series Editor: Neil Lerner

Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear
Edited by Neil Lerner

Music in the Horror Film

Listening to Fear

Edited by Neil Lerner

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2010
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Simultaneously published in the UK
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2009.

To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge's collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Music in the horror film: listening to fear; edited by Neil Lerner.
p. cm.—(Routledge music and screen media series)
1. Motion pictures and music. 2. Horror films—History and criticism. I. Lerner, Neil William, 1966–.
ML2075.M879 2008
781.5'42—dc22 2009029811

ISBN 0-203-86031-4 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 10: 0–415–99202–8 (hbk)
ISBN 10: 0–415–99203–6 (pbk)
ISBN 10: 0–203–86031–4 (ebk)

ISBN 13: 978–0–415–99202–2 (hbk)
ISBN 13: 978–0–415–99203–9 (pbk)
ISBN 13: 978–0–203–86031–1 (ebk)

Contents

Foreword
Music and Screen Media Series

While the scholarly conversations about music in film and visual media have been expanding prodigiously since the last quarter of the twentieth century, a need remains for focused, specialized studies of particular films as they relate more broadly to genres. This series includes scholars from across the disciplines of music and film and media studies, of specialists in both the audible as well as the visual, who share the goal of broadening and deepening these scholarly dialogues about music in particular genres of cinema, television, videogames, and new media. Claiming a chronological arc from the birth of cinema in the 1890s to the most recent releases, the *Music and Screen Media* series offers collections of original essays written for an interdisciplinary audience of students and scholars of music, film and media studies in general, and interdisciplinary humanists who give strong attention to music. Driving the study of music here are the underlying assumptions that music together with screen media (understood broadly to accommodate rapidly developing new technologies) participates in important ways in the creation of meaning and that including music in an analysis opens up the possibility for interpretations that remain invisible when only using the eye.

The series was designed with the goal of providing a thematically unified group of supplemental essays in a single volume that can be assigned in a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses (including courses in film studies, in film music, and other interdisciplinary topics). We look forward to adding future volumes addressing emerging technologies and reflecting the growth of the academic study of screen media. Rather than attempting an exhaustive history or unified theory, these studies—persuasive explications supported by textual and contextual evidence—will pose questions of musical style, strategies of rhetoric, and critical cultural analysis as they help us to see, to hear, and ultimately to understand these texts in new ways.

Neil Lerner
Series Editor

Preface

Listening to Fear/Listening with Fear

Neil Lerner

One of the most familiar responses to the gruesome moments of a horror film is to cover or close one's eyes in fear. Yet, as Robynn Stilwell has pointed out about film sound in general, we can't cover our ears with the same certainty of muting the unwanted sounds as we can avert our gaze to stop seeing something.[1] Human anatomy lacks the equipment necessary for actually closing our ears—there is no earlid as there is an eyelid, and a finger only dampens, not obliterates, sound waves—and perhaps that says something about the fundamental utility of hearing in our development as a species. Thinking more specifically about the role of music in human evolution, Charles Darwin related all music back to its usefulness in sexual selection, noting the function of song in bird courtship. Songs could be used to attract mates as well as to define territory, yet Darwin thought only certain types of emotions could be affected by music; in *The Descent of Man*, Darwin wrote that "Music arouses in us various emotions, but not the more terrible ones of horror, fear, rage, etc. It awakens the gentler feelings of tenderness and love, which readily pass into devotion."[2] Such an assertion confirms for us that Darwin never saw a horror film, because of all the cinematic genres, horror gives music a heightened responsibility for triggering feelings of horror, fear, and rage, and so Darwin's statement rings particularly hollow in this context.

Scholars in film studies have tended to downplay the audible over the visual, to overlook if not the presence of music in horror films—music's presence in horror has long been noted—then its potency within them. For instance, Carol J. Clover's important work on the horror film draws attention to what she calls "the eye of horror."[3] Accurately situating the work of horror around "eyes watching horror"[4] and its self-reflexive voyeurism, Clover does mention the role of the sound track in a paragraph-length parenthetical aside:

> (We also take it in the ear, of course. Although my interest here and throughout is with the ocular, it would be remiss not to mention sound in connection with horror's directly assaultive effects. The

> shower sequence of *Psycho* shocks at the auditory as well as the visual level; preceded by an ominous silence [the unadorned natural sounds of Marion's preparations], the attack triggers the sound of "shrieking violins" whose hammering thrusts duplicate both the stabbing action of the diegesis and the editorial shattering of the image. Some viewers claim that they are more disturbed by the "music" of horror movies than the images, and that they cover not their eyes but their ears in the "scary parts." Sound in cinema in general has been undertheorized, and horror sound scarcely theorized at all.)[5]

Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear includes twelve essays that strive to address that lacuna, although they are hardly the first to do so. K. J. Donnelly's essay "Demonic Possession: Horror Film Music" provides an important theoretical framework for music in horror films, offering a historical survey of significant horror film scores and techniques together with the broader theme of music's role in making film (horror films in particular) a visceral experience for the audience, of film music being "able to *embody* horror, providing a demonic presence in itself."[6] Horror film's repetitious drones, clashing dissonances, and stingers (those assaultive blasts that coincide with shock or revelation) affect us at a primal level, perhaps instinctually taking us back to a much earlier time when the ability to perceive a variety of sounds alerted us (as a species) to approaching predators or other threats.

Music's Presence in Horror

Stylistically, music in horror films tended to allow greater freedom for composers to experiment with harmony and instrumentation. It may be regarded as a commonplace of twentieth-century music history that film music absorbed some of the practices of aesthetic modernism from the concert hall, and that in particular the genre of the horror film turned to unresolved dissonance, atonality, and timbral experimentation as part of its characteristic stylistic qualities. Frightening images and ideas can be made even more intense when accompanied with frightening musical sounds, and music in horror film frequently makes us feel threatened and uncomfortable through its sudden stinger chords and other shock effects. Yet the modernist experiments of the twentieth-century concert hall are not the only models for music in horror film. In the important collection of essays about horror film that he co-edited, film scholar Robin Wood includes an essay on Schubert's famous *Lied*, "Der Erlkönig" (1815).[7] Examining Goethe's poem as well as Schubert's musical setting of it through a psychoanalytic lens, Wood draws attention to the ways music and words work together to deal with repressed desires regarded as sacrosanct by civilization. Woods's basic formulation of the horror film—

"normality is threatened by the Monster"—focuses attention on the important ways the genre allows for the contemplation of taboo topics through various levels of subterfuge and subtext.[8]

As Woods's essay on Schubert makes clear, composers long before the twentieth century, and without recourse to unresolved dissonances or timbral experimentation, found multiple ways to create a sense of unease or dread. The unexpected recontextualization of a consonant and familiar-sounding musical work can also create dread. For instance, the return of the happy-sounding waltz (Arditi's *Il Bacio*) in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), a work that first appears during a romantic kiss and that essentially serves as a love theme in the film, nonetheless twists the knife in our heart as we hear it at the end of the film, while Jekyll breaks up with his beloved Muriel. The most trivial tonal music can also become terrifying when it calmly and euphoniously accompanies scenes of brutal violence, as Stan Link so eloquently discusses in "Sympathy with the Devil? Music of the Psycho Post-*Psycho*."[9]

Organization: Joining the Eye of Horror with Horror's Ear

While all of the essays in this collection examine closely the ways that music works in horror films, the first three chapters take a more thematic approach (e.g. the presence of organs, tritones, and children's music) while the remaining nine delve into a particular film or group of films with an eye—and ear!—towards finding new understandings of these filmic texts through a careful reflection upon the music. Although the essays here do not offer an exhaustive survey of every horror film or every technique, they nonetheless bring with them fresh insights (note visual metaphor) of well-known films such as *The Exorcist*, *The Shining*, and *The Sixth Sense* just as they also expand our knowledge of lesser known but still important films like *Carnival of Souls* and *The Last House on the Left*. Ultimately, the essays in this collection interrogate a number of different ways that music functions in horror films, with an underlying assumption that music in a horror film, just as in any other cinematic genre, participates crucially in the creation of the film's meaning, and so close attention to the score with both the eye *and* the ear will generate readings of the film that do not emerge when considering only the visual and cinematographic elements. By leading us with the ear to hear these films in new ways, these essays also allow us to see these horror films with fresh eyes.

Notes

1 Robynn Stilwell, "Sound and Empathy: Subjectivity, Gender and the Cinematic Soundscape," in *Film Music: Critical Approaches*, edited by K. J. Donnelly (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 171.
2 *The Works of Charles Darwin*, edited by Paul H. Barrett and R. B. Freeman, volume 22 (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 594.
3 "The Eye of Horror" is the title of the fourth chapter in Carol J. Clover's book *Men, Woman, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
4 Ibid., 167.
5 Ibid., 204.
6 K. J. Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), 106.
7 Robin Wood, "Der Erlkönig: The Ambiguities of Horror," in *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, edited by Andrew Britton, Richard Lippe, Tony Williams, and Robin Wood (Toronto: Festival of Festivals, 1979), 29–31.
8 Wood, "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," in Britton et al. (eds) *American Nightmare: Essays on the Horror Film*, 14.
9 Stan Link, "Sympathy with the Devil? Music of the Psycho Post-*Psycho*," *Screen* 45/1 (Spring 2004), 1–20.

Acknowledgments

This volume could never have happened without the considerable assistance of several individuals. The initial ideas for this book and the series it inaugurates benefitted from the vision of Larry Todd, Bryan Gilliam, and Constance Ditzel, Music Acquisitions Editor at Routledge. Clark Ross, Dean of the Faculty at Davidson College, and the Davidson College Faculty Committee on Study and Research supported this project through grants that allowed for travel to several archives, visits that were made especially fruitful with expertise from archivists: Barbara Hall, Jenny Romero, and Warren Sherk at the Margaret Herrick Library; Nicolette Dobrowolski at the Syracuse University Library Special Collections Research Center; and Alice Birney and Laura Kells at the Library of Congress. Tim Carter and Annegret Fauser helped me track down some vital archival sources. A number of colleagues at Davidson College provided crucial feedback, conversation, and encouragement: Mauro Botelho, Jessica Cooley, Scott Denham, Ann Fox, Van Hillard, Burkhard Henke, Randy Ingram, Ray Sprague, Jennifer Stasack, and the students in the Fall 2008 seminar CIS 421, The Horror Film. The Davidson College Library staff, and especially Interlibrary Loan coordinator Joe Gutekanst, regularly led me to necessary materials. My special thanks go to Stan Link for coming up with the book's subtitle and most especially to all of the contributors for their horrifically interesting work.

Neil Lerner

Chapter 1

Carnival of Souls and the Organs of Horror

Julie Brown

Watch a horror movie and there is a good chance you will hear an organ, probably a pipe organ. Screenwriters and directors even add organs to stories whose literary sources have none. Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* contains no mention of a pipe organ and yet the 1931 film of the story by Rouben Mamoulian opens with Dr. Jekyll playing one in his grand home; the Edgar Allan Poe story to which Edgar G. Ulmer's 1934 *The Black Cat* alludes (admittedly only vaguely) likewise has no organ even though the film does. Herk Harvey's one-off, low-budget cult film *Carnival of Souls* of 1962 is perhaps the *ne plus ultra* of horror movies with an organ. Its central character is an organist, its soundtrack consists exclusively of organ music, and the film moves to and from two locations of organ imagining: a church and an abandoned fairground-cum-entertainment pavilion. The minute we hear the organ underscoring we know something is up. Much as K. J. Donnelly argues we can consider films to be generally haunted by the "ghosts" and half-remembered sounds of film music, that "repository of reminders, half-memories and outbursts of emotion," we might consider this film to be thoroughly haunted by organ music, certainly to the same extent as its central character seems haunted by demons and ghosts.[1]

Horror movies as a genre are often read as safe explorations of the audience's worst fears. Steven Schneider, for instance, argues that horror "serves a variety of psychological functions in society."[2] In addition to catharsis and escape, it provides audiences with "a relatively safe (because relatively disguised/distorted) forum for the expression of socio-cultural fears." *Carnival of Souls* is a little more like the films of Hitchcock or Cocteau in that it presents its fantastical events as if they might be a psychological effect on its central character. *Carnival of Souls*' Mary Henry (Candace Hilligoss) even sees a psychoanalyst. The plot, which can be interpreted in various ways, was neutrally summarized in *The Daily Cinema* in 1967:

> The survivor of a car crash, organist Mary is given up for lost, but emerges apparently unscathed from the river into which the car plunged. She takes a job as a church organist; but her solitary life is haunted by a strange, elusive man (whom no one else can see). At times she can make no contact with the people around her and she is drawn to a deserted pavilion. A stray relationship with a flirtatious neighbour merely accentuates her sense of isolation. Sacked by the vicar for playing profane music over which she has no control, Mary attempts to leave town, but instead is drawn to the pavilion where she encounters other doomed souls. In the morning, Mary has disappeared, but when the car in which she crashed is fished out of the river, her dead body is also recovered.[3]

The final scene thus tells us that normal-looking Mary's ghostly and horrifying experiences arise from the fact that *she* is the zombie—this six years before that cornerstone of zombie films, *The Night of the Living Dead*.

Judging by his screenplay to *Carnival of Souls*, John Clifford well understands a point made by Terry Castle: namely, that "the most influential of modern theories of the mind—psychoanalysis—has internalized the ghost-seeing metaphor: the Freudian account of psychic events . . . is . . . suffused with crypto-supernaturalism."[4] Like so many horror films, *Carnival of Souls* is not only helpfully explicated by psychoanalysis, but the relationship is mutually supportive. "Without a soul," sexually "cold," and "off her rocker," as variously described, Mary Henry is understood by Dr. Samuels (Stan Levitt) (the type of doctor is left open) to be acting the way she does because of her traumatic experience:

> Look, look. You've had a fright. Hysteria won't solve anything . . . You've had a shock . . . It's been less than a week since you were in a car that crashed into the river. How you got out of that, no-one seems to know. But that experience must have been a serious emotional shock . . . The point is this: our imaginations play tricks on us. They often misinterpret what we see and hear. Do you agree? . . . If that can happen in ordinary times, go a step further. Look what can happen in a high fever, or following a serious emotional shock.

Or perhaps the whole thing is a nightmare; as such, the obvious nightmare sequence that starts when she is at a garage on a car hoist is a nightmare within a nightmare. What is certain is that the film reflects the post-Freudian view that mental apparitions have a demonic hold over us. The (ghostly) man who haunts her throughout may, for instance, be the embodiment of Mary's general fears about men. By the very end,

however, the logic of genre kicks in, and, for horror, the film provides a more straightforwardly supernatural explanation: Mary herself belonged to the world of the dead.

The way in which the organ music is deployed in the film strongly supports this fantastical world. But why the organ? The organ is one of the spectral presences in *Carnival of Souls*, summoning up, or being summoned up by, the various allusions in the film to cinema's past. The screenwriter explains its inclusion as the result of a series of location choices.[5] As this was a very low budget independent film, and the first feature film by a director and screenwriter who had previously shot only industrial films, it made sense for affordable locations to drive the plot. Director Herk Harvey chose Salt Air, the enormous and highly atmospheric abandoned amusement pavilion sitting in the middle of a lake just outside Salt Lake City, and said that he wanted the film to include creatures emerging from the water and dancing on the dance floor of the abandoned pavilion (Figure 1.1).[6] He gave screenwriter John Clifford carte blanche to write the rest of the story. Before doing so, Clifford identified a good second location: the Reuter Organ Company in Salt Lake City, which had a big room where they tested their organs (Figure 1.2). From this came the idea of making Mary an organist, according to Clifford. There is no reason to doubt this account of the story's genesis, but making these

Figure 1.1 Zombies dancing on dance floor of the deserted entertainment pavilion, in *Carnival of Souls*

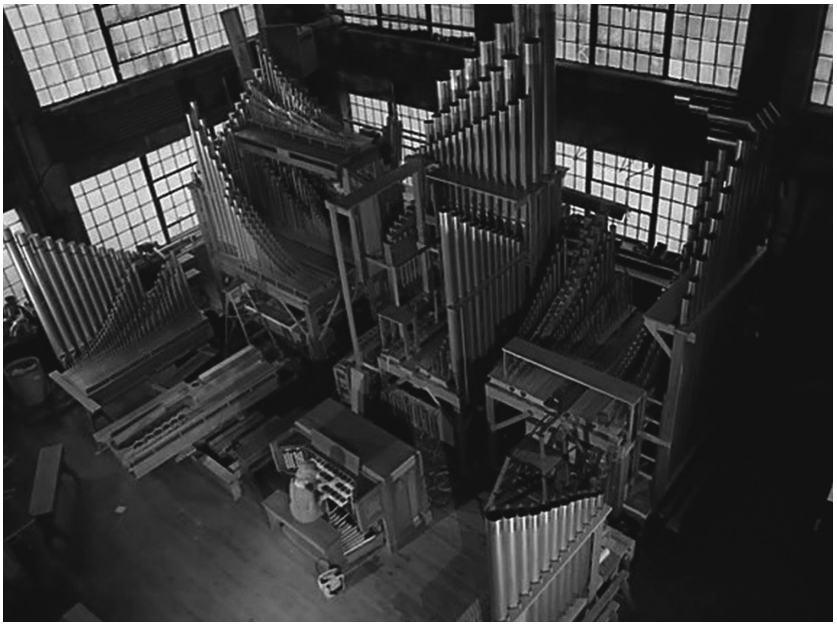

Figure 1.2 Mary Henry in the Reuter Organ Company testing room, in *Carnival of Souls*

conceptual connections presupposes a knowledge of the horror genre and the significance of the pipe organ to it.

Herk Harvey admits that he feels the sequences shot in the organ factory add to the "Gothic look" of the film. Yet *Carnival of Souls* is not Gothic in the sense in which we typically understand the term. The term has a rather loose definition, but broadly refers to a sense of an earlier time, usually the Middle Ages, and one of necromancers and superstition. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic novel, which partly gave rise to genre horror film, asserted itself from the beginning "as the literature of collapsing structures, evil enclosures, forbidden feelings, and supernatural chaos. Its primary crisis would be entrapment or fear of entrapment for the innocent and evil characters alike . . ."[7] Yet it was a universe of "*pleasing* horror." In this sense, its "ruined magnificence, beautiful disorder, attractive decay, dreadful spectacle, and supernatural extravagance" provided a kind of aesthetic relief from the emotional starvation of the neoclassic value system. For Frederick S. Frank, the Gothic was a response to the political and religious insecurity of the time in which it emerged. The crumbling pavilion, the images of immense pipe organs, and the church scenes, render *Carnival of Souls* a contemporary spin on the Gothic.

The broader attraction of horror films to the pipe organ must be partly a function of the instrument's suitability to the genre's recurring, often Gothic themes. The instrument's clear religious associations enable it to serve as a musical sign of religious ponderings (in *Bride of Frankenstein* [James Whale, 1935]), when a blind man takes the monster into his isolated hut and thanks God for sending him a friend, non-diegetic organ music is heard), esoteric knowledge (in *The Black Cat* we see Boris Karloff's character sitting at the organ and later presiding over a bizarre futurist rite while another man plays the organ), and possible death followed by funerals (in Hammer horror *The Gorgon* [Terence Fisher, 1964], when a character reaches a coffin lid). The organ's usual locations—inside churches and cathedrals, near crypts—alludes to the spaces of the Gothic novel, joining with tolling cathedral bells and choral voices in horror films in this respect.[8] The immensity of the sound of a pipe organ seems well suited to a horror film's sense of monumentality, and its desire both to scare and to create larger-than-life characters. Its effect might be likened to Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime. While for Burke beautiful objects are associated with smallness and delicacy, huge objects evoke awe and terror—a sense of the sublime.[9] The huge sound of the organ might be thought of in this way. With their baroque and various other fanciful instances of interior styling, including cathedral-like ceilings and accoutrements, the picture palaces' interiors themselves, and often the very architecture of the organ console, would in their heyday have supported horror's gothic allusions. As famous American theater organist Gaylord Carter recalls, "going into the Million Dollar Theater in [the late 1920s], with its magnificent orchestra and wonderful organ, was like entering a cathedral."[10]

In some other respects, the way in which the organ is used in *Carnival of Souls* goes against type. Either that, or its reversal of the established genre conventions invites us to read the film in a particular way. The fact that *Carnival of Souls*' organist is a beautiful woman is the key instance of play with genre conventions. In horror movies the organist is typically a weird male loner, with plans to exert some sort of power. This topos has appeared in horror films since at least *The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1925; re-released with sound 1929), which is based on Gaston Leroux's 1909–10 novella *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra*; and may partly exploit the solitariness of the typical church organist who commands his immensely powerful instrument from his usually hidden loft. Hiding underneath the Paris Opera the masked "phantom" has an organ in his lair (Figure 1.3).[11] *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has a similar image: a grand home with the quite unlikely installation of a full pipe organ—the addition that Rouben Mamoulian's version adds to Stevenson's story. This idea of making the organist an eccentric, dangerous genius probably originates

Figure 1.3 Christine being seduced by the phantom outside his bedroom in *Phantom of the Opera*

in Jules Verne's 1870 novella *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (*Vingt Mille Lieues Sous Les Mers*), in which scientist Captain Nemo lives an isolated life at the bottom of the sea in his submarine *Nautilus*, whose grand gentlemen's club-style salon contains a pipe organ (Figure 1.4).

The cinematic image of a man playing his organ at home or in some other secluded place is quite sexually suggestive. Indeed, it is hard not to conclude that from the earliest days of the establishment of genre horror movies, the long-established English-language organ pun has been an important part of the pipe organ's attraction.[12] In *Phantom of the Opera* Christine is seduced by the voice of the phantom who speaks to her through the walls of her dressing room. She goes in search of him, but he soon becomes the proverbial beast in his fantastical boudoir. The scene when she unmasks the phantom follows an overtly sexual trajectory. Christine follows him into his lair. He takes her into the bedroom then goes just outside the door to play his organ (see Figure 1.3): the title of the piece is "Don Juan Triumphant," as the pointed close-up of his score confirms. (It is after this that, having emerged from the bedroom and listened to him enraptured, Christine sneaks up behind him and pulls the string that will drop his mask.) The metaphor is similarly blatant in

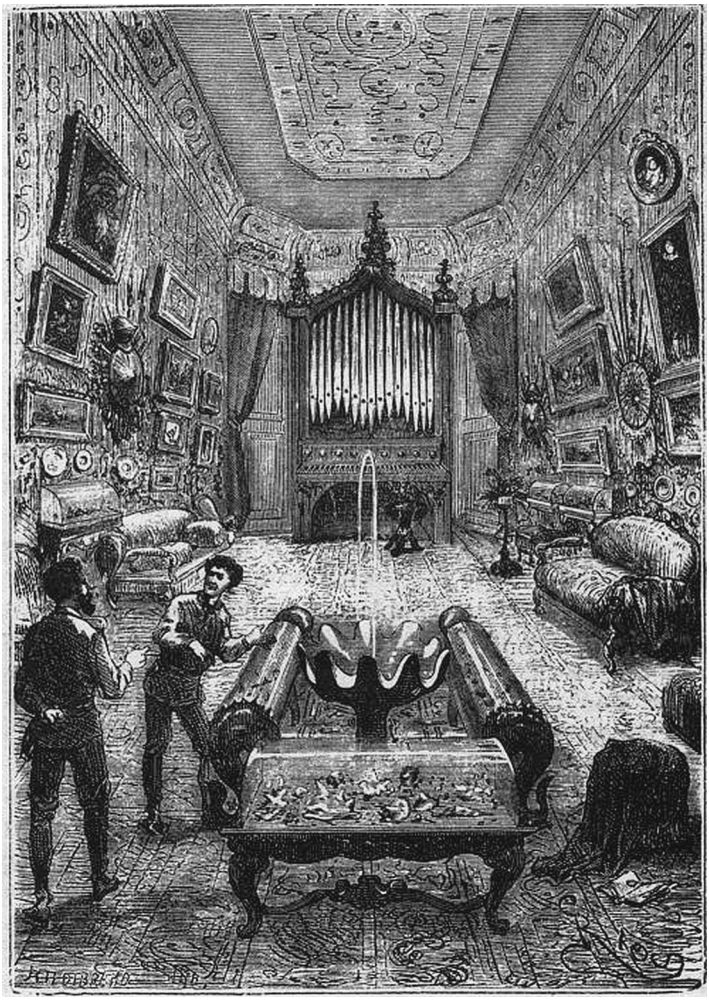

Figure 1.4 Édouard Riou's drawing of the Grand Salon in the original edition of *Vingt Mille Lieues Sous Les Mers*

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Organ-playing Dr. Jekyll's sexual and emotional frustration is central to the film, whose plot dwells on his expressions of (sexual) frustration at not yet being permitted by Muriel's father to marry her; he turns himself into Mr. Hyde and disappears off to a music hall essentially in order to satiate that sexual need. By the time of the Dr. Phibes films—*The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (Robert Fuest, 1971) and *Dr. Phibes Rises Again* (Robert Fuest, 1972)—the sexual connotation is quite camp.

It might or might not be relevant to all this that the organ work most repeated in horror films is Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, a piece explicitly referring to "touch" and involving repetition and a relentless driving rhythm typical of many baroque pieces, and certainly toccatas—notwithstanding the fact that the date, title, and even Bach's authorship of this particular toccata and fugue remain disputed.[13] Though the phantom plays "Don Juan Triumphant," Dr. Jekyll and so many who followed him are associated with the Toccata and Fugue. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* opens with an orchestral transcription of the Toccata and Fugue as title music, though Dr. Jekyll does not himself play it. The opening credits are immediately followed by the famous point-of-view sequence of Jekyll at the organ playing the Chorale Prelude in F Minor, BWV 639, "Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ," and he returns again later to the Toccata and Fugue after Muriel's father finally gives him and Muriel the go-ahead to marry: Jekyll immediately rushes home triumphant, arms waving, to play his organ. *The Black Cat* (1934), *The Raven* (1935), and many other films follow *Dr. Jekyll* in using the Toccata and Fugue. It is even used in the 1954 film version of Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954) and its sequel *Mysterious Island* (1961). In the Hammer horror film *The Gorgon*, James Bernard's score draws on the style of Bach's Toccata and Fugue on Hammond organ for the coffin lid moment.

If Bach's Toccata may in English connote the idea of auto-erotic "touch" in the context of the larger organ pun, it is also often associated with a kind of virtuosic inventive madness, of which Dr. Jekyll is cinematic archetype and Verne's Nemo key precursor. Though we do not actually see Dr. Jekyll playing the Toccata passage, the opening organ-playing scene constructs Dr. Jekyll as having a god-like outlook onto the world. The sequence is filmed strictly from Jekyll's point of view, and rendered quite optical by the iris shot: in this way we are given Dr. Jekyll's eyes, not just his approximate point of view. Other characters, notably his butler, a policeman, and colleagues, directly address the camera. This filming device helps us to recognize his high status and emphasizes the notion that he is controlling matters, even though we do not actually see him. An almost god-like aura attaches to him not only because of the respect he is paid by those around him but also as a result of his command of the three-manual organ, with all its religious connotations and implication of access to sonic power (Figure 1.5). In a later scene we see him confidently tossing his head back as he plays (Figure 1.6). Having succeeded in controlling this immensely powerful musical instrument, he immediately attempts, god-like, to control nature.

Such a reading of Jekyll follows a strain of the reception of Jules Verne's Captain Nemo. According to Jean-Paul Dekiss, director of the Centre International Jules Verne in Amiens and the writer of several books on the author:

Figure 1.5 Iris shot of Jekyll looking onto his organ keyboard in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Figure 1.6 Jekyll playing his organ in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

> Verne was the first modern mythmaker. He was the first writer to try to tell the story of what happens after God is de-throned, what happens when Man begins to fashion his own world, what happens when Man shrinks the globe and re-creates the terms on which he had existed for thousands of years.[14]

In this respect, organ-playing Nemo gave rise to a hundred enigmatic, hermit-like, megalomaniacal, scientific geniuses—many of whom in genre horror movies (Dr. Jekyll, *The Black Cat*'s Poelzig, Dr. Phibes, etc.) also play the organ or are underscored by organ.

Such a use of the organ locally as a genital symbol and more broadly as a phallic symbol is perfectly consistent with horror's use of monsters as a symbol of an unconscious content in the mind.[15] Given that horror usually involves something visual, as opposed to purely conceptual, the on-screen pipe organ is structurally similar to the monsters that surround it and serve as embodiments of the audience's worst fears. Not exactly embodied, the pipe organ nevertheless both visualizes and renders audible phallic power, making use of a similar distorting hyperbole.

In light of this genre convention, the different symbolic configuration in *Carnival of Souls* seems quite pointed. Mary is portrayed as a beautiful, independent, indeed, somewhat semi-detached young woman. She is a working woman whom we first encounter moving to a new town and a new job. She is single, with no husband or boyfriend (or desire for one), and succeeds in keeping her lascivious boarding house neighbor Mr. Linden at arm's length—notwithstanding a number of sequences involving his peeping through slightly open doors at her in a state of undress. The film constructs a homology between the idea of playing the organ soullessly and Mary as a somewhat soulless person (ultimately revealed as the result of her being a zombie). As she tries out an organ at Reuter's organ factory, the organ manufacturer compliments her on her playing:

> "Well Mary. You'll make a fine organist for that church. It'll be very satisfying to you, I think."
> "It's just a job to me."
> "Well, it's not quite the attitude for going into church work."
> "I'm not taking the vows. I'm only going to play the organ."
> "Why, you want more than that."
> "'Course, it doesn't pay much, but, well at least it's a start . . ."
> "Mary, it takes more than intellect to be a musician. Put your soul into it a little. Okay?"

The film develops this theme of soulless organ playing. As Mary finds herself inexplicably drawn toward the abandoned pavilion, the organ music we hear is closer to that of a mechanical fairground organ: pipe organ in its most mechanized state.

In reading the significance of Mary's organist construction, it is important to bear in mind that the fact and the effects of difference are a key concern of horror.[16] For Raymond Durgnat, "the only films whose erotic content is as open as that of musicals are horror films . . . The kingpin of the horror film is the rendezvous of eroticism and violence."[17] He cites *King Kong* and James Whale's *Frankenstein*, noting that:

> Frankenstein's laboratory is a stone tower set on a hilltop, and the scene where the "embryonic" compendium of carcasses hoisted to the top of a tower while a storm rages is a crude but by no means unimpressive image for tumescence.[18]

Another obvious example is the almost pornographic slasher film, which usually involves a psycho killer slashing to death a string of mostly female victims. As Carol J. Clover has noted, one girl usually survives (*Halloween*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*).[19] Despite their roots in *Psycho*, with its psychologically inflected *raison-d'être*, these films came not to bother with a story about bestial transformation, or otherworldly fantasy, thin though such premises usually are for horror's fantasies—often sexual fantasies of difference.

Mary Henry's sexless and soulless construction as "working woman" is therefore important, and may be read in the context of a wave of postwar 1950s horror movies. For Barry Keith Grant, horror movies of this era sometimes took a slightly new form, whereby women were being positioned by popular culture within domestic space.[20] Threats to masculinity, he argues, can be found in *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) and *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman* (1958). Grant cites an interesting statement by director Don Siegel about *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, suggesting that it betrays the nature of the fear expressed in a particular scene: Siegel observed that McCarthy tries "to kiss her awake in a delicious non-pod way but she's a limp fish and he knows immediately that she is a pod. In my life, I am sorry to say, I have kissed many pods."[21] Grant concludes, "Here the director, like so much of horror cinema generally, disavows the possibility of his own inadequacy and projects it onto woman as Other."[22]

Mary Henry in *Carnival of Souls* might be read as a projection of male fears of castration in a similar way: a fear that women were not functioning in the expected ways in society, were taking on traditionally male roles and as such seemed to have lost their souls. The opening scene visually connects this theme with her generically phallic organ playing. Mary and a couple of girl friends are in a car and are challenged to a drag race by a car full of young men. They lose at this very "boy's own" race when their car runs over the side of a bridge and plunges to a murky graveyard in the river. When, astonishingly, Mary emerges from the river and goes

to drive off, the camera constructs a parallel between the boys' game of drag racing and the masculine business—certainly in horror movies—of playing a pipe organ, providing us with a close-up of her hand on the car choke and then on an organ stop at the Reuter organ factory. (Figures 1.7 and 1.8). Her business-like approach to her job, her independence, and the fact that she brushes off of her neighbor's advances all support this. Yet at the same time, she remains the object of male fantasy—albeit now a somewhat confused fantasy. As with so many horror films, we see her in more vulnerable moments—such as when she prepares for a bath—and is subject to the male gaze; in one scene she wears a nightgown, and the neighbor tries to force himself on her. As already mentioned, she is also presented as suffering from that archetypal female complaint, "hysteria." She emerges both as object of physical desire and as an independent, detached, emotionless, hysterical, and not only sexually unavailable but ultimate thoroughly undesirable woman ("off her rocker").

Cinematic form even seems to implicate itself on this point. She constantly sees a ghostly face staring at her, The Man, even though no one else can. At the end of the film, we learn that The Man is one of the undead calling her back to the world of death. His impersonal designation as "The Man"—as if a character in an expressionist "Ich drama" where characters are not given names but stand in for types—suggests that throughout the ostensibly realistic part of the film he stands

Figure 1.7 Mary Henry's hand on the car choke, in *Carnival of Souls*

Figure 1.8 Mary Henry's hand on an organ stop, in *Carnival of Souls*

for *all men*. In other words, The Man comes to stand for other characters—or rather, other male characters seem to become simply "Men" in Mary's eyes. The scene when Mr. Linden finally takes Mary out on a date and then brings her back to her room is one of several suggesting such a reading. Before they enter the room we see him flirting, putting his head on her shoulder. Inside we see him move toward her and do likewise, but when he looks up, we (and she) see not his, but The Man's, head reflected in the mirror. She screams. But the next shot reveals that Mr. Linden is still on the other side of the room. The implication is that Mary imagined Mr. Linden to have been even more forward than he was.[23] The fact that the director Herk Harvey played the role himself only makes the issue more intriguing. As The Man, a ghostly projection of All Men, the director seems to admit to his film director's role at this time of objectifying women.[24]

The Spectralization of the Cinema Organ

The pipe organ's potential to suggest readings of the film results not only from a twist on the usual casting of the organist but also from the way in which its music floats within the soundtrack as a whole. The fluidity with which diegetic, non-diegetic, and metadiegetic spaces are blurred renders