

HORROR FILMS



**Current Research on
Audience Preferences
and Reactions**

Edited by
James B. Weaver, III
Ron Tamborini

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Preface

Why do so many of us enjoy being told frightening stories? What are some of the consequences that result from such exposure? In light of the considerable popularity of horror films over the last three decades these questions have become the focus of growing attention for many scholars. However, research on audience preferences for and reactions to horror films has been done eclectically by investigators from varied theoretical and methodological backgrounds. Although considerable insights have been uncovered by different parties, efforts to integrate such findings have been limited. To our knowledge, there has never been a book published that has brought together the most recent research in this area. This volume was organized in an effort to end this dilemma and to put the study of audience responses to frightening fiction on the map as a significant research venture.

The first chapter of this volume offers a brief historical account of fictional horror. From fireside fables to pulp fiction to the modern horror film, Tamborini and Weaver trace the development of frightening fiction as an entertainment enterprise.

Zillmann and Gibson also examine the history of horrifying story telling, but from a different perspective. In chapter 2 they explore the socialization function of such tales noting, in particular, that the modern horror film may be a last vestige of ancient rites of passage.

Considerable debate has emerged over the last decade concerning the content of modern horror films. In chapter 3 Sapolsky and Molitor provide a review of several content analyses of horror films. They conclude that some basic assumptions regarding the content of these films are unfounded.

In chapter 4, Gomery points out that the horror film ranks as one of the most popular and profitable of film genres. He then provides a detailed analysis of the economics of the horror film industry. Gomery concludes that the horror film should continue to enjoy a stable position in the repertoire of Hollywood.

Cantor and Oliver examine the issue of how children and adolescents respond to horror films. In their exploration of developmental differences in responses to horror, Cantor and Oliver offer an illustrative and informative presentation of young adults' retrospective reports of intense emotional reactions to horror. They conclude chapter 5 with a discussion of how parental involvement is the key to helping children cope with media-induced fright.

In chapter 6, Zillmann and Weaver advance a theory of gender socialization of affective behaviors and displays. Specifically, they propose that, through consumption of horror films, adolescents and young adults are provided a safe environment where they can engage in societally prescribed displays of affect and emotion. Further, they propose that such displays during the consumption of cinematic horror have significant consequences for interpersonal attraction and interaction.

Tamborini, in chapter 7, also examines emotional reactions to horror films. Specifically, he outlines a model that illustrates the processes by which the aesthetic emotions are elicited by imaginative involvement with environments created by horror films. He concludes that empathic processes are critically important in determining how we respond to graphic horror.

In chapters 8 and 9 Sparks and Zuckerman each tackle the issue of why some of us enjoy graphic horror whereas others do not. These authors argue that consideration of viewers' personality characteristics offers an informative avenue for untangling this puzzle. Both of these scholars offer psychophysiological evidence suggesting a link between personality and responding to horror films.

Lawrence and Palmgreen, in chapter 10, also explore some of the reasons why many individuals are enticed by horror films. Utilizing data from an extensive survey, these authors concluded that an "arousal need" is a key factor underlying most individuals' preference for horror films.

Finally, in chapter 11 Tamborini and Salomonson turn to the issue of how exposure to horror films may influence our social perceptions and behaviors. Although undesirable effects for the individual viewer or society at large are probably not intended by the producers of horror films, the review of research findings provided by Tamborini and Salomonson suggests that such consequences do occur.

The principal acknowledgment in a collective work such as this goes to the contributors. We are most grateful for all they have done to make this volume possible. A special thanks to our graduate students who, in one capacity or another, helped us complete this work. We are both indebted to Dolf Zillmann who has patiently guided, stimulated, and encouraged us. Finally, we owe a debt of gratitude to our families for both their support and tolerance in granting us the time needed to complete this task.

James B. Weaver, III
Ron Tamborini

Chapter

1

Frightening Entertainment: A Historical Perspective of Fictional Horror

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It can be hard to understand the "nature of the beast" when we are always running away from it. So it seems as we attempt to define the modern horror genre. Indeed, as we looked for a clear, precise definition of the horror genre, we discovered instead a deeply entangled and controversial concept. It is not uncommon, for instance, for scholars to be centuries apart when identifying the genre's inception. Some trace the ancestry of horror to early cave drawings and primitive rituals (see Zillmann & Gibson, chap.2, this volume). Others put its roots in the mid-18th century beginning with the "Age of Reason" (Edwards, 1984; Twitchell, 1989), and mock those who would describe horrid fiction "in mythic, legendary terms, as if there were any resemblance between a postindustrial American teenager, screaming in delight at a monster movie, and some medieval peasant who trembled in the dark for fear a ghost would get him" (Kendrick, 1991, p. xxii). Still others suggest that the modern horror genre originated only in the early part of this century when scholars first began to write anthologies on horrid fiction, or, perhaps when critics affirmed it by decree (Joshi, 1990).

There is some merit in each of these perspectives depending on the facet of horror considered. If one begins with an interest in the functions served by horror (such as Zillmann & Gibson, chap.2, this volume) we might assume that certain needs associated with these stories have not changed since prehistoric times, whereas other needs may be associated with much more recent developments. In the same manner, interest in the genre's form might focus on characteristics of horror that have been a part of frightening *narratives* since

preliterate times, or focus on characteristics of frightening *fiction* that have distinguished modern horror from other related genres since the middle of the 18th century.

Whichever perspective is embraced, little appears to have changed as the telling of horrific tales has moved from campfire fables to pulp fiction to the modern film. This chapter offers a brief historical overview of the development of frightening entertainment.

DEFINING HORROR

One problem associated with defining horror is confusion about the nature of the threat implied. Separate examinations have made similar attempts to distinguish the sensation experienced in the face of physical danger from that experienced as a form of supernatural threat (Barclay, 1978; Derry, 1977; Praver, 1980). Lovecraft (1923/1973) suggested that horror found in weird tales of this type:

Has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the demons of unplumbed space. (p. 15)

Edwards (1984) suggested that the clear separation between horror and fear lies in the distinction between external threat and the idea of threat, but to this she added that terror is associated with extreme fear, whereas horror couples extreme fear with disgust. Thus, one may feel terrified by the impending danger that could result in death, but horrified by the thought of being dead and the disgust of corruption and decay. This designation of horror is similar to that found in literature on emotion (Lazarus, 1991) and used elsewhere in this volume (see Tamborini, chap. 7, this volume). It implies that horror is characterized by fear of some uncertain threat to existential nature and by disgust over its potential aftermath, and that perhaps the source of threat is supernatural in its composition.

Defining horror in this manner provides a starting point for understanding the complexities of the phenomenon. A more detailed conception might be gained by examining the typologies consistent with this definition that have been developed to distinguish the concept. Penzoldt (1965) suggested that horrid fiction can be categorized as a Gothic tale, science fiction, or psychological horror; Derry's (1977) typology includes horror of the demonic,

the horror of Armageddon, and the horror of personality; and Joshi (1990) proposed classes including supernatural horror, quasi-science fiction, and nonsupernatural horror. Although the typologies were created for various purposes and the nomenclature seems to differ, much in common can be found in three dimensions that are shared by each typology. The terminology of Joshi (1990) is employed here for its more broadly inclusive features.

Supernatural, Gothic, or horror of the demonic all begin with the assumption that the real world is governed by "natural law" and we live our lives according to this belief. Lovecraft (1923/1973) suggested that horror is created when some "natural law" is violated. When this occurs, life as we once knew it starts to function according to laws we do not understand and over which we have no control. We are at the mercy of supernatural forces that appear to have malicious intent.

Quasi-science fiction, science fiction, or the horror of Armageddon once again begins with the assumption that the real world is governed by forces that are well understood, even though the impossible seems to have occurred. In this case, however, the violations are accounted for in some rational manner. Quasi-science fiction presupposes that the impossible is an issue of epistemology, and not an issue of ontology. The impossible is accounted for not as a function of reality being violated, but as a function of our inability to yet understand the reality that we know to exist. As such, although the violation may appear supernatural at present, it is implied that we will be able to explain the phenomenon in the future. Nonetheless, again we are confronted by malevolent powers beyond our understanding or control, and the threat it presents is horrifying.

Nonsupernatural, psychological, or horror of the personality has been the most difficult to classify as part of the genre. Joshi (1990) suggested that nonsupernatural horror has two autonomous divisions: *pseudonatural*, in which events that appeared to violate natural law are later shown to be the account of an abnormal state of mind; and *conte cruel*, a tale of inhuman brutality. Lovecraft (1923/1973) and others believed that attempts to integrate the nonsupernatural, particularly *conte cruel*, confuse understanding of fictional horror, however, denying its inclusion would eliminate materials central to many audience conceptions of the genre. Classics like *Psycho* and other nonsupernatural horrors would have to be left out. In order to avoid limiting our concept to one unrelated with these audience experiences, a broader meaning that incorporates nonsupernatural horror seems appropriate in this situation. Although the divisions may appear somewhat blurred, this inclusion seems appropriate if psychological horrors can be considered part of the supernatural. For example, in *Psycho*, Norman Bates is classified as schizoid. If this diagnosis is taken to mean that as yet we really do not understand what is going on in the person's mind, these stories of unexplainable forces with

malicious intent fit more easily within the genre (Twitchell, 1989). In either account, when stories of this type center on the provision of extremely loathsome images they seem more compatible with horror than with affiliated genres predominantly owing to their attempt to disgust.

Exploring these typologies helps us clarify different meanings of horror employed by audiences today, but viewing archaic thoughts on horror according to this conceptualization is unlikely to give us an accurate account. Clearly, these categories are inappropriate for understanding the phenomena prior to the 18th century when prevailing ontological assumptions would have provided no meaning for categories like supernatural, psychological, and science fiction. Perhaps today it is still the case that each of these is just a function of uncontrollable fear from an unknown existential threat, and that this understanding has not changed across time.

Nevertheless, in order to comprehend modern horror, it is important to understand something of its origins. As such, when considering the development of entertaining horror as we know it today, there is good reason to look back as far as recorded history. The horrific images we find in today's graphic films can be traced to their origins in visual and verbal media. Although the form differs somewhat, the context is essentially unchanged. We are frightened by forces we do not completely understand and by things that go bump in the night.

THE FABLED PAST

Stories of preposterous violence are apparent in the earliest cave paintings, and are likely to have been in existence for much longer. Frightening fiction has a legacy as old as recorded time, and its genealogy can tell us much about the role it plays in our daily lives. Historians like to trace horrid fiction to a tradition so primordial that it might be considered a part of human nature. Throughout the ages, they suggest, people have gathered in circles to frighten each other with horrifying tales. This image is not a hard one to accept based on available evidence. For centuries, archaeologists have collected antiquated fables and primitive tales from all cultures and corners of the earth. The stories are enough to raise goose flesh on those who listen to them without disbelieving ears.

The monsters, demons, and maniac killers of the modern horror genre have clear-cut predecessors. These legends and fables from centuries ago may provide us with clues to their attraction. Lovecraft (1923/1973) traced the heritage of what he termed "the weird tale" to archaic ballads, chronicles, and sacred writings. The similarity between the themes found in these ancient artifacts and those found in modern weird tales provides a clear indication that

the form and functions of today's horrid fiction have been with us since an earlier time.

Support for this notion can be seen in the recurrent themes found in myths. Kluckhorn (1960) maintained that universal themes are contained in the legends of widely diverse cultures, and it is apparent that many of these themes are standard in the subject matter of today's horrid fiction. Fables of witchcraft and tales of hideous monsters can be found in most if not all cultures studied. The appearance of these forms across time and cultural divisions suggests functional equivalence in the motives that lead to their popularity.

The functions served by frightening myths and scary stories have been the focus of much scholarly speculation. It has been suggested that fables are often employed as a substitute for fact when people are attempting to explain mysteries beyond their understanding (Levin, 1960). The legends and fables provide an acceptable explanation for the events they are attempting to understand. The telling of fairy tales, even repulsive stories about hideous demons and fiendish killers, functions to provide children with the opportunity to confront their fears through ritualized exposure in a protected environment (Bettelheim, 1976).

Learning to master our fears is an important part of development, and ritual can play a big role in this learning process. Perhaps that is why ritual has always been such an important part of horror and the fear that we associate with this genre. For centuries, the conquest of fear has been accomplished by rituals and rites that require the direct confrontation of the threat (see Zillmann & Gibson, chap. 2, this volume). At the same time, however, many rituals confront threats using a symbol to represent the source of fear. From simple representations of early cave drawings to graphic depictions of 18th-century intaglio engravings, symbolic representations have allowed us to face our fears in rituals that help us cope with different threats. Myriad examples of graphic violence and horror can be found in classic literature from Homer to Shakespeare as small segments inserted in larger stories. Although feature-length horrid novels did not emerge until the 19th century, the attraction to such themes appears to be very old (Kendrick, 1991).

FACT OR FICTION

Certain aspects of horror as we know it today are generally accepted as descending from early legends and fables, but changed attitudes about death in the mid-18th century altered the nature of how these stories were perceived. When we consider the genre along divisions of supernatural, nonsupernatural, and quasi-science fiction, we are dealing with an understanding of horror that did not develop until the concept of fiction began to acquire its present form (Daniels, 1975).

The change that occurred in perception of horrid stories during the 18th century can be identified by a growing disbelief in things that could not be observed. Although many features of these stories remained relatively unchanged from ancient legends and fables, the audience attitude toward them was different. The 18th century "Age of Reason" brought a skepticism toward the supernatural that before had not been seen. Because the supernatural was accepted as a part of reality, there was no "violation" of natural law before the 18th century. With the incursion of empiricism, the fantastic was now curtailed or accounted for in most narratives. Tales in literature were introduced as stories related to the author by a source claiming the report to be true (Brockett, 1964). The crumbling settings and loathsome violence were still present and frightening, but increasingly were looked on with disbelief.

Whereas change in 18th-century attitudes toward horror are characterized by disbelief, change in the format of horror came as result of technological advances. Twitchell (1989) suggested that attitudes toward violent death were influenced by developments in printing that provided a thrilling new form of "mimic" aggression. Much has been said about advances in stereography that made typesetting more efficient and inexpensive. These advances, no doubt, had an impact on the availability of literature for those who knew how to read. At the same time, however, other developments in print technology may have been more influential on illiterate audiences. When the labor-intensive techniques of early relief printing methods were replaced by intaglio engraving, the inexpensive production of illustrated copies became a possibility. Many early attempts to profit from this technology came in the form of gruesome images.

One of the first attempts to find a mass audience for this type of graphic imagery can be found in the work of Horgarth during the latter half of the 18th century (Paulson, 1970). Horgarth created a strong impact by connecting illustrations to relate a short story in pictures. Because verbal literacy was limited to the educated upper class, a larger audience could be reached by telling the tale through his drawings. Although the story lines were often simple morality tales, they provided a forum for explicit images of sadistic brutality and gruesome retaliation. His illustrations were so popular, that soon he started to hire other artists to help produce illustrations for his tales. Some, like *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, which featured the savagery of a fiend named Tom Nero, were so successful that they were followed by sequels (Twitchell, 1989). In much the same manner that monstrous killers now return until audience members lose interest, Tom Nero appears a forerunner of today's film demons. He was a nonsupernatural sociopath, a Mr. Hyde without a Dr. Jekyll.

The rigid curtailment of the supernatural in literature was swept away in the late 18th century and replaced by a style that would have a lasting impression on traditional supernatural horror. As the romantic movement began to take

root, the drive toward rationality was supplanted by reliance on intuition. The fantastic was once again a topic accepted in polite circles, and in demand by the general public. With a middle class growing in number and economic strength, it was not long before the supernatural was back in full swing. This time, however, the stories were listened to quite differently than they had been by audiences for early myths and fables. Although tales of the supernatural were fascinating to many, they were taken now as a form of fiction. The eerie tales filled with crumbling buildings or decaying graveyards still put a chill into their patrons, but the patrons now had their doubts (Barclay, 1978).

Castle of Otranto (Walpole, 1764/1840) is believed to be one of the first examples of modern supernatural horror (Lundwall, 1977). *Otranto*, subtitled *A Gothic Story*, is often acknowledged for founding the Gothic genre, yet no imitators came soon on its heels. Nonetheless, it provided a prototype of the features that would come to represent Gothic horror at the turn of the century. During the end of the 18th century and early into the 19th century, Gothic novels had achieved great public favor. Hundreds of novels were written in an easily duplicated style for which publishers could predict a demand. Soon after reaching its peak, however, the craze began to dwindle, and Gothic novels eventually faded into the broadly encompassing movement of Romanticism.

Although the initial popularity of Gothic fiction was short lived, the appeal of horrid entertainment did not seem to vanish. Instead, horrid entertainment materialized in a different form on the early 19th century stage. At a time when it appeared that frightening novels were starting to lose their thrill, the theater seemed able to reproduce these effects with a new and even greater intensity. The theme of the plays did not stray far from novels, but the manner of presentation was extraordinary. Even with the limitations of archaic stage technology, the effects achieved on stage were electrifying for 19th-century audiences. Startling lighting, smoke and mirrors, and the use of eerie music could shock the audience or chill their bones in a fashion not achievable in print.

The stage of the early 19th century was captured by a new style that would have a strong impact on the evolution of horrid fiction. The melodrama had a thematic structure very similar to contemporary frightening entertainment, but it introduced a new use of stage music. Music was used to express the sensation of various emotions like joy, anger, fear, and alarm. The music played before, during, and after actors' dialogue. Sometimes the performer would just stand and hold a pose while the music voiced the passion of the moment. Soon certain musical forms became standards associated with the experience of different emotions. The screeching violins in the film *Psycho*, which penetrate the darkness to warn us of fiendish terror, repeat sounds first heard almost 200 years ago on the early 19th century stage.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, fear was only one among many powerful emotions that horrid novels and melodramas tried to induce (Kendrick, 1991). No horror, comedy, or tragedy as we think of them today existed in its pure form at that time. Most episodes of horror in conventional fiction were merely a brief interlude or parts of more complete works. In classical literature, the short story is the first form of fiction to focus entirely on horror. The development of the magazine in the 19th century provided the perfect location for horrid short stories. One of the first examples of this type of writing is found in the short ghost stories of Sir Walter Scott (Kendrick, 1991).

Along with developments in the short story format of horrid fiction came changes in its content. Some of the same appeal of early fables and myths that was based on the belief that they were true can be seen in the popularity of authentic stories about real-life atrocities and crime. Although there were few crime stories written in feature length during the mid-19th century, enthusiasts had to go little further than newspapers and pamphlets whose only intent was to shock. It is difficult to tell what type of person was attracted to these stories, but millions of such items were sold. Based on sales and evidence suggesting their popularity with all classes, however, it appears they were able to attain a broad-based appeal that earlier horror could never attain (Kendrick, 1991).

The early 19th century's focus on real-life crime had an important impact on the development of horrid fiction. When the lunatics who committed savage atrocities in real-life crime found their way into fictional short stories, a new frightening convention was established. In the mid-19th century, this pivotal change in the focus of horrid fiction was initiated by the writings of Edgar Allen Poe (Lovecraft, 1923/1973). Poe led the change in the popular form for fictional horror from episodes in novels to short stories of pure terror, and from the supernatural to a focus on psychological horror. Poe's stories laid the groundwork necessary to move the frightening fiction of early magazines to the next generation of horrid entertainment.

In the latter half of the 19th century, Darwin's (1859) *Origin of the Species* raised questions about the existence of God and his role in explaining natural events. Historians have suggested that Darwin's work had a strong influence on scary stories. With skepticism toward the spiritual and an understanding of nature as the real determinant of ferocious violence, those so inclined could use horrid fiction as a form of diversion to ponder a supernatural that was beyond scientific reason (Edwards, 1984). Although beliefs now dictated doubt in the possibility of such events, it did not stop people's impulse to dabble in the macabre: "Sometimes a curious streak of fancy invades the hardest head; so that no amount of rationalism, reform, or Freudian analysis can quite annul the thrill of the chimneycorner whisper or the lonely wood" (Lovecraft, 1923/1973, p. 13).

Ghost stories and the supernatural made a small comeback in English literature. A fashion of ghost stories at Christmas started with Dickens' (1843) *A Christmas Carol* and comprised a major outlet for scary fiction in England through the end of the 19th century. These ghost stories were not very loathsome in general, much like the Gothic novels they followed (Kendrick, 1991), but the gentility found in these stories was not maintained in other forums of the day. Horror came back to the stage at this point, and took on a vivid new image.

In 1897, the Grand Guignol opened with one goal in mind—to shock its patrons and give them a thrill. The theater put on several different plays each evening, but the emphasis was always on horror. The producers intended to make the Grand Guignol "a place where every social taboo of good taste was cracked and shattered" (Gordon, 1988, p. 18). The actors and stage technicians were masterful in their efforts to create horrifying spectacles that looked remarkably authentic. The sight of blood spurting from real people on stage, hacked with sabres right in front of the audience's eyes, must have been more shocking than any special effect ever created on film. Throughout the history of fictional horror no episode approaches the Grand Guignol in depravity, not even the new horrors that came after the turn of the 20th century.

THE MODERN HORROR GENRE

Joshi (1990) suggested that the horror genre did not exist prior to the early part of the 20th century, but developed as a result of professionals and academics scrutinizing the works of certain writers. Until this time, these authors had always been considered as essentially no different from other novel and short-story writers. In the early part of the 20th century, nonacademic anthologies of frightening fiction and scholarly reviews of Gothic and supernatural fiction separated these authors and originated the modern genre in the form that we now think of today. Although most horrid fiction gets excluded from broad anthologies of literature, the research devoted to horror specifically has had a significant impact on forms of horror in this century.

The first academic investigation of fictional horror was by Scarborough (1917). Later anthologies have made additions and alterations, but the general outline offered by Scarborough has stayed mostly intact; starting with the early Gothic novels; through Poe, Dickens, and other mid-19th-century writers; to late-century authors like Algernon Blackwood and H. G. Wells. Along these lines other anthologies have focused on early 20th-century writers like Bram Stoker, Henry James, Arthur Machen, and M. R. James, who added gruesome images, elements of the macabre, and a return to the graveyard chill. Although the anthologies differed, the fact that they archived this collection of works added respectability to horrid fictional writing. When scholars and critics

called these classic works of literature, horror became legitimate. By the mid-1930s, the genre was well established (Kendrick, 1991).

With the success of the developments in other entertainment forms, it is surprising that it took so long for popular trends in horror to make their way into film. On stage and in print, grotesque physical horror showed its widespread popular appeal. Yet in early motion pictures, the industry did not capitalize on film's ability to shock its audience with ghastly scenes. Although it is clear that, since the first black-and-white films, horror has always had great box office appeal and been profitable (Huss & Ross, 1972), attempts in this area during the early 20th century were tame by the standards of other media.

Many initial horror films created a sense of eeriness with tilted cameras, strange buildings, and shadowy figures. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) and *Nosferatu* (1921) are good examples of expressionism in early silent movies. Vampire stories seemed particularly well suited for expressionism, and provided the setting for one of the first talking films as well. In 1927, *Dracula: The Vampire Play* was a hit on the London and New York stage. The success of the play led to the film version *Dracula* (1931), and launched a new career for its stage star, Bela Lugosi. With the film a commercial hit, Universal Pictures looked for a successor and quickly found its heir in *Frankenstein* (1931). Boris Karloff, the Frankenstein monster, joined Lugosi and others in a wave of films during the 1930s that recycled their stories and the subdued conventions of the late 18th-century and early 19th-century horror. Mummies, werewolves, and decaying old castles held their appeal for a while, but within a decade the novelty wore off and the popularity of tepid horror films declined.

The mild nature of these films was largely determined by the Production Code of 1930. Films generally curtailed loathsome images on camera in compliance with the standards of the code, but what horror fans could not get on the motion picture screen they could find in a new horrid medium. The extremes of the pulp magazines, which originated during the 1920s and developed in the 1930s, drove scary fiction out of legitimate publications.

After the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* first appeared in 1924 with morbid stories of bloodshed and the macabre, horrid fiction was no longer published in traditional "slick" magazines, but only in the "bloody pulps." Whereas restraint was the rule for film at this time, indulgence better describes stories in these issues. In 1939, when Arkham House was founded specifically to publish scary fiction in volumes by writers like H. P. Lovecraft, horrid fiction almost stopped appearing in all other book forms. As horror was pushed underground, the popularity of the bloody pulps grew to cult levels within a limited audience, but the audience limits changed when the pulps' horrid stories came together with a new type of carrier. In the 1940s, when the comic book put horror in a form

written for juvenile readers, scary fiction found the audience of adolescent boys, and the match between them became profitable.

Comic-book horror made a brief first appearance with *Eerie* in 1946, but its popularity exploded with issues like *Tales from the Crypt* released by EC comics in 1950. Horrid comics far exceeded the pulp magazines' indulgence in the macabre. The bright colors added a vividness to the gore that black-and-white film could not match. Although they often revived the old graveyard motifs, they went beyond a sense of unearthly fear to images of disgusting depravity. Disembowelment, festering wounds, rot, and putrefication were the ghastly images that appeared in full color. It was not long before many were concerned about the harm they might create.

By 1954, it is estimated that 150 million comics were being bought each month in the United States (Benton, 1989). That same year, *Seduction of the Innocent*, Fredric Wertham's bestseller, attacked what he considered the blight caused by comics, and horrid comics in particular. Wertham was not alone in his view that social ruin was attributable to juvenile corruption (cf. Twitchell, 1989). Following Senate hearings, and fearing legislation, the comic industry developed guidelines including a ban on the walking dead and "scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism" (Goulart, 1986, p. 266). Instead of *Night of the Living Dead*, we now had the dawn of *Jughead*.

About the same time, change in the marketing of films would have implications for horror. When television put an end to film as a medium of universal appeal, producers discovered they could profit from films aimed at a limited audience (Doherty, 1988). One audience with both enough time and money to spend included the same juveniles who had been reading comics. This market for limited appeal horror first became apparent with a series of films from Hammer that starred Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. Starting in 1957 with *The Curse of Frankenstein*, Hammer films got serious about horror by using Technicolor and close-ups of the bloodshed. The modest success of these and similar low-budget U.S. films caught the eye of film makers like Alfred Hitchcock. The outcome was *Psycho* (1960), a watershed in film horror. *Psycho's* huge success led to a flood of imitators, and Hitchcock's stature added legitimacy to gruesome films of bloody murder.

From 1960 to the 1990s, the enormous number of films produced makes detecting major trends virtually hopeless. Although *Psycho* seems to culminate a general shift in scary fiction from the supernatural of the mid-18th century to the nonsupernatural and quasi-science fiction, the most apparent development since the 1960s is the drive toward more graphic horror. Over the genre's brief history, special effects have played a key role in determining frightening fiction's success. From smoke and mirrors on stage, to camera angles and mood lighting, to special make-up, hydraulic apparatus, and computer