



Mélanie Boissonneau, Gilles Menegaldo, and
Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris (eds.)

Dark Recesses in the House of Hammer

Peter Lang

Twenty years after Universal horror movies, the Hammer studio brought back to life the great mythical figures inspired from British literature as well as French and European folklore (Dracula, Frankenstein, the Werewolf, the Phantom of the Opera, etc.). It invented new incarnations rooted in a precise historical context and revisited according to the evolution of British society. This independent studio constitutes a notable stage in the history of the genre between the Gothic horror of the 1950s and the more radical productions of the 1970s, which eventually contributed to its demise. Focusing on the peculiar balance between Hammer's inventiveness and classicism, this volume mainly explores the lesser-known productions, examining as well its contradictions, paradoxes and limitations.

The book raises the question of the paradoxical modernity of films that are innovative in various respects (themes, modes of representation challenging censorship, aesthetics), but are also trying to resurrect a dying tradition, mostly offering a rather surprisingly conservative discourse despite their efforts to comply with the expectations of new audiences. The films born from the recent Hammer renaissance are still referring to this bygone Golden Age of the horror film. One may wonder whether the Hammer studio was a mere factory churning out mostly conventional horror films now buried in the dust of a gothic dungeon, or a true laboratory of modern cinematic horror whose past glory still inspires contemporary filmmakers. This volume will provide some answers and raise quite a few questions.

FILM CULTURES

Mélanie Boissonneau received her Ph.D. in film studies. She is the author of *Pin-up au temps du Pré-Code : 1930-1934* (2019) and co-editor of *Tim Burton, horreurs enfantines* (2016) and *Cinéphilies/séripileries 2.0, Les nouvelles formes d'attachement aux images* (Peter Lang, 2019).

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Table of Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	ix
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Preface: The Need for Hammer Films</i> ANTONIO SANNA	xix
<i>Introduction: Dark Recesses in the House of Hammer</i> MÉLANIE BOISSONNEAU, GILLES MENEGALDO, ANNE-MARIE PAQUET-DEYRIS	1
Part I Iconic Monsters and Actors	
<i>Intermediality as a Way to Debunk Tradition: New Perspectives on Terence Fisher's The Curse of Frankenstein (1957)</i> ISABELLE LABROUILLÈRE	15
<i>The Phantom of the Opera Goes Victorian</i> DOROTA BABILAS	29
<i>Acting Hammer Style: About Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee</i> HÉLÈNE VALMARY	41
Part II Genre and Gender	
<i>Hammer Motel: Twisted Nerves and Twisted Plots in the Post-Psycho British Psycho-Thriller</i> JEAN-FRANÇOIS BAILLON	55

<i>Hammer Science-Fiction Horror and the Decline of the British Male Hero: The Quatermass Trilogy</i>	71
GAÏD GIRARD	
<i>The Political Complications of Revamping the Horror Canon: The Vampire Lovers (Baker, 1970), Dr. Jekyll & Sister Hyde (Baker, 1971), Dracula A.D. 1972 (Gibson, 1972) and The Satanic Rites of Dracula (Gibson, 1973)</i>	83
DAVID ROCHE	
<i>Why Does Sherlock Holmes Capture the Black Rook of Dr. Mortimer in Terence Fisher's The Hound of the Baskervilles (1959)?</i>	103
JEAN-PIERRE NAUGRETTE	
 Part III Aesthetics of Horror	
<i>The Vampire Figure: Recurring Principles in Hammer's Symphonic Film Music until Twilight: New Moon</i>	123
CÉCILE CARAYOL	
<i>Terence Fisher with a Lake Scenery</i>	139
JEAN-MICHEL DURAFOUR	
<i>Jack Asher (1916–1991) and the Creation of an Original 'Eastman Color' Hammer: Between Hollywood Color Tropes and Aesthetic Innovation</i>	159
RAPHAËLLE COSTA DE BEAUREGARD	
<i>The Sonic Realm in The Quatermass Experiment: Medium and Genre and Sound</i>	175
ROBYNN J. STILWELL	
<i>Hammer's Children, Between Visuality and Aurality</i>	195
PHILIPPE MET	
 Part IV Post-Colonial Gothic and Imperial Politics	
<i>Beauty is the Beast: Horror According to John Gilling</i>	211
CHRISTIAN CHELEBOURG	
<i>Unmasking the Other: Danger and Difference in Hammer's Colonial Horrors</i>	223
REHAN HYDER	

<i>Postcolonial Anxieties in Hammer's Dracula and The Curse of Frankenstein</i>	241
VICKY WALDEN	
<i>Epistemology and Power Politics in The Abominable Snowmen (1957) and Lesser-Known Hammer Gothics</i>	261
JEAN-MARIE LECOMTE	
Part V Mutations, Unmade Projects and Resurrection	
<i>Hammer Hybrids, Genre Mutation and 1970s Horror Cinema</i>	281
IAN CONRICH	
<i>Reigniting the Blaze: Hammer's Unmade Remake of The Day the Earth Caught Fire</i>	295
MATT JONES	
<i>Mapping Cult Topographies and Transgressive Space: Hammer's Legacy in The Rocky Horror Picture Show</i>	311
MARISA C. HAYES	
<i>A New Old Hammer? The Woman in Black (James Watkins, 2012)</i>	327
SOPHIE MANTRANT	
<i>General Bibliography</i>	341
<i>Index</i>	347



List of Illustrations

Intermediality as a Way to Debunk Tradition: New Perspectives on Terence Fisher's The Curse of Frankenstein (1957)

Figure 1: Frankenstein shows the anatomy lesson to Bernstein 18

Figure 2: Eye of Frankenstein 23

The Phantom of the Opera Goes Victorian

Figure 1: The Phantom (Herbert Lom) and Christine (Heather Sears) 33

Figure 2: The rat-catcher (Patrick Troughton) 35

Acting Hammer Style: About Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee

Figure 1: Peter Cushing: hand and face 47

Figure 2: Christopher Lee: hand and face 47

Hammer Motel: Twisted Nerves and Twisted Plots in the Post-Psycho British Psycho-Thriller

Figure 1: American stars in Hammer psycho-thrillers: Joan Fontaine in *The Witches* (Cyril Frankel, 1966) 57

Figure 2: Quoting *Psycho: Paranoiac!* (Freddie Francis, 1963) 60

Figure 3: Evolution of Hammer production in the 1960s in terms of genre, based on Wayne Kinsey, *Hammer: The Bray Studio Years* (London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2005) and *Hammer: The Elstree Studio Years* (Sheffield: Tomahawk Press, 2007) 62

Hammer Science-Fiction Horror and the Decline of the British Male Hero: The Quatermass Trilogy

Figure 1: Monstrous Carroon in Westminster after his electrocution 75

Figure 2: Last shot of the film: Quatermass and Judd slumped against a wall 79

The Political Complications of Revamping the Horror Canon: The Vampire Lovers (Baker, 1970), Dr. Jekyll & Sister Hyde (Baker, 1971), Dracula A.D. 1972 (Gibson, 1972) and The Satanic Rites of Dracula (Gibson, 1973)

Figure 1: The Gothicism of Swinging London 86

Figure 2: Dr. Jekyll's face seen through a stained glass window seconds before falling to his death 98

Why Does Sherlock Holmes Capture the Black Rook of Dr. Mortimer in Terence Fisher's The Hound of the Baskervilles (1959)?

Figure 1: Holmes ponders upon his next move. Diegetic variations 106

Figure 2: *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2015) 108

The Vampire Figure: Recurring Principles in Hammer's Symphonic Film Music until Twilight: New Moon

Figure 1: 1a – Fisher, *Horror of Dracula* (Tania and Lucy)/VG.
1b – Coppola, *Dracula* (Lucy, "The Storm") 133

Terence Fisher with a Lake Scenery

Figure 1: *The Mummy* 142

Figure 2: Frankenstein must be destroyed 146

Jack Asher (1916–1991) and the Creation of an Original "Eastman Color" Hammer: Between Hollywood Color Tropes and Aesthetic Innovation

Figure 1: Red, green, yellow: the primary colours of the laboratory 163

Figure 2: Kharis rises from the pond 165

The Sonic Realm in The Quatermass Experiment: Medium and Genre and Sound

Figure 1: Futuristic (a) and retrograde (b) technologies 182

Figure 2: Prof. Quatermass and the Man from the Ministry, blocking and framing (a) a BBC television production and (b) a Hammer film 184

Hammer's Children, Between Visuality and Aurality

Figure 1: *Demons of the Mind* 203

Figure 2: *The Nanny* 204

Beauty is the Beast. Horror According to John Gilling

Figure 1: The prey and her predators 216

Figure 2: Under the bun, the monster 220

Unmasking the Other: Danger and Difference in Hammer's Colonial Horrors

Figure 1: *The Stranglers of Bombay* 230

Figure 2: *The Mummy* 233

Postcolonial Anxieties in Hammer's Dracula and The Curse of Frankenstein

Figure 1: Van Helsing leaps over the table on the attack 250

Figure 2: Victor, a dishevelled creature locked-up in his cell 253

Epistemology and Power Politics in The Abominable Snowmen (1957) of Lesser-Known Hammer Gothics

Figure 1: Epiphanic encounter 266

Figure 2: Tears in his eyes (werewolf) 273

Hammer Hybrids, Genre Mutation and 1970s Horror Cinema

Figure 1: The Orientalising of Hammer in the British poster for *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974) 285

Figure 2: Orientalism Americanized in the American release poster for *The 7 Brothers Meet Dracula* (1979; aka *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires*) 287

Mapping Cult Topographies and Transgressive Space: Hammer's Legacy in The Rocky Horror Picture Show

Figure 1:	Oakley Court, featured in <i>The Rocky Horror Picture Show</i> and numerous Hammer films	312
Figure 2:	Birth of a monster	313
<i>A New Old Hammer? The Woman in Black (James Watkins, 2012)</i>		
Figure 1:	Kipps shares a frame with the ghost	331
Figure 2:	The face of screaming Jennet	331
Images for central insert		
Figure 1:	<i>The Curse of Frankenstein</i> , Terence Fisher, 1957. Peter Cushing as Baron Frankenstein	148
Figure 2:	<i>The Curse of Frankenstein</i> , Terence Fisher, 1957. Christopher Lee as creature	148
Figure 3:	<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> , Terence Fisher, 1959. Chess game	149
Figure 4:	<i>Taste of Fear</i> , Seth Holt, 1961	149
Figure 5:	<i>The Curse of the Werewolf (1961)</i> . Oliver Reed as werewolf	150
Figure 6:	<i>The Curse of the Werewolf (1961)</i> . Woman victim	150
Figure 7:	<i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> , Terence Fisher, 1962. Phantom mask	151
Figure 8:	<i>Dracula Prince of Darkness (1966)</i> . Blood Pact	151
Figure 9:	<i>The Reptile</i> , John Gilling, 1966. Visit to the larder	152
Figure 10:	<i>Quatermass and the Pit</i> , Roy Ward Baker, 1967. Alien figure looming over buildings	152
Figure 11:	<i>Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed</i> , Terence Fisher, 1969. Laboratory	153
Figure 12:	<i>The Vampire Lovers</i> , Roy Ward Baker, 1970. Carmilla declares her love to Emma	153
Figure 13:	<i>Hands of the Ripper</i> , Peter Sasdy, 1971. Little girl watching	154
Figure 14:	<i>The Woman in Black</i> , James Watkins, 2012. Carriage in the mist	154



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Preface: The Need for Hammer Films

Inside a laboratory, amid spinning wheels and glass containers filled with bubbling red liquid, a bandaged being comes to life following the experiment of a man of genius. On another occasion, an elegant vampire welcomes his guest into his castle, with aristocratic demeanor, a polite attitude and a hint of a smile. The unsuspecting guest will soon discover a horrific world where a seductive female attempts at his life, blood runs copiously and his kind host is actually a sadistic and ruthless villain. These two scenes (from the 1957 *The Curse of Frankenstein* and the 1958 *Horror of Dracula*) have often been deemed by critics as marking the rise of Hammer Productions for an international audience and the company's introduction of the public to a new interpretation of the horror genre on the silver screen. The British company created indeed a distinctive world of stylish horror that made the history of the genre and its films can now be effectively considered as classics that have remained in the public consciousness ever since their release in the late 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. Single images and scenes from the films—such as the close-ups on Christopher's Lee's red, ablaze eyes in the series on the Transylvanian Count, the sequence of the doctor's daughter rising from her own grave and approaching her victims with a smile on her grey, decaying face in *The Plague of the Zombies* (1966) and the titular scientist's deformed half-male and half-female face at the end of *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971)—have become iconic for horror scholars and fans. Equally memorable are the sequences in which a mummy strangles single-handedly the old archaeologist confined in a psychiatric clinic in *The Mummy* (1959), the slow but inexorable petrification of the several men in *The Gorgon* (1964) and the poisoning by bite in *The Reptile* (1966), the various victims' agonizing last moments being some of the most gory representations of death portrayed on screen until then. Simultaneously, the unmotivated ill-treatment of women on the part of

the Baron in several adaptations of the Frankenstein myth and the injustice suffered by the title character in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1962) can still elicit sympathy in the spectator for the unfortunate victims.

The company, founded by the Carreras brothers and William Hinds in 1934 and revived after World War II, acquired Bray studio near Windsor in 1951, initially producing several films (particularly radio and TV adaptations) that were considered third rate at the time until *The Curse of Frankenstein* became an instant success at the box office both in the United Kingdom and United States, grossing £2 million worldwide. This is the first color film based on Mary Shelley's 1818 novel and it substantially revised the original text's contents and structure by focusing mainly on the dandified Baron's monomaniacal thirst for knowledge and disregard of any ethical concern. The choice to rewrite the original story, in order also to differentiate its plot from Universal's previous series on the creature, became a distinctive mark of Hammer films in the cases of Count Dracula, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the mummy and the werewolf as well. These supernatural creatures were presented in a series of (sometimes repetitive) sequels spanning from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Hammer's repertoire of monsters—which also includes cannibals, serial killers, dinosaurs, zombies and devilish possessions—further qualified the company as the indisputable global master of horror for nearly two decades.

Characteristic of Hammer films are: the depiction of gory graphic details (which was instead generally confined off screen in the 1930s and 1940s productions by Universal), the vividness of blood (for the first time in full color), the majestic and ominous orchestral soundtracks, the violations of young, attractive women's bedrooms by the villains, the seduction perpetrated by lustful femme fatales intent on preying upon the stories' heroes and the binomial fight of good against evil, generally solved with the final re-establishment of the status quo. All of this is spiced up by special effects and gruesome make-ups (all the more rendered vivid by Technicolor and Eastman Color), which thrilled the audience of the time—though they may definitely appear dated, predictable and poor to contemporary spectators—and provoked the indignation of many critics and reviewers. The repertory of settings typical of Gothic novels is faithfully reproduced in Hammer's films, including foggy cemeteries, dark crypts, uninhabited woods and steps-echoing alleys as well as decaying buildings, isolated stone castles and elegant Victorian mansions realistically filled with many artefacts. In many productions such settings are alternated with contemporary locations, particularly London, where evil (often residing inside the human being) threatens a modern-day community devoted to scientific thought and technology.

However, Hammer did not only produce horror films, but also crime and psychological thrillers, pirate films, prehistoric epics, comedies and science fiction films, amply quoting from English and American literature (including Arthur Conan Doyle, Oscar Wilde and R.H. Haggard). Such films have equally presented spectators with memorable sequences, from the two leather-clad protagonists being chased by prehistoric creatures on a desert island in *One Million Years BC* (1966) and the apparition of the gigantic alien creature's image in the sky over a chaotic and devastated London in *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967) to depictions of powerful, resolute women in *She* (1965) or lunatic, threatening women in *The Nanny* (1965). Success was guaranteed by the recurrent use of members of the staff such as directors Terence Fisher and Freddie Francis, composers James Bernard and Mario Nascimbene, screenwriters Jimmy Sangster and Anthony Hinds, and actors Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee (who achieved international fame and became a trademark couple in the public consciousness, thus inheriting the crown of Universal stars Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi), Ralph Bates (who usually appears in the "reboots" of the series) and Michael Ripper (whose brief cameos often provide spectators with comic relief). Hammer films also cast talented female stars of the time, such as Bette Davis and Barbara Shelley, and a long series of young women interpreted by attractive models and actresses, who certainly enthralled the (male) audience with their stunning looks and flirtatious attitude—especially in those sequences that include elements of nudity and lesbianism—including Ursula Andress, Raquel Welch and Veronica Carlson.

After receiving the Queen's Award to Industry in 1968, the company also had several forays into television, from the anthology series *Journey to the Unknown* (1968–69) to the series *Hammer House of Horror* (1979–80) and *Hammer House of Mystery and Suspense* (1983). Unfortunately, Hammer films were also vitiated by several faults, from major plot holes and lapses in continuity to unconvincing special effects, poor film choices and evident low budgets.

With international successful productions such as *The Exorcist* (1973), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *Suspiria* (1977), horror films began to focus less on the supernatural and more on the carnal (and violent) aspects of human beings, thus leading to what came to be known as "body horror." Furthermore, by the end of the 1970s science fiction epics such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1979) and *Alien* (1979) as well as horror franchises such as *Halloween* (1978-) and *Friday the 13th* (1980-) epitomized the new successful formula that conquered the worldwide market and audience, supplanting Hammer's by now repetitive retakes on the various monsters' legends. The company's failure to adapt

to the general trend and its adherence to the gothic horrors produced until then, along with the withdrawal of American funding at the beginning of the 1970s, doomed Hammer to a premature “death.” The company was resurrected in the 2000s and has recently produced films such as *Let Me In* (2010) and *The Lodge* (2019).

The authors of this collection of essays made the conscious choice of examining both Hammer’s most popular movies and many of the lesser-known films, including *X The Unknown* (1956), *The Abominable Snowman* (1957), *The Damned* (1963) and *Vampire Circus* (1972). What emerges, therefore, is a comprehensive study of the company’s horror, thriller and science fiction productions, which is enriched by frequent comparisons with the films’ literary and cinematic predecessors—indicating both the links and the breaks with tradition—and with their contemporary rival world productions (Henry-Georges Clouzot’s *Les Diaboliques* (1955) and Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960), for instance). Simultaneously, Hammer’s films are read in respect to their legacy in the subsequent decades and the contemporary age: the reader of this volume will be able to trace the mid-century company’s influence on films such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1992) and *Twilight: New Moon* (2009), but will also benefit from the analysis of Hammer’s failed projects during the company’s allegedly “inactive” 1990s and its most recent productions (such as *The Woman in Black* [2012]). Fans and scholars of Hammer films as much as those readers who are unfamiliar with them will definitely be prompted to (re)watch the films scrutinised in this book (each film is excellently summarized in the various essays before being analysed) in order to enjoy them (again) and interpret them through a new perspective.

The introduction provides a short historical overview of the studio, highlights the main orientations of the volume and outlines its contents. Then the book’s five sections focus on different technical facets and thematic concerns of the films, from color, lighting and sound to heroism, the representation of childhood traumas, monstrosity and the uncanny. The twenty essays constituting the volume adopt a great variety of approaches, from art studies and postcolonial theories to gender and queer studies. The contributors make ample use of pertinent secondary sources that belong to film and horror studies (including several dated and contemporary reviews of the single films and of the company at large—which gives an idea of the evolution of the public’s evaluation and appreciation of the films over the decades) as much as philosophical theories (by Michel Foucault, Herbert Spencer, Jeremy Bentham, Claude Lévy-Strauss, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari). The analysis of the films’ thematic concerns and visuals (as well as specific frames, editing, dialogs

and actors' performances but also sound effects, music, the color palette and the poster art in several essays) and the extrapolation and interpretation of their meaning(s) are therefore well supported by solid academic background. Such a variety of perspectives reflects the need to still reiterate the critical importance of Hammer in contemporary culture. Hammer's films can indeed still thrill our senses and entertain us. Watching and exploring them is necessary for anyone who wants to engage with the history of cinema as much as with a genre that never ceases to address our most intimate fears, phobias and anxieties, a genre that reminds us of our fragile emotional and physical states. Precisely like a vampire or a mummy, Hammer films are undead in the popular imagination of most scholars and fans of film studies and horror.

Antonio Sanna



Introduction: Dark Recesses in the House of Hammer

MÉLANIE BOISSONNEAU, GILLES MENEGALDO,
ANNE-MARIE PAQUET-DEYRIS

At a time when horror/fantasy/Gothic as a genre is thriving both on the big screen with its many rewritings, various remakes or original screenplays, and on television with its plethora of TV series, it seems imperative to revisit the Hammer Films years. Twenty years after Universal studios, the independent British studio brought back to life the great mythical figures inspired from British literature as well as French and European folklore, from Dracula, Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and the Werewolf, to the Phantom of the Opera and the Mummy. It invented new incarnations rooted in a specific historical context (most often a Victorian one), and revisited and revised according to the evolution of British society and the mores of the day, especially in the late fifties.

The studio was founded in 1934 by Enrique Carreras and William Hinds, a jeweler who was also a stage and music hall actor performing under the name of Will Hammer. After relatively humble beginnings, yet already with a distinctive style, mostly in crime movies or Sci-Fi/melodrama films like *Stolen Face* (1953) and *The Four-Sided Triangle* (1953), or even Sci-Fi/horror ones like *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) and *Quatermass 2* (1957), the owners bought back the rights acquired by Universal so that they could come up with new versions of the famed 1930s horror productions during the genre's first golden age and hence make the most of the US market. Despite limited financial means, Hammer's first two ventures, *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) and *Horror of Dracula* (1958), both directed by Terence Fisher, were widely successful, notably thanks to the charisma of Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, who would soon become undisputed stars of the genre.

From 1955 to 1979, the Hammer Studio produced almost 150 movies and two TV series in a variety of genres: science fiction, exotic adventures (*The Stranglers of Bombay*, 1959), detective stories, psychological horror movies, often featuring an atmosphere of fear and terror bordering on the fantastic. The horror movies were by far the most popular and came to represent the Hammer brand; in time, they would even enjoy critical acclaim, including the works that had become forgotten. These films revived the Gothic figures that had achieved a modern cult status thanks to cinema and theatre.

The return to romantic sources and especially the Victorian or “fin-de-siècle” context imbued the various productions with a degree of cultural and aesthetic homogeneity (set design, costumes, color schemes). This cohesion was highlighted by the fact that these films were created by a closely knit team with a specific aesthetic vision.

Terence Fisher, the studio’s emblematic figure, directed five of the seven *Frankenstein* films, three *Draculas*, as well as *The Mummy*, *The Curse of the Werewolf*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *the Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Two Faces of Dr Jekyll*, among other titles. In Fisher’s films, the characters’ sex drive constantly threatens the fundamentally bourgeois, materialistic and coercive social order. But the Hammer touch was not the result of one man. Among the other directors, Freddie Francis, John Gilling (*The Reptile*, *Plague of the Zombies*), Peter Sasdy and Roy Ward Baker were the most prominent. Jimmy Sangster, who worked on the scripts of *The Curse of Frankenstein*, *Horror of Dracula*, *The Mummy*, was the most famous screenwriter. Jack Asher and Arthur Grant are remembered for their often flamboyant cinematography, and Bernard Robinson for his brilliant sets. James Bernard, Harry Robinson or Benjamin Frankel were all noted composers. Phil Leakey, Universal Jack Pierce’s counterpart, was also a celebrated special effects make-up specialist.

Male actors were given prominence in plotlines staging the patriarchal power structure, but some “scream queens” such as Barbara Shelley, Ingrid Pitt, Veronica Carlson, Martine Beswick, Valerie Gaunt or Carol Marsh largely contributed to the films’ success, even though they were mostly confined to the roles of victims (exceptions include *Countess Dracula* and *The Vampire Lovers* (1970) where female desire and empowerment are foregrounded). The films relied on graphic exhibition of violence, sometimes interspersed with gore, erotic or subtly subversive scenes, at least before the “sexploitation” turn the studio took with films like *Virgin Witch* (1971) or *The Flesh and Blood Show* (1972). This accounts for the studio’s many run-ins with the British Board of Film Censors. All these characteristics formed a relatively coherent tone leading the viewer to instantly recognize the “Hammer style.”

This collected volume aims to explore prominent but also lesser studied aspects of the studio's history and its various periods of creative activity from the golden age of the original Bray studio between 1951 and 1966 and mostly from 1957 onward, to the films produced at Elstree between 1967 and 1978, the last film being aptly named *The Lady Vanishes*, a remake of Hitchcock's 1938 film. During that time, production diversified and crossed genres so as to compete with other independent British studios like Amicus or Tigon, Hong Kong films (*The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires*) or franchises such as the James Bond saga, until lack of success led to bankruptcy. A variety of theoretical and methodological approaches (formalist, gender, psychoanalytical, etc.) are used to analyse the movies. The authors have sought to highlight the films' specific style, their sociological and even political impact and why they exerted such great fascination on generations of viewers.

As is commonly admitted, the Bray studio's period was the most fruitful one. The sci-fi films received relative critical acclaim and were followed by highly successful remakes of the great Gothic myths. The figures of Frankenstein and Dracula would endure with varying degrees of success, including the various attempts at modernizing the myths, mainly Dracula's, until the 1970s. The first two variations on Frankenstein are resolutely rooted in a 19th century context and profoundly renew the myth. They bring in color, violence and an erotic touch nowhere to be seen in Mary Shelley's novel and they also reverse the traditional Universal Studio's relation between the doctor and his creature, foregrounding the former. While Boris Karloff first plays the monster's part (on four occasions) and is the undisputed star of the Universal saga, the creature is given less focus in the Hammer cycle, mostly because it's played by a different actor—if not actress—each time. Conversely, Peter Cushing almost always plays Baron Frankenstein's part and hence grows old with it—which ensures great consistency. Moreover, rather than being cast in the victim's role as in the James Whale movies Terence Fisher calls “melodramas,” Frankenstein becomes the dominant character incarnating the scientist's hubris and his obsession for the perfect being. As a consequence, in quite a few movies, the doctor's frustration causes him to be seen as monstrous (*Frankenstein Must be Destroyed*).

The Frankenstein cycle went on after the Bray era. It includes seven films, five of which were directed by Terence Fisher. The Dracula cycle was initiated in 1958 with *Horror of Dracula* and includes eight movies with Christopher Lee as the vampiric Count—the exception being *Brides of Dracula* (1960), in which David Peel portrayed Baron Meinster; yet another avatar of the aristocratic vampire. Lee was disappointed in his role in the first opus of the series,

mainly because of the absence of dialog or its ineptitude, and for fear of being typecast he refused to play the part again. However, after seven years, he eventually relented and ended up starring in *Dracula, Prince of Darkness* (1965), and several other movies from the same cycle. A modern touch was added to the final opuses when the studio heads picked 1970s England as the new context for their movies and turned the vampire into a *capitalist* living in a skyscraper instead of a Gothic castle as in *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1972). The latter also proved to be a threat to the world like Ernst Stavro Blofeld in *Diamonds are Forever*, the film it is obviously modeled after.

During the Bray period and until 1966, the studio produced several sci-fi movies and reinvented most of the great horror figures already adapted for the screen in the 1930s. Witchcraft (*The Witches*, 1966), Greek mythology (*The Gorgon*, 1964), as well as Haitian or Malaysian folklore (*The Plague of the Zombies* and *The Reptile*, 1965) also became prime sources of inspiration. Other films conjure up historical figures like Rasputin played by Christopher Lee (*Rasputin the Mad Monk*, 1965) or else stage the Stone Age (*One Million Years B.C.*, 1966). Terence Fisher brilliantly tackled the Holmesian myth (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1958). And the studio also produced many psychological thrillers like *Taste of Fear* (1961), *Nightmare* (1964), *Hysteria* (1965), *The Nanny* (1965), so that it had created a specific cycle by the time it settled at Elstree in 1966.

Production continued between 1966 and 1977, with variations on the Dracula, Frankenstein and Mummy cycles. The studio's greatest achievements include *Frankenstein Must be Destroyed* (1969) with its spectacular scenes, *The Devil Rides Out* (1967) adapted from a celebrated Dennis Wheatley novel, *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967), the third film featuring Professor Quatermass, and *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971), a bold and fascinating rewriting of the myth. All the while, the studio chose to diversify. Hammer's difficulty in reinventing itself was heightened by increased competition and eventually drove the studio into the ground. The erotic escalation found in *Vampires's Lovers* and *Lust for a Vampire* was no longer enough, and the audience turned to productions more rooted in a contemporary context like *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *The Exorcist* (1973), or proposing more subversive discourses such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *The Last House on the Left* (1972) or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). It grew increasingly difficult for the studio to compete with American slashers, Italian *gialli*, the James Bond franchise or even Hong Kong movies.

This brief historical overview provides some insight into the studio's strategies that include a return to the great mythical horror figures and to the Victorian or colonial era while also considering the specific cultural context

of the production period. But what makes the studio's thematic, aesthetic and representational choices so striking is its intent to take into account the public's thirst for powerful emotions and for carrying out one's fantasies by proxy. The modernity of such an intent is the studio's trademark whether on the thematic level of transgression, repression, the challenging of patriarchal power, family structures, or on the aesthetic level (experimentations in color, framing, editing, sound).

The original context of the crisis of British masculinity and patriarchal power threatened by the new forms of women's power generated original variations on the assertion of female desire. Both *Count Dracula* and female vampires such as Lucy, Carmilla, and Countess Bathory were eroticized; questions of gender and sex in the midst of the family circle were highlighted, and the monster figure represented as a vastly disruptive force. Most of Hammer's strategy is built upon an apparent paradox. The heritage dimension is meant to elicit nostalgia and to foreground conservative values such as those of the father figure or a professional, often a scientist and rationalist working for law and order (Quatermass, Van Helsing, Richleau) with a straightforward plotline and classical editing. There are however some exceptions such as *Frankenstein*, antithetically portrayed as the epitome of the mad scientist, a marginalized anti-conformist who ends up as a stateless aristocrat. From this point of view, Stephen Arata's central notion of "reverse colonization" in *Dracula* and *The Mummy* brings to the fore the resurgence of an uncanny other coming from an exotic, colonized place. Under cover of historic reenactment, contemporary setting is explored thanks to a high degree of realism in the representation of violence and sexuality.

The exploitation of transgression, meant to stimulate the spectator's fantasies, sparked anger in the critics' ranks at the time before a belated reassessment could take place. This is why we argue that, because of its critique of the mainstream more and institutions, its paroxysmic aesthetics and exacerbated sense of spectacular, and its sophisticated sets which partly hid budgetary limitations, Hammer studio was, in effect, a laboratory of modern horror and constitutes a notable stage in the history of the genre between the Gothic horror of the 1930s and the more radical productions of the 1970s, which contributed to its demise. In order to better explore the peculiar balance between Hammer's inventiveness and classicism, the chapters herein will mainly focus on its lesser-known productions. They will therefore examine to what extent the studio became the locus of formal and narrative innovations, while pondering over its very contradictions, paradoxes and limitations and ultimately over the nature and extent of Hammer's contribution to modern horror cinema.

Before introducing the contents of this book, we would like to pay tribute to some of the previous film scholars (some of them still publishing to-day), who have delved extensively into Hammer. David Pirie was the first to devote a full-length study to the studio in his groundbreaking book, *A Heritage of Horror* (1973), revised and expanded in 2008 (with new material from the BBFC files). Among other merits, he contributed to establish as a major filmmaker Terence Fisher whose work had been demeaned by critics like Carlos Clarens referring to Fisher's "pedestrian direction" while praising some of the Hammer films and especially the actors (Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee) and the sets. On the contrary Pirie praises Fisher, "a rational eccentric" for his robustness, coherence, realism and measured cinematic style. He also emphasizes his world view, based on dualism: "Divided rigidly between ultimate Good and ultimate evil, Light and Darkness, Spirit and Matter, while visually the opposition is most often expressed in images of bourgeois splendour juxtaposed with those of madness, decay and death." Even before Pirie, the famous French magazine, *Midi-Minuit Fantastique* had devoted a special issue to Terence Fisher (with lavish photographs and remarkable texts) as early as May 1962, also setting him up as an auteur and later as a cult director. Wheeler Winston Dixon will eventually devote an important book to the life and films of Terence Fisher, even comparing him to John Ford. Dixon analyses the ways in which each director re-imagines national myth and cultural memory through genre, the Gothic for Fisher, the Western for Ford. In 1996, Denis Meikle published the first major monograph on the studio. He thoroughly studied all the films, using a chronological structure, which justifies the subtitle of the book: *The Rise and Fall of the House of Hammer*. However his approach is more historical and thematic than Pirie's.

In *Hammer and Beyond, The British Horror Film* (1993), which also deals with the production of other studios like Amicus, Peter Hutchings focused upon the socio-cultural aspect, while not neglecting an aesthetic analysis of the films. He stressed the tremendous impact of the Gothic production of the studio, in particular of horror myths, such as Frankenstein, Dracula, or the Mummy. He highlighted the way in which some of these films establish a set of hetero-normative values while also challenging patriarchy especially through transgressing, subversive figures like the vampire or the "mad scientist" (Baron Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll) or empowered female characters like Countess Dracula or Sister Hyde. Hutchings also published two essential monographs, one on Terence Fisher (with a psychoanalytical as well as a socio-cultural approach), the other on *Dracula* (1958), one of the most emblematic films of the studio. Among the most important recent works, one must mention Wayne Kinsey whose impressive study relies on

hitherto unpublished material and film archives, including censor reports and numerous new interviews of filmmakers, actors/actresses, set-designers etc. His three volumes (*Hammer Film, The Bray Studio's Years, Hammer Film, The Elstree Studio's Years, Hammer Films, A Life in Pictures*), draw a very comprehensive, documented and enlightening history of the studio with fascinating insights into all the stages of the creative process, from screenwriting to post-production and also critical reception. Other historical accounts of the studio could be mentioned such as Howard Maxford's *Hammer House of Horror* (1996) or *The Hammer Story* (Marcus Hearn and Alan Barnes, 2005). *Hammer Films, an Exhaustive Filmography* (Tom Johnson, Deborah Del Vecchio), McFarland (1996) is also a precious instrument for scholars. Also invaluable are works by people who were deeply involved in the studio, like Christopher Lee (*Lord of Misrule*, 2003) or Jimmy Sangster (*Inside Hammer*, 2001).

Several books and collection of essays on horror or Gothic cinema devote at least one chapter to the British studio. So do books devoted to important cultural icons like Frankenstein or Dracula. Among those, *Dreadful Pleasures, An Anatomy of Modern Horror*, James Twitchell, (1985), Gregory Waller, *The Living and the Undead* (1986), *A Companion to the Horror Film* (Harry M. Benshoff, ed., Wiley Blackwell, 2017), *Contemporary British Horror Cinema* (Johnny Walker, Edinburgh University Press, 2016). We also wish to mention critics and film historians who have widely contributed to the knowledge of the studio: Christopher Frayling, Steve Chibnall, Ian Hunter and Ian Conrich (who contributes to this volume) among others. Lastly we should not forget the work accomplished by film magazines such as *Little Shoppe of Horrors, Midnight Marquee* and many more. Thanks to all these scholars, critics and fans, a lot is already known about Hammer, for a long time identified with horror cinema. Let's hope this volume will nevertheless bring fresh insights, and especially highlight relatively neglected works.

The first section of this volume investigates the reshaping of iconic monsters and the rise of emblematic actors. Isabelle Labrouillère analyses the rewriting and recreation of the Frankenstein myth in Terence Fisher's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957); she emphasizes the way in which the film toys with a series of clearly identifiable hypotexts going back to the Universal Studio opuses from the 1930s and 1940s but also clearly breaking away from long-standing interpretations of the myth and opposing doxa. Dorota Babilas explores how Terence Fisher's 1962 *Phantom of the Opera* relies on the heavily sanitized 1943 Hollywood version of *The Phantom* starring Claude Rains which offers musical melodrama in place of the Gothic macabre found in Gaston Leroux's 1910 classic French thriller; the foreboding atmosphere of

foggy, gas-lit streets, enhanced by cinematographer Arthur Grant's work, gives the story a new twist and helps relocate the story of the haunted Opera House from the Belle Epoque Paris to Victorian London, anglicizing the tale and turning the dark and menacing original Phantom into a tragic hero for the decades to come. Focusing on Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee's viewpoints, H el ene Valmary chooses to study the subtleties of their performances and the type of relation the mythical duet bears to female figures; she investigates the nature of the intimacy they build within a specific movie but also from one film to another.

The second part of the book tackles the central notions of genre and gender and their intricacies. Jean-Fran ois Baillon surveys a cycle of lesser-known and often marginalized psychological thrillers like *The Full Treatment* (Val Guest, 1960, b & w), *Taste of Fear* (Seth Holt, 1961, b & w), *Paranoiac* (Freddie Francis, 1963, b & w) and *Maniac* (Michael Carreras, 1963) produced in between 1960 and 1972 demonstrating to what extent they go against the canon of the Hammer horror and also underlining their reflexive quality; he argues that "[t]he viewer is then less the victim of cinematic illusion than the observer of illusion at work." Ga id Girard reassesses how the success of the science-fiction film *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955), the first of Hammer's Quatermass trilogy, seems to be the main reason for the company's resolute turn to gothic horror fiction; she deals with film genre but also gender relations as she appraises the decline of the British hero in *Quatermass* adapted from a former TV series. David Roche examines the re-evaluation of the canon in the late Hammer productions (1970–1973) and shows how inserting Dracula in the 1970s London may have hampered the subversive potential of the famous vampire, while the Karnstein trilogy and *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* conversely make some of the underlying characteristics of the monstrous figures all the more explicit in the source opuses. Jean-Pierre Naugrette focuses on a chess game in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (Terence Fisher, 1959), absent from Doyle's text, yet quite relevant in the way it characterizes Holmes (Peter Cushing) and Mortimer (Francis de Wolff). Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee form a mythical duo, impersonating contrasted and complementary characters in five Hammer produced films, between 1957 and 1964.

The third section deals with the aesthetics of horror. C ecile Carayol is mainly interested in the way in which music actively shapes the Hammer aesthetic thanks mostly to the work of composer James Bernard. She also explores the influence of the "Hammer sound" on various scores like Wojciech Kilar in *Dracula* (1992, F.F. Coppola) or Danny Elfman in *Sleepy Hollow* (1999, Tim Burton). Jean-Michel Durafour shows that in Terence Fisher's movies,

landscapes images, which are often inspired by famous paintings, take on an aesthetic value, distinct from narrative illustration; they escape the bounds of traditional representation and “empower” themselves, as is illustrated in the author’s analysis of the green color in *Horror of Dracula*, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* or *The Mummy* where the green becomes “the diffuse colour of the film itself.”

Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard analyses the work of Jack Asher, one of Hammer’s great cinematographers, and focuses on the uses of Technicolor in the *Curse of Frankenstein*, *The Revenge of Frankenstein* and *The Mummy*. She shows that Asher uses chromatic contrasts to distinguish the everyday world described with restraint from the uncanny or supernatural one, depicted in vivid saturated hues, and also emphasizes the use of night scenes as a signifier for the gothic genre and she demonstrates how chromatic composition and lighting effects deconstruct familiar color codes. Robynn Stilwell looks into *The Quatermass Experiment* (BBC, 1953), the Hammer film *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) and the 2005 version of *Quatermass*. She focuses on the two surviving episodes of the series—the experimental kinescope recording process was discontinued for the last four episodes—and shows that this ephemerality of early television is one of the challenges to understanding the history of the medium and a space of crossing and blending of institutional practice, technological structures, and aesthetic fields, across media. Hence a comparative study of the three versions in order to explore the interactions and intersections of genre, medium and soundscape.

Philippe Met investigates the child figure, which has received little attention in supernatural and horror movies. He argues that while in some films, the treatment of the subject matter is “essentially exploitative or derivative,” Hammer’s better efforts “display a good degree of innovation and subtlety.”

The fourth part examines post-colonial gothic and imperial politics. Christian Chelebourg deals with John Gilling, screenwriter and filmmaker who worked in the shadow of Terence Fisher during the Hammer’s golden age; Gilling however contributed to creating a new form of mystic-Gothic horror in three films, *The Gorgon* he wrote in 1964 for Fisher and *The Plague of the Zombies* and *The Reptile* he directed in quick succession two years later. Rehan Hyder’s essay examines *The Stranglers of Bombay* (1960) and *The Mummy* (1959) both belonging to an important sub-category of films produced by Hammer Films, “colonial horror,” which became a recurrent, albeit sporadic, theme, present during the prolific output of Hammer Films from the late 1950s until its demise in the mid-1970s; these two titles paved the way for a number of similar films produced both by Hammer and competitor studios and drew upon existing representations of the exotic seeking to exploit

an underlying fear of cultural and racial otherness. Victoria Walden argues that a much overlooked particularity of the “Britishness” inherent to many of Hammer’s horror films is the fear of transition from colonialism to post-colonialism; influenced by S.D. Arata’s 1996 work on the original “Dracula” novel as foregrounding the fear of the instability of British colonialism in the Victorian era, she explains how Hammer’s films often emphasise tensions between the British and the racial/national Other and an unsettling ambiguity about good and evil, which can be understood within the context of the deterioration of the British Empire. Focusing on early and lesser-known films, Jean-Marie Lecomte shows that Hammer offers a conscious reflexion on the nature of knowledge, by featuring many scientists and their methods and ethics. He distinguishes two types of scientists: austere and often narrow-minded rationalists are contrasted with “imaginative thinkers,” maverick scientists or seekers for knowledge. In terms of philosophy, the Hammer studio seems to be against or indifferent to modernity, rather foregrounding determinism, humanism, even religious discourse. Ideologically Hammer is mostly conservative, as shows for instance *Twins of Evil*, a sequel to *Vampire Lovers*.

The fifth and final section of this volume copes with mutations, unmade projects and resurrection. Ian Conrich deals with horror films made by Hammer after 1970 and explains their progressive decline. First they became increasingly hybrid in order to compete with other independent productions, drawing on the success of Hong Kong films, spaghetti westerns, sexploitation or Blaxploitation. Then they could not really compete with American horror films after *The Omen* or *Night of the Living Dead*, either more realistic with their “nihilism, reflexivity and contemporary settings” or far more expensive. Ultimately the studio lost its generic identity. Matthew Jones, focusing on Hammer’s attempts to revive production in the nineties, offers an in-depth analysis of the script of the unmade remake of *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*, a classic British science fiction film. By outlining first the various obstacles the studio was confronted with, he shows how Kevin Quinn the scriptwriter did his best to adapt the project to the American market, transposing the plot from 1960s London to 1990s New York, highlighting American cultural landmarks and drawing upon the popularity of disaster movies, while trying to address more global issues, especially environmental ones. This chapter debunks the common belief that the studio was inactive during the 1990s. Marisa Hayes contends that the celebrated transgressive nature of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* not only directly stems from the influence of Hammer film productions, but openly recycles and builds upon them in a setting already familiar to Hammer audiences (Oakley Court); if *The Rocky Horror*

Picture Show is unapologetically direct concerning its depiction of sexual freedoms, Hammer productions, even prior to their “soft porn” phase, were equally defiant in confronting censorship and expanding the boundaries of what was deemed permissible in popular genre cinema. To conclude, Sophie Mantrant gets to grips with Hammer’s cinematic resurrection with the movie *The Woman in Black* (2012). She demonstrates how the latter perpetuates the great legacy of the studio’s British touch which is mostly rooted in the national literary heritage, while attempting to attract new audiences by picking Daniel Radcliffe, the *Harry Potter* saga hero, as its main character.

These chapters will hopefully contribute to widen the reader’s knowledge of the Hammer studio, especially of its lesser-known productions. Among other topics, they raise the question of the paradoxical modernity of films that are innovative in various respects (themes, modes of representation challenging censorship, aesthetics), but are also trying to resurrect a dying tradition, mostly offering a rather conservative discourse despite their efforts to comply with the expectations of new audiences. The films born from the recent Hammer renaissance are still referring to this bygone Golden Age of the horror film. We may wonder whether the Hammer studio was a mere factory churning out mostly conventional horror films, now buried in the dust of a gothic dungeon, or a true laboratory of modern cinematic horror whose past glory still inspires contemporary filmmakers. Some answers will be found in this volume—and further questions raised.

