HORROR TELEVISION IN THE AGE OF CONSUMPTION

BINGING ON FEAR

Edited by
Linda Belau and Kimberly Jackson

ROUTLEDGE

Horror Television in the Age of Consumption

Characterized as it is by its interest in and engagement with the supernatural, psycho-social formations, the gothic, and issues of identity and subjectivity, horror has long functioned as an allegorical device for interrogations into the seamier side of cultural foundations. This collection, therefore, explores both the cultural landscape of this recent phenomenon and the reasons for these television series' wide appeal, focusing on televisual aesthetics, technological novelties, the role of adaptation and seriality, questions of gender, identity and subjectivity, and the ways in which the shows' themes comment on the culture that consumes them. Featuring new work by many of the field's leading scholars, this collection offers innovative readings and rigorous theoretical analyses of some of our most significant contemporary texts in the genre of Horror Television.

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Contents

Introduction

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Horror on TV

Since the publication of such seminal works of criticism as Carol Clover's "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" (1987), Barbara Creed's "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection" (1986), Linda Williams' "When the Woman Looks" (1983), and Robin Wood's *Hollywood from Vietnam to Regan* (1983), the popular horror film has come to occupy a significant space in the realm of cultural studies. Such films are now seen as legitimate, indeed important, objects of criticism that are just as revealing of cultural attitudes and social relations as more "highbrow" film genres. *Horror Television in the Age of Consumption: Binging on Fear* offers a significant contribution to this ever-growing critical conversation, focusing as it does on horror's now near omnipresence on the small screen.

   This collection aims to explore what has become an ever-burgeoning TV phenomenon that now spans all televisual realms: premium channels, network TV, specialized channels, and online streaming venues. The popularity and recent proliferation of horror television series—which include such contemporary hits as AMC's *The Walking Dead* (2010–), WB and CW's *Supernatural* (2005–), A&E's *The Bates Motel* (2013–), NBC's *Hannibal* (2013–2015), and Showtime's *Penny Dreadful* (2014–)—can be attributed to a number of sociohistorical and technological factors, from relaxed censorship regulations to advancements in digital technology that allow for cinematic effects to be employed on the small screen. In addition, many of the contemporary shows exhibit an obsessively loyal fan following, demonstrating an enthusiasm for horror programming and horror themes unprecedented in the modern television era. An examination of this sub-genre is thus triply essential, as its success in recent years provides important commentary on the evolution of the horror genre, the nature of the televisual, and the culture of the twenty-first century. Through multiple scholarly voices and perspectives, the essays in this collection further illuminate what makes the sub-genre so attractive, the factors that qualify it as a sub-genre, and the uniqueness and diversity of its manifestations.

Film and television critics of today seem to agree that Gothic and horror are particularly well suited for television. For Helen Wheatley, Gothic television in its serial form allows for a powerful manifestation of the uncanny, while contributors Stacey Abbott and Lorna Jowett point out that "television is ideally suited for horror because it is still perceived as an object of horror" (xiv). But while the proliferation of such series is a fairly recent phenomenon, the question of whether horror belongs on television is not. This collection thus begins by looking back at the horror anthologies of the 1950s and early 1960s, in the process examining the issue of genre formation and the establishment of a unique set of plot elements and aesthetic components that allowed for the serialization of the genre in the first place, setting the stage for the acceleration of seriality that has taken place in recent years, particularly since Netflix began to offer access to full seasons of serialized programming.

This acceleration of seriality, which has become part of the television viewing experience in all genres, not just horror, has resulted in the popularization of a phenomenon we now refer to as "binge-watching." According to cultural anthropologist Grant McCracken,

> I believe we binge on TV to craft time and space, and to fashion an immersive near-world with special properties. We enter a world that is, for all its narrative complexity, a place of **sudden continuity**. We may have made the world 'go away' for psychological purposes, but here, for anthropological ones, we have built another in its place. The second screen in some ways becomes our second home.

McCracken's poignant quote is both a reflection and articulation of the positive stance many critics have taken with regard to binge-watching, defined by Netflix, the company largely responsible for its rampant rise, as "watching 4 or more episodes of the same TV show in one sitting." While the term "binge" is obviously associated with addiction, compulsion, and self-destructive behavior (and indeed, these associations can cause feelings of guilt in those who practice it), most critics agree that binge-watching is part of a complex web of cultural, artistic, economic, and technological processes that do not necessarily translate into intellectual dullness, cultural decay, or psychological distress. On the contrary, the relationship between consumers and cultural production that largely defines this phenomenon involves a complex interplay that has resulted in a mad rush of original series with complicated narratives and highly diversified content, delivered by top actors and top directors and aimed at an audience poised to engage with what Jason Mittell refers to as the shows' "operational aesthetic" (qtd. in Loock 92). Not only does binge-watching not necessarily "ruin" the viewing experience or go against the intent of the producers, but in fact, Netflix in particular— with its release of an entire fourth season of *Arrested Development* in

2013—has begun producing original series structured with the idea that viewers *would* binge-watch. Television series are now advertised with binge-watching in mind, not just on Netflix but also on other channels like AMC and WB/CW that play and produce popular series: "Get ready for a new addiction!"

Binge-watching is part of a larger movement Henry Jenkins has termed "convergence culture": "Media convergence is more than just a technological shift. Convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres, and audiences. Convergence alters the logic by which media industries operate and by which media consumers process news and entertainment" (16). This new way of processing popular narratives involves a radical enough shift that Mareike Jenner, for example, has tentatively suggested that we have entered a new age of television—TVIV—which involves precisely a move away from the TV set to such a degree that one can claim "Netflix is simply not TV" (261). Part of what Jenner terms "post-postmodern culture," today's consumers possess unprecedented "media mobility" (Tryon 3). Not only is our relationship to space and geographical location transformed but time as well, since we can access thousands of media events at any time, no longer having to be present at their first broadcast, a phenomenon Tryon refers to as "time shifting" (5). In addition, popular narratives take place through a broad network of media outlets. A viewer not only watches a television show, but also becomes part of a larger media experience that includes blogs and fansites, as well as various layers of intertextuality. Because of this, the viewer takes part in what Jenkins terms "transmedia storytelling":

> Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience.
>
> (21)

Horror, it seems, is quite at home in this new media culture, as the popularity and recent proliferation of horror television series would attest. The original essays collected here—in their analyses of individual series, both old and new—offer various perspectives on these shows' successes. Yet certain themes repeat themselves and are thus deserving of some introductory treatment here, namely, a focus on televisual aesthetics and technological novelties, the role of adaptation and seriality, questions of gender, identity and subjectivity, and the ways in which the shows' themes comment on the larger economic and political context in which they are consumed.

We will leave the question of what constitutes horror largely to the side for now, as the essays that follow each treat that issue in their various ways. Suffice it to say that the shows we have included here are not simply concerned with the visceral experience of spectacles of blood and gore (although there is that, too). There is what some would term Gothicism, the supernatural, science-fiction, mystery, psychological thriller, etc. Some would make the distinction between horror and terror, in the way, for example, that Enlightenment thinkers distinguished between the beautiful and the sublime. But since this collection is focused precisely on themes of transmedia interactions, intertextuality, pastiche, and all other manner of mixing and crossing, it hardly seems appropriate to attempt to draw lines where they really do not exist. And yet we do not think anyone would argue against our choices here; there is a reason we have not included Netflix's *Orange is the New Black* (2013–) or AMC's *Breaking Bad* (2008–2013); as horrifying as some elements of such shows are, they are not horror.

One of the elements of television horror that Lisa Schmidt identifies in her essay "Television: Horror's 'Original' Home" is precisely its cross-genre links to the Gothic, particularly in its melodramatic eighteenth- and nineteenth-century serialized novel versions: "Through seriality, television horror reveals the melodramatic nature of the genre. Moreover, it (re)creates that original horror in a way that speaks, perhaps, to some of horror's less appreciated pleasures and less acknowledged audiences" (159). Indeed, Gothic elements abound in the shows analyzed in this collection, all of which undoubtedly contain some or all of the following:

> a mood of dread and/or terror inclined to evoke fear or disgust in the viewer; the presence of highly stereotyped characters and plots, often derived from Gothic literary fiction…; representations of the supernatural which are either overt (created through the use of special effects) or implied (suggested rather than fully revealed); a proclivity towards the structures and images of the uncanny…; and, perhaps most importantly, homes and families which are haunted, tortured, or troubled in some way.
>
> (Wheatley 3)

These melodramatic narrative elements dovetail nicely with the kind of suspense created by seriality. As Wheatley points out, serialized Gothic horror is "underpinned by a kind of serial uncanniness, whereby the repetitions of the serial reinforce an uncanny feeling of *dreadful* recognition" (180). Schmidt continues,

> Serialized shows demand an investment from the viewer beyond a single, one-hour block of time, but with this investment comes the possibility of greater emotional impact… Not to put too fine a point

on it, serialized television shows can create astonishing levels of emotional crisis and catharsis because they have time on their side.

(166)

This emotional investment rises exponentially when such serial installments are viewed in rapid succession. As Robyn Warhol contends, "the forward narrative pull of long-form serial television programs is profoundly suited to binge-watching. The ability to move instantly from one season's cliffhanger to the next premiere's Big Reveal has altered the emotional dynamics of watching serialized television" (145).

   With so many of these shows readily available for viewing, and given the fact that most of them go on for multiple seasons, each show has to compete with other similar series and, in addition, continue to outdo itself to keep fans watching. This is particularly true of shows that rely on spectacles of violence, as so many treated in this collection do. As Karin Hoepker argues in her essay "No Longer Your Friendly Neighborhood Killer: Crime Shows and Seriality after *Dexter*,"

> [c]learly, many shows in the field of contemporary crime drama simply push the envelope regarding their depiction of violence. But much more interesting are the broader aesthetic patterns and dynamics that emerge from a logic of serial escalation as productions supersede and surpass themselves and as generic variations evolve in an effort to achieve a characteristic and recognizable profile.
>
> (250)

It is thus not only the serial form that contributes to horror's particular aesthetic; television horror also benefits from "the effects of the digital age on what could be produced on TV" (Wheatley 175). As Wheatley argues, "There has been a long tradition of using the supernatural Gothic to demonstrate or 'show off' innovations in audio-visual media" (172). Similarly, Abbott and Jowett contend, "[b]y exploring the potentially unlimited palette of visual and aural aesthetics available within television… these series re-imagine what horror is or can be" (154). Thus, far from being a genre that tolerates passive, distracted viewers,

> Gothic television is a particularly striking example of a genre of television programming which asks *to be looked at*, which demands concentrated attention from viewers (both domestic and scholarly), through its emotional intensity, its complex plotting, and its highly dense and detailed mise-en-scène.
>
> (Wheatley 21)

The seriality of television horror is also intimately linked with the way the shows adapt, revise, and remake horror narratives that both precede

them and are being created simultaneously. Adaptation, in various forms and degrees, is a key component of many of the shows discussed in this collection, including *Bates Motel*, *The Walking Dead*, *Penny Dreadful*, *Stranger Things*, *Hannibal*, and *Sleepy Hollow.* Commenting particularly on the relationships among the various *Psycho* films and *Bates Motel*, Kathleen Loock follows the lead of Katrin Oltmann, employing Freud's notion of *Nachträglichkeit* to explain the relationship between "originals" and remakes. She writes,

> *Nachträglichkeit* describes how a later event prompts the retroactive attribution of meaning to an earlier event, its belated understanding or even revision. The remake—if grasped along these lines—has not only to come to terms with the cultural unfinished business and memories of the earlier film, it also creates the original in the process, retrospectively transforms its meaning in significant ways and thereby hints at the instability of narratives in general.
>
> (83)

By including *Bates Motel* in her analysis, Loock expands the category of remake to include not only film but also television, and suggests that remaking is a serial phenomenon, an ongoing conversation among various versions of the same story:

> In these cases [the *Psycho* franchise, including *Bates Motel*], it makes sense to think of remaking in terms of seriality because the processes of repetition and variation at work are structurally akin to the more explicitly serialized aesthetics in other popular media.
>
> (83–84)

In a similar move, Maria Sulimma challenges the fidelity/infidelity distinction that usually dominates remake criticism, taking as her primary example the "simultaneous seriality" that characterizes the relationship between the comic and television versions of *The Walking Dead*. In this case, the two narratives are evolving at the same time but along different lines, so it is even more apparent that neither narrative is more original, more privileged, or more "central" than the other. Instead, "[t]he relationship between both texts has to be understood not as a fixed configuration but rather as an ongoing process in which both occupy different positions, imitating, supplementing, contrasting or competing with one another" (133).

Finally, as part of an overall culture of postmodern "referencing," not only do these shows refer to earlier similar narratives and those being produced simultaneously but also earlier eras in relation to our own. As Rose Butler explains in her contribution to this collection, *Stranger Things*, for example, references both earlier horror narratives,

particularly those of Stephen King and Steven Spielberg, and the economic and political climate of the 1980s, which bears a strong resemblance to what we are facing in twenty-first-century America. In this way, our relationship to history is, in a sense, also serially remade.

As part of what Däwes, Ganser, and Poppenhagen call "transgressive television," the horror television series thus occupies a unique place within the larger phenomenon of televisual seriality. As Däwes contends, those series that deal with violence and criminality involve "a remarkable blurring of conventional boundaries of genre, of fictional time and space, of plot patterns and character types, of social and ethical norms, of language, and of visual representation" (18). The artifacts treated in the essays that follow thus represent something of a cultural revolution, one we cannot hope to fully explore in these pages not only because of its complexity and scope but also because we are currently immersed in it, unable to say for sure where it will take us, but fairly certain that we are enjoying the ride.

The Essays

Beginning the collection and its exploration of contemporary horror television, Peter Hutchings' essay, "Pigeons from Hell: Anthology Horror on American Television in the 1950s and 1960s," engages with some of the earliest forms of horror television and, as such, establishes the historical backdrop, particularly as it relates to anthology horror. With his analysis of early horror programming, Hutchings maintains that anthology series have been an especially important format in the development of horror television from the 1950s onwards. Exploring some of the earliest examples of anthology shows containing elements of horror, the supernatural, and the macabre to appear on American television, Hutchings considers the ways in which they framed and presented these elements within a televisual context where a fully fledged horror genre did not at that time exist. Focusing on the Boris Karloff-hosted series *Thriller*, but also drawing examples from *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour, The Twilight Zone, One Step Beyond*, and *The Outer Limits*, Hutchings maintains that none of these series, including *Thriller*, were exclusively horror-based. Rather, in varying combinations, they offered mixtures of crime, science-fiction, and horror. Yet they all worked to develop, in various ways, a televisual horror aesthetic that drew upon horror cinema and horror literature but had its own distinctive, medium-specific character. Considering the significance of the anthology framework itself and the role within it of the host, Hutchings also considers contributions made by leading creative personnel to the content, form, and style of the new television horror. Focusing on what he argues is a prime example of one of the most distinguished examples of anthology horror from this period, Hutchings further offers a reading

of the 1961 episode of *Thriller* entitled "Pigeons from Hell" in order to specifically demonstrate the innovation and achievements of early horror anthology television.

Continuing the historical backdrop and the exploration of the anthology horror series, Mark Jancovich's essay "'Where It Belongs': Television Horror, Domesticity, and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*" argues against the notion that early television horror developed in a manner that characterizes it as inferior to cinematic horror. Rather, he contends, despite the domestic setting that permeates the genre, claims that the cinema is superior have been widely challenged, especially since television horror relies on a variety of other media, particularly in its earliest formation. Focusing on television's contribution to the wave of horror production that developed in the mid-1950s and the ways in which television horror of the period managed the relationship between horror and the domestic sphere, Jancovich explores *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and the ways in which it was generically produced as horror television. Jancovich further examines the role of Joan Harrison, famously known as the first female producer in Hollywood, and the gendered dynamic of her working relationship with Hitchcock. Finally, Jancovich considers the ways in which Harrison used Hitchcock in his role as host so that he not only mediated between the domestic context of television viewing and the horror of the stories, but also between these two worlds and a third: the commercial messages provided by the sponsor for the series. By focusing on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, Jancovich demonstrates that horror and television have a long and fruitful history, that television horror has long proved far more influential on cinematic horror than is acknowledged, and—crucially—that the domestic context is not in tension with horror.

Moving the collection into the latter part of the twentieth century and into the origins of the contemporary era of mass consumption, horror television binging, and fanhood frenzy, Ed Cameron's essay explores the universe of *Twin Peaks*, including ABC's 1990–1991 hit series, the 1992 feature "prequel" film *Fire Walk with Me*, and Showtime's 2017 third season, *Twin Peaks: The Return*. While Showtime aired its "return" season in 2017, the initial series (and cinematic prequel to the series) in the early 1990s set the stage for the current upswing in production and popularity of other horror series that have emerged in the past three decades. Focusing on both the original and contemporary iterations of the program, but primarily on the earlier series and its cinematic prequel, Cameron considers the persistence of surrealist horror which, he argues, goes back to the French surrealist attraction to early American horror films and their championing of the disturbingly strange and bizarre over the purely horrifying. In his essay, entitled "The Thing 'Chants Out Between Two Worlds': Surreal Latency in the *Twin Peaks* Universe," Cameron argues that, like the surrealists and Sigmund Freud before them, David Lynch possesses a preference for the uncanny—as a specific subclass of

horror—over the purely horrifying as a means of achieving the bizarrely terrifying effects for which his television show *Twin Peaks* is known. Grounding his analysis in Jacques Lacan's notion of the Thing—that which hauntingly disturbs signification from within—to explain the differing role horror plays in all three manifestations of the surreal world of *Twin Peaks*—the 1990–1991 ABC television program, the 1992 feature prequel, and Showtime's return to the third season in 2017—Cameron's essay offers an analysis of Lynch's *Twin Peaks* universe through the lens of the surrealist emphasis on the uncanny Thing with its privileging of the latent reality that always lies within, is censored by, and continually haunts the manifest content of Lynch's narrative design.

Transitioning us into the twenty-first century and the "golden age" of television horror series programming, Kimberly Jackson turns our attention toward Showtime's hit series *Dexter* which, given its appearance on a premium cable network, presented itself as one of the earliest articulations of contemporary horror television that beckoned fans to the binge experience. Through her examination of the relationship between gender and law in *Dexter*, Jackson explores the repressed Gothic underside of the series in her essay entitled "'If I Could Have Feelings at All, I'd Have Them for Deb': Love, Law, and Loss in Showtime's *Dexter*." Considering the manner in which the show attempts to cleanse itself of its Gothic excess, Jackson departs from the usual analyses of the show that focus on the main character and focuses instead on the relationship between Dexter and his foster sister, Debra. In the show's presentation of this relationship, particularly in the last three seasons, the two characters' identities become profoundly intertwined and ultimately destructive. Thus, Jackson argues, they resemble such legendary lovers as Catherine and Heathcliff from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. Drawing on the similarities between the two narratives, she argues for what emerges essentially as the buried feminist mythos of the show, as opposed to the manifest Oedipal structure of the narrative that seems to focus on Dexter's relationships with the father as super-ego and with the mother as lost object. This reading helps to explain the series' tragic close, which results in Debra's death and Dexter's exile from the social and symbolic orders.

In her essay "White Trash in Wife-Beaters? U.S. Television Werewolves, Gender, and Class," Lorna Jowett continues the exploration of contemporary horror series as she argues that the werewolf has been consistently aligned with the masculine. Cashing in on the popularity of both the supernatural and the paranormal romance, horror series frequently position the (male) werewolf as the opposite of the (male) vampire, particularly in relation to the alignment of hypermasculinity with social class. The male werewolf, Jowett argues, frequently coded as trailer trash, is often violent, bestial, blue-collar, macho, manly, aggressive, and "hot" blooded compared to the vampire's cold and aristocratic

demeanor. Through analysis of werewolf/vampire-focused horror series programs such as *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and its spin-off *The Originals*, Jowett examines how ongoing narrative arcs in these programs develop their werewolf characters (and their werewolf mythologies), particularly in relation to the werewolf-vampire rivalry. Focusing on other non-werewolf-centric programs like *Supernatural*, Jowett considers how the appearance of the werewolf in one-off episodes of ongoing series can offer a disruption of the status quo, both in terms of the series and of the werewolf trope. Drawing on her examinations of both the typical and the disruptive TV werewolf, Jowett further explores how the Netflix series *Hemlock Grove* introduced a different version of the vampire-werewolf relationship. According to Jowett, *Hemlock Grove's* apparently typical presentation of its vampire-werewolf protagonists divided audience attention and opinion by simultaneously extending and subverting some of the key features of the werewolf-vampire trope, particularly in relation to whiteness, class, and masculinity, as well as through tone and aesthetics.

In his essay entitled "'The World is Changing Again': Bodies, Interpretation, and the Monotony of the Drive in *The Walking Dead*," Alexander Howe turns to what has become, arguably, the most iconic example of binge-horror television. Howe argues that early success for *The Walking Dead* series was in large part due to faithful fans of Robert Kirkman's comic series upon which the television show is based. According to Howe, readers were immediately drawn to the uniqueness of the comic version that focused less on the blood and gore of life with zombies and more on the "human" interactions between characters. The AMC version likewise follows this formula. Howe further argues that, in following this formula, the intractable death drive of the zombies is hardly an occasion for drama and only intermittently a thing of horror; rather, the unyielding drive of the zombie is utterly banal—and already a part of the mindless consumption and isolation of our daily lives. Thus, Howe maintains, there is no better figure for the psychoanalytic concept of the drive than the zombie, since drive is that ceaseless, organic impulse toward lethal enjoyment and ultimately our own demise. Zombie narratives, Howe explains, stage the drive without any cultural sublimation whatsoever since the zombie is incapable of sociality or an experience of its own body. Howe explores this dimension of the narrative, demonstrating the importance of later Lacanian theory. *The Walking Dead*, Howe further argues, duplicates the very logic that the show would ostensibly critique by serving as a sort of CliffsNotes take on the zombie genre, making what were likely already unmistakable cultural analyses all the more accessible so as to be consumed without desire or thought.

Through her Lacanian-inflected psychoanalytic reading, Linda Belau's essay entitled "Family Ties and Maternal Things: *Bates Motel* as Family Romance for the Post-Oedipal Era" explores the five seasons

of the polymorphously perverse cultural universe of A&E's *Bates Motel*, focusing on what she calls the "post-Oedipal" context, where the Name-of-the-Father that functions as the organizing principle and the basic cornerstone of symbolic exchange has been cast aside. Offering a reading of the psychic dimension of horror and its relation to the contemporary social environment, with its shrinking public space and fading symbolic pact, Belau considers how the symbolic dimensions of the culture that consumes the serial program *Bates Motel* come to reflect the same psychotic mind-set that characterizes the main character of both the television show and the source film that the program is adapted from (Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*). In her analysis of *Bates Motel*, then, Belau explores the plethora of family ties and dysfunctional kinship relations that permeate and condition both the protagonist Norman's psyche as well as the broader diegetic space of *Bates Motel*, where every potential relation or act that might otherwise ground symbolic authority is willfully transgressed. From the image of the failed father and criminal lawman to the over-proximate presence of the Phallic Mother, *Bates Motel* provides a fascinating origin story for Norman Bates that accounts for his ultimate psychic disintegration into a homicidal psychotic who murders his mother and completely disassociates from his symbolic identity. Through her further analysis of the television series' overt rejection of the cultural authority of its own father figures (that is, Hitchcock's film *Psycho* and Robert Bloch's novel from which the film is adapted), Belau also considers how the show itself functions at the same level of symbolic transgression that characterizes its story lines and permeates the metatextual trajectory of the program.

Turning the focus toward network television, Stacey Abbott's essay "Masters of Mise-En-Scène: The Stylistic Excess of *Hannibal*" examines the aesthetics of contemporary television horror as characterized by a form of visual and aural spectacle. The representation of spectacle, particularly in the horror television genre, Abbot argues, often encompasses a combination of gore and stylistic experimentation, pushing the boundaries of acceptability and televisual transgression. Considering what she calls the "new Golden Age of TV Horror" and the increased presence of the horror genre on television, Abbott focuses on *Hannibal* as an extreme example of the genre's penchant for narrative and stylistic innovation and transgression. Focusing on the TV landscape in which the horror genre is increasingly commonplace, Abbott shows how this network program redefined expectations of TV horror in terms of representations of the body in disarray, narrative structure, moral ambiguity, visual aesthetics, and music and sound. In so doing, Abbott argues, *Hannibal* challenged and overturned the conventions of the televisual serial killer genre, all while being broadcast on network television, defying assumptions that this level of experimentation was only available via cable or streaming services. Abbott further positions *Hannibal* within a cross

section of influences and discourses, including the broadcast landscape of television horror at the time of its airing and the show's relationship to the originating novels by Thomas Harris and the subsequent cinematic adaptations, as she demonstrates the show's effect on TV horror and the serial killer genre when it is reimagined as avant-garde.

Continuing the focus on network television, Jim Daems considers the rehabilitation of Washington Irving's Ichabod Crane in the television series *Sleepy Hollow* as it transforms Crane into a redemptive combatant in an apocalyptic struggle, using elements of horror to anchor the American identity in religious symbolism and Biblical lore. In his essay, entitled "*Sleepy Hollow* and the Horrors of History Post-9/11," Daems argues that while Washington Irving satirizes certain aspects of his own era in *Sleepy Hollow*, the series does not. There is nothing new in horror representing contemporary fears and anxieties, Daems maintains, but there is something deeply ambivalent about *Sleepy Hollow*'s historical and contemporary apocalyptic contexts. This is evident in the series' scenario of situating the founding of the United States as already marked by the founding fathers' struggle against the forces of darkness. In this sense, Daems suggests, *Sleepy Hollow* is a sustained commentary on the ability of America to defeat its own demons through the conventions of horror that it draws on. Through his analysis of key scenes and episodes in the series, Daems demonstrates how *Sleepy Hollow* reveals anxieties over the loss of a master narrative and a proper American identity in the contemporary post-9/11 era. The series' use of horror, Daems argues, is an attempt to make up for the subjective loss and shore up this fragmentation, a reunion of then (national founding) and now (contemporary Sleepy Hollow as a microcosmic U.S.). As *Sleepy Hollow* constructs a supernatural-historical master narrative that reinvigorates the centrality of the U.S. in the current global context of "terror," Daems argues that the series reaffirms the U.S.'s role to combat "evil" as a founding principle.

Arguing that contemporary culture has embraced the combinatory nature characteristic of textuality, Michael Fuchs' essay "It's a Monster Mash! *Penny Dreadful* and the Return to (and of) Contemporary Horror's Victorian Roots" explores what he calls the intertextual and intermedial dimension of Showtime's edgy and experimental television series *Penny Dreadful*. The program's novelty, he argues, consists in its representations of returning icons of horror, which largely return to their roots but are, at the same time, cast in a new light, with original characters that, in the show, inhabit the same universe as these well-known creatures. By transporting Victorian monsters into the present moment, Fuchs contends, the show draws up a microhistory of the genre reflected in both its intertextual and intermedial contexts. Maintaining that "mashing" is nothing new, particularly in the horror genre, Fuchs explores the ways in which the show utilizes a wide array of Gothic themes and motifs, from the empathic, insightful, and sensitive monster

to the past's powerful grip on the present. Further, as Fuchs argues, by setting its narrative toward the end of the nineteenth century, *Penny Dreadful* itself becomes a kind of specter, invading the present moment of the early twenty-first century from the past. Thus, in the same way that the show's characters uncover their dark, repressed pasts in a piece-meal fashion, so *Penny Dreadful* not only reveals its origins but also showcases the interrelations between the genre's past and present. In this manner, Fuchs argues, *Penny Dreadful* excavates the horror genre's foundations in the nineteenth century as it clearly emphasizes its historical location and establishes its setting through a very particular tone and style. This meta-historiographic awareness functions as the very foundation of *Penny Dreadful* while it concurrently fuels its aesthetics.

In his essay entitled "Slashing through the Bonds of Blood: Queer Family and *Scream: The TV Series*," Kyle Christensen examines MTV's foray into horror television with his reading of *Scream: The TV Series* in relation to the *Scream* film it is adapted from. Focusing on the notion of "queer family," Christensen considers both the film's and the series' queering of family structure and traditional familial relations through representations of women's intergenerational relationships and what he calls the "matrophobic-abject mother." Arguing that, despite the fact that the first season of the series aired during the summer of 2015, which was monumental for queer politics concerning the family in U.S. popular culture and society, *Scream: The TV Series* fails to replicate the radical positioning of the successful film franchise in terms of its presentation of a functional horizon for queer family relations. In the progression from film to television, then, the *Scream* franchise comes to lose its once innovative figures of queer familial-feminine identity. Thus, according to Christensen, while *Scream: The TV Series* pays homage to its cinematic predecessor, it concomitantly de-queers and re-heteronormalizes the family within its narrative. Whereas the film exemplifies politics of queer family and the production of mother-daughter ties not steeped in the bonds of blood, the television series accomplishes the opposite by effectively de-queering depictions of family within its narrative. Specifically, Christensen argues, *Scream: The TV Series* upholds models of normative familial relations by canonizing traditional reproductive motherhood and depicting queer maternity as monstrous, while also recoding queer identity as conventionally sexual/romantic, youth-centered, and without concern for the maternal figure.

The penultimate essay by Ian Conrich, entitled "Resurrection: *Ash vs Evil Dead*, Network Television, and the Cult Horror Film Revival," discusses the Starz network series *Ash vs Evil Dead*, which extends the *Evil Dead* trilogy of films directed by Sam Raimi between 1981 and 1992. Because the film trilogy has enjoyed wide fan support and an extraordinary cult following, Conrich explores its adaptation into a televisual medium as he explores what he calls "nostalgia-horror" as television that resurrects popular and cult film narratives and characters from the

golden age of post-classical Hollywood horror and takes them beyond the fan fiction of the Internet. According to Conrich, today's wave of multimedia network platforms has created an unprecedented period for television production. There has been a drive to develop resurrected characters, locations, and authors as horror series offered spin-offs that appropriated essential parts from the original successful films. However, it was always largely believed that the original storylines of these horror franchises would be insufficient to support an entire television series. While this is the case with many of these kinds of shows, Conrich maintains, *Ash vs Evil Dead* is different insofar as it both resurrects and advances the *Evil Dead* narrative and characters. Bruce Campbell, the actor who plays the central character, Ash Williams, has acquired a hyperreal existence within the context of the series, where the line between the actor and his character has often been blurred as the *Evil Dead* world has grown. Conrich explores the rich parameters of this show, set almost thirty years after its "precursor" *Evil Dead II*, as Ash appears as a reluctant hero trapped and destined to forever fight the Deadites.

Focused on the hit series *Stranger Things*, Rose Butler's essay "'Welcome to the Upside Down': Nostalgia and Cultural Fears in *Stranger Things*" closes the collection with her analysis of the series, which is produced and is distributed by Netflix for immediate access as an instantly streamable program. Butler's essay investigates the series as a piece of nostalgic horror television that utilizes its 1980s setting and genre aesthetics to explore a number of complex sociocultural anxieties and their relationship to present-day America. In its presentation of the other world of the Upside Down and in its allusions to a number of touchstones from the 1980s, including the films *Poltergeist*, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Firestarter, It* (and its television adaptation), and Steven King as a horror writer more generally, *Stranger Things*, Butler maintains, encapsulates the culture of the era. Rather than evoking the decade as a happy time, however, the television series functions as a sharp critique of the 1980s and the rise of a deeply entrenched political conservativism, which, she further argues, returns in the Trump administration and in the alt-right conservativism that characterizes the contemporary political climate. As it captures the pervading fears and anxieties of the decade, Butler posits, *Stranger Things* borrows narrative and thematic elements from its influences to draw attention to the social and cultural issues that plagued the Reagan era, including fiscal inequality, social conservatism, and Cold War militarism. Set in a fictional American suburbia blighted by inequality and home to a secretive military laboratory performing outlandish experiments, the show is, Butler contends, far more than a genre pastiche; it is a piece of horror television which reveals the stark similarities between two very troubling times in American history. In this manner, Butler argues, the show's themes speak to the present as much as the past.

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