The Horror, the Horror: Graduate Student Information Seeking and Horror in Academia

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by Lizzy Walker

Horror has taken a seat at the table of academia. This genre of film has spurred academia to take a closer look at them. Gender studies, the arts, philosophy, and other humanities studies can benefit from a specific reference section in regard to horror. Graduate status is seemingly a line between undergraduate and faculty patterns and, as such, there is a difference in how they conduct research and information seeking. While it is clearly their own way of gathering information, it is a combination of the motions performed by undergraduates and faculty. More specifically, graduate students in the humanities have distinct information seeking behavior.

According to Barrett (2005) in his article “The Information-Seeking Habits of Graduate Student Researchers in the Humanities,” the information-seeking behavior of these students is “often assumed to resemble those of either faculty members or undergraduates” (p. 324). This makes sense as graduate students have a larger knowledge base of resources available and perhaps had the opportunity in their upper-division coursework to make use of more sophisticated ways of doing research. Barrett mentions the stereotype of the humanities student as being resistant to technology—this study proved otherwise. Barrett stated, nearly every student who volunteered for the study “strongly disagreed with the stereotype” (p. 326). In addition, the study found that graduates made use of “online journals, OPACs, discipline-specific CD-ROMs, Internet search engines, and websites” (p. 326) as well as traditional resources. Students preferred primary sources, which are not necessarily going to be located online or in a database. Graduate students were also found to do what Barrett called citation chasing. Barrett stated, “Most participants described their information-seeking behavior as an idiosyncratic process of constant reading, digging, searching, and following leads” (p. 327). Skimming the bibliography and index for the desired information yielded positive results, as did browsing a particular section of shelves.

Another article by George et al. (2006) gave some more insight into the information-seeking pattern of graduate students. George et al. broke down the disciplines into their respective schools and
focused on four questions during their study. They found that ninety percent of humanities graduate students used online sources as a primary method of doing research. Of that percentage, sixty percent used citation chaining from searches. The academic library “remains a key element” even though Internet sources are prevalent (p. 15). Ninety-five percent of humanities graduate students made use of books and eighty percent used print journals rather than online journals. The authors concluded that the information seeking behavior of graduate students “is both random and organized” (p. 20). They also stated that the “random motions of the information seeking are in effect in the planning stage, when choosing an area of focus, developing a search stratagem or general browsing for background information or a general idea of their field of research. The organized information seeking behavior includes regular planning sessions with an advisor, planned search strategies and use of citation chaining” (p. 20).

While online sources are used by graduates, skimming through physical books is still a popular way of information seeking. Graduate information seeking is a unique combination of undergraduate and faculty practices and as such these students have a unique research technique. The attached annotated bibliography concentrates mostly on primary print resources that have extensive bibliographical sections and notes, as well as filmographies. In addition, it concentrates primarily on aspects of horror film which can be beneficial to humanities graduate students. Information seeking behavior in the graduate studies is a unique area.

References


Annotated Bibliography

5 Actors in Horror Films


The author’s purpose for this book was to provide the layman, as well as researcher, with a comprehensive guide on Agnes Moorehead. Kear separates the book into eight sections pertaining to Moorhead’s life and work, provides an annotated bibliography, appendix, index, and some stunning black and white photographs. In addition, the film section has extensive annotations and reviews from older publications. The writing style is clear and concise. Biographical information in the horror genre is typically a male dominated field, which makes this book, about a female, somewhat of a rarity. While she did not primarily perform in horror, the films and radio plays she
had acted in were memorable.


Meikle wrote screenplays to horror films and in the forward accounts his first encounter with Price. The book is homage to the late Vincent Price. Meikle’s recollections of Price in the forward are illustrations of the man behind some of the most horrifying characters in film. The title plays off of the old time radio show, which Price narrated and starred in, called “The Price of Fear.” Meikle used stage production terms instead of chapter headings, such as “Overture,” “Intermission,” “Finale.” “Encore,” and acts. A notable addition to the text is the afterword penned by Roger Corman, another influential person in the field. The book provides biographical information and a filmography. The appendix, titled “Cast and Crew,” gives a full list of Price’s films, with complete cast and credits listings and movie posters. Flipping through the book, it is difficult to find a page that doesn’t hold a photograph, movie still, or film poster. There are quotes included on many pages from actors who had the opportunity and pleasure of working with this legend.


When one reads the introduction to this book, it is clear Mank has a huge respect for the actors he writes about. This is the second edition of the book, the first being published in 1990. Some of the title chapters are not incredibly descriptive in regard to what they cover, but they are clever (for example, Chapter 4’s “The Strangest Passion” and Chapter 37, “The Film that Never Was”). There are others that are more descriptive, however. For instance, Chapter 33’s “Unholy Three—Bedlam, Genius at Work, and, House of Dracula” and Chapter 11’s “Karloff the Uncanny in The Mummy.” Mank includes three appendices, one for each actor’s career and one of the films they starred in jointly. There are chapter notes, a bibliography, and an easily searchable index. Each chapter includes various photographs, as well as a full color insert with movie poster images.


Nollen’s book is another valuable resource in regard to a legend of the horror genre. Karloff not only starred in film, but also performed on old time radio shows like *Creeps by Night* and television shows such as *Beyond the Veil*. He also wrote several published pieces and performed on stage. Nollen takes note of these, hence making this resource different from Mank’s book. Each chapter deals with a different film or era in Karloff’s life. Another notable fact is that science fiction author and legend Ray Bradbury penned the forward. Nollen included seven appendices that list the history of Karloff’s professional career. There are chapter notes, a bibliography, and a well-organized index. Something noticeable right away in this annotated bibliography is that MacFarland Publishing, Inc. is the company that has published numerous volumes in the horror genre. Nollen’s book is a great source of research for film historians, literature masters, or any number of humanities masters, and also for the interested reader.


Peter Lorre is a horror genre legend. His voice has spawned many imitators, whether it is a serious example like in one of O. Arch Oboler’s creepy radio plays or satirical caricature as in at least one
episode of Looney Tunes. Youngkin has an extensive knowledge of Lorre and has worked on several books about the actor as well as working on A&E’s Biography about Lorre. Youngkin takes a look at his career from the point of view that Lorre was a reluctant villain. There were times in his career when he wanted to shrug off the guise of the villain, but Hollywood allegedly typecast him. Interviews with peers, directors, and other resources are what Youngkin pulled from in order to create this biography. The chapter titles are eye-catching. Lorre dealt with drug addiction, which seems to be the focus of Chapter 2, “M is for Morphine,” and Chapter 9’s title, “Elephant Droppings,” makes one wonder exactly what is going on between those pages. Youngkin includes an epilogue, “Mimesis,” which lists Lorre’s “Credits and Broadcast Appearances” which are listed per section chronologically. He was in numerous old time radio programs, including Suspense and The Philip Morris Playhouse. He has a chapter notes section, as well as an extensive bibliography and well organized index.

5 Essay Collections Deriving Information from the Horror Genre


According to the editors, the purpose of this book is to examine the ways in which Hitchcock has influenced numerous aspects of film. At the time of publishing, it marked one hundred years since Hitchcock was born, 1899. The authors felt it was an appropriate time to examine the lasting fascination with the famous director. Allen and Ishii-Gonzalès section the book into four parts, “The Figure of the Author,” “Hitchcock’s Aesthetics,” “Sexuality/Romance,” and “Culture, Politics, Ideology.” They include a list of contributors, which is quite lengthy, and all of which are scholars at various universities, including the editors. Allen is an associate professor at New York University in cinema studies and Ishii-Gonzalès, at the time of publication, was a “doctoral candidate in the Dept. of Cinema Studies” at the same university that Allen was affiliated with (p. xx). At the end of each essay is a bibliography under the notes section. There is also a complete bibliography just before the index at the back of the book. This would make a very valuable resource to multiple fields in the graduate humanities programs.


Benshoff’s book is a part of the Inside Popular Film series. He holds a doctorate in film studies from University of Southern California and teaches in L.A. This volume concentrates on the interesting analogy that Benshoff states as being the “monster is to ‘normality’ as homosexual is to heterosexual” (p. 2). His introduction boils down to looking at culture and society norms in regard to homosexuality and how they can be applied to the horror genre, something that Benshoff does well and convincingly. He starts with the 1930s films and works his way up to the early 1990s. This expanse of time provides much information for Benshoff’s book, most of which are primary sources, something valuable to humanities graduate students. Each chapter includes a notes section at the end, and there is a bibliography and index at the end of the book. Various black and white photographs, including publicity stills, movie posters, and behind the scenes stills, are included with captions that consider why it is a homoerotic or homosexuality charged illustration. This could be a great resource for gender studies, film studies, historical studies, and art studies material reference,
among others.


The reason that Cowan wrote this book is highly intriguing. He had a desire to “understand my own fears as much as I do those of other people” (p. ix). He discusses the fact that horror films with heavy doses of religious tones are the most frightening to him. Writing this book is a way of addressing his strong feelings of revulsion to these particular films. Cowan is affiliated with the University of Waterloo as an Associate Professor of Religious Studies. The *Hellraiser* series is what spawned his interest in writing this book. Cowan covers more films than Barker’s *Hellraiser* series, but they do seem to take quite a bit of space in this volume. As one of the most popular modern horror films, *Hellraiser* has one of the most recognizable and intriguing villains Pinhead the Cenobite played by Doug Bradley. With a large amount of religious overtones, it belongs at the forefront. Cowan includes a filmography of films which have religious elements in them, each with the date and director listed as well. He also includes a bibliography and searchable index. There are not too many books that have looked at religious aspects of the horror film. Cowan’s *Sacred Terror: Religion and Horror on the Silver Screen* would be valuable for humanities graduate students in any capacity.


One thing that most horror movie fans can agree on is that the genre isn’t what it used to be. Current horror films rely on worn out, recycled remakes, or rewrites that leave the horror connoisseur with a bad taste in their mouths. Hantke, an Associate Professor of English at Sogagn University, has collected essays from other member of academia, authors, directors, and others for this volume of work. It is divided into three sections: Bloody America: Critical Reassessment of the Trans/national and of Graphic Violence; The Usual Suspects: Trends and Transformations in the Subgenres of American Horror Film; and Look Back in Horror: Managing the Canon of American Horror Film. As mentioned earlier, the long list of contributors is impressive. Included at the end of each essay is a section of notes and a bibliography, as well as an index at the end of the book.


One question seems to crop up time and time again about the really bad horror movies. Why, if they are so horrible, so campy, do audiences and horror fans eat them up? Weaver looks at thirty-one horror movies made by Monogram, PRC, and Republic from 1940 to 1946 to try and find the answer. Weaver seems to struggle with why these films are so popular when he feels they are stinkers. He uses the terms “abysmal,” “notoriously bad,” and “unfortunate” several times in his introduction. There seems to be an obvious bias against these films, which some horror fans also exhibit. The book is chronologically ordered and each section contains photographs from the films and movie posters. Weaver includes four appendices, one for music in the films, filmographies of some of the actors in said films, a briefly annotated list of films that were not included in the book, and one he titles “The Experts Rank Lugosi’s Monogram Films” (p. 356). Not everyone who views horror can be expected to like or understand why a particular film can belong in a horror fan’s collection. The viewpoint from someone who struggles with the question is beneficial. It could even make the researcher or fan question why he or she enjoys them, too. Perhaps this could be a good resource for the philosophy, film studies, and art history graduate students. It could help them answer the question “why is bad
art so good?”

5 Influential Directors or Production Companies in the Horror Genre


David Cronenberg is a very influential figure in the horror genre. This revised edition of Beard’s book analyzes fifteen of Cronenberg’s works with each chapter looking at one film each. The author is a Professor in Film and Media Studies at University of Alberta. Beard states of Cronenbergs films that, “Technology, the body, subjectivity” and “the realm of gender and sexuality” (p. vii) are areas that deserve some analysis. There are numerous fields of study that have taken a look at this director’s work. Rather than corner him in the category of postmodernist artist Beard feels he is, for lack of better terms, a modernist trapped by postmodernist theories and views. Beard also states that he has a certain respect for Cronenberg, so there is a bias in the director’s favor.


This is the second edition of this book, the first being published in 1991. Ed Wood, Jr. struggled with gender, alcohol, and other issues perceivably through his films. He was also not the most honest dealing director in the field either. In his introduction, Grey briefly illustrates his own struggles with getting Wood’s acquaintances to open up about the troubled director. He even states that those who did know him flat out denied it. Grey took pieces of interviews and created and organized the chapters from these interviews. He had “chosen not to eliminate an individual’s memory even if it contradicts another’s account” (p. 7). Having conflicting accounts of people who knew him is a very valuable research tool. One gets multiple views on one man. Some love him; some hate him with a passion. There are numerous black and white photographs of film images, candid life shots, and movie posters. For anyone wanting to research biographical incidents of a particular director’s strange life, this is a great resource.


Hammer Films was one of the most important and influential film production companies in the business and Kinsey’s book is an important resource to add to horror reference. Kinsey focuses on “the Golden Era” of Hammer Films and “places a greater emphasis on the talented team that made these films the cult classics that they are today” (p. 6). This book is different from many other sources as it not only includes the actors and films but the people who made the movie behind the scenes. This could be useful to many different areas of study; business, history, film studies, and more. The author has written a total of four books on Hammer Films, so he can be considered an authority on the company and the films. The book is highly organized in its format. It begins with a chapter on the “early years” of the studio, then gets into the meat of the matter with the move to Bray and looks at selected films from 1956 to 1966. Each section includes numerous photographs and a filmography. There is a section titled “Post Mortem” that lists the films to come after the Bray Studio era. The appendix includes floor plans from the beginning to the end of the life of Bray. There are numerous references the author used and they are listed by chapter. Instead of swimming
through a long list of citations hoping to get the one desired from a certain chapter, the author has separated them for the researcher.


This book is part of Twayne’s Filmmaker Series. Other directors in this series include David Lynch, Peter Weir, and Roman Polanski, just to name a few. Some of the most recognizable films that were destined to become cult classics were the films based on Poe’s short stories. However, that is only one chapter covered in Morris’ book. The term Morris applies most often to Corman is that of “auteurist director” (p. vii). This makes sense because he took charge of the script and direction so aggressively that his films could be considered purely his own creation. The book gives a brief biography and analyses on Corman’s films. Included, are good quality black and white photographs, one of which is a great photograph of Corman just opposite the title page. Morris includes a reference and notes section, a short bibliography, a filmography, and an index.


This is the second edition of this book, the first being published in 1976. Among other works, the author also penned The Dark Side of Genius: The Life of Alfred Hitchcock, so it is clear that Spoto has an interest in Hitchcock biographically, historically, and is an expert on Hitchcock. While he was working on the first edition, he sent several chapters to Hitchcock to take a look at and ended up hearing from the author personally, having the opportunity to interview him. Spoto also taught classes on Hitchcock’s films at the New School for Social Research located in New York. The book chapters cover hitchcock’s silent films, and then thirty-seven films are covered in chapters devoted to one film each. There is a unique storyboard from the director’s last film, Family Plot. In addition to various stills and images from Hitchcock’s films, Spoto includes “A Hitchcock Album” that contains candid and publicity shots. There is a detailed filmography that contains information on the cast and crew. Spoto includes a short bibliography and an index. He specifically notes that the “Italicized page numbers refer to illustrations” (p. 463).

5 General Reference Resources for Horror Films


Fangoria Magazine was formed originally in 1978 under the title Fantastica, but after some legal troubles over the title, they settled on Fangoria Magazine in light of some successful articles on the horror genre. Since then the focus has been on different mediums of the horror genre: video games, comic books, fiction, interviews, and articles on the films themselves. The website has many features that members, who can join free of charge, can peruse. The pages are divided into “Home/News,” “Movies/TV,” reviews, blogs, a community section, the register option (with the ominous phrase, “Join Us,” just underneath), and the store link. As the cursor hovers over each section, there are subsections under each main link. Also, a link labeled, “Fangoria: Fango family,” provides links to other publications produced by Fangoria. Incidentally, the company has also published single volumes of interviews and essays concerning different subjects.

Joshi, S. T. (2007). Icons of horror and the supernatural: An encyclopedia of our worst nightmares,

These volumes go through twenty-four of the iconic creatures, monsters, and ethereal villains that wander through the horror genre. Each entry contains its own bibliography, so it is a haven for citation hunters. There are multiple contributors, including the electronic resources and reference librarian from Nicholls State University, a humanities bibliographer from Homer Babbidge Library, and more. The multiple contributors, each with either an interest or a professional career in the horror genre, makes the books even more authoritative. The entries, as any good encyclopedia offers, are in alphabetical order. The first volume goes from “The Alien” to “The Mummy” and continues in the second book at “The Psychic”, finishing off with “The Zombie.” It includes concepts of horror like “The Curse” and “The Small-Town Horror,” and also includes the entirety of “The Cthulhu Mythos.” Joshi includes a “Notes on Contributors” in which he gives a brief explanation of the contributors. He also includes photographs, movie posters, and illustrations in each entry.


Reading the introduction to this book yields much information. The most valuable piece is that Mank had the opportunity to interview some of the actresses he included in this text. Not in alphabetical order, it is difficult to say just how the entries are ordered. Despite that, it is a well-done book. In the introduction, Mank splits the feminine roles into “Monsters,” “Femme Fatales,” and “Misfits.” Each entry for the actresses includes a black and white photograph of the actress. The sections include interviews, excerpts, candid photographs, and a filmography. Mank includes an appendix titled, “Outstanding Performances,” which is a poll that asked authors, directors, and others in the field, “What were the outstanding female performances of 1930s Hollywood?” He also includes a table of contents and index. Many of the photographs include the legendary actors Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, as well as some of Mank with the women he interviewed. In addition, Mank wrote Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff: The Expanded Story of a Haunting Collaboration, which is included earlier in this bibliography.


This book is the 25th in the Historical Dictionaries of Literature and the Arts published by The Scarecrow Press. Each book in the series has a different author. Hutchings holds a B.A. in Film and Literature from Warwick University and obtained his Ph.D. from the University of East Anglia. British horror was the focus of his doctoral dissertation and he has continued his research and passion for the genre. Having published numerous essays and contributed to reference books, he is an authority on the British realm of horror. Hutchings includes a chronology that “ranges from its origins through the present day” (p. vii), an introduction, and the dictionary itself. The dictionary contains actors, directors, films, and more. As with any good dictionary, it arranges everything but the chronology in alphabetical order. Entries are short and concise. If an entry coincides with another, the term is bolded for ease of search. There is also a rather large bibliography at the back of the book.

As the title suggests, this book consists of lists of horror that covers many areas of the genre. Film, literature, music, and trivia are only a smattering of what this book has to offer. Since it was published in 2008, it has very recent information. Coauthor, Amy Wallace, has authored fifteen books, one of them being another Book of Lists written with her father and brother. Del Howison owns a horror themed book and gift shop and has authored several articles for horror themed publications. An interesting aspect of the book, according to the writer of the introduction, Gahan Wilson, is that the “list format” could be used as “a teaching device, which will wonderfully, and sometimes downright awesomely, will open their eyes...to aspects of horror rarely considered and new ways of looking at it, which will refresh and delight and downright surprise its most sophisticated fans” (p. xvi). The book is directed toward new fans of the horror genre, as well as the aficionado. The contributors of the lists are people involved in some aspect of the genre. The book is split into sections for film, literature, music, “miscellany” (p. 324), and a small section submitted by fans of the genre. There are a few sections that have illustrations of vintage horror comic books and movie posters.

Lizzy Walker works at the Boise State Albertsons Library. She is currently working in her MLIS with the SWIM cohort through University of North Texas. When she is not working on her studies, she enjoys gaming and spending time with her incredibly supportive husband, Arthur.

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