

fashion, or music enterprises is far from ‘seamless’. What television offers the ‘divergent convergence culture’ (p. 90) of heterogeneous media and industries is a possible, though never fully controlled, ‘overflow’ of intimacy. Bratich and Kavka both claim that the connection between different media is based on affective procedures that harness divergence as well as convergence.

Not all of the contributions to the anthologies reviewed here are as clear and convincing in their analysis as the ones by Bratich and Kavka. Throughout the different chapters, the questioning of established categories seems to be easier than the development of new categories (which should not come as a surprise). This is particularly true of methodologies which convincingly show how cross-media dynamics develop, how some are established, and how others are rejected. Overall, these volumes prove that the potential to re-think established categories lies in the transitional nature of television, also allowing one to re-think what a medium might be in a cross-media context. Television research in the form represented in these volumes has a vital role to play in on-going discussions about how to theorise and analyse the cross-media dynamics which characterise the current conjuncture.

Note

1. An in-depth reflection on the term ‘convergence’ and its relevance for the discipline of cultural studies can be found in the special issue of the journal *Cultural Studies* (Vol 25, 2011) under the title ‘Rethinking Convergence/Culture’.

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European nightmares

Horror cinema in Europe since 1945

Francesco Di Chiara

Patricia Allmer, Emily Brick, and David Huxley’s edited collection *European Nightmares: Horror Cinema in Europe Since 1945* (New York-Chichester: Columbia University Press/Wallflower Press, 2012) is a book with roots that go back to a con-

ference organised by the editors at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2006.¹ As Allmer, Brick, and Huxley state in their introduction, horror films produced in Europe during the past decade have proven to be very popular and successful at the box office, while at the same time the horror genre has become a flourishing field of investigation.² Although a number of books have been published about the Hollywood horror film or about specific national cinemas, a comprehensive analysis of European horror cinema is still lacking. This is the gap that this book intends to fill.

In 2004, another edited collection on European horror was published by Wallflower Press: Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik's *Alternative Europe: Eurotrash and Exploitation Cinema Since 1945*. However, Mathijs and Mendik's book relies on a notion of the European horror film as exploitation and/or underground cinema. This is a definition that Allmer, Brick, and Huxley intend to challenge. According to Peter Hutchings, whose essay 'Resident Evil? The Limits of European Horror: *Resident Evil* vs. *Suspiria*' opens their collection, the 'Eurohorror' label emerged within the context of UK horror fandom in the wake of the notorious 1984 Video Recordings Act that heavily censored, or even banned, the home video circulation of a large number of 'nasty' European horror productions. At the time, being a fan of European horror meant taking some sort of a counter-cultural stance. This attitude has remained, even though many of the specifics have changed in relation to European horror production and consumption. One of the goals of *European Nightmares* is to oppose to the 'old' Eurohorror label with a more open and ductile concept that takes into account European-Hollywood co-productions, such as the *Resident Evil* or *Underworld* series (pp. 13-23). Thus, in the editors' words, this collection aims at exploring the constantly evolving 'European aesthetics' of the horror film, which are defined externally by an opposition to Hollywood horror film production and internally by religious and cultural differences among European nations, as well as by different censorship laws across Europe.

European Nightmares can be split into two parts: the former is devoted to the reception of the European horror film while the latter, containing the bulk of the essays, is divided into six chapters, each focusing on a single European nation (or region). The first part is theoretical, aiming to define the concept of European horror on the grounds of its reception. In fact, as the aforementioned Hutchings essay points out, European horror films have never been marketed as such. On the contrary, this particular generic identity was shaped by the audience of those films in a perspective that draws its premises from Rick Altman's work on film genres.³

The result of this fan discourse is a European horror film canon that usually includes films that are 'extreme' from a visual standpoint (in terms of graphic violence, or stylistic features) as well as objects that seem to be in-between the art film and exploitation cinema, and as such are often either overlooked

or explicitly rejected by the critical establishment. The subsequent sections in the book follow this framework. Case studies, grouped in the British, French, Spanish, Italian, Northern European, and Eastern European areas, range from Italian zombie films to the works of Michael Haneke; from Spanish rip-offs of *The Exorcist* to the Hungarian György Pálfi's *Taxidermia* (2006), a film that appears to be more closely linked to Czech director Jan Švankmajer's surreal sensitivity than to straightforward horror.

In this respect, one of the main problems with this book is a certain lack of consistency between how the European horror film is defined by the first essay in the volume, and how the subsequent contributions shape this same object of investigation. On the one hand, *European Nightmares* intends to challenge the old European horror canon as it was conceived by 1980s fandom, by taking into account the recent changes in European horror production, exhibition, and consumption; on the other hand, the selection of essays reverses the book's course into old Eurohorror territory. In fact, as noted before, Hutchings defies the Eurohorror label in a very provocative way. He contrasts a well-established European generic canon (composed mostly of low-budget exploitation films) with an American-Japanese blockbuster franchise like *Resident Evil*, mainly because the films in this series are French minority stake co-productions shot in Germany and helmed by a British director. By the means of this provocative choice, Hutchings is able to stress how the contemporary European horror film is transnational in nature, aiming at mainstream distribution and often relying on source material that comes from the new media environment.⁴

However, most of the essays chosen by Allmer, Brick, and Huxley somehow contradict this stance by dealing with lowbrow 'extreme' cinema from the 1970s-1980s, or with highbrow directors that are supposedly aiming to shock their audiences. Therefore, most of the featured case studies are representative of the European horror film as a counter-cultural subversion of the mainstream Hollywood values of morality and taste. It then becomes a refreshing choice, and more consistent with the overall approach of the collection, to include contributions that are akin to the broader category proposed by Hutchings, such as an analysis of the science-fiction classic *Village of the Damned* (1960) by Wolf Rilla, or a consideration of the early works of Spanish director Alejandro Amenábar. Moreover, it is worth noting how Brick, by using the category of the 'rape-revenge film' in her essay '*Baise-Moi* and the French Rape-Revenge Films', connects the sensational low-budget film *Baise-moi* (2000) by Virginie Despentes to this sub-genre, urging one to explore the link between violence in the French *banlieue* and other French horror films like *Inside/À l'intérieur* (2007) by Alexander Bustillo or *Frontière(s)* (2007) by Xavier Gens (pp. 93-102).

As is the case with European cinema in general, most of the work on the European horror film tends to focus on Western and Central Europe, leaving Eastern European countries out of the scope of investigation. This is hardly surprising, given that Eastern European cinemas were state-driven industries, in countries with socialist regimes that were not keen on supporting horror film production. Nonetheless, during the 2000s, Eastern Europe has acquired a prominent place in the Western horror film imagination. As Christina Stojanova points out in her essay 'A Gaze from Hell: Eastern European Cinema Revisited', after the fall of the Iron Curtain and after the Yugoslav wars of secession, the Western gaze began constructing Eastern Europe as 'the site of the uncanny Other' (p. 228). This is apparent in Hollywood productions such as *Hostel* (2005) by Eli Roth, and also in various European films such as *The Abandoned* (2006) by Nacho Cerdà, *Them/Us* (2006) by Xavier Palud, *Severance* (2006) by Christopher Smith, or *Caged/Captifs* (2010) by Yann Gozlan – some of which are co-productions between Western and Eastern European countries.

It is all the more interesting that the book includes a section on horror films produced by Eastern European countries in order to explore how, in those nations, the horror genre is used to relate to major political shifts and to the Western imaginary construction of the East. In addition to focusing on Eastern Europe, the same section provides an overview on the emerging Turkish horror film. In these films, the Catholic and Orthodox themes that are a tradition in Western horror cinema are replaced by references to the local culture (mostly to Islam), even though less 'essentialist' approaches are also being experimented with. The essay 'Horror Films in Turkish Cinema: To Use or Not to Use Local Cultural Motifs, That is Not the Question' by Kaya Özkalacar is an interesting evocation of this trend (p. 258).

Although the book does a good job of representing most of the European nations and/or regions involved in horror film production, the fact that the sections are conceived as completely separate from one another can be misleading. In fact, the reader of *European Nightmares* may get the impression that European horror films are usually the product of the nation where they have been shot, as the essays seldom refer to the transnational features of the genre. However, as Tim Bergfelder pointed out in his chapter 'The Nation Vanishes: European Co-productions and Popular Genre Formula in the 1950s and 1960s', in the book *Cinema and Nation* (London-New York: Routledge, 2000) edited by Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie, since the 1960s, European genre films were generally made as co-productions between two or more countries (pp. 139-151). They shared a common cultural framework (derived from the late 19th century European popular literature of Karl May, Norbert Jacques, and Edgar Wallace) and they were aimed at an international audience, given that they rarely performed well at the domestic box office. Perhaps

it is this cosmopolitanism that allows for a shared European identity among these national film industries. By highlighting the role of co-production and distribution across national borders, *European Nightmares* could have critiqued the general impression that European horror films are nothing more than the output of various mono-national film industries, thus helping to better shape the identity of the subject.

The theoretical methods deployed in the book range from 'psychoanalysis and Deleuzian film theory to reception theory and historical analysis' (p. 5). The essay 'New Labour, New Horrors: Genetic Mutation, Generic Hybridity and Gender Crisis in British Horror of the New Millennium' by Linnie Blake offers a compelling analysis of the gender crisis following the conservative rule over England during the 1980s and the 1990s, and the subsequent pursuit of new models of masculinity by Tony Blair's government and the British horror film after the turn of the century. However, in general, a focus on the European film industries' relationship with the genre and the larger society it exists in is perhaps missing. In fact, the 2000s have seen a major switch in European horror production, marking the shift from a marginal mode bound to be released in peripheral film circuits to a more mainstream distribution pattern that is able to reach the urban multiplexes. This is the case in Spain, where horror cinema has moved from small films to large box office successes, such as *El orfanato* (2007) by Juan Antonio Bayona and *REC* (2007) by Jaime Balaguerò and Paco Plaza (the Spanish-Mexican co-production *El laberinto del fauno/Pan's Labyrinth* [2006] by Guillermo Del Toro was a nominee for best foreign film at the Academy Awards). Similar examples can be found in France or Northern Europe.

A focus on film aesthetics runs the risk of narrowing the book's scope. This is particularly apparent in the editors' introductions to each section, where they provide the reader with some historical information before introducing the subsequent essays, generally limiting their remarks to an overview of notable horror films or directors. In particular, the editors tend to start from the 'original' horror film in each area, often drawing examples from early cinema, such as the work of George Méliès or German Expressionist films (even though they were made long before the concept of the horror genre entered general usage). Although the editors clearly state that they do not consider these to be 'horror film[s] *per se*', the choices may generate confusion in the reader.

European Nightmares challenges previous definitions of the Eurohorror category and tries to build a broader concept in its place. Many of the chapters are of remarkable quality and often work well both as specific case studies and as investigations of more general problems within this field. While there are flaws, ultimately, the book is an ambitious and important contribution to the study of European horror films.

Notes

1. *European Nightmares. An International Conference on European Horror Cinema*, MIRIAD and Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, 1-2 June 2006. Although the conference is not mentioned anywhere in the book, the core of the collection comes from the speakers' presentations. With respect to the conference programme, the collection broadens its area of investigation to Northern and Eastern Europe.
2. See, for instance: Ken Gelder (ed.), *The Horror Reader* (London-New York: Routledge, 2000); Mark Jancovich (ed.), *Horror: The Film Reader* (London-New York: Routledge, 2002); Stephen Prince (ed.), *The Horror Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Steffen Hantke (ed.), *Horror Cinema: Creating and Marketing Fear* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004); Richard Bégin and Laurent Guido (eds), *L'horreur au cinéma* (Special Issue of *CINÉMAS*, Vol. 20, No. 2-3, Spring 2010).
3. Rick Altman. *Film/genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999).
4. In this respect, I think that the French-Canadian-Japanese co-production *Silent Hill* (Cristoph Gans, 2006) would have been a more fitting example.

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Cinema and experience

Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno

Malte Hagener

I first encountered the work of Miriam Hansen as a graduate student in the mid-1990s when her book *Babel and Babylon* was the talk of the (at that time still fairly modest) film studies town – even though it was sitting somewhat uneasily on the fence. In fact, it was this position beyond the canonical that made the book so attractive in the first place. It did not fit into the raging debate of that time between psychosemiotics and neo-formalism, nor did it offer the (often too schematic and naive) way out within the cultural studies paradigm of empowering the individual or sub-culturally constituted groups.

Building on the emerging field of early cinema studies, yet not falling into the trap of factographic fetishism, *Babel and Babylon* helped to make the ideas of the Frankfurt school productive for film studies by bridging the gap that much too often still divides history and theory. Ever since then, Hansen has worked on a