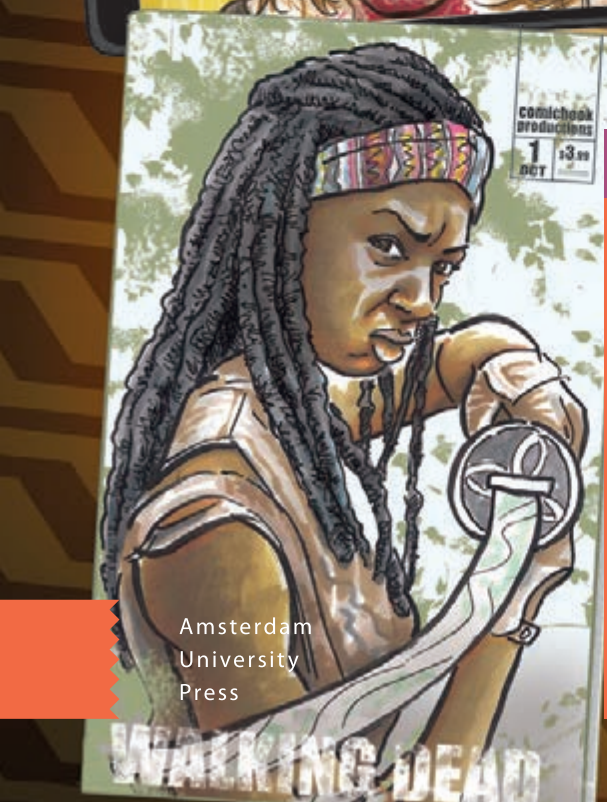
TRANSMEDIA



James Rendell

Transmedia Terrors in Post-TV Horror

Digital Distribution, Abject Spectrums and Participatory Cultures

Amsterdam University Press

Transmedia Terrors in Post-TV Horror

Transmedia: Participatory Culture and Media Convergence

The book series Transmedia: Participatory Culture and Media Convergence provides a platform for cutting-edge research in the field of media studies, with a strong focus on the impact of digitization, globalization, and fan culture. The series is dedicated to publishing the highest-quality monographs (and exceptional edited collections) on the developing social, cultural, and economic practices surrounding media convergence and audience participation. The term 'media convergence' relates to the complex ways in which the production, distribution, and consumption of contemporary media are affected by digitization, while 'participatory culture' refers to the changing relationship between media producers and their audiences. Both developments have required substantial (and still ongoing) redefinitions of existing media platforms, as the rapid interactions between technological developments and socio-cultural practices continue to pose challenges as well as offer new opportunities for media scholars from a variety of academic disciplines.

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For Gina – easily scared, always brave –
and River – 'I'll eat you up, I love you so'

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Introduction – TV Horror: What a Time to Be Alive… and Undead

Abstract
This chapter considers the often-overlooked longstanding connections between horror and television, before reading the genre's graphic shift as emblematic of the new/current golden age of TV horror. Located within a post-TV paradigm, the chapter considers television's portalization facilitated by internet technologies that alter the production, distribution, curation, and consumption of horror TV. A pertinent feature of post-television, the chapter examines the complexity of transmedia: fostering hyperdiegetic depth and commercial opportunities for industry players, and outlets for fan participatory practices. Finally, the chapter develops the abject spectrum model, broadening audiences' affective engagement with horror beyond being scared. It also considers audiences' ideological deconstructing and aesthetical evaluation of horror. The chapter ends by providing an overview of the book.

Keywords: horror, post-TV, portals, transmedia, audiences, abject spectrums

As we move into the third decade of the twenty-first century, far from dwelling in niche shadows or underground catacombs, horror television is being feasted upon by hordes of ravenous viewers as it takes centre stage on many TV outlets. *Stranger Things*' (Netflix 2016–) inaugural season saw it rank among the top three series on Netflix (Holloway, 2016), while season two was the most streamed show in the world before season three, at the time, shattered the record for most viewed series or film in the platform's history (Katz, 2018; Mumford, 2019). In 2022 season four then became the most viewed English-language series on Netflix and the second series after the South Korean dystopian horror hit *Squid Game* (Netflix 2021) to total over one billion hours of audience viewing (Hailu, 2022). Other genre fare

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has also proven extremely popular. Season five of *Black Mirror* (Channel 4 2011–2014/Netflix 2016–2019) was the most consumed text on Netflix in the UK (James R, 2019), *American Horror Story*'s (FX 2011–) third season première was the second most viewed FX episode of all time with 5.54 million viewers (O'Connell, 2014), while *The Walking Dead*'s (AMC 2010–2022) 'debut in 2010 [...] was the most-watched premiere in AMC history. Its premiere in the fourth season was the most-watched cable programme in history with 16.11 million people tuning in, besting even the *Breaking Bad* finale' (Hogan, 2014). Such impressive viewing figures surpass the current most popular drama series in the US, *NCIS* (CBS 2003–) (Stoll, 2021a, 2021b).

It appears, according to Stacey Abbott, we find ourselves in the midst of 'a new Golden Age of TV horror' (2018a, p. 120). Abbott writes, '[t]his golden age has been fueled in part by the proliferation of cable and pay-per-view channels and streaming services, creating a progressively competitive landscape' (ibid.). As 'edgy' drama that can attract the much-sought-after 18–34 audience demographic, '[t]his increasingly competitive and lucrative market has resulted in the gradual relaxation of censorship restrictions across all media outlets and types of programming' (ibid.). This has fostered a creative freedom, resulting in horror television becoming progressively more violent, graphic, and gruesome akin to cinema. Abbott is not alone in her declaration. *Den of Geek* writer Ron Hogan asserts, '[t]elevision has entered what may be the true golden age of small-screen horror. With the massive proliferation of broadcast channels (five networks up from three in 1984), cable channels (in the hundreds), and internet TV networks like Netflix and Amazon Prime, this is a glorious time to be a horror fan' (2014). Similar sentiments are offered in Jacob Trussell's article 'We're In A Golden Age of Horror Television' (2018), Sarah Hughes' piece 'A Macabre Makeover: This Is a Golden Age for Horror on the Small Screen' (2012), and Sesali Bowen exclaiming 'Horror Fans Are Having The Best TV Season Ever' (2018). For Chris Tilly (2018) and Jeff Ewing (2018), TV plays an equal role to cinema in the genre's screen media renaissance in general. For others, television itself is enjoying a (second) golden age at the turn of the century, of which horror is central in elevating the medium (McGrath, 2014; Struthers, 2015; Clarke, 2016; Shackleton, 2017).

This is not to say television previously avoided the macabre and monstrous. Quite the opposite, 'horror and television are longstanding bedfellows, yet this relationship shapeshifts with the ebb and flow of textual, cultural, industrial, technological, and commercial changes' (Rendell, forthcoming). In the UK, as early as 1936 Bransby Williams played Scrooge (BBC) in Charles Dickens' ghost story *A Christmas Carol* (1843). In 1938 the BBC produced a

version of *The Monkey's Paw* (Jacob, 1902). Algernon Blackwood presented his own horror tales in *A Ghost Story* (BBC 1947); Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) was adapted in the UK (BBC 1947) and US (NBC 1948, 1950; WOR-TV 1952), notably after Alfred Hitchcock's (1940) cinematic iteration; and *The Edgar Allan Poe Centenary* (BBC 1949) saw three of the author's stories retold on the small screen. These illustrations of fledgling horror television highlight several interrelated points still important today which are explored within the pages of this book: firstly, horror has been used to develop brand identity; in this case, BBC's Reithian ethos to inform, educate, and entertain. Secondly, far from lowly, the genre is bestowed with cultural cachet particularly when adapting from legacy media such as literature and theatre. Thus, the genre can serve 'quality' TV production and elevate television as a medium. Thirdly, since TV's commercial inception, the genre has been pivotal to technological advancement and artistic experimentation often out of necessity due to budget limitations (Wheatley, 2006; Abbott, 2013). Fourthly, rather than a nascent trend, TV has long had a dialogic relationship with cinema (Jancovich, 2018).

Furthermore, ITV was introduced to British screens in 1955. The BBC's competitor focused on the popular, aggregating single teleplays into anthology series like *Mystery and Imagination* (ITV 1966–70), whose adaptations included *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Poe, 1839), *Carmilla* (Le Fanu, 1872), *Dracula* (Stoker, 1897), and *Frankenstein* (Shelley, 1818). The latter two episodes, alongside 'The Curse of the Mummy', also tapped into iconic monsters of the 1930s–1940s Universal Film horror cycle. This demonstrates again how horror serves channels' brand identities, but more specifically supporting brand distinction as market competition began to increase, albeit in a highly limited fashion, as channels sought to distinguish themselves from each other via their output. These points have been amplified in an ever-increasing mediascape.

These examples also show how British's TV's treatment of horror has predominantly employed the Gothic. Helen Wheatley argues that 'television is the ideal medium for the Gothic […] [since] Gothic television is understood as a domestic form of the genre which is deeply concerned with the domestic' (2006, p. 1). Tales of supernatural mystery intertwine with the melodrama of human relationships, affairs, double-crossings, wrongdoings, and downfalls. The TV Gothic offers an intimate mode of horror both in terms of the home and domestic spaces as locations of threat and anxiety (ibid., p. 23), and the technological language of close-up camera shots that stress the idiosyncratic emotional turmoil and personal crisis befallen on characters (ibid., pp. 114–115).

Yet such subject matter and imagery was negotiated against the familial connotations of television *as a* domestic medium. Consequently, Gothic TV's horror has predominantly sought 'to create *atmosphere*, to audio-visually evoke the supernatural in mode and feeling rather than clearly visualise the genre's associated ghosts or monsters, and therefore [...] develop[ed] a restrained, suggestive aesthetic' (ibid., p. 36). Similarly, when corporeal destruction has taken place on TV horror the verisimilitude of gore is commonly displaced by substitution, where violence takes place off-screen; blood is recoloured or replaced with different coloured fluids; or bodily damage being short, sharp, but sanitized (Hills and Williams, 2005, p. 207; Johnson, 2005, p. 104). This renders TV horror 'safe' while often stressing a text's other generic qualities (Hills, 2010a, pp. 116–118). Indeed, merged with its sister genres science fiction and fantasy under the umbrella term telefantasy (Johnson, 2005), again makes the genre more palatable for domestic viewership where horror is 'disguised' in scheduling and marketing (Jowett and Abbott, 2013, p. 2). Labelling TV horror as Gothic television, telefantasy genre hybrids, or other forms of drama (postmodern, teen, etc.), Matt Hills explains, sidesteps negative connotations attached to 'horror-as-low-cultural-threat' (2005a, p. 120). Such genre exnomination, resultantly, 'render[s] horror relatively invisible' (ibid., p. 112).

This has led to television's denunciation as a lesser medium for displaying the aesthetic spectacle of horror compared to cinema (King, 1981, p. 253; Magistrale, 2003, pp. 182–183), with the genre viewed as incompatible with discourses surrounding the home (Branston and Stafford, 2003, p. 87; Gunter et al., 2003, pp. 1–2); critiques twenty-first century horror TV has since ostensibly quashed in two ways. First, '[i]ncreasing advances in technology and effects and more focus on TV aesthetics [...] [have enhanced] TV horror as spectacle' (Jowett and Abbott, 2013, p. 13), pronouncing 'itself as horror through the more graphic and nihilistic conventions of the genre' (Abbott, 2016, p. 97). Hence, while the Gothic, suggestive horror, and telefantasy remain mainstays of the twenty-first century TV landscape, we have seen progressively a move towards what Philip Brophy coins 'horrality',[1] a propensity for the horror genre to privilege 'the act of showing over the act of telling' (1986, p. 2), employed as a specific type of TV spectacle (Wheatley, 2016, p. 7). Second, whereas previously horror was downplayed as a genre marker and obscured via generic exnomination, '[m]ore recent television shows are specifically categorized and marketed as TV horror' (Calvert,

1 Brophy (1986) argues horrality is a distinct aesthetic mode of cinematic realism centring on the graphic bodily damage that comes to the fore in the US from the late 1970s inwards.

2014, p. 186), aimed at pre-sold, niche, genre fans and wider viewership (Wells-Lassagne, 2017, p. 23). Within the post-network era, hard-edged horror, referring 'to horror narratives that spotlight visceral, sanguinary, and grisly images' (Platts, 2020, p. 3), is no longer considered the market risk by industry players that it once was (ibid., p. 5). Likewise, no longer coded a 'para-site'; 'a cultural site that is assumed to be alien to the genre and a space where horror supposedly does not belong' (Hills, 2005a, p. 111), television has become an auspicious home for horror, sold and marketed to audiences as such. Andrew Lynch concurs, positing that since the 2010s, horror television, alongside its sister genres science fiction and fantasy, 'have served as prestigious flagship titles for a number of major US cable and subscription video on demand (SVOD) platforms' (2022, p. 2). Lynch adds this rise on these 'Quality Telefantasy' series are '[n]ot only […] beloved by die-hard fans and critics, [but] many of them have also become mainstream successes' (ibid.), a point explored within this book.

Following Mittell, the horror genre is a 'discursive cluster' of TV texts, 'with certain definitions, interpretations, and evaluations coming together at any given time to suggest a coherent and clear genre' (2004, p. 17). However, Mittell highlights that 'these clusters are contingent and transitory, shifting over time and taking on new definitions, meanings, and values within different contexts' (ibid.). Such textual clustering locates horror TV within the various 'historical and production context[s]' (Peirse, 2013, p. 3), and considers genealogical 'generic dominance', recognizing 'previous incarnations' (Mittell, 2004, p. 36). Building on the landmark works of Wheatley (2006), Jowett and Abbott (2013), and Belau and Jackson (2018), *Transmedia Terrors in Post-TV Horror* explores the growth and variety of horror television in the twenty-first century, attesting to Cherry's understanding of 'horror as an umbrella term encompassing several different sub-categories' (2009, p. 3) (see Chapter 1 and 2).

Equally, much like horror's nebula nature where subgenres arise as cycles (Hutchings, 2004, pp. 15–16), '[h]orror fans are far from a specific demographic, but there is a broad spectrum of people on whom [TV horror] shows can focus to find an audience' (Hogan, 2014). As branded goods that support the identity of channels and services, the book analyses how TV horror targets genre fans and wider demographics as part of the genre's mainstreaming on television. What Machado describes as 'TV utterances', 'presented to spectators in an almost infinite variety […] targeting […] certain segment[s] of the TV audience' (quoted in Lima et al., 2015, p. 242), I argue as interpellative strategies seeking to attract various audiences by hailing them through a range of textual, marketing, technological, and

consumer touchpoints. Such an examination considers both the specific developments of twenty-first century TV horror whilst also shedding light on wider industry practices.

Dead Sets?: Post-TV

Concurrent to the expansion of horror across television, the medium's ontology has gone under seismic shifts. Amanda D. Lotz explains that we find ourselves in a post-TV epoch where '[n]ew technological and industrial practices have introduced radical changes in technological aspects of television, its use, and its consequent cultural significance' (2014, p. 35). Most notably, distribution via over-the-top (OTT) internet protocols and subscription video on-demand (SVoD) sidestep broadcasting linearity (Arnold, 2016, p. 50), fostering disparate consumption patterns. Differentiating from legacy broadcast systems, Lotz coins the term 'portals' as the intermediary internet-distributed television services whose 'nonlinear access [...] [frees] them from the task of scheduling' (2017, p. 8). Rather, a portal's central function is 'curating a library of content based on the identity, vision, and strategy that drive its business model' (ibid.). While libraries of branded media have always been essential in developing and maintaining television channels' distinct identities (Johnson, 2012), post-TV's curational facilities tailor content in a more specific and customized manner based on individuals' viewing habits (Pardo, 2015). This allows services such as Netflix to target multiple groups via branding heteroglossia, appealing to different viewers as 'conglomerated niches' (Lotz, 2017, p. 26) for different reasons based off varied content within a library. Indeed, genre is one useful clustering device for grouping, and marketing to, audiences (Lima et al., 2015; Tompkins, 2014). This book examines how such heteroglossia as TV utterances interpellates conglomerate niches within horror television, where various textual features and devices hail genre fans and other demographics.

Moreover, as highlighted, portals' distribution strategies shift consumer habits, giving audiences flexibility in how, where, and when they watch television. On the one hand, SVoDs complicate orthodox 'windowing' strategies for the sequential extracting of economic value from televisual intellectual property (Doyle, 2016). On the other hand, this simultaneously adds symbolic layering to TV content, the portal it is housed on, TV as a medium, and viewers watching it. Ritualistic habits traditionally understood as cult where fans binge a series watched on home formats such as VHS or DVD have become more quotidian and encouraged by streaming

services releasing series in their entirety (Jenner, 2017). Consequently, the popularity of horror television blurs cult/mainstream distinctions not only in terms of content (Lynch, 2022), but also via modes of watching. This can be another way that a channel or service brands itself: by producing or curating watercooler 'bingeable' quality horror television (Matrix, 2014), which audiences will want to watch and discuss with others such as friends, family members, colleagues, or fellow fans (see Chapter 2 and 3). Yet this is not to conceptualize binge-viewing as a monolithic catch-all term; its widespread application has made it somewhat unwieldly (Turner, 2021). The book is careful to discern between industry enticing bingeing via textual qualities and distribution strategies, and audience-led practices that harness digital/internet technologies to consume TV horror according to customized preferences. Furthermore, to avoid overstating the ubiquity of bingeing television, the volume looks at distribution patterns and viewing habits other than bingeing to provide a more precise and varied account of post-TV ecosystems.

Catherine Johnson (2019) explains that from the early 2010s the increased prevalence of internet technologies to deliver and consume television across an array of media devices – including internet-connected televisions and other hardware – contests normative definitions of television as a medium. TV's technological fragmentation has resulted in the service emerging 'as the central site that mediates our experience of watching television' (ibid., p. 35), acting as the primary entry point irrespective of the technology used. For Johnson, 'the "service" is at the centre of the definition of online TV' (ibid.). This allows online TV to differ from other forms of internet-connected media, such as live music streams (Rendell, 2020), since these services incorporate central features of broadcast, cable/satellite, and digital television. Thus, while positioning themselves as something other than television (Jenner, 2016, p. 263), online television constructs viewer experiences akin to traditional TV broadcast, gatekeeping highly regulated 'editorially selected content', and operating within closed contributory systems (Johnson, 2019, pp. 35–39). For instance, despite not being constrained by broadcast series blocks or schedule flows in the same way legacy television is, we still find online TV content predominantly adhering to conventional temporal units – approximately 30 minute or one-hour episodes (ibid., p. 86). Relatedly, longform post-TV serials still utilize end of episode cliffhangers to encourage audiences to return to the series (Lima et al., 2015, p. 252). As Hendy notes, technological advancements can, in fact, strengthen rather than enfeeble legacy television, whereby 'new forms of social media sometimes serve old media rather than replace them' (2013, p. 109).

As such, Van Esler (2016) and Johnson (2019, pp. 16–17) express wariness towards the post-TV paradigm since online services still provide access to linear television, thus problematizing non-linear/linear binaries asserted by Lotz and others. Certainly, this volume does not ring the death knell of television as others have done (Hardenbergh, 2010; Christian, 2012, pp. 340–341). Television has been, and continues to be, an evolving medium (Uricchio, 2009). While viewing of legacy television has declined over the last ten years concurrent with a rise in subscriptions to online television services (Lotz, 2019, pp. 923–924), audiences still consume content from across the mediascape. Yet, whilst agreeing with these concerns, my work further complicates this relationship since I explore the televisualization of other media technologies' content, services, and frames (see Chapters 2 and 3). Developing the post-TV model, I address not only how new media technologies have transmogrified existing television ecologies, but also how fundamental televisual attributes are being incorporated into, and therefore altering, other digital media such as YouTube and Twitch.TV (see also Cunningham and Craig, 2017). In turn, this better accounts for the diversity of TV horror in the second millennium, both in terms of content and delivery platforms/portals/services and how technological convergence has nuanced what we might call horror television.

This last point alludes to another key aspect of post-TV's portalization and internet-facilitated delivery of online television: the introduction of new players within the televisual ecosystem, resulting in 'a complex mix of professional, semi-professional, and amateur content that competes for attention across all screens' (Strangelove, 2015, p. 164). TV natives not only battle amongst themselves through their existing distribution patterns and accompanying business models, but now extend these services online (Johnson, 2019, pp. 57–58; Van Esler, 2016, p. 132). Moreover, they compete within the internet realm of televisual ecologies with online natives, companies born out of internet-related services (Johnson, 2019, p. 61), independent web series (Day and Christian, 2017), and user-generated content (Enli and Syvertsen, 2016).

The book locates television horror within respective channels', portals', or services' business structures. This links content not only to genre, branding, and target demographics, but, relatedly, also how productions serve the financial side of television industries via myriad textual and paratextual strategies. Certainly, horror has continuously been bankable on the big screen (Gomery, 1996; Falvey et al., 2020, pp. 4–6), and with television industries being risk adverse (Warner 2015a) and series' susceptibility to fail (Lotz, 2019, p. 926), the genre's lucrativeness serves various post-TV

economic models given its domestic and transnational appeal. Doyle puts it simply: '[t]he wider the audience, the more profitable content will become' (2016, p. 78).

In the UK, seeking to attract viewership has seen '[s]trategic investment in content by SVoDs and other competing subscriber services […] significantly […] [boost] demand for one particular genre–high-end drama' (Doyle et al., 2021, p. 172) with strong international appeal. Positioned as 'big statement' programming (Doyle, 2016, p. 86), high-end horror behemoths may reflect gargantuan budgets that seek global mainstream viewership to recuperate production costs and yield profits. Yet not all horror TV costs $12 million per episode to make as is the case of *Stranger Things* (Stoll, 2021c).

Other horror dramas are far smaller in scale indicating more modest budgets. Likewise, TV horror is not solely embalmed within drama. Twenty-first century horror television, although dramatic, melds with various other comparatively cheaper televisual genres, reflective of TV's propensity for genre-hybridization (Turner, 2015; Jowett and Abbott, 2013, p. xiii). This includes sitcoms (e.g. *What We Do in the Shadows*, FX 2019–), gamedocs (e.g. *Killer Camp*, ITV2 2019–2021), reality competitions (e.g. *The Boulet Brothers' Dragula*, OutTV/Amazon/Netflix/Shudder 2016–), children's animation (e.g. *Bunnicula*, Cartoon Network/Boomerang 2016–19), and genre-focused documentaries (e.g. *A History of Horror with Mark Gatiss*, BBC4 2010), further attesting to the Frankensteinian configuration of the horror genre as described by Cherry (2009, p. 3).

Moreover, it is vital not to essentialize post-TV as globally felt in a universal manner. Post-TV has largely been studied in Western settings and/or via Anglophonic content (Johnson, 2019), such as North America (Lotz, 2017, 2019; Strangelove, 2015; Van Esler, 2016) and the UK (Evans and McDonald, 2014; Doyle, 2016, Grainge and Johnson, 2018). However, online (post-)television is important to other global regions in terms of indigenous media makers and services, multinational corporations' international expansion, and various national audiences' engagement with domestic and foreign TV (e.g. Evans et al., 2016; Gonçalves et al., 2021; Harlap, 2017; Lobato, 2019). Consequently, this book analyses international co-productions, Japanese, and Mexican horror television (see Chapter 1 and 3), supporting the examination of TV horror as a global phenomenon (see also Abbott and Jowett, 2021a).

However, increased audience fragmentation alongside the introduction of online natives into the post-TV landscape further heightens market competition, particularly since consumers are faced with the financial burden of paying to subscribe for exclusive content housed in various services' libraries (Hersko, 2019); prompting viewers to acquire horror television via

alternative, potentially illicit, means (see Chapter 3). Crisp highlights how 'recent technological changes have increased the ease of media copying […] [and] have […] expanded the opportunities for media piracy' (2015, p. 76). Much in the way that formal techno-industrial changes have propagated post-TV cultures, various forms of illicit formatting and circulation 'challenge […] our conception of television as a technology, medium, and a set of social practices' (Newman, 2012, p. 464). Addressing the various ways televisual media is denied, restricted, or rejected via official routes, the book provides a taxonomy of piracy (Chapter 3), but also considers how informal distribution can instil value in horror television outside of textual qualities (Loh, 2019), supporting both domestic and transnational flows of TV horror. This is particularly pertinent when located within fan communities as it can allow transcultural fans from around the globe to participate in discussions, can provide access to rare or hard-to-find content that translates into subcultural capital and status within a fandom, and may rely on audiences themselves being involved in the remediating process whereby they source and circulate content and/or provide the subtitles – known as fan-subbing – so other fans can understand foreign dialect. In this case, twenty-first century fans are active contributors to national and international flows of TV horror. Consequently, the post-TV paradigm is developed in this volume by exploring its informal aspects alongside official industry qualities and the overlap between the two.

Spreading the Contagion: Transmedia and Television

Post-TV's digitality can be located within 'broader blurring of media formats' (Sim, 2016, p. 204), emblematic of convergence cultures where 'old and new media […] interact in ever more complex ways' (Jenkins, 2006a, p. 6). Twenty-first century convergence cultures also support television's transmediality[2] where heightened competition within attention economies for sustained viewership has seen industries develop consumer routes for audiences to engage with content beyond, but linked to, televisual content in various ways (e.g. Gillan, 2011, p. 4; Ross, 2008, p. 228; Mann, 2014, p. 15; Doyle, 2010, p. 432; Blake, 2017, pp. 96–99; Jenkins, 2017). In doing so, TV texts are kept in 'circulation' via an array of media outlets.

2 Transmediality existed long before digital convergence cultures but was increasingly supported by multiplatform new media practices (see Freeman, 2017; Richards, 2017).

Transmedia is usefully characterized by Freeman and Gambarato as, first, 'multiple media platforms', second, as 'content expansion', and third, as 'audience engagement' (2019, p. 3). Echoing this, Elizabeth Evans defines transmedia television 'by both the text and the technology on which it is accessed, with both helping to shape each other and the experience of the viewer' (2011, pp. 173–174). Likewise, Henry Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling as 'stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions to our understanding of the world' (2006a, p. 334). For Jenkins, television is transmedia *par excellence* since the medium 'is increasingly relying on seriality (and back story) to create a particular kind of aesthetic experience' (2009a). Matthew Freeman develops Jenkins' definition where 'expand[ing] established fictional story worlds and extend[ing] the arcs of characters and plots across multiple media' (2017, p. 9), transmedia storytelling centres on three central traits: 'character-building', 'world-building', and 'authorship' (ibid.). Reifying a text's 'hyperdiegesis', the 'vast and detailed narrative space, only a fraction of which is ever directly seen or encountered within a text' (Hills, 2002, p. 137), transmedia storytelling 'functions to a specific end with drama programming […] [used] to expand the fictional world of a series away from the television episodes' (Evans, 2011, p. 10).

In attempts to reduce financial risk by attracting fan cultures via complexifying hyperdiegetic intricacies (2013, pp. 4–5), M. J. Clarke contends that transmedia's 'streamability' across a range of media platforms is harnessed by producers of franchise/blockbuster television to create 'tentpole TV' (ibid., p. 4). Jason Mittell (2015, p. 288) posits such complex television rich in narrative tapestries foster 'drillability' where forensically-inclined fans bore down into the storyworlds to reveal details hidden from surface-level media engagement. Mittell adds that '[d]rillable media typically engage far fewer people but occupy more of their time and energies in a vertical descent into a text's complexities' (ibid., p. 290). Such drillability lends itself to transmedial extension where fans turn to other media to gain deeper understanding of, and to immerse more fully into, the hyperdiegetic universe. Consequently, by offering 'multiple touch points for audience engagement […] [transmedia engenders] long-term engagement rather than the appointment model of the network and multi-channel era' (Kohnen, 2018a, p. 338).

Alongside a plethora of original TV-only productions, twenty-first century horror television has been especially multimedial. This is not new; horror is a genre that has long retold, remade, reimagined, and remixed tales as they transfer across media (Browning and Picart, 2011; Cutchins and Perry, 2018; Saggini and Soccio, 2018; de Bruin-Molé, 2020; Shail et al., 2019).

But what is distinct is how television has become a salient destination for hyperdiegetic transmedia extensions of established horror film canons, further problematizing distinctions and hierarchies of value between television and cinema: *Chucky* (Syfy 2021) serving as a sequel to *Cult of Chucky* (Mancini 2017), part of the Child's Play franchise; John Jarrett reprising his role as serial killer Mick Taylor in *Wolf Creek* (Stan 2016–17); or *Damien* (A&E 2016) where we follow the eponymous child of Satan from The Omen films into adulthood. Chapter 2 of this monograph explores this transmedia cycle, highlighting what television adds to legacy horror cinema franchises. Indicative of more general convergence cultures, TV horror transmedia also includes 'motherships', such as *Stranger Things*, *True Blood* (HBO 2008–14), and *The Walking Dead*, from which subsequent tentpole media texts derive. However, as the latter two examples adapted from existing IP highlight, transmedia storytelling is not as coherent or unifying as Jenkins describes. While for Jenkins a transmedia story 'unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole' (2006a, pp. 95–96), some audiences began with the True Blood novels or Walking Dead comics. Others' first encounters, however, started with the TV iterations, destabilizing what is the primary text and what are secondary paratexts.

Additionally, TV horror may both remediate *and* expand the narrative universe within the same series. For example, *From Dusk till Dawn* (El Rey 2014–2016) is a televisual remake of the film *From Dusk till Dawn* (Rodriguez 1996) that also gives backstory to established characters, introduces new characters, and builds on the film's mythology. Similarly, *Bates Motel* (A&E 2013–2017) begins as a prequel to *Psycho* (Hitchcock 1960) before the final season retells and reimagines iconic scenes from the original film. As such, both transmedia TV horrors expand, solidify, and disrupt intratextual and hyperdiegetic franchise memory (Harvey, 2015) (see Chapter 2 and 4).

Moreover, Hills critiques Jenkins' balanced definition of transmedial textuality for neutralizing media hierarchy (Hills, 2019, p. 298). Status is often ascribed to certain storytelling media within transmedia matrixes alongside 'other media [that] do not add to an overarching textual whole so much as supplement or support this core media textuality' (ibid.). Transmedia is often unbalanced where peripheral transmedia texts encourage audiences to always return to the privileged core narrative experience embedded within the film or TV mothership; the primary medium from which revenue is derived (Mittell, 2015, pp. 294–295). Furthermore, rather than bolster narrative comprehension premised on a mothership model of transmedia, auratic transmedia strengthens 'cultural value to the franchise' (Hills, 2019,

p. 290). Whereas diegetic transmedia encourages fans to deep dive into storyworlds, auratic transmedia that stress the artistry and artisanship of media production can appeal to established fan communities, but also legitimize a franchise's cultural significance to more general/lay audiences (ibid., 292). This, in turn, can enhance brand identity of the referent text, the production companies that make them, and/or distributors that circulate them.

Furthermore, just as franchise memory can become fragmented as much as it is unified by transmedia, transmedial connections are further complicated by audiences' memories (Koistinen et al., 2016). Remembering, misremembering, and forgetting textual content within franchise universes alongside experiential voids where someone has not experienced a text, thus it does not enter one's memory bank, necessitates a post-structuralist underpinning to transmedia. There are viewers of the aforementioned TV horror transmedia that have never watched the antecedent parent texts, and therefore do not wield experiential knowledge in the same manner as cult fans entrenched in franchise lore (see Chapter 4). As such, these viewers' experiences differ from those well-versed in the seriality of transmedial horror nexuses.

Likewise, not all texts within a transmedia franchise are consumed by all audiences. Some fans police textual boundaries, readily enjoying certain media objects whilst discursively avoiding others (Sandvoss, 2005, pp. 131–132). Further, some international audiences are denied transmedia since specific iterations are confined to particular regions or countries (e.g. Catania, 2015; Scott, 2013a). Similarly, source texts from which TV horrors are adapted may not be translated into other languages. For example, 'Imprint' (2006), the Japanese/American co-produced *Masters of Horror* (Showtime 2005–2007) episode, was adapted from the Japanese novella *Bokkee Kyoutee* (Iwai, 1999) (see Chapter 1). However, the novella has yet to be translated into English, meaning within Japan 'Imprint' is a multi-formatted text (book and TV), but not so outside of Japan (TV-only). As such, transmedial potential to enhance viewers' engagement with TV horror storyworlds operates across a continuum of expansion and restriction contextualized by industrial, technological, social, and global factors.

Finally, while much of the work on transmedia addresses institutional multimedia texts, practices, and strategies, Derhy Kurtz and Bourdaa offer the term 'transtexts' (Derhy Kurtz and Bourdaa, 2017) to account for industry-produced transmedia's augmentation of fans across multiplatform landscapes. This can also allow industry to surreptitiously police audience interpretations and practices that ultimately support companies' bottom

lines (Gwenllian-Jones, 2003, p. 173; Scott, 2013b; Kohnen, 2018a, pp. 338–339). Yet transtexts also give saliency to fan-made transmedia that enrich narrative universes, often produced by those very audiences' official transmedia targets. Such fan-created transtexts 'are primarily intended to fellow members of the fan communities, the Internet allowing for connections between one another, across the world' (Derhy Kurtz and Bourdaa, 2017, pp. 5–6). Indeed, as noted, some official transmedia may be denied transnational flow. However, a dearth of official multimedia can be remedied by fans' own transtextual creations (Rendell, 2018). In fact, as Stein explains, '[f]or many viewers, fan-created transmedia works [...] define their understanding of a storyworld, of characters, and of a narrative landscape, arguably more so than the "official" source text' (2017, p. 71). Moreover, whereas official tentpole transmedia requires harmonious narrative expansion that supports the TV mothership (Clarke, 2013), fans' transtexts have licence to be far more contradicting and controversial. Likewise, fans' transtexts can unmoor meaning from official parent texts, shifting the ideological thrust in their works that serve audiences' own ends (e.g. Bourdaa, 2017; Hassler-Forest, 2019). This is exemplified in anti-fan criticisms of racial representations in *The Walking Dead* materialized in meme texts (see Chapter 5). Therefore, by acknowledging that fans as much as industry build transmedia universes (Booth, 2019), the volume understands transmedia as lenticular, changing when viewed from various industry, independent, and fan productions.

With this in mind, official transmedia and fan-made transtexts have proliferated thanks to new media technologies and platforms (McCormick, 2018, p. 369; Booth, 2019, p. 282) (e.g. Booth, 2016), as Chapter 5 gives credence to. Yet 'transmedia does not necessarily imply digital' (Jenkins, 2017, p. 220). Indeed, in locating post-TV horror within convergence cultures there is a potential danger of the convergence culture maxim 'where old and new media collide' (Jenkins, 2006a) blinkering our understanding of the transmedia ecologies that operate around the genre, which neglect the non-digital and its significance in transmediality and in audience engagement. This is not to offer the opposite. Old media colliding with other old media offers us very little. However, by focusing on the offline we can further explore transmedia's tangible materialities, its real-world spatializations, and the experiential qualities for audiences connecting or participating with a franchise via an array of media touchpoints (Hills, 2017a). Looking beyond the digital expands the possibilities of immersive transmedia experienced through various senses beyond the audiovisual, such as touch, taste, smell, and purely sonic (see also Williams, 2020). Thus, while *Transmedia Terrors in Post-TV Horror* addresses the significance of new media technologies

shaping the production, circulation, and formatting of twenty-first century (post-)TV horror and is a pertinent arena for audiences to articulate their responses to televisual media and produce their own media, this is but one part of the convergence culture jigsaw. For a more robust and holistic understanding of transmedial horror television, and transmedia more broadly, it is essential we look at its analogue, offline, and physical features. Moreover, this realm of transtextuality can offer nuanced understandings of audiences' readings and responses to horror media that are evidenced through the things they make. As such, Chapter 6 of this book addresses two underexplored areas of tactile transmedia: firstly, food as a source of sustenance and horror within TV shows (re)mediated into horror television cookbooks and the central ingredients for fans' culinary craft that plays with the affective spectacle of foodstuffs by making the abject delectable. Secondly, TV horror soundtracks released on vinyl as sonic transmedia and fans designing mockup vinyl soundtracks that elevate the audio *over* the visual of their favourite horror television series, asetheticizing the reference text via vinyl's auratic qualities. Consequently, offline transmedial convergence provides additional economic opportunities and brand visibility for industry players (Dwyer, 2010, p. 9), and active audience participation that strengthens their 'intellectual and emotional engagement [with TV horror texts]' (Freeman and Gambarato, 2019, p. 5).

Accounting for the Heterogeneous Audience: Abject Spectrums

In stressing the popularity and diversity of twenty-first century television horror, I now turn to developing a concept to account for heterogeneous viewer engagement with the genre on TV that is also applicable to other horror (trans)media. When raising the question of why audiences consume horror, Leeder rightly explains that '[n]o single answer emerges as definitive, and nor should it: it may be desirable not to generalize, and there may be as many possible motivations as there are viewers of the horror film' (2018, p. 136). Indeed, pertinent shortcomings emerge from a number of existing key theories that both standardize audiences' engagement with horror and evade actual audience research. Instead, such approaches employ textual analysis that infer a monolithic 'ideal' viewership.

'By far the most common accounts of the appeal of horror' (Tudor, 1997, p. 446), psychoanalytic schools of thought understand horror fictions as revealing that which is repressed within the deepest recesses of our subconsciouses (see Dumas, 2014). Given its 'source of horror' (Miles, 2001,

p. 49) and 'aesthetic and cultural dimension[s]' (Hutchings, 2004, p. 69), Freud's (2003 [1919]) concept of the uncanny has been widely incorporated into horror theory. Fear is roused by that which is familiar (*heimlich*) yet repressed, (re)emerging as uncanny (*unheimlich*) (ibid., pp. 132–134). Freud offers a wide range of objects, instances, and scenarios that produce the uncanny linked to a child's repressed psychosexual drives and fears, such as womb fantasies, castration anxieties, and Oedipal complexes with the 'acme of the uncanny [...] represented by anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts' (ibid., p. 148). Clasen (2017, p. 17) strongly rejects psychoanalytic explanations of horror affect for lacking empirical audience evidence, premised on substitution and allegory that have been found obsolete (ibid., p. 19). Instead, opting for a biocultural approach to horror, he argues the genre 'successfully target[s] ancient, evolved defensive mechanisms and short-circuit[s] prefrontal mechanisms' (ibid., p. 29). Yet Clasen's evolutionary claims are no more speculative since he too talks for an imagined audience, essentialized to a pre-conscious (rather than subconscious) series of responses to audiovisual stimuli. Moreover, Clasen's assertion that horror fictions develop humans' coping skills against real-world negative experiences, 'function[ing] as simulation of and rehearsal for the nastier sides of life' (ibid., pp. 59–60), is equally as difficult to prove as arguments claiming horror corrupts audiences (Lester, 2021, pp. 6–7); especially since he does not use audience data to corroborate his arguments or empirically study how flesh-and-blood audiences engage with horror.

Robin Wood revises Freud's universal basic repressions, positing that horror dramatizes the return of the repressed 'in the figure of the monster' (1986, p. 75). Monsters embody 'surplus repression', 'specific to a particular culture and is the process whereby people are conditioned from earliest infancy to take on predetermined roles within society' (ibid. p. 71) that perpetuates 'monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists' (ibid.). Horror's monsters reflect various Others that threaten hegemonic norms by representing repressed aspects or identities within society. Audiences' pleasure derives from either seeing the monster vanquished and social order reaffirmed – reactionary pleasure – or the monster's destruction of society and its prevailing norms – progressive pleasure.

Yet Hills evidences that Wood's discussion of viewer pleasure speaks for an 'ideal' reader that fixes semiotic meaning *within* horror fictions 'in line with his project to validate and legitimate horror as a deadly serious business' (2005a, p. 51), challenging views of horror as 'a devalued or disreputable genre' (ibid.). This is not to proclaim that audiences do not bring a continuum of

progressive to reactionary responses to media (Stanfill, 2020), as opposed to a rigid progressive/reactionary duality, but this necessitates looking at actual audiences.

Another key psychoanalytic concept applied to horror is abjection developed by Julia Kristeva (1982). Kristeva's post-Lacanian approach understands that a child's initial forging of self-identity does not derive from paternal control of the Phallus and instigation of language. Instead, prior to this the child is in a state of *chora*, locked within the narcissistic gaze that identifies with the maternal body (Kristeva, 1984, p. 27). For self-identity to manifest, the Mother must be repelled and rejected by being made abject (Kristeva, 1982, p. 13). Hence, '[a]t this point the mother is not-yet-object and the child is not-yet-subject' (Oliver, 1993, p. 56). Consequently, abjection is not only that which is Other to me but *is* part of me, hence abjection ruptures the Self via a 'narcissistic crisis' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 14). Since the Mother is abject and abjection is the 'primer to my culture' (ibid., p. 2), abjection continues as feminized/feminine/female where the nascent unstable boundaries between Self and Other 'are repressed in adulthood but continue to haunt the subject through encounters with abject phenomena' (Chare et al., 2020, pp. 3–4) (I discuss this concept in more detail shortly).

Previously, religion was the central pillar for purifying and quelling abject phenomena. In secular cultures, 'art and literature now have an important role to play in policing and processing contemporary encounters with the abject' (ibid., p. 4), serving a cathartic release from these ritualistic encounters. Applying this to the horror genre, Barbara Creed argues that:

> [t]he horror film would appear to be, in at least three ways, an illustration of the work of abjection. First, the horror film abounds in images of abjection […] Second, the concept of the border is central to the construction of the monstrous in the horror film; that which crosses or threatens to cross the 'border' is abject […] The third way in which the horror film illustrates the work of abjection is in the construction of the [archaic] maternal figure as abject. (1993, pp. 10–11)

For Creed, watching horror films serves a sort of perverse pleasure as we confront 'sickening, horrific images, being filled with terror/desire for the undifferentiated' (1986, p. 48). Further, this perversity offers a cathartic purging of abject repression by allowing us 'to throw up, throw out, eject the abject (from the safety of the spectator's seat)' (ibid.).

However, as with Wood, Creed's horror-as-ritual ignores real audiences' interactions with the genre; instead effect is derived from the structural

qualities of horror cinema where a text's entire narrative arc fosters the cathartic release and restoration of symbolic order (Hills, 2005a, pp. 60–61). Not to suggest that horror media cannot be ritualistic. Far from it, especially when we look at horror fan(dom)s and/or repeat viewing, but this reveals other forms of intra- and intertextual pleasures beyond one's repressed psyche, not dependent on narrative unity, and can be aimed at non-narrative aspects of the text (ibid., p. 62). Moreover, Wood and Creed's focus on single story horror cinema that largely confirms to narrative cohesion maintained where abjection is exhibited and ejected within a film's duration. Whilst the audiovisual narrativity of TV is similar, horror television's seriality within and across seasons and propensity for multiple storylines means narrative restoration is far more mosaic and uncertain (Jowett and Abbott, 2013, pp. 31–44). Likewise, transmedia storytelling extends, rather than closes, narratives across media – a point psychoanalytic horror theory neglects – further delaying or preventing psychoanalytically-inflected audience pleasures. Further, both Wood and Creed's theses are premised on completed narrative consumption. While often audiences may consume a horror text from beginning to end, this does not account for those audiences whose viewing experience are fragmented, incomplete, or do not start at the beginning of the narrative. Discussing underage child viewership of *The Exorcist* (Friedkin 1973), Smith's adult respondents noted that 'watching the film was fragmented either due to parental intervention during the viewing or, more frequently, as a result of a secret attempt to skirt around a parental ban [...] [thus were] denied the full experience' (2019, p. 135). One fan 'spent an entire fortnight watching [...] [*The Exorcist*] in small chunks after bedtime with headphones, watching as much as he could get away with at a time without being caught' (ibid., p. 151). Part of the thrill of viewing, then, comes not only from the horror text, but the social context of watching 'banned' material and possibly being caught doing so. Additionally, contra Creed, horror affect may be more pronounced out of narrative context. For one of Smith's respondents, catching a glimpse of Regan possessed without the understanding that the child is saved at the end of the movie is what made the viewing experience so terrifying (ibid., p. 136). Moreover, these acts of censorship, attempts to avoid the parental panopticon, partial or decontextualized engagement, and various 'temporal or spatial "access points"' of where and when *The Exorcist* was watched (Egan, 2022, p. 235) by fans in their younger years informed their adult memories and relationships with the horror film.

Cognitive philosophy counters psychoanalytic notions that audiences are drawn to horror because it provides a safe space for aesthetically

rendering repressed aspects of our identities and subconscious fears. Rather, the approach argues emotional responses to horror are engendered via rational cognition imparted by audiences onto the text (see Smuts, 2014). This is exemplified by Noël Carroll who contends that horror media elicits 'art-horror' in audiences, 'emotion that the creators of the genre have perennially sought to instill in their audiences' (1990, p. 24). Since art-horror's emotive and somatic responses can be identified by the audience, they are cognitive. Further, for Carroll the locus of art-horror is the fictional monster defined as 'any being not believed to exist now according to contemporary science' (ibid., p. 27), and is therefore 'threatening and impure' (ibid., p. 28). For Carroll, then, audience pleasure stems from a universal cognitive curiosity to discover the monster that violates scientific categories.

Yet many find Carroll's object-centred emphasis on the monster-as-source-of-horror limiting. Firstly, it fails to account for cinematic/textual devices other than the monster that arouse fear and disgust (Hanich, 2010; Aldana Reyes, 2016), and object-less horror films 'that withhold or imply diegetically monstrous agencies rather than clearly representing them' (Hills, 2005a, p. 15) (e.g. *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick and Sánchez 1999)). Moreover, this suggestive mode of horror, as noted, has been popular for horror television which Carroll does not address.

Secondly, Carroll constructs art-emotion as universally felt by all audiences in the same way premised on 'the average consumer of art-horror' (1990, p. 192) that differs from 'specialized' fans. This ignores the degree of affect/effect felt by myriad audiences in response to the text. To borrow Hills' example of a 'giant spider scuttling towards me' (2005a, pp. 13–14). Some of us may fear arachnids, whilst others are indifferent of them. Some are even phobic (beyond the cognitive realm) towards the animal (Smith, 2019, p. 62), while others enjoy keeping the mini-beasts as pets. We could not ascertain these audience differences from cognitive textual analyses of filmic spiders. Additionally, as this chapter initially demonstrated, and as I argue throughout the book, a neat and arbitrary distinction between lay and aficionado audiences does not operate for twenty-first century horror television given its variety and popularity. Relatedly, as with psychoanalytic and evolutionary horror theories' shortcomings, Carroll fails to account for other pleasures beyond textually-determined emotions – fear and disgust – when consuming horror media, 'where cognitive processes would not be entirely narrative based, nor indeed fear of disgust based' (Hills, 2005a, p. 17). This might include a text's special effects, recognizing genre stars, and locating texts within auteurs' oeuvres (ibid., p. 18).

Finally, the cognitive thesis that emotion is born out of thought means the philosophy 'cannot encompass all dimensions of spectatorship, and ignores an element that is vital to the experience of cinema: the pre-cognitive, affective power of film in the "lived-body" experience of the spectator' (Daniel, 2020, p. 17). Addressing this caveat, phenomenological approaches have sought to explain *how* audiences respond to horror as corporeally-felt lived experiences (Sobchack, 2004a), centring on the genre's distinctive affective qualities.

Affective Responses

Arguing that whilst 'what we enjoy in horror is [...] the emotional immersion of *Angst-Lust*, i.e. pleasurable fear' (2010, p. 100), Julian Hanich correctly stresses that immersion is not experientially consistent nor monolithic when one watches a horror film. Rather, pleasurable fear is 'characterized by a balancing out between the strong intertwinement of immersion and loosened or even cut entanglement of extrication' (ibid., p. 101). Hanich theorizes that the 'ontological distance' between audiences' worlds and the fictional diegesis forms a safe passivity in the former that fosters their narrative immersion into the latter (ibid., pp. 87–99). Immersion reduces or vanishes our 'phenomenological distance' to the text where '[t]he viewer experiences the phenomenological distance to the film as *vacillating* on a continuum from *growing* to *decreasing*, depending on the relative position beforehand' (ibid., p. 94) – in doing so, eliciting emotive responses to horror cinema's pathic qualities. Engrossment leads to enthralment (Stromberg, 1999), where the shorter the individual audience member's phenomenological distance correlates to the deeper their immersion, the more their self-consciousness is reduced, the more they are likely to be affected by the text's generic strategies.

Adopting a phenomenological first-person perspective, Hanich usefully differentiates between shifting modes of affective audience fear whereby '[h]orror and shock are thoroughly rooted in the present, whereas dread and terror are future orientated' (2010, p. 22). Horror reactions manifest when audiences come into contact with the monstrous threat or the aftermath of an attack, aesthetically rendered across a continuum of direct horror – the violent monster visually depicted – to suggested horror – the monster evoked and described rather than actualized; the latter traditionally being the dominant mode of expression for TV horror as discussed. Cinematic shock is instantly and automatically felt somatically where the horror bursts onto

the screen, bringing audiences' lived-bodies to the fore as phenomenological distance explosively disappears. Comparatively, dread is an 'anticipatory type of cinematic fear in which we both feel *for the endangered character* and fearfully expect a threatening outcome that promises to be shocking and/or horrifying to us' (ibid., p. 156). For Hanich, audiences' feeling of dread results from deep immersion into the film storyworld as they follow the narrative into the unknown concurrent with the sense of threat to characters, often leading to horror or shock, or dissipating as a misleading false alarm or 'Lewton Bus'.[3] Hanich, somewhat unconvincingly, differentiates terror to dread, arguing that with terror audiences' anticipatory fear still centres on characters' endangerment and possible horrifying outcome, yet the threat is known to us. Importantly, across the duration of a horror film, these different aesthetic strategies are employed variously to draw the audience in and jettison them out as they feel different types of fear that are in-and-of-the-body.

Building off Hanich's phenomenological work, Xavier Aldana Reyes' (2016) affective-corporeal model of viewership engenders negative responses in audiences somatically, emotionally, and cognitively when watching extreme horror cinema. Unlike psychoanalytic and cognitive theories, and Hanich's explanations of horror affect, Aldana Reyes shifts focus away from monsters as semiotically-laden affective loci. Instead, he contends that 'in order to affect […] viewers, Horror continuously positions them at a concomitant experiential level to that of the victim' (ibid., p. 164). Analysing various shot types and scenarios, Aldana Reyes argues cinematic realism presents 'images of abjection' (ibid., p. 58) commonly incorporated into the visual generics of horror that display indexical bodily destruction presented with high degrees of verisimilitude.

Conceptualizing abjection, for Kristeva, '[t]he abject has only the quality of the object – that of being opposed to *I*' (1982, p. 1). It is that which threatens identity, structure, and position, whether it be a 'fall' from a social, psychological or biological standing (ibid., p. 3), creating anxiety towards abject object(s), people, and situation(s) (Lechte, 2003, p. 10). Fear is generated by that we perceive highlights the fragility of our identity; thus we reject it. Yet paradoxically, since it indicates the self, it is part of I. Markers including refuse, blood, sweat, and vomit indicate that which 'I permanently thrust aside in order to live' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3), with the ultimate abjection being

3 The Lewton Bus – made famous by film producer Val Lewton – is an audiovisual device popular in horror media where tension, suspension, or dread are built up only for the subsequent jump scare to result from something harmless to the characters, such as a cat or bus.

'[t]he corpse, seen without God and outside of science' (ibid., p. 4). This aesthetic corpus finds kinship to the generic elements popular in horror, particularly, as Aldana Reyes evinces, relating to victims' bodily dangers, damages, and demises.

Yet Aldana Reyes disassociates abjection's psychoanalytic conceptualization as defined by Kristeva (1982), subsequently refined in its application to horror by Creed (1986, 1993, 2022). Instead, he argues audiences' 'corporeal intelligibility and the[ir] capacity to understand the intensity and consequences of pain' (Aldana Reyes, 2016, p. 37) fosters somatic empathy between their own and intradiegetic characters' bodies (ibid., p. 97). In this case abjection is a 'fearful disgust' when witnessing the disintegration of corporeal boundaries, generating primeval affect in audiences that short-circuits cognitive appraisals of horror by bringing the audiences' own somatic bodies into consciousness as we witness physical damage inflicted upon characters onscreen.

Aldana Reyes offers further nuance to future-orientated fearful affect. Namely, 'survival suspense', which 'is narratively close to dread but experientially different in its use of cinematography, editing, pace and music' (2016, p. 120). As with dread, survival suspense engenders anxiety and anticipation, but whereas dread centres on the unknown, survival suspense is premised on 'the fear for one's survival [...] and the threat, now concretised, displays its potentially fatal consequences' (ibid.). Thus, whereas dread is often experienced when leading up to the diegetic threat, survival suspense is provoked 'in the aftermath of the encounter with [the] threat or the events that take place after its manifestations' (ibid., p. 119).

Certainly, the intense graphic bodily mutilation prevalent within particular cycles of horror cinema lend themselves to somatic affect (Wilson, 2015), as does the increasingly extreme visuality of twenty-first century TV horror, such as the violent corporeal destruction vividly shown in *Slasher: Flesh & Blood* (Shudder 2021). Nevertheless, such affective capabilities are also engendered by more suggestive horror. Steven T. Brown explains that 'the scare effects created by Japanese horror are less about shock and surprise and more about the persistence of dread-filled affect' (2018, p. 7). Unlike object-centred extreme body horror, Brown adds, Japanese horror's dread is enhanced by textual visual and sonic diffuseness, producing a 'cinema of sensations' (ibid., p. 8). Notably, this mode of dread is actualized, in part, by what Brown conceptualizes as 'haptic sonority', 'a liminal space that blurs the boundaries between the sonic and the tactile' (ibid., p. 15). In Japanese horror, 'haptic sonority opens an intensive space where one does not much hear sounds as one feels them

in one's body in ways that are by turn bone-rattling, gut-wrenching, and hair-raising' (ibid.).

Affective approaches are salient for highlighting varying responses between audiences watching horror media and how an individual's responses will ebb and flow over the duration of their engagement with the text. However, as with psychoanalytic and cognitive approaches, employing a neo-formalist methodology that 'links anticipated effects with film techniques' (Aldana Reyes, 2016, p. 8) centres on 'the way Horror *ideally*[4] affects viewers' (ibid., p. 98). Certainly, there are particular scenes or instances in a horror text that a number of viewers find affective (e.g. Barker et al., 2016, p. 88), but speaking for an imagined audience *through* textual readings of horror media fails to address 'whether flesh-and-blood audiences are able to shake off, or negotiate with, these textual imaginings and interpellations' (Hills, 2014a, p. 91). Likewise, constructing a priori affect as 'pre-subjective or impersonal' (ibid., p. 104)[5] via textual analysis fails to account for how biographic phenomenological identity shapes 'affective-textual encounters' (ibid.) with horror media.

In their conclusion, Lothar Mikos acknowledges that biographical experiences shape audiences' engagement with aspects of the media text. They write, '[t]he way in which specific spectators experience a certain film depends on the makeup of their identity, structure of experience, and social engagement in the web of their lifeworld. Thus, spectators experience specific films differently. Still there are certain common patterns' (1996, p. 47). This is a highly important point, yet, while considering audiences' 'viewing contracts' with horror premised on varying genre experiences and film literacies that foster differing affective pleasure fear (ibid., pp. 41–42), Mikos' analysis of formal textual emotive structures neglects the deeper intersectional fabrics of audiences' identities and how this affects their responses to horror. Equally, Hanich rightly indicates that 'viewers have very different thresholds in terms of what they consider scary' (2010, p. 32) – a point neglected in psychoanalytic and cognitive approaches – and that the emotional categories of fear should not lie solely in the intentions of the text but 'take into account experiential difference as well' (ibid., p. 204). The existential phenomenology employed by Hanich argues that the 'lived body […] [is] always informed and qualified by the specific historical and cultural context lived in' (ibid., p. 40). However, the lived body is ultimately

4 My emphasis.

5 This conceptualization of affect is frequently employed from a Deleuzian understanding of affect (e.g. Powell, 2005; Aldana Reyes, 2016; Daniel, 2020).

nullified in Hanich's theorizing since, according to him, the fears aroused can be so powerful that they 'level social, economic, ethnic, gender, age and religious differences' (ibid., p. 248).

For instance, Robin R. Means Coleman (2011, p. 1) details watching *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg 1993). The film's opening sees an unnamed Black guard brutally killed by an unseen velociraptor. While the scene serves as both a hermeneutic – what does this brutal prehistoric beast look like? – and foreshadowing device – these dangerous animals will not remain immured in human caging – the attack is visually suggested in line with its PG (UK)/PG-13 (US) rating and provides no character exposition for our victim. He is disposable as characters of colour in mainstream media all too often are and simply serves the two aforementioned narrative devices. However, Coleman explains they were affected by the horror in this set-piece and mourned the quick death of the unnamed Black man. This response where identity is so central to the spectator–text relationship is not readily accounted for by the previous horror affect models. As Coleman highlights:

> Blacks have a rather unique relationship with American film's presentation of Blacks. Some may bring to, and take away from, their film viewing experience culturally specific expectations – what Kozol calls 'the racial gaze' – in which they hope to see themselves as whole, full, and realized subjects rather than simply 'window dressing on the set' or human meat to up a bloody body count. (2011, pp. 1–2)

Informed by their biographical identity that entwines race as experienced within their genre knowledge, Coleman's response of mourning and unease raises another shortcoming of the previous affect horror models: they ignore how affect is shaped by a posteriori audience identity. Kinitra D. Brooks highlights how existing horror theories rely on, and thus naturalize, 'the normativity of whiteness' (2014, p. 464), particularly when exploring gender and sexuality. Yet race as part of intersectional lived identities is fundamental to audiences' engagement with media representations (see Chapter 4 and 5). Furthermore, as with others who solely view horror as producing negative emotions of fear and disgust, the aforementioned approaches underplay the gamut of possible affective responses elicited in audiences when engaging with the genre. Turning to early affect theory, Silvan Tomkins' work on affect can, I argue, enrich these phenomenological understandings of horror responses. Tomkins himself explains that '[f]ear or terror is an innate affect, which can be

triggered by a wide variety of circumstances' (1984, p. 163).[6] Yet he quickly concedes that a circumstance that one individual finds horrifying can leave another unaffected or even joyful (ibid., p. 164). Thus, fear is not predetermined and, whilst a common affect felt by many, stimuli can produce various affects between individuals. In fact, whilst horror often generically strategizes for fearful responses, Tomkins states, '[t]here is literally no kind of object that has not been linked to one or another of the affects' (ibid., p. 166). Whilst most commonly applied to fear, abjection itself has also been linked to emotive modes such as melancholia and humour (Barrett, 2016, pp. 130–131).

Horror media can 'scare, shock, revolt or otherwise horrify the viewer' (Cherry, 2009, p. 4), but poignant abject deaths can also move audience to tears, as demonstrated by Douglas Howard's (2010) experience of watching fantasy-horror film *Pan's Labyrinth* (del Toro 2006). Moreover, compared to a horror film's relative short narrative duration and genre sequels predominantly revelling in increased spectacle over further characterization (Aldana Reyes, 2016, pp. 88–89), longform serial horror television more readily explores characters in-depth. Combined with TV's longstanding use of melodrama,[7] horror television prompts character investment in audiences. Consequently, killing off beloved characters in horror television can trigger pathos as much as fear that results in viewers crying (e.g. Masson, 2010), especially when such scenes are slowed down and/or elongated to elevate their tragedy (Abbott, 2012a). These deaths *matter* to audiences.

We, therefore, need to account for a greater affective field than psychoanalytic, cognitive, and phenomenological approaches to horror have previously allowed for, to cater for what I term audiences' abject spectrums. Incorporating Aldana Reyes' conceptualization of somatic emotional abjection unbeholden to subconscious archaic psychosexual drives, along the continuum of phenomenological distance as described by Hanich, the abject spectrum model accounts for myriad affective engagement with horror screen media as ongoing and gradational. Not just the various types of fear, but also duration and intensity of affect that can differ between

6 Tomkins describes nine 'innate affects': interest or excitement, enjoyment or joy, surprise or startle, distress or anguish, fear or terror, shame or humiliation, contempt, disgust, anger or rage (1984, pp. 167–168).

7 Particularly through soap operas, a markedly televisual genre traditionally aimed at female viewership that symbolized the medium's feminine connotations (see Kuhn, 1984). This has helped form part of the gendered binaries in relation to masculine cinema, informing hierarchies of value that elevate the latter and belittle the former (Caldwell, 2005, pp. 93–94; Nelson, 2015, p. 16; Newman and Levine, 2012, p. 5).

viewers (Tomkins, 1984, p. 166). As Hills argues, '[p]resuming that horror films must predominantly be about one affect – to scare – misses the range of ways in which flesh-and-blood spectators relate to the genre' (2014a, p. 99).

Similarly, Tomkins expounds that '[n]ot only may affects be widely invested and variously invested, but they may also be invested in other affects, combined with other affects, to intensify or modulate them and to suppress or reduce them' (1984, p. 166). Such aggregational potential allows the abject spectrum model to account for negative fear or responses somatically and emotionally felt to affix with other modes of affect, namely fan affect. Paul Booth defines 'affect as the deep emotional connection fans experience related to the media object [...] [which] becomes tied to meaning-making' (2018, p. 75). Whereas affect models of horror viewing centre on audiences' responses to texts as a hermetic relationship between viewer and screen, Kohnen argues '[f]annish affect is central to transmedia storytelling' (2018a, p. 339), and that 'affect connects fans to texts *and each other*'[8] (ibid.). Hills highlights that horror theories have consistently served horror fans poorly, 'aiming to resolve the "paradox" (why do people enjoy seeing images that they should find repulsive?)' (2014a, p. 90). Aldana Reyes (2016, p. 98) concedes that they do not account for fan viewing dispositions in their conceptual model or how fan practices such as repeat viewing complicate affect (see Egan, 2022; Smith, 2019).

Likewise, Hanich correctly identifies that horror 'not only fulfil[s] various functions but also generate[s] diverse pleasures' (2010, p. 6), regularly playing with audiences' knowledge and expectations (ibid., p. 161). Yet his theory romanticizes the multiplex movie theatre as the only genuine space for affective responses to textual horror (ibid., p. 54). This is emblematic of audience studies' neglect of home viewing (Smith, 2019, p. 118), failing to consider 'the important roles played by past technologies, families, domestic spaces and sensory experiences in respondent memories of horror films in the childhood domestic context and, consequently, the continued meanings and significance of these memories in the present day' (Egan, 2022, p. 223). Accounting for this, the abject spectrum model is contextualized by the various social settings and spaces of media consumption. The model also acknowledges how previous lived experiences of texts and their surrounding memories shape subsequent (re)viewings, and how medium-specific tenets inflect affect (such as weekly scheduling and binge-viewing TV series). This is important since, given the focus of this monograph, the model gives

8 My emphasis.

credence to television, as well as cinema, being an affective horror medium and to domestic sites being impactful viewing environments.[9]

Furthermore, Hanich does not consider how affective pleasures form fan identities (Hills, 2002), how affect propagates collective fan spaces outside the cinema theatre, such as online fan communities (Busse, 2017), how affective engagement with fan object(s) shifts across the biographic lifecycle of a fan (Booth, 2018; Smith, 2019; Egan, 2022), and how affect prompts fan-made transtexts which offer subsequent affective pleasures (Derhy Kurtz and Bourdaa, 2017). Such tenets of fandom undertaken by horror fans highlight how this specific genre audience share many sensibilities with other types of fans (Booth, 2012a), and how fans of horror need not always be studied as distinctive siloed (sub)cultures since audiences are often fans of multiple texts and multiple genres (Hills, 2014b, p. 9; Morimoto, 2018). In this case, 'affect' is employed 'to distinguish the complex layers of experience that often separate the fan from a more casual viewer' (McCormick, 2018, p. 372).

Yet, just as this volume attests to the heterogeneity of audience responses to horror media, horror fans and fandoms are equally myriad (for an overview see Leeder, 2018). It is by looking at fans that we can find an array of pleasures when consuming TV horror that go beyond being scared. Moreover, rather than the affective potential lying solely within the horror text, (sub)cultural habitus can shape fans' abject spectrums (Aden, 1999, p. 3). Emic social rules in various horror fandoms evidence myriad interpretive communities and value schemas, which authenticate or malign different genre works based on habitual sets of criteria (see Hills, 2014a, pp. 96–99; Jancovich, 2000, 2002a). As such, fan spaces can police affective engagement publicly as social discourse vocalized within communities and privately where fans internalize the habitus that regulate behaviours and practices (Busse, 2013).

Equally, the phenomenology of fan identity (Hills, 2014b, p. 9) cannot be disaggregated from other aspects of one's intersectional makeup. Put another way, Pande (2018, p. xii) explains that racial identity is 'constitutive' of fan identity and experiences of fandom. However, much like horror theory, Fan Studies has all too often disregarded race (Wanzo, 2015) in terms of fan identity construction (Johnson, 2015), informing meaning-making (carrington, 2016), galvanizing fan works (Warner, 2015b, 2018), identity performance within social spaces (Steele, 2016, 2018), and negotiating textual

9 It is worth signposting that the psychoanalytic, cognitive, and affect theories of horror audiences previously discussed all focus on cinema only.

interpretations discussed in fandoms (Brock, 2011). Addressing this, race converging with other aspects of one's lived identity are key to audiences' abject spectrums and responses to TV horror. Moreover, I explore how race, particularly for audiences of colour, is articulated, discussed, and positioned within TV horror fan communities (see Chapter 4 and 5). In doing so, the book argues fan identities are just as multifaceted as other types of audience.

Despite Aldana Reyes underscoring the limitations of psychoanalytic readings of archaic abjection, he glosses over or neglects other ways Kristeva develops the theory, such as food loathing (see Aldana Reyes, 2016, p. 32). While his conceptualization of abjection as fearful disgust acknowledges viewer phenomenology as one, albeit particularly pertinent, aspect of horror's affective potential, I now revisit Kristeva's original conceptualization of abjection and its wider application to account for a broader range of audience engagement with horror television. To do so, I begin with Kristeva's recalling of abject food ingestion:

> [f]ood loathing is perhaps one of the most elementary and archaic form[s] of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk [...] I experience a gagging sensation and still further down, spasms in the stomach, the belly, and all the organs shrivel up in the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight, clouding dizziness, *nausea* make me balk and that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. (1982, pp. 3–4)

This often-quoted passage is rarely explored in detail. Firstly, the response is somatic. Reactions are activated in different parts of the body in various ways framed by borders. In this case, Kristeva's eyes and lips experience the milk, and the surface of the milk itself. Abjection occurs when these borders are disrupted. Further, the bodily reactions caused by ingesting the milk highlight the phenomenological experience of abjection (Tyler, 2009, pp. 79–80), reified by Kristeva's first-person perspective which differs from her parents. This point is often overlooked, creating one-dimensional generalized abject affects by idealized monolithic imagined audiences (Keltner, 2011, p. 20). Finally, one must consider the temporality of responses. The distinction between child and parents highlights the liminality of abject affect. The child will go on a journey into adulthood and what was previously such vehement abjection *may* change to elicit different responses, even pleasure. Self-identity is not static nor finished, hence that which is held

in opposition to I has the potential to transform. As Oliver writes, 'Kristeva looks to the orders of subjectivity in order to demonstrate that we are all subjects-in-process' (1993, p. 13). McCabe and Holmes echo this, stating that '[s]ubjectivity, as described by Kristeva, is what is contained within an imaginary border drawn around the body: a border that is continuously constructed and reconstructed throughout life' (2011, p. 78). The subject-in-process is central to this monograph. How we arrive at, or stay with, the genre is worth considering. Likewise, there are a host of reasons why someone will choose to consume horror media (e.g. Hill, 1997, pp. 19–23). Some audiences find horror as illicit media in their younger years (e.g. Kermode, 2001), others initially adverse to the genre's effective potential and visual schema delight in horror later on (e.g. Egan, 2011, pp. 1–7; Clasen, 2017, p. vii), whilst others who previously enjoyed scenes of horror and brutality subsequently reinterpret or self-censor the genre due to external life events (e.g. Schlesinger et al., 1992; Chronaki and Tsaliki, 2019, p. 210). As such, our abject spectrums' affective thresholds to horror develop, grow, and shrink in relation to our in-process life trajectories and experiences (Barker et al., 2016, pp. 88–89).

Ideological Readings

Continuing my conceptualization of abject spectrums, immersion and varying phenomenological distance encourages somatic and emotional affect that can short-circuit 'the distinction between thought and body' (Aldana Reyes, 2016, p. 12). However, phenomenological distance – both close and extended – fosters other forms of audience response to horror and, in doing so, broadens the abject spectrum model. Ndalianis argues that as audiences, our 'cognitive engagement with the ideological issues raised by horror films […] [relies] on our sensory responses to horror' (2012, p. 20). Yet, despite affording interpretive agency as part of audiences' affective sensorium to horror, Ndalianis provides scant evidence of this. Instead, alongside passing descriptions of her own responses to horror media, ideological understanding of genre vehicles stems from the author's own textual analysis that speaks for imagined viewers.

Audiences' ideological interpretations of horror media, I argue, chime with Kristeva's cultural framing of abjection, particularly her focus on 'anthropological delineation[s] of the logic of *exclusion* that causes the abject to exist' (1982, p. 65). Kristeva correctly identifies that 'abjection assumes specific shapes and different codings according to the various

"symbolic systems"' (ibid., p. 68). Consequently, emic semiotic meanings of the abject manifest in the prohibition of taboos recognized as sin mapped onto the body (ibid., p. 14). Kristeva explains that, like evil, sin is not intrinsic. Rather, 'sin is [culturally-]subjectified abjection' (ibid., p. 128), informed by Mary Douglas' (1966) anthropological research. As with the psychoanalytic underpinning of abjection, Kristeva's cultural locating of abjection is guilty of essentializing gender structures. Using Douglas to reinforce abjection's feminine codings across cultures, Kristeva states that unlike the abject nature of excrement and menstrual blood (both framed as female), sperm has no 'polluting value' (1982, p. 71). While these codings support feminist analyses of art and culture[10] (Creed, 1993; Schippers, 2011), this gendered delineation of abjection is contentious since semen is potentially highly abject, particularly when arbitrarily linked to identity discourses (e.g. sexuality, class, race, age, etc.), disease, and/or sexually-transgressive acts (such as rape), which may be literalized or allegorically suggested as monstrous in horror fictions (exemplified in hicksploitation horror *Deliverance* (Boorman 1972)).

In comparison, Douglas states 'there are beliefs that each sex is a danger to the other through contact with sexual fluids' (1966, p. 4). Thus, Douglas' theorization prompts a revising of abjection to account for a more myriad semiotic framework to better serve the array of horrors within the genre (see also Tyler, 2009). For Douglas defines that which subverts social structures and cultural order as 'matter out of place' (1966, p. 41), frequently linked to dirt as a symbolically disordering pollutant much as abjection 'persist[s] as a rite of defilement and pollution' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 17). Horror is generated by those perceived as in-between frames of identity or outside cultural classificatory borders since they embody disorder and threaten the status quo (Douglas, 1966, p. 118). As such, if abjection serves ideological functions within a culture, audiences' abject spectrums need to account for such ideological readings of horror media.

In revisiting her earlier conceptualizations of the monstrous-feminine to which Kristeva's work is paramount (Creed, 1993), Creed argues that twenty-first century Feminist New Wave horror films focus on female revolt against such '*aggressive phallicity*', 'a concept that relates violence specifically to the phallus/penis and its destructive powers' (2022, p. 52), which support 'violent patriarchal societies' (ibid., p. 10). Subsequently,

10 However, Kristeva herself has never identified as a feminist nor located her work within wider feminist frameworks. In fact, 'she has repeatedly distanced herself from feminism' (Tyler, 2009, p. 82).

Creed broadens abject categorization to include anthropocentric abjection that attacks and 'undermine[s] the laws of the natural order (nature, the planet, and its multi-species)' (ibid., p. 11). To do so, Creed focuses on male abjection that pertains to the fragility of law; '[t]he traitor, the liar, the criminal […] the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The prefix of 'he' in the above quote and the act of rape as male-centric violence contradicts Kristeva's (ibid., p. 71) later assertion that sperm is a non-contaminant or that above all abjection is feminine/female. Moreover, whilst Creed's updating of the monstrous-feminine clearly frames the male-as-abject, other aspects of criminal behaviour that undermine cultural rules and regulations have the potential to be genderless (women are often framed as liars, for instance (Yarbrough and Bennett, 2000)) *or* become more complex when addressing the intersectional makeup of identities that goes beyond gender alone (Crenshaw, 1989). It is this consideration of intersectionality and its mapping onto cultural contextualized instances of abjection that allows the abject spectrum to move beyond inferred fixed and reductive audience identities (e.g. Ahmed, 2005), further supporting the range of responses to horror media. Indeed, Creed's analysis of Feminist New Wave horror cinema, where the monstrous-feminine revolts through her abject transformation, is contextualized against a backdrop of wider cultural revolts by 'contemporary liberation movements such as #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ, Earth Day, and PETA, whose politics help shape artistic production worldwide' (2022, p. 4).

Yet just in the way political climates, events, and movements can shape media production, so too can they shape audiences' engagement with horror media. Creed alludes to this, arguing that, '[t]o the male spectator […] [the abject female of this horror film cycle] might be a monstrous figure (avenger, lesbian, femme fatale, witch, angry wife) but to the feminist spectator she is a woman – an empowering, inspirational figure who engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the violence of the patriarchal symbolic order' (ibid., pp. 17–18). However, this infers affirmational political affective audience readings that neglect counter-ideological interpretations or the intersectional matrices of audiences that impact their responses. For example, some feminist (itself a heterogeneous and contested ideology/movement) viewers may watch these films and feel no such affect and/or political galvanization, read these texts as not feminist, or find them as an exclusionary form of feminism. This is exemplified by discussions surrounding *Mad Max: Fury Road* (Miller 2015). Creed positions the film's female warrior Furiosa an instance of the Feminist New Wave monstrous-feminine who 'uses her

Amazonian powers to horrify her male adversary, *this adds to the feminist spectator's pleasure in viewing*'[11] (2022, p. 5). However, commentary on websites and online forums questioned the text's feminist potential given its predominance for hegemonic heteronormative white bodies, its lack of diversity, and plastic representations of non-white characters (Jones, 2015; Khan, 2015; see also Warner, 2017). These responses are no less ideological (see Chapter 4–5).

Indeed, horror media habitually taps into the zeitgeist with diegetic representations frequently read against the cultures they are produced in. Moreover, Mann demonstrates that horror's sociological function changes over time and place (2020, pp. 7–9). As such, contra fixed ahistorical meaning, horror media offers polysemic decodings whereby a text is open to 'multiple readings in relation to its cultural moment' (ibid., p. 11). For example, Madden explains that, as a monstrous figure, '[o]wing to her uncanny ability to disrupt patriarchal social constructs, the witch is often portrayed as not only a malevolent, unholy creature, but also paradoxically, a symbol of female liberation' (2020, p. 135). Consequently, horror is bestowed with radical and reactionary potential (often within the same text (e.g. Hutchings, 2003)). This socio-moral opacity and the malleability of audience's readings further aligns with Kristeva's conceptualization of abjection since, unlike Freud's ascribing of the uncanny with 'evil intent' (2003, p. 149), dirt and abjection's ambiguous state are not morally predetermined (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9; Douglas, 1966, p. 162). Being abject-thus-Other can be politically subversive against oppressive forces (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). Moreover, although representations can endorse existing cultural order, this is not to suggest that being Other is intrinsically negative. Some audiences may align with such Othered positions/monsters (Haraway, 1991, p. 293), particularly if they themselves are othered within wider society. Indeed, liminal subjectivity manifests in being abject (Maylan, 2017, pp. 278–279). Such textual understandings foster pertinent sources of pleasure or displeasure for audiences as diverse and disparate 'interpretive communities' (Bobo, 1995, p. 22; Hills, 2005a, p. 186).

Not only have psychoanalytic and cognitive theories conceptualized 'ideal' audiences in broad monolithic terms, both approaches pathologize horror fans as 'lacking' in some way, perceived as awash with affect compared to knowing analysts (Hills, 2002, pp. 99–104). However, horror aficionados incorporate knowledge schemas into their interpretation of the genre. In fact, the cognitive knowledge/emotional affect dualism

11 My emphasis.

falters when considering how fans applying knowledge to their readings of horror itself can be a source of affective pleasure. For some fans, habitual responses to horror media prioritize 'knowledge over affect' (Hills, 2005a, p. 75), employed to authenticate their own fan identities and simultaneously delineate themselves against incorrect responses from non-fans whose reactions to screen abjection are pathologized as too emotive or somatic (ibid., p. 203). This suggests that for this fan segment a critical distance in deconstructing the horror text is mapped along phenomenological distance. An example of this can be seen with transnational Japanese horror cinema fans; supported by transmedial circulation, the transcultural dynamics of cross-cultural audiences (Chin and Hitchcock Morimoto, 2013) engaging with international horror is also neglected by previous horror theories (see also Pett, 2017). Online J-horror fans of *Ringu* (Nakata 1998) privilege 'read[ing]-for-cultural-difference' in the wake of its Hollywood remake and mainstreaming of East Asian horror cinema in the West (Hills, 2005b, p. 161), discussing the film's depiction of '"*nensha*" (literally, the "thought-writing" displayed by Sadako), and focus on differences between western "rationalism" […] [and] the supernatural in Japanese culture' (ibid., p. 168). Stressing complexity in reading J-horror's abjection against Japanese cultural 'symbolic systems' that require extra-textual-knowledge yields subcultural capital – knowledge lay audiences do not possess – with those understanding and able to communicate the Japanese language positioned highest within the community (ibid., pp. 168–169).

On the other hand, detailed textual readings can result from shortening phenomenological distance. As Barker writes, '[t]o be absorbed can mean that one is fully engaged in bringing to bear on a film the interpretive frameworks which viewers have built up' (2016, p. 100). Having established that horror fictions are open to multiple interpretations, audiences may read through a specific prism that illuminates an understanding in favour of other possible navigations of the text (that others may undertake). Hills explains, for instance, that 'for some fan audiences […] elevating "homoerotic subtext," or "not-so-subtext," to the status of narrative focus means selecting out one thread of polysemic textual material for communal and discursive prioritisation' (2015, p. 153). Chronaki and Tsaliki's (2019) interviews with female audiences of *American Horror Story* found participants utilize various interpretative strategies. Notably, several individuals deployed feminist theory to read gender depictions and relationships within the series. Accordingly, it is not only academics who undertake close textual readings. Audiences too frequently apply knowledge schemas

and specific reading strategies to extract deeper semiotic meaning in horror fictions.

Interpretative strategies develop out of one's familiarity with the genre and how they culturally contextualize horror media. Addressing the phenomenological centralizing of the individual audience member, it is paramount to consider how their own identities and lived experiences inform abject spectrums where 'the cultural is intricately interwoven with other aspects in the lives of cultural readers' (Bobo, 1995, p. 22). Markers of our identity and their intersectional hybridity, such as class, sexuality, gender, age and race shape our affective engagement with media (hooks, 1996, p. 3). As Jacqueline Bobo highlights:

> [a] viewer of a film (reader of a text) comes to the moment of engagement with the work with a knowledge of the world and a knowledge of other texts, or media products. What this means is that when a person comes to view a film, she/he does not leave her/his histories, whether social, cultural, economic, racial, or sexual at the door. An audience member from a marginalized group (people of color, women, the poor, and so on) has an oppositional stance as they participate in mainstream media. (2004, p. 181)

Bobo explains that the encounter between viewer and text is an 'interdiscourse', 'the specific moment when subjects bring their histories to bear on meaning production in a text' (ibid., p. 186). Much like fans' discursive prioritization, interdiscourse is comprised of particular discursive readings, 'that a viewer brings to the act of watching a film and creating meaning from a work [...] [where] the meanings of a text will be constructed differently depending on the various backgrounds of the viewers' (ibid.). Consequently, it is not the case that '[w]hilst socio-political readings of Horror are necessary, they hardly ever cover the experiential side of Horror' (Aldana Reyes, 2016, p. 134). Instead, audiences who undertake such interpretations experience horror filtered through their phenomenological biographies. Indeed, audiences' abject spectrums often 'focus on thematic deconstruction of texts, especially when [their] lived identity has also been politicized' (Rendell, 2019a) and/or during highly politically-charged cultural periods such as the Vietnam War or Black Lives Matter protests in the face of racial oppression.

Moreover, ideological readings do not purely consist of allegorical schemas and subtextual discursive prioritization deployed as meaning-making practices. They can also address production cultures behind media creation.

For example, audiences interpreting actors' intersectional identities as reinforcing or destabilizing dominant media representations (e.g. Rendell, 2021a), and, relatedly, how horror may perpetuate or challenge cultural anxieties towards non-hegemonic bodies through casting choices (Chronaki and Tsaliki, 2019, pp. 206–208). Not only is this a reading of horror texts, but a reading through the diegesis to engage with the artifice of media as aesthetic objects. As such, the abject spectrum model needs to account for engagement with horror's aesthetic qualities.

Aesthetic Engagement

Hanich explains that those individuals attempting to reduce or alleviate affect can physically extend their phenomenological distance by looking away from the screen or covering their eyes or ears (2010, p. 95) or focus on the horror text's aesthetic qualities such as form, materiality, or fictionality. In doing so, audiences look *through*, rather than *into*, the film (ibid. p. 96). Correspondingly, Aldana Reyes argues 'the depth of cognitive involvement is greater and more removed from the affective purpose of the film when we are admiring it aesthetically than when we are fully immersed in its affective work' (2016, p. 90). Hence, the author does not consider 'the contemplative and appreciative aspects of Horror's spectacles in any more detail' (ibid.). The abject spectrum model, however, does.

As discussed, cognitive philosophy does not account for audiences' non-narrative based pleasures (Hills, 2005a, pp. 17–18). This same criticism holds true for affect theories previously addressed. Kristeva (1982, p. 18) posits that it is the 'aesthetic task' of modern literary writers to verbalize primal repression within their work. That the second half of *The Powers of Horror* moves between culture and art when formulating abjection, particularly Kristeva's analysis of novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline, gives credence to how abjection is constructed and communicated across media. Relatedly, many engaging with Kristeva and abjection theory note the aesthetic qualities of its materialization (Arya and Chare, 2016, pp. 3–4; Wark, 2016, pp. 30–33), with van Alphen positing that abjection 'is an aesthetic judgement' (2016, p. 19). Focusing on the persons who undertake such crafting allows us to consider that abject encounters between audience and text do not exist solely in the diegesis. That said, Kristeva focuses on singular creatives, romanticized within artistic discourse. However, film, television, and other types of media production are markedly more collaborative. Therefore, the making of audiovisual abjection can be responded to holistically or

audiences can concentrate on specific textual aspects, their specialized construction, and the creatives behind them.

In the case of abject music and sound (Luko, 2013), it is not just sonic somatic emotional affect as Brown (2018) describes. Nor is it 'non-diegetic music [...] offer[ing] an immersion, a kind of "wrap-around sound" that envelops the audience, bathing it in affect' (Donnelly, 2005, p. 13). Rather, Donnelly notes that 'we might notice music more if we become less involved with the film as a whole' (ibid., p. 7). Using similar terminology to Hanich, Donnelly adds that:

> those who appreciate film music are able to *distance* themselves from the screen activities to some degree. Musicians may well be able to focus on (to be aware of) the music more than non-musicians, but people who are less 'bound up' with narrative and character may well find themselves more *conscious* of the music – whereas others deal with music in an unconscious or semi-conscious manner, and are thus in a situation where it is most effective, according to the absolute terms in which it was conceived. (ibid.)

Those musically trained or with a musicologist background (Halfyard, 2016, p. 41) may disaggregate the soundscape from audiovisual unity as an act of distancing discursive prioritization that looks through the text to consider audial technical production and qualities. Non-trained audiences can also engage with music aesthetically, with some fans building sonic catalogues of texts' music and relational information about tracks that gives them authority and status within fan communities (ibid.) (see Chapter 6). Therefore, the aesthetic region of the abject spectrum can be said to be concerned less with how narratives unfold, the thrill of what will happen, and thematic subtexts that predominate the other two aspects of the abject spectrum. Rather, it engages with 1) 'operational aesthetics' where the narrative itself 'invite[s] viewers to engage at the level of formal analyst, dissecting the techniques used to convey spectacular displays of storytelling craft [...] that transcends the traditional focus on diegetic actions' (Mittell, 2015, p. 47); and 2) 'pragmatic aesthetics', technical elements including 'lighting, acting, script, set décor, [music and sound]' (Sipos, 2010, p. 29). To this, I would add pragmatic aesthetic choices such as casting decisions (Warner, 2015a) and marketing campaign strategies (e.g. Kattelman, 2011).

Leeder offers a pertinent example of pragmatic aesthetics relating to the materiality of special effects, noting '[h]orror fans debate the value of CGI, especially decrying [...] unconvincing monsters [...] though the general viewing public does not always share these compunctions' (2018, p. 216). In

comparison 'horror films that use practical effects are praised by fans for authenticity and fidelity to tradition' (ibid.). Thus, affective (dis)pleasure lies in the perceived artisanship that goes into the construction of horror which centres on professionals not seen on screen, such as SFX artists (see also Hills, 2005a, pp. 85–90). Likewise, visiting set locations (Hills, 2002; Couldry, 2007) and media-induced tourism (Beeton, 2005) as affective experiences foster audiences' topographical proximity to fantasy worlds that paradoxically underscores their artificiality within real locales (see Chapter 5), such as those who visit Transylvania as part of Dracula tourism (Light, 2009, 2017).

Similarly, whilst '[i]mages of horror (especially in the genre cinema) do not tend to fit sociocultural notions of beauty' (Cherry, 2009, p. 89), a horror text's distinct visuality can be a source of great pleasure for audiences (Cherry, 2012, p. 26), as can its 'high production values in art direction, set design […] costumes [, and acting]' (Cherry, 1999, p. 194). This can result in fans engaging with the creatives behind a production in other ways (e.g. Bobo. 1995, pp. 10–21). To illustrate, queer horror fans' discursive prioritization reads the character Jesse Walsh as gay in *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddie's Revenge* (Sholder 1985), stemming from textual interpretation but also via the public image of Mark Patton (who plays Walsh) who is openly queer, and the parasocial relationship he maintains with fans online (Scales, 2015, pp. 131–140). Again, we see how audience identities shape abject spectrums and how they filter aesthetic engagement with horror media.

Moreover, whereas previous theories/concepts focus on audience responses to horror via a single media platform, often cinema (Smuts, 2014, p. 3), the abject spectrum model considers the impact of transmedia networks so integral to twenty-first century horror television, and the media landscape in general. Some transmedia texts may evoke similar affective responses. For example, playing the survival horror videogame *Alien: Isolation* (Sega 2014) may create similar somatic and emotive reactions of dread and terror as watching the parent films. However, the former requires ludic engagement and logic deployment to navigate the narrative; skills not necessary for watching cinema (see Conclusion). Thus, the ontological materiality of respective mediums effect audience's abject spectrums. This may shape aesthetic evaluations of textual abjection. For example, as noted, previous arguments have contended that TV is aesthetically a lesser medium for depicting horror than cinema; an axiom this volume denies. Other transmedia can prompt different aspects of the abject spectrum. For example, auratic behind-the scenes materials such as *The Making of Alien* (Rinzler, 2019) reveal the production process of horror creation that guides the reader

to look through the diegesis and appreciate the constructed nature of the storyworld. In comparison, video essays or books (e.g. Luckhurst, 2014) analysing the Alien franchise can inform and guide interpretive readings that foster new ways for audiences to read the horror media. Equally, of course, fans' own transformative transmedia practices can perform similar engagement functions as officially licensed ancillary media (see Chapter 5 and 6). Consequently, alongside an individual's subject-in-process that allows for varying forms of engagement with horror over time and differences in responses between individuals, transmedia too attests to the phenomenological breadth of audiences' affective reactions accounted for by the abject spectrum model.

Book Structure

Geraghty and Lusted note that, 'Television Studies has its roots in a mixture of disciplines' (1998, p. 3), covering 'production and audience ethnography, policy advocacy, political economy, cultural history and textual analysis' (Miller, 2002, p. 3). This book follows this mixed method tradition (see also Wheatley, 2016, p. 20). Part 1 of this volume (Chapters 1–3) addresses TV horror texts and the channels, services, portals, and transmedia they are disseminated on. Chapter 1 examines various ways TV horror is mainstreamed in the twenty-first century, arguing that producers interpellate existing genre fans and wider audiences within the same texts. As such, TV horror is simultaneously discursively clustered (Mittell, 2004) as genre vehicles and branded content that hails different audiences by various means. Building on the first chapter, Chapter 2 explores the relationship between horror and post-TV, addressing how SVoDs and OTT portals shape media production and distribution. In doing so, television becomes both ontologically disrupted and reaffirmed as it moves across new media technologies. Moving away from formal media ecologies, Chapter 3 analyses informal online circulation of TV horror via what I term Only-Click TV that supports the popularizing of TV horror in regions where content is inaccessible and cultifying pre-existing rare TV horror from around the world. The chapter then looks at how media industries are engaging with Only-Click TV practices either by incorporating or trying to better informal digital media.

Part 1 combines analyses of textual form, industry production models, and technological environments that locate TV horror within the wider twenty-first century post-television landscape. Yet this section avoids speaking for imagined or essentialized viewers. Likewise, '[a]n account of

the appeal of horror should probably be able to tell us what is particularly appealing about the genre […] [and] should tell us why some love it and why others hate it' (Smuts, 2014, p. 10). To do this, Part 2 (Chapters 4–6) furthers the abject spectrum model by analysing audiences' engagement with horror television using a range of data sets. Comprised of data sets from Reddit, Twitter, Amazon reviews, the now defunct Snowblood Apple forum, blogs, Facebook groups, the TellTale community forum, Chapter 4 analyses online audiences watching TV horror texts and investigates the emotive, somatic, ideological, and aesthetic aspects of viewers' abject spectrums. Resultantly, the chapter demonstrates how abject spectrums are polysemic, intratextual, and intertextual. Having developed the abject spectrum concept via the *logos* of the written word typed by audiences, Chapter 5 expands the textuality of responses to TV horror by analysing online audiences' image transtexts that pictorially evidence meaning-making (Newman, 2014), using data sets from Facebook groups, Twitter, Google images, blogs, Knowyourmemes.com, Reddit, and Tumblr. Combining image, aesthetic, and form, audiences' visual texts posted online affirm TV texts' key qualities but also foster playful expression. As previously discussed, in order to have a more rounded understanding of post-TV transmedia and transtexts, there is a need to go beyond the digital. As such, the playfulness of participatory cultures continues into Chapter 6 but sees the book turn to offline/real-world transmedia expressions where the tangible materiality and harnessing of multiple senses are key to audience engagement. Examining TV horror cookbooks and vinyl soundtracks, both as formal cross-media extensions and fan-made transtexts, the chapter highlights the popularity and shifting aestheticization of twenty-first century horror television. It also expands conceptualizations of transmedia beyond digital convergence cultures and into the realm of material culture. Additionally, the chapter considers how audiences' abject spectrums can be demonstrated not just in affirmational responses in written form or pictorial signposting (Chapter 4 and 5), but performed in craft practices and how the materiality of transmedia can guide various forms of affective engagement with TV horror – the somatic, emotional, ideological and aesthetic. Audience data sets for this chapter come from independent publications, food blogs, Reddit, Twitter, and Instagram.

While audience responses are performative (Hills, 2002), shaped by technological and subcultural contexts from which they reside, online data is an excellent source for examining the variety of ways audiences engage with horror (Hills, 2014a), as viewers post in real time as a form of second screen engagement (Blake, 2017), reflect on past viewing experience, and

use sites' technological affordances to add media content that prompts further discussions (Anstead and O'Loughlin, 2011).

Finally, the book's conclusion suggests that (post-)TV horror is more fluid than ever. In doing so, the Conclusion suggests other content to be considered within the multimedia milieu, including portal horror films, internet horror monsters, YouTube horror, and fan-made horror, episodic mobile phone horror, smartphone augmented reality horror, and horror webisodes. The Conclusion then addresses how the abject spectrums model can explore audience experiences of non-horror screen media and how other viewing contexts shape audiences' experience of horror media.

A final note on my methodology. Given that I am using audience-produced data, ethical considerations are raised. Online ethics relate to issues of consent, transparency, privacy, and anonymity (Ess and AoIR, 2002; Salmons, 2014), and are context-dependent rather than standardized (McGee, 2008). Since I analyse data from a range of online and offline sources, this produces an extremely large sample pool over an expansive period of space and time. Some of these sites were open, public, and free to access (blogs, forums, Twitter, Reddit), others private and required me to join specialist groups (Facebook). Furthermore, the spreadability and recirculation of online content can obfuscate the original author of creation (Jenkins et al., 2013). Likewise, one site – the forum *Snowblood Apple* – is no longer active, meaning obtaining consent from posters was impossible. Incorporating mixed-data sets from a range of media-technological platforms, users, and content meant employing various ethical stances. Where websites are considered open, consent was not required due to the public nature of the content and the pragmatic issues of gaining consent from every individual over such an extensive time period. In the closed Facebook groups, consent was granted from users, with debriefing, the right to withdraw, and the option to see the research. While I quote audiences, all users' details are anonymized in order to minimize 'intrusion into the fan community' (Bore and Hickman, 2013).

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