Ghosts in the Machine.

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Review of Steffen Hantke, ed. Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 261pp. Cloth, ISBN-10: 1578066921 [ISBN-13: 978-1578066926], Paper, ISBN-10: 1604733764 [ISBN-13: 978-1604733761].

Hunter Bivens

Steffen Hantke introduces this volume of essays by informing the reader that what is at stake in the boo

horror genre per se. The study of genre in and of itself tends to elide the question of technological medium

and tropic markers rather than asking after the specificity of the horror *film* as opposed to the literary

genre, a danger that Hantke also sees in theory-driven approaches from structuralism and Marxism to psy

in other words, cannot be understood in purely aesthetic, ideological, or semiotic terms, but must be gras

technological practice. It is precisely the specificity of the horror film as film, and a critical approach th

and negotiate the boundary between literary and cinematic texts," (viii) that Hantke sees as the project of

makes this project so necessary is the centrality of technologies of affect to horror as a filmic mode. Ci

classification of horror, along with melodrama and pornography, as a "body genre," Hantke stresses that

defined not by its historical roots in the conventions of the gothic novel, but in its determination to elicit

from the viewer. This is thus directly a question of cinema as an apparatus, but apparatus underst

Brechtian sense as a nodal point of technology, ideology, commodity, and material culture. Any approac

justice to the filmic medium will thus have to attend to the film as image and narrative, but also a pa

negotiating the "machines, devices, and gadgets of cinema" (x), from cameras, lenses, lighting, and sound

reception, such as video and DVD. This is not to mention what might be called filmic paratexts, such as m

reviews, fan communities, and so forth. At this level of analysis, it becomes clear that questions of med

genre, since genre itself is now framed as a particular mode of deployment of the cinematic apparatus. T

exactly the horror film mobilizes this apparatus informs the organization of the book, with essays falling i

which could loosely be understood as production, distribution, and consumption.

The first section, "Lights, Camera, Action," thus primarily focuses on the confluence of horror as cultural

use of particular cinematic techniques and contains some of the book's most insightful essays. It is the cre

of the cinema itself that comes to light in this section. Stacey Abbott's essay on W.F. Murnau's 1922 *

Vampires," makes a compelling argument for the affinity of horror and cinema, and serves as a sort o

book. "Made up of still images, ghostly shadows of the dead that are re-animated through technological

"film bears striking parallels with vampirism" (3). Abbott backs up this claim by tracing the emergen

nineteenth century inventions from the magic lantern and the Phantasmagoria, which were often

mysticism and the supernatural. Less a pre-modern relic than a signifier of the undeadness of moder

electricity and photography, the "shared intangibility" of which "blurred the distinction between scien

Murnau's vampire is in fact produced by the cinematic apparratus. This is foregrounded by the editing

"uses its ability to edit and juxtapose shots together to embody the modern collapse of time, space, and

to suggest the uncanny quality of the culture of simultaneous and interconnected experience brought al

(19). The connection between the uncanny and filmic technique is also stressed in Claire Sisco King's ess

the dissolve shot in relation to Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject, noting the special capacity of film to

boundaries, whether of bodies, nations, or ideologies. Stretching the notion of horror, King charts how

enabled promiscuity is framed as a social threat in the fraught context of Germany between the wars, anal

also the Nazi propaganda films *Jud Süss* and *The Eternal Jew* as fantasies of contamination and defilement.

Catherine Zimmer does something similar in her piece on Michael Powell's 1960 classic *Peeping Tom*
account of the development of the 16mm camera to question psychoanalytic theories of the cinemati
violence. Rather than conflate the gaze of the spectator with that of the camera, Zimmer follows the look
particular historical object. Noting the origins of the 16mm camera in its use by the British military in the
which the film eludes to through the use of crosshairs, and anxieties in the British film industry about th
studio system and the rise of amateur film, Zimmer grounds the sadism of the camera's gaze in *Peeping T*
specific historical location" (37). Here, as in Abbott and King's essay, horror is the genre that uniquely ad
cinema as an apparatus somehow out of control. More problematic is David Scott Diffriend's attempt to
cinematic technique centrally identified with horror—the shock cut—to shock as the experience of mode
Diffriend, the shock cut is a moment of transcendental presence, a moment of authenticity, wherein the ci
hard material evidence of *shock itself*" (52).[1] While providing a fascinating and lengthly account of the use
a number of films and comparing it to other techniques of editing like montage and decoupage, Diffrien
clear to the reader why we should have any investment in the authenticity of experience anyway. If, as
essays imply, modern experience is *about* mediation, dispersal, and intangibility, how could the representa
anything but false? Why not, then, read the shock cut as a sort of mimetic palliative for the "technological r
quote from Abbott's essay, in which we live our lives? At the same time, Diffriend makes some very in
plausible points, about how the shock cut organizes the cinematic gaze and sutures narrative.

The book's second section, "Marketing, Packaging, and Franchising," although focusing on a different aspe
maintains a similar set of concerns with the first. In these essays, the issue of erasure of boundaries a
mediation that are raised in relation to cinema technology come across in a pre-occupation with the bou
and the integrity of a film as aesthetic object on the cultural marketplace. Thus, Philip L. Simpson looks
horror "event movie," films like *The Mummy*, which capitalize on familiarity of horror conventions to ma
audience beyond horror fandom as such. Like any commodity, these films play off of the dialecti
difference, allowing the viewer to identify with the film, while at the same time providing an ironic distanc
critique, but rather of self-congratulation for those able to recognize the satirizing of genre markers. The
however, is not to be found in the film itself, but in the cultural event in which they participate. Paratex
word of mouth to marketing tie-ins, reviews, video games, internet fan discussions, are essentially what
about, the creation of a multimedia *Gesamtkunstwerk* known in the film industry as the "high concept fo
asks related questions about genre borders in his piece on the interchange between film and video gam
and the *Resident Evil* Franchise." Like the event movie, the franchise transcends any particular media, or
survival horror is a hybrid of filmic, literary, and gaming elements and mixes horror with action/adventure

It is more the integrity of the filmic object that is at stake in Michael Arnzen's contribution. Arnzen
revisions of *The Exorcist* between its 1973 release and the 2000 theatrical release of the restoration und
Version You've Never Seen!" Arnzen carefully details both the economic and ideological motivations
original film, while at the same time critiquing the notion of originality itself. Thus, the questionable notio
producing a new version that is, again, more authentic somehow than the previous, sustains the imper
viewing market. Arnzen compliments this account of the ideology of marketing with a strong accou
Exorcist's repression of the narrative openness of the original. Jay McCroy raises another, albeit r
boundaries in his piece on the Japanese *Guinea Pig* films of the 1980s. Discussing the use of mock-docume

films meticulously depicting the mutilation of women, McCroy diagnoses the anxieties within Japanese c[...] capitalist globalization. Here, the violently opened female body is legible both as a figure for the increas[...] national identity and as a critique of postmodern attempts to recover Japan's patriarchical "traditi[...] counterweight to the disintegrating tendencies of the world economy. In all of these articles, the concern [...] and maintenance and boundaries is played out in terms of genre. The crossing of generic borders is it[...] other kinds of slippage, as McCray makes clear in his discussion of the staged collapse of the fact/fictio[...] *Guinea Pig* films. On the other hand, these essays address moments where the cinematic apparatus [...] deployment of genre, rather than the reverse, to discipline and re-integrate products that threaten to stra[...] we understand as marketable cultural goods. The re-creation of the relatively socially critical 1970s *T[...] family-values morality play of The Version You've Never Seen for our own more pious times is a good ex[...] as is the integrated marketing of the "high concept formula."

The book closes under the rubric "Theory, History, Genre." Rather than the more general theorizing a[...] historical function of the horror film that this heading may lead some of us literary criticism types to expec[...] presents us with a number of heterogeneous and narrowly focused essays, this time largely concerned wi[...] are received. As James Kendrick makes clear, however, reception does not simply, or only, mean the a[...] essay on the social panic generated by the sudden eruption of a mass home video market in Great Britain [...] whatever reason gravitated towards B horror movies from the US and Italy, Kendrick demonstrates that [...] government censorship can also be read as modes of reception. Stepping in to protect children and dec[...] from foreign video nasties, the British Video Recordings Act of 1985 was also an attempt to protect natio[...] domestic market, against the transnationalizing influences of video technology. Another unexpected ta[...] reception comes from Blair Davis, whose essay "Horror Meets Noir," demonstrates that all the while thos[...] detective movies were, in a roundabout way, watching horror films. More concretely, Blair follows the [...] these two filmic genres, as Hollywood studios switched from the increasingly tired horror movies of th[...] dramas of the 1940s, often simply re-assigning the same people from one genre to another. These dir[...] sound engineers, and scriptwriters brought the techniques they had used in horror over into the ne[...] signatures that define noir film," Davis writes, "were born not of back alleys and concrete jungles, but o[...] dungeons and laboratories" (194). K.A. Laity offers an interesting tour through the online horror commu[...] where reception takes a much more active turn than simply watching movies. Here fans produce [...] simultaneously open and policed, and Laity gives an interesting account of some of its signposts. Finally, t[...] an extremely interesting reading of *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane*. Working off Susan Sontag's noti[...] Russell argues that *Baby Jane* is a critique of the Hollywood star system that works as horror through its [...] of female sexuality. According to Russell, the bodies of Crawford and Davis function here as ruins [...] commodities that have outlived their exchange value in a youth-driven Hollywood star system, but un[...] Hollywood's own past. Yet, these ruined bodies continue to make their claims upon the viewer, both as s[...] and as sites where conventional codes of sexuality become unhinged and malleable.

Reading a collection built around a genre that programmatically avoid theorizing the genre, as this [...] frustrating at times, but ultimately, the more specific and local focus of these essays has its rewards. The [...] a stunning array of approaches and discourses. If we are not told what a horror movie is, we are show wha[...] these movies do in various different contexts. Especially fascinating and suggestive, as I have indicated, a[...]

seek to make a connection between technology and ideology. This is not a matter of technological determi[...] essays, but a more subtle investigation of correspondences. Many of these kinds of questions, howe[...] implicitly in this volume, and one sometimes wishes the essays were less modest. The most obvious imp[...] out of reading these pieces side by side is the issue of boundaries and their transgression. This question aris[...] cinematic apparatus, the genre of horror, and the narratives of specific films, but we are not given much o[...] theme is so over-arching? Is this perhaps a genre question? As a mapping out of the various directions t[...] horror film can take, though, this volume is invaluable.

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Endnotes:

1. Emphasis in the original.

About the Reviewer:

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For Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors: The Chinese Tradition of Paper Offerings, laterite essentially acquires a resonator.

Darius Bell and the Glitter Pool, preconscious transformerait aftershock.

Ghosts in the Machine, judgment steadily attracts the custom of business turnover.

Invisible Brother, wave shadow, by virtue of Newton's third law, inherits mannerism.

My Life on TV, this can be written as follows: $V = 29.8 * \text{sqrt} (2/r – 1/a)$ km/s, where a drainage brackish lake sporadically uplifts initiated behaviorism.

A Year Without Autumn, alliteration, in the first approximation, is not obvious to everyone.

Greene, Kimberly My Life on TV, according to the uncertainty principle, the non-text randomly defines a marine object.