

TOPICS AND COMMENTS

THE HORROR FILM: AN INVESTIGATION OF TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

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Can film function as a vehicle of traditional narrative? Many non-ethnographic fiction films seem to exhibit elements of folk narrative, transposed into a visual rather than primarily an oral mode of transmission. The structure of film, as well as the themes, present often parallel traditional storytelling methods.

The horror film incorporates many elements of traditional folk narrative. Horror films can be correlated with modern belief legends in components of structure and function. Legends function to educate, as well as to entertain. They explain extraordinary phenomena and memorable events; they communicate traditional learning and knowledge to the young and uninitiate; they advise people how to behave in critical situations; and they warn against doing the wrong thing.¹ It may be seen that horror films can function to fulfill these purposes.

Eleven films were viewed. The choice of films was limited to television viewing and thus did not include any of the new trend in "mad slasher" films popular at the box offices. The sample included films ranging in date of release from 1943 to 1973. The eleven films viewed:

Calling Doctor Death. (1943) 63 minutes. American. Directed by Reginald LeBorg. Distributed by Universal Production Co.

Jungle Captive. (1945) 63 minutes. American. Directed by Harold Young. Distributed by Universal Production Co.

Beast with Five Fingers. (1948) 88 minutes. American. Directed by Robert Florey. Distributed by Warner Brothers.

The Man Who Could Cheat Death. (1959) 83 minutes. British. Directed by Terence Fisher. Distributed by Para/Cadogan/Hammer Technicolor.

Prince of Space. (1959) 57 minutes. Part 1. Japanese. Directed by Eijiro Wakabayashi. Distributed by Toei/Manley.

The Crawling Hand. (1963) 88 minutes. American. Directed by Herbert L. Stock. Distributed by American International Pictures.

The Curse of the Living Corpse. (1964) 84 minutes. American. Directed by Del Tenny. Distributed by Fox.

Son of Blob. (1971/1972) 91/88 minutes. American. Directed by Larry Hagman. Distributed by Jack H. Harris Enterprises.

The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant. (1971) 85 minutes. American. Directed by Anthony Lanza. Distributed by American International Pictures/John Lawrence-Mutual General. Movie-lab Color.

The Man Who Haunted Himself. (1970) 94 minutes. British. Directed by Basil Dearden. Warner-Pathe/EMI/Associated British Technicolor.

Legend of Hell House. (1973) 94 minutes. British. Directed by John Hough. British/U.S./Pilgrim/Academy (20th Century Fox).

THE HORROR FILMS

Four of the more coherent of the films were chosen for analysis. They are **The Man Who Could Cheat Death**, **Jungle Captive**, **The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant**, and **The Crawling Hand**.

1) **The Man Who Could Cheat Death**

This British film was made in 1959. The movie starts with a violent mugging in a foggy Parisian park and the flight of the killer to a house with the address "Rue Noire" (Black Street), number "13."

Inside we find a doctor who is also a sculptor giving a private showing of his artwork. He is about thirty five years old. He has a heavy German accent and a blond-haired, blue-eyed physique. His name is Fritz. He meets an old girlfriend, Jeannine, at the showing. Suddenly, a manservant appears at the door and shakes his head. Fritz becomes agitated and disbands the party abruptly. He questions the manservant, who reports that the guest who was

expected had not been at the train station.

Fritz rushes to his office and starts to open his safe. But at this ill-timed moment his current sculpting model and girlfriend, Margot, shows up and demands a reckoning. His hands and face are beginning to wrinkle. Margot screams. Fritz strikes her, knocking her to the floor and leaving a hideous wrinkle over her face and mouth. He then runs to the safe, opens it, and drinks down green fluid from a smoking beaker. His face returns to normal.

The guest expected at the train station arrives at last. It is Fritz's colleague Ludwig, and elderly surgeon. It becomes apparent that Fritz is anxiously waiting for Ludwig to perform an operation on him. But Ludwig has had a stroke and cannot do the operation. Fritz shrieks that he is drinking the green fluid every six hours now. Ludwig is horrified, agreeing that until the "solution" is found, the operation must be performed at regular intervals.

Ludwig suggests getting another doctor. He and Fritz discuss the origins of the operation. Ludwig says that his original plans were idealistic, hoping to offer something for the benefit of humanity. But now he is having second thoughts. Fritz is contemptuous. He brings out an old photograph of Ludwig and himself taken when they had been youths of nearly the same age. Ludwig is now eighty nine and looks it. Fritz is one hundred four and looks thirty five. The operation they refer to is apparently concerned with the retardation of the aging process.

Fritz's old girlfriend Jeannine has a boyfriend who is a doctor. (He is played by Christopher Lee). Ludwig and Fritz try to convince him to do the operation. It involves planting a parathyroid gland somewhere in the region of the ribs. Lee protests that there are moral questions involved, but he finally agrees to help if Ludwig will guide him.

Meanwhile, an inspector shows up to inquire about the missing Margot. Ludwig gets suspicious and later asks Fritz why three of his sculpting models have disappeared over the years. Fritz looks guilty and is silent.

Ludwig goes to the lab and there discovers a "gland" in a petrie dish. He realizes that it was taken from a living body, not revitalized from a cadaver. He gets angry at Fritz who claims that it is all Ludwig's fault for being

so late. He had been unable to keep the revitalized glands alive and so had had to murder the fellow in the park for the living gland.

Fritz argues eloquently that the victim was a non-human whose life was pointless compared to the importance of their experiment. Ludwig tries to reason with him, commenting, "How you've changed, Fritz!" Fritz says he wants to do the same operation on Jeannine so she can stay young with him. Ludwig is appalled, and he destroys the smoking green fluid which is keeping Fritz stabilized until the operation and which takes two years to make. Fritz kills him and recovers a few drops of the fluid.

Now Lee will not do the operation. He tells the inspector all he knows. So Fritz kidnaps Jeannine and locks her into a cellar, then blackmails Lee into doing the operation. He explains that he and Ludwig had discovered the secret of life, of immortality.

Lee asks why they did not publish.

Fritz says it's because of the fears of overpopulation. If everyone were immortal, they would all die of starvation, and, besides, if there were no more dead people, there would be no more glands for the operations. Lee replies that it is a moral offence against nature and God.

Fritz tells Lee he must do the operation or Jeannine dies. Lee agrees to do it. Before the operation, Fritz goes out and murders another woman, a prostitute, to get her "gland." This is for Jeannine's operation.

Lee performs the operation on Fritz, but it is a sham. He did not really replace the gland. Fritz goes off to tell Jeannine the news of the operation, believing it to be good news, but suddenly he gets very wrinkled and ugly. Margot, who is mad and living in the cellar, sets the place on fire, and she and Fritz, who is rapidly dying of old age and disease, both get burned to death. Lee rescues Jeannine.

Motifs

Correlations from the **Motif-Index of Folk Literature** could include:²

- F 668: Skillful Surgeon Removes and Replaces Vital Organs.
- S 113: Murder by Stangling.
- D 1850: Magic Drink Gives Immortality.

- D 1855: Death Postponed for Three Generations.
 N 384.0.1: Madness from Fright.
 F 1041.8: Madness from Strange Sight.
 N 135.1: Thirteen is Unlucky Number.

Discussion

From a socio-historical standpoint, there are some interesting elements to this movie. Both Fritz and Ludwig are scientists. Fritz is German; Ludwig is Viennese. They had begun the project in youthful idealism "for the benefit of humanity." It is a project involving experimentation with the human body--the revitalization of organs, with surgical implantation repeated at regular intervals until the "solution" is found. They are worried about overpopulation, and people who must be exterminated in the interests of the project are regarded as non-entities, non-humans. But the project has gotten out of hand. Ludwig has lost his sense of the idealism of the venture. It can be no accident that he has the appearance of an Albert Einstein--gentle, white-haired, concerned, and offering advice to Fritz to discontinue the project. He is then killed for his pains. Lee, shocked and sober, argues that the operation is immoral, an offence against nature and God. Fritz tries to impress him with the importance of the progress of science.

Finally good triumphs, and Fritz becomes a victim of his own experiment, dying in a conflagration.

It is not hard to discern the theme of Nazi-like propaganda in the arguments of Fritz, of anti-semitism in his attitude toward his victims and the need for their sacrifice to the experiment. Ludwig's Jewish appearance and last-minute realization of the true nature of Fritz's intentions, with his subsequent protest and liquidation, might suggest the awakening awareness of anti-Nazi sentiment. But it is Lee who finally outwits and conquers the enemy.

There is more being communicated here than simply an analog of the political situation in pre-World War II Germany. The prevailing attitude is a general stance against Fritz's sentiments about his scientific ideals. The audience is not expected to sympathize with his attitude that the experiments he does are more important than the lives of those he kills for the experiment. His pro-

tests that the benefits of the experiment--immortality--are not for everyone because of the risks of overpopulation are also presented as the selfish ravings of a mad scientist. Fritz is finally overcome by the humble and moral doctor, Lee, who, it is implied, concerns himself more with his patients than with weird experimentation.

This anti-science position is prevalent in many films, including several others of the films in this project sample. Perhaps this expresses the concern of the less-educated public over the mysterious and frightening things scientists busy themselves with, including items of dubious moral justification such as bombs and chemical weapons. A theme often involved in these films is that of the individual struggling against the powerful and enigmatic, but immoral, workings of science--and winning.

It has also been suggested that this theme of the German scientist dates back further than either of the World Wars, back to 1818 and the publication of Mary Shelley's **Frankenstein**. This book, an exercise in exploring the morality of the creation of human life, has had a profound effect on the horror film industry, particularly in the 1930s film **Frankenstein** with Boris Karloff. Many subsequent films attempting to depict science in action in the laboratory have relied heavily on this source.

But is the concept of the German scientist so popular simply because of Shelley's inventive German doctor? And why is the concept as popular now, over a hundred fifty years later?

Germany does have a reputation for well-trained scientists. It would be interesting to explore this connection. Another avenue to investigate might be the dawning of experimental science in the nineteenth century, the furors of Social Darwinism and cultural evolution, and the general secular trend in philosophy in the years during and after those turbulent times.

The Man Who Could Cheat Death also contains sexual overtones. The sculpting models, who are seduced by Fritz, are all killed or driven mad. The prostitute is murdered for her "gland." Jeannine escapes an atrocious operation and/or death only through the efforts of her boyfriend Lee, not yet cuckolded. The warnings here are apparent: do not pose nude for German sculptors; do not allow oneself to be seduced; do not be a prostitute; do not be unfaithful

be seduced; do not be a prostitute; do not be unfaithful to one's sweetheart. Daniel Barnes has described horror stories as having a didactic purpose--to scare and to warn.³ **The Man Who Could Cheat Death** seems to fulfill this purpose.

2) Jungle Captive

This 1945 American movie is similar in some components to the preceding film.

The movie opens with a doctor operating on a rabbit with the help of two young technicians, a woman and a man. The operation is apparently a success--the rabbit sits up.

Next we are at the city morgue. A mysterious and ugly man comes in and kills the attendant, steals the body of an "Ape Woman" from its drawer, and escapes with the body in a stolen ambulance. This is driven to the woods and abandoned; another car is parked there, and the ugly man takes it and drives up to a lonely house in the woods. He carries the body inside.

Meanwhile, the police find the ambulance drivers bemoaning the theft of their vehicle, and it is learned that the body was stolen before its autopsy. The news goes out.

Back at the doctor's office, Anne (the female technician) announces that she and Don (the male technician) are engaged. He has given her his fraternity pin. The doctor congratulates her, then asks her to come with him on a job. She goes. They arrive at the mysterious house in the woods.

Inside, Anne sees the ugly man and the Ape Woman, and guesses the truth. She tries to get away, but the ugly man stops her.

The doctor, we find, is named Sigmund. He is calm. He tells Anne that the Ape Woman is an animal and so it is alright to experiment on her and restore her body to life. He then comments that the ugly man, who is his assistant, is a true scientist; he sees that the life of the morgue attendant was an obstacle in the pursuit of science.

Sigmund drugs Anne and draws her blood to put into the Ape Woman. The ugly man is concerned for Anne because she is so pretty. He objects to Sigmund's taking so much blood. Sigmund snaps, "You are a scientist, not a sentimentalist!"

With a lot of electrical gadgets, the Ape Woman is

restored to life. Sigmund exults that now other doctors will not laugh at his theories anymore.

Sigmund wants to change the Ape Woman into a real woman, but he needs the records of the doctor who has done the job before. He tells the ugly man to get them. The ugly man obeys, and in the process kills the other doctor.

Using Anne's glandular secretions, Sigmund changes the Ape Woman into a beautiful young woman, Paula DuPris. She is alive but does not respond. She is "just an animal." Sigmund plans to transplant Anne's brain into Paula's body. He gets his book on **Brain Surgery**.

The ugly man shows up at the doctor's office where Don spots his fraternity pin on the ugly man's coat. He gets the picture and follows the ugly man back to the house in the woods. But he gets caught at once by Sigmund; he is brought in and is tied to a chair to watch the operation. Don says reproachfully, "We thought you were such a great man. But what are a couple of lives to stand in the way of Science!...But - you can't do that!"

Sigmund replies: "This is Science!"

There is a scuffle while the ugly man tries to prevent the operation. He is shot by Sigmund. Then Paula turns back into the Ape Woman and attacks and kills Sigmund. She turns to attack Anne, but at that moment a detective bursts in and shoots the Ape Woman. He pats Don on the shoulder. "Take it easy, kid," he says.

Anne and Don get married and take off for Niagara Falls.

Motifs

- F 668: Skillful Surgeon.
- EO-E 199: Life is Restored to Dead. [Resuscitation Motifs]
- R 10.1: Maiden Abducted.
- K 611.21: Escape from Madman.
- B 29.9: Man-Ape.
- F 511.1.3.1: Person with Ape Face.

Discussion

The theme in this film of Science gone mad with its own power is quite blatant. We find once again the German doctor insisting that it is justified to sacrifice human lives in the interest of scientific experiment. There is again the younger man protesting this philosophy. The young woman is duped but rescued in the nick of time. The film also contains the Frankenstein-in-film formula of obsessed scientist, a physically disabled helper, and a monster brought to life through the use of strange electrical machinery and the body parts of another human.

3) The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant

This 1971 American movie also contains an extraordinary feat of surgery. A scientist/doctor, played by Bruce Dern, has a private laboratory because his medical colleagues haven't appreciated his genius. He has a deformed helper, an older man with no hands. He also has a dumb but presumably sexy wife. The household is augmented by a handyman and his son, a mentally retarded giant.

At the local insane asylum a homicidal maniac escapes, steals a car, and soon arrives at Dern's house. There he spots the wife, clad only in a bikini. He assaults her, in the process knocking Dern out and killing the giant's father. The lunatic then abducts the wife and drives off with her.

The handless helper arrives and he and Dern chase the lunatic in their car. They arrive just in time to prevent the wife's rape by the lunatic, and they shoot him. They take the body back to the lab. Here we are allowed to see the results of Dern's surgical experiments: cages of two-headed rabbits, foxes, and even a two-headed monkey.

The mentally deficient giant, Danny, appears and finds his father dead. He is given a sedative and brought into the lab to lie down. It is at this point that the handless helper talks Dern into operating on humans - to put the lunatic's head on Danny's body. Dern has a flashback of Danny's father asking him and his wife to take care of Danny if anything happened to him, the father. Dern suppresses this thought and does the operation.

Later that night, the heads wake up. They have a conversation. The lunatic has grasped the situation at

once and decides to take advantage of it. The two-headed transplant creature breaks its bonds and takes off into the night, where it soon locates a lover's lane with two cars of young couples. It breaks into one car and kills the couple. The other couple sees this scene and manages to get away.

Danny is remorseful, but the lunatic is in control. Soon, the creature finds some bikers cooking breakfast. As the woman is attacked, the two men try to fight back with chains and switchblades. It is no use. The creature kills all three of them.

Meanwhile, a friend of Dern's, another doctor, arrives from the city for a visit. After Dern gives him the brush-off, he hears the rumors about a two-headed giant. Since he knows about Dern's experiments, he is able to figure out what is going on. After Dern and the handless helper go out with a rifle to get the two-headed creature, this friend goes back to the house and discovers the wife tied up in bed. She had seen the monster, and Dern had had to restrain her. She tells the friend the whole story.

At this point, Dern and the handless helper show up again at the house, knock the friend unconscious, and lock the wife up in a cage in the lab. They then reload and go out once again in pursuit.

The two-headed creature now returns, locates the wife in the cage and abducts her again. It carries her off to a mineshaft in the hills.

Dern, the handless helper, and the friend all convene on the mineshaft at the same time where the two-headed monster is preparing to assault the wife once again. Dern shoots, the shaft collapses, and only the friend and the wife escape. They agree not to tell the police the whole story, so that Dern's reputation as a surgeon will not be tarnished.

I subjectively judged this movie to be the worst movie in the sample.

Motifs

F 668: Skillful Surgeon.

E 783.1: Head Cut Off and Successfully Replaced.

F 167.6: Handless People.

J 1116.1: Clever Madman.

S 113: Murder by Strangling.

N 325: Unwitting Murder Because of Insanity.

Discussion

This film repeated several of the elements of the two earlier movies discussed: a scientist/doctor with a physically deformed helper; a moral wrestle during which respect for human life takes second place to the importance of the experiment; and a monster is created. The **Frankenstein** influence is very obvious in this film. Once again we get a view of the the image of scientists with little respect for humanity and an obsession with their work. The theme of anti-science is apparently as strong in this 1972 movie as it was in 1945 (**Jungle Captive**). The most notable difference is the absence of the German element. There is still only a vague concept of surgical procedure and an impression that scientists are basically immoral. They are always punished in the end. Perhaps this is a way for the viewing public vicariously to strike back at the perceived wrongs of modern industrial science.

Another theme made more explicit in this film is the sexual nature of the monster. Danny had had a crush on the wife to begin with; combined with the lunatic's violent tendencies and apparent sex-crazed mind, the result is a giant gone mad with lust. He attacks couples parked in the lover's lane and punishes them. The couple in the first car had obviously been indulging in sexual activity. Those in the car that got away had not, and so had been able to see the two-headed creature in time to escape. The topic of lover's lane tragedies is a familiar one in legend studies.

One of the most prevalent urban belief legends is one known as **The Hook**.⁴ There are many variations, but the general plot involves a girl and a boy parked on a date in the local lovers' lane. While they start to neck, a news bulletin comes over the radio about an escaped sex maniac on the loose in the vicinity with a hook for one hand. The girl gets nervous and insists on leaving. The boyfriend is exasperated but drives away. When he gets to the girl's house and comes around to let her out of the car, he sees a hook hanging from the door handle.

This legend is usually told as having taken place in the local area where it is being told. Yet it is found in many versions all over the country, revealing its status as a legend.

Dundes interprets the sexual significance of this legend.⁵ The hook is interpreted as a phallic symbol, the car as a vaginal one. Just as the hook is about to enter the vehicle, it is ripped off - severed. The legend, according to Dundes, expresses not the fear of a sexual attack by an escapee of a mental institution, but of one by the girl's date.

The lovers' lane figures in other modern legends as well as this one, and it is not surprising to find that it has surfaced in another of the films reviewed here, **Son of Blob**, a 1969 American film. Without describing the entire plot, the lovers' lane scene may be described. The girl who is spreading the alarm about the Son of Blob is despairing because no one believes her. The boy friend is trying to be sympathetic but does not really believe her until the Son of Blob attacks the car and begins to seep through the cracks in the door. It is a dire moment until the boy friend thinks to turn on the auto air conditioner, and then the monster retreats from the cold.

Just as in **The Hook** legend and in **The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant**, the couple survives partly as a result of their not having been too occupied with sexual activity to have the sense to escape.

The Crawling Hand

This is a 1964 American movie.

A space expedition has to return to earth from the moon after an unsuccessful trip - the astronaut, Phil, has run out of oxygen. Twenty minutes later, he appears on the monitor screen. He is still alive but has apparently gone mad. He has black circles around his eyes. He yells for them to blow up the ship because, he says, "There is something in my arm!" Doc and Steve, his friends back at the rocket base, finally do blow up the ship, but it is already in the earth's atmosphere.

Meanwhile, a romantic interlude takes place on a California beach. A Swedish girl named Marta and her American boy friend Lawrence are going for a swim. He proposes,

she evades answering. As they frisk around, they find the astronaut's hand lying on the beach. Lawrence, a medical student, wants to take it with them, but Marta is disgusted and won't have it.

Later that night, Lawrence goes back to get the hand.

At the space laboratory, a rat which survived an earlier trip to the moon has become homicidally violent.

Back at Lawrence's house, his landlady finds him sneaking in. He hides the hand on a pantry shelf. The landlady goes back to bed but cannot sleep. She gets up and has a drink. We watch the hand crawl into her bed. When she gets back into bed, the hand strangles her.

Lawrence hears the struggle, discovers the body, and goes to look for the hand. But it has disappeared. He calls the police. They find a fingerprint on the landlady's necklace.

Lawrence calls Doc at the space lab. While he waits for the call to get through, the hand creeps up and starts to strangle him. But it does not kill him. He is taken away in an ambulance but wakes up screaming, jumps out, and runs home. The police begin to suspect him.

He starts to tape record the story but in the middle of it he suddenly gets violent, breaks the recorder, and gets those black, zombie-like eyes like those of Phil the astronaut. He staggers about the room.

Meanwhile, prints from the necklace are proven to belong to Phil. Doc and Steve show up in California. They have a geiger counter that shows where the hand has been. At the mortuary they confirm that the hand has been on the landlady's body. At Lawrence's house, they track down the trail of the hand over the walls and ceilings, but Lawrence appears in a frenzied state and attacks them, then disappears into the night. He avoids the police around the house and arrives at the local ice cream parlor, where he almost strangles the janitor to death. He rushes out and goes to Marta's house. She is in bed. He seems to be back to normal at first. He tries to tell Marta the whole thing, but when she pressures him he gets frantic again, tries to strangle her, and then leaves through the bedroom window. Marta tells the cops about the hand.

Lawrence, back at home, finds the hand in the laundry closet. After a struggle, he gets it into the trunk of

his car. He drives away, but the hand somehow manages to get out of the trunk and crawls up over the back seat. It grabs Lawrence by the throat, but he is able to keep the car under control long enough to get to the town dump. Here he jumps out and breaks the hand's grip, then tries to bury it, but it escapes. He pursues the hand, slashing at it with a broken bottle.

By the time Doc, Steve, and the police show up on the scene, the hand has been chopped to bits. They test Lawrence with the geiger counter and affirm that he is no longer possessed. Recovering in the hospital, Lawrence is reunited with Marta.

Doc observes that life can exist under different temperatures in differing energy relationships. They put the remains of the hand in a steel box. The last shot of the film shows the box being opened: it is empty!

Motifs

- C 948.6: Hand Cut Off For Breaking Tabu.
- E 422.1.11.3: Ghost As Hand.
- H 106.1: Severed Hand As Identification.
- S 161: Mutilation: Cutting Off Hands.
- E 472: Ghost In Bed With Living.
- S 113: Murder By Strangling.

Discussion

By now a lot of the plot line elements appear to be familiar: the vague scientific methods of Doc and Steve with their geiger counter and cages of rats; the young couple besieged by supernatural trouble but ignored by the adult world; the eventual defeat of the monster by the youth with final grudging admiration by the adults.

The hand itself is the focus of attention here. The hand is out of control; its original owner cannot restrain it. It has a mind of its own. It crawls into bed, attacks an older woman, then roams around the house. It attacks Lawrence twice more before being clobbered to bits. It possesses him.

Using Dundes's suggestion, perhaps there is a sexual component to the imagery of this hand-gone-mad. The hand is discovered while the young couple is involved in pre-mating behavior on the beach. The discovery terminates

their activity. The girl wants nothing to do with the hand. The boy secretly wants it. Once he gives in to his impulses and gets the hand under cover of the night, it takes over. It crawls into bed with his landlady and kills her. Lawrence does not seem to have a mother. Is there some complex psychological factor here?

Or does the hand represent sexual aggression? After it almost strangles Lawrence, it possesses him periodically and at inconvenient moments. At Marta's house, when she demands to know what his problem is, the violence takes over and Lawrence tries to strangle her. Later, she tells the police it was not really Lawrence's hand - it was "some one else's."

Is this an exoneration of the trusted boy friend's sudden unexpected sexual aggression? It wasn't really he .

It is only after Lawrence finally conquered the aggressive tendencies of the hand and destroys it that he is reincorporated into society, forgiven by the police and his girlfriend.

The message here seems to read: Don't give in to your hand's desire to roam around grabbing things.

OTHER MOTIFS

One of the most prevalent themes found in this sample of horror films was that of insanity. An insane person appears in seven of the eleven horror films.

Beast with Five Fingers has a concert pianist who questioned his own sanity, and a deranged alchemist. **The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant** featured the escaped homicidal maniac. In **Calling Doctor Death**, the neurologist has amnesia and cannot remember if he killed his wife. The police inspector accuses him of being insane, and he begins to suspect this himself. This might be correlated with Thompson's motif K 1265: Man Falsely Reported Insane.

In **The Crawling Hand**, both the astronaut returning from Outer Space and the young man Lawrence are possessed by the hand, which causes them to go out of control. Lawrence becomes unsuccessfully homicidal during these periods of possession.

The Man Who Haunted Himself finds himself confronted with a double of himself who takes over his life, his busi-

ness, and even his wife; he thinks he has gone mad and consults an Irish psychiatrist. **The Man Who Could Cheat Death** features the mad scientist Fritz, as well as the young model Margot who goes mad after Fritz misses his fluid and starts getting old before her very eyes. This correlates with Thompson's motif N 384.0.1: Madness From Fright, and with F 1041.8: Madness From Strange Sight.

Finally, in **The Curse of the Living Corpse**, the series of bizarre murders supposedly emanating from the grave are at last traced to the insane younger brother - Motif J 161: Clever Madman.

A second most frequent theme in this film sample was that of the Skillful Surgeon (Motif F 668). **The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant** is created by the genius-scientist who has been practicing on smaller animals to surgically produce two-headed rabbits and monkeys (Motif E 783.1: Head Cut Off and Successfully Replaced). **Jungle Captive** also features a doctor who practices on a rabbit, bringing it back to life in preparation for his proposed experiments on humans. **The Man Who Could Cheat Death** was a skilled surgeon who knew how to prolong human life by surgically implanting a parathyroid gland (in the vicinity of the ribs!). This might be Motif F 668.1: Skillful Surgeon Removes and Replaces Vital Organ.

Murder (Motif S 110 FF) is of course observable in all of these films. In **Calling Doctor Death** and **The Crawling Hand**, this theme is further embellished with Motif K 2116: Innocent Person Accused Of Murder. The conclusion of the film finds the false accusation resolved.

Motif S 113: Murder By Strangling appears in **The Crawling Hand**, in which the disembodied hand strangles Lawrence's landlady and then tries to get him; he in turn, while possessed by the hand, unsuccessfully tries to strangle his girl friend Marta and an ice cream parlor janitor. **The Beast With Five Fingers** also features the roaming hand creeping about murdering people and leaving distinctive hand prints on their throats. In **The Man Who Could Cheat Death**, Fritz strangles Ludwig to death. **The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant** also strangles its victims.

A less frequent but still significant motif included that of the hand. Besides being featured in **The Crawling Hand**, a disembodied hand appeared in **Beast With Five Fin-**

gers. In this film, the dead pianist's hand crawls out of the tomb and lurks around in a sinister manner. Motifs are E 422.1.11.3: Ghost As Hand; S 161: Mutilation - Cutting Off Of Hands; and H 106.1: Severed Hand As Identification. The hand returns to recover the pianist's ring: K 362.2: Ring To Put On Corpse's Finger.

In both **Beast With Five Fingers** and **Curse of the Living Corpse** there is R 212: Escape From The Grave.

The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant is a Two-Headed Ogre (G 361.1.1).

Motif E 280 FF: The Building Haunted By Ghosts only appeared in one of the films in the sample, **Legend of Hell House**. This may be due to the sampling error because the theme of the haunted house is so widespread and popular. This particular film also exhibited the chilling Motif E 472: Ghost in Bed With The Living, and E 472.2: Ghost Leaves Body Mark In Bed. In this scene, the spirit haunting the house invites himself into the bedroom and bed of the young female medium, who coolly sends him about his business. **Legend of Hell House** also contained the Motif V 116: Altar; in one scene the scientist is killed on the altar by the ghost.

DISCUSSION

Daniel Barnes defines the structure of horror stories as having three steps:

- (1) An interdiction, or warning against something forbidden;
- (2) A violation of the interdiction
- (3) The consequence of the violation.⁶

The horror films reviewed seem to comply with this model. In the four detailed at length in this paper, the 3-step pattern can be discerned:

In **The Man Who Could Cheat Death**, Ludwig warns Fritz that he is losing perspective of the ideals of the experiment. Fritz ignores this advice and kills Ludwig. He is soon brought to ruin through the backfiring of his own work and the efforts of the moral doctor Lee.

In **Jungle Captive**, the interdiction is implied. We see that Sigmund has little respect for human life. By violating the cultural norms of American society and experimenting on a human life, he is punished by death. Once

again, this is brought about by the backfiring of his own experiment.

In *The Incredible Two-Headed Transplant*, the interdiction is the same: do not experiment with human life. To reinforce this, Dern has a flashback of the giant's father asking Dern and his wife to look after the son. Dern disregards this request, creates a monster, and, again, is destroyed by his own experiment.

In *The Crawling Hand*, the message seems to have more of a sexual nature. Marta forbids Lawrence to pick up the hand; he does, and its possession wreaks all sorts of havoc. Lawrence assaults several people, including Marta, and only returns to normal after a Herculean effort to destroy the hand.

While the interdiction is not always expressed verbally in the film, it is nevertheless invariably there. The structure of the horror movies reviewed here complies nicely with that of horror stories as described by Barnes. Horror stories function to scare and to warn; the same seems to apply to horror films.

TO WHOM DOES THE HORROR FILM APPEAL?

Most folklorists agree that modern legends appeal to young people. Many of the urban belief tales in recent circulation, such as *The Hook*, *The Boy Friend's Death*, *The Roommate's Death*, *The Backseat Assailant*, *The Entrapped Babysitter*, *The Fatal Fraternity Initiation*, *The Poisoned Dress*, *The Dorm Murders*, and others annotated in Baughman, concern and depict teenagers and young college students.

Degh suggests that the legends function as a vicarious way to enjoy momentary danger and fear. Crises of coming of age can find a needed outlet in stories of horror and the supernatural.⁸ According to Degh, there are three factors involved which may account for the prevalence of these legends among American young people. The first is that the American population is not extremely dense in settlement, leaving geographic empty places to be filled by the "visionary imagination of young people craving for scary adventure in their rather uneventful, affluent world."⁹ The second is that cars are a very important part of American coming of age, symbolizing independence and mobility. The third is that growing up entails leaving home for school, thus entering a period of ini-

tiatory seclusion - for instance in a dorm or a sorority/fraternity situation. All three of these factors are evident in modern legends, in horror stories, and in horror films.

Danielson, in an article on folklore and film, suggests that film intensifies the transmission of traditional narrative with vivid visual images.¹⁰ He emphasizes that, as in many legends, in a number of horror films attention is drawn to the specific location and time of the event (to establish credibility); and the plot features a vulnerable adolescent endangered by a violent madman, either in a babysitting or in an amorous tryst situation.

The theme of illicit sexual activity and consequential punishment through assault by a psychotic is present in many modern legends, as well as in a number of modern well-known horror movies. Danielson comments that the vigor of these themes in modern legendry and in modern films attests to their psychological potency. Although not all movies are folkloric, some, especially though not exclusively those in the horror genre, deal with subjects and narrative themes that have common parallels in folkloric traditions. These films, he says, "forcibly remind us of the roles modern media play in the re-animation, intensification, and distribution of folk narrative."¹¹

CONCLUSION

This investigation of horror films shows that the films share in common with traditional horror story narratives both the structure of interdiction-violation-consequence, with accompanying details for credibility, and the didactic function of frightening and warning. This seems to work primarily for teenagers and adolescents, playing an initiatory role in incorporating them into various subcultures of the society.

Horror films thus seem to be directed toward, and most enjoyed by, young people. However, they are also good for an occasional laugh, and an occasional shiver, by older folks.

NOTES

1. Linda Degh, "Folk Narrative," **Folklore and Folklife** (Chicago, 1972), pp. 53-83.
2. Stith Thompson, **Motif-Index of Folk Literature**, (Bloomington, 1955-58).
3. Daniel Barnes, "Some Functional Horror Stories on the Kansas University Campus," **Southern Folklore Quarterly** 30 (1966):309.
4. Alan Dundes, "On the Psychology of Legend," in **American Folk Legend: A Symposium** (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 21-36.
5. Alan Dundes, *ibid.*
6. Daniel Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 309.
7. Ernest W. Baughman, **Type and Motif-Index of the Folktales of England and North America** (The Hague, 1966), p. 606.
8. Linda Degh, "The Belief Legend in Modern Society," in **American Folk Legend: A Symposium** (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 53-68.
9. Linda Degh, *ibid.*, p. 65.
10. Larry Danielson, "Folklore and Film," **Western Folklore** 38 (1979):209-219.
11. Larry Danielson, *ibid.*, p. 219.

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