

**Made for TV Monsters: How has the rise of horror on US television impacted on
the spectacle and acceptability of the genre?**

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.1.1 Horror Film.....	9
2.1.2 US television Industry	19
2.1.3 US television Drama.....	21
2.1.4 Show runners and creative autonomy.....	22
2.1.5 Spectacle.....	26
2.1.6 US television Horror.....	31
2.2 Methodology.....	42
CHAPTER 3 INDUSTRIAL CONTEXTS: THE RISE OF HORROR ON US TELEVISION.....	44
3.1 Introduction	44
3.2 Networks, Advertising and Horror	50
3.2.1 Network I.....	50
3.2.2 Network II.....	57
3.3 The Rise of Seriality.....	65
3.4 Subscription Online	71
3.5 Technology and VFX, Production and Exhibition.....	76
3.5.1 Technology and Visual Effects	77
3.6 Technology and Exhibition.....	85
3.7 The changing hierarchy of film and US television	88
3.8 Chapter 3 conclusion.....	98
CHAPTER 4 <i>THE WALKING DEAD</i> CASE STUDY.....	101
4.1 Introduction	101
4.2 The Zombie on Screen.....	104
4.3 AMC: American Movie Classics	107

4.4 AMC drama strategy.....	108
4.5 AMC and The Walking Dead.....	110
4.6 <i>The Walking Dead</i> Promotional Posters.	112
4.6.1 Positioning <i>The Walking Dead</i> as a movie.....	115
4.6.2 <i>The Walking Dead</i> and Tensions between TV and Horror.....	117
4.7 <i>The Walking Dead</i> and Advertising.....	119
4.8 Genre and Drama	122
4.8.1 Season 1: October 2010 – November 2010.....	123
4.8.2 Season 2: October 2011 – March 2012	126
4.8.3 Season 3: October 2012 – March 2013	131
4.8.4 Season 4: October 2013 – March 2014	136
4.8.5 Season 5: October 2014 – March 2015.....	143
4.8.6 Season 6: October 2015 – April 2016.....	149
4.8.7 Season 7: October 2016 – April 2017.....	155
4.9 Visual Horror: zombies and murder.....	160
4.10 Case Study Conclusion.....	180
CHAPTER 5 HEMLOCK GROVE CASE STUDY	183
5.1 Introduction	183
5.2 Revisiting Quality and cultural legitimacy.	185
5.3 Netflix and Original Drama	189
5.3.1 Netflix, data and algorithms.....	192
5.4 Eli Roth and Horror legitimacy.....	193
5.5 Genre, the Gothic and Netflix Drama.....	196
5.5.1 Trailer 1: 'Allies and Enemies.'	198
5.5.2 Trailer 2: 'Blood Ties.'	199
5.5.3 Trailer 3: 'Monsters within.'	201
5.6 The Gothic and Classic Monsters.....	205
5.7 Classic Monsters.....	209
5.7.1 Werewolves.....	209
5.7.2 Vampires.....	210
5.8 Revisiting Classic monsters in Hemlock Grove	212
5.9 Visual Horror	221

5.9.1 The Werewolf transformation.....	222
5.9.2 The Money Shot.....	232
5.9.3 Eli Roth and Visual Horror.....	233
5.10 Case Study Conclusion.....	245
CHAPTER 6 SCREAM QUEENS CASE STUDY	248
6.1 Introduction	248
6.2 FOX and the Horror Cycle	250
6.3 Ryan Murphy and Middlebrow.	252
6.4 The Promotion of <i>Scream Queens</i> season 1.	257
6.4.1 Season 1 premiere and the ratings spin.....	260
6.5 Promotion of <i>Scream Queens</i> season 2.....	262
6.6 The Slasher and <i>Scream Queens</i>: Building on the classics.	264
6.6.1 The Slasher: From Trash to Middlebrow.	268
6.7 Genre and Intertextuality.	271
6.7.1 Intertextuality in Season 1.....	272
6.8 Horror intertextuality and Visual Horror: season 1.	277
6.9 Horror intertextuality and Visual Horror: Season 2.....	285
6.10 <i>Scream Queens</i> and the spectacle of the slasher murder.	286
6.10.1 The Absurd Slasher Spectacle.	287
6.10.2 Visual Horror and Comedy	293
6.11 Case Study Conclusion.....	296
FINAL CONCLUSIONS.	298
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	306
Selected TV and Filmography	336
APPENDIX.....	339
Appendix 1.....	339

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Promotional Poster for season 1	113
Figure 2: Poster for season 7, featuring Negan.....	114
Figure 3: Rick and Lori argue in a domestic setting. 2.06 'Secrets'	130
Figure 4: The frontier town of the Governor's Woodbury. 3.03 'Walk With Me'	132
Figure 5: The town of Hadleyville, from High Noon, Zinnoman, 1952	133
Figure 6: Rick's Colt Python .357 Magnum. 3.13 'Arrow on the Doorpost'	135
Figure 7: Rick and Carl on the road after the prison has fallen. 4.09 'After'	139
Figure 8: Abraham, Eugene and Rosita join Glenn and Tara on their search for Maggie. 4.08 'Claimed'.....	141
Figure 9: Daryl finds himself alone on the road after Beth is kidnapped. 4.13 'Alone' ..	141
Figure 10: Carol daubs herself in walker blood and mud, as she prepares for her one woman siege of Terminus. 5.01 'No Sanctuary'	146
Figure 11: Rick and Daryl buddy up in this action movie sequence. 5.01 'No Sanctuary'	148
Figure 12: Gory frame from The Walking Dead, Vol 1: Days Gone By	160
Figure 13: The dummy head of Chandler Riggs.....	164
Figure 14: The same dummy head casualty makeup applied, and complete with wig and clothes, The Hollywood Reporter, 2016.....	164
Figure 15: Bicycle Girl as she appears in the US television version. 1.01 'Days Gone By'	168
Figure 16 : The original Bicycle Girl in the comic, The Walking Dead Vol. 1, 'Days Gone By'	168
Figure 17: Michonne comes to her senses and begins her attack. 4.09 'After'	170
Figure 18: The decapitations are added in post-production. 4.09 'After'	170
Figure 19: Quick cuts follow Michonne as she swings at walkers from all sides. 4.09 'After'	171
Figure 20: The CGI blood splatters allow for less mess on set. 4.09 'After'.....	171
Figure 21: The scene is strewn with corpses and blood. 4.09 'After'	172
Figure 22: The swollen zombie from the well in 2.04 'Cherokee Rose'	175
Figure 23: Burnt walkers in 4.14 'The Grove'.....	176

Figure 24: Walkers melted in the asphalt after the napalm bombs in Atlanta, in 5.07 'Crossed'.....	176
Figure 25: A walker squeezes between two trucks in 6.01 'First Time Again'	177
Figure 26 : Handsome teen Roman Godfrey shown in the high school grounds. 'Allies and Enemies'.....	199
Figure 27: The powerful Olivia Godfrey in an adulterous post sexual repose. 'Blood Ties'	200
Figure 28: Eli Roth's previous work is showcased in the third trailer. 'Monsters Within'	202
Figure 29: Roman breaks open the varghulf with his bare hands and pulls the fully formed Peter out of the wolf. 2.09 'Tintypes'	214
Figure 30: Dr Pryce momentarily brings the head back to life. 3.07 'Todos Santos'	218
Figure 31: Peter prepares for his transformation. 1.02 'The Angel'	225
Figure 32: Convulsing, Peter falls to the ground as blood pours from his eyes. 1.02 'The Angel'	225
Figure 33: In a nod to previous werewolf movies, Peter regards his hand as it turns to claws. 1.02 'The Angel'	226
Figure 34: Peter's skin tears open to reveal black fur underneath. 1.02 'The Angel'	226
Figure 35: Peter tears at his own face. 1.02 'The Angel'	227
Figure 36: The wolf snout emerges from Peter's face. 1.02 'The Angel'.....	227
Figure 37: The fully formed wolf eats the remains of the human skin that lays, steaming on the ground. 1.02 'The Angel'.....	228
Figure 38: Peter's mother Lynda watches on with pride, while Roman is transfixed by the spectacle. 1.02 'The Angel'.....	228
Figure 39: Clementine lies flayed on the cold floor of the abandoned Godfrey Mill. 1.12 'Children of the Night'	235
Figure 40: As part of his cure, needles are inserted into Romans eyes. 2.06 'Such Dire Stuff'	236
Figure 41: Peter awaits his painful torture at the hands of the cult members. 2.09 'Tintypes'	237
Figure 42: Roman drops his jaw to bite the captive gangster. 3.08 'Dire Night of the	

Worm Moon'	239
Figure 43: Brooke's fingernails tear off during her brutal murder. 101 'Jellyfish in the Sky'	240
Figure 44: Peter is mortally injured during his fight with Christina the varghulf. 1.12 'Children of the Night'	241
Figure 45: Peter fools the drug dealers into thinking they have taken a powerful hallucinogen. 2.01 'Blood Pressure'	242
Figure 46: The autopsy of the cannibalistic upir. 3.03 'The House in the Woods'	243
Figure 47: Destiny retrieves the swollen caterpillar from the jar of dead Willoughby's innards. 1.05 'Hello Handsome'	244
Figure 48: Dying Olivia takes a chunk out of her own arm. 3.10 'Brian's Song'	245
Figure 49: Poster from the Six Flags theme parks.	259
Figure 50: Sorority girl with the blood of her post-partum sister on her hands. 1.01 'Pilot'	277
Figure 51: The pledges are buried up to their necks in a cruel hazing ritual. 1.02 'Hell Week'	278
Figure 52: The Red Devil bothers Chanel #3 in the bath, in the title sequence. 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch'	279
Figure 53: Dodger lies dead in the maze. 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch'	280
Figure 54: Roger resembles Pin Head after the Red Devil kills him. 1.06 'Seven Minutes in Hell'	281
Figure 55: The head of the Dean's ex-husband in the fish tank. 1.07 'Beware of Young Girls'	282
Figure 56: The lights go out in the Red Devil's now infiltrated lair. 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch'	282
Figure 57: Jamie Lee Curtis tweets this image of herself and her mother in the infamous shower.	283
Figure 58 : Miss Bean tears off her own fried face. 1.01 'Pilot'	289
Figure 59: The Red Devil on a lawnmower approaches Deaf Taylor Swift. 1.02 'Hell Week'	289
Figure 60: Deaf Taylor Swift's head sprays out from under the mower. 1.02 'Hell Week.'	

.....	290
Figure 61: The Green Meanie throws the scythe. 2.03 'Handidates'	291
Figure 62: Sheila spots the incoming scythe. 2.03 'Handidates'	291
Figure 63: The Scythe decapitates Sheila. '2.03 'Handidates'	292
Figure 64: The camera pans around with the spinning scythe and then Sheila's spinning head. 2.03 'Handidates'	292
Figure 65: Dicky Dollar Scholar brother Caulfield, is left dismembered by the Red Devil. 1.03 'Chain Saw'	294
Figure 66: Season 2 promotional poster	339
Figure 67: Season 3 promotional poster	340
Figure 68: Season 4 promotional poster	340
Figure 69: season 5 promotional poster	341
Figure 70: season 6 promotional poster. Each central cast member got their own version.....	341

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and then make you read my thesis.

Abstract

This study will explore the rise of horror drama on US television, investigating the significance of this trend of horror programming to both the US television industry and the understanding and acceptability of the horror genre as a whole. The first section will account for this increase in horror programming by providing the evidence that demonstrates how the shifts in the US television industry, trends in programming, serialisation and technological advances, have driven this cycle of horror drama.

The study will then consider three case study examples in depth. While horror has been on US television before, the major turning point for the genre occurred in 2010 with *The Walking Dead*. The first case study will consider *The Walking Dead* and the impact this show had on the US television and advertising industries. It will explore how *The Walking Dead* began to break down the boundaries between horror, film and US television. The second case study will move over to the subscription service Netflix, and *Hemlock Grove* (2013 – 2015). This chapter will explore the use of the Gothic to elevate the horror drama in conjunction with the strategic ambitions of Netflix as they began their journey into original drama programming. The final case study will demonstrate the levels of acceptability that horror had reached on US television, through the exploration of a slasher on free to air network, *Scream Queens* (FOX, 2015 – 2017). Through the examination of previously considered disreputable horror film texts that *Scream Queens* both mimics and pays homage to, this case study will consider the rise of horror from lowbrow to middlebrow, and the merging of the gratuitous slasher film and pop culture US television. Examining how the TV horror text is impacted by the industrial conditions, the case studies will explore the developing spectacle and acceptability of the horror genre on US television.

Chapter 1 Introduction

On US television in 2005, there were two dramas airing that could be considered horror: *Supernatural* (The WB / The CW, 2005 -) and *Masters of Horror* (Showtime, 2005 – 2007). In 2015 there were twenty horror dramas on air.¹ In the decade between 2005 and 2015, twenty-five horror series launched on US television, with twenty still on air in 2015. In 2015 alone, seven new horror dramas were launched. 2016 saw four further horror and horror hybrid dramas launched (*The Exorcist*, Fox, 2016 - ; *Damien*, A&E, 2016 - ; *Stranger Things*, Netflix, 2016 - ; and *Outcast*, Cinemax, 2016 -). This increase from two to twenty in only ten years, is a steep growth for horror on US television, a growth never seen before. This thesis is motivated by a scholarly and personal interest in horror and US television drama and inspired by the observation that there is more horror on US television than previous years. This work seeks to understand how and why there is so much more horror on US television; how it functions internally; and how the horror text is impacted by the US television industry. In the context of horror screen studies and US television studies, I will be asking how and why this increase in horror programming has happened, and what form the contemporary horror drama takes on US television. There has been horror on US television before, it is not the case that there was no horror on TV until the current cycle of horror dramas that this thesis examines. As far back as 1966 horror was appearing in a daytime soap opera *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966 – 1971), featuring vampires, ghosts, witches, time travel and parallel universes. Horror over the proceeding decades saw several monster of the week and anthology programmes: some of which had narrators (*Rod Sterling's Night Gallery*, NBC, 1970 – 1973; *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, NBC, 1985 – 1990; and *Tales from the Crypt*, HBO, 1989 – 2007), and others with closed stories contained in each episode

¹ *Supernatural* (The WB / The CW, 2005 -); *Vampire Diaries* (The CW, 2009 – 2017); *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010 -); *American Horror Story* (FX, 2011 -); *Teen Wolf* (MTV, 2011 -); *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013 – 2015); *Sleepy Hollow* (Fox, 2013 – 2017); *Bates Motel* (A&E, 2013 – 2017); *Hemlock Grove* (Netflix, 2013 – 2015); *The Originals* (The CW, 2013 -); *The Strain* (FX, 2014 -); *Penny Dreadful* (Showtime, 2014 – 2016); *From Dusk Til Dawn* (El Ray, 2014 – 2016); *iZombie* (The CW, 2015 -); *Scream Queens* (Fox, 2015 – 2017); *Scream: The TV Series* (MTV, 2015 -); *Fear The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2015 -); *The Returned* (A&E, 2015); *South of Hell* (We TV, 2015); *Ash vs Evil Dead* (Starz, 2015 -).

(*The Sixth Sense*, ABC, 1972; *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, ABC, 1974 – 1975; *The Next Step Beyond*, ABC, 1978 – 1979; and *Darkroom*, ABC, 1981 – 1982). Frequently appearing were made for TV horror movies or single plays (*Duel*, ABC, 1971; *The Strange Possession of Mrs Oliver*, NBC, 1977; *The Haunting Passion*, NBC, 1984). The horror as a serialisation with continuing story arcs across the series has appeared on US television before. *Werewolf* (Fox, 1987 – 1988); *Forever Knight* (CBS / USA, 1992 – 1996); *American Gothic* (CBS, 1995 – 1996); and *Kindred: The Embraced* (Fox, 1996). TV horror has also borrowed and remade from cinema horror: A serialised version of *Friday the 13th* (Cunningham, 1980) with *Friday the 13th: The Series* (Syndicated release, 1987 – 1990), and *Freddy's Nightmares: A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Series* (the WB, 1988 – 1990), and *Poltergeist: The Legacy* (Showtime / Syfy, 1996 – 1999). This is not an exhaustive list of all the horror that have been on US television, but it does demonstrate that horror has been fairly consistent through the decades.

Before the changes to the US television industry that this thesis will explore, there was a tension between horror and TV: horror was a genre that was much maligned by critics and viewed as a genre that only the cinema screen could do justice. That is to say, horror was meant to be unsettling, scary, graphic, and outrageous. All the things that horror fans want were precisely the things that US television, in particular advertiser funded network US television, were very reluctant to provide. Instead of graphic gore and jump scares, TV horror was atmospheric, suggestive, and prone to cutting away from moments of intense horror. In the 1960s and 1970s, horror film was seen as barely better than pornography and was viewed as a genre that pandered to the most basic of human emotions. This view of horror was compounded by the intimate close ups of the insides of bodies, and profuse bodily fluids splattering all over the scene (Clover, 1992; Zinnoman, 2011). Horror came with a whole assortment of negative associations; from its pornography like treatment of the body by reducing the body to an object of violence, to the (allegedly) shallow plot lines and unsophisticated teenage audience, horror was not a viable prospect to US television. However, shifts and changes in the US television industry allowed horror and other types of drama to expand. These shifts, as the first half of this thesis will explore, have had an impact not only on what US television drama

today has become more generally, but impacted on the horror genre on US television, and changed and morphed it into something never before seen.

The most obvious change from horror pre the 2000s, is the amount of graphic horror that is now found on US television. This is part of a general trend across US TV which has seen a rise in violence in other drama forms². US television has become more technically adept in showcasing special effects and using special effects skills to market and champion new and continuing drama series. Effects that contain as well as gory close ups, vast landscapes, historical sites and mystical creatures. Because this trend has developed across US television drama, horror has developed rapidly and, in some cases, with monumental success in terms of audience figures and advertising revenue gained. Does this mean then, that horror and all that comes with it; violence, gore and scares, on US television is more acceptable? How is the spectacle of genre itself impacted by its growth on US television? To answer this there are several areas that need to be addressed and considered. The literature review that follows this introductory chapter will begin to map out the areas of scholarship that need to be addressed in order to unpack the contemporary horror drama. Horror on film is written about by many scholars, and so this is where the majority of works on screen horror lie. In the first instance, the dominant frameworks that focus on cinema horror need to be addressed. As the thesis moves through the literature review, I will be approaching contemporary horror drama from several different angles. I will examine the US TV industry itself, how it works and how it has changed, which will provide the underlying framework to this work. The trends and cycles that occur within the TV industry, in particular around drama development, will form the next approach to understanding the horror drama and the rise of seriality, and so seeing where and how horror fits into the broader field of drama on US television. For the purposes of this study, I view genre as conventions of a story – there are certain elements to be expected for each sub-genre of horror, the techniques

² While US television by its very nature is a visual medium, it has in the past relied on more aural storytelling techniques. With small screens, low resolutions, and stricter broadcasting standards and practices departments, stories were presented on US television via dialogue and script. The big, spectacular dramas now still do develop dialogue and script, but storytelling has progressed visually on US television. US television can now visually explore storytelling through technical developments that allow such visual expression.

of how the story is told. An approach for this thesis then is to consider how the medium of US television and the industry itself, impacts on the horror genre itself and its codes and conventions. As said, it is not the case that the horror drama has not appeared on US TV until the decade in which I am researching. There have been other horror texts on TV as listed above, and horror has also been re-appropriated by other forms of drama. What I argue from this then, is that the use of horror elements - such as intimate gore and the human body in disarray – in other drama forms that have a long and solid background on US television (soap operas and medical dramas for instance), open the door for more horror focused dramas to occur. Expanding on this the general use of special effects and graphic scenes across US television needs to be examined, before I can look at the use of graphic scenes in the horror case studies that will take up the final parts of this thesis. I have selected three case studies for this thesis. While there was a plethora of horror serialisations for me to choose from, I chose these three for the following reasons. *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010 -) marks a shift in US TV horror. Initially, *The Walking Dead* sparked the inspiration for this thesis (I initially wondered how and why there was a zombie series on US television, and that conversely, it appeared to be doing well), but through the language of US television, through the demands and needs of US television as a business, *The Walking Dead* marked a definite and identifiable shift in the attitude of US television to horror, and the beginnings of a cycle of horror on US television. The second case study, *Hemlock Grove* (Netflix, 2013 – 2015), was chosen because as I will outline in my methodology, I wanted to choose examples from across US television, so *Hemlock Grove* is the representative for subscription services. In addition, it is very interesting to me that as their second foray into original drama, Netflix chose to do a horror. Why this might be is explored in the case study itself. The final case study to represent free to air, advertiser supported US television, I chose *Scream Queens* (FOX, 2015 – 2016). The very fact that a slasher, arguably one of the most disreputable sub genres of the horror canon was on advertiser supported TV (even if it is FOX), was worthy of study because it pointed to and supports my key point of horror becoming a cornerstone of US television.

Television's use of spectacle to attract audiences and outdo competitors and showcase technical excellence, means that horror is an ideal drama genre with which to do this. This is not the first scholarly work to address horror on US television, but it is novel in examining the industrial contexts that underpin the cycle of contemporary horror drama that this thesis explores. I will in the literature review focus on key works that have addressed horror on US television and highlight the gaps and position this work in relation to the existing pieces.

The horror genre is cyclical. When looking back at horror through the decades, clear trends can be seen falling in and out of popularity. From the Universal monster pictures to the Hammer Horror years – both featuring traditional monsters and otherworldly threats. In the 1970s there was a move away from monsters and creatures, and the horror became the result of human action. The 1990s saw the return of the slasher film. Contemporary horror (2000s) in the cinema has seen a surge of found footage and paranormal / ghost stories. The serialization of horror on US television could be argued to be another cycle of horror within the screen horror canon. With some series borrowing directly from the cinema with remakes for the small screen (*From Dusk Til Dawn*, El Rey Network, 2014 -; *Scream: The TV Series*, MTV, 2016 -; *Ash vs Evil Dead*, Starz, 2016 - 2018; *The Exorcist*, FOX, 2016 – 2018). Some TV horror monsters have never before tackled with such detail and focus: cannibals in *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013 - 2015); zombies in *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010 -); and *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC, 2015 -); and slasher killers in *Scream Queens* (FOX, 2015 - 2017).

From observing this surge in horror drama – which inspired this thesis – these dramas and their content, the long-term serialisation of horror on US television motivates the frameworks for the questions that inform this thesis. How has US television as a medium and its industrial strategies and policies impacted on the horror genre? How is it that the contemporary horror dramas as listed above, and more are so graphic? Why is it now (2010 – 2016) that horror has grown in popularity on US television – what is it about the progression and growth of US television as an industry that meant horror in its contemporary, graphic, spectacular and serialized form, is appealing to TV? These are

just initial questions that arise from my first observation (the clear growth in TV horror on US television), the literature review in the next chapter will draw out the key aims of this thesis which arise from my central research question: How has the rise of horror on US television impacted on the spectacle and acceptability of the genre?

Chapter 2 Literature Review.

2.1 Introduction.

This chapter will review the literature around the key fields as laid out in the introduction: the horror genre on film; industrial contexts; US television drama; graphic spectacle and the re appropriation of horror; and existing works that look specifically at horror on US television. Each of these fields on their own is extremely large, so I have had to focus on key works that will help me answer my research question and form a model of my own methodology. For the most part, work that looks at the US television industry does not cover horror, and in turn, work on horror does not usually cover US television; either from a textual or industrial perspective. What little work there is on horror on US television needs reworking in light of the changes in the US television industry and the contemporary horror cycle on TV. Even though there has been horror on US television for decades, and there is some analysis of contemporary horror series, TV horror is mainly approached through fan / reception studies, psychoanalytical or allegorical frameworks. Work on the horror drama as a product of the recent US television industrial changes are uncommon. Horror on US television has not been thoroughly studied until now because of several factors. Network TV was not allowing too much horror because of its commercial funding – the advertising industry was reluctant to associate their brands with anything untoward or disreputable. Networks and schedulers were either simply not making it, or they were unsure as to where to place horror within the US television broadcast schedule. Horror film is disreputable in of itself; in the past it has been criticized, banned, and heavily censored (Hutchings, 2004), and the horror found on US television in previous years is a layer even below that: being not as good as horror found in the cinema (according to some studies of horror US television and horror film fans). This thesis will look at horror on US television as it is now, following the industrial changes of the last twenty years. This thesis will contribute to the study of the field of US TV drama by adding horror to it and contribute to the field of horror studies as this new form of the horror text grows and develops as a substantial part of the horror genre on screen.

This review will begin with general work around horror film, as this is where most of the work on screen horror lies. This will give an overall story of how the genre is approached and what the dominant frameworks are. Then key works from writing on horror film: works that have either set up the way many scholars write about the genre in the decades that followed, and pieces that while covering horror film, are relevant to my work as they lay out key archetypes and structures that can be seen in the TV horror texts that I will examine in detailed case studies. I will then move away from horror and look at literature around US television studies. First reviewing a fundamental work on the industry itself, before moving on to drama, and then to spectacle. Spectacle, as the works on graphic horror will reveal, is key to the horror genre, and has been reappropriated by US television in other drama genres. I will cover literature that looks specifically at graphic scenes as they appear in the medical drama, to open up the debate about the growing acceptability of horror on US television.

The final section of this chapter will look at some key works that deal directly with horror on US television. I will demonstrate the work already done in the field of horror TV and show how horror on US television needs either reassessing because of the changes in the industry, or how the approaches are lacking in context. This section will finish with what my methodology will be as drawn from the literature reviewed.

This review is not an exhaustive account of all the literature either on the subjects of US television, horror, or drama, nor is it meant to contain all the literature and resources I will engage with throughout the project. What it is instead is a review of the literature that I think are key texts that provide the best approach for me to use going forward in my research, and to review other works that illustrate the limitations of the scholarship done so far with regards to horror on US TV, which my thesis intends to fill. There are several key approaches to horror and US television and drama that are beyond the scope of this study. For horror, the frequent approach through the lens of psychoanalysis, feminism and gender, are beyond my work. I will cover these approaches in this literature review in order to demonstrate the dominant frameworks, and in turn, demonstrating the gap that my work will fill, which is approaching horror from an industrial perspective. My

research question is not asking how horror US television texts can be read in an allegorical fashion, it is instead asking how the US television industry impacts on the spectacle and acceptability of the horror text itself. For horror and drama, I am not concerning myself with audience, fans practice or fan reception. There are many excellent studies in these areas, but not entirely relevant to my work. I will touch upon them because the horror dramas that I will call upon as case studies, are watched and deliberated over by millions of fans, and the audience is hugely important to US television in its strive for ratings, so I will only discuss audiences in terms of what matters to US television models and strategies, and advertising business perspectives and motives. Because there are several fields that need to be addressed to build my methodological model, I have split this review up into the separate areas, to aid the clarity of the chapter.

2.1.1 Horror Film.

The writing about the horror screen genre centers mainly on film, as screen horror has traditionally been seen to belong in the cinema (King, 1980; Hutchings, 2004; Hills, 2005). The key texts that cover horror film, and those that are directly transferable are included to help me approach the horror elements of the dramas that will be under study in this thesis. Horror as a genre was not really something that people wrote about (Jancovich, 2002), and now countless scholars and critics write about horror on film, but not writing about horror on US television. In horror film scholarship most works are influenced and follow models (even if this is not explicitly referenced within the work) of analysis and the reading of the text, as set out by Robin Wood (1988), and Andrew Tudor (1989). I will look at Wood and Tudor more closely below. First, I want to cover some more general approaches to horror, before looking closely at some key works that show the nuances in horror writing, within what can seem an area of scholarship that is dominated by Freud, sociology, and gender.

The horror film as a reflection of social and cultural anxieties is perhaps the most common framework for approaching the horror film. This well-known method of reading a text has even seeped into criticism of horror film (and US television) in the popular

press, as reviewers attempt to make their articles on a disreputable genre appear to have more gravitas (see the 'Roundtable' reviews of many horror dramas in *The Atlantic*.³). However, horror scholarship, for example Twitchell, 1985; Phillips, 2010; Bishop, 2010; Rockoff, 2011 and 2015; and Hantke, 2010, often consider how horror reflects social fears and anxieties, which explain the rise and popularity of certain horror figures (zombies, slashers, and serial killers respectively). The horror movie monster figures have taken over the decades, more outside forms as Tudor said – the creature, the vampire, the alien – but more contemporary writers have looked at the human figure of terror and suggested that the positioning of the monster as 'other,' is what generates horror and monstrosity. For example, Benschhoff (1997); Jancovich (2002); and Hutchings (2004) all pointed to homosexuality as 'other' in horror film, and Phillips (2005) considered race.

It seems now short sighted to assume that the horror audience is predominantly male, but for a while this was the case. Two works (one of which I will review in more detail later), changed this perception, with particular reference to the slasher and the rape revenge film. Clover's 1992 work approached horror film from a feminist perspective, bringing gender studies and horror together. Clover argued that the traditional view of horror being for men should be reconsidered. Clover states that while such films (slashers) were predominately viewed by males,

There are also many female viewers who actively like such films, and of course there are also women [...] who script, direct, and produce them. These facts alone oblige us at least to consider the possibility that female fans find a meaning in the text and image of these films that is less inimical to their own interests than the figurative analysis would have us believe (Clover, 1992, p. 27).

Clover is arguing that despite the high levels of violence towards women in the films she discusses (*Halloween*, 1978, Carpenter; *I Spit on Your Grave*, 1978, Zarchi; *A*

³ The Roundtable reviews are a weekly meeting of a group of writers from *The Atlantic*, who meet to discuss that week's episode of a given series. The reviews are then transcribed and published on *The Atlantic* website. An example of allegorical reading and the recognition of social anxieties can be found in the Roundtable reviews of *The Walking Dead*, in which the group described the series as a retelling of the Holocaust and other WWII atrocities.

Nightmare on Elm Street, 1984, Craven; *Lipstick*, 1976, Johnson), the audiences for them was populated with females who enjoyed the experience. Barbara Creed (1993) combined gender and horror studies by examining the female body as the source of horror and abjection. The slasher / revenge movie cycle of the 1970s encouraged a wealth of scholarly writing, as did the Argento and Italian Giallo cycle. Grant, 1996; Gallant, 2001; Brottman, 2002, all cover this area of horror film. Freud's work appears in many breakdowns of the horror film, and films that deal with monstrous families, children or teens, frequently use Freudian / Oedipal theoretical approaches: Paul, 1994; Petley, 1999; Craig & Fradley, 2010.

Robin Wood's seminal work *An Introduction to the American Horror Film* (1988) formed an almost universal approach to the analysis of horror film. Wood saw horror as the 'return of the repressed' and the exposure of threats to normality. This, says Wood, is the basic formula of most horror films. He states that horror films show us the rupturing of what is repressed through ideological tension, and how commonly the monster is defeated, the ending is happy, and normality is restored. For Wood, this highlights the conservative nature of the horror film, and he was the first to do so. Wood took seriously texts like *Rosemary's Baby* (1968, Polanski); *The Omen* (1976, Donner); *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, (1974, Hooper); and *Night of the Living Dead* (1968, Romero); films which were until Wood, were seen as depraved and nasty, and not worthy of academic study. For Wood to consider horror as a beacon of social order, was revolutionary to the study of the genre (Wood, 1988). Wood read political meaning into the horror text, demonstrating that horror allows us through the "collective nightmare" (Wood, 1988, p. 164), to play out our fantasies of breaking the norms and rules that society holds over us.

It is the horror film that responds in the most clear-cut and direct way, because central to it is the actual dramatization of the dual concept of the repressed/the Other, in the figure of the Monster. One might say that the true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilization represses or oppresses, its reemergence dramatized, as in our nightmares, as an object of

horror, a matter for terror, and the happy ending (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of repression (Wood, 1988, p. 28).

Wood was one of the first to recognise horror as central to American cinema, despite antipathy from critics at the time. Wood offered psychological insight and a Marxist political approach to the horror film and demonstrated that despite horror's initial veneer of the disreputable and the nasty, it was in fact an ideal of social order and the status-quo.

Andrew Tudor in his 1989 work *Monsters and Mad Scientists* took a sociological approach to the horror film that laid out a framework for reading horror that has become almost standard for horror scholarship. Tudor sought to find out what it is that the horror audience finds frightening, and through statistical evidence he identified the many sub genres, and the social and political anxieties which are reflected in horror. Tudor looks at characters, narrative, style and identification, and not, as many others had done (and still do) at the psychological root of the monster or source of horror (Tudor, 1989). Tudor noted how the audience understands a genre, but how they may not be able to articulate it: their implicit understanding of the language of the film (Tudor, 1989). Tudor laid out many factions of the genre; monsters not of our world and those that are (vampires and zombies; scientists and serial killers); of external and internal attack (space invaders and possession); and threats that exist on their own or are the result of us (prehistoric monsters and witchcraft). Tudor points to the 1960s as a key turning point for horror. Over this decade he states, horror went from secure to paranoid, reflecting the heightened cultural paranoia of the 1950s and McCarthyism. Secure horror had monsters that were 'other' and different (the vampires or aliens), and paranoid horror brought horror that was within us (serial killers and horror in the domestic space). In paranoid horror, we see the rise of the unreasonable slasher or serial killer, and it is all a reflection of the "... as yet incomplete social changes" that were taking place at the time (Tudor, 1989). Gender roles were changing, people had less faith in authority, both government and church. There was fear of social chaos. Tudor does argue against Wood saying that not all horror is conservative, especially post the shifts – both cultural and in the horror film itself - in the 1960s. Not all texts restore social order and Tudor

identified the trend towards the open and ambiguous ending and the horror franchise sequel.

Cynthia Freeland in *The Naked and the Undead: Evil and the Appeal of Horror* (2000), studies the nature of good and evil in film, and the negative reputation of the inherent aesthetics of horror. Taking a cognitive approach and examining the behavior and responses elicited by horror films, Freeland explores graphic horror and its function in film, arguing that it engages human responses beyond the base responses usually associated with the negative aspects of horror – fear, anxiety, and revulsion. She says horror garners complex and emotional responses which can be enjoyable. Freeland considers gore and visual body horror as sublime spectacle and examines them as a reflection of philosophical thinking about good and evil. For Freeland, because these scenes are such a large part of the horror text, then they must be considered. Freeland argues that these scenes are for the most part, glossed over by scholars, who either describe the scenes with scant detail, or skim over them in their search for the deeper meaning of the text. Scholars are more concerned with what these scenes symbolically represent, rather than their narrative function and what they might add to the texture of the film itself. Freeland argues against using purely psychoanalysis and uses feminism and philosophy as frameworks instead. Continuing this linking of visual horror to the Gothic or the classic, Freeland argues that gore has been part of literature for as long as there has been literature, and she points to *The Iliad* as example (Freeland, 2000, p. 243). For Freeland, in graphic films the spectacle is overwhelming, so it should be considered. Gore doesn't provide moral elevation, she acknowledges, and when thinking about this in relation to US television, this placing of such graphic scenes on the 'safe' medium of US television creates tension. She states “the appreciation of the graphic sublime is participatory. And such participatory pleasure is disturbing” (Freeland, 2000, p. 243).

This disturbance relates to such scenes appearing on the safe space of US television, the scenes being enjoyed and praised in the trade and entertainment press. Such scenes can be validated and justified, by either the framing of a show as Gothic; as

having a known and reputable show runner; or falling under that contentious 'quality' drama banner - I will explore the notion of 'quality' more thoroughly in chapter 3, and graphic scenes in US television later in this chapter. Freeland goes on to explore the purpose and the function of the gory scenes, stating that the pleasure of the gore is twofold: To contribute to the plot, and to provide the visual spectacle that delights the fans. She likens them to the song and dance 'numbers' in musical theatre and film, and sees them less as interruptions to the narrative, but more to move it forward and solve problems. Freeland divides the 'numbers' into three roles. The first is to further the narrative, making them part of the structure and form. The second is to provide the central emotional effect of horror, and thirdly, to provide the aesthetic pleasures that the knowledgeable horror audience requires. Freeland states that for these numbers to be effective, they should be done sparingly, so that the audience is left wanting more. For my research, how does this operate in horror drama on US television: finding the balance between horror storytelling, character development and keeping the gory 'numbers' fresh and interesting. The serialisation of horror could potentially dampen the horror, running out the millage of zombie attacks, hungry werewolf transformations, or masked killers stalking and killing many teens. The 'numbers' could lose their potency over serialisation. The horror drama may become less about the visual shocks, and more about the story and character development.

Freeland's methodology of applying philosophy to horror is a break away from the multitude of Freudian readings of so many horror films. What the work is limited by is any explanation for why horror films might be getting gorier. She acknowledges that they are, but she does not detail any technical developments, industrial change or market pressures for films to outdo each other. What I will take forward from Freeland, is her placing of the gory numbers in the text, and asking what purpose they serve, both in the show in question and for the TV industry. For US television, this is a difficult area to navigate, more so for the commercial networks. But as I will show later with works from Jacobs and Lyons, grisly operations on *ER*, or *Nip/Tuck*, are commended and legitimised, as long as strong storytelling supports such scenes.

Isobel Pinedo argues in *Recreational Terror: Women and the Pleasures of Horror Film Viewing* (1997), that the horror film is safe. Pinedo looks at the difference between the classic and the postmodern horror monster. In the horror films that Pinedo discusses, The postmodern world is an unstable one in which traditional (dichotomous) categories break down, boundaries blur, institutions fall into question, Enlightenment narratives collapse, the inevitability of progress crumbles, and the master status of the universal (*read* male, white, monied, heterosexual) subject deteriorates (Pinedo, 1997, p. 11).

She says there are clear distinctions between the two types: classic, she claims, contain monsters that are definitely not human: ghosts, ghouls and creatures. For Pinedo, postmodern horror brought terror onto the streets of the USA, with monsters in human form – Freddie Krueger, Michael Myers, and Jason Vorhees⁴ – destabilising the worlds in which they inhabit, fracturing families, crossing the boundary between reality and dream worlds, and being totally unhindered by authority and law. She describes a crucial point to consider when thinking about the contemporary horror US television drama, the ‘safety’ that the cinema or film feature offers. “The temporally and spatially finite nature of film” renders it safe (Pinedo, 1997, p. 41). As film is a contained experience even though the monster might survive to fight in another sequel, it is contained and trapped in the ninety or so minute run of the film. The monster or threat is contained and trapped in the cinema building itself. Viewers know roughly how long the film is, they know that it ends and they go home. The film is a time bound experience, an experience both solitary and communal. The ticket holders in the movie theatre agree to ignore each other for the duration of the film; each audience member is both safe and with people, and at the same time alone watching the film (Pinedo, 1997, p. 45). This safety in the closing of the film narrative is lost in the serialisation of horror on TV. The horror is in your home, unending. With more series' being written to reward sustained viewing (Bignell, 2007; Lotz, 2014), and driven by spectacle as well as storytelling (Dunne, 2007; Nelson, 2007; Feuer, 2007), the horror form residing in the cinema can be questioned.

⁴ *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Craven, 1984); *Halloween* (Carpenter, 1978); *Friday The 13th Part II* (Milner, 1981).

Pinedo also describes the spectacle of the “ruined body” (1997, p. 51), which has infiltrated TV hospital dramas as I will cover below⁵. She says the camera pays extreme attention to the blood, the gore, the corpses, and revels in what she terms “the wet death” (1997, p. 51). Pinedo moves this on through a psychoanalytical analysis of the pleasure in seeing and not seeing, and the pleasure taken in knowing how these effects are produced. My study is not concerned with the potential effect of such scenes, but instead the move of US television to 'show' more than it used to. That is to say, how US television drama and horror drama have pushed the boundaries of seeing, and what is acceptable to see. Pinedo employs thematic, textual and psychoanalytical analysis in her methodology, and applies postmodern concepts to the modern horror film. Alongside psychoanalysis Pinedo combines her approach with audience reception⁶, and she attempts to pull the slasher film out of the depths of disrepute. For me, I see no reason to have to ‘defend’ horror in any of its media, but Pinedo’s work on the subtleties and distinctions inside the broad term ‘slasher,’ is useful for unpicking the nuances of that particular sub-genre. She says the postmodern horror presents violence as part of everyday life, that horror features transgressions of physical, moral and cultural boundaries; it must question rationality; it has a lack of narrative closure; and is a time bound experience (Pinedo, 1997). What is useful from Pinedo’s breakdown of the modern horror text are the thematic elements that can be found in the contemporary horror TV drama. While I am not assessing if a text frightens an audience or not, what I will consider through the analysis of the text and structure, is in the industrial environment of the US television industry, how the horror is carried forward: how does the US television structure of the serial drama impact on horror.

Pinedo was defensive of the disreputable slasher and so were other writers. Clover noted that horror was disregarded for being “too close to pornography,” that it was seen as misogynistic and punishing of sexually active women.

⁵ Pinedo's work is focused on horror movies that came out of the USA. There were other horror cycles that contained close up gory imagery of the human body in disarray. The cannibal cycle of horror film, and the extremely gory movies that populated European horror in the 1970s and 1980s. These cycles and trends though are outside of Pinedo's study.

⁶ Pinedo conducted observation and interviews with horror movie going fans at the cinema.

On the face of it, the relation between the sexes in slasher films could hardly be clearer. The killer is [...] distinctly male: his fury is unmistakably sexual in both roots and expression; his victims are mostly women, often sexually free and always young and beautiful ones [...] the women are brutalized in ways that come too close to real life for comfort (Clover, 1992, p. 21).

Pinedo alludes to the slasher as being the most disreputable film type of all-time and being of low budget and substandard production values (the 1970's and 1980s slashers, at least). Hutchings said that at the time of the first wave of slashers in the 1970s, few critics had anything good to say about them (Hutchings, 2004). The slasher was seen as cheap, repetitive, and pandering to an unsophisticated teenage audience. The use of the Point Of View shot, or I Camera highlighted by both Clover and Pinedo, was cause for criticism of the slasher. Placing the viewer in the place of the killer, the victims would look directly into the camera, positioning the audience in a place of guilt by association, or as Freeland stated, the disturbing "participatory pleasure." The slasher film was eventually read differently, with a feminist perspective viewing the slasher with the potential to be progressive, being as many of them had female heroes (Clover, 1992; Creed, 1993; Pinedo, 1997). Clover saw the 'final girl' as disrupting the pervious misogynistic readings of the slasher and subverting the long standing view that the slasher was not, and could not possibly be enjoyed by women. Clover looked in detail at audience pleasure and gave a new perspective on who was watching horror films and why. She challenges the opinion that the horror movie was only watched and enjoyed by teenage males, sadistically viewing the women on screen as they were tortured and killed. Clover demonstrated that the horror audience was complex and varied. This is useful when considering the audience demographics for US television horror: the US television executives and the advertisers are chasing the most valuable, the most profitable audiences, which horror can provide. I will engage with this idea in much more detail in chapter 3, but for now, I will review Clover's work more generally.

Clover challenges Mulvey's male gaze / sadistic voyeur theory, instead arguing that both the male and female audience members identify with the female hero as screen surrogate. Her work is limited by only a cursory observation of horror fans, which means

that her conclusions are subjective. However, her recognition of horror archetypes are useful for when I choose my case studies: it will help me to explain why I choose certain case studies over other ones. Both Clover's and Pinedo's work on the identification of the screen characters by the (revealed to be varied) horror audience is challenged by the contemporary horror drama on US television. With US television seeking specific audience demographics, and demographics that are valuable, the previously perceived teenage male horror viewer has been actively rethought.

This section has considered works that cover the horror genre and its many archetypes. Freeland looked at the aesthetics of the horror genre and the need to acknowledge the graphic scenes and their function. Pinedo's work on the safety of the horror film needs reworking as horror texts on TV are stretched across weeks, months, even years. Pinedo's work on the spectacle of the "ruined body" is directly applicable to the study of the horror drama, and the place of the "ruined body" on in particular, network US television. Pinedo also offers thematic breakdown of the contemporary horror text, themes that can be identified in the horror dramas found on US television. These thematic elements are useful when I choose my case studies, and to continue to challenge the assumption that horror belongs in the cinema. Clover presents us with more thematic breakdown, in particular reference to the slasher and its disreputably. Important to the study of horror on US television is Clover's work on the demographic breakdown of the horror audience, and how it is not, as thought, merely teenage boys. This is important to the US television industry, which seeks out the most valuable viewing demographic, those with the spending power to either afford the monthly subscription or the products advertised in the commercial breaks. The limits of these models rest in that they are works about film. But they do reveal key archetypes; the function of graphic horror; and highlight the potential of the horror audience demographic. Important to the positioning of my study, is the lack of industrial context – even though these are works about film. Next, I will move on to the US television industry, to open up the debate about horror on US television, and the industrial influences on it.

2.1.2 US television Industry

The US television industry has been written about in many frameworks. From the historical charting of its development (Barhow, 1975), to the worrisome effects that US television has on politics and society (Postman, 1985). These sociological and historical views have slowly given way to studies that consider how the US television industry functions in itself and what it produces, rather than how it is apparently bad for us, or inferior to cinema. As US television has had to shift and morph to compete with other media – the Internet, games, mobile technology – the impact these pressures have had on the medium and its outlays have become the focus for many writers, critics and scholars. Curtin & Shattuc (2009) explain in their work the connections between US television production, the changing advertising industry and the evolving distribution of US television. They also allude to the US television industry becoming more attracted to genre US television, and the branching out into the hailing of smaller audience sections.

There will be many more works on the US television industry and the development of drama discussed in more detail in particular in Chapter 4. These works will be better positioned in there when I account for the rise of horror on US television, as they will assist in providing a full and detailed context and evidence for this. The central and most useful work that will help me approach the industrial context comes from Amanda Lotz work, *The US television Will Be Revolutionized* (2014). The industrial context of the horror drama is an element of understanding that is crucial to this study. The ever-changing landscape of the US television industry has as effect on what the drama output will, or can be. What channel a programme is on and its target demographic; programming policy or how long a creative leash a channel or network allows its show runners; where in the schedule a drama is to be placed; the economic model of the channel; the advertising industry; technological developments in production, distribution and reception; are all factors that contribute to the making of dramas and what form the drama will take. Lotz examines the changes to the US television industry considering technical developments, changing industrial practice, audience uses and business models. Lotz lays out the major changes across US television that fueled the development of the medium into what we know now. Lotz analyses the business

models, personal experience, audience uses and technological advancements of a selection of channel across all three tiers of US television – free to air commercial network, basic cable, and premium subscription channels and services (Netflix, Hulu etc.). For Lotz, developing technology has changed the form and function of US television. From second screen viewing, widescreen HDTVs demanding wide composition and richly textured mise en scene, and the increasing complexity of serial stories, as people store up libraries of their “prized content” (Lotz, 2014, p. 12), and watch at their leisure. Lotz chooses a selection of case studies to elaborate on the changing form of US television. Looking at (amongst others) *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998 – 2004); *The Shield* (FX, 2002 – 2008); and *Survivor* (CBS, 2000 -), Lotz considers the industrial concerns that influenced these programs, and in turn, what followed. As a methodological point, Lotz chooses case studies that represent a range across the ratings. Some of the shows did well, some did not. As a method, this works to keep the exploration and argument in balance. The changes to and in the TV industry does not automatically mean that everything it produces will be successful or groundbreaking. US television is still a risky business. So, to choose only dramas or programs that are Emmy award winning, would render the work biased.

However, as much as the explanations that Lotz gives of the TV industry and its changes is useful to this study, for understanding how and why drama in its current form has come about, Lotz does not explore any horror series in her study. Lotz provides the essential breakdown of business, changing habits and technical shifts, and in my thesis, I will apply some of Lotz theories and methods to horror. In doing this, I will fill the gap which was left open by the literature reviewed towards the end of this chapter: in Waller (1987); Hills (2005); and Jowett & Abbott (2012). What is most useful from Lotz's work are her models of the eras of US television. I am placing my research in the post-network era, for this is where the most pertinent changes and developments have taken place. I will continue to revisit and engage much more deeply with Lotz's work throughout this thesis, as she provides me with solid industrial pinpoints and explanations for what has happened over the previous twenty years. I am also taking influence from Lotz in the choosing of my case studies. While my central argument is

that horror has become a cornerstone of US television, not everything made is a success. My case studies will cover texts that in the first instance are taken from the three tiers of TV, and also of varying success rates, with varying amounts of season renewal, to give a fuller picture of contemporary horror TV drama.

2.1.3 US television Drama.

A huge body of work has developed that covers drama on US television. A body so large that I have had to draw some stark lines in how much I can cover in both the scope of this literature review and in the following chapters of this thesis. Michelle Hilmes in *Only Connect* (2001) covers the history of broadcasting in the USA and considers the place and development of drama. Feur, Kerr & Vahimagi (1984) explore the Mary Tyler Moore company, MTM Entertainment, its output and the birth of 'quality TV,' a theme revisited by Dunne (2007) and Nelson (2007), when they consider the problems of the growing trends of expensive dramas and the need for 'quality US television.' This notion of 'quality' is where US television might be viewed as overlapping with film; the notions of quality work as justifications for taking US television more seriously. Horror is of course, not included in scholarship around quality, as it is not regarded as so, not even on film, as we have seen with the disreputability as described above by Wood (1988), Tudor (1989), Hutchings (2004), Clover (1992), and Pinedo (1997). There were some scholars talking about horror on US television, which I will get to towards the end of this chapter. For now, I want to concentrate on drama more generally. Anderson considers the impact that HBO dramas had on the perceived cultural hierarchy of US television dramas and subscription channels (2008). This was followed up with works that covered the spread of the "slow – burn" drama (Smith, 2011) into cable US television (Jaramillo, 2012). Writers have also put together accounts that come direct from those involved in US television. TV critic Alan Sepinwall (2012), and journalist Brett Martin (2014), both looked behind the scenes and compiled biographical career journeys of those that made the dramas that have apparently "changed TV forever" (Sepinwall, 2012).

The development of drama as a product of the industrial changes, is explored further in Trisha Dunleavy's *TV Drama: Form, Agency, and Innovation* (2009). This work provides

useful discussion of the commercial infrastructure of US television – in both the UK and the USA (I can leave aside the work on UK drama in Dunleavy's study, as I am focusing on the USA). Dunleavy looks at dramas and how they are affected by the industrial models. Dunleavy states that the developing complexity of drama storytelling through the growth of the serial is a result of the immense competition that has been created by the expanding number of channels and choices available. This has forced channels and networks to allow more creative autonomy, for the free to air networks and later the basic cable channels, to take more risks in their drama content. Dunleavy's uses a methodology that features theoretical approaches from Todorov and Propp to explain the changing and developing narrative forms. She combines this with a textual analysis of the changing aesthetics of drama programming. While Dunleavy provides a more specific look at the industrial effect on drama, focusing in even further than Lotz on the industrial shifts and its effects on drama in particular, Dunleavy does not discuss any examples of TV horror. At the time of writing, Dunleavy could have covered, for example, *American Gothic* (CBS, 1995 – 1996), or *True Blood* (HBO, 2008 - 2014). To take forward from Dunleavy is the clear effect that industrial development has on drama, and I will expand on Dunleavy' specific look at drama, to look specifically at horror.

2.1.4 Show runners and creative autonomy.

The creative autonomy as cited by Dunleavy can be argued to have its roots in film, with the theory of the film auteur. The idea that a personal 'stamp' can be seen from the director, as s/he holds creative control over the visual and audio components of a film. Writing in 1980, Prawer's work on the Gothic screen works clearly acknowledges the influence of the auteur. Prawer conducts a study of the relationship of horror and the classic movie *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Weine, 1921). His approach is to define horror through the lens of German Expressionism, and he centers his analysis on the uncanny, obsession and fear.

Through detailed thematic and stylistic analysis of key scenes from *The Omen* (Donner, 1976); *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Kaufman, 1978); and *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), Prawer looks at what the personnel brought to the films in question, through their choice

of iconography, shots, lighting, makeup etc. However, Praver does not recognise that horror is either cyclical, nor does he recognise the big studio movements that created sizable horror libraries: Hammer Horror, or the Universal monster pictures. Much of his critique only considers the influences of *Caligari*, which makes for a very narrow approach. Although attempting to deal with the origins of horror through the one film (*Caligari*) limits the study, Praver considers horror on US television and cites Dan Curtis as an auteur. The power of the TV (or even film) auteur however, is contested, as US television drama production is largely a team effort. The single authorial voice in each text he considers, in particular for US television, while difficult for TV considering the collaborative nature of US television, is a promotional tool that has been adopted into contemporary TV drama⁷. The “creative control” that an auteur, or as we term it now for US television drama, a show runner, or big-name writer / producer hyphenates, can bring, is pushed to the forefront of discourse and promotion around expensive, and often violent and explicit dramas. In her chapter 'The Writer / Producer in American US television' (2005), Roberta Pearson discusses the director / writer / producer (showrunner) and the development of the figure, as US television has developed across the last 30 or so years. Pearson points to “the transformation of the industry resulted in the US television writer – producer, or hyphenate in *Variety* – speak, playing a much more prominent role [...] than previously” (Pearson, 2005, p. 11). Approaching the hyphenate through the reception of Joss Whedon and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB / UPN, 1997 – 2003), Pearson considers the industrial use of the hyphenate to attract the right demographic via the “star image” of Whedon. After covering the previous industrial constraints of the three-network oligopoly, Pearson notes the lack of creative autonomy offered to programme creators, sticking as the networks did to traditional programming strategies. Now, says Pearson, the hyphenates have relative freedom, resulting from the industrial changes across US television. “The producer’s relationship

⁷ It is difficult to claim authorship in US television, as the process of production is a team effort. However, as I will explore in the case studies, the addition of ‘big names’ from either film (Frank Darabont, Eli Roth), or those with a strong back catalogue of US television success (Ryan Murphy), authorship is embraced as part of promotional strategy. All three of my case studies harness the cultural cache of the known author, and present them as showrunner, as the mastermind as it were, of the series in question. The question of whether or not one person can author a TV serialisation or not is not pertinent to this debate, but it is worth looking at the strategies of US TV channels and online platforms as they push the idea of authorship to, as I will explore, legitimate their horror series.

with the network has changed [...] networks offer hyphenates greater creative freedom, but at the same time place increasing demands on them” (Pearson, 2005, p. 22). Pearson's methodology centers on a case study of *Buffy*, and she approaches this through the fan reception and she considers the trade and entertainment press. While her work leans towards audience and fan studies and does not cover the contemporary horror serial, the viewing of a show through the lens of the industrial context in which it is made, and the value of a show has for its parent network, is useful. A key change in taking US television seriously has come from critics and scholars foregrounding the creative personnel. The creative or artistic merit of the show runner legitimises the graphic content. I will cover this again below, with work from Jacob and Lyons.

In his 2001 paper, *Practical Film Theory and its Application to TV Series Dramas*, Barry Salt discusses the methods of applying film analysis to US television drama, through the deconstruction of the text. The film is “susceptible to simple analysis because of the ways [it] is constructed” (2001, p. 98). He applies that same systematical stylistic analysis to US television dramas (specifically the soap opera), from the UK, Australia, the US and Finland. Salt seeks to find out if TV drama is uniform – if the perceived industrial production line turnout and apparent lack of creativity results in a standard set of soap drama elements and styles. Salt's approach is that the analytical process should “reverse the process of the composition of the work” (2001, p. 99), and to look only at what is there, to not add on or read into it, any unnecessary theory. Salt says to employ the terms of the industry, and to not make up new ones. Salt is not concerned with audience response, and there is no need either for Freudian readings of a text (Salt, 2001, p. 99). Instead Salt focuses on the shots and composition of the case study dramas he uses. As part of his methods he identifies the significant features of the soap opera genre. By looking at it statistically, he can lay down solid descriptions of the texts he studies and be bold in doing so. The soap he claims, is recognizable because,

Each episode of a soap opera can be simply described as part of an incomplete play, or better as an endless string of Second Acts which involve the doings of a whole group of protagonists of equal importance, rather than the standard one or two leading characters (Salt, 2001, p. 101).

Salt goes on to statistically break down elements of the production: how often a hand-held camera is used, and how this depends on the director's instruction. In considering the soap, Salt reveals that there is indeed a formula to the series that he considers and reveals the industrial 'norms' of the soap opera, alongside the individual contribution of differing directors. Salt's work offers me an approach that considers both the industrial and individual effect on the soap. What Salt does not offer however, is a way of looking at the long form drama that has more time in its shooting schedule and a larger budget. It is also limited for my work by its spread across differing nations. Neither does he consider how technological changes and developments mean that US television drama has become less run-of-the-mill than it used to be. Nor does he consider market and economic pressures, such as what Lotz and Dunleavy describe as pushing the creative scope of TV dramas. His article was published in 2001 and so can be reworked and applied to horror. The grounding of the process of case study analysis in the deconstruction of the case study text, staying within the industrial terms and conditions in which the case study was / is made, will contribute to my study of the industrial impact on the contemporary horror drama.

This section so far has looked at works that consider the impact of industrial changes on drama programming. Lotz detailed the changes to the US television industry and give a timeline and framework within which to work. The effect of increasing competition and choice was explored by Dunleavy, and the expanding creative autonomy afforded to personnel as they create new dramas in the ever-growing market. I will look at how this creative freedom has affected the horror drama. Praver considers the now obsolete auteur theory and applies it to Dan Curtis and his Gothic US television texts. While this is limited, Praver is considering the influence of what is now a showrunner. Salt takes a more systematic approach to the soap drama and its production and demonstrates that different directors will have an influence on the overall look and feel of the text. Salt points to the importance of the deconstruction of the text within its industrial and practical perimeters. That is to say, there is no need to read into a text any convoluted meanings that are not actually there. So much of work on horror (film) is centered on reading allegorical and symbolic meanings into the text; and while contemporary horror

TV dramas are a veritable goldmine of allegorical meaning for those scholars that want to look for it that is not what this thesis will do. I am going to look at the development of the horror drama and its place in the growing library of US television drama, and its place in the screen horror canon.

2.1.5 Spectacle.

One of the more obvious developments in drama programming is the increase in visual storytelling. By which I mean the shift from an emphasis on dialogue and the 'aural' nature of TV, to the increasing emphasis on the visual. The industrial standard is now one of increased skill in the visual effects departments, and the overt exhibition and promotion of this skill. It is not just dragons and historical landscapes that have become commonplace on US television (*Game of Thrones*, HBO, 2011 -; *Boardwalk Empire*, HBO, 2010 - 2014), it is also the more intimate visuals, the close-up shots of cutting edge special effects that feature in the more horrific end of the spectrum. In order to understand this, I want to look at where the increasing use and importantly, the acceptability of the gory close up has come from. In his work *Body Trauma TV: The New Hospital Dramas* (2003), Jason Jacobs chronologically charts the development of the medical / hospital drama. From the "paternal era" of the hospital dramas that featured the trustworthy, effective and mentoring white male middle class doctor, who were wise and could solve moral dilemmas as well as heal the sick; typified in dramas like *Dr Kildare* (USA, 1961 – 1966). Then came the "conflict era" in dramas like *St Elsewhere* (NBC, 1982 – 1988), in which the medical drama aligned itself with the counter culture, with those in the 1960s and 1970s that defined themselves as being antiestablishment, unwilling to do what 'The Man' told them to do. In this era of medical dramas, doctors were beginning to lose control. These dramas were much more explicit in their dealing with gritty, and realistic issues – abortion, drug abuse, and homosexuality. Then the new era of the "apocalyptic" medical drama, where the 100% trust in doctors and medicine is lost. This era, typified by *ER* (NBC, 1994 – 2009), *Chicago Hope* (CBS, 1004- 2000) and *Gideon's Crossing* (ABC, 2000 – 2001), was part of the growing trend of 'realism' being

tackled in dramas across TV⁸. For the hospital drama, the pressure and the trauma and the horror that the staff face every day, is depicted in graphic detail (Jacobs, 2003). The more recent “apocalyptic” version of the medical drama for Jacobs, their purpose was not to reassure, but to disturb the viewer. Jacobs takes a historical and cultural approach and places the changing hospital drama alongside changing social and political movements. This work, while clearly not about horror, is useful as a way of understanding the rising trend of graphic scenes on US television. Jacobs' methodology is an aesthetic and thematic analysis of the chosen case studies, in particular his work on the seeping of what he describes as ‘body horror,’ into the primetime hospital drama. Jacobs demonstrates how gory body horror permeates these series', and forms part of the structure and texture of these popular shows. He argues that,

We are offered the body horror traditionally associated with the horror film genre, in the context of medical care. The doctors slice open and insert tubes into the traumatized body, electrocuting it in order to bring it back to health and life. (Jacobs, 2003, p. 69).

Jacobs notes that body horror in these shows is finding a “mainstream audience” because the “meaning is framed in such a fashion.” This meaning is one of positivity and healing, and that to show a scene of similar visual or visceral content inside another narrative or symbolic frame, it would be rendered gratuitous and “violent destruction” (Jacobs, 2003, p. 69). Horror to the body in high profile hospital drama, at the hands of a handsome healing doctor, is acceptable. This lays the foundations for horror on US television, making both audience and industry ready for increasing visual gore. For my work, Jacobs's book is limited in that he is not discussing a horror series. He merely describes the re-appropriation of horror elements into another drama form. His application of the term ‘body horror’ is also somewhat misplaced. While the scenes he talks about are horror concerning the body, the term body horror has more association

⁸ Realism within these dramas refers to the text, the art, representing what a person might expect from a real-life situation. In the case of these hospital dramas, the physical traumas of the emergency room are as bloody as they are shocking. For horror, when I refer to realism, I mean the depictions of horror that are consistent with expectations from outside the text. Horror does not reflect actual real life – there are no living dead – but what a zombie might look like after three years of rot; how a wolf might emerge from a human; how skin might look if it was deep fried; all of these depictions work hard to present realism of the matter at hand. While fantastical, they are as true to life as if they were real. Therefore, the horror presented in my case studies presents a high degree of realism.

with the works of David Cronenberg's *The Fly* 1986, or movies like *Alien* (Scott, 1979); or *Braindead* (Jackson, 1992). Jacobs's description of the graphic scenes would work better and more consistently within theories of horror and visual pleasure, as explored by Clover and Pinedo, or the genre pleasures gained from such scenes as described by Cynthia Freeland. While these scenes when placed in a horror drama provide the pleasures as described by Freeland, on US television they function more like an interruption to the already established US television drama form that the horror is taking. The gory scene interrupts the form of the medical drama. The traumatised patients at death's door interrupt the interweaving character relationships that arc over the series. The same happens inside the contemporary horror drama. The horrific scenes interrupt the soap opera like characterisation and story arcs, which develop across the series. Zombie attacks, for instance, mean that complex character interaction is put to one side while the immediate threat is eliminated. The characters fight, then continue with their inter-group bickering, once the zombie herd is scattered in various body parts around the scene.

What is useful from Jacobs work is the point that these hospital dramas that featured the gory scenes were part of the door opening for horror in its current form to appear on US television. That the kinds of scenes that are common in the horror now on US television first appeared in the 'softer' genres, marked the changes in content that paved the way for the horror at the focus of this study. This bloodier imagery on the softer genres open the door by aligning the imagery with realism – it is acceptable to show such scenes because it legitimizes them by tying it up with realism. The horror drama challenges this notion. By adding the visceral scenes to a hospital drama, the result is a stronger feeling of realism. By adding such scenes into horror – zombies, vampire attacks, and complicated murder set pieces – it becomes less realistic. That is to say, by adding in vast zombie hordes or convincing human to wolf shapeshifting, the realism is lost, becoming fantastical and make believe. I will engage further with these drama developments in chapter 4. In addition to this I will take from Jacobs the methodological approach of combining aesthetic and thematic analysis, when considering the horror drama in its contemporary form.

This practice of disguising horror as something else, continued in drama that was again associated with the medical. James Lyons in his paper *Miami Slice: Surgical Shocking's in Nip/Tuck* (2007), points to the redressing of graphic horror scenes inside the medical drama with overtones of the Gothic. Lyons also discussed the trend towards elevating a text despite controversial content, via the authorial vision of its showrunner. *Nip/Tuck* was framed in the press and by critics as Gothic and likened to the works of Bram Stoker. Lyons discusses how much this worked in creator Ryan Murphy's favor. It means that *Nip/Tuck* can evade disapproval of such scenes, and the Gothic can "frame the show's grisliness as in keeping with a theatrical and literary Gothic heritage." This framing "enables the show to be interpreted in the context of an established literary genre" (Lyons, 2007, p. 5). *Nip/Tuck* combined the realism of the brutality of cosmetic surgery with the more unrealistic narrative wanderings. It can be argued then, that *Nip/Tuck* as far as horror goes, marks a transitional point for both the horror genre on US television, and for the horror path that Ryan Murphy would carve on US television. Not only did the series showcase the invasive surgery and gory scenes, it combined the medical drama with horror, the Gothic and soap style family and friends / relationship drama. This use of the Gothic, or rather, the framing of the show as Gothic, means that the body horror of the invasive cosmetic surgery, which is not healing and is as the show suggests, the product of a rather disturbed society, is acceptable. The veneer of acceptability or prestige that the Gothic places on scenes or series of horror, means that as an element of horror, it is one that is very easily assimilated into US television drama. Unlike Jacobs, Lyons explores why *Nip/Tuck* appeared on FX and what the show did to attract a certain audience – an audience that was valuable to the channel and to the advertisers that fund it. Instead of merely highlighting the use of horror as part of a medical drama, Lyons takes an industrial approach by assessing the market competition and the influences that this had on FX and the creation of *Nip/Tuck*. Lyons combines both industrial analysis and textual analysis, to fully explain the place of the show on US television. While Lyons likens *Nip/Tuck* to the Gothic, and he does this through the trade press articles that did indeed frame the show as such, Lyons does not fully explain what this Gothic is, in the show. However, what I will take forward from Lyons work on

Nip/Tuck is like Jacobs work, the increasing goriness across US television and the infiltration of horror and its imagery, opens of the door for horror. If like Lyons says, and to extent what Jacobs implicitly says, that these shows are influenced by horror, then I would argue that horror is in turn, influenced by these shows: by the structure and the legitimisation of grisly images through the placing of them inside something else. Be that intense and complex character development, through the Gothic, or even through soap style story arcs. As part of his methodology, Lyons rightly points out the problems of attempting multi season analysis. Each is different, and with its own set of characteristics. The personnel – show runners, writers and directors change from series to series, sometimes from episode to episode – to keep things fresh. Sometimes the networks make these changes to refashion the show after success or after ratings failures (Lyons, 2007, p. 6). Lyons methodological approach of combining industrial and textual analysis I will take forward and employ in my methodology.

Across the works on the US television industry and its drama content horror is generally not included. This could be because horror just was not a significant part of US television, and the networks and channels simply didn't know where to place it. Horror has carried with it an element of disrepute. Blamed in the press for inspiring real life violence, glorifying serial killers or like as Clover said, being just that little bit too close to pornography, writers may not want to align themselves with something that is less than honorable. This cultural snobbery could be a reason as to why horror has until now been left out of works on drama – especially drama that has been given that 'quality' handle. If TV drama is being elevated and flattered, then the murky reputation of horror is not going to help. Horror is however, on the periphery of scholarship about drama on US television, in the recognition of dramas borrowing from horror or the Gothic. Another other issue is that horror is difficult to define. Horror fans spend endless amounts of time debating what horror is – is it mainstream, underground, is it allowed to be funny? Does it need to be scary? Gory? Or is horror whatever cycle is getting the most blanket marketing at a given moment: for example, in the 1970s and 1980s, slasher franchises were horror. In the early 2000s it was zombies. For TV horror then, the genre is even more slippery, crossing over as it does with science fiction, fantasy, period and Gothic

drama, medical dramas and suspense thrillers. So while I am not attempting to define horror, I am going to have choose my case studies with this in mind, and so I will choose case studies according to what the trade press cite as horror.

2.1.6 US television Horror.

Bringing together the disparate elements discussed so far, this final section of the literature review will focus on works that have already tackled horror on US television. Like horror film, horror on US television has in the main, been discussed by other writers through the framework of social and cultural lenses. Apart from Kenneth Muir's 2001 two book *Terror US television*, a complete reference library of all horror TV shows from 1970 – 1999, work on TV horror has looked for what the texts and stories and characters all mean. Brigid Cherry's edited collection of essays investigates vampires and the Southern Gothic through detailed analysis of *True Blood* (HBO, 2008 – 2014), and seeks to understand the cultural and social anxieties reflected in the series. Similarly, Dawn Keetley's edited collection *We're All Infected* (2014) questions what *The Walking Dead* is really all about: is it a cowboy parable; about unchecked police brutality in America; or the very real social fears about running out of fuel, global pandemic and terrorism. While these books look closely from a sociological and cultural, even psychological viewpoint at specific US television shows, more generally TV horror has been amalgamated into the broader area of 'cult' or fantasy US television. Johnson (2005) and Lavery (2010) both mention horror on US television but in a passing way, and when talking about shows like *The X Files* (FOX, 1993 -), or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB / UPN, 1997 – 2003), which leads to both a lack of focus on horror and a confusion as what horror actually is on US television.

In his 1987 essay on the made for US television movie in the late 1970s, Gregory Waller first describes a range of the types of horror on US television – the adaptations, the anthologies, the imitations of cinema⁹ – before focusing in on the made for TV movie.

⁹ De Palma's 1976 *Carrie* ignited a flurry of TV pieces about telekinesis; the Bermuda Triangle and its mysteries was enjoying much tabloid press attention; and the myriad vampire, werewolves, and stalk and slash movies and updated monster pictures, that were all influencing the TV feature.

Waller's work takes a sympathetic view towards the restrictions on language and adult situations, and the schedule constraints (for both making the movies and finding where to place them on the schedule), in the era of wholly commercial US television. Waller also recognises the potential for the structure of commercial network US television to have a diluting effect on the horror, interrupted as it is by commercial breaks. For Waller, this interruption forms part of the censorship of such horror telefilms, and gives the example from *Devil Dog: The Hound of Hell* (CBS, 1978), stating that,

Through a strategically placed commercial break prohibits us from seeing exactly what happens after she is trapped with and by the dog behind a closed bedroom door (Waller, 1987, p. 157).

The diluting of horror by the commercial breaks not only acts as a form of censorship, but also support the network policy in terms of what is 'normal.' For Waller, the adverts for household cleaners and new family cars, bring the viewer back to the network's perceived idea of normal, and the TV industry's perceived idea of the audience that is watching the show in question. This bringing back to normal is a key function of the made for TV horror movies that Waller analyses. He states that the audience as visualised by the networks is the white middle class audience; what is normal in "US television terms." Through textual analysis Waller examines the made for TV movie text and identifies four distinct types, or themes, within the horror telefilm form. He sees the films that concern a solitary victim, in these, says Waller, the monster usually lives. He sees the masculine investigator TV movie, where the monster represents the protagonist's problems. He reads pseudo feminism into the works about vulnerable wives, and finally, the besieged suburban nuclear family. A reaction, says Waller, to the social fears and anxiety around the rising divorce rates and more women choosing career over family. Waller's methodology sees him viewing the made for TV horror through the lens of both the industrial context in which it was made, and the textual and thematic analysis of a selection of case studies (including *The Strange Possession of Mrs Oliver*, NBC, 1977; *Stranger in our House*, NBC, 1978; and *Invitation to Hell*, ABC, 1984). He discusses the TV structures and how they affect the horror and notes the restrained nature of the texts. He makes the comparison to cinema horror and the changes that are taking place there: how the limits of the R Rating was expanding and

opening the door for much more gorier features – *Night of the Living Dead*, Romero, 1986; *The Exorcist*, Friedkin, 1974; and *Friday the 13th*, Cunningham, 1980. Compared to cinema, says Waller, the horror on US television was “indirect horror.” (p. 148).

But for Waller this was not a bad thing. Through close textual analysis of the telefilms he argues that the lack of special effects, the use of slow motion, saturation, negative exposure and superimpositions, and the zoom ins to draw attention to specific details, all render the director and the camera and therefore the viewer, as holders of a hidden truth (pp. 148 – 149). The personal and domestic aspect of US television itself is mirrored in the personal and domestic closeness to the ‘every man’ that feature in the 1970s telefilms. Pointing to Spielberg’s *Duel* (1971), and the character at centre of the text, Daniel Mann, as a victim of evil and horror that is merely a problem. Not affecting society at large, the made for TV movies resemble the cop shows of the time. With networks wanting to stick to the series structure – where the monsters (or problems) change but the protagonists live to fight another day. The horror is there, says Waller, but restrained, small, indirect, and compressed to fit in with the drama form of the commercial network US television.

Writing about telefilms in the network era in 1987 means that there were no alternatives for Waller to consider. Waller touches upon the constraints of the networks, but does not really say what they are, or indeed why. He states several times that the telefilms are at the mercy of the commercial structure of the channels – advert breaks – but the work is missing a detailed look at the commercial influence on the content of the telefilm itself. That is to say, why advertising companies might not want to support stronger horror. In chapter 3, I will expand on why this has changed, and how the advertisers have now changed their attitude to backing and funding the stronger horror text.

While the discussion of what the impact of network era on horror in terms of dilution and interruption is right, it needs updating to cover the developments in US television that have happened since. Waller is focusing on the made for TV horror movie, and not the horror TV series / serial, or anthology. My case studies will be horror serialisations.

Waller through his categorisation of the types of TV horror, does so through their relation to cinema. He vaguely says that horror telefilms are re-appropriating cinema horror, but not why they might do so. He does not suggest why the networks might follow cinema trends. The connection between the disreputability of the horror film and the struggles of the schedulers is only touched upon. However, unlike other works on TV horror as I will review next, Waller's view is still sympathetic and recognises the texts for what they have managed to achieve. The small scale and budgets what they may lack in comparison to the cinema feature, in terms of special effects and verisimilitude, they make up in generic exploration. For Waller the made for TV horror films would prey "upon one human being whose situation falls outside the province and the power of socially sanctioned authorities." The horror is personal – no epic cataclysmic breakdown (Waller, 1987, p. 150). For Waller, US television offers a medium in which horror and its generic conventions can be expanded, and not crushed as some other scholars suggest. Waller's approaches the telefilm in its context and therefore does not find it lacking in comparison to cinema – Waller uses the cinema comparison to merely categorize the telefilm. This approach is useful to my study of horror on US television. Waller's work might be dated but it illustrates the changes and the usefulness in considering the different and ever shifting industrial conditions and what effect this has on the horror US television text.

Nearly 20 years later, and Matt Hills in *The Pleasures of Horror* (2005), tackles horror on US television again, but this time the extended serial rather than the telefilm and takes a discursive approach to the audience and reception of horror. Asking not what horror is but where it is, Hills considers the circulation of horror and the "cultural exchange" that occurs between fans. Hills does not concern himself with any emotional affect that horror might have, true horror fans after all, says Hills, don't get scared. But instead through the discourse around horror Hills explores the notions of "connoisseurship" around the genre. For Hills there is too much tension between horror and the US television as a "family and domestic medium" meaning horror can never truly 'fit' on TV (Hills, 2005, p.118). He says that advert breaks and news breaks dampen horror. Hills considers the fans and reception of TV horror, rather than the horror TV series themselves, or the

industry in which they are in and the constraints and limitations which that might bring to bear.

For Hills the pleasure of horror is in the surrounding practice and discourse from the fans. Because this fan practice is part of a sub culture, and horror on TV is mainstream, then the two cannot gel together. Hills leaves to one side the cognitive, allegorical, and psychological theoretical approaches to horror, and instead focusses on the depth of knowledge that some fans possess, and how the 'real' fans make themselves known. In his chapter that specifically looks at horror on US television, Hills sees TV as a place where horror can only be judged through what it lacks, what it does not offer fans. Hills methodology takes in fan forums and message boards, publications and fanzines. He looks at a selection of examples – *The X-Files*; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990 - 1991). However, in the choices of case study that he looks at, he restricts himself to network US television, and does not say that this is part of his approach or why. At the time of writing there were a wealth of other channels to choose from, and more horror series to choose from. In his discussion of US television horror programming in the mid to late 1990s, Hills cites Stephen King's 1981 work, *Danse Macabre*, in which King writes about horror programming in the 1970s. King's work overall attempts to get to the bottom of why we enjoy horror. In his chapter on horror TV, King takes the perspective from the outset that TV is bad for you. Not only does US television spoil stories, according to King, it spoils you too. King looks at horror on US television from a historical and biographical approach, explaining how the personnel failed at their attempts to make horror on US television. King states that the networks "neuter horror, and that horror on US television must somehow horror without horrifying." Claiming that on TV horror is "all sizzle and no steak" (King, 1981, p. 252). King's lack of satisfaction with the TV adaptations of his literary works, leaves his view on horror US television somewhat biased. Rather than looking at horror on US television in its context King merely seeks out what it is that TV horror lacks, when compared with his own literary works. King's work, *Danse Macabre* is an influential text and is cited in many works on why people might enjoy the horror genre. The use of King in Hills study of horror US television is misplaced. King's bias against US television after his own work

was rejected (ABC dropped one of King's scripts), is not a basis on which to form a considered study of contemporary TV horror. That is to say, applying King's ire about his own rejected script to a long standing, and importantly, thoroughly enjoyed by fans series such as *The X Files* or *Buffy*, does not work as a sufficient source. Hills through his method that examines "... the complaints of horror practitioners – the professional screen writers [King, et al]" (Hills, 2005, p. 114), sets up the study to be biased and skewed towards horror on TV as lacking in comparison to cinema.

Combined with King's displeasure towards TV horror, Hills study is limited by the scope of the work. In one chapter of a book Hills cannot cover all of horror on US television and only considers commercial network US television examples of horror TV. Hills adds that TV horror is (or rather, was, at the time of his work) lacking in investment from US television production and is not marketed as such (Hills, 2005, p. 112). Hills rightly describes TV horror as a conflict between medium and genre, a tension explored in greater detail in Jowett & Abbott's work *TV Horror* in 2012, which I will cover below. Taking into consideration the year that Hills' work was published, 2005, highlights the narrow approach of the study which fails to take into account the amount of horror that was actually available for analysis at the time. Hills did not have the plethora of horror TV dramas at his disposal as I do in 2017. But there were many more that could have better answered his initial research question of where horror is (on US television). He leaves out horror offerings from basic cable and from premium / subscription. My thesis will fill this gap, as I am taking into account horror from across the models of US television that are available to me at the time of writing: free to air network, Fox; basic cable, AMC; and subscription, Netflix. Hills takes his case study texts from commercial networks only, looking at *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; *The X Files*; and *Twin Peaks*. Hills remarks on the extra-textual nature of TV horror merging with science fiction, teen drama and gothic / detective serialization, which is true for the cases he presents. But left out is a wealth of horror texts that could better fit the horror mold¹⁰. As part of Hills's deconstruction of TV horror, he cites Waller's work from 1987 as an explanation of the

¹⁰*The Hitchhiker* (HBO, 1983 – 1991); *Werewolf* (Fox, 1987 – 1988); *Tales from the Crypt* (HBO, 1998 – 1996); *Nightmare Cafe* (NBC, 1992); *Forever Knight* (CBS, 1992 – 1996); and *American Gothic* (CBS, 1992 – 1996).

restrictive constraints placed on TV horror. While this was true for the selections of texts that Waller writes about, for Hills, the TV industry has developed further by the late 1990s and early 2000s, with more horror texts on offer. While some of Hills points do tally with Waller's – the problems of censorship, the breaking of horror by the adverts and the news breaks - Hills applies the restrictive and suggestive nature of the 1970s' made for TV horror film, to the TV horror series of the 1990s. Hills aligns the horror hybrid series of the 1990s with the TV horror feature of the 1970s, and looking at the horror hybrid on only commercial network, narrows the study. In asking where horror is, for Hills, it is not on US television.

Hills claims that TV horror is not visual enough or scary enough – which contradicts his earlier point that he is not concerned with any emotional affect of horror, or the study of it – horror fans do not get scared. The true fans that Hills uses in his methodology to explore the discussion and culture around horror, by their nature they are never going to value 'mainstream' horror anyway. This flaw in the methodology, along with the lack of industrial context and the misplaced use of Waller and King, leaves Hills study lacking in appropriate evidence. However, Hills discussion of the hybridity of US television horror, is useful to me. Hills considers how horror might be sitting inside another show, how it is contained and bracketed with other elements of US television. Because Hills is concerned with audience reception, he considers how the generic hybridity navigates the many fan sub groups that are potential viewers.

Generic hybridity becomes not just a way to interpolate fan audience coalitions; more than that, it is a way of managing the discursive hybridity or confusion that underpins the multiple positioning's and 'imagined audiences' at work around TV horror (Hills, 2005, p. 126).

Even though Hills through this and the “complaints of the practitioners” views horror as lacking, it is useful to me to consider the hybridity – which Hills sees as a problem – as it will help me in unpicking what horror is on US television now, and how that hybridity might in fact help or progress horror on US television. As I will cover with a look at graphic horror, a US television serial can legitimise graphic scenes if it is contained and

packaged as something else. This is an element that I will take forward to fully consider contemporary horror on US television.

Like Hills, Jowett & Abbott in *TV Horror: Investigating the Darker Side of the Small Screen* (2012), discuss the tensions between genre and medium and the problems of what is considered tasteful or acceptable. But what *TV Horror* does, is to consider the horror TV text not in terms of lack, but instead what it has achieved. Following Waller's more sympathetic attitude, this work challenges Hills and King by considering that US television can push horror, make it work harder, make it create more with less, and see the value the 'quieter' and 'smaller' horror can bring to the genre as a whole. Like Waller, Jowett & Abbott argue that TV horror is more like film horror than some would initially first recognise: having small budgets and tight shooting schedules, TV horror is very similar to the 'real' horror film. That is to say, the underground and low budget horror, that many horror aficionados would claim is where the genre really lies.

Jowett & Abbott's approach is to in the first instance avoid defining what TV horror is, and instead they look at a very wide scope that horror on TV covers, and across several decades. Jowett and & Abbott see the creative potential for horror on US television, as the medium offers many forms which horror can take – serials, anthologies, single plays - and the capacity for storytelling potential. Jowett & Abbott recognise the problems inherent with US television: censorship, commercials, scheduling etc. But for them, their central argument is that horror has always been at home on US television and in many guises. Importantly to their focus, horror on US television does not always, and certainly does not have to, emulate horror film, or even be scary. Jowett & Abbott use textual and stylistic analysis to chart chronologically, horror on both American and British US television. This method serves their central argument well – that horror is there, has always been there and sometimes in disguise. The number of case studies cited in the work is vast: Jowett & Abbott cover the extensive use of horror iconography across US television, from children's programming to medical drama to Gothic adaptation, and the stylistic interpretation of such imagery as horror. Jowett & Abbott recognise the shifts brought to drama after the success of shows on HBO, like *The Sopranos* (1999 – 2007);

True Blood (2008 – 2014); and *Deadwood* (2004 – 2006) and lay the foundations of such large scale shows like *The Walking Dead* directly at HBO's door, and recognise the prestige of the literary classic and their adaptation to a US television horror text. This is one of the few accounts of the contemporary and large scale horror shows on US television in the years since 2010, but because of the time of writing, *The Walking Dead* had only just started, and the many horror shows that followed are not discussed. Jowett & Abbott only touch upon the first season of *The Walking Dead*. At the time of writing for me, the show has completed and aired its seventh season, and the eighth is in production and soon to be aired, and has a spinoff show, *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC, 2015 -). The background knowledge of horror on US television that this book offers me is useful. How the genre has developed and its place on US television is well illustrated. What is lacking is a full and concise look at what the horror serial is now on US television. This background knowledge I will take with me as I look at the contemporary TV horror text. More importantly is the extensive thematic and stylistic analysis that the authors undertake that lay out the horror themes and structures that are common to US television. By understanding what horror on US television has been, I can see much more clearly what it has become; what elements of older horror on US television have become part of the contemporary horror primetime drama, and crucially, what is new. Jowett & Abbott's selection of case studies is both plentiful and occasionally stretched. In response, I will still choose the case study method, but I will narrow it down and focus in on three series, so as to be much more detailed about each one in my approach and analysis.

Helen Wheatley's detailed work *Gothic US television* (2006) argues that the Gothic is ideally suited to US television, as both primarily deal in the domestic. Family secrets, personal traumas, and the domestic space, are places where literally and figuratively, the Gothic and US television can be found. Like Jowett & Abbott, Wheatley concurs that there are many types of Gothic TV¹¹. Wheatley accounts for the prestige that the Gothic brings, the literary credibility, or as Robin Nelson suggests, the Gothic brings with it style

¹¹ Found in sitcoms like *The Munsters* (CBS, 1964 – 1965), and *The Addams Family* (ABC, 1964 – 1966); soaps *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966 – 1971); and the new American Gothic, found in highly televisual cross genre shows.

and aesthetic disposition. To watch and fully enjoy these shows, the viewer must be media literate (Nelson, 1997; Wheatley, 2006). Wheatley explores the shift in US television drama as moving away from the lowest common denominator. She cites shows like *Twin Peaks*; *The X Files*; *Millennium* (FOX, 1996 – 1999); *Brimstone* (FOX, 1999 – 1999); *Kingdom Hospital* (ABC, 2004); *American Gothic* (CBS, 1995 – 1996). In particular she looks at *Twin Peaks* as an important moment in drama, in terms of Caldwell's 'televisuality.' *Twin Peaks* (and the Gothic and horror US television more generally), is a stage upon which channels can display new and cutting-edge technology and techniques. As Caldwell noted that such US television is produced as a response to competition (Caldwell, 1995), the importance of Gothic TV and horror TV in this competitive environment is the point driven home by Wheatley. She employs historical data and textual and stylistic analysis in her methodology and touches upon the market pressures as described by Lotz, that push and shift drama into new and exploratory places. Wheatley points to the blurring of genres which heighten the sense of the uncanny within the Gothic TV text. She says that a Gothic show instead of being outright horror, or scary, or grisly, is instead “worrying,” and seeks to create a subversive commentary on – in shows like *Twin Peaks*; *Millennium*; and *American Gothic* in particular – white middle class America (Wheatley, 2006).

Wheatley's historical account is useful as it highlights the problems and tensions between US television and horror, and how the Gothic is very malleable, and can be exploited for anything from sitcom to children's programme to period dramas. It is useful to see what kinds of Gothic has appeared on US television before the time period in which I am working. Wheatley's approach is historical and economic as she charts the costliness of creating the rich Gothic visual imagery. She uses textual and stylistic analysis to build a comprehensive canon of Gothic on US television. She focuses on separating out the Gothic from the more general box of fantasy TV. For my work, this is useful because it mirrors what I seek to do: unlike Jowett & Abbott who include a lot of examples in their horror canon, I want to focus in on a particular type, the long form serial, with recognisable horror archetypes. I will expand on the market pressures to consider the place and function of the horror serial. I will leave the historical analysis, as

I am concerned with the contemporary horror drama. I will engage with Wheatley's work in more detail later in the case studies.

In the three years in which I have researched and written this thesis, scholarship around TV horror has itself increased. In 2017, The University of Kent held a three day conference dedicated to horror on US television, titled *At Home With Horror: Terror on the Small Screen*. Published in 2017, *Horror US television in the Age of Consumption: Binging on Fear*, a collection edited by Kimberly Jackson and Linda Belau, looks at the wider cultural appeal of the contemporary TV horror drama, and considers the phenomenon via questions of gender, identity, technological change and the aesthetics of US television. I myself am contributing to an upcoming collection, edited by Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott, on TV horror as a global phenomenon. The field of scholarship around TV horror is becoming recognised as a key part of both horror and US television studies. My study comes at a crucial and exciting time in TV horror scholarship, as both the creation of such texts and the study of them, represent shifts in the direction of both horror and US television content itself.

This section has covered key texts that looked at TV horror before my study. Waller considered the made for TV horror movie in the era of wholly commercial US television. Waller is sympathetic to the form at that time. He still categorises the horror on US television at the time of his writing in relation to the horror trends were happening in the cinema, rather than consider the US television horror text by itself. Hills' approach is concerned with the audience and the discourse around what I think are limiting case studies. Along with Hills, King's chapter on TV horror, while influential and worth considering because it is still one of the few works that does deal with horror on TV, and importantly, the personnel that made the texts which King covers. But the work is dated and biased. Jowett & Abbott provide the most up to date and detailed look at how horror on US television is a worthwhile part of the horror screen canon. My study will fill the gap from all these works and approach through the industrial context, the contemporary long form horror serialised drama.

2.2 Methodology.

This chapter has been a review of the literature in the areas that I regard as important to my research question: *How has the rise of horror on US television impacted upon the spectacle and acceptability of the genre?* The aims of this project are:

- ⤴ To account and provide evidence for, the rise of horror on American US television.
- ⤴ To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes in the US television industry – and how these changes have shaped horror on TV.
- ⤴ To discover how the horror genre is deemed culturally legitimate and acceptable and on US television now, and why.

Through this literature review, I have found that the gaps are; the lack of industrial context of the horror genre; no work on the development of drama on US television in specific relation to horror; lack of thematic analysis of the contemporary horror drama; lack of up to date work on the spectacle / graphic nature of the contemporary horror drama – its functions, its technical prowess and its apparent legitimisation; and finally, how horror (and all its previously disreputable elements – scariness, grisliness, nasty characters etc.) is now acceptable and applauded in the industry: what does horror offer US television and its associated advertising industry.

I am bringing together horror and the study of the US television industry, which have not been brought together before. I will carry out close textual analysis in the context of the US television industry to understand the programmes themselves, through a multi – perspectival model which will first provide the evidence for the rise of horror. Then I will, taking into account the industrial context, conduct close textual analysis of three case studies in order to understand the programmes themselves, combined with industry analysis to understand how the text functions internally. Horror is discursive, so again, I am not defining what drama is a horror and what is not. I am using the trade and entertainment press to inform my choices of case study: I will choose case studies drawing on what the trade and entertainment press marks as horror. Using the trade and entertainment press as a research resource allows me to understand the channels motives around making horror, through their interviews with executive staff and creative

personnel. In addition to the press and their discussion of horror dramas, I am also choosing cases from across US television: one from free to air network, one from cable, and one from a subscription service. My case studies will be: *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010 -); *Hemlock Grove* (Netflix, 2013 – 2015); and *Scream Queens* (FOX, 2015 – 2017). Adapting and reworking Lyons' model I will consider each case study through multi-perspectival approaches:

- ⤴ Drama structures: how do US television drama structures and forms affect horror and vice versa. How does the horror change across seasons as it adapts to the needs of US television.
- ⤴ Genre: the conventions of horror genres on US television, how they are altered and merged with other US television drama conventions. Importantly, my case studies will explore how this differs across the three tiers of US television.
- ⤴ Visual gore and special effects technical excellence; in the first instance how does this function on US television: interruptions to the story, how is it a tool to market the show, and how does the trade and entertainment press engage with the graphic scenes.
- ⤴ Acceptability, cultural legitimacy and the links to the Gothic; moving on from the graphic horror, how is it framed within notions of the Gothic? Does the use of the Gothic elevate the show away from previous negative associations of horror?
- ⤴ The trade and entertainment press: in addition to the close textual analysis, the press will be my primary research source for industry analysis.

Expanding on Lyons's model, I will consider more specifically the horror genre in the case studies: its function as interruption to the drama, but also its reflections of horror cinema and importantly, how the horror is different or changed, by being on US television. Because my research question acknowledges that *has* been an increase in horror on US television as a whole, the next chapter will account for and provide the evidence for, that rise of horror drama on TV, before I focus on the three specific case studies.

Chapter 3

Industrial Contexts: The rise of horror on US television.

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the evidence for the growth of horror on US television. To revisit the central question to this thesis: how has the rise of horror US television impacted on the spectacle and acceptability of the genre? I acknowledge in the question that there *has* been a rise of horror on US television, which is what this chapter will account for. I will then move on to the case studies to explore what the impact has been on the horror genre. To do this I will explore what I think are the key moments, pivotal industrial shifts and developments from the last 30 years in the US television industry. It is through the examination of these developments that the position and form of horror on contemporary US television can be fully understood. In the years 2005 to 2015, it is clear that there was an increase in the number of horror themed TV drama series, than there was in the preceding decade. This increase in horror drama is part of a trend of increasing numbers of drama series across US television more generally. FX Chairman and CEO John Landgraf said to the US television Critics Association press tour, that in 2015 there were 419 scripted series on both digital and linear schedules, compared with the 216 scripted series, that aired in 2010 (Lynch, *Adweek*, 2016). This chapter will demonstrate that as part of changes across US television that brought about the rising numbers of dramas, horror has become a cornerstone of US television programming strategy.

So broadly, why would US television do horror? Why attempt something that has in the past, proven to be so problematic? While this chapter will explore the conditions across the US television industry that have opened the door for horror, it remains a challenging genre to bring to US television. Horror still has negative associations: from the material that horror inherently deals with (death, murder, gore, unease etc), and its alleged bad

influence on people. Horror has suffered at the hands of witch-hunting tabloids, blaming the genre for

actions committed in the real world.¹³ These negative associations in the past have been precisely what advertisers have been keen to distance themselves from: not wanting a violent drama tainting the clean image, for example, of a sophisticated family SUV. As this chapter will show however, these attitudes and associations have shifted, as horror has become a genre that advertisers now support.

That is not to say that horror has never been on TV until the years in which I am working (2005 - 2016), it has of course. In the introduction to this thesis I explored some of the previous incarnations of horror on US television. Previous scholars have commented on the ability for horror (and fantasy, science fiction and the Gothic) to be a place on US television where writers, producers and visual effects departments can experiment (Johnson, 2005; Wheatley, 2006; Pearson, 2010). As Hollywood groans under the weight of endless sequels, prequels, franchises and sprawling story worlds, many Hollywood staff are suffering from “franchise fatigue.” Jeremy Zimmer, CEO of United Talent Agency spoke in *The Atlantic*: “A bunch of writers that have been disfranchised by the movie business have gone into US television” (Green, *The Atlantic*, 2013). US television offers wide ranges of dramas subjects and space to develop characters and themes, as the trend of long form drama series allows for the development of complex and varied storylines.

Even though many channels have been enjoying success with horror TV series between 2005 and 2015, in the earlier years of this horror cycle, there was still a tendency in the press for executives, producers, show runners, even critics, to distance themselves away from the more notorious horror films or sub genres. Speaking in 2013, FOX21 president Ben Salke was sure that we would not “see blood and guts at the *Saw* level ...

¹³As recently as 2013 horror film was blamed for real life events. 19 year old Johnathan Cruz killed three people in a four day crime and shooting rampage, which was blamed on *The Purge* (2013). (No Author, *CBS News*, 2013).

unless it's on one of the pay channels like HBO or Showtime" (Neel, *Broadcasting and Cable*, 2013). Trade press, likewise, was keen to distance itself and the show it was reviewing: "*American Horror Story* isn't *Saw*" (Goldberg, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2011). Show runner Brad Falchuk went out of his way to note about the first series of *American Horror Story* that it "isn't *Saw* and isn't a slasher film" (Goldberg, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2011). Only four years later, in 2015 and Falchuk himself is working on *Scream Queens*, not only a serialised slasher: arguably one of the most notorious sub genres of horror, but a slasher on FOX: a free to air advertiser supported network channel. The "blood and guts" that Salke did not see possible unless on premium channels has also shown itself, in scenes in series that are both inside and outside of the horror genre, and on basic cable. *The Strain* (FX, 2014 -), *Sons of Anarchy* (AMC 2008 – 2014), both have caused controversy: the promotional billboards for *The Strain* had to be taken down, after many people were offended, and took to Twitter to complain. Screenwriter Kristen Smith tweeted: "Seriously, *The Strain*? I have to look at your disgusting eyeball billboard when I drive? Are you trying to make me crash and die?" (Smith, Twitter, 2014). Similarly, *Sons of Anarchy* received much criticism from the Parents US television Council for its graphic violence and torture (Lowry, *Variety*, 2014). And as for wanting to distance TV horror away from the *Saw* movies, the premiere of the seventh season of *The Walking Dead*, episode 7.01 'The Day Will Come When You Won't Be,' featured a very long, protracted and drawn out scene, that critics likened to that other much maligned horror sub-genre, torture porn. Critic Erik Kain said of the episode,

Tonight's killing was tasteless and gory and gross. It left audiences reeling, myself included [...] like the episode left me unclean, dirty, sick to my stomach. I'm not sure if this was great drama, or just torture porn. I'm not sure how to feel, only that it feels wrong (Kain, *Forbes*, 2017).

Horror on US television has developed fast. In the space of only seven years, from *The Walking Dead* in 2010, the genre has moved on to feature some of the most disreputable sub genres and elements. But as said, I first need to account for how and why horror has been able to develop to such levels on US television.

In order to do this, I have split this chapter up into four sections, each one taking a key shift or development, that has led to the rise of horror on US television. The first will cover network US television and its advertiser funding. Because network US television is the most problematic place for horror to appear, I will cover this first and demonstrate the changes that allowed the development of horror drama to take place. The second section will cover the rising trend of serial drama across US television more generally, and what this means for horror. The third will take the advances in special effects technology, and home exhibition, essential for horror as a visual genre. The fourth section will discuss the changing hierarchy of film and US television. If, as explored in the introduction chapter and literature review, according to scholars horror belongs on the cinema screen, how the maturing US television drama has blurred the lines between film makers and US television makers, and film genres and US television genres. What I draw out from this chapter will set what I will explore in the case studies. Before I get to the first section, I want to set out a brief US television history, to show how US television itself got to where it is now, as a diverse and multi platformed medium.

US television in the United States developed in fits and starts after in the 1940s and 1950s; evolving from radio and local US television stations, with 83.2% of homes able to receive broadcast TV by the mid-1950s (Baughman, 1993). The Big Three free to air networks, ABC, CBS and NBC, dominated US television for some time. Right from the very start US television was built on a wholly commercial model: these commercial drives were entrenched in US culture and its economic powers. Driven by the capitalist urges of the post-war US society, William Boddy notes that this commercial thinking led to a “remarkably consistent and enduring set of ideas about the general nature and function of the US television medium” (Boddy, 2004, p. 192). This configuration of US television remained steady for some time, and in Lotz's model, is termed as the network era. This dominance continued well into the second half of the century and was eventually challenged by the rise of cable US television channels and increasing numbers of free to air broadcast networks. Known as the multi-channel transition (Lotz, 2014), spanning from the mid-1980s to the start of the 2000s. The arrival of the FOX network in 1986, and then The WB and UPN in 1995 challenged the Big Three for their

free to air audience, alongside increasing cable, driving the US television industry ever forward.

The growth of cable was rapid and was set in motion by two major factors: industry deregulation and the use of satellite technology to transmit US television. In the 1970s cable growth was restricted by FCC rules that prevented cable networks from taking and showing programming from the broadcast networks (Satell, *Forbes*, 2015). The 1984 Cable Communications Policy Act allowed cable companies to charge whatever rates that they wanted for their services, meaning that cable channels could increase their revenue and spread their reach across the country. The uptake of satellite technology further encouraged this. After HBO showed the legendary boxing match between Ali and Frazier (The 'Thrilla in Manilla'), US television pioneer Ted Turner uplinked his station WTBS to the same satellite. Showing documentaries, films and a small number of original programming, Turner's station was in itself, very much similar to HBO's content (Zaretsky, *The Regional Economist*, 1995). The next ten years saw huge growth for cable, with ninety-four basic cable channels available by 1994. The numbers of households subscribing to cable had been rising steadily, with 8% in 1970, up to 23% by 1980 (53 million households), and over 65 million households by the end of the 1990s. This caused much anxiety at the broadcast networks, loosing as they were their one third share of the total audience. The majority of cable adoption was taking place in more affluent homes: those with disposable income. This meant that, for the advertisers, the value of broadcast network commercial slots was decreasing (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 135). If the viewers with the disposable income were moving to cable, then less of them would be watching network. This anxiety over loosing audience share led to "demographic thinking," and seeking more specific audience groups. Networks began to make a move towards making the most out of their dwindling audience figures. Networks began to seek out the aforementioned affluent homes by directly targeting drama at them.

The multi-channel transition, beginning in the 1980s and lasting til the late 1990s / early 2000s, saw many changes, some of which seemed small on the outside but collectively

were developing US television as a place of choice and fierce competition. Remote controls, VCR machines, and spreading analogue cable systems and new subscription channels were vastly expanding viewer control (Lotz, 2014, p. 24 and 57). As the new millennium dawned the industry found itself grappling with more new technologies. DVR machines allowed viewers to time shift content and watch at a time that suits them. Increasing amounts of digitised content develops, as shows begin to be sold through iTunes, and increasing DVD sales and video on demand (VOD) views. New methods of advertising becomes a necessity as less and less viewers see the traditional advertising in the commercial pods inside programmes, either through DVR capabilities, or glancing at other screens while the adverts are on. According to Neilson in 2011, 40 – 42% of people look at phones or tablets when watching US television – Growing to 87% of viewers looking at a second screen when viewing TV by 2015 (Accenture Report). And then web 2.0 and the developments and devices that came with it (smart phones, WiFi, tablets etc). This post network era (Lotz, 2014), sees extremely quick adoption of these new technologies, and so US television has had to keep up. The three main tiers of US television remain (network, basic cable and subscription), but each has had to evolve and adapt as new technology and societal change drive the changing expectations of US television.

Further technological advances and distribution innovations came through IPTV (Internet protocol US television): the delivery of programming to viewers through encoded video stream. IPTV can deliver both live TV and stored video, and like cable, requires a set top box (<http://searchtelecom.techtarget.com/definition/IPTV>). The rise in the popularity of Internet native streaming sites, like Netflix, Hulu and Amazon Prime, have further pushed the boundaries of what US television is, and what it might be. The 2008 recession encouraged 'cord cutters' ending their cable subscriptions, and now the recent trend of “cord-nevers” (Montpetit, 2014) forgoing the traditional box in the corner of the room altogether, and only watching through online streaming platforms. What US television is and where we find it, is as complex and diverse as the content that it now produces. Horror has become a solid part of that content, and so this following chapter

will present the evidence for the rise of horror to its place as a regular part of US television drama programming.

3.2 Networks, Advertising and Horror

This section will chart a brief history of network US television, its economic model and the impact this has on programming strategy. I am starting with network because this is the model that US television was built on, and the appearance of horror on network in the cycle that this thesis deals with, supports my argument that horror has become a cornerstone of US TV drama. Because of the needs of advertisers, drama that could be deemed in any way negative was perceived as unsuitable for network US television – advertisers would not want to align themselves with something that might be viewed as indecent. However, as this section will show, changes in the industry brought about by the competition from other channels and services, advertisers and networks had to change their attitudes and therefore programming strategies. This in turn allowed for the growth of horror drama across US television. By looking at what the networks are doing now, how they are approaching their programming, I can show that the slates of networks are expanding to feature more niche and genre based programming. I have further split this section into Network I and Network II. This is to be clear in demonstrating the strategies before the industrial changes that channel expansion and audience fragmentation brought, in Network I. Then in Network II, the resulting moves the networks and the advertisers have taken in terms of programming strategy post the changes to remain in business. These changes and the strategies employed have allowed for the rise of horror drama across TV, and how horror has come to be on network.

3.2.1 Network I

A free to air network channel has an economic structure that is reliant on advertising. That is to say, the networks are obliged to the needs and wants of advertisers who seek to sell through the medium of US television. As a general rule, advertisers demand maximum viewers from the networks, for maximum eyeballs on their products. Even

though the industry has moved on from the days of single sponsorship: for example, the *Texaco Star Theatre* (NBC, 1948 – 1956), or the brewery sponsored *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars* (CBS, 1951 – 1959), to much more complex and varied methods of paid advertising, programme makers, schedulers and network TV executives must still satisfy Madison Avenue. The model is simple enough; the networks are privately owned and seek to make a profit by the selling of advertisement time slots inside their programming. However, this demand for as big a share of the viewing population as possible has an effect on what the content of the US television would, and could be (Baughman, 1993; Stephens, 2000; Lotz, 2014; Edgerton, 2016).

Prior to the 1980s and the rise of both cable channels and the forthcoming additional free to air networks, the content produced was still (broadly, with some notable exceptions that I will discuss later), bound to the notion of *broadcast*. Broadcasting as the big three channels were, to around a third of the viewing audience each. Programming at this time was at the mercy of the advertisers who, wanting to sell as much as possible, aimed their products and so programmes, to reach broadly across the audience. Genre programmes were limited, and people became accustomed to TV consisting of cop shows, sitcoms, and game shows. To appeal and reach broadly across the nation, networks and the advertisers that funded them had to assume that inside the homes where their show was airing, the entire family could be sat around the US television; the 'imagined audience'. Ien Ang explains this clearly with the notion that the audience is “institutionally produced.” The industry's idea of who is watching their shows and in turn, the adverts, is not necessarily who is actually watching (Ang, 1991, p. 3). At this stage of US television's development, for the networks and the advertisers their focus was on achieving high numbers of viewers overall, rather than differing or specific groups within those numbers. With only three, then four channels to choose from, that imagined audience had to be catered for and entertained, and not be alienated, offended or inclined to switch over or switch off entirely.

This “imagined audience” that the networks and advertisers were trying to reach, is a heterogeneous one: diverse and composed of different groups. But diverse content that

would reach all these groups individually was not the prevailing network content as it was not cost effective. Niche programming simply did not offer the advertisers enough eyes. The networks stuck with what would be the least offensive, the Least Objectionable Programming, as coined in 1974 by the former NBC executive Paul L. Klein. This method meant the creation of programming that is least likely to offend, keeping shows formulaic and unlikely to push any boundaries, the least likely to alienate (*Primetime TV: The Decision Makers*, ABC, 1974). Klein described the viewing audience as consuming the medium rather than the individual or specific programmes themselves. In this period, viewers would simply “watch some TV” (Klein, 1974). This act of watching US television would lead viewers, according to Klein, to flick around until they found something that was least objectionable, rather than something they actually wanted to watch, that spoke to them as an individual. Least Objectionable Programming then, does not lend itself to experimental or specific genre programming. Combining the imagined audience with Least Objectionable Programming means that at this time, a horror drama was difficult to place on TV. It may well offend, it may well cause viewers to switch over or off. However, as viewing monitoring technology improved, so did the data that the networks received with regards to who was watching and when. As early as 1966, more detailed data of the viewing audience was causing the advertisers to rethink what they could get from the US television audience. Speaking about the increasing numbers of homes having more than one US television set, Jack Caplan, then vice president of Kenyon & Eckhardt, a New York based advertising agency, noted that,

Media planners have become increasingly interested in measuring the cost of reaching individuals or particular prospects as compared to the households as a whole [...] the households measurement is already beginning to use its usefulness among media planners (Caplan, *Broadcasting*, 1966).

Caplan further suggests that the networks might want to begin thinking about how to expand their programming ideas, so as to reach a more “specific audience,” instead of focusing on the big, sweeping numbers of households reached. In addition, the advertisement agencies themselves needed to look seriously at improving their defined target audiences (Caplan, 1966). The notion of targeted programming and specific

programming was emerging, and progress was slow yet steady. This progression began to gain momentum as US television moved through the late 1960s and into the 1980s, as the industry started to recognise the “segmented” market. Michelle Hilmes writes with regards to the dividing market,

It was during the 1965-1975 period that all three networks drive the first wedge into the notion that their primetime public consisted of an undifferentiated mass audience of white middle class families. With more sophisticated ratings data and the advertising industry adopting more segmented marketing research, and above all observations of the great generational divide opening up between baby boomers and their parents, networks discovered the youth market (Hilmes, 2001, p. 264).

As US television matured into the 1970s and 1980s, the move towards more specific demographic thinking meant that the smaller and more individual groups of potential viewers were recognised as valuable. The approach of one size fits all, was rejected, leading to experimentation with other types of programming. The 1990s saw major shifts as new channels emerged bringing new competition for the Big Three networks.

From its inception in 1986 the free to air FOX channel set itself apart by targeting a younger audience. Particularly during the early 1990s FOX appealed to young and black viewers and sought to establish itself as a network that was edgy and hip.

Over the first four seasons FOX distinguished itself with satirical programmes (*The Simpsons*, 1989 -), ribald fare (*Married, With Children*, 1987 – 1997), trendy youth drama (*Beverly Hills 90210*, 1990 – 2000), and reality TV (*America's Most Wanted*, 1988 -). The network also made a strong pitch to African American viewers, an audience that the three major networks ordinarily ignored, believing they would follow the tastes of the mass market, white audience (Curtin & Shattuc, 2009, p. 25).

FOX brought to light that there were other viewers, not the industrially imagined white middle class audience, who were potentially very valuable. With the increasing numbers of channels offering both narrowcast (programming aimed at specialist audiences), and broad appeal services, cable and subscription channels brought challenges to the

networks. The new channels were pulling viewers away and further increasing the fragmenting nature of the viewing public. Those that want to view different, select and / or niche programming could do so with the vast choice that was becoming available.

The spread of cable US television and channel expansion into cities during the late 1960s and 1970s, marked the start of a drift away from the confines of both Least Objectionable Programming and the inherent limitations of being funded purely by advertising revenue. Cable networks like ESPN or Nickelodeon were appearing as channels dedicated to their genres and their audiences; sports fans or children. The 1984 Cable Act marked the start of a period of huge investment into cable and an explosion of channels which carried on into the 1980s and 1990s, including: MTV, CNN, USA, AMC, The WB, and FX. By the 1990s there were 79 cable channels and 57% of homes had cable subscriptions. By 1999 the amount of cable networks had almost tripled, with 171 available channels. Into the 2000s and there are 65million subscribers to cable (www.ncta.com). Cable is part advertiser supported, in addition to cable carrier fees. The carrier fees are the paid by the distributors to the channels, for the license to carry that channel in their offered line ups. It must be understood here, however, that network, cable and subscription (explored below) can also earn revenue through DVD sell through, syndication rights of original programming to other channels, and selling licenses to programmes to Video On Demand streaming services, like Netflix or Hulu (Lotz, 2014, p. 39), and I will explore below how this contributes to the development of drama programming. But it is the adverts and carrier fees that principally support the basic cable channels.

So here presents an alternative model that both influenced and encouraged a more creative environment which generated more diverse programming. Basic cable channels still have to satisfy the advertisers, but they do not fall under the Federal Communications Commission, a congressional statute that regulates and monitors US television (and other media) communications. "The FCC's regulatory powers extend only to over-the-air broadcasters, who transmit their programs via the publicly owned spectrum" (Koerner, *Slate*, 2004). Basic cable channels self-regulate, defining their own

moral, ethical and legal implications of the content that they make and air, in their own Broadcasting Standards and Practices Departments.

The challenge that the expansion of basic cable channels brought to the networks, by way of interrupting their roughly one third of the audience share each, promoted the increasingly aggressive competitive environment of audience hailing. Because cable channels can sit outside the FCC ruling, they have “motivation and courage to rewrite the rules of hitherto risk-averse commissioning process” (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 231). Basic cable channels can develop more inventive dramas, in order to *build* their share of the audience. The networks and their funding advertisers in response, turned to drama to *protect* their share of the audience, who might be having their heads turned by what cable offers. Both networks and advertisers can see the types of programming that was on cable, and that it was attracting those viewers most of value, of 'quality.' This 'quality audience,' as described by Dunleavy (2009), represents those that most valuable. Valuable in terms of their dedication and loyalty to shows, but also their spending power. The quality audience member will be affluent, educated, and professional. In short, they are worth money to both the cable channel and the advertisers, as they can in the first instance afford a monthly cable bill, and in the second, they are worth advertising to, if they have disposable income.

For new cable channels building their audience, drama serves their economic interests further than simply attracting attention. It is one thing attracting an audience to watch a pilot episode, it is another to keep them for the duration of a full series. Cable channels want their viewers with a degree of future certainty. That is to say, repeated viewing, staying, and watching. This is so that they can maintain respectable ratings and so keep the advertiserdiscusses's funding, and to ensure that the viewers keep paying their cable bill. Drama then, while a way of attracting viewers, is a competitive tool to maintain viewership. The concept of 'must see' TV from the industry's perspective according to Dunleavy, is to “engender 'addictive' rather than merely 'appointment' viewing:” To keep the viewers, such dramas work hard to provide “cumulative sub plots” that create the addictive elements, which in turn keeps the viewers returning for future episodes and

narrative conclusion (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 212). Shifting and jumping between story arcs and character action, promotes and encourages the viewers to return and offers them what Lotz termed as “prized content.” This content is programming that “... people seek out and specifically desire.” Lotz describes these shows as crucial to the economic underpinnings of the industry, and as Dunleavy states, for networks to protect their share, and to make it worth paying the monthly cable bill (Lotz, 2014, p. 12). Keeping dedicated viewers has tremendous economic value to basic cable channels. With so much to choose from, on US television and other media, prized and must see dramas can bring the viewers but also offers continued revenue via second life showing through syndication, or DVD sell through. This selling on of dramas also functions as a method of maintaining viewership and the cultural connection to US television, as it is challenged by the rise of Internet streaming services, by aligning US television content and the Internet. Through media convergence, US television drama became instrumental to the growth of Internet TV. Dunleavy states that after the major conglomerate mergers of the 1990s and beyond, the larger US television companies now also owned Internet companies (see the merger of AOL and Time Warner in 2000). US television could place its drama on the burgeoning Internet TV sites, maintaining the channel brand, and remain “central to the expansion of Internet TV services” (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 205). If people are moving over to the Internet, by either expanding their potential screen time options, or cord-cutting, they are still watching US television and in particular, it’s high end and high cost innovative dramas. Because these dramas were proving so useful, it stands to reason then that the networks and the advertisers changed their philosophy, when it came to genre and horror programming. As the US television audience fragmented and were distracted away from the Big Three by more edgy, gritty programming, or content aimed at a younger audience, networks had to pull them back. By seeing what sort of programmes audiences and crucially, advertisers were backing, as I will discuss below, the networks had to rethink their approach of one size fits all, in their drama slates.

3.2.2 Network II

The rapidly multiplying channels led to an increase in competition for viewers, so now I want illustrate how drama is used to navigate that competition. Looking at what kind of dramas were made, that in the first instance, serve the channels as they contend for audience share. Then in the second instance, how this contributes to the rise of horror, and broadly, what sort of horror it leads to. To compensate for the dwindling numbers of viewers across broadcast US television, and the increasing numbers of cable channels all fighting for a share of the viewers, strategies were employed by the networks to make the most of the viewers they could get. This audience was thought to be interested in drama and sharp comedy, and so this type of programming began to slowly infiltrate the prime-time slots (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 32).

With an ever thinning audience and an increasingly busy US television marketplace, channels moved to targeting certain demographical groups. Johnson writes a summary,

The national networks could no longer hope to gain the large mass audiences that they had competed for in the 1960s and 1970s, leading to a shift in the way that the networks measured the popularity and success of their programmes [...] a strategy of niche marketing, producing programmes targeted to specific audience groups that would be attractive to particular audiences (Johnson, 2010, p. 141).

This marks the increasing trend of moving away from the strategy of broadcasting, and instead to narrowcasting, by targeting smaller and more specific demographics. The aim is to attract as many of a certain group as possible, and to encourage their loyalty to a specific programme or genre. This strategy while clear to channels that cater for specific groups – music US television, film channels, children's channels, or history channels - for channels with a variety of programming, homing in on certain defined target demographics, encouraged experimentation with genre programming. These shows generate a clear and focused fan base that can be targeted with specific advertisements. To explore some examples of this type of programming, I am going to look at some key examples as discussed by Pearson, Hills and Abbott (2010), and consider the effect these shows had on the rise of horror. Pearson notes that the late

1990s and early 2000s brought “telefantasy to the masses” (2010, p. 12), highlighting shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; *Lost* (ABC, 2004 – 2010); and *Heroes* (NBC, 2006 – 2010) as examples. These shows, according to Pearson, brought substantial ratings despite being radically different from previous critical and ratings successes: the 'real' dramas (i.e. not fantastical) and endless procedural and crime dramas like *CSI* (CBS, 2000 – 2015), *ER* (NBC, 1994 – 1999), or *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999 – 2007). Because of the rapidly increasing numbers of channels in the 1990s and early 2000s, the widening margins of genres made for TV meant that the horror genre, was now a viable prospect to the programme makers. After seeing that there was indeed a keen and receptive market to these genres, networks began to take notice.

As I will discuss part three of this chapter, technology is key to the rise of horror, in terms of the developing abilities of production staff to physically create the horror and its associated visual effects. In this section, the developing technologies that encourage fan engagement and loyalty to a show, are the most pertinent. The Internet and fan forums had much to do with the success of shows like *Lost* and *Heroes*. The increase of these and other genre dramas dovetailed perfectly with the rise of social media. On the widespread chatter and discussion generated by the season one finale of *Lost*¹⁴ producer and show runner Carlton Cuse said,

What we never could have anticipated was that the show would debut just as social media came into existence. So there was this unforeseen confluence of events where we were making a show that was perfect for discussion and debate, just at the moment where the Internet was evolving into a place where people were forming communities where they could have those discussions and debates (Sepinwall, 2015, p. 176).

Seeing that the audience was there and was loyal to the point of forming community around a TV show, developed further the rise of this type of genre programming. This increasing innovation and dynamism began to further experiment with what US

¹⁴ Characters Locke and John finally get to look down into the hole they have just blown the hatch from, a moment the show had been building up to for weeks, only for the camera to reveal nothing to the viewers.

television was capable of across many other areas of programme development, including horror drama.

What horror and other types of genre programming offer then, is high levels of fan loyalty, something which networks and cable channels recognise as vastly important in these times of huge choice and distraction across US television and other media. These shows – *Lost*, *Heroes*, *Buffy* - were hits at Comic-Cons and fan conventions, which have become,

A crucial market for the networks and studios to premiere new programmes and garner fan loyalty while the shows are still on the air. Networks might hope for the large broadcast figures associated with mainstream US television, but they also want their shows to generate the audience commitment associated with [genre programming] (Abbott, 2010, p. 1).

These types of programming – including horror - were fulfilling ambitions that pleased both TV industry and TV audience. They have narrative and content that played with generic conventions, providing new universes which fans could play in. At the same time these genre shows gave US television committed audiences, that bring not only loyalty but lucrative audience pools that advertiser's desire. VP-Director of national broadcast at Horizon Media said to *Advertising Age* that the,

Biggest brands have long brought into family friendly programming that attracts broad audiences. But marketers are becoming increasingly accepting of grittier fare, and some have proven willing to pay broadcast-like prices for the big desirable *The Walking Dead* audience (Poggi, *AdAge*, 2013).

These horror genre shows have the key ingredients that the advertisers are looking for: potentially big ratings, activity and chatter on social media, and a loyal fan base. In terms of continuing and spreading the show and the numbers of people it reaches, *The Walking Dead* in particular, has been highly successful with its spin off and sister shows: *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC, 2015 -), and *Talking Dead* (AMC, 2011 -). These offshoot shows are valuable, as they either bring high numbers viewers in their own right, or another and even more loyal fraction of the already specific audience (No Author, *AdAge*, 2013). Only the most dedicated fans are going to stay tuned after the main show

(*The Walking Dead*), to watch a show that talks about what they have just seen (*Talking Dead*).

So far, I have established that audience fragmentation leads to more diverse programming as channels seek to target specific groups. Now I want to demonstrate what the networks are doing now, in terms of their programming strategies, and where horror fits into contemporary free to air network US television. There are now many more free to air network channels, with over 200 channels available to most of North America (www.ftalist.com). This means that there is more competition from not only cable and subscription, but many other free channels. However, The Big Three, now the Big Five, remain steadfastly as ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX and The CW, and still operate around the selling of advertisement time in and around programming. From the advertiser's point of view, the contract offered by the networks is one that consists of a promise to supply enough viewing eyes that are lured by the programming content. How well a programme performed is in the first instance, shown through the ratings. The ratings are a standard set of figures provided by a third party, Neilson that the advertisers and the networks use to negotiate sales. These ratings can also show that the networks deliver what they promised through audience profiling and the how well the show performed. (Curtin & Shattuc, 2009, p. 34). In the landscape of such high competition that the Big Five face, they must work hard to keep and maintain valuable audiences to sell to their advertiser funders.

Networks are facing conflicting times. On the one hand they are keeping up with the myriad changes brought about by technological advances: Internet, video on demand, multi-platform viewing, and the migrating of audiences away from the traditional TV set in the corner. And on the other hand the networks must keep their advertising revenue. While networks engaged with niche audiences targeting throughout the 1980s and 1990s as the rise of cable channels encouraged, some analysts and critics are forewarning doom for the networks that have too much of an idealised audience. ABC claims to potential media buyers that it offers "Expansive Reach + Diverse Audience = Targeted Solutions" (www.abcfullcircle.com/our-audience, 2016). For ABC's most

popular long running shows, *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC, 2005 -); *Once Upon A Time* (ABC, 2011 – 2018); *Nashville* (ABC, 2012 - 2018), “media buyers are concerned that ABC depends too much on older female demographics – not much for the advertisers to go for at the upfronts”¹⁵ (Poggi, *Adage*, 2014). ABC are having to expand and diversify, by trying to attract a male group with the launch of *Marvels Agents of SHIELD* (ABC, 2013-), and as well, dropping *Dancing with the Stars* (ABC, 2005 -), with a 70% female viewership, to just the one night a week (Poggi, *Adage*, 2014). The challenge faced by ABC is to attract the male viewers over to the channel in the first place. With no weekly sports franchise that is “male centric,” says Carter in the *New York Times* (2013), there is nowhere on channel to promote new shows that the potential male viewers might be drawn to.

At NBC they are trying a different strategy, by leading in the advertisers at the upfronts with 'guarantees' that they can offer more targeted audiences. Smith at *Bloomberg* (2016), noted that the network is trying to be as specific as possible, as specific as the Internet adverts, which work following browser history. These “specifics and defined targets” are echoed at CBS. David Poltrak, Chief Research Officer told *AdWeek* how demographic thinking was moving into viewer behavior, rather than simple age and gender groups. “Discussions [over advertising deals] are now going to be more and more about specifics and clearly defined targets, so that we can match the targeting efficiency of digital offers” (*AdWeek*, 2015). While audiences need to be targeted for efficiency of advertising support, too small a target does not reach enough that is expected of broadcast network. The solution, or at least part way, is to gain much more detailed data about who is watching, when, and what on. At FOX too, plans are now in place to provide data to the advertisers that guarantees audience segments, and how many, are going to watch a particular type of programme. Data that is so specific as to offer groups that are first time car buyers, fast food eaters, or even those in the market for a new cell phone (Steinburg, *Variety*, 2016). Specific audiences require specialist programming. This industrial shift towards such particular audience measuring has had

¹⁵ The upfronts are gatherings held where channels showcase their upcoming slates and negotiate with advertisers.

an effect on the content produced, as specific audiences require specialist programming.

At The CW, the targeting and advertising revenue division manifests in a slightly different way. The CW has had, according to analysts and critics, for a broadcast network a very narrow audience: young women 18 – 34. But in recent years the channel has diversified, and while maintaining a female orientated slate, with its emphasis on supernatural and fantastical programming (*iZombie*, 2015 -; *The Flash*, 2014 -; *Arrow*, 2012 -; *The 100*, 2014 -; *Supernatural*, 2005 -; and *The Vampire Diaries*, 2009 - 2017), its demographic is aging. Jumping from a median age of 33 up to 43, The CW is benefitting from a viewership that has become ever more desirable, with disposable income. Billie Gold, Vice President Director of buying programming research told *AdAge*,
An older audience is welcome for The CW, even an increase as big as ten years, partly because adults have more disposable income on advertiser's products. Also important: older audiences tend to have more stable traditional viewing, a positive in an ecosystem where digital viewership is especially difficult monetize (Poggi, *AdAge*, 2016).

As much as The CW was one of the first channels to make their content available on digital platforms, this proved problematic as it "cannibalised its traditional ratings" (Poggi, *AdAge*, 2016). For The CW and the rest of the Big Five networks, this spread of viewers across platforms and time scales as they stream and catch up, has both positive and negative points. Networks can use data from days later viewing of shows to pad out ratings with which to bargain with the advertisers and media buyers. They can show that young people are watching, they can show that older people are watching too, with more detailed data of behavior. And importantly for this project, they can utilise certain types of programming that offer sustained viewing and loyalty. Paul Lee, Entertainment Executive at ABC, recognising the need to increase the type of programming that garners loyalty and further money raising initiatives, told the *New York Times*,
Over the last decade procedural police shows were the gold standard of US television, because they rated consistently higher than soaps and had stronger value selling repeats to cable and in syndication. Now [...] serialized shows are

coming into their own, because they can often charge more to advertisers and first run (because of an urgency to view them) and have increasing value for streaming sites like Netflix and Hulu (Carter, *New York Times*, 2013).

Programme makers are turning to drama to both boost viewing figures, target groups and open up to new groups of US television watcher. Drama can bring revenue after initial airing, as above, with sales to media sites that are outside of US television.

Gary Carr, senior VP of National Broadcast at TargetCast (a media agency, since merged with RJ Palmer to create new agency, Assembly), emphasised to *AdAge* in 2013 that networks should pay attention not to where the advertisers are buying, “but *what they're buying*” (Poggi, *AdAge*, 2013). That is to say, attention should be to the types of shows, the genres and dramas that the advertisers are investing in, and not necessarily where (what channels) they are investing. In recent years though, networks have been undoubtedly influenced by cable programming choices. With successes like *The Walking Dead* and advertisers keen to put their brands to that show, networks have themselves branched away from tradition, and turned to seek out not only particular demographics, but not be afraid to push the envelope. If horror is proving itself as a harbinger of the desired demographics over on cable, then it follows that network would test the waters, as,

Advertisers try to harness the audience reach of these gory dramas while striving to keep their brand images clean. Once viewed as something to keep at arm's length, edgy drama these days is one of the few things that attract a hard-to-reach demographic (Steinberg, *Variety*, 2013).

By looking at what sort of content the advertisers are backing, means that for networks, they can potentially pull viewers back from cable if, that is, what they offer is of the same standard. While the networks and channels want to stand out amongst the clutter, so do the brands that back them. Executive VP of Advertisement Sales at AMC Networks, Scott Collins, described the potential that backing a horror series has to brands. On the sales of advertisement time in spinoff *Fear the Walking Dead*, Collins said to *AdAge* that it is,

A means to develop integrations for clients looking to stand out from the rest of the pack. A longstanding sponsor [of *The Walking Dead*] T-Mobile has jumped into "Fear" with a creative execution that puts the brand in the center of the action while giving viewers a chance at some exclusive content. Immediately following a key moment in the "Fear" pilot, a T-Mobile commercial will direct viewers to power up the Shazam app on their smartphones. Shazam-ing the commercial unlocks an extended scene that takes place during the first hours of the eventual full-on zombification of Los Angeles (Crupi, *AdAge*, 2015).

Here we see the changing attitudes about the association of backing a horror drama. In this case T-Mobile are exploiting the genre for its dedicated audience, its fan practice, and their desire for extra content (a point further explored below).

As I will follow up with in my case studies, and as demonstrated here, networks have embraced horror, and are even making serialisation of *The Exorcist* (FOX, 2016 -). It should be noted that *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973), is one of the most notorious horror movies ever made. Hailed as gruesome and hateful, with even churches trying to ban it in America, it was viewed for a long time as the scariest movie of all time. For it to be now re done, on network, is quite the leap from cultural pariah, to mainstream US television. And while horror has been on US television before, *Advertising Age* claims that "the success of a small cable channel's post-apocalyptic zombie series has turned TV conventions on their head, in both programming and advertising" (Poggi, *AdAge*, 2013).

For networks to be making horror (even as far as *The Exorcists*) shows a fundamental shift in the attitudes to horror in not just the networks, but in the advertisers that fund them. After the explosion in the numbers of channels, a scattering audience, the networks were pushed into heavy competition. The differing conditions on cable allowed for more freedom in what types of drama cable could produce. Cable took to specific audience targeting, and networks took notice of the benefits. Networks were influenced by seeing what the advertisers were backing on cable, and so engaged with genre programming as a way to pull back and offer competition. First through shows like *Lost*,

and *Heroes*, and then later expanding into horror, with *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013 – 2015), *The Vampire Diaries*, and *The River* (ABC, 2012). Genre programming is important and useful to US television as I have shown, through targeted demographics and potential fan loyalty. Horror has become assimilated by the networks into their slates because it brings with it what the advertisers want: specific and sometimes “hard-to-reach” demographics, who are loyal and reachable across media platforms.

3.3 The Rise of Seriality

So far, I have demonstrated how the power of the demographic has generated genre programming, making horror a worthwhile and financially sound inclusion for the networks, and of course for cable. Now I want to look more specifically at the rise of the serialised drama across US television, how this affects longstanding drama types, and furthermore why this is important to the rise of horror on TV. If horror is traditionally seen as belonging in the cinema, this section will demonstrate how and why horror is translating to the long form serial on US television. I have shown that networks were influenced by cable, who were themselves influenced by premium, in particular HBO. By examining the rise of demographic targeted drama, in the previous section, and the influence of the HBO model and new viewing habits in this section, I will establish how horror has adapted to the trend of 'quality' drama that has swept across TV.

On the rise of seriality itself, long before the contemporary horror drama, 'quality' drama is not a new concept to US television. The 1970s saw pioneering sitcoms from CBS; *M.A.S.H.* (1972 - 1983), *All In The Family* (1971 – 1979), and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970 - 1977). In 1996 CBS offered Mary Tyler Moore a multibillion dollar deal to star in her own series, money that allowed herself and her then husband Grant Tinker, and manager Arthur Price, to found their own company, MTM Enterprises. Importantly, with their own production company, Moore and Tinker would part own the shows they made and crucially, keep creative control (Feuer, 1984, pp. 61 – 62). *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and others by the studio, were pioneers of 'quality' shows that attracted the valuable 'quality' and niche audience. For the long term development of serialised

drama, these shows in the 1970s and 1980s were prototypes of what later became the complex and 'quality' drama we know today (Hilmes, 2001; Dunleavy, 2009). These early shows in particular from MTM reflected the “shift of network interest from overall audience size to the spending power of particular demographics” (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 32). MTM Enterprises was instrumental in the development of drama, and in the recognising of the more specific audiences. Moore formed the company with Tinker, and together they were innovators particularly in the way that they allowed their creative staff to work. Tinker was adept at ensuring that the bosses at the networks did not interfere and tamper with shows in production. Long before HBO began priding and selling themselves on creative freedom and talent filled teams, MTM were hiring some of the industry's best, and giving them the freedom to create some groundbreaking series. MTM brought both *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981 – 1987) and *St Elsewhere* (NBC, 1982 – 1988), both critically viewed as revolutionary: Blending soap style ongoing storytelling, ensemble casts and central characters that deviated away from white middle class males. Critics and US television historians argue that MTM Enterprises were the creators of 'quality US television,' being the first to offer layered storytelling and engagement with contemporary issues (Feuer, Kehr & Vahimagi, 1984; Hilmes, 2014). Another example of early 'quality TV' was as part of The *NBC Mystery Movie* wheel (1971 – 1977), *McCloud*, *Columbo*, *McMillan & Wife*, and *Hec Ramsey*. On a four week rotation each show was only airing once a month. This meant that with one production unit per show, and less pressure on the amount of content to produce, time and detail could be put into the production. These shows were also shot on film, giving them a different 'look' to the rest of US television.

In another pioneering step, *Cagney & Lacey* (CBS, 1982 – 1988) brought second wave feminism to the small screen. Dealing with subjects like breast cancer, domestic violence and date rape, *Cagney & Lacey* had significant effects on the way that women were represented on TV and importantly, how valuable the female audience was to the advertisers. With more women working, earning and spending, their interests were now taken into account. The audience for drama, in the main was traditionally female, watching daytime soap style dramas. Now these serialised dramas were moved into

primetime, for time slots outside the working hours and for those women with money to spend (Hilmes, 2001, p. 302). Crucially, these shows were allowed to survive on smaller audiences, now that networks were not vying for one third of all viewership. Looking at these shows and thinking of them as prototypes, it is clear that while complexity and 'quality' are the hallmarks of contemporary drama, this type of sophisticated programming has been around for decades. It is drama serials on HBO in the late 1990s and early 2000s however, that arguably had the biggest impact on the rise of seriality across US television. I want to look now at how HBO can in the first instance make such dramas, but also the effect this has had on drama across US television as a whole.

HBO, Starz, Cinemax and Showtime, online natives like Netflix and Amazon Prime are all services that work via paid subscription. Unlike basic cable channels these are signals that are scrambled and require an additional fee on top of the monthly cable bill. This extra subscription fee is the foundation of the funding that these channels receive and in turn, the channels are therefore commercial free. This autonomy from advertising lends itself to creative freedom, as the programme makers need not worry about losing advertising revenue should the advertisers dislike or fear the content. Subscription channels then, can offer content that is allegedly more daring than what can usually be found on a network channel: steering clear of a "safety first approach to [in particular] new drama" (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 133). To fully understand how this has driven the rise of seriality and in turn horror, I want to look in detail at the HBO model, before moving on to looking at the influence that HBO has on the rest of US television drama.

As a premium service HBO makes money by way of four revenues. In the first instance to receive HBO viewers must pay an extra fee on top of their cable bill¹⁶. HBO receives at least half of this fee. Following this, HBO owns 100% of its shows and so upon licensing and syndication to other channels and overseas, HBO takes all the profits. Owning all their content means that HBO also reap the rewards of the DVD and merchandising market. Despite being without commercial breaks, they still gain return

¹⁶ Although since 9th March 2015, and the launch of HBO Now, there is an online streaming version of the channel, that requires no cable package or subscription.

on advertising, through paid product placement: *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998 – 2004) was a major source of income, with its “loose attitude towards product placement” (Ferrier, 2014). The show contained many brands, ranging from the upmarket fashion labels (Manolo Blahnik, Chanel, and Ralph Lauren), to everyday brands (Post-It Notes, TiVo, and Starbucks). This business model ensures for HBO that they have ample returns with which to fund their original dramas, alongside other content (documentaries, made for TV features, sports rights and acquisitions for their movie library). It is the original drama that attracts and keeps the viewers, with such culturally important and addictive programming; “Many subscribers find they can't live without HBO, and Time Warner like it that way” (Fuhrman, 2012). HBO's 'hands off' approach grants more creative autonomy to its staff which in turn attracts the 'talent' from Hollywood (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 140).

Since 1996 HBO has tagged itself with “It's Not TV, It's HBO,” implying “that the series and specials produced by and presented on HBO are a qualitative cut above the usual run-of-the-mill US television programming” (Edgerton, 2008, p. 9). This suggestion that HBO is US television for the discerning, is rooted in both its economic model and the subjects that the dramas on HBO deal with. As the privilege of watching HBO is only gained by paying for it, around \$15 a month, then HBO is only available to those that can afford it. To have disposable income these subscribers must then, be well paid, educated, professional. These people will also be likely to own the apparatus at home that gives them the best viewing experience, to fully appreciate the high production values that HBO puts into its drama: HD and large screen US televisions, and surround sound set ups. Dunleavy notes in her breakdown of HBO and its output of,

Serious drama [which] refers less to the content or subject of an individual drama than it does to what writers call the 'treatment' of a given subject, and to the pursuit of a 'no holds barred' creative attitude (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 29).

This is clear in HBO's treatment of the crime and cop drama in *The Wire* (HBO, 2002 - 2008), or the Western in *Deadwood* (HBO, 2004 - 2006). Both established subject matter and genre but dealt with in HBO's own way. Sepinwall describes *The Wire* with “it

wasn't really a cop show, but a despairing sociological screed in cop show drag," (Sepinwall, 2012, p. 80). The cop show / police procedural / crime drama has been a long standing stalwart of drama, from *Dragnet* (NBC, 1952 – 1959, and 1967 – 1970), to *Hawaii Five-0* (CBS, 1968 – 1980, and 2010 -), and *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993 – 2005).

These dramas as Dunleavy notes, have a,

Tendency to locate crime in large urban cities and a preponderance of white 'maverick' male protagonists whose tendency to 'buck the system' is mitigated by their achievement of the desired result (Dunleavy, 2009, p. 58).

The Wire does indeed set the drama in the large urban city, surrounded by crime and also an ongoing battle with 'the system,' for either the cops or the criminals, the school leavers and the addicts in the series. However, *The Wire* rejects the end of episode restored equilibrium as seen with previous cop / crime drama on TV. Instead layering intricate plot lines, with no "apprehension of the villain, [or the] neutralisation of the threat he poses to the status quo" (MacMurrough-Kavannah, in Dunleavy, 2009, p. 59). Indeed, the "prevailing sense of hopelessness" (Lowry, *Variety*, 2006), and its collection of "characters that are largely devoid of conscience or compassion" (Garron, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2014), are the hallmarks of HBO's dramas. Hallmarks that followed in the rise of seriality across US television, suiting well the coming influx of horror series. For example, *The Walking Dead* and its continued bleakness and endless supply of murderous villains, or the march of the seemingly impossible to stop virus and the Nazi – like vampire Master, in *The Strain*.

Similarly, in *Deadwood*, HBO takes the Western and expands its limits. It has the recognisable basics in place, set in the Dakota Territory of the 1870's with all the Old West trappings: the prospector, the marshal, the female Calamity Jane character, and lots of liquor and shooting. *Variety* described it as being populated with,

Miscreants, whores, alcoholics and human flotsam in the frontier camp of *Deadwood*. In that respect, it goes beyond revisionism to create an almost wholly original version of the Old West, whose rough edges have never been quite so bluntly depicted (Lowry, *Variety*, 2005).

Importantly for horror, HBO brought the series *True Blood* (2008 – 2014). While the vampire drama was not new to US television, see *Dark Shadows*, or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *True Blood* brought the vampire out of its (relatively) clean US television persona. The vampires on the TV screen previous to *True Blood*, when destroyed, burnt into ash, or disappeared into smoke or flashes of light, which was all the previous network era and its least objectionable strategy afforded. The 'true death' of the vampires in the HBO series, show the moment in full on exploding blood and gore. The vampire US television series, previous to *True Blood*, according to Goddu (1997), is a place of repression and secrets, where the true nature of the situation, or the monster is never seen. *True Blood* and all its gore, sex, violence and excess, is a place where all that US television previously repressed, can be fully on display. Jowett and Abbott note about *True Blood*,

It brings to bear all the elements, meanings and themes of the genre in a spectacular display of excess, using the vampire as a means to push the boundaries of US television by placing all of the text and the sub-text of the genre out in the open, on our US television screens like never before (Jowett & Abbott, 2013, p. 132).

This presentation of the known-to-US television vampire in a way that was new and excessive, precisely embodies HBO's strategy with its drama: taking existing fare and going it the HBO way. HBO dramas that are said to be pushing the boundaries, are doing so by taking something that already exists, and bending and twisting it into a new and sometimes rebellious form. Like the drama sub genres mentioned above, horror drama has been on US television before, but due to the rise of seriality, the horror serial drama has developed and blended into something new and darker: see the vampire drama in *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966 – 1971), now we have *The Strain*. The anthology series, *Rod Sterling's Night Gallery* (NBC, 1969 - 1973), has given way to *American Horror Story*. And the supernatural detective show, seen before with *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (ABC, 1974 – 1975), has become *iZombie*. All these dramas take something that already exists, and then treat them differently. The shifts away from mass programming and the power of the demographic, changing attitudes of advertisers as they seek the

loyalty and numbers brought by genre programming, have given rise to contemporary horror drama.

3.4 Subscription Online

What of the new types of US television and its contribution to the rise of seriality, and the rise of horror? While Internet streaming video services are no longer confined to the old models of US television, in their creation of original drama, both Netflix and Amazon Prime, still in some cases, follow some of the traditional structures. On traditional US television – network, basic cable, premium - dramas typically clock around 44 minutes per episode (on network or basic cable), and around 53 to 57 minutes for premium channels (HBO, Showtime). On Netflix, *Orange Is the New Black* (2013 -) for example, has its episodes coming in at around 52 to 58 minutes, and season lengths of 12 episodes. But Netflix does not have to do this. They are no longer confined to the hour slot, or even the numbers of episodes needed to fill a season. Because of the nature of the on demand service, viewers can watch as much or as little of a series, even of an episode, as they choose. The same story could be told in, say, six movie-like features of two hours each, per season. It would seem that the majority of Netflix viewers watch drama episodes in clusters anyway, giving rise to the common phrase to 'binge-watch.' There has been a clear instrumental role that US television has played in the expansion of Internet TV: the drama made by Internet services is still employing structures and notions of what drama and storytelling pacing is. However, this is changing as the Internet services are making and commissioning more of their own original scripted dramas. For example, the 2016 Netflix series *The OA* experimented with episode length. According to the creators they wanted the story to dictate the run time of the episodes, rather than the rigid hourly structure as set by traditional US television. Some of the episodes of *The OA* ran for 30 minutes, some were 50 and some went to an hour and 10 minutes. This playing with the timing of episodes explored for critics, what could be “the future of storytelling” (Debruge, 2016, *Variety*). Debruge goes on to describe *The OA* not as US television, but as “a long-form movie [...] divided into eight chapters [...] on-demand storytelling.” In addition to the developments in experimenting with episode

length for drama, on demand services have for a long time been reforming episode length, or rather, storytelling pacing, through the releasing or the 'dropping' of full seasons all at once. Feeding the behavior of the binge-watching or the cluster viewing of large portions of a series in one session, has a profound effect how complex a story can be. The tendency to watch shows in bulk, rather than a drip feed of week to week, can come either through home library building with TiVo, DVRs or on demand services. Some viewers prefer to catch up on more than one episode at once, allowing viewers to be in control of their own "televisual time" (Tryon, 2015). For the writers, this means that they can assume that a complex story can be followed if there is no week long gap between episodes. For horror, this means that the notion of holding tension across week long gaps and the problems this can cause, can be in some cases, eliminated. And not just in a week to week episode structure. During the individual episodes too, commercial breaks can be eliminated so that tense and atmospheric scenes are not broken by the bright and shiny lights of a washing powder commercial (Waller, 1987). What this means for horror is a larger and expansive exploration of the story or the universe and maintenance of atmosphere and tension. A horror TV serialisation loses the confines of the closed cinema film and expands on the story and its world. The serialisation of horror also fills the space that would in some film franchise cases, be occupied with many sequels, as I will now explain.

The behavior and desires from horror film fans for further story and plot development suits the US television industry. They are an audience that has an appetite for ongoing storytelling and keep up with the quick shifting US television and technological developments. Horror fans will follow the shows they want across the varying platforms on which to find them¹⁷. Brigid Cherry's 2010 study of online fan practices acknowledges horror fans not only as early adopters of technology, but also wanting more complex and layered storytelling. In the early days of the Internet and online communities, horror fans were active users, and some of the longest running email discussions are horror based. Cherry goes on to argue that through a study of fan fiction, horror fans are more interested in important aspects of the genre, character and plot development, and not

¹⁷ I will explore this further in the third case study, *Scream Queens* (FOX, 2015 – 2017).

(as much of the rest of fan-fiction explores), fictional inter-character romance. On fan-fiction written in response to the *Scream* movie franchise, the focus was on,

Alternative plot developments or endings, character points of view of events in the films, the filling in of narrative gaps or what happened next [...] this illustrates that the concerns and interests of this group of horror fans centre around the desire for narrative continuation and more detailed narrative (Cherry, 2010).

This adoption of both technology and a desire for continuing stories, places horror fans and their deep interest in continuing stories perfect for the serialised drama. Horror offers very precise attributes that are desirable to the US television industry. In the wake of audience fragmentation and the notion of the 'quality audience,' horror can provide a large and loyal fan base. While horror film stories sit inside the 'closed walls' of a cinema feature, the horror US television drama can explore what happens next; what happens after the initial killing spree, or the viral outbreak. US television allows the story to go further and to explore more, in a way that horror has tried to do in the cinema with the endless franchises and sequels. These sequels (see the twelve *Friday the 13th* movies, the ten *Halloween* films, and the seven, up to now, films in the *Saw* franchise), are par for the course for the dedicated horror fan for whom no sequel number is too high. These sequels feed the enjoyment of horror fans who relish the intertextual nature of the recurring set pieces and returning killers and monsters. On US television, the ability to explore a horror story and its many layered sub plots because of the space that long form drama serialisation offers, means that the ongoing horror story no longer has to be confined to the tiresome and repetitive sequel¹⁸. The "cumulative sub plots" as described by Dunleavy (2009), needed to create the addictive 'must see' TV, are already proven to be sought and desired by horror viewing fans, as Cherry found. The DVD sell through and syndication to other channels and across to Internet sites suites the horror fan: being able to watch and re-watch is a common activity for the more involved horror viewer. Having the access to do this, via availability on Netflix, or Hulu, various seasons and episodes of *American Horror Story*, for example, can be watched and watched again, to seek out the alleged 'Easter eggs,' that, again allegedly, connect all the stories together. As Cherry discusses, horror fans have a loyalty to the genre and hold and

¹⁸ I will explore this repetition and the negative opinions of it from critics in the *Scream Queens* case study.

enjoy large amounts of discerning inside knowledge (Cherry, 2009, p. 43). This loyalty is of value to the networks, channels and advertisers as they seek out specific audiences as attitudes change to the genres that can supply dedicated and returning viewers.

Launching a new drama has become increasingly difficult. Difficult because of the already discussed increasing competition, and specific to drama, what FX president John Landgraf called Peak TV. Landgraf says that it is becoming harder to cut through the clutter and stand out amongst what he calls a “glut of drama” now on US television (Garber, *The Atlantic*, 2015). The rise of seriality across US television, has pushed, merged and twisted genres in new forms, as channels and shows seek to stand out. From brutal re-imaginings of the Old West, to the new ventures into storytelling outside the traditional hour long schedule slots, the rise of seriality has in turn given rise to horror. The rise of seriality has led to all manner of genres and sub genres being utilised, horror included, as the value of the horror audience became more apparent. But it is important to note alongside why horror became a valuable prospect to US television, also what it is that the serialisation has done to the horror: what kind of horror does seriality breed, and how does horror adapt.

Broadly, horror has adapted by absorbing, exploiting and merging existing TV genre and tropes, and existing horror film genres and tropes. See the medical procedural elements in vampire drama *The Strain* or zombie / detective in *iZombie*. And while horror films are often simplistic – high concept even – horror has adapted to suit the slow and steady storytelling of contemporary drama. Spinoff *Fear the Walking Dead*, while opening with a startling zombie attack, spends much of the first season as a family drama, with little zombie action for the majority of the series. This story spread across the first series of *Fear the Walking Dead*, expands the reach of the story across characters, plot trajectory and arcs, in addition to being the same universe as *The Walking Dead*. It is this development of such series that fulfills two things. One, the desires as Cherry showed, of fans wanting more character development. And two, the serialised horror occupies the corresponding space that sequels and prequels do. By for example, further storytelling in *The Walking Dead* universe – what was the outbreak like at the start of the pandemic,

and on the other side of the United States¹⁹ and expanding on character development. Horror is providing the networks, cable channels and subscription services what they want: an audience that is faithful to the genre, that will follow story worlds and characters across platforms and time scales – see Dr Hannibal Lector as a younger man in *Hannibal*, or the re-telling of the family trauma based slasher killer, in *Scream: The TV Series* (MTV, 2015 -).

In Landgraf's world of "Peak TV," standing out from the crowd is becoming increasingly difficult. Significantly to the rise of seriality and the sheer volume of dramas now on TV, horror offers some interesting and standout twists on existing formulas. According to Landgraf there were 419 dramas on TV in 2015, up from 2016 dramas in 2010, and this has "created a huge challenge in finding compelling original stories" (Garber, *The Atlantic*, 2015). As seriality has been on the rise it has absorbed horror into its existing drama types. In addition, the appropriation of classic horror cinema into a US television drama shows just how far the serial drama has had to go to make itself heard in the peak of TV drama. Existing core and extremely loyal fan bases for such movies as *The Exorcist*, or *Scream*, can be an advantage particularly for the advertisers, who having embraced horror programming, will view the faithful fans as valuable consumers. Targeted and 'quality' programming is not new as explored, but it was the premium services who were able to truly test the waters of the limits of drama in the late 1990s. Their treatment of dramas exposed an audience pool who the advertisers, cable channel and network executives, would deem to be valuable. New services and the viewing habits that this breeds, the cluster viewing of episodes, means that not only does the long form TV horror drama offer the same pleasures of the sequel or prequel, but it can do so without breaking tension. Subscription services influencing cable, who then in turn influenced network, the serialisation of horror and the inherent characteristics of the genre, allow a channel to utilise the genre to stand out in the busy space of drama production and attracting audiences.

¹⁹ *The Walking Dead* is set some weeks into the outbreak, and in Georgia, while *Fear the Walking Dead* takes place in Los Angeles, and the Pacific coast, at the very start of the viral outbreak.

3.5 Technology and VFX, Production and Exhibition.

With higher production values, bigger budgets and longer shooting schedules (Nelson, 2007), film has traditionally been perceived as more sophisticated than US television. The small screen and poor resolution of home US television sets before the digital and HD revolution, meant that the medium of US television had little to no use for expensive and detailed visual effects. In addition, scholarly opinion had it that US television does not receive as much of the viewers' attention as film, in the distracting home environment (Ellis, 1982; Hills, 2005). US television was film's little, and inferior brother. However, in recent years opinions have changed regarding the sophistication of US television, as digital and HD home technology developments, and advances in special effects, have expanded the scope of possibilities in US television production. This section will explore the increasing use of visual effects across US television drama and how this has encouraged the rise of horror. Most pertinent to this discussion is the increasing visual excess and violence across US television, that like the rise of genre programming and seriality, also opens the door for contemporary horror drama. As demonstrated in the introduction and literature review, previous horror works on US television, while laudable for what they achieved despite their time in TV history and industrial contexts and constraints, for some critics and fans, they lacked a key element of screen horror: the visual reveal – the monster close up or the bloody murder. This section will explore the developments in technology and effects and the rise of visual spectacle on US television. Some critics claim that the rise of spectacle could be taking the place of the high standards of storytelling, the complex plotting that has become synonymous with the long form 'quality' drama. This section will explore both sides of the coin: how a concentration on spectacle can present problems in the context of US television, and how the specificities of the medium mean that spectacle can give way for creative manipulation of what can be done in the restricted time frames and shooting budgets. For horror, an exploration of the rise of visual effects on US television is crucial to understanding the cycle of horror drama that this thesis explores. Charting the journey of visual effects and exhibition, will demonstrate how horror has developed from Waller and Hill's TV horror that was quiet, contained and visually lacking, to the spectacular and excessive shows that I will examine in the case studies. For clarity, I have split this

section into two parts: i) Technology and Visual Effects, and ii) Exhibition, to show the developments that contributed to the rise of horror at the production level, and then at the consumption level – how are viewers watching US television at home.

3.5.1 Technology and Visual Effects

The shift from TV as an aural medium to a visual medium follows the technological progressions of apparatus and skills employed in visual production and special effects, in addition to cultural shifts around expectations of US television drama. Some critics have lamented the increase of visual spectacle and a reliance on special effects and view it as a process of “story displacement” (North, Rehak, Duffy 2015 p. 1). In order to explore the shifts in this area, I first want to clarify some points. The term special or visual effects can encompass many things. Historically, special and visual effects have come to mean matte paintings, miniatures, stop motion, wire work, pyrotechnics, puppets, animations, double exposures, and more: a section of the industry that varies enormously in skill and discipline. For the purpose of this work I mean the effects to be visual illusions that are artificially produced. I will adopt the industry terminology of 'visual effects' or VFX. There are variations on where the VFX sit in the composition: some of these VFX are what are termed as 'invisible' effects. They are hidden so to speak, in that they simply provide the “seamless screen reality” that many of the contemporary dramas require (North, Rehak, Duffy, 2015, p. 2). For example, the grand scale of *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011 -) requires extensive green screened background in order to provide the location of the story. The dragons and White Walkers that feature in the show are the spectacle.

Two main threads exist in the production of and analysis of, VFX: practical and mechanical, and optical and post-production. Considering optical / post-production first, technology and skill have improved over time, what makes a VFX 'special' has changed. What was once 'special' is now standard. The aforementioned green screened backgrounds that can place stories anywhere and in any time, are now an industry standard. VFX no longer sit only in the realm of film, fantasy or science fiction texts. Shows that on the surface seem without the need for VFX still use them. Comedy drama

Ugly Betty (ABC, 2006 – 2010), for example, used green screen for the extra detail of New York streets, extra people, extra vehicles, despite being filmed on location, on the streets of New York (Stargate Studios, 2009).

If VFX are being used across US television, what are the reasons for doing so? Very little exists in terms of previous studies of US television and VFX, and for the discipline in general, the main body of work focuses on 'How-To' manuals, or career works of famous effects artists. However North, Rehak & Duffy offer a concise explanation of why VFX are used and break it down into three areas.

- ⤴ Technical: Effects that are produced through certain practices; the use of animation, CGI, puppets, pyrotechnics etc, and used in combination with the real. For example, characters interacting with the dragons in *Game of Thrones*.
- ⤴ Narrative: the VFX are themselves the “storytelling agents conveying narrative elements and themes” (North, Rehak and Duffy, 2015, p. 5), see the Smoke Monster in *Lost*. They become like musical numbers; interruptions but they drive the narrative forward (Freeland, 2000).
- ⤴ Economic: here VFX solve problems of budget and scale. Replica sets can be far too costly and impracticable. For instance, in the *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO, 2010 – 2014) it would be far too costly to build period recreations of Chicago, Manhattan or Atlantic City. So, the vast majority of the set and location in the series is green screen. The other economic value of VFX is the potential for use in the marketing of a text, where the technical excellence of the programme is showcased, hopefully boosting viewing figures, or box office numbers (North, Rehak, Duffy, 2015, p. 5). This marketing potential is crucial to the horror genre on US television, as the case studies will demonstrate.

To link all of the points so far made: Audience fragmentation led to more demographic thinking, which in turn leads to the rise of seriality as a tool for attracting and keeping dedicated and specific audience groups. If what the audience group desires is horror programming, having the means with which to make it is crucial, if it is to be taken seriously. Horror fans have high expectations from horror, in particular its visual effects. Whole magazines and Internet sites are dedicated to the work (*Fangoria*; *Bloody*

Disgusting; Gore Zone; Scream). As networks and channels seek to have their drama product stand out in these times of peak TV, ambitious and complex stories of spectacle and excess, frequent the upfront network pitches to advertisers.

Grand ambitions pitched by writers might seem fantastic ratings pullers on paper, but under the budget and time constraints of US television production, extensive use of VFX has the potential to appear cheap or forefronting spectacle over substance, or cause problems in production. Writing about ABC's *Once Upon A Time*, Li (2013) in *Entertainment Weekly* comments "when the unrealistic parts of these fantasies look hastily created, it lowers the entire quality of the show."²⁰ Problems of excessive VFX can occur before the show even airs. Spielberg's much anticipated *Terra Nova* (FOX, 2011) had to be put back from a Spring premiere to an Autumn launch. Entertainment President Kevin Reilly told *Broadcasting & Cable* that,

Terra Nova is one of the most ambitious US television series ever produced. The cutting edge visual effects used to create the world of *Terra Nova*, which is massive in scope and scale, required more time to be realised (Morabito, *B&C*, 2011).

Critics, however, took a more scathing line. Hibberd in *Entertainment Weekly* mocked this announcement with "It's so amazing, we can't even make it" (2011). The series was cancelled after one season, after ratings plummeted in the season finale (Goldberg, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2012). These two examples highlight the potential problems that US television as a traditionally aural medium faces, when it expands into visual storytelling. The makers of *Terra Nova* put themselves in the position of attempting too much VFX in order to live up to the expectations of contemporary genre drama. The effects were compared directly to the 1993 film *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg), with critics saying: "how two dimensional and unrealistic they [the dinosaurs] looked compared to the technology used in the 1993 film" (Li, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2013). In *Once Upon A*

²⁰ Similar issues have occurred in film. *I Am Legend*, the 2007 adaptation of the Richard Matheson novel, directed by Frances Lawrence, was torn apart by critics and fans, after the vampires were fully realised in CGI. There exists on YouTube footage from early make up tests for the movie, with the vampires created with prosthetics. These creatures looked great compared to the CGI monsters as appeared in the film. Some critics even likened the movie vampires as looking like effects created for a network fantasy show.

Time and *Terra Nova*, the compulsion to include lots of VFX came at the expense of the final product.

Boardwalk Empire (HBO, 2010 – 2015), described by Franich (2011) in *Entertainment Weekly* as “the most gorgeous show on US television,” illustrates the emphasis and expectations placed on drama aesthetics. Set in 1920s Atlantic City, New Jersey, *Boardwalk Empire* is shot on Super 35mm film and relies heavily on natural light, as a way to recreate the look of the 1920s and its beach side boardwalks. In post-production, 1920s cityscapes, ocean liners, WWI trenches, Richard Harrow's disfigured face, and classic cars are added to create the full and rich tapestry of the show. These expectations come bring pressures however, on both industrial and economic levels. Dunne explains,

The technological advances in cinematography, special effects and editing have created the ability to produce extraordinary visual story telling for the small screen. The expectations at the networks for this kind of feature film quality have not only fostered a competition among programme suppliers and networks to produce spectacular shows, they have also created a financial nightmare” (Dunne, 2007, p. 100).

Shooting on film was, and still is, expensive. A roll of 16 mm film from Kodak that will provide 11 minutes will cost \$216, and 35mm film for 11 minutes will cost \$863 (www.kodak.com). Add all that up to cover the amount of film needed to include outtakes, deleted scenes, B-roll footage, pre roll, post roll – the costs escalate. However, shooting on film is viewed by some as superior to video. Images shot on film look softer, with no hard edges. Highlights, mid-tones and shadows are realised in more subtlety, and film adds grain to the image. Video produces a much sharper image with hard lines, and extremes of light and dark. The whites, lighter tones and highlights become 'blown out,' while dark tones and shadows blacken and get lost in the image. The vast majority of US television after years of using time consuming film, moved over to video shooting, for ease of storage, time saved on set and reproduction of footage. In order to stand out, some dramas have opted to shoot again on film, but this desire for as Dunne states,

“extraordinary visual storytelling,” brings its challenges. The combination of shooting on film and the extensive VFX, is very costly and time consuming.

In some cases, the sheer scale of a scene or plot event means that more inventive means to create content need to be employed. Even a show with a large a scale as *Game of Thrones*, still needs to work to budget and time. The 'Battle of Blackwater,' a crucial point in both book and series, threw up its own dilemmas. The show found itself without a director and so drafted in Neil Marshall (*Dog Soldiers*, 2002; *The Centurion*, 2010), known for his talents with creating action with lower budgets and resources. Marshall wrote and directed the 2008 science fiction film *Doomsday*, which features a great deal of battle scenes and hand to hand combat. The Blackwater scene in the *Thrones* novels, resembles the epic set piece battle of 'Helms Deep' from Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2003), but in no way could HBO produce such a battle sequence. Marshall reported to *Empire* that he purposely did not view Jackson's battle scene, as the two were far too similar in scale and content. In this case, the fundamental medium specifics of US television allowed the show to engage with this crucial battle yet scale it down in a way that suited the medium. That is to say, if they had attempted a Helm's Deep type scene, it could have potentially been very much below par, and run into problems and comparisons to film, such as with *Terra Nova*. Instead, Marshall took advantage of the medium and its leanings towards aural / character driven intimacy. Writer and producer on *Game of Thrones* D. B. Weiss explained to *Entertainment Weekly* in 2012,

On the resources we have, you're never gonna be able to compete with that [*Lord of the Rings*] level of spectacle. It really has to become more about pulling into the characters, and making it more about their personal experience of this event rather than giving us the giant bird's eye view (Hibberd, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2012).

The in depth character development of the serialised drama, means that in such a scene, focus can be on their own personal corner of the battle. Editing tricks, quick cuts and point-of-view shots of the fighting, will still leave the viewer with a feeling of having experienced something grand and exciting, and spectacular. This feeling of experience,

either achieved via extensive VFX or complex and clever practical effects, is very much pronounced in the contemporary horror drama. I have shown that VFX can drive or swamp a narrative. But for horror the increasing visual nature of US television storytelling has pushed horror drama into places never before seen on US television. And interestingly, in to a place that differs visually, from cinema horror. Because TV horror was seen as lacking in visual payoff, the increase in spectacle across US television drama means that horror could now exist on the smaller screen, importantly fulfilling one the genre's most basic characteristics: the visual scare, the gore, the bloody close up. As I will show in the case studies, contemporary horror drama works to utilise both elements now available to US television drama production: high end special effects and the intimacy of characterisation on the long form serial drama.

Horror is unmistakably a visual genre, either in excess or in scarcity. In the cinema horror works visually both with what you cannot see (see the suggestive nature of *Paranormal Activity*, Peli, 2007), and what is overtly displayed (lengthy torture scenes in *Hostel*, Roth, 2005, or the *Saw* franchise). Some horror requires the visual manifestation of either the monster and the spectacle, or the detailed location which lends atmospheric tension and dread to the text. Contemporary TV horror has expanded its visual spectacle, with horror series combining storytelling with large scale visuals. Widescreen and HD screens show the detail and the work of the expensive VFX to their best capacity. For example, the second season of *Fear the Walking Dead* (2015 -) opened with a dramatic imagining of a burning Los Angeles. As the survivors sail away to (apparent) safety aboard *The Abigail*, the camera pans up and towards the engulfed city, showing in detail flames licking the iconic palm trees and beachfront housing of Los Angeles. As the series progresses and the plague increases, detailed zombie hordes are seen to repeatedly approach the beaches. Over on FX, vampiric infestation drama *The Strain* revels in the tiny detail of the parasitic worms that leech out of victims, and the whipping snake like stingers that erupt out of the vampire mouths, to catch on to the throat of the next victim: all gloriously realised in high definition, fully exhibiting the liberal use of visual effects. Gothic drama *Penny Dreadful* (Showtime, 2014 – 2016) again benefits from HD viewing. Filmed on location in the forests of Ireland, *Penny*

Dreadful is saturated with lush colour and detail. In an interview with *IndieWire* (Gupta, 2014), costumer designer Gabriella Pescucci describes her lavish and intricate designs, the sets and locations that are based on original 19th century illustrations of London and inspired by the work of French Impressionists Monet, Morisot and Tissot. *Penny Dreadful* revels in its close ups: of fabrics, piles of dead bodies, scalpel incisions, hieroglyphs underneath the exoskeleton of the Creature, and silver curlicue picture frames.

While it is unfair to compare the two media, having as they do different industrial and medium specifics, it should be recognised and noted, that horror was seen to be unable to work on US television, and actually belongs in the cinema. Some horror found in the cinema however, is also thin on spectacular special effects. Recent examples include, *Paranormal Activity*, made for only \$15,000, relying on very little visual effects to generate the tension and fear (Pomerantz, *Forbes*, 2007). Based on a demonic presence / possession, with very minimal settings and the use of only two main actors, very little 'horror' actually happens. We hear footsteps, lights going on and off, and the bedroom door moving by itself. The tension builds, and the film expertly creates much fear with little action. Lots of the events happen during the night, so the use of negative and blind space is used extensively. Similarly, David Robert Mitchell's 2014 *It Follows*, a film about an unknown force, or 'it', that persistently follows the female lead after a sexual encounter, also creates great tension with little visual accompaniment. 'It' takes on the physical form of a person, invisible to all but the female protagonist, and changes every time it appears. Again, very little visual horror, or spectacle is used to create the very creepy and unsettling tension: simply a person unknown, always walking towards the victim. Both successful examples from the cinema that do not rely on spectacle yet still present critically acclaimed horror. To be clear, cinema horror does not have to be filled with dazzling special effects. US television horror has become big budget, visually epic, packed with special effects and crammed with eyebrow raising content, sometimes before it; launches. See for example, the furore over the marketing campaign for FX's *The Strain*, which featured a worm coming out of an eyeball gracing the nation's billboards (Sims, *The Atlantic*, 2014; Block, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2014). Take also

the figure of the raping Addiction Demon in *American Horror Story: Hotel* episode 5.01 'Checking In.' This caused much disgust at the Parents US television Council (Goldberg, 2015, *The Hollywood Reporter*, Steadman, 2015, *Variety*). The brutal murder of two beloved characters in the seventh season opener on *The Walking Dead*, 7.01 'The Day Will Come When You Won't Be,' was both complex and skilled in terms of its violent VFX. Characters Abraham and Glenn had their heads bashed in by Negan and his personified barbed wire covered baseball bat, Lucille. The camera lingers gleefully on the victims, their open skulls, popping out eyes, and brain bits all over the floor. My point here is that these examples demonstrate that US television horror has become extreme and excessively violent and gory, while in the cinema, fear and tension is created with less, and smaller budgets.

Just as in the aforementioned controversial scenes, many other shows now kill off major characters and hold the suspense in this way. Talking about *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006 – 2013), Martin comments “the sudden death of regular characters, once unthinkable, became such a trope that it launched a kind of morbid parlor game, speculating on who would be the next to go” (2014, p. 6). Martin goes on to stress the increase of visual excess and violence, and how a viewer is no longer safe from such scenes.

Ten years earlier, I would have felt protected from such a sight [a torture scene] by the rules and conventions of US television; it simply would not happen because it *could* not happen. It was a sickening, utterly thrilling sensation to realise that there was no longer any such protection” (Martin, 2014, p. 6).

As the numbers and range of dramas grows (Landgraf's ear of Peak TV), alongside the considerable influence pay channels have had on basic cable and network, and audience fragmentation, the limits of what US television will go to in order to attract and keep viewers, are being pushed ever wider. That is not to say that excessive violence is not in the cinema, it is (see *Saw*, 2004; *Hostel*, 2005; *Laid to Rest*, 2009), but these films' are not for everyone. Horror on US television, horror for the masses, is 'mainstreaming' the more brutal and violent, or twisted and dark, forms of horror storytelling. US television is making more visually spectacular content, but all of this is only worthwhile if the exhibition of such content best does it justice. Now I want to look at

how the exhibition and distribution developments have themselves ushered in in the first instance, more genre TV, more seriality and in the second instance, more horror.

3.6 Technology and Exhibition

The expansion of the boundaries surrounding the creative potential of drama offers such promising scope for content, that for some critics and scholars the lines between cinema and US television have become increasingly blurred. This blurring of lines between cinema and US television could in part stem from increasing digital technology development, in particular the use of digital production, and the increasing prevalence of special effects on US television. One of the reasons that US television was seen as films inferior counterpart, was the small screen of the US television set, and its low resolution. But as TV appropriates the heightened film production values, so the viewer at home does too. Lotz (2014, pp. 85-90), refers to this trend of mimicking the cinema at home, with theatre-like audio systems, large HD screens with 16:9 aspect ratio, which since 2009 has become a standard format for US television sets and computer monitors. It was as far back 1991 that the moves to make digital transmission, HDTV and the 16:9 aspect ratio, became standardised for international US television (The International Telecommunications Union, www.itu.int). The International Telecommunications Union (ITU), an agency in the United Nations, began to develop international agreements on both wired and wireless communications. The investigation began in 1991 into what was needed for enhanced US television broadcasting. These agreements were finalised in 1996, with designs for complete digital US television broadcasting, which had a set plan involving:

- ⤴ Multi Programme capability and interoperability with other media. This involved digital signal compression which would improve how the spectrum was utilised, resulting in higher quality sound and high definition.
- ⤴ HDTV. High definition was aimed to become international standard. “Such an agreement would be beneficial to content producers who have global market concerns.” For expensively produced drama, it will be worth exporting it around

the globe if everyone has the means with which to fully enjoy and appreciate all the work and detail in it.

- ▲ Picture aspect ratio. The traditional 4:3 of US televisions was adopted from the aspect ratio used by films in 1930s Hollywood. In 1984, the Hollywood film community requested that the Society of Motion Pictures and US television Engineers (SMPTE) adopt the more commonly used by film ratio, 16:9. Hollywood was relying more on electronic production of film, and special effects and animation. Hollywood, SMPTE and the ITU needed an aspect ratio that would serve the needs of all the creative artists. Dr Kerns Powers from Sarnoff Laboratories worked on this issue by overlaying all the rectangles of the most popularly used formats, and found that they all fell into what would become known as the 16:9 aspect ratio (The International Telecommunications Union, www.itu.int).

While the widescreen TV and must-have home gadgets have become (for some) standard pieces of home entertainment equipment, for the drama producers and directors, they have become a changing force for aesthetic and drama form development. This wider frame means that at production level, the composition of shots when filming, will take account of wider screen apparatus in the audiences' home. This change in home exhibition of the drama, changes the drama itself. The previously common use of the facial close up and aural storytelling, makes way for wider angles, visual set pieces and highly detailed set design.

This trend serves those who can afford the gadgets, and the drama output of the top tier channels, who actively promote “aesthetic excellence and originality in a manner that distinguished their shows from those of conventional US television” (Lotz, 2014, p. 89). Namely Showtime and HBO, positioning themselves away from the rest of TV through their aesthetics and large scale visuals. But also, through the combination of this emphasis on aesthetics and visual storytelling, with the way they (HBO) 'deal' with the conceptual material. As above, taking the crime / mob / vampire drama, but doing it the HBO way. The technical excellence and complex story layering as laid out in the HBO model, has filtered down to basic and broadcast channels, with FX and AMC in

particular, “establishing themselves as the purveyors of a distinctive type of US television content” (Lotz, 2014, p. 89).

I have demonstrated here how home cinema systems, widescreen and high definition have influenced drama production. The consideration of depth, composition and attention to detail have become the norm for long form dramas, and the inclusion of spectacle and excess. For horror, the exhibition apparatus allows for much more use of the horror location: dark spaces, blind space, and in the trend of the ambitious contemporary horror drama, large depth of field that allows the zombie hordes, the recreated art-deco hotel, or the Gothic underworld, to be fully realised and appreciated.

The proliferation of visual effects has become core to even non-fantastical dramas, which are also making full use of the available green screen technology. The reasons for the widespread use of these technologies is threefold: some effects can only be produced through certain technical practices and are used in combination with the real (dragons in *Game of Thrones*). Some effects drive the narrative (the smoke monster in *Lost*), and some are needed for economic reasons (the recreation of 1920s Atlantic City in *Boardwalk Empire*). However, these effects coupled with shooting on film are expensive. Constraints in US television shooting schedules and budgets mean that despite the apparent ease and abundance of computer generated effects on TV, sometimes a series really cannot create something that might be inevitably compared to film. In this case, the practical skill of the director and editor is called upon to create the same feeling of the epic scenes. The expectations of TV drama have now been raised to such a height that there is a compulsion to overuse VFX. While horror in cinema is often more reliant on the power of suggestion (and low budgets), horror on US television has focused on its visual storytelling. Taking full advantage of widescreen, CGI, and practical effects guru's (Greg Nicotero on *The Walking Dead*, for example), the horror TV drama has moved into an extremely visual, and even excessive, territory. Something quite different from what horror on US television used to be: the new aesthetics of US television have pushed the horror drama into a more visual and graphic place. The other side of the coin is that the narrative possibility of US television also allows the horror

story to be explored past the initial incident or outbreak or killing, and thus fulfilling one of the hallmarks of the horror genre, the continuing and over extended sequel, as I explained in the previous section.

Horror is now a financially sound investment for US television at all levels, from subscription to broadcast. As the industry turns to genre shows and advertisers are prepared to back gory and violent shows, technology is key to the expanding trend of serialised horror drama. This technology and development in VFX techniques, mean that even with the quick turnaround of US television crews, it can be done. Bela Bajaria spoke to *The Hollywood Reporter* saying “The turnaround for [CG] special effects is much more efficient now [...] There’s more available to use. And that was not the case seven, eight years ago” (Guthre & Seigel, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2013). These changes, as I have demonstrated through the exploration of spectacle on US television, and the exhibition of it, show that TV horror can now offer more than King's “sizzle and no steak” of the 1970s and 1980s (King, 1982, pp. 252).

3.7 The changing hierarchy of film and US television

So far, I have demonstrated that the rise of horror on US television can be accounted for by the changing attitudes of advertisers and programme makers to horror, turning as they have to genre programming. In this section I want to show how filmmakers have contributed to the rise of horror on US television. There are two reasons why filmmakers and their work on US television is important to the rise of horror. Firstly, horror's home was seen to be in film. Horror on US television, as I explained in the introduction to this thesis, was problematic. The second reason is that there was a clear perceived hierarchy of value with regards to film and US television: film was seen as superior to US television (Nelson, 2007; Gray & Lotz, 2011). Because of all the changes demonstrated already in this chapter, US television is no longer a step down for filmmakers. This section will demonstrate the changing hierarchy of film and US television, by exploring two examples of horror anthology series which featured well known filmmakers working on US television. One from 1985 and one from 2005. I will

demonstrate that in 1985, a horror anthology made by filmmakers struggled on US television. The second series in 2005 builds an important bridge between film horror and US television horror, a key moment in my accounting for the rise of horror on US television. This will then lead into a final discussion of why filmmakers are being drawn over to US television now at the time of writing, and what this means for the contemporary TV horror cycle.

The last ten to fifteen years have been labelled by some as 'the golden age of TV,' another quite different golden age, from that of the 1960s. The current age has been characterised by dark dramas and questionable anti-heroes (VanDerWerf, 2013; Reese, 2013; Goodman, 2015). But these multiple golden ages are successors to the alleged original golden screen time, in the cinema. The Hollywood studio system in the early days of cinema has been claimed as the Golden Age of cinema, from the 1930s to the late 1950s. The dissolving of the Hays Code in 1956 slowly ushered in Hollywood's arguably second Golden Age, taking film from the late 1960s through to the end of the 1970s. Some of the movies made in this second Golden Age, are viewed as classics and master pieces, and marked the start of glittering careers of some of the most well-known filmmakers and creative staff, both in front of and behind the camera (Zinnoman, 2012). This rush of young, talented filmmakers – Scorsese, Coppola, Lucas, de Palmer, Spielberg, Polanski, and others, encapsulated the hierarchy of film and US television that would stand for decades. In previous years, in film was where the height of technical excellence could be found, with works like *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968); complex visual gore in *The Wild Bunch* (Pekinpah, 1969); and excessive hedonism in *The Valley of The Dolls* (Robson, 1967). Epic stories and costly blockbusters pushed and pulled cinema into new directions and saw the now household names of Spielberg, Scorsese and Coppola emerge, with *Close Encounters of The Third Kind* (1977); *Mean Streets* (1973); *Taxi Driver* (1976); and *The Godfather* (1972) respectively, all placing cinema firmly at the top of the cultural heap. In addition, stage plays that were adapted to cinema feature further added to the higher ranking status of film. *Amadeus* (1984, Forman); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966, Nichols); and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975, Forman): all celebrated stage productions, but

arguably made the original material more famous by their screen adaptation, by the hierarchy that claims the superiority of film.

Steven Spielberg, one of Hollywood's longest serving writers, producer and directors, has a long standing career in TV and film, and links to the horror genre on both platforms. With TV movies like "Eyes," the middle film of the anthology pilot *Night Gallery* (NBC, 1969), *Duel* (ABC, 1971), and *Something Evil* (CBS, 1972), and a horror cinema filmography including: *Jaws* (1975), *Poltergeist*, as writer / producer (1982), and *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, directing with John Landis (1983), Spielberg has been a key component in the emerging trend of both filmmakers on TV and horror on TV. I want to take a closer look at *Amazing Stories* (NBC, 1985 - 1987), to demonstrate how thirty years before writing this thesis, US television horror was a struggle, even for such a well known director, from the apparently superior, world of film.

The anthology series *Amazing Stories*, while attracting lots of attention in the run up to premiere, and having a huge \$1 million budget per episode, ultimately did not do very well.

Touted as a blend of the *Twilight Zone* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, [*Amazing Stories* was] a highly uneven mixture of fantasy with often leaded doses of whimsy, soon proved an expensive, embarrassing dud (McBride, 1997, p. 387). *Amazing Stories* struggled to find its audience. Despite the big name directors that the series offered; Joe Dante, Robert Zemeckis, Kevin Reynolds, it never quite took off. One explanation for this is offered by McBride in his biography of Spielberg, suggesting that the show lacked continuity. McBride claims that audiences need a face they recognise from week to week, either through characterisation or in the case of an anthology, a regular host; like Rod Sterling on his *Night Gallery*. The critics at the time felt that the show simply did not deliver. Reviewing in *The People*, Jarvis comments,

Amazing Stories is one of the worse disappointments I've ever had watching TV... the least we should expect from a series named *Amazing Stories* and a man named Spielberg is surprise [...] I've seen prairie interstates with more twists and turns than any of these episodes. But there is a worse sin here: In every one of

the *Amazing Stories*, I can practically see the writers, directors and producers behind the scenes shrugging and saying “Its only TV.” Its as if Spielberg, Inc. believes that one idea – one note -is enough for a little TV show. (Jarvis, *People*, 1985).

It seems that at this period in time, US television could not deliver what critics expected from Spielberg, when his film slate included *Jaws*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). Spielberg himself was blamed for the failure of the series by critics: David Blum in the *New York Times*, Tom Shales in the *Washington Post*, and Richard Turner in *TV Guide* all took offense at the lack of previews of the show, and the kibosh that Spielberg put on any press being allowed on set. Spielberg wanted to maintain an air of mystery and suspense around the show, though possibly there was too much mystery: no one knew what to expect from the series, and then in turn, no one watched it (McBride, 1997, p. 387). It seemed that there was too much reliance on the Spielberg name. The *New York Times* noted that,

The network thought that Spielberg's reputation would ensure high audiences [...] it didn't quite work out that way. *Amazing Stories* ended the season in 35th place. Its competition on CBS, *Murder, She Wrote*, was third” (No Author, New York Times, 1986).

In an interview with *Icons of Fright*, fellow director and screen writer Mick Garris commented on the problems of network US television and strong material. Garris wrote the episode 'Mirror Mirror' for *Amazing Stories*, which was directed by Martin Scorsese. The draft of the episode underwent several rewrites to appease the network, but still managed to be “terrifying” and “one of the scariest things I've seen” (*Icons of Fright*). For some people at least, though perhaps not the intended target audience, *Amazing Stories* and its horror potential, was recognised. The targeting of the right audience for horror is a challenge that I shall revisit in the case studies to follow. The horror anthology series was made again, and like *Amazing Stories*, had a different director for each

episode²¹. *Masters of Horror* was an anthology series aired on Showtime, 2005 – 2007. Headed by Mick Garris, director of, amongst others; *The Shining* (1997), *The Stand* (1994), and *Psycho IV: The Beginning* (1990), and many TV movies and miniseries, including *Tales from The Crypt* (1994), *The Others* (2000), and even a TV version of *The Shining* (1997). *Masters of Horror* was allegedly concocted during one of Garris's dinner parties. According to Garris, he would hold regular events for fellow directors, and he wondered about them making a movie together. Pitching to his guests, jokingly self-titled as the 'masters of horror,' they discussed the possibility of thirteen one hour films, each directed by a different director. Garris encouraged the participants to adapt existing short stories and to not hold back on theme or content. Garris promised no interference and no censorship, a tempting and exciting prospect for horror directors. Among others, some of the most well-known directors involved with the project were: Garris himself, John Carpenter (*Halloween*, 1978; *The Thing*, 1982; *Village of the Damned*, 1995); Larry Cohen (*Its Alive*, 1974; *The Stuff*, 1985; *Maniac Cop*, 1988); Dario Argento (*Suspiria*, 1977; *Inferno*, 1980; *Sleepless*, 2001); and Tobe Hooper (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 1974; *Poltergeist*, 1982; *Toolbox Murders*, 2004). Each film was to be given a budget of \$1.8 million and shot in ten days, on location in Vancouver. This budget came from Anchor Bay who originally picked up the project as a straight to DVD collection.

Anchor Bay Entertainment was fully formed in May 1995, after two other home video release companies, Starmaker Entertainment and Video Treasures were bought by the Handleman Company. In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, Anchor Bay was the specialist for cult and horror film, and built a comprehensive library of horror particularly from the 1970s and 1980s. Anchor Bay released many classics, like *Prom Night* (Paul Lynch, 1980), *Sleepaway Camp* (Robert Hiltzik, 1983), and *Children of the Corn* (Fritz Kiersch, 1984), and owned the distribution rights to George Romero's *Of the Dead* series and a bank of Dario Argento films. Anchor Bay have continued to release horror

²¹ I am aware of HBO's *Tales from the Crypt* (1989 – 1996), also a horror anthology series. But I have purposely left this out because *Crypt* was a collection of made-for-TV movies, and they were feature length. Some of the *Crypt* films did air in the cinema, and so for the purposes of my study, I feel that this series is closer to film, than it is to US television. The 'films' that were made for *Masters of Horror*, all fit into the traditional one hour US television schedule slot.

and cult film, and in recent years, horror US television, with long term distribution contract agreements with AMC Networks, releasing *The Walking Dead*, and spinoff *Fear the Walking Dead*, and MTV's *Scream: The TV Series*. Anchor Bay then, have a long and faithful relationship with horror, so when Garris was developing the idea and getting guest directors on board, Anchor Bay seemed the natural choice. *Masters of Horror* was originally going to be a straight to DVD release, with the real aim on 'true' horror fans.

In interview, Garris commented on the amount of material on the DVD for each film: one hour films with around two hours of extra material (source material, scripts, short stories, interviews), all of which was intended to sit alongside the series. This extra material is just the sort of para-text content that horror fans love. It was later pitched to HBO and Showtime – the only realistic potential buyers because Garris wanted no censorship and no advert breaks. In 2005, this level of horror was not going to be able to air on network or even basic cable. HBO showed some interest but ultimately declined as all that was on the table was the license to air *Masters of Horror*, and HBO as I have shown, like to own its content for maximum returns. Eventually Showtime picked it up and agreed to show the films as they were and without tampering with them (Garris, *CHUD.com*, 2006).

Masters of Horror crosses an important line between horror's 'natural' home in the cinema and the rise of horror on US television. The making of the show itself blended the authorial vision of a sole director – and the cultural significance and legitimacy that this holds - with the shooting schedule and crew dynamic of a US television show. A crew was established with three cinematographers who worked on rotation through the episodes: Brian Pearson, Jon Joffin and Attila Szalay. Although this method for some critics, took away some of the potential impact of the series. “each episode was more like a journeyman director jumping into an already running machine, rather than a broad spectrum of mini movies with the firm imprint of a visionary” (McLevy, *AV Club*, 2015). In the interview with *CHUD.com*, Garris comment on the loyalty of the fans of the horror genre, and the usefulness that this has to pay channels. “Our genre is a very loyal and enthusiastic genre. I know for sure that thousands of people signed up to Showtime to get *Masters of Horror*. I don't know of anyone who signed up to get *Weeds*” (Garris,

CHUD.com, 2006). While this is a broad and sweeping statement, it does reflect the potential benefits that horror can bring to a channel or network, through a loyal and dedicated fan base, which as I have demonstrated, the advertisers and networks have come to realise and exploit. With a tendency for horror films to be low budget and to have lesser known actors, fans are loyal to the horror genre, rather than to any particular film, actor or writer. Producer Scott Weinberg remarked on Twitter, “Producers realise that horror fans are crazy loyal to the genre” (Weinberg, 2015), revealing the potential that the US television industry has detected with regards to horror and the everlasting battle to attract and keep viewers. A research project taken by Nieslon and commissioned by Bravo in 2014, attempted to assess the loyalty of viewers, and not just the basic numbers of viewers. By recognising the changing and fickle viewing habits of today’s audience and the need for a ‘quality audience,’ viewer loyalty is paramount. Vice President of research at Bravo concluded that “those viewers who come back time and time again have a different mindset. They are more engaged and have a deeper connection” (Poggi, *Adage*, 2014). The dedication and loyalty of a horror audience then, is a promising group to target.

Masters of Horror represents an important moment for the rise of horror on US television. If horror is regarded as belonging on the cinema screen then *Masters of Horror* bridged that gap. It brought horror film directors en masse to the small screen. It was funded by Anchor Bay, an entertainment company that specialised in horror film. It was intended as a straight to DVD release – a very common path for horror to take – and yet appeared as an anthology series on Showtime. However, as much as *Masters of Horror* represented a pivotal shift in horror and US television, there was one hitch with the episode directed by Takashi Miike, *Imprint*. This was the final episode of the first series, originally scheduled to air on January 27th, 2006. Showtime pulled it, deciding not to show it on US television (it did appear on the DVD release). Given the whole premise of the series, as laid down by Garris, that it must not be tampered with, no censorship, *Imprint* brought problems. Seen as far too graphic in its torture scenes and images of fetuses, Showtime required too many cuts to air the film. Even references to the episode were removed from Showtime’s website, and was described by Garris as “the most

disturbing film I have ever seen” (Kehr, *New York Times*, 2006). The episode was pulled but remained intact on DVD. While Showtime wanted to push boundaries and experiment with the *Masters* series, at this point in time they still pulled out when confronted with something so outrageous. They were still afraid to boldly go, despite being a premium cable channel, keeping the harder horror, away from US television. More recently of course, the episode has been shown on TV, both with cuts and in full, on the channel Chiller, and the VOD service Hulu. But in the early to mid-2000s, there was still some trepidation around horror. The experimentation and showcasing of horror in the years after 2010, are therefore, on scales not seen on US television before.

Back when *Amazing Stories* was aired, US television was only just releasing itself from Least Objectionable Programming. At this time film was still seen as a higher caliber than US television. With demographic thinking, the potential that genre serialisation offers, and production, technology and exhibition of US television all much improved, US television is offering scope and potential that film cannot. Director Neil Jordan (*The Crying Game*, 1992; *Interview With The Vampire*, 1994), echos many sentiments that the TV serialisations now being made offer lots of potential for creative productivity. Jordan himself found that US television could offer him more of what he wanted. Head of DreamWorks Pictures, Spielberg, suggested that Jordan's script for a period piece about the 15th century papacy would better suit a long form drama. Jordan then took it to Showtime, and *The Borgias* (Showtime, 2011 – 2013) was made. Speaking in an interview with Sperling and Maerz in the *Los Angeles Times* in 2011, Jordan explains the reasoning behind the move,

Hollywood isn't doing anything like this material anymore. With cable, there's this wonderful domain that's emerged for film directors like me who enjoy the kind of material that Hollywood finds too boring for words.

Jordan also comments on the trends sweeping Hollywood that have driven himself and others towards US television.

It helps that US television [...] has become more innovative in recent years, with deeper character development and edgier storylines, while the major movie

studios largely have abandoned intricate character driven stories for superheroes and pirates.

Jordan continues to comment that US television offers an audience that, is “older, more sophisticated” (Maerz and Sperling, *Los Angeles Times*, 2011). What this is implying, is that only a TV audience would be able to fully appreciate the complex and layered stories, the likes of which is to be found in his works.

With the evolution of US television from an aural to a visual medium, it stands to reason Hollywood creatives while dabbling with US television in the past, have as TV has evolved, now view US television as a medium which speaks to their creative needs.

Cinematographer Paul Cameron (*Collateral*, 2004; *Total Recall*, 2012) now working on *Westworld* (HBO, 2016 -), comments to *Variety* on seeing new scripts and projects,

When I read something now, I try not to think of it as TV or a feature film. It's about the content and people involved. There may have been a stigma with US television in the past, but that has changed” (Huring, *Variety*, 2016).

Cameron, like Jordan, is citing the potential that contemporary US television drama offers, because of the power of the demographic, and solid funding from advertisers who are keen to get on board with the “darker, grittier dramas”, and the production technology advances.

The filmmakers that do cross to US television are then used as means to promote a show and enhance its cultural significance and legitimacy. For example, there was much hype around movie giant Martin Scorsese bringing his directorial and producer skills to US television with *Boardwalk Empire*. *The Hollywood Reporter* joined in the excitement around the allegations that Scorsese might direct a TV show: “there had been some speculation that Scorsese might take the helm, but given his busy schedule, that was not easy to pull off” (Andree, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2008). And then *Variety* championed Scorsese's involvement at the announcement stage, but with a little more understanding of what his involvement would actually be: “HBO has given the series green light to the Martin Scorsese produced period drama *Boardwalk Empire* (Littleton, *Variety*, 2009). The excitement of Scorsese as a TV show director was though, only

promotion. Scorsese was only set to direct the pilot episode, but that did not get in the way fully exploiting his name and his credentials to launch the show. This influence and inspiration has built an “emerging hierarchy of taste” (Anderson, 2008, pp. 23-41). HBO fostered a culture that promotes US television authorship and the “belief in the artistic vision of a sole creator” (Anderson, 2008, p. 36-37). Big name directors, writers and producers who have impressive back catalogues with which to emphasise creative talent and achievements, are championed in promotion of upcoming shows. See Alan Ball (*American Beauty*, 1999) and *True Blood* on HBO, and then how this method of promoting the Hollywood talent bled down into other tiers of US television. Frank Darabont (*The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994) and his credentials as successful legitimate film director, were used in promotional material for the launch of *The Walking Dead*, and Guillermo Del Toro's name was fore fronted for the TV adaptation of *The Strain*, despite again, only directing the pilot.

With the blurring of the hierarchy of film and US television some films are being remade for TV, including some classic horror films and their monsters. *Hannibal*; *Bates Motel* (A&E, 2013 -), *Scream: The TV Series*; *Ash v Evil Dead* (Starz, 2015 -), and *The Exorcist*: all derived from horror films that are regarded as classics, even charged with reigniting or creating new genres and cycles of horror²². US television and filmmakers, advertisers and networks, now see horror drama as a viable and financially sound prospect. While *Masters of Horror* might have been a dream come true for the stalwart horror fan, for US television even in 2005, it was still too much, with *Imprint* not even shown on premium. Since 2010, the horror serial has been tested, stretched and played with, to such an extent that the horror genre has become a mainstay of contemporary US television drama.

²² *Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991), from which *Hannibal* comes from, was critically applauded as a beautiful horror / detective cross over, with one of the most enigmatic characters ever put to screen, Dr Hannibal Lecter. *Bates Motel*, a prequel to *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960), the film arguably claimed as the birth of the horror movie as we know it now – ie the loss of the monster movie, and the beginning of the human as monster. *Scream* ignited the postmodern slasher movies, spawning a franchise and many imitations. And *The Evil Dead* (Raimi, 1981) collection of films, regarded by some as a classic in its savage humor and endless exploitation of horror movie tropes.

3.8 Chapter 3 Conclusion

My central question acknowledges that there has been a rise of horror US television, and I have accounted for this rise. US television drama is a product of its industrial context, the infrastructure of US television and its strategies, and the trends within it. It was therefore fundamental to this study, to first account for how and why there has been an increase in horror programming, before I can discuss the impact that the industrial changes, shifts and trends, have had on the horror genre itself. A key part of the originality of this work is to place horror in its industrial context. No one else is talking about the industrial purpose of horror and the impact this has on the genre, and crucially, no one else is talking about why in particular, the free to air networks are making horror (and genre) programming. Via the four sections of this chapter, each exploring key shifts in the US television industry I have accounted for the rise of horror. For networks, the key change was the advertisers rethinking their attitude towards horror and genre programming, after realising the power of demographics and the dedicated horror audience. Not only would more experimental programming strategies allow for horror to be given a chance, but also that the horror programming would be allowed to survive on a smaller audience: the much regarded 'quality' and valuable audience. Cable hits like *The Walking Dead*, *American Horror Story*, and premium favourites *True Blood* and *Penny Dreadful*, opened up the eyes of networks as they saw what the advertisers were willing to back, and what audiences were willing to pay for. The key point that struck me from this part of the research, was just how much the advertisers had changed their attitudes. From attempting to stay clean and family friendly in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, to now product placing cars in gory zombie dramas, and school lunchbox snack cheese in cannibal themed dramas²³. However, this complete turnaround for advertisers means that networks have been able to embrace the rise of horror across cable and premium US television and use horror as the drama tool for navigating the busy world of peak TV.

²³ Hyundai placed its Tuscan into *The Walking Dead*, insisting the car be a "trusted partner" to the characters, and a frequent getaway vehicle. The snack cheese Babybel appeared in NBC's *Hannibal*.

The exploration of the rise of seriality reveals how the lengthening of the horror story across a drama series fulfills and expands upon features inherent in the horror genre. Firstly, the long form horror drama occupies the position of the film sequel. For the fans, who delight in extra story and detailed characterisation, serialised horror provides the expansion of the universe and follows characters after cataclysmic events, or how the introduction of a character into a supernatural world, unfolds. This expansion can be followed across multiple seasons, spinoffs and offshoot programmes that exploit the fan practices of wanting more, talking about their favourite shows as they previously would do independently, through social media chatter and fan made message boards and Internet sites.

One of the key elements of contemporary horror drama is its visual excess. VFX across TV drama has become industry standard. TV horror takes full advantage of the current compulsion in TV to provide spectacle. TV horror is now reveling in gory close ups, violent “numbers” (Freeland, 2000), which have now become industry standard for the horror drama. Combined with the developments in home viewing apparatus, horror drama can fully exploit not only changing and relaxing attitudes towards visual excess at the production and industrial level, but also utilise the wide and HDTV screens on which it is viewed. What this level of excess has done to the horror genre will be explored in the case studies. This level of excess is what forms the basis for the development of the new TV horror, and how it is moving in a different direction than horror film.

As the hierarchy between film and US television has become blurred, so does the preconception that horror belongs in the cinema. With all of the shifts illustrated; the changing attitudes and strategies at network level, the rise of seriality across US television and the expansion of the horror story, along with the emergence of VFX across drama and horror, home cinema systems, and film not necessarily being the higher rank anymore, what impact do these industry shifts have on horror? That is to say, to revisit the core question of this thesis: How has the rise of horror on US television impacted on the spectacle and acceptability of the genre? These issues as raised

through the accounting for the rise of horror in this chapter, will form the basis of the exploration of the following three case studies.

Chapter 4 *The Walking Dead* Case study.

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter illustrated the industrial shifts and trends that account for the rise of horror on US television. This case study will focus on *The Walking Dead* in its context on AMC, and its unique aims as a movie channel. *The Walking Dead* is a useful case study because it had a marked impact on the TV industry overall; US television drama output, and horror on US television more generally. In the early years of *The Walking Dead* (2010 – 2015), there was a surge in horror dramas. These horror dramas could be found across US television: from free to air networks to premium and streaming services. *The Walking Dead* is useful as it tells us how despite the evident success of *The Walking Dead*, how some elements of horror still remain problematic. My original research question asks: how the rise of horror on US television has impacted on the spectacle and acceptability of the genre. I have already accounted for the rise of TV horror in chapter 3, as per the aims of this study outlined at the end of the literature review. This case study focusing on *The Walking Dead* will begin to answer the second and third aims:

- ⤴ To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes in the US television industry outlined in chapter 3 – and how these changes have shaped horror on TV.
- ⤴ To discover how the horror genre is deemed culturally legitimate and acceptable on US television now, and why.

My multi perspectival approach consisting of industrial context, discourse and textual analysis, is the best way to deal with a case study this large (*The Walking Dead* is made up of seven seasons, with the eighth airing as I write this thesis). Through my methodology I can look at the bigger picture of *The Walking Dead* and its position inside AMC, and the wider trends within US television. Through textual analysis I can assess generic conventions, aesthetics and structural elements within the show across seasons, and when needs be, concentrate on specific episodes and scenes. This multi perspectival approach provides the tools to study the impact of the US television industry and its processes and practices on *The Walking Dead*. This approach invites

analysis that does not view *The Walking Dead* as simply a screen horror text, as to do this would miss out important trends from across US television and the conditions across the industry. Building on chapter 3, US television content, specifically drama, has many industrial influences on it (the advertising industry; technological developments; cultural hierarchies; the process of audience fragmentation etc.). These industrial influences therefore, will demand certain things of in this case, *The Walking Dead* as a zombie horror for US television. These industrial influences and demands, and the strategies behind them, form the crux of the originality of this study.

This case study aims to consider *The Walking Dead* as a product of being on a channel that is primarily a movie channel. I will explore how and why AMC made *The Walking Dead*, to contextualise the show and the channel, in the wider trends of serialization across US television. I aim to show how the conditions of AMC have impacted on the horror drama and its structures and aesthetics. I will examine how AMC sought to alleviate the tensions between US television and horror – building on in chapter 3 and the work of Hills, and his claim that horror and its associated visual imagery, has no 'fit' on US television, if US television is to be considered a “family and domestic medium” (Hills, 2005, p.118). I will develop the notion of generic hybridity of horror, with a more specific analysis of the generic impact the conditions of AMC as a film channel have on its horror drama. I will also aim to uncover what tensions between horror and US television AMC and *The Walking Dead* have not been able to solve. With seven and now eight seasons, this case study will consider how *The Walking Dead* has gone on for so long; what is it about the show that inspires such longevity? And what impact has *The Walking Dead* had on TV horror more generally?

My overall argument concerning *The Walking Dead* is underpinned by the position of the show on a movie channel. This case study will show through the aims as stated above, that because AMC is a movie channel, *The Walking Dead*, ostensibly a TV show about zombies and the end of the world, other film genres are layered over the post-apocalyptic drama to maintain the show. AMC's used its status as a film channel to position *The Walking Dead* as film, in order to alleviate some of the tensions (as

described by Hills) between US television and horror. For Hills, US television is a family and domestic medium, and that horror has not been effective on TV, in part due to the 'real life' aspect of TV that creeps in and disrupts the horror: advert breaks or the news. The associated visual imagery that comes with horror AMC marketed as technical skill and used the craft of Greg Nicotero and KNB studies as promotional material for the show. I argue this practice of visual horror and showcasing technical excellence also goes some way to alleviate the disturbing nature of the imagery. The demands of US television and serialization however, soon take over from the discursive positioning of *The Walking Dead* as film. Long term serialization in particular brings its own issues with visual horror imagery, and when it might cross a line: a line that is a result of serialization. However, in the early seasons of *The Walking Dead*, the show and its strong ratings and revenue demonstrated the value of horror to the rest of US television: Horror finally, could be made to 'fit.'

I have outlined the aims of this chapter, but for the purposes of balance, I want to note here what it is that *The Walking Dead* cannot tell us, so as to lay the path for the following case studies. While a large part of this case study on *The Walking Dead* focusses on how AMC got the show to 'fit' – how they got horror to fit, this cannot tell us how other channels or services did the same. *The Walking Dead* cannot tell us how a network channel dealt with horror, or a streaming service (*Scream Queens* on FOX, and *Hemlock Grove* on Netflix). As I will show, *The Walking Dead* suited AMC in its primary role as a film channel. *The Walking Dead* cannot tell us how other channels make horror without a film library to mine, or to position a horror drama inside. *The Walking Dead* and AMC cannot tell us about the conditions of other channels and services, and the impact this has on their horror dramas. *The Walking Dead* cannot tell us about horror dramas that have different or no source material (*Hemlock Grove* was a novel, *Scream Queens* has no original source), and then therefore, how other channels dealt with the lack of in built core audience. The steps that AMC took to alleviate tension around TV and horror, and TV and visual horror (gory imagery), cannot not tell us how other channels set about to solve the issue, in the contexts of their own and very different industrial conditions.

The Walking Dead is part of a larger canon of zombie themed texts that have seen a resurgence in recent years. To open this case study, I will first briefly chart the development of the zombie film, and the resurgence of the genre in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This will show where *The Walking Dead* sits in the zombie canon, before a more focused discussion of *The Walking Dead* on US television.

4.2 The Zombie on Screen.

William Seabrook's Haitian travelogue, *The Magic Island* (1929) influenced early zombie films (*White Zombie*, Halperin, 1932; *I Walked With A Zombie*, Tourneur, 1943). The zombie genre was relatively quiet until Romero's reinvention with *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), itself influenced by Richard Matheson's 1954 science fiction novel *I Am Legend*. Romero's *Dead* franchise of films formed the crux of the zombies' development from a creature of voodoo, to a consequence as we know them now, of scientific meddling. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the zombie appeared in various parody and pastiche films, which developed at the same time as maturing makeup and practical special effects. The zombie featured heavily in the low budget, 'video nasty' cycle of splatter films in the 1980s. *The Video Dead* (Scott, 1987); *The Dead Next Door* (Bookwalter, 1980); *The Return of the Living Dead* (Bannon, 1985); and *The Evil Dead* franchise. The 1990s saw *Braindead* (Jackson, 1992); *The Cemetery Man* (Soavi, 1994); and *The Dead Hate the Living* in 2000, directed by Dave Parker. Away from all this, was the cycle of horror from Italy, which also saw a flurry of zombie films: *City of the Living Dead* (Fulchi, 1980); *Zombi 2* (Fulchi, 1979); *Burial Ground* (Bianchi, 1982); and *Hell of the Living Dead* (Mattei, 1980).

The mid 1990s saw a resurgence of the zombie away from cinema, in horror graphic novels and the boom in survival video games. *Alone in the Dark* in 1992, and the extremely popular *Resident Evil* series of games, launching in 1996. Remade as a movie in 2002, *Resident Evil* (Anderson) is of particular importance to the subsequent cycle of zombie texts as it laid out explicitly, that the zombie outbreak was the result of human error. The unleashed man made virus brings about near human extinction – a

theme explored again in *28 Days Later* (Boyle, 2002), and *REC* (Balaguero & Plaza, 2007). Zombies brought about by pandemic marked the start of a new and long running cycle of zombie texts. Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* series of graphic novels does not concern itself with why the outbreak started, only that it has, and that everyone is infected, bitten or otherwise.

It seemed in the early 2000s that zombies were everywhere. Director of the first season of *The Walking Dead* himself said in an interview with *Time Magazine* that,

“for decades, [zombies] was this subgenre of horror that appealed to a core group of geeks like me, has gotten so much mainstream acceptance in the last five years [...] all of a sudden zombies are everywhere” (Cruz, *Time Magazine*, 2010).

As discussed in the literature review with Waller's work on horror on US television, and how trends in the cinema will drive imitations on TV, with zombies covered in other media – films, games, comics - US television was the last medium on which to find zombies. Russell (2014) and Bishop (2010) both allude to the resurgence of zombies across media culture more generally, and Bishop suggests that serialization would be the next logical step. Just as in *28 Days Later*, *The Walking Dead* features a central protagonist who wakes from a coma to find the world broken by zombies²⁴. The story is told through the protagonists' eyes, as he attempts to make sense of this new world. Characters feature in *The Walking Dead* who are bitten / infected and so choose suicide or have a loved one dispatch them when the time comes (as seen in *Dawn of the Dead*, Romero, 1978; and *Dawn of the Dead*, Snyder, 2004). The characters desire of not wanting to become 'like that' – turning into a zombie themselves – runs through both zombie films²⁵ and *The Walking Dead*. *The Walking Dead* has the zombie virus spread by bites and scratches, and they are dispatched by destroying the brain. Most

²⁴ In *The Walking Dead*, the zombies are never referred to as zombies. They are labelled as walkers, biters, roamers. Throughout this case study I will adopt both the word walker, as well as the classic label zombie.

²⁵ To be clear, the zombie films that I mean are the cycle of zombies that were post-Romero, and part of the zombie plague / viral infection collection of zombie cinema. In *The Walking Dead*, while there is no certain reason or explanation of events, it is referred to as an infection. Dr Jenner gives this information to Rick in the closing moments of the finale of season 1, telling him that “we are all infected.” So whenever I refer to zombie movies, I mean the viral infectious variety, and not the voodoo / Haitian films, from the earlier in the 20th century.

contemporary zombie texts feature megalomaniac white males (see Dennis Hopper's character Kaufman, in Romero's 2005 *Land of the Dead*), and in turn, The Governor and Negan in *The Walking Dead*. The protagonist and his group whom the story follows, seek shelter and sanctuary, and to a degree, and explanation of what the zombie plague is. The sanctuaries always turn out to be false. Usually at the hands of the aforementioned megalomaniacs or human cannibals. The shopping mall / store, and the sequence in which characters stock up and indulge their consumerist desire features in *The Walking Dead*. This mimics the iconic shopping scene in both versions of *Dawn of the Dead*. And again in *28 Days Later* when they stop at a supermarket for supplies. Central character Jim is educated on merits of different whiskeys. In episode 1.02 'Guts,' some of the action takes place in a department store. Andrea chooses a necklace for her sister; in 2.01 'What Lies Ahead,' Carol and Lori hunt for new clothes among the abandoned cars. In 4.12 'Still,' Beth takes pleasure in clean and new clothing in the gift shop at the abandoned golf club. Briefly going back to 'Guts,' we see the recurring motif of characters disguising themselves as zombies in order to pass safely through a group, or herd of zombies, as seen in *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright, 2004). This appears again in 5.01 'No Sanctuary,' and 6.08 'Start to Finish.' In the promotion of the first season, *The Walking Dead* producer Gale Ann Hurd said on the visual horror,

No horror fan watching it will complain that we cut away. We don't want it to be gratuitous, but we are making a zombie series here, and there are certain expectations (Lowry, *Variety*, 2010).

These expectations that Hurd speaks of, come from both the original comic material and previous zombie films. The creators of *The Walking Dead* sought to both serve the expectations of the fans by making it gory enough, and to also create a level of respectability with their new drama. What this tells us about the contemporary horror TV drama is that the many recognisable themes contained within *The Walking Dead* mean that the show was never an attempt to rewrite the zombie rule book, as it were. AMC as its place as a movie channel, as I will go on to explore in detail, understands the structure and content of movies. While this seems obvious, it means that AMC can exploit this knowledge to build a horror drama that suits both US television and the existing horror fan base – crucial for their economic structure based on advertising and

the need for valuable demographics. Dedicated horror fans fill that need. Horror fans enjoy the intertextuality of horror: they take pleasure in “the recognition of intertextual references” (Hills, 2005, p. 9). *The Walking Dead* had many boxes to tick, if it was going to be both a horror and a drama. They did this by attempting to align *The Walking Dead* with film. In doing this, AMC could solve some of the tensions and doubts that surround horror for US television. Before I explore how *The Walking Dead* was discursively positioned as film, I want to first look at how AMC came to make a zombie drama in the first place.

4.3 AMC: American Movie Classics

Launching in 1984, AMC, formerly known as American Movie Classics, was a basic cable channel that specialised in classic movies made prior to the 1950s. The channel showed uncut and uncolourised films and was dedicated to the art of the classic Hollywood movie. In 1990 American Movie Classics became a 24 hour service and changed its format to include traditional (but limited) commercial spots inside the movies. In 2002, the format changed again, rebranded as AMC, expanding its library to include films made after the 1950s. This rebranding brought about the inclusion of original drama to its slate, with the miniseries *Broken Trail* (2006) being AMC’s first foray into scripted drama that would complement, or serve to curate, an existing portion of its movie library. *Broken Trail* served to draw viewers in to a selection of Western films, and vice versa. In 2007, *Mad Men* launched to much critical acclaim, and was lead-in by *Goodfellas* (Scorsese, 1990), and then *Breaking Bad* was bookended by a series of anti-hero films – *Dirty Harry* (Seigal, 1972), and *Death Wish, Winner, 1974* (Idov, *New York Magazine*, 2011). Being known as a movie channel, and a movie channel that shows ‘the classics,’ meant that AMC could surround their original dramas with such classic texts, and therefore the prestige and cultural legitimacy of the classic movie could be transferred on to the drama: on to *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, or *The Walking Dead*. Put simply, the eminence of the classic films that are put together in film festivals or seasons dedicated to a certain type of film, can elevate the original drama by its positioning alongside the films. AMC makes drama to fit its film library, each will complement the

other. With a substantial horror library, AMC had a springboard on which to launch a horror drama.

4.4 AMC drama strategy.

AMC followed the original programming model as set out by HBO. Like AMC, HBO was primarily known as a movie channel, but began making original dramas. This balance in favour of films with a small percentage of original programming meant for AMC (and HBO) that they could develop dramas that focus on exclusive and dedicated audiences. Audiences that would be valuable, 'quality.' As I explained in the previous chapter with Dunleavy's work on the 'quality' audience: the audience that is the most precious because of their dedication and loyalty to shows, and their potential spending power. They will be affluent, educated and professional (Dunleavy, 2009). AMC President Charlie Collier said AMC was to be the "home of premium programming on basic cable" (AMC Networks, 2010). The "premium on basic" means not only the complex and expensive dramas that the viewers seek added to the AMC slate, but the ability to increase their affiliate, or retransmission fees in addition to advertising revenue gained. As I work through this case study, I will continue to use Collier's terms "premium" and "quality," so I want to clarify here what I mean when using these terms. Premium has come to be a byword for desirable content, content that makes people want to subscribe and pay, and importantly, keep renewing their subscriptions. For the purposes of this thesis, I mean premium to be drama programmes that are described as such because of what they contain, and what they do not tone down: Violence, nudity, sexual content and profanity. Quality is again a quick way of alluding to the characteristics of certain types of dramas²⁶. Quality pertains to the subject matter of a drama, the ensemble cast, high budgets and production values. AMC provides quality drama usually found on premium, and in turn AMC gets more premium-like returns. The finale of season one of *The Walking Dead* had 6 million views – but more importantly than that, the 18-49 audience

²⁶ It should be noted that the terms quality and premium have been used to describe other types of programming other than dramas. Films or sport can be described as premium when on pay channels, and other types of shows like documentaries or news programmes, have also been described as quality. I am however, using the quality and premium terms only in reference to long form, serialization drama.

was the largest ever seen for a basic cable drama (Idov, *New York Magazine*, 2011). This 18-49 demographic is the advertiser coveted group, and I will explore towards the end of this section how this had an impact on the growth of horror across US television as a whole.

Collier succinctly describes AMC's drama programming strategy as "[making] shows that play like movies" (AMC Networks, 2009). The context of AMC as a film channel means that underpinning the development of drama on the channel, lies in a crucial understanding and the utilisation of, genre. As I explained in chapter 3, the US television industry as a whole went through a process of audience fragmentation as the numbers of channels and platforms increased. In this situation new serial dramas must strive to be seen, and importantly, attract the valuable and loyal audience. For US television channels, studios and programme makers, this has an element of risk. No one wants to put time and money into making a new series which fails. Given the changes in the TV industry as laid out in chapter 3, channels and networks seek security and a promise of a worthwhile return on their new dramas. I demonstrated some previous attempts that did not fulfill expectations (*Amazing Stories*; *Terra Nova*), and so were cancelled – despite the attached big-name director (Spielberg) and the solid science fiction genre.

Putting all of this together: bringing "premium to cable;" launching new dramas alongside the existing library of movies; and an understanding of genre is a potential short cut to building a successful drama. Joel Stillerman, Chief Content Officer at AMC said that their tactic is to find "things we can look at and see a rich cinematic history without doing too much heavy lifting" (Idov, *New York Magazine*, 2011). In framing the new dramas within the film library already available to AMC, the channel can alleviate some degree of risk. *The Walking Dead* (Kirkman, 2003 -) was and still is, an ongoing graphic novel, winning the Eisner award at the San Diego Comic-Con in 2007 and 2010 for the best ongoing comic series. *The Walking Dead* as a US television drama had to then satisfy the needs of existing fans, new fans, industry and medium. That is to say, not deviate too far from the original material; complement its parent channel (AMC) and be profitable; and function as an ongoing US television drama whilst being a credible horror

text. In 2010 as season one of *The Walking Dead* aired, the zombie resurgence had arguably peaked and was on the wane (Bishop, 2009; Flint 2009). The decision to make a serialization of the zombie apocalypse seemed to some critics an odd choice. Parker (2010), writing in *Broadcast*, was unsure if *The Walking Dead* would fit alongside the other “slow burn blue chip drama” on AMC – *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*. Lowry in *Variety* mused on whether “the zombie drama [was] hardly a genre that screams compatibility with *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*” (2010).

To resolve this potential problem, *The Walking Dead* on AMC was positioned amongst the films, rather than the existing drama. AMC positioned *The Walking Dead* to complement its successful horror film festival, FearFest. This expansion into original drama blurs the identity of AMC. Primarily a movie channel, AMC is now known in more recent years as a site for original drama. This blurring of identity and the boundaries between film and original drama is what drove AMC to position *The Walking Dead* as film, which I will explore in more detail below. The industrial conditions contribute to similarities between film and *The Walking Dead*. In seeking the quality and valuable audience, AMC mined their existing film library and exploited horror fan practice of horror and aimed *The Walking Dead* at the inbuilt audience of both the FearFest horror film festival, and the original comic material. These conditions – AMC as movie channel which then makes content that compliments its movie libraries and bringing in Hollywood talent – also drive the genres that layer across *The Walking Dead*, as I will explore below. By first exploring how and why AMC came to make *The Walking Dead*, I will uncover how US television approached horror given the changes in the industry as explored in the previous chapter. This will serve to fully understand the reasons and conditions at AMC, and then therefore how this affects the horror drama TV series.

4.5 AMC and *The Walking Dead*.

Director of season 1 of *The Walking Dead* Frank Darabont, acquired the rights to adapt the comic book after picking up the first six novels in his local bookstore, in 2008. Author of the novels Robert Kirkman had in mind to adapt the series, but until Darabont pitched

to him, Kirkman was not taken with any of the candidates that he had previously met with, to discuss screen adaptation (Kirkman and Darabont, Comic-Con, 2010). After taking the script to NBC who passed, on the grounds it was too gory, Darabont asked Gale Ann Hurd to come aboard and she suggested to take it to AMC, who had had recent critical hits with *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*. At this time, AMC were having their highest ratings over the year from their annual horror movie festival which coincided with the Halloween holiday, FearFest. FearFest runs for the two weeks prior to Halloween showing a range of horror films. In 2008 MonsterFest was rebranded to FearFest, expanding its film library to include more contemporary texts, including *Jeepers Creepers* (Salva, 2001); *Resident Evil* (Anderson, 2002); and Rob Zombie's *House of 1000 Corpses* (2004). This 2008 rebrand brought 50% more viewers than the 2007 MonsterFest, giving AMC the strongest numbers in the 25-54 demographic group, and ranked the channel in the top 10 for 18-49. This shift to include more raw and hard-edged horror films in addition to the classic, with much more visual gore, proved to AMC and to Joel Stillerman, then Senior Vice Principal of Original Programming, who said that "we've got an audience that loves this kind of material" (Littleton, *Variety*, 2009),

According to Stillerman, *The Walking Dead* was the perfect original to complement and launch off the successful FearFest. When asked why AMC were drawn to *The Walking Dead*, at San Diego Comic Con in 2010, Stillerman said when he saw the huge movie talent attached to the show (Darabont, Hurd, Nicotero), that it was a "short hop" to saying yes. For Stillerman, the Hollywood staff that were pitching to him outweighed the potential risk of making a new TV drama, in the cluttered landscape as explored in chapter 3. This new drama was in the first instance, an adaptation of comic book material, and in the second was a zombie horror. Neither of which carry any of the cultural prestige of say, an adaptation of a Gothic novel; or a movie monster that has some legitimacy due to its previous back catalogue: the vampire, or the highly intelligent serial killer for example, both of whom "command respect." Zombies are "maligned [...] the great unwashed of horror cinema" (Russell, 2014, p. 6). Just as Darabont commented, zombies used to be for the few, the geeks, and not for the many, not for the mainstream. But the Hollywood weight brought by Darabont, Hurd, and Nicotero,

persuaded Stillerman and AMC President Charlie Collier, to take the risk. As discussed in chapter 3; with Scorsese's name attached to *Boardwalk Empire*; Alan Ball and *True Blood*, and Del Toro adding his prestige to *The Strain*, a successful director can bring much needed attention to a new show and legitimacy to an otherwise violent and gory US television drama. The three point team consisting of known director Darabont, and longtime producer Hurd, and the skilled and experienced Nicotero²⁷, reassured the channel executives that *The Walking Dead* would work, and also gave a reference to work from when positioning the show inside the context of its channel. Including a horror drama series on their slate, AMC combined Hollywood talent with US television drama, in the ambition that such esteemed personnel would outweigh the low brow perception of the zombie text. The film talent suited AMC as a movie channel, and this was capitalised on to promote and position the new drama, beginning with the promotional material for *The Walking Dead*.

4.6 *The Walking Dead* Promotional Posters.

In addition to the discourse (detailed below) surrounding *The Walking Dead*, the promotional posters visually aligned the series with film. The posters from season 1 to season 7 present images that appear as film promotional material, rather than US television. While I am not focusing too much on ancillary material, the promotional posters are important to this study as they also demonstrate the tension between horror and US television, and how AMC and staff served to try and solve these tensions.

²⁷ Greg Nicotero also worked with George Romero on *Day of the Dead*, and has a huge film and horror filmography, including *The Mist*; *Evil Dead II*; *Scream*; *The Faculty*; *Cell*; *Cabin Fever*; and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

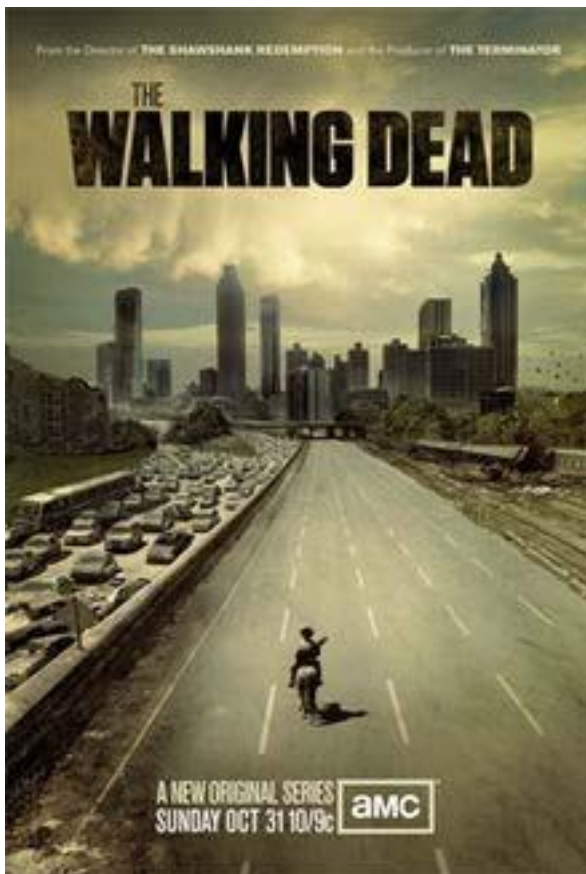


Figure 1: Promotional Poster for season 1

The promotional poster for season one of *The Walking Dead* is a post-apocalyptic vision of a fallen Atlanta. The city is dead and the freeway out of Atlanta is choked with abandoned, crashed, and burnt out vehicles. Only one man is venturing into the broken city, the central protagonist Rick Grimes. This poster tells us we are to see what happens when the lone man featured in the image enters the looming and imposing cityscape. What this poster does not tell us, is that *The Walking Dead* features an ensemble cast; flashbacks and backstory; and intertwining character story arcs, that will continue across future seasons of the show. What this poster is not telling us, is that this apocalyptic zombie text has all the features of a contemporary and what some critics might suggest, 'quality' US television drama. *The Walking Dead* features what Robin Nelson outlined as key to the much discussed notion of quality TV: the expensive production values; an emphasis on visual storytelling; complex and intertwined stories;

and importantly, generic hybridity²⁸ (Nelson, 2007, p. 48), or as I will argue, generic layering. As *The Walking Dead* continues through its seasons, growing its cast members and expanding its own universe, the promotional posters continue to place Rick front and centre. For the second season, the poster sees him running towards the farm; defending the prison in the poster for season three; the torn prison fence frames Rick in the promotion for season four; and season five displays Rick again alone on an abandoned street. This repeated positioning of Rick alone in the promotion, does not reflect the content of *The Walking Dead* and its development as a drama serial. *The Walking Dead* by the fifth season has killed off some characters and gained new ones, borrowed from multiple other US television and film genres, and yet the promotion persisted in centering the focus on one character. It is not until the promotion for the mid-season premiere of season five²⁹ that the rest of the large ensemble cast appears (see Appendix 1). AMC persists in releasing posters for *The Walking Dead* that feature only Rick, or for the run up to season seven, only Negan.



Figure 2: Poster for season 7, featuring Negan

²⁸ It should be noted that Nelson in the chapter that I have quoted from, was discussing US TV. Nelson is known more generally, for his extensive work on US television from the UK. The book that this quote is from deals with 'quality US television' in the United States, post 1996.

²⁹ There were other promotional posters that were released as a means to encourage nominations and hopeful wins for the Emmy awards. These posters did feature some of the other cast, but only around season 4. As they had different purposes than these posters meant to attract viewers, I have left them out of this discussion.

What this tells us is that despite *The Walking Dead* never being a film, and the continuing seasons, character additions, and multiple storylines, the posters reflect the home of *The Walking Dead* on a film channel. To be clear, AMC is a movie channel, so its promotional posters for *The Walking Dead* look like movie posters, they look like a movie that might be found on AMC. AMC maintains its links to film and conditions as a movie channel, which is reflected in the promotional posters. For horror TV drama, this means that it can continue to reap the benefits of elevation via its connection to film. Despite the positioning of *The Walking Dead* as a movie and the focus on the one-man-and-his-apocalypse as the posters suggest, eventually the demands of US television take over and develop *The Walking Dead* as a US television drama.

4.6.1 Positioning *The Walking Dead* as a movie.

In the lead up to the launch of season one, AMC were airing shorts (sneak peaks) that featured cast and crew (mainly Frank Darabont, Andrew Lincoln and Steven Yeun), on set and explaining the scale of the job they were doing. Cast members Andrew Lincoln and Steven Yeun both claimed to be “shootin' a movie [...] in a TV schedule.” At the San Diego Comic Con in 2010, Lincoln said on the panel that “It feels like we're shooting a movie, and we probably are” (Lincoln; Yeun, 2010). At this stage, only one season had been given the green light from AMC, so it was viewed by cast and crew as an elongated zombie movie. Producer Hurd said that “we wanted it [*The Walking Dead*] to be more cinematic” (Baysinger, *B&C*, 2014). The use of the term ‘cinematic’ seeks to distance *The Walking Dead* away from US television and instead place it on the same hierarchical level as film. In suggesting that it should be, or will be, “more cinematic” Hurd and AMC are positioning *The Walking Dead* amongst the films that AMC airs, despite the absolute fact that in order for *The Walking Dead* to be successful – to work on the medium of US television - then it must fulfill all its duties as a drama. As I said in chapter 3 and with Dunleavy’s work (2009), that the whole concept of ‘must see’ TV, or Lotz’s “prized content” (2014), is to generate content that is addictive and keeps viewers coming back, and not just a one-off event, as a film is. Dramas must build the cumulative plots and expanding character storylines to encourage the viewers to return. As

Dunleavy states, this means that channels protect their audience share, so therefore, *The Walking Dead* could never be like a film, as the closed narrative space of a film does not fulfill the motives of AMC as Collier described as, “bringing premium [drama] to cable.” For viewers to keep coming back and paying the cable bill, *The Walking Dead* needed to grow beyond the borders of a one-off film.

However, despite the needs of AMC and the building of its drama slate, the channel and its staff continued to walk a blurred line when talking about and positioning *The Walking Dead*. In 2012 Collier said when quizzed about the success of the show and where the roots of that might be, he said that “we really try to create a movie every week, and I think people are responding to that” (Morabito, *B&C*, 2012). It would seem on the surface that Collier is saying that *The Walking Dead* is like a mini movie every episode, and while that is perhaps one way to view his words, implicit in this is the bigger picture of the scale of the production of *The Walking Dead*. Discursively positioning *The Walking Dead* as a film, or with movie like production and effort, functions as an industrial tactic to continue to draw attention to the show as being 'something more' than every other drama on US television. Whether it is or not is not a point for debate, what is a point for scrutiny however, is the potential offered by the horror text to US television in terms of scale and the possibility for showcasing technical excellence. I will explore this in more detail in the Visual Horror section below. For now, this discussion will focus on the discourse around the positioning of season 1 of *The Walking Dead*, as film.

Apart from discursively positioning *The Walking Dead* as a film, AMC made external moves to present the same façade. The global launch of *The Walking Dead* to 120 countries and in 33 languages, served to further embed this horror drama as a movie event. AMC sold the license rights to FOX International Channels (FIC), who launched *The Walking Dead* across the world. Sharon Tal Yguado, Executive Vice President of Scripted Programming & Original Development at FIC, said “10/10/10 is global zombie day ... we’re going to treat *The Walking Dead* like a theatrical release” (Albiniak, *Variety*, 2010). This global zombie day saw a wave of zombie themed events around the world, building up to and culminating in the season one premiere, the “release” of episode 1.01

'Days Gone By,' on Halloween night. This contradicts what *The Walking Dead* actually is: it is a US television drama, and so would be "released," again, seven days later, with a new episode, as viewers eagerly tuned in to see how Rick made it out of the zombie surrounded tank. As the facade of film wore away and the demands of US television took over, descriptions like film, movie, and theatrical disappeared, to give way to the derivatives of *The Walking Dead* that US television could make. As the seasons have continued, AMC have created two entirely separate shows from the original. *Talking Dead* (AMC, 2011 -), and *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC, 2015 -). CEO of AMC Networks Josh Sapan told *Broadcasting & Cable* that with regards to *The Walking Dead* they are "treating this as a franchise" (Lafayette, 2014). As discussed in chapter 3, the practice of horror fans showing their love for extra plot development, narrative expansion and community debate (Cherry, 2009), has been adopted by AMC to further their revenue and viewer numbers. In the expansion of the story world they created *Fear the Walking Dead* and *Talking Dead* utilises horror fan practice to create extra, and importantly, low cost content based on the one original intellectual property. Only the most loyal fans of *The Walking Dead* are going to stay tuned to watch a show that discusses and shows clips from, the episode they have just watched. It is precisely this level of loyalty, this "rabidly loyal fan base" that I discussed in chapter 3, that the advertisers want, and what *The Walking Dead*, provided to US television.

4.6.2 *The Walking Dead* and Tensions between TV and Horror.

The discursive positioning of the show as a film resolves some of the tensions that are surrounding *The Walking Dead* and horror on US television. In the first instance, AMC had already blurred the line between film and US television by including on its lineup original scripted dramas. AMC was no longer the just a channel for old movies and was now making critically acclaimed dramas that rivaled HBO's output in their content and themes (*Breaking Bad*; *Mad Men*). In the second instance, drawing on the literature review, for some scholars and critics, horror struggles to find its place on US television (King, 1981; Hills, 2005). But the discursive positioning as film shows intent to elevate a text beyond just another drama, and to legitimise the frequent use of gory scenes and extreme violence. For all its production scale and esteemed creative team, it is still a TV

show. For example, *The Walking Dead* follows what Waller (1987) highlighted when he examined the made for TV movies of the 1970s. In essence, *The Walking Dead* follows the 'everyman' (like Daniel Mann in *Duel*) and concerns itself with the day to day survival of the characters. It does differ in that the event in *The Walking Dead* is cataclysmic, rather than personal, but the underlying issues (apart from avoiding being eaten alive) inside the show still reflect older TV horror concerns: domestic breakdowns (Shane and Lori's affair); the jealous and spurned lover (Shane); the dangers of childbirth (Lori's death by caesarian section); and good old fashioned revenge³⁰. The zombie show might have been new to US television, but many of its themes were not. Take away the smoke and mirrors of *The Walking Dead*: the post-apocalyptic backdrop, the zombies, the violence and the gore, central drive of season 1 is the recombining of the family. The drive of the protagonist is to reunite with his wife and son and return to some semblance of normality. Waller cites telefilms wherein the wives return to 'normal' after their possession; the vulnerable women who regain their strength (or go back to their husbands); and the besieged suburban families. In *The Walking Dead*, the wife returns to normal when her husband finds her (Lori ceases her affair with Shane and returns to Rick); the vulnerable woman regains her strength (Carol is freed from her abusive husband); and the suburban family consisting of Morgan and Duane, are besieged by the zombies that surround their house every night and scratch at their door.

Waller highlighted US television appropriating cinema trends for its horror, *The Walking Dead* does this too, in re-appropriating the zombie resurgence in the cinema. AMC has blurred boundaries between film and US television by virtue of its own strategies of creating original dramas that serve to support and curate its movie library and having film genre drive its dramas and their content: in the case of *The Walking Dead*, taking the zombie film and expanding it into serialised drama. Matt Hills argued that horror does not have a place on US television, for US television dilutes horror (2005). Hills has concern with where horror "fits" on TV, if TV is a domestic and family medium. AMC solved this problem of "fit" by placing the zombie serial as part of its horror movie

³⁰ The Governor, Gareth, The Claimers, Negan, Sacha, Rosita, and more, all seek revenge.

festival. This positioning serves to solve some of the tension of horror and US television. Tension around where to place horror (Hills), or what can be tasteful or acceptable (Jowett & Abbott, 2012).

The promotional posters paint *The Walking Dead* as a story concentrated on one man. While it does begin this way, by the end of episode 1.02, the cast has swelled to ensemble. Staff at AMC were describing *The Walking Dead* as a movie – which was at odds with Collier's promise to bring premium-like drama series to cable. The global launch of *The Walking Dead* was like a theatrical movie release, and AMC approached the property as franchise, creating a sister talk show and a spin off drama serialisation, adapting fan practice for US television. All of these moves and developments seek to solve the tensions between horror and US television. I argue then, that the tension was solved to a degree, and this can be seen in the changing attitudes of the advertisers, who while once showed trepidation to support such material, were soon more than willing to pour big money into appearing in and around *The Walking Dead*.

4.7 *The Walking Dead* and Advertising.

While the first season of *The Walking Dead* was enough for AMC to greenlight a second season, no one could predict the heights that it would reach as it continued. In chapter 3, I accounted for the changes in the US television industry that opened the door to a new cycle of TV horror, but it was *The Walking Dead* and its ratings and revenue, that convinced other channels and networks to reconsider their attitudes to horror. The season 1 premiere impressed with 5.35 million views, and a 2.7 rating. While this was good, critics forewarned a drop, and that the higher than expected ratings for episode 1.01 were just a “fluke” (Yanan, TV by the numbers, 2010). The season 1 finale however, was even higher, with 5.97 million views and a rating of 3.0. These numbers only continued to grow. By the premiere of season 3, episode 3.01 ‘30 Days without an Accident,’ *The Walking Dead* was drawing 11 million viewers, with more in the 18-49 demographic than *The Big Bang Theory* (CBS, 2007 -); and *Modern Family* (ABC, 2009 -). Morabito commented that the broadcast networks “would kill for *The Walking Dead*’s

demographic ratings” (*Broadcasting & Cable*, 2012). *The Walking Dead* was providing high numbers of the target demographic – the demographic that the advertisers want above all else, the 18-49s. As well as the high numbers of viewers more generally, the percentage of these viewers that were worth having, was high. *The Walking Dead* was providing what broadcast networks wanted: in the first instance a large portion of the audience share, and in the second, a large percentage of that portion was in the 18-49s. *AdAge* commented that “most network dramas struggle to get their target demographics to represent one third of the total audience watching” (2015). For season 6 of *The Walking Dead*, average viewer numbers were around the 14.6 million mark, with 9.42 million in the 18-49 demographic, which is 65% of the audience in the coveted group. The “unprecedented ratings momentum” that the show demonstrated as its numbers went up and up, turned the heads of both advertisers and the rest of US television. In season 4, the average viewer figure was 13.3 million, with 8.6 million of those in the 18-49 demographic. The season 5 premiere was the highest ever rated drama on US television (Lafayette, 2014), and the commercial pods were the most expensive. This growth across *The Walking Dead* is perhaps the most evident in the cost of advertising. In season 1, it cost \$33,000 for a commercial pod and by season 4 a pod cost \$223,000. By season 5 at the upfronts AMC were charging upwards of \$400,000 per commercial, and even a combination offer of plus \$1 million for placing an advert in both *The Walking Dead* and *Mad Men*. AMC dubbed this package as ‘Brains and Brawn.’ “In quarters when *The Walking Dead* is on the air, AMC Networks cash flow is 25% higher than when it is not on” (Lafayette, *Broadcasting & Cable*, 2014). These numbers caused the rest of US television to consider making a horror drama, and to strike while the iron was hot. Terence Carter at FOX warned of the potential for overdoing horror, when *The Walking Dead* was at its peak. “People will always try to capitalise on hits, and you hope you don’t water things down too quickly” (Carter, 2014). For Carter, the potential for everyone to jump on the horror bandwagon may cause fatigue with the viewers.

The trade and entertainment press at the start of *The Walking Dead*’s run, could not praise the show enough. Goodman described it as “an elite, top-tier series” (*The Hollywood Reporter*, 2010); and other critics said that it is “compelling [...] intoxicating”

(Lynch, *AdWeek*, 2012); “a new bar for horror” (Goldberg, *The Atlantic*, 2012); “a solid zombie drama with occasional flashes of brilliance” (Meslow, *The Atlantic*, 2013). But as soon as ratings and figures took a dip, the press leapt on it. Schwindt in *Variety* talks about the “ratings slide” (2016); and Patten at *Deadline* claimed that the show had taken a “body blow” in its ratings (2017). Season 6 did see a dip in ratings. The season 6 premiere had 15% less viewers than the season 5 premiere. But the numbers are so large, that even with the dip, as *AdAge* described, *The Walking Dead* was still “unparalleled” when compared with any other drama (2015). That is to say, that the numbers were so big, that even with a dip, they are still out front. What this tells us about contemporary TV horror drama more generally, is that with such massive figures, other networks and channels sat up and took notice. *The Walking Dead* and its money making potential, highlighted to others that horror was a viable and potentially valuable commodity. Following the success of *The Walking Dead*, horror saw a surge on US television. As I said at the very start of this thesis, from only two horror shows on TV in 2005, to twenty horror shows on air in 2015. The figures and ratings for *The Walking Dead* spoke for themselves, meaning that *The Walking Dead* arguably was the catalyst for the following years of the horror boom on US television.

After the rebranding of FearFest to include more contemporary and bloody horror movies, AMC saw the value of content that would appeal to a core horror fan base. On the surface of it, *The Walking Dead* seemed like an odd choice for the channel that had had hits with *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*. AMC went ahead with *The Walking Dead*, and alleviated tensions between horror and zombies and US television, by discursively positioning the show as a film. But the objective of making *The Walking Dead* within the strategy of the channel meant that *The Walking Dead* never was, and never can be, film. It is a drama that seeks to fulfill the objectives that a drama should – ensemble cast, cumulative plots and valuable demographics. The problematic presence of horror on US television was dissuaded by the unforeseen high viewing figures and key demographics, which did not go unnoticed across the US television industry. *The Walking Dead* ushered in a new cycle of horror on US television, as other networks and channels followed suit. The show has run for 7 seasons with 8 currently on air, and this could not

have been done without a fundamental (on the part of AMC and the shows creative team) understanding of and utilisation of genre. This next section will explore the use of genre within *The Walking Dead*, and the underlying genres that drive the show.

4.8 Genre and Drama

In the previous section I demonstrated that in the context of being on a channel primarily for film, *The Walking Dead* was positioned discursively as a film itself. While it is not a movie, in the context of being on a movie channel, *The Walking Dead* is driven by differing movie genres. Each season of *The Walking Dead* has a distinct genre that underpins the text. These genres shift in each season, layering and stacking up over each other, over the course of the 7 seasons Hills suggests that horror (when it is found on TV, and as a product of struggling to find 'fit'), sits inside other shows, as a result of the hybridity of US television more generally. The aim of this section is to develop this notion of hybridity, but with a closer look at a contemporary horror drama in its specific context (on a movie channel) and the impact this has, leading to what I describe as generic layering.

The character types and trajectories; the mise en scene; the location; the obstacles that the characters must navigate, are born from the genre that layer over each new season of *The Walking Dead*. The zombie element is still there, but as this section will show, the monsters themselves lose their potency. What purpose the zombies serve as the underlying genres shift, I will discuss in the section that focuses on the visual horror. For now, this section will explore the generic impact that being on a movie channel has on *The Walking Dead*. As said, AMC President Charlie Collier wanted to bring “premium to cable.” The “premium” version of dramas, as I illustrated in chapter 3, take established genres – the cop drama for instance – and then blend with this sociological commentary, intricate plot lines, bleak events, and exploration of moral grey areas. The bleak events and moral grey areas certainly populate *The Walking Dead*, but the zombie pandemic and despair in the end of the world can only take a drama so far. As a product of its position on a movie channel, *The Walking Dead* takes other established genres and

layers them over its fundamental mode of zombie horror text. Rather than hybridising generic elements to make a drama, *The Walking Dead* builds on its basis as a zombie horror drama, with a different driving genre for each season. Other scholars have noted (Hills, 2005; Jowett & Abbott, 2013; Wheatley, 2006), that the hybridising of horror drama is a symptom more generally, of the medium of US television. In previous decades, horror was concealed within other texts: see the hospital dramas and medical based dramas as highlighted by Lyons (2007) and Jacob (2003), or teen driven shows like *Buffy* or *Angel* (The WB, 1999 – 2004), which while dealing with the iconography of horror – demons and vampires – elements are overlaid to conceal the horror³¹. I argue that *The Walking Dead* features generic layering, which is a symptom or product of being on a movie channel, it also inverts the process of layering as seen in previous incarnations of TV horror. Where in the past the layering concealed the horror, *The Walking Dead* starts very overtly as a horror, but layers other genres over the top of the horror to keep it going. The generic layering is a strategic approach to hybridity that reflects both the position of *The Walking Dead* on a film channel, and the long-term goals of AMC and the continuation of the series. Because I argue that each season is driven by a different genre, I will split this section up season by season so as to clearly demonstrate these changing drives. I will conclude by bringing together the seasons to illustrate how this amounts to generic layering; while each new season brings a new driving genre, the previous genre layers still remain.

4.8.1 Season 1: October 2010 – November 2010.

AMC and the creative personnel spent much air time, interview time, and Comic-Con time, positioning the first season as a film. The words “we’re shootin’ a movie” were akin to a tagline for the show itself. Of all the seasons of *The Walking Dead*, season 1 has the most zombie movie tropes within it. Season 1 draws, more than the subsequent seasons, from zombie films in terms of plot, tropes and motifs. Like the contemporary zombie movie, season 1 is concerned with,

³¹ The character Angel is a private detective, giving the first season a procedural feel. As the series goes on, further layers are added to both allow the show to continue and to conceal the horror: demon lawyers, sacrifices to ancient creatures, ghosts and curses.

Graphically representing the inescapable realities of an untimely death (via infection, infestation or violence) while presenting a grim view of the modern apocalypse in which society's supportive infrastructure irrevocably breaks down (Bishop, 2010, p. 11).

The season opens with 1.01 'Days Gone By,' and protagonist Rick Grimes encountering then shooting a little girl zombie in the face. After the titles the episode takes a flashback to outline the domestic workaday issues that face Rick, as he talks with his cop partner Shane, about the problems in his marriage. By placing the protagonist in his role as father and husband, the text is aligned into the domestic space in which it is viewed: on US television, not in the cinema, and reflects Waller's 'domestic' TV horror, in which the drives of the characters are steeped in the domestic. Shortly after the conversation regarding Rick's marriage, Rick is shot and consigned to a coma. During his coma, the zombies take over. On discovering his family missing, Rick meets Morgan and Duane, who offer him shelter and explain to Rick the recent apocalyptic events.

The Walking Dead season 1 covers the generic codes and conventions that are expected of the post-apocalyptic, post-Romero, and plague cycle of zombie film (not the voodoo Haitian cycle of movies). Rick encounters a small group of survivors (including his wife and son) which he joins, and this group is attacked by zombies when they are vulnerable and paying little to no attention. Loved ones are lost, and one group member conceals a bite. As the bitten Jim's fever increases, discussions of euthanasia ripple through the group, and eventually Jim elects to be left behind. The group makes a move to reach apparent safety at the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), and the security offered rapidly turns sour, as the CDC runs out of power and destroys itself to, ironically, prevent release of the deadly virus strains contained within it. Dr Jenner, the sole operator left at the CDC, views the quick and imminent death offered by the exploding CDC, as a better choice than the short and cruel existence they would face outside. The group escapes and sets off in convoy, for what we do not know. Cast out into the dangerous wider world, this ambiguity is where the zombie movie would end. At the end of *28 Days Later* we are unsure of Selena and Jim's safety; in *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), Peter and Francine escape in a low-fueled helicopter, but the outlook for them is bleak.

The Walking Dead contains these recognisable tropes, but expands beyond the zombie movie perimeters, as the structural space of the US television serialisation allows. In the case of season 1, this happens as another group is revealed and explored³². Such an expansion would generally not feature in a closed zombie film. More tellingly of the structures of US television taking over *The Walking Dead* 'movie,' in the finale of the season, episode 1.06 'TS:19,' the zombie strewn land disappears to give way to a *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000 – 2015) aesthetic. This episode places the zombie text in a medical / scientific / crime drama. This abrupt change sees inside the CDC lab equipment, computer work stations, cold metal fittings and a clinical attitude to the virus. 'TS:19' features a CGI sequence in which we see inside the head and brain of a victim of the virus. This invasive shot mirrors that of the motif of *CSI*, as the camera zooms into the body and we see a reenactment of the crime in the gory insides of the victim. The crime in this case, is the assault on the victim that led to her infection and death. In 'TS:19' Dr Jenner shows the group a replay of the death and reanimation of the infected brain of the victim. This invasive and intimate image sees the inside of the brain shift from lit up with living synapse activity, to black and dead, and finally to the red glow of the zombie virus within the brainstem. The invasive nature of this reflects the physical crimes as seen in *CSI*, through the damage done inside the body. In reducing the zombie plague to a scientific matter – Jenner states that it invades the brain like meningitis – 'TS:19' pulls *The Walking Dead* away from the zombie movie that it has so far been drawing from and elongating and layering over the top a *CSI* style drama. Just like the forensic scientists in *CSI*, Dr Jenner is, in his lab, "distanced [...] from the society they protect" (Harris, *Journal of Popular Film and US television*, 2009). Jenner is removed from the real world that the central group has been experiencing – one overrun with death and danger. Jenner's view on this and their future, differs very much from the survivalist instincts held by Rick and most of his company (both Andrea and Jacqui elect to stay behind and die with Jenner). At this point in the plot, the threats that the core group face come from fellow humans, or themselves: Dr Jenner threatens them all,

³² In the episode 1.04 'Vatos' Rick and company encounter a group of young male survivors, who are caring for patients of a nursing home. After a squabble over guns which is resolved peacefully, Rick and company return to the central group and the season trajectory continues.

Andrea is suicidal, and Shane begins his descent into psychosis. Despite the fall of the world under the zombie plague, the zombies as main threat takes the back seat and begin their loss of potency. *The Walking Dead* abruptly shifts its path from elongated zombie movie to long term US television serial, by closing the season with an episode that places the action in a clinical and above all, human environment. With an aesthetic drawn from *CSI*, the text starts to begin its settle into being a serialisation, less about the zombies and more about the human relationships and drawing on multiple film and US television genres.

Season 1 sees the generic conventions drawn from the contemporary, post-apocalyptic viral zombie film. This content matched with AMC and creative staff discursively positioning the first season as film. It did everything a zombie movie did and more, expanding beyond this perimeter, with the exploration of a second and unconnected group, and draws on *CSI* for its finale. What this tells us, is that the claims to film can only take *The Walking Dead* and contemporary TV horror drama so far. Eventually, US television demands and serialisation structures take over. For *The Walking Dead* specifically, a new genre drives the second season, and layers over the top of the zombie show.

4.8.2 Season 2: October 2011 – March 2012

At the start of production for the second season, *The Walking Dead* ran into trouble as Darabont left, or was sacked³³, and so it lost its most explicit film link. Mazzara who took over for season 2, had a background as a US television producer³⁴, and so the positioning of *The Walking Dead* shifted, as it was not so easy to place it as film. The second season sees a focus on domestic and relationship issues, and producer Hurd commented “It’s a TV show, so it’s all about the love triangle” (Hurd, *Live and Let Die*,

³³ It is difficult to find definitive evidence to what actually happened with Darabont. Some articles say he left, some say he was sacked, and the reasons given for either event vary from arguments with the executives over money; with arguments with the cast; shooting schedules; budgets; a dislike of the scriptwriters and more. I do not think it relevant to this study of *The Walking Dead* to try and fully expose what happened. Instead I am just going to look at the difference made by a TV producer working on the show, than that of a film director.

³⁴ *The Shield* (FX, 2002 – 2008); *Standoff* (Fox, 2006 – 2007); *Life* (NBC, 2007 – 2009).

2011). This love triangle (between Rick, Shane and Lori) draws *The Walking Dead* into the framework of a soap opera. Surrounding the triangle are many other plot themes, codes and conventions that cement season 2 as 'the soap opera season'. The season is bookended with highly tense zombie horror set pieces: 2.01 'What Lies Ahead' opens with the herd on the highway causing young Sophia to run away. This brings the group to the farm, where the majority of the activity of season 2 happens. The season closes with 2.13 'Beside the Dying Fire,' and another herd overrunning the farm. In between these tense and gore packed sequences³⁵, is a drama peppered with zombies, but is in the main, a soap opera with domestic, emotional, and romantic themes. According to Dunleavy (2009, p. 117), the American soap opera is built upon "glitz and glamour," seen in long running soaps such as *Dallas* (CBS, 1978 – 1991), and *Peyton Place* (ABC, 1964 – 1969). In addition, *Dynasty* (ABC, 1981 – 1989) and *Knots Landing* (CBS, 1979 – 1993), enjoyed "Hollywood style" high production values, long episodes (filling hour slots in the TV schedule), long season lengths, and complex and melodramatic organisation (Dunleavy, 2009). *The Walking Dead* features also the high production values and the complex and melodramatic themes. It replaces the "glitz and glamour" of the soap, with the visual horror and gore. Instead of expensive dresses and sumptuous homes, there are rotting zombies and expansive post-apocalyptic landscapes.

Season 2 develops the zombie text through underpinning the show with soap opera themes and trajectories. Elements of the soap opera that are at the surface of season 2 – with an undercurrent of zombie driven post-apocalypse – revolve around the "lives of a typical American family, their friends and their sweethearts" (Allen, 1985, p. 11). Like soaps, *The Walking Dead* has families living near one another in a community setting. In season 2 the central group joins with the family and friends at Hershal's farm, which develops the soap arrangement of characters. Different families and their differing and sometimes clashing values (see for example how Rick's group are sure that the walkers are dead, compared to Hershal's insistence they are human, alive, and can be helped).

³⁵ In 2.01 our group hide and cower under cars, under dead bodies, and on vehicle roofs, while a herd lumbers past. Despite keeping quiet, one zombie notices, attacks and causes the young girl Sophia, to run off into the woods alone. In 2.13, a large herd embarks on the farm. Many people are lost, the barn burns, and characters are lost in graphic and horrific ways.

The families have their domestic dramas (the Rick / Lori / Shane love triangle), and the sweethearts can be located in Glenn and Maggie, and their newfound romance. Allen explains that soaps “present distortions of the real world” and real world problems. The altering significance of events depends on the situation, and the culmination of previous character interaction (1985, p. 86). In *The Walking Dead*, soap like elements are blended with horror, producing another layer to the character exploration. For example, the unwanted pregnancy / attempted abortion thread. Lori is pregnant and is unsure who the father is. The motives behind Lori's actions (not telling her husband or lover; asking Glenn to fetch her a pregnancy test and then morning after pills; and demanding that her husband ensures that they can stay in the relative safety of the farm) are driven by both the zombie world and soap opera themes. The soap opera layer is concerned with Lori's liaison, and the inherent problems the resulting pregnancy will have to her marriage, while the zombie drama layer sees the potential risk a baby brings to a group already on the edge of survival, and of being cast back out on to the road with no fixed home.

The nature of the zombie driven apocalypse leans towards a lack of resolution, or no situation where the characters are able to let down their guard. *The Walking Dead*, like the soap, sees the characters “endlessly subjected to an 'unrealistic' amount of pain, suffering, tragedy, disease, and death” (Allen, 1985, p. 40). Season 2 alone sees a total of 22 deaths; suicidal characters; a child getting shot; and a jealousy fueled murder plot. Like soaps, the character relationships remain constant. The character archetypes come from genre films (zombie films, Westerns, action movies), but inside this TV drama, like soaps, they never learn or develop.

From the 'big' problems of the day to day existence, season 2 deals with the more mundane. There are arguments over who should do the chores, and the correct etiquette around the sleeping arrangements in Hershal's home: is it alright if Glenn and Maggie sleep together under Hershal's roof? A key soap opera trope is visible in the family secrets exposed throughout the season. There is the literal translation of the skeletons in Hershal's cupboard – the exposing of the walkers he keeps in the barn, and his later admission of alcoholism. The location of season 2 places all the action either in

camp while the women clean pots and do laundry, or in Hershall's farm house, while characters make dinner, giving a distinct domestic feel. This domestic feel is a key generic code of the "interior world" of the soap (Allen, 1985, p. 85). Episode 2.06 'Secrets' fluctuates between zombie text and soap in a way that fully illustrates the layering of the two. Opening with live chickens being cruelly fed to the walkers held in the barn, the narrative of the episode quickly shifts to melodrama, with Glenn and Lori discussing Lori's pregnancy. Lori then argues with her husband about having to leave the farm, over a picnic bench mimicking a dining table. Draped with a tarpaulin table cloth, covered with domestic supplies, surrounded by cooking equipment. The other sounds heard over the wind and cicadas, are the clinking of pots and pans being washed by nearby campmates. While the zombie genre overhangs this whole scene: the farm is safe and zombie free and they want to stay there (zombies in the barn notwithstanding), the history of their marriage influences the scene. Despite the current situation, Rick and Lori cannot help slipping back into their old ways of bickering, the way they did before the plague, when their lives were only concerned with the domestic issues. As Allen described, the soap is concerned with the "typical American family." This family, even in the post-apocalypse, are still driven by their pre-apocalypse relationship patterns. Patterns that would be at home in a 'standard' soap opera: the marriage on the rocks and the affair with the best friend.



Figure 3: Rick and Lori argue in a domestic setting. 2.06 'Secrets'

Still in 2.06, and sworn to secrecy, Glenn goes with Maggie into town to bring Lori some morning after pills. Here Maggie is attacked, and upon return, she verbally attacks Lori for putting herself and Glenn at risk to fetch the “abortion pills.” Later, as Rick discovers the attempted abortion, he too gets angry. Lori has by this stage, taken and then thrown up the pills. This anger fueled reaction of both Maggie and Rick, reflects Dunleavy’s melodramatic observations from other TV soaps. Instead of dealing with the problem at hand (the end of the world), characters instead show concern for keeping their misdemeanors secret, or growing their family (Rick wants to keep the baby, as do Glenn and Dale). In Lori’s changing of heart, Maggie and Rick’s rage at the idea of abortion, and both Glenn and Dale suggesting that she have the baby, *The Walking Dead* is just as conservative as Robin Wood (1988) recognised that the horror films of the 1970s were. The episode closes with Rick and Lori in talks about their marriage and Lori’s infidelity. Here it closes, with no zombie threat, but instead with a soap style cliffhanger – will they stay together or will they split up. The attack on Maggie by a lone walker in the pharmacy, sits in the very middle of the episode. The attack is surrounded by domestic

issues and serves only to fuel Maggie's rage at the idea that Lori might consider abortion. Its placing in the centre of the episode serves as a pinpoint reminder about *The Walking Dead* as a zombie drama. This is however enveloped in the soap opera dynamic that drives the season.

Season 2 saw the demands of US television take over as the elongated zombie movie gave way to more a soap opera style structure. As Darabont left and a TV producer took over, the show became less about the zombies and more about love triangles, domestic duties, and budding romance. *The Walking Dead* became like an expensive and melodramatic "supersoap" (Geraghty, 1991, p. 25), but with zombies marauding outside the farm community fence. The melodramatic themes of pregnancies and affairs were punctuated with violent scenes and rotting zombies. Importantly for the following seasons of *The Walking Dead*, and for the generic layering contained within the show, the character relationships stay the same, but what is around them changes: the iconography; the location; the enemies. What this tells us about contemporary TV horror drama, is that in order for the show to continue it must expand beyond the borders of horror. Character development must take place if the show is to move forward. The adoption of soap opera-like storytelling does this for season 2, but to carry on into season 3, another layer is needed. To put it simply, it was going to take more than endless hungry zombies and inter-marital bickering, to maintain the show into its subsequent seasons.

4.8.3 Season 3: October 2012 – March 2013

The third season continues its exploration of the human relationships and soap opera-like melodramatic themes, and the zombies, and layers over the top the Western. In a tangle of mistrust, moral chaos, questions of loyalty, death and revenge, season 3 rotates around a plot point which quite simply states that "this town ain't big enough for the both of us" (Nick Gindall, in *The Western Code*, McCarthy, 1932). The 'us' being Rick's group, and the Governor and his Woodbury townsfolk. Season 3 takes place across two locations. The prison, where Rick and his group attempt to settle, closely mirroring the Western ghost town. Abandoned apart from a small few, Rick and

company take the prison by purging it of its savage elements: the zombies outside and the majority of the criminals still inside. The second is the frontier town of Woodbury, marshaled by the Governor. Woodbury is a representation of the familiar Western trope of civilization versus nature and savagery. In the case of *The Walking Dead*, nature is the vast landscape in which the story is set, and the savagery lies with the zombie plagues. Woodbury is the frontier of the building of the new world, and resembles closely Hadleyville, the town in *High Noon* (Zinneman, 1952).



Figure 4: The frontier town of the Governor's Woodbury. 3.03 'Walk With Me'

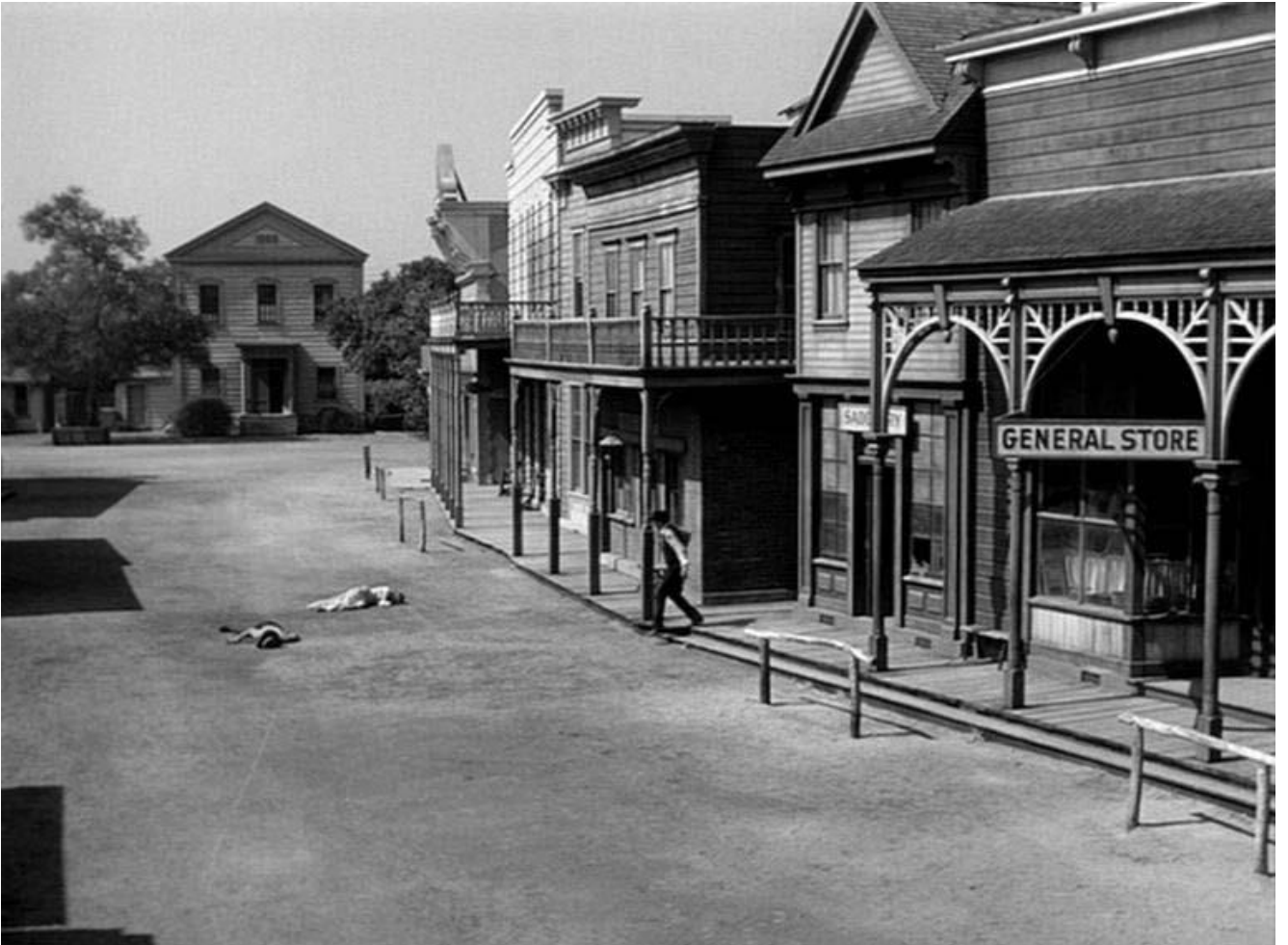


Figure 5: The town of Hadleyville, from High Noon, Zinnoman, 1952

Both leaders (Rick and the Governor) are building a new world which exists in a state of lawlessness, and both of them adhere to their own code. Woodbury seems to have beaten nature and its savagery, but it mirrors other such Western frontier towns (such as Cold Stream in *The Law and Jake Wade*, 1958, Sturges; and Prairie City in *Terror in a Texas Town*, 1958, Lewis), populated as it is with characters with something to prove, and with a fluid social hierarchy. The positions that people hold within the Governor's system fluctuate and change according to what action the Governor wants to take.

Jim Kitses (1969) tackled the difficult task of outlining and to a degree, defining what a Western film is comprised of. Kitses laid out character types and the common conflicts – one of which we see in season 3, in the impossibility of the two group leading males

living close to one another; Rick and the Governor. Both these men have their own moral code and are trying to survive in a “terrain that can be barren and savage.” According to Kitses, this terrain, this environment renders the men “morally ambiguous [or] wholly brutalized.” The Governor is indeed morally ambiguous, as his outward ambitions appear to be for the greater good, yet behind the scenes (for the people of Woodbury), his moral code does not derive from good intentions. Both Rick and The Governor are attempting to build communities which for Kitses, are either “a positive force, a movement of refinement, order and local democracy ... or a harbinger of competition” (1969, p. 10).

Season 3 features many Western themes that Kitses describes. After the two leaders have cleaned up their towns (the prison, Woodbury), both are setting out to forge a new world, and like the Western (explored thoroughly in HBO's *Deadwood*), they are trying to figure out what rules they should live by, and with no real structured law, issues must be dealt with in whatever ways characters see fit. Season 3 as a Western then, features plot themes of revenge. The Governor wants revenge for Michonne killing his zombie daughter and Rick wants revenge for the kidnapping of Glenn and Maggie. There are two climactic gunfights. One in 3.08 'Made to Suffer,' which is a ferocious gun slinging street battle, and in 3.16 'Welcome to the Tombs.' In 3.10 'Home,' previously absconded characters Daryl and Merle return to save the prison group from the gunfight, fulfilling the role of the cavalry rescue. The moral barometers of group leaders Rick and the Governor shift alongside the fluidity of the social hierarchies within an underlying Western genre. What was once unfathomable, is now necessary. For Rick, handing over Michonne to certain death seems the better option. For the Governor, he kills his own man (Milton) in order to extract revenge on another (Andrea).

Episode 3.13 'Arrow on the Doorpost,' engages with many Western conventions, and is only missing the customary shootout. In this episode, group leaders Rick and the Governor meet to attempt to verbally reach an agreement over the recent troubles. In this Western, apocalyptic state of lawlessness, both men must take it upon themselves to police their people and decide what is legal, or the right thing to do. The men meet in

an abandoned feed store – an important destination for a cowboy. It is dusty and messy, and with a table diagonally placed in the centre of the room, illustrating their cross purposes³⁶. The camera gives a close up of Rick’s Colt Python .357 Magnum revolver – a classic pistol that a Sheriff cleaning up the town might use. The pistol fills the frame as Rick cocks the gun, and it remains in shot as he walks further into the barn.



Figure 6: Rick's Colt Python .357 Magnum. 3.13 'Arrow on the Doorpost'

As he walks, there is a distinct thud of his boots on the wooden floor, and the rattling of his belt is reminiscent of jangling spurs. Upon revealing himself with his hands up, the Governor removes his heavy and clunky gun belt and holster, putting this and his 9mm Beretta on the table behind him. The Governor sits, and Rick continues to stand. Both men are overtly masculine; Rick in his brown shirt that while not his Sheriff's uniform, mirrors the same. The Governor, with his heavy belt, black shirt and eyepatch, echoes Rooster Cogburn of *True Grit* (1969, Hathaway; 2010, Coen Bros), played by John Wayne and Jeff Bridges respectively. The cross purposes soon become apparent as

³⁶ Rick wants to live peacefully and set boundaries, the Governor wants revenge.

Rick tosses a map on the table and suggests they draw boundaries, mark their territories, much like the old Westerners pushing across the US, as they sought to claim the new world. The Governor refuses, as he wants revenge for deeds done³⁷. Instead of a truce, the Governor sets his terms (to hand over Michonne) and tells Rick “Two days. I’ll be back at noon.” The showdown at high noon – the classic Western trope. While Rick and The Governor are talking, henchmen and right hand men belonging to the two, reside outside. Milton, advisor to the Governor, is noting the events in a notebook. When questioned about this he says that he is documenting history: what is happening right now is history in the making. Kitses notes himself that “the Western is American history” (1969, p. 8). *The Walking Dead* then, is the American Western drawing its history as the country starts again, post the cataclysmic societal breakdown. Having the Western driving *The Walking Dead* in season 3 aligns the show with a genre that Aquila described as celebrating “American exceptionalism.” (1998, p. 35). As a genre that holds mythic status within American culture (Cowie, 2004), layering the Western over *The Walking Dead*, both cements the show as part of said American culture, but continues to solve the tensions between horror and US television through the alignment with what AMC describes as “our country’s greatest contribution to the movies” (www.amc.com). What this tells us about contemporary TV horror drama, in the context of AMC, is that even though horror was proving to be both viable and valuable, for it to function and remain it still needed to fit the channel on which it resides. And vice versa, the channel on which it resides will influence the horror product.

4.8.4 Season 4: October 2013 – March 2014

The focus of season 4 is the journey made both physically and psychologically by the central and some new characters, as *The Walking Dead* is driven by the post-apocalyptic road movie. The survivalist, walk the earth themes that permeate season 4, are drawn from cinema texts such as *No Blade of Grass* (1970, Wilde); *Children of Men* (2006, Cuarón); *The Road* (2009, Hillcoat); *Carriers* (2009, Pastor); *Zombieland* (2009, Fleischer); and *The Book of Eli* (2010, Hughes Brothers). In season 4 and these movies

³⁷ Michonne killed his zombie daughter, and stabbed him in the eye, which is why the Governor has his eye patch.

listed, the plots follow small groups who are trying to get from point A to point Z, and while walking the earth they encounter many points in between. Each member of each group has an epiphany: they discover something about themselves that changes them for the future. In some cases, it is a personal realisation, in others actions by others or done to them, cause a fundamental change in attitude and / or life goals. In *Lost Highways*, the road movie is described as a feature which depicts,

A troubled man (or women, or duo) hits the road in search of himself. Along the way he meets interesting people who show him the light. The man grows up, comes to terms with what's bothering him, gets over a loss, or whatever else he needs to do to bring the plot to a logical conclusion (Sargeant & Watson, 2000, p. 120).

Because this is a serialisation, the plot does not reach Morton's logical conclusion. Instead as I will show, the genre layer, the next driver, shifts into something new. *The Walking Dead* displaces the group from the prison and sends its characters off on separate journeys that have a shared end goal. Scattered, they seek shelter and sanctuary, and all separately discover signs pointing them to Terminus³⁸. Like the apocalyptic road movie³⁹ the second half of season 4 focusses on the road ahead as the characters learn from the road behind them. Across all the journeys I will look at more closely below, the figure of the road itself surrounds and engulfs the characters, as they are repeatedly framed as belittled by the sheer scale of the roads (see figures below). The vastness of the USA encourages the feeling of isolation and desolation, and the long road yet to travel. Because the central group and episode structure is split into fragmenting plot lines, serial drama structures govern how this is told. Common to the serial drama, is the stand-alone episode that focusses on one small sub section of the overall plot. Self-contained, these episodes have the completed journeys inside them, subgroup journeys that begin and end in the episode and are generally not spoken of

³⁸ Terminus is situated where many rail tracks converge. Offering sanctuary and community with signs posted on all roads to the end destination.

³⁹ The road movie genre sees characters embarking on a trip, journey or mission. Along the way the physical journey becomes one of self-discovery. The apocalyptic road movie places the journey in a world of danger; from other humans, monsters, or simply starvation, exposure and illness, or in this case, zombies.

again⁴⁰. This was a technique utilised frequently by *Lost*, to defer from the central story to tell the complex back story of the island inhabitants. This constant shifting of focus from one subgroup to another, expands and complicates the multiple storylines and requires attentive viewing. The complex storyline layering is, as explored in chapter 3, part of the trend of the rise of seriality across US television drama more generally. What this means to *The Walking Dead* and the genre drive from the apocalyptic road movie, is that there can be several personal and geographical journeys that happen parallel along the same timeline. One group becomes several smaller groups, and these subgroups absorb new characters along their way, who also are on journeys of their own. Because the story jumps from one group to another, for purposes of being as succinct as I can, I will look at the character journeys and their motives rather than the episodes.

⁴⁰ In 4.14 'The Grove,' Carol, Tyreese, Lizzi, Mika and baby Judith, stop in an empty house. It is in this episode that the extent of Lizzi's psychopathy is revealed. She hurts animals, and she nearly smothers Judith to death. She also thinks that the walkers are friends, and importantly, still alive. Viewing them like this, Lizzi murders her sister Mika and is about to kill the baby, as she wishes for them to come back as walkers. On discovering this, Carol and Tyreese realise the extent of their fears about Lizzi's mental state, and how dangerous she is to herself and others. Carol executes Lizzi, and then she and Tyreese bury the girls, and leave the Grove where they had been staying. They never speak of this incident again, either between themselves or to any of the others when they finally catch up to them. Similarly in 4.12 'Still,' what Beth and Daryl do to exercise their demons contains no other characters, and is never spoken of again.



Figure 7: Rick and Carl on the road after the prison has fallen. 4.09 'After'

The apocalyptic road movie generic layer appears in episode 4.09 'After,' as we rejoin Rick and his son Carl. Rick is injured and is struggling to keep up with Carl as they seek shelter. Mirroring *The Road*, Rick as a father does everything he can to keep Carl safe, whilst being himself in far from good health. Their journey sees them move from family farmers in training at the prison (in episode 4.01 '30 Days Without An Accident'), before it fell at the hands of the Governor, to Carl angry with his father for what he perceives as weakness in failing to defend the prison. Much like *The Road*, what Rick as a father must do to protect his son is brutal and disturbing. Rick must murder to ensure his sons' survival. Across season 4 we look through Carl's eyes at the man Rick has become. When Rick tears out a man's throat with his teeth – the man in question was about to rape Carl – Carl is comforted by Michonne, as he witnesses the exceptional lengths that Rick will go to to protect him. Michonne, who has joined them on the journey, has a simpler realisation: she does not want to be alone and angry. Similarly, Sasha's journey follows a trajectory that replicates *Children of Men*, as a person devoid of any hope. In *Children of Men*, all women have become infertile so the human race is waiting to die.

Sasha in 4.10 'Inmates,' and 4.13 'Alone,' sees no reason to have hope or goals, in a world which is so broken. Like Theo in *Children of Men*, Sasha has her own battle between hope and despair.⁴¹ In interacting with Bob (and to a lesser extent Glenn in 4.15 'Us'), Sasha learns that their life can have meaning if they put meaning in it. Both Bob and Glenn (as Glenn persists in finding his wife) have hope, reflecting themes from *The Book of Eli*, in which Eli is assured by belief that there is a purpose to him being alive and moving forward. New characters Abraham, Rosita, Eugene and Tara, all realise that it is better to be in a group and to stay together, the key point also made in *Zombieland*. In *Zombieland*, small groups of loners are thrust together and after various trials, elect to stay as a larger group. Characters Daryl and Beth have their own standalone episode 4.12 'Still.' In this they both resolve to leave their past selves behind them. As Daryl continues his journey he meets the aforementioned Claimers and finds himself in situation that mirrors *No Blade of Grass*. The Claimers, like in *Grass*, live by a code, "The law of the group for survival" (*No Blade of Grass*, 1970). This code states that should a member want something they say "claimed" and possession is theirs. Lying brings about a heavy beating. They live on the road, hunting, claiming, and as we find out in 4.16 'A,' raping. Also heading to Terminus, Joe (Claimers leader) sees Daryl for what he was before the turn: a bandit, a robber, a taker, a survivalist. Daryl expands his realisation he reached with Beth and fully decides to be one of the good guys. A good guy who shows emotion and loyalty to others as well as himself.

⁴¹ In *Children of Men*, the government hands out home suicide kits to aid the many that are overwhelmed with despair at the fate of an infertile mankind. Protagonist Theo has not quite got to that stage yet, but it is coming. Theo's hope is restored as he is tasked to help a woman, the one woman, who is pregnant. As he sets out on the journey to take her to the coast – another trope of the post-apocalyptic road movie, he finds purpose and meaning in his life once again.



Figure 8: Abraham, Eugene and Rosita join Glenn and Tara on their search for Maggie. 4.08 'Claimed'



Figure 9: Daryl finds himself alone on the road after Beth is kidnapped. 4.13 'Alone'

Season 4 closes with the introduction of the people at Terminus, signaling the end of the apocalyptic road movie as the plot sees all the characters' journeys convene to a stationary point. The end of the road movie and the start of the next underlying genre, the action genre, is stark and abrupt. As the core group arrive at Terminus and apparent safety, Rick spots the danger clues. A common trope of the action movie, in which the hero spots certain small objects or changes to what is the *mise en scene*, that imply danger. In 6.16 'A,' Rick sees that Terminus residents are sporting Glenn's pocket watch; Maggie's blanket poncho; Glenn's riot gear; and Bob's rucksack. In this precise moment, the post-apocalyptic road movie comes to its end, and the action genre begins.

Two points from my overarching argument are clear here in season 4. The first, *The Walking Dead* continues with its generic layering with the addition of the post-apocalyptic road movie. The second, the demands and the allowances of US television and serialisation, means this season can fully utilise the themes contained within a post-apocalyptic road movie, and the expansion of these themes that a TV drama serialisation allows. The episodic structure of the drama serial means that each subgroup and their journey can be explored separately; as usually in a post-apocalyptic road movie, only the one group is followed – *The Road*, *The Book of Eli* – these films follow one group, and their single journey or mission. In *The Walking Dead*, each group is allowed their own journey and psychological exploration. This shows us that the understanding of genre at AMC, which leads to the mining of content that contains what Chief Content Officer Stillerman describes as “a rich cinematic history,” supports my argument that *The Walking Dead* is a product of the conditions of AMC being a movie channel. At AMC they understand and utilise movie genres, to create and drive the long running horror drama. To be sure, the layering of movie genres with a “rich cinematic history,” over the horror drama, gives AMC a large amount of scope, or possibilities, to keep driving this drama forwards. What this means for *The Walking Dead*, is that AMC can keep it going – their rich source of high ratings and advertising revenue - continuing for many seasons, as a result of the layering of genres to expand and sustain the original material.

4.8.5 Season 5: October 2014 – March 2015.

The opening episode of season 5 does many things that are unusual for a season premiere. The last season left off with such a cliffhanger (Rick and company trapped in the train car), such a moment of high tension, that the premiere of season 5 seems more like a finale. Episode 5.01 'No Sanctuary' is front loaded with action, both in terms of the single episode itself and the front loading of the action from the start of the season to the end. In short, 5.01 bursts with explosions, escapes, zombie herds, tearful reunions and a torture porn- like murder sequence. The last episode 5.16 'Conquer,' closes with an argument.⁴² This season sees an emphasis on heroes and rescues, and a mission to save the world⁴³.

This front loading of high octane action, is drawn from a multitude of action movies. Beginning the action film with such sequences draws the audience in to the hopefully exciting ninety minutes in front of them. For example, the opening sequence of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg, 1981), its rope swinging stunts and the rolling boulder drive a visual and action packed sequence that is largely devoid of script. Much like *The Matrix* (Wachowski Bros, 1999) and *Kill Bill Volume 1* (Tarantino, 2003)⁴⁴, episode 5.01 slots us right into the middle of the action – in *Kill Bill* The Bride is already beaten and bloodied, and awaiting the final gun shot to her head; in *The Matrix* Trinity is mid fight with agent, and we do not know why or how, just that we are thrown into the middle of a fast paced action sequence. For Rick and company, they are in a classic action movie plot device: the escape from a secure and single location, first the train car and then the Terminus camp. In 5.01 our heroes are trapped, mirroring action such as *Escape from New York*

⁴² Rick is in heated talks with the residents of Alexandria, as it comes to a head as one of the Alexandrians attacks Rick, who retaliates, just as his old friend Morgan appears. Morgan being the first human Rick encountered, all the way back in 1.01 'Days Gone By.'

⁴³ The rescue from Terminus, the rescuing of Beth from the hospital later in the season, and Abraham's continuing mission to get Eugene to Washington DC, because, Eugene claims, he has the answer to infection. Abraham's mission is to save the world.

⁴⁴ *The Matrix* opens with Trinity's fight: where she jumps over buildings, fist fights a group of men, her action is slowed down with the iconic 'bullet time.' In all this she barely speaks, except to encourage herself to "get up" and keep running. In *Kill Bill Vol. 1*, once The Bride has been shot, she makes her way to her first mark, Copperhead. Through a red tinted alarm backed flashback image, we see why The Bride wants revenge. From here they fight with fists and fire pokers, only stopping when the school bus turns up outside. Through exchanged looks in place of dialogue, the fight ceases.

(Carpenter, 1981); *Die Hard* (1989, McTiernan); *Fortress* (1992, Gorden); and *The Rock* (1996, Bay). Episode 5.01 like these films, features heroes having to sneak around to maneuver around and towards, the many enemies that greatly outnumber them. Common to the action movie, the siege, see *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976, Carpenter; Richet, 2005), is represented in 5.01 by the zombies at the Terminus gates. As I will explore next, one of our heroes lays siege to the compound, bringing the zombies with her. As said, the action in season 5 is front loaded, before it permeates the rest of the season, and eventually taking a more underlying role. But in 5.01, it is the main driving force. I will explore that episode in more detail, and then pick out the other nuances of the action movie that spread over the fifth season.

Gallagher describes the key tropes of the action movie, and defines them through the, Exaggerated, fantasy settings [...] spectacular, fantastic realism, that is, the genre's deliberately unrealistic narratives, its functionally superhuman protagonists, and its excess of violent kinetic spectacle ... intersects with the real or putatively real social world, which involves family and personal conflicts [...] and global or regional warfares (Gallagher, 2006, pp. 5 – 6)⁴⁵

The majority of the action film markers and tropes occur on 5.01 'No Sanctuary.' Opening with the central and now conjoined group⁴⁶ locked in a train car, they improvise weapons in order to ready themselves for escape. This improvisation is frequently employed by heroes as they make do with what they have. O'Brien in *Bad Boys* (Rosenthal, 1983) uses a pillowcase filled with cans of soda to beat the heads of those stopping his escape; and Jason Bourne makes use of a Biro and a rolled up magazine to kill those he needs to (*The Bourne Identity*, Liman 2002; and *The Bourne Supremacy*, Greengrass, 2004). In *The Walking Dead*, jewelry, belt buckles, other scraps from their clothing and from the interior of the train car form makeshift weapons. From the outside,

⁴⁵ The exaggerated setting is Terminus with its cannibalism; the deliberately unrealistic way in which 'our' group are saved in the nick of time from having their throats slit; the superhuman protagonists are clear in no matter how many times Rick, Daryl, Abraham, etc, get beaten up or shot at, they are always OK. The family and personal conflicts continue within the group despite the impending danger and are resolved when Rick discovers that it was the exiled Carol that singlehandedly saved them from the Terminus cannibals. And of course, the global warfare is that which is caused by the zombie outbreak.

⁴⁶ Not only Rick, Michonne, Carl and Daryl, but the newcomers that joined up with Glenn and Maggie: Tara, Eugene, Abraham, Rosita, Sasha and Bob.

Carol begins her siege of Terminus, by blowing up a gas tank. In this sequence Carol is a John McClane, *Die Hard* figure. A reluctant hero, saving the day because there is no one else around who will. She is a one-woman army, tearing the place down to save those who she loves – much like Trinity in *The Matrix*. Like action movies, large objects built to remain intact, blow up spectacularly with the minimum of catalyst. Carol's siege and rescue breaches Terminus, and so the walkers flood in. For Rick and company, they do not know that a rescue is underway, only that they have a chance. From here on in, the action film trope of extreme violence under the veneer of the good guys versus the bad guys, takes over. Rick and Daryl murder at will in order to escape – they shoot Terminus inhabitants in the legs so they collapse, meaning that the zombies are distracted and so Rick and company can escape. Carol, who has by this point covered herself in mud and walker guts⁴⁷, mirroring the war paint as seen in *Commando* (1985, Lester) and *Predator* (1987, McTiernan), finds herself embroiled in a woman to woman fight, *Kill Bill Volume 1* style. The women fight with their fists, and briefly discuss how this world can make even the most morally solid person, do whatever it takes to survive. Just as in *Kill Bill*, the women discuss how they had to do what they had to do to survive.

⁴⁷ Again covered in zombie guts to move through a zombie herd: as we saw in 1.01, and will see again, in 6.08. This again is the generic layering: Carol is daubed in war paint to go into battle, but the paint is zombie guts. The action is layered upon the zombie horror.



Figure 10: Carol daubs herself in walker blood and mud, as she prepares for her one-woman siege of Terminus. 5.01 'No Sanctuary'

This moral grey area, while a point of concern throughout *The Walking Dead*, is more apparent in 5.01. Yes, Rick and company should escape – Terminus is after all, a trap. A trap which entices humans which are then captured for the Terminus residents to eat. Cannibalism is of course horrific, but the means with which Rick and our group escapes, is just as cold and bloody. To be a hero in the action film world, is to be as ruthless and violent as those that are the apparent enemy. This elevation of person to worthy hero, is seen again with Tyreese. He does not approach Terminus, instead he stays in a cabin with baby Judith and Martin, a bound Terminus henchman. Tyreese up until now has not killed anyone. He is forced to after Martin threatens the baby. Upon hearing of this, Carol is pleased, she is proud of him. Now Tyreese has murdered with his bare hands (as all good action heroes are able to do), he is now a hero himself. 5.01 closes with everyone out and reunited. The plot arc of 5.01 is a complete and contained one. They are trapped, rescued, escape and are reunited. The season moves on and engages with action film tropes and conventions as they continue to pick their way through the zombie

infested countryside. Episode 5.01 then, in its finale like, high action, siege and rescue, is structured as its own standalone action episode.

More general action movie tropes lie across the season, rather than being front loaded into 5.01. The adrenaline makeover while something that all characters must undergo in the post-apocalyptic world of *The Walking Dead*, some characters climb a steeper makeover hill. Carol in particular – changing from dowdy, downtrodden, meek wife who was the victim of domestic violence, to the action hero as described above. The war paint and guts wearing, gas tank exploding commando, who singlehandedly brings Terminus to its knees⁴⁸. The post-apocalyptic circumstances bring about relationships that transcend or intensify more than they usually would. In season 5, Rick's original group has joined with Abraham's group, and outsiders Tara and Bob⁴⁹, this new larger group, quickly become tight knit and reliant on each other. A further faction of this action movie relationship model is in the conventions of the 'buddy movie.' The buddy movie sees two characters who ordinarily might not get along. *Lethal Weapon* (Donner, 1987); *Point Break* (Bigelow, 1991); and *Die Hard with A Vengeance* (McTiernan, 1995), feature the young cop teamed with an older more jaded cop; an undercover cop and the criminal; the retired maverick cop and the peaceful bystander respectively, all of which are relationships that on paper, are not well matched. In *The Walking Dead* there is the longstanding and far reaching buddy relationship between Rick and Daryl. Caught as they are in frequent action and near death sequences, their relationship has been compressed into an intense and intimate brother partnership. Rick was the embodiment of moral codes, and the importance of doing the right thing, as a family man. Daryl was an impulsive loose cannon, with more than a bit of the lawless redneck about him. The pressure cooker of the zombie apocalypse and the need to survive, has led these two men to become solid buddies.

⁴⁸ Carol is as said, on the same rescue path as Trinity of *The Matrix*, but also tougher because of her circumstance of being thrown into this situation, much like Sarah Connor, of *Terminator 2* (Cameron, 1991).

⁴⁹ Tara was a former resident of a group that The Governor ran, after he got back on his feet post Woodbury. Bob was a loner found on the road by Glenn and Daryl, and taken in by them, and who was part of Sasha's epiphany in season 4.



Figure 11: Rick and Daryl buddy up in this action movie sequence. 5.01 'No Sanctuary'

As much as season 5 contains all these action movie tropes, there is not, and cannot be just the one hero as most of the films mentioned have. Because of it being a serialisation and part of Nelson's 'quality' TV, it has an ensemble cast. So then, it has an ensemble of heroes. Each hero is given his or her moment to be that hero. Relatively new to the show is Abraham, and his trio consisting of Rosita and Eugene. Abraham is a man on a mission and is an action hero who has fulfilled the common trope of the short term retirement. This trope sees a hero attempt to bow out of the action – seeing only futility or a failed mission. After losing his family, Abraham is about to bow out completely via suicide. Eugene stumbles across him and gives him his next mission – to get Eugene who says he has a cure, to Washington DC. Abraham dons his heroic white vest and cargo trousers (mirroring John McClane of *Die Hard*) and sets off on the new

pursuit. This trio eventually meet up with, and escape with as said, Rick's company, and form the action movie band of brothers, who continue together even after they learn that Eugene had been lying. The friendships formed in the crucible of Terminus and the apocalypse more generally, force them to stay together and form loyal bonds.

Season 5 is layered with action movie themes and elements, and front loads the season with the ultra-violent, one (wo)man army, rescue and save the world mission, seen in the cycle of action films popular in the late 1980s and 1990s. The cycle of action before the CGI revolution fully took over cinema. The practical effects and explosions, and the introduction of female action heroes (Sarah Connor, Trinity), and moral grey areas, disguised the as said ultra-violent sequences as good prevailing over evil. Layering action over horror, meant that the sequence at the start of the 5.01, which is like torture-porn in its intensity and violence, is disavowed by the approaching hero (Carol) and the triumph of Rick's group over the cannibals⁵⁰. What this tells us, or rather, this provides further evidence to my argument that as part of horror drama being the product of the context of its home channel, in this case, for *The Walking Dead* and AMC, the understanding and exploiting of the action genre is another way of circumnavigating the tension between horror and US television and pushing the series ever forward.

4.8.6 Season 6: October 2015 – April 2016.

As the end of season 4 abruptly stalled the road movie element of *The Walking Dead*, the end of season 5 laid the framework for what season 6 would entail. As season 5 drew to a close, and the cartoonish and exaggerated action sequences settled down, the central group were eventually ensconced in Alexandria⁵¹, a settlement that appeared not only too good to be true, but eerily untouched by the horrors that had been played out over the rest of Georgia, Virginia, and one would presume, the rest of the United

⁵⁰ The torture-porn sequence sees Rick, Daryl, Bob, Glenn, and four other prisoners bound and gagged over a trough. Laid out in a line, the prisoners are one by one, hit over the back of the head with a baseball bat, before having their throat slit by a Terminus worker. The dead men slump over the trough, bleeding out. The next men in line, whimper, scream, writhe and sweat, as they await their terrible fate. For our group, rescue comes in the form of Carol and her explosions.

⁵¹ Episodes 5.10 'Them;' 5.11 'The Distance;' 5.12 'Remember;' 5.13 'Forget;' 5.14 'Spend;' 5.15 'Try;' and 5.16 'Conquer;' cover the plotting that takes our group out of the wilderness and into a community, Alexandria.

States. The merging of the central group with the Alexandria community is a prickly affair, with our group viewed as too savage and feral. But it is this tension between those that have not seen the reality of what is “out there,” and our zombie war weary group, that forms the underlying genre of season 6. In this season, the threads and themes borrow extensively from bandit and outlaw films, before maturing towards to end of the season, into a slicker and more structured gangster-based text. For my analysis of season 6, I want to focus on the bandits and outlaws that populate and drive the first half of the season⁵². For the purposes of clarity, I will begin with the tensions between the Alexandrians and the central protagonist Rick, before moving on to the bandits and the movies which season 6 draws upon.

Episode 6.01 'First Time Again' begins with a familiar TV drama trope of showing us what happened the previous episode. At the end of 5.16 'Conquer,' Rick executes Pete⁵³ as the community are deciding whether to cast Rick out of Alexandria, effectively deciding whether to make Rick an outlaw. The camera only shows us the final few frames of 5.16, of the shot, Rick's face and the confused and disappointed face of Morgan, a character who has come back himself from the brink of madness. This character interplay is drawing from the tradition of the bandit movie that also experiments with the concept of the anti-hero. The outlaw has been declared guilty by a community – this is a state of lawlessness remember – and despite Rick's intention to keep them safe, his physical approach causes them anxiety. But in 6.01 when a quarry full of thousands of walkers is discovered close to Alexandria, and the reason why the community has seen little zombie action, Rick's potential outlaw status is rebuked as he creates a plan to move the enormous horde. 6.01 jumps from time line to time line: shot in black and white when it deals with how Rick goes from potential outlaw to hero, and the planning of the emptying of the quarry. It is shot in colour when the plan to shift the walkers is actually in action. In these sequences, Rick as dangerous outlaw is not in

⁵² I would argue that as *The Walking Dead* has continued over its 7 and now 9 year run, the underlying genres begin to overlap. It was clear in seasons 1, 2, and 3, that they were what they were. Zombie film, a soap, a Western. The merging of underlying genres inside a season further supports my point that the utilization of genre by the executives has been an intrinsic part of *The Walking Dead* being as monumental as it is.

⁵³ He shoots Pete, who has been beating up his wife and sons, and moments before cuts the throat of the husband of Deanna (Alexandria's leader).

question. When it is in black and white, the scenes and themes are permeated with mistrust of Alexandria's potential new leader and hero. Any discussion over what Rick is, who he is, and why he is like he is, is completed in black and white, and draws on movie tropes of outlaws and radicals. While this split of colour and black and white footage is a method used by the director of the episode Greg Nicotero to jump between 'then' and 'now,' I argue that it is a more telling indictment of the use of other films genres layered over *The Walking Dead*. The use of black and white to signal 'the past' or even a flashback, could be argued to be a cliché. However, in this episode, it serves to move the narrative and therefore the viewer, fluidly between the outlaw theme, and the horror (the zombie horde in the quarry problem) drama.

As the season moves through its first half, the bandits and the genre tropes that they bring with them move to the fore. In “bringing premium to cable,” and the tactic of taking established material and layering it. The bandits that *The Walking Dead* season 6 draw on, pull together the traveling, raiding, robbing, killing and raping clan of bandits, names them the Wolves, and has them attack any that cross their path. The Wolves mirror bandits from a series of movies set in the Old West (and in doing so, *The Walking Dead* refers back to itself and its previous Western and frontier era). In *How the West Was Won* (Ford, Hathaway, Marshall, 1962), in the sequence set by a river, the River Clan prey on unsuspecting settlers and those passing through and set traps in which victims would fall leaving them open to being murdered and robbed. The Wolves do the same: they set traps and leave calling cards⁵⁴. In *A Few Dollars More* ((Leone, 1965), the bandit clan after they have released their leader, Indio, from prison, they set about stalking and murdering, setting traps and dismembering their victims. In *The Walking Dead*, the bandit clan do the same. Indio's bandit clan and the Wolves both live in the wilderness. They travel around and target potential bounties: In *A Few Dollars More* they focus on banks, in *The Walking Dead*, the bandits target Alexandria and the supplies which the inhabitants may have. Both have what they perceive as a warrior culture, and

⁵⁴ To their almost doom, Daryl and Aaron found this out the hard way when they were caught and almost killed in a Wolves' trap. At a Del Arnos food store, many trucks are filled with walkers, who surround Daryl and Aaron after they mistake the trucks for potentially supplies. Previous to this, there have been several sightings of the words 'wolves not far' written on objects, and victims and walkers with W's calved into their foreheads.

they view battle and bloodshed as a cultural system which they abide by. To put it another way, the source of their sense of selves, of their power and their glory – fame even, is in their ruthless nature and ease of murder.

In *A Few Dollars More*, the bandits are running from the law, wanted as they are for breaking from prison. In *The Walking Dead*, their bandits are running from civilization. After the zombie plague civilisation was lost, and for many survivors, the regaining of a new civilisation is the goal. For the Wolves, regaining civilisation is to be avoided, and mirroring *A Few Dollars More*, the Wolves are running from any sort of imposed law: they view Alexandria and its walls as a prison.

When Morgan first encounters a Wolf early on in 5.01 'Conquer,' he enquires as to why this stranger might have a 'W' calved into his forehead. The stranger is Owen, leader of the Wolves, and he states that when the first settlers came here (harking back again to the Old West and the attempted domination of the frontiers of the United States), that bounties were placed on wolves (the actual animals) heads. Owen says that the Wolves are back now. And will behave accordingly by killing and taking everything that they (the humans) have. In medieval times, the word 'wolfesheved' described the action of wolf hunting, and was later applied to an outlaw, someone on the run, someone who was perceived to have the head of a wolf and so they were to be hunted like one (www.thelaw.com).

Several films deal with this: the outlaws, the bandits, the bounty hunters: *Fistful of Dynamite* (Leone, 1971); *How the West was Won* (Ford, Hathaway, Marshall, 1962); *I Shot Jesse James* (Fuller, 1949); and *Django Unchained* (Tarrantino, 2012). *The Walking Dead* blends the outlaws with the bandits through both the situation and through the transition between the bandits to the gangsters. At the start of this section I said that the season matures into a gangster text. This maturity is a reflection of the wider film world in which organised crime has developed from the rag-tag outlaws and bandits foraging in the wilderness, to the more sleek and polished set of criminals who provide the antagonism for Rick and the group at Alexandria.

Until this point, each season of *The Walking Dead* has been fairly clear cut in its driving genres. In season 6, the driving genre changes mid-season. The Wolves (the bandits) have been dealt with midway through season 6. However, a stark change occurs which sets the course along a new road. The ratings were dropping, as I explored above, and so it needed a boost, a 'stinger,' to attract back the more dedicated fans of *The Walking Dead* (in its comic form), for when season 6 returned for its mid-season premiere in 2016. The 'stinger,' or post credit sequence, while traditionally a trope from film⁵⁵, episode 6.08 took advantage by showing the first encounter with some of Negan's henchmen. Industrially, this functions on two levels. The first, to ensure audience return for the second half of the season, and the second, to bring back the more dedicated comic book fans for whom Negan is a "pivotal comic book character." When looking at the upcoming season 6, Dalton Ross in *Entertainment Weekly* states,

fans are more likely to be geeked out about the possibility of two pivotal [...] characters making the leap from page to screen in season 6 [one being Jesus and the other being] the most infamous villain in *Walking Dead* history – Negan (Ross, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2015).

Negan and all he entails is eventually introduced in the post credits sequence, as a biker gang. At this stage, and throughout the rest of season 6 until the season finale, the Savivors (as Negan's group are known), still appear and play into the trope of bandits, outlaws, robbers who kill. Upon returning in episode 6.09 'No Way Out,' Daryl blows up the aforementioned biker gang with a convenient rocket launcher, and before the opening credits too. Then we are back in an Alexandria heavily infested with walkers, with Rick and company pulling another 'Guts' stunt⁵⁶, in order to escape.

⁵⁵ At the end of the credit roll an extra scene is sometimes played for those that remain in the cinema. There are three main reasons for doing so: Simple entertainment value, some extra material to please the fans: Easter Eggs which give away secrets or explain a certain plot device; or the Stinger is a sequel hook. This hook tells us that there is essentially, more to come. Sometimes it might hint at a new villain, or the villain is not dead after all, or the introduction of new and expected characters or expanded storyworld.

⁵⁶ Rick, Michonne, Jessie, Sam, Carl, Ron, Gabriele, and baby Judith, all resort to the disguise we saw way back when in episode 1.02 'Guts.' They kill and gut a walker or two, then cover themselves in entrails in order to gain safe passage through the marauding horde outside their very door.

Across episodes 6.11 'Knots Unite,' and 6.12 'Not Tomorrow Yet,' Rick's group encounter the community of Hilltop, their leader Gregory, and comic book favorite, Jesus. Through this, we learn of the deal or rather, the enforced misfortune that the Hilltop live under. Jesus explains, the Savivors turn up, they make their demands which is half of everything that they might have / find / grow. What Jesus and the Hilltop get in return, is not being killed by the Savivors. Because Gregory appears (and is) weak, Rick's group (who are starving and looking to make a trade deal of food for weapons with Hilltop), say they will take out the Savivors for them. The Savivors at this point, while having a 'business deal' that echoes a protection racket, still mirror the law and code of the bandit and the outlaw. Episode 6.14 'Twice as Far' sees a collection of Savivors attack from the tree line, they kill Denise and rob Daryl and Rosita. It is a highway robbery. A gun fight ensues, and there is no resolution, the bandits run back into the trees, back into their wilderness where they avoid (or so it seems), any remnants of civilisation or organisation.

Season 6 takes the bandit from its Wild West and even older origins (with the Wolves and the mythical 'wolfesheved'), to the more organized gangster. The Wolves were savages, saw themselves as animals. The Savivors that we see in the latter half of season 6 resemble both the Wild West bandit and the outlaw. There is a sense of tribalism about them, like the Wolves, but with more organisation. They are apparently easily taken care of and eliminated⁵⁸, but the final episode follows what the previous seasons have, by laying down the driving genre for the next season and at the same time, showing again, all was not what it seemed. In 6.16 'Last Day on Earth,' the full extent of the organised, preprepared, coordinated and even militarised capacity of the Savivors, and Negan is revealed. It is here that Negan is presented as a Don figure – the likes of which seen in the classic gangster movies (Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*, Coppola, 1972; Michael Corleone in *The Godfather II*, Coppola, 1974; and Paul Cicoro in *Goodfellas*, Scorsese, 1990). He emerges with much fanfare from his RV van, which in this scene serves as his criminal headquarters (the real headquarters, The Sanctuary,

⁵⁸ In 6.12 'Not Tomorrow Yet' Rick and company attack the Savivors outpost, kill many of the inhabitants, and return Craig (a Hilltop member the Savivors had kidnapped) to Hilltop.

is revealed in season 7). Savagery has given way to organised crime, and all the attributes that that underlying genre brings, in season 7.

Season 6 saw the layering of both the bandits and outlaws, and the introduction of the gangster genre to *The Walking Dead*. While AMC and its utilisation of movie genres is clear throughout *The Walking Dead* so far, the demands of US television are stark in the use of the 'stinger.' Ratings were falling so action was taken to entice viewers to come back for the mid-season premiere. The viewers that AMC were once again chasing, were the dedicated comic fans. For the fans of the TV show, Negan is just another enemy. For the comic fans, they know what Negan does, and they know what is coming. This tells us then, that generic layering is still the practice of AMC and *The Walking Dead* come season 6 and then 7. And that the demands of US television – the need for high numbers of the right demographics - mean that attention had to be paid to the waning fans.

4.8.7 Season 7: October 2016 – April 2017.

When talking about *Goodfellas*, (1990), Scorsese noted that a key structural element to the gangster movie was to “deal with it episode by episode [...] you start in the middle and move backwards [then] forwards” (quoted in Hughes, 2005, p. 108). *The Walking Dead* season 7, episode 7.01 'The Day Will Come When You Won't Be,' takes up from where the finale of season 6 left off, and the brutal killing of an unknown member of Rick's group. 7.01 opens with a close up on Rick's face just after the unknown victim has been bludgeoned to death. The camera eventually pans down to the smashed skull and brains on the floor – still the identity is unknown on account of the bloody death. The titles run, and yet we still do not know who is dead. 7.01 revolves around the deaths from Rick's group. But the plot is told through structures as described above by Scorsese. Starting in the middle after Negan has postured and verbally asserted his authority. Then a jump backwards and forwards from before, during and after the assaults. To assert again the development of a horror serial on AMC and its operation as a movie channel and the effect that this has on the horror TV show, *The Walking Dead* season 7 is layered with gangster movie tropes, character archetypes, and

themes. AMC itself, defines the gangster movie as revolving “around the sinister actions of criminals or gangsters [...] ruthless hoodlums who operate outside the law, stealing and violently murdering their way through life” (Dirks, www.filmsite.org, no date). To be sure, there is no 'law' as such in *The Walking Dead* universe, as we saw in season 3 and its Western style moral coding, and season 5 and 6's cannibals, and the outlaw-like Wolves. There are only the laws and codes by which the fractions and mob style groups that populate season, adhere to and live by. For purposes of clarity, I will as in other seasons above, analyse this across the season as a whole, picking out key moments, scenes and character trajectories, to form my central argument.

Beginning with 7.01, and Rick is dragged into Negan's RV van. Negan goads Rick into attacking him, which he does. Negan reveals his weapon, which is like a tommy gun in appearance (the weapon is actually a Colt M4A1 rifle) and points it at Rick⁵⁹. Here Negan lays down the law, or rather, his racket: his method of extortion and power that he holds over Rick, his group, and as we later discover, over the Hilltop, the Kingdom, and now Alexandria. Negan is very clear. He states; 'You are mine. The people back there, they are mine. This [Rick's axe], this is mine.' (*The Walking Dead*, 2016). Back in 6.16 'Last Day on Earth,' Negan told the group as a whole 'Give me your shit or I will kill you.' In essence, Negan offers, or rather demands, that for his protection – protection that means Negan will not kill you – all people now under his control give them half of everything they have. In this world where there is no money, supplies are currency.

The plot jumps continue through 7.01. From Rick battling with walkers to retrieve the axe (Negan testing Rick's newfound loyalty to him), to the scene with Rick's group on their knees and the eventual killing of both Abraham and Glenn. The plot space into which the story jumps, is cemented by dialogue spoken by Negan. This device not only anchors the action, but repeats words spoken by Dr Jenner right back in 1.06 'TS:19.'

⁶⁰But more crucially for the layering of the gangster genre over the bandit / outlaw genre

⁵⁹ Negan later shoots his tommy gun from the RV at a large group of zombies, letting the weapon go full throttle, mirroring scenes from both *Angels with Dirty Faces* (Curtis, 1938), and *Scarface* (De Palme, 1983).

⁶⁰ Back in 1.01, when the CDC is about to explode, and Jenner finally lets Rick and company out, Rick tells Jenner that he is grateful. Jenner replies “The day will come when you won't be.” In 7.01 and the savage killing of Glenn

in season 6, Negan's dialogue is repeated from the end of 6.16 and then in 7.01. The dialogue spoken by Negan stays the same but the shots which it accompanies change⁶¹. Negan is cementing the genre layer in which season 7 is moving in. In 6.16 what appear to be bandits known as the Savivors, reveal themselves to be much more organised. In 7.01, with Rick and company at the mercy of Negan, the level of organisation and control is demonstrated through both the same dialogue, and the camera angles place Negan in the position of power. The same scene is viewed through Negan's eyes, and not from the point of view of Rick and company⁶².

As the rest of the season progresses, more gangster archetypes and themes emerge. The Savivors are the Mob. They have their Don figure in Negan, mirroring Vito and Micheal Corleone in *The Godfather*, and *The Godfather II* (Coppola, 1972 and 1974), and Paul Cicoro in *Goodfellas*. Negan has his own moral code, he demonstrates sharp judgement and is under an illusion of morality. The Don has his right hand man; Negan has Simon at his right hand. Negan has his interchangeable molls; the ladies he has 'married' while in control of the Savivors and the Sanctuary. On the surface, the Savivors operation runs smoothly, and according to their 'laws,' fairly, via the exchange of goods in the Sanctuary marketplace, the payment for services supplied (the protection and payment). However, Negan and the Savivors make punishment or comeuppance for lack of respect, or the breaking of rules, public. Wrongdoers are made an example of⁶³.

and Abraham, perhaps Rick is finally, as Jenner predicted, not grateful. The episode 7.01 is titled as said, 'The Day Will Come When You Won't Be.'

⁶¹ Negan chooses who will die first through the childhood practice of choosing who is 'it' through eeny, meeny, miny, moe.' In 6.16 and 7.01 the same method of choosing occurs, the same dialogue, but who and what the camera focuses on changes.

⁶² This scene was shot twice to give both Negan's point of view and Rick's group: their point of view from being on their knees. However, it should be noted that a third cut of this scene is on the DVD (the Directors cut, as it were), in which Negan says the work 'fuck' a lot more. While AMC were fine in showing Glenn and Abraham have their heads smashed in, they were still wary about using that particular word. The same goes for the end of season 4: 'A,' where in the televised cut, Rick says that they are "screwing with the wrong people." On the DVD, Rick asserts that they are "fucking with the wrong people." Show whatever gore you like, just don't swear while you do it.

⁶³ Negan publicly shows his punishment. Obviously, Glenn and Abraham, and then later, in 7.07 'Sing Me A Song,' Negan burns a Savivors face with an iron. In 7.08 'Hearts Still Beating,' Negan guts Spencer, and then orders Arat (a Savior) to kill Olivia. In 7.11 'Hostages and Calamities,' Negan throws Carson in a furnace. All these incidents are Negan punishing those who are not abiding by his rules or lacking in respect.

The continuous collecting of supplies and luxuries from those under the control of the Saviors – sofas, mattresses, paintings, liquor, clothing, etc., mirror the pursuit of material status symbols and possessions as seen in gangster movies. The watches, the cigars, the cars, the suits. Negan too has his gangster uniform. This uniform consists of his leather jacket, red neck scarf and Lucille (the baseball bat wrapped in barbed wire). While not the usual three piece suit iconic of the gangster movie, as already said, AMC changes and alters the original genre, and bends it to become part of, and drive its horror series. Negan does not wear a three piece, but he has his suit which consists of his trademark leather jacket and red scarf. Negan's work is extortion and his wealth comes from his protection racket. Protection from his own promised violence. However, Negan dresses up this protection as protection from the zombies. In episode 7.04 'Service,' Negan kills one lone walking at the open gate of Alexandria, telling Rick that he is providing him a service.

Episode 7.03 'The Cell,' sees the inner workings of the Sanctuary (where the Saviors are based) for the first time. Daryl is captured and held in a dark, locked and very small room. He is tortured with the repeated playing of a very jaunty and highly irritating song from the musical *Annie*. 'Easy Street' is played over and over again while he is fed dog food sandwiches and shown pictures of his dead group mates⁶⁴. After an appropriate time has elapsed, Negan checks Daryl to determine if he is broken yet. When it appears he has not, he is 'beaten in.' This form of initiation often seen in gangster movies is a method of determining whether someone is tough enough. This 'beating in' occurs again later as Rick first encounters the Scavengers. In episode 7.10 'New Best Friends,' Rick is forced to fight an amour plated zombie, one to one, to prove himself to Scavenger leader, Jardis. The Scavenger, like the Saviors, have their own rules and codes. They are another gang or fraction, for Rick, Alexandria, Hilltop and The Kingdom, to have to deal with.

⁶⁴ Daryl arguably caused the death of Glenn, after he leapt up and punched Negan. Negan said that he is a man of his word, and that he wants Rick and company to know him, and that means he will not tolerate any back talk or retribution. Negan then spins round and smashes Glenn's head in. Negan was only going to kill one (Abraham), but Daryl's rash action caused Negan to murder Glenn too. Daryl is understandably feeling very guilty.

By the end of season 7, *The Walking Dead* has many generic layers that construct the show. While each season has seen another layer, the previous ones remain. Beginning as a zombie drama in season 1 – the zombies are still there come the close of season 7. They have lost their potency (which I will detail more below), but they remain. The soap style character drives still remains with continued inter-relationship development⁶⁵. The Western theme continues with the perpetual focus on guns, frontier towns of Hilltop, The Kingdom, Oceanside, and the dump where the Scavengers live. Like the Western, they are making their way in a brave new world, but through the lens of the post-apocalypse. The post-apocalyptic road movie continues; the journey to Alexandria, and the constant supply runs where all sorts of incidents happen on the road. Character Carol in the latter half of season 6 decides to go it alone and leaves Alexandria, and she takes to the road. Morgan has been on the road for a long time, and frequently returns to it. Bandits continue to make miserable the lives of those that do not belong to the Saviors. *The Walking Dead* has as a product of being a movie channel, absorbed these multiple generic layers, to prolong its life as a US television drama. What this ultimately tells us, is that the demands of US television mean that horror drama must shape shift if it is going to have any sort of long run. Horror as a movie genre, has franchises that deliver many sequels that place different characters in the same situation: the returning killer for example, in *Nightmare on Elm Street*. *The Walking Dead* tells us that a horror genre as known from cinema – in this case a zombie text – can of course be done for TV. But it cannot stay a zombie text alone. The demands of serialisation mean that the zombie text must develop to remain. The zombies will still be there, but everything else will change. Because the zombie drama is on AMC, this development to ensure longevity is done through the layering of film genres over the top of the original zombie drama. *The Walking Dead* cannot tell us however, how other horror dramas continue past their first season run. The case studies that follow in this study will explore what is horror drama serialisation on other channels and platforms, and their industrial conditions. The next section for *The Walking Dead*, will consider the visual elements of the horror text.

⁶⁵ Rick has romantic dealings with Jessie (season 6) and then Michonne (season 7). Abraham is with Rosita (seasons 5 and 6), then dumps her for Sasha. Sasha too has a romance with Bob (season 4 and 5) and then with Abraham. Maggie reveals she is pregnant. Season 6 has a domestic violence storyline.

4.9 Visual Horror: zombies and murder.

As demonstrated at the start of this case study, AMC, the creative personnel and the cast of *The Walking Dead* were in the early days, keen to align the show with film. This went some way to solve some of the tensions and potential problems with putting graphic horror on cable US television. AMC and staff continued with “it’s a movie” to position the show, and the “movie” claim brought with it certain promises. If it was to be anything like a “movie,” it must adhere then to the “conventions of horror cinema, where the large scale display of effects is the norm” (Johnson, 2005, p. 106). Producer Gale Anne Hurd promised no cuts and that they were meeting “certain expectations” (Hurd, 2010). As part of that promise, or rather, to support that promise, Hurd also said to the crowds at *The Walking Dead* panel at the San Diego Comic Con in 2010, and to *Broadcast*, that “AMC never came back to us with any issues about standards.” Implicit in Hurd's words is that the visual horror expected of a zombie story will be in place on a US television serialisation of the zombie apocalypse. As also said earlier in this case study, the creators of *The Walking Dead* had to serve the very high expectations of the existing fans – the original comic is very graphic indeed.



Figure 12: Gory frame from *The Walking Dead*, Vol 1: *Days Gone By*

I explained above how AMC came to make *The Walking Dead*, so this section will focus specifically on the visual horror of the show. To clarify again, what I mean by visual horror is that which is seen in the frame that is horror. Not the theme, or the concept, but what is exhibited through the construction of the image that is horror⁶⁶. This section then will consider what *The Walking Dead* contains due to its generic conventions as a horror (specifically the zombies themselves), and how this has developed and shifted. I will consider how the practical effects themselves have developed, alongside the relevancy of the zombies to the story. From the start of season 1 where the zombies drove the story, to where we are now (in terms of the scope of this thesis, the end of season 7), where human to human violence is the main source of the visual horror. I will also consider what is the industrial purpose of the visual horror, and how has that changed over the long run of *The Walking Dead*. Rather than looking at each season, I will look at the visual horror across the whole of *The Walking Dead* and focus in on specific creations and sequences to demonstrate how the serialization of a zombie drama impacts on the purpose and potency, of the zombie monster itself.

The conditions I explored in the previous chapter (the rise of seriality: changing exhibition and special effects techniques; audience fragmentation; the blurring of the hierarchy of film and US television) have led to US television drama overall being more aesthetically focused. As already demonstrated, shows like *Dexter*, *Game of Thrones*, *Boardwalk Empire*, and even *Ugly Betty*, dramas across US television and across genres, area engaging with more complex visual storytelling. Complex in the plot and location of the stories (set in the past and / or fantasy realms), and complex in the construction of the visual by US television production engaging and utilising techniques previously reserved for cinema. TV has become altogether a more visual medium, rather than an aural one. On the visual horror within the show, effects artist on *The Walking Dead* said,

⁶⁶ I am not trying to make a solid definition here: this is horror, this is not horror, but instead looking at it more broadly. The sequences and effects that I will cover in this section will be generically aligned with horror: visual depictions of monsters, violence, murder, blood and guts. Essentially, all the elements that were deemed as missing, by Hills and King, as explored in the literature review.

I think it's astounding that we can show stuff that wouldn't have even been a preview [for *Dawn of the Dead*] on TV in 1977, and now millions of people flock to their US television screens every Sunday for it (Greg Nicotero, *Inside KNB Studios*, 2013).

But the “stuff” that *The Walking Dead* can show that Nicotero is alluding to, has not appeared out of nowhere. It is the result of all the shifts across US television that I outlined in the previous chapter. While the makers of *The Walking Dead* were “[breaking] new ground in putting an undiluted version of zombie culture on the small screen” (Russell, 2014, p, 2014), it needs to be taken into account the context in which the TV version of *The Walking Dead* could happen in the first place (see previous chapter). For Nicotero, who has spent the majority of his career as make up and special effects artist in film (starting back in 1985 on Romero's *Day Of The Dead*), to come to US television for *The Walking Dead*, and its first twenty two minutes of visual horror⁶⁷, the “stuff” being shown, is a long way from previous years of US television drama. That is to say, *The Walking Dead* was indeed a fundamental turning point in US television drama for horror, but it did not appear in a vacuum: it was a product of years of developments and shifts and developments across the TV industry.

Nicotero said himself that the after being asked to work on *Land of The Dead* (Romero, 2004), that the techniques they he (and his studio, KNB) worked for the zombies in that film, he developed and refined further for *The Walking Dead*. Horror, more generally, does rely on practical, handmade effects, and fans of horror expect and indeed revel in such practices. With magazines dedicated to the genre and the practice: *Fangoria*; *Rue Morgue*; *Shock Horror*; *Scream Horror: Make Up Magazine*; it is an integral part of screen horror. The fidelity to the horror genre that *The Walking Dead* attempted, can be seen in the time and effort that goes into the practical special effects that form the visual horror on the show.

⁶⁷ In episode 1.01 'Days Gone By,' at 4 minutes in Rick shoots the little girl zombie in the face. At 16:50 minutes there is a half-eaten, and then zoomed in upon, bloodied and gutted body on the hospital corridor floor. At 19:50 minutes, Rick stumbles outside to see hundreds of dead bodies lying outside the hospital, then at 22 minutes, the infamous bicycle girl makes her appearance. A legless torso of a zombie, who stirs into movement as Rick picks up the nearby pedal bike (which gives her 'name'). Dragging itself towards Rick, snapping and growling despite missing the lower half of her body, this zombie set the line as to what to expect from the rest of the show.

This fan practice of high interest in the special effects and the techniques, is utilised by *The Walking Dead* and the PR machine at AMC, to ease the tension between visual horror and US television. Pinedo discusses in her work that the “awareness of artifice [is] an essential ingredient of recreational terror” (Pinedo, 1997, p.55). For Pinedo, some viewers “pretend it is real” and some “pretend it is fake,” and this helps them to maintain their attention to the disturbing images. *The Walking Dead* takes this interest and need and manipulates it to offer both a showcase of how technically excellent they are (look at how good the effects are on our zombie show), and an elimination of potential terror engendered from viewing such images (it is fake, so it is alright, and here is how it is done). *Talking Dead*, the post-episode debate show, further exploits fan practice in the exposing and discussion of how they created the zombies and the gore just seen in the preceding hour of US television. Pinedo argues that these magazines, and in the case of *The Walking Dead*, *Talking Dead* and these frequent articles in the trade and entertainment press and video extras offered by AMC detailing the special effects practices “allows the fan viewer to distance himself or herself from depictions of violence by looking for the trick, e.g., the cut from the actor to the prosthetic device,” so they can watch and enjoy, without the visual horror becoming too threatening (Pinedo, 1997, p. 56).

Clear examples of such detailed explanations of the visual effects (and therefore visual horror), are found in the articles that featured in the trade and entertainment press which covered a particularly intense and crucial moment of season 6. In episode 6.09 ‘No Way Out,’ teen Carl has his eye shot out during a tense sequence in which a band of characters are making their way through a crowd of zombies. Already covered in zombie guts (again), events take a turn for the worse after the zombies notice their presence and begin to attack. In the ensuing mayhem, a gun goes off and the bullet ricochets off of Carl’s eye socket, destroying his eye, and leaving a grim hole in his face.



Figure 13: The dummy head of Chandler Riggs



Figure 14: The same dummy head casualty makeup applied, and complete with wig and clothes, The Hollywood Reporter, 2016

An article in *The Hollywood Reporter*, details just how this was done – and with gory images to go with it. Goldberg interviews both actor Chandler Riggs (who plays the young Carl), and artist Nicotero about the sequence, and both interviewees detail the process of creating this effect. Describing the “sculpted dummy head with the wound incorporated into it” and,

For the actual reveal [...] we put a prosthetic on Chandler’s face, shot the puppet head of Chandler with the wound, and added the hole and depth of the wound to the puppet head on to Chandler digitally (Nicotero, in Goldberg, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2016).

The article goes on to note the arm molds that were taken of Riggs, and fellow actor Alexandra Beckenbridge, who played Jessie. These molds were made so that Rick could chop Jessie’s arm off with a machete, when she refuses to let go of Carl’s arm while she is being eaten alive. This article explicitly tells us in very precise detail not only how these effects were made (the dummy, the prosthetic, the arm molds) but also where in the sequence like as Pinedo describes, the cut from actor to prosthetic is. Riggs states in the article that when we see his head with the eye shot out, and Rick running with the injured boy in his arms to the safety of a nearby house, that it is not Riggs himself, but the dummy. It tells us precisely where the “rupture in the realism” is (Pinedo, 1997, p. 56). Therefore, easing the tension between US television and visual horror⁶⁸. AMC and *The Walking Dead* go to great effort to show us behind the curtain as it were, and to explain at length, how the illusions are made. Fans desire more knowledge of how it is done – see the aforementioned fanzines – and so AMC provides this knowledge, which in turn feeds the fans and then stimulates discourse and interest around the show. This in turn helps to maintain viewership. I will come back to this later in the chapter with a more detailed look at the purpose of visual horror as an industrial promotional tool.

⁶⁸ It is interesting to note that the article in question in *The Hollywood Reporter*, appeared on the publication’s website at 7pm on February 14th, 2016, two hours before the episode aired, at 9pm the same day. While the article warns of spoilers, it reveals before the show how the key moments of visual horror are made.

As I discussed earlier *The Walking Dead* was discursively positioned as film by AMC and creative personnel. And while it was not a film, it was, and is, a US television drama, and it draws on film genres and production techniques typically associated with film. *The Walking Dead* was (and still is), shot on Kodak 16mm film. For the visual horror (the makeup, prosthetics, dummies), 16mm is much more forgiving than HD. While the use of 16mm film gave AMC another point from which to position season 1 as a film, for the makeup department, it was a practical positive that helped to create the zombies. The 16mm gives the grainy, film-like texture to the show, but it also helps to blur out the edges of facial and body prosthetics, and helpfully, under different lighting (indoors, outdoors, changing weather conditions), the colours of the zombies stayed the same. Nicotero noted that during makeup tests under digital cameras, dependent on whether the zombie extras were outside, or in a bus, or indoors, the makeup on their face would appear to change colour, and become too green (Nicotero, 2010). Having Nicotero and his zombie movie pedigree was exciting for fans, and he worked hard to ensure that the walkers in the show reflected both what a screen zombie should look like, and what they look like in the original comic material. The comic drawings show the zombies as very thin, almost mummified in appearance. As the drawings are in black and white, the comic is less about the blood and gore, and more about the decay of these creatures (Nicotero, 2015). The transition from two dimensional black and white page to a complete world in colour on the US television screen, meant that the zombies of *The Walking Dead* got bloodier. Because as said, US television drama more generally had turned to aesthetic storytelling and richly textured visual imagery, the TV version of *The Walking Dead* could, and did, develop the black and white comic zombie to a bloodied and rotting animated monster. These zombies then showcase both the skill of KNB studios, Stargate Studios (who do the CGI), and what AMC were allowing on their drama slate, in their mission to bring “premium to cable.”

In the previous chapter I discussed the rise of visual storytelling and its connection with the development of technology and the techniques of visual effects. I cited North, Rehak and Duffy and their breakdown of why computer generated and practical visual effects are used, for technical, narrative and economic reasons. Audience fragmentation and

demographic thinking across the US television industry encouraged genre programming and seriality as a means of attracting audiences. This in turn drove AMC to engage with the horror genre with *The Walking Dead*. And as Hurd said, there are certain expectations, visual expectations of horror that Freeland also considered, as I demonstrated in the literature review: that the visual manifestation of the horror genre is both plentiful and to be expected. While the visual elements were both expected and promised on *The Walking Dead*, the methods and techniques used to create the visual horror, or to use the industrial term, the gags⁶⁹, can be explored through both the breakdown offered by North, Rehak and Duffy, and by Freeland.

I will explore the more practical and industrial demands on the gags first, and then the impact these gags have on *The Walking Dead* itself. *The Walking Dead* from the beginning used a combination of both practical / mechanical gags (prosthetics, puppets, dummies), and optical / post production effects (blood gushes and splatters, zombie herds, battered buildings in Atlanta). While this combination is standard across film and US television, the demands of US television mean that what is practical and what is post production, alters from a horror film to a horror TV drama. The practical and mechanical techniques are expected of the horror genre by the fans, see above with the dedicated fan culture around such gags. Prosthetics, makeup and dummies are combined with the real – the actors themselves – to give the full effect. Either prosthetics are applied to living people or actors engage with puppets and dummies. *The Walking Dead* opens as said with shooting a little girl zombie in the face, but the first big gag, as it were, is the now infamous Bicycle Girl.

⁶⁹ The term gag is used to describe a visual effect. These gags can range from simple squib blood bags to simulate a person being shot, or as in *The Walking Dead*, a close up on someone being bitten. This type of gag and shot without any cutaways, requires more complex techniques. In the show the gags range in terms of complexity and impact. By which I mean, we have seen many bites and shootouts by now (season 8 on air as I write), but there are some standout gags across the whole show, which I will explore in this section of the case study.



Figure 15: Bicycle Girl as she appears in the US television version. 1.01 'Days Gone By'



Figure 16 : The original Bicycle Girl in the comic, The Walking Dead Vol. 1, 'Days Gone By'

Only the top half of her body remains, with entrails on show, this gag set the bar for *The Walking Dead* and its visual horror effects. Throughout the show as the seasons go on, the gags that are this level of technical skill⁷⁰ continue, but because of being on a long running series, they have had to evolve. I will consider this in more detail below, for now I want to concentrate on the technical processes which are a product of US television drama production.

Next in North, Rehak and Duffy's breakdown is the importance of the visual effects as the "storytelling agents conveying [the horror] elements and themes" (2015). In *The Walking Dead* the zombies are essential to the plot, and in season 1, very much drive the story. Following the storytelling function of the gags, there comes the economic demands, constraints and limitations, which lead to the use of green screen and CGI rather than practical. In US television with its short shooting schedule (8 days to shoot one episode), CGI becomes essential. It is because of the technological improvements to digital effects, that shows like *The Walking Dead* (and as discussed in the previous chapter with *Boardwalk Empire* and the like), are possible on US television. From the huge zombie herds to the blood splatters, or helicopters falling through store roofs, *The Walking Dead* while being proud of its practical effects, also engages with the most up to date digital effects (courtesy of Stargate Studios). For example: in episode 4.09 'After,' Michonne dispatches a group of walkers with her katana. Shot multiple times, the blood gushes and splatters that result from the fight are laid on in post-production. Should this be done with 'real' liquid blood on location, before each retake, the position held by Michonne and the zombies would have to be cleaned and reset, a procedure which takes an awful lot of time. The blood and the sliced open heads of the walkers that she dispatches, are added in post-production at Stargate Studios. This allows the shooting of the rest of the episode to continue, and so keep to the tight schedule.

⁷⁰ This gag took hours to make. The actress was fully covered to her waist with prosthetic, wig, dentures and contact lenses. Her legs were in blue tights, which in post-production were removed and replaced with the aforementioned entrails.



Figure 17: Michonne comes to her senses and begins her attack. 4.09 'After'



Figure 18: The decapitations are added in post-production. 4.09 'After'



Figure 19: Quick cuts follow Michonne as she swings at walkers from all sides. 4.09 'After'



Figure 20: The CGI blood splatters allow for less mess on set. 4.09 'After'



Figure 21: The scene is strewn with corpses and blood. 4.09 'After'

In her discussion of the aesthetics of horror, Freeland (2000) looks beyond the perceived limited responses of visual horror. Beyond fear and revulsion, Freeland argues that visual horror garners more complex responses around emotion and pleasure. Freeland also notes that visual horror forms part of the philosophy of good and evil, which alongside the emotional impact of visual horror, *The Walking Dead* engages with throughout the run of the show. *The Walking Dead* evokes a melancholy, a sadness within its visual horror and the gags. Even though the gags are frequently excessive in violence and gore, the show attempts to neutralise this somewhat through either the framing of the violence and gore with moral philosophising, or through the alignment with the Hollywood staff on the show. In short, the tension between the violence and gore on the show and it being on US television, is eased by either having the violence have pathos, or through promotion of the film industry talent working on the show. For example, take Bicycle Girl again. Instead of her remaining the grotesque monster that she is, Rick returns to her and he tells her that he is “sorry that this happened” to her. He then shoots her in the head. So we have a snapping, rotting zombie torso, entrails on show, shot in the head, but because it is all wrapped up in emotion and pathos, so it is agreeable for US television. Freeland said that the pleasure in these scenes is

“disturbing,” and this is particularly so for TV. US television aligns the aesthetics of the horror genre with the emotional impact of a drama. As according to Freeland, these visual horror gags (or numbers as Freeland calls them) in the first instance delight the fans, and in the second contribute to the plot, for the zombies are at the very core of this drama. But because of its place on US television and on a movie channel, as the show moves through its years on air, the zombies are displaced to the outer edges of the story drive, as the changing over laid genres (as above) drive the character development and direction of the show.

The zombies in *The Walking Dead* by the time we get to season 7, have become part of the backdrop, part of the mise en scene of the show. They have moved through the three roles of the visual horror that Freeland describes. In the first role, the gags further the story and so are part of the structure of the text. The second role, the gags provide the central emotional effect. In the beginning, it is the zombie gags in their simplest form, which provide the emotional effect: the horror of the zombie plague and the fear of becoming one of them. As *The Walking Dead* moves along, the zombies lose their potency and the human to human gags (in particular in episode 7.01 and the actions of Negan) take centre stage for emotional effect. The third role is the aesthetic pleasure that the gags fulfill. Despite the zombies being part of the backdrop to the gangster feud by season 7, a lot of time and effort goes into keeping the hero zombies and the gags fresh⁷¹. Because *The Walking Dead* is a long running TV drama, this has impacted on the development of the zombies and the gags. The zombies themselves have had to change simply because of time. A long time has passed – both literally and within the timescale that the story of the show is telling. *The Walking Dead* has been on air for now 8 years. In the story, while there is no definitive answer (fans disagree), the ballpark figure is that by the end of season 7 the apocalypse is approaching three years old. This means then, three years of decay on the zombies. The threat from them remains the same – a zombie bite has the same effect in season 7 as it did in season 1. But the

⁷¹ Season 7 sees Negan's base, The Sanctuary, surrounded by zombies in various states. From swinging and snapping heads, to zombies caught on poles, who slide up and down with poles driven straight through their torsos; to keep them in place. Hundreds of zombies fill a road, and they are dispatched via a line between two cars. When Rick meets the scavengers, he has to fight an amour plated, spike covered zombie, to prove his worth.

aesthetics of that threat has changed. The zombies doing the biting have changed in order to remain fresh despite their decay. In season 1 it was enough to simply have the zombies, and lots of them. But as the seasons have gone on, the walkers have had to visually develop as their position as story drive is moved to the periphery of the writing, and because the demands of long term serialisation means that the decaying zombie effects need to stay, as it were, fresh.

Nicotero explained that “every season we really do try to keep them [the zombies] visually exciting, visually interesting” (Horn, *Vulture*, 2015). As the seasons have progressed the zombies have become irritants, a manageable threat. They are “easily dispatched,” again said Nicotero, and the audience needs reminding “how dangerous these creatures are” (Ross, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2017). What this translates to, is that each episode features a particular hero or feature zombie or collection of walkers, which are unique to that episode. While the standard *Walking Dead* zombie wanders around the woods or knocks on the walls of Alexandria, the episodic feature zombies differ dramatically from the rest. Affected by environment and situation, these zombies each have a more personal and exclusive set up.

In the context of US television, while *The Walking Dead* is a long form serial, it still draws upon a more traditional structure of TV horror, the monster-of-the-week. Jowett and Abbott explore monster-of-the-week and discuss the monsters, creatures, threats, that appear inside an episode and are defeated, either within (*Kolchak*) or without (*Buffy*, *X-Files*) longer running story arcs. These monsters are then never seen again (2013, pp. 34 – 35). *The Walking Dead* does this with its own monster-of-the-week zombies, they hold a personal uniqueness that sets them apart from the rest of the undead, they have tremendous amounts of technical detail put into them, yet they are never seen of again. Bicycle Girl is the first hero zombie that is shown⁷². Season 2, episode 2.05

⁷² A hero zombie, or gag, is one that is both in close up and in direct interaction with a cast member. The heroes get full prosthetics, dentures, contact lenses and wigs. Behind them are the mid-ground zombies. They will be made using only makeup (grease paint) and will never appear in either close up or in direct interaction. Behind them, are background zombies, who wear masks. Nicotero notes that these background zombies are usually females with long hair. Purely for the ability of their long hair to fall around and cover the sides of the masks.

'Chupocabra' has the swollen and waterlogged zombie in the well; Burnt and still smoldering zombies in 4.14 'The Grove'; Zombies melted into the asphalt, from the napalm assault on Atlanta, still snapping at the characters as they walk by in 5.07 'Crossed'; and in 6.01 'First Time Again, zombies squeeze between trucks. Zombies with such detail as this feature only once, and in only one episode, mirroring the monster-of-the-week structure, or much older US television horror programming.



Figure 22: The swollen zombie from the well in 2.04 'Cherokee Rose'



Figure 23: Burnt walkers in 4.14 'The Grove'



Figure 24: Walkers melted in the asphalt after the napalm bombs in Atlanta, in 5.07 'Crossed'

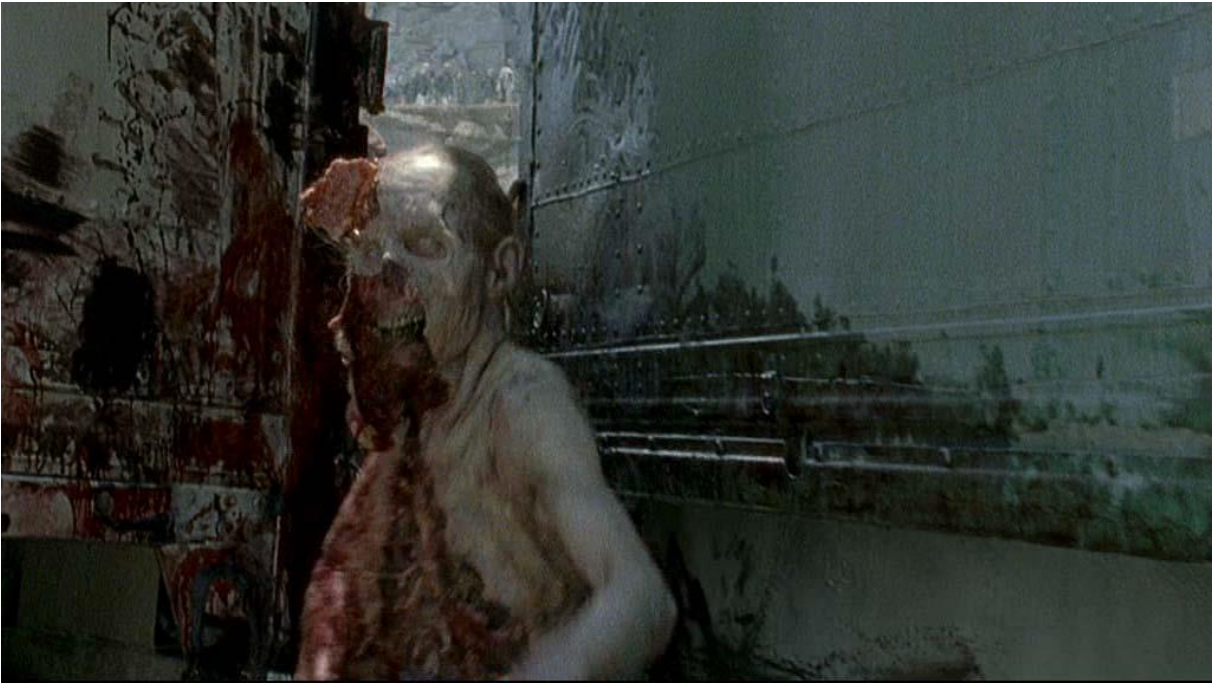


Figure 25: A walker squeezes between two trucks in 6.01 'First Time Again'

As the zombies have moved to the edges of the story drive, their potency is lost. It was in season 6 and 7 that this fully occurred. Season 6 featured many more large scale stunts than previous seasons⁷³. But the zombie gags themselves serve a structural purpose of monster-of-the-week, and an industrial purpose of promotion. In the weeks prior to a new season starting, Nicotero features in many articles in the trade and entertainment press, talking about the gags and the practice of making convincing zombies. Whether talking about creating perfect zombies (Bertam, *NBCNewYork*, 2014); getting the right extras at 'Zombie School' (Horn, *Vulture*, 2015); the grossest zombies in *The Walking Dead* (Ross, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2017); or Nicotero's own favorite top ten zombies in the show (Ross, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2017), the skill of KNB studios and the creations they make, while not at the centre of the story, they form part of the promotion for an upcoming season. Nicotero and his work appears in the press every October, as audience hailing for the show reaches its peak. The purpose of the zombies and their gags come season 7 fulfill two roles. The first is to maintain generic fidelity –

⁷³ Stunts include Abraham hanging off a bridge; a tower falling and smashing the Alexandria walls; the lake in Alexandria on fire; stuntmen zombies on fire; and Jesus jumping off a moving van.

despite the changing and layering genre drivers as noted above, at the core it is a drama based on zombies, and so *The Walking Dead* still produces its zombie monster-of-the-week. The second is a more general industrial role which provides material for promotion, and the showcasing of the effects and the techniques used on the show. What was initially seen as a “tough sell for US television” (Kirkman, 2010), the zombie has been developed into a vehicle for promotion.

If the zombies have lost their potency, and have given way to other threats, namely violent action from other humans, then the gags that feature in these acts should be considered. In the genre and drama section above, and season 7, I covered the gangster-like nature of season 7 villain Negan. Episode 7.01 'The Day Will Come When You Won't Be,' featured the violent deaths of Abraham and Glenn⁷⁴. Unlike previous complex zombie gags on the show, these two were not featured in the trade and entertainment press as promotional material, or exhibitors of technical excellence. While *The Walking Dead* has been subjected to many complaints on the grounds of its visual horror, the contents of 7.01 according to the Parents US television Council (PTC), “crossed the line.” PTC President Tim Winter said that this episode was,

One of the most graphically violent shows we've ever seen on US television, comparable to the most violent of programmes found on premium cable networks. [It is] brutally explicit [...] set a new threshold for basic cable [...] the creative team has resorted to the graphic violence as a crutch for what used to be better storytelling” (Winter, quoted in Goldberg, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2016).

Other complaints described the episode as “irresponsible;” that it “went too far;” that it was “unnecessary visuals;” and that it “wasn't about the storytelling, it was about the torture” (Scwindt, *Variety*, 2016; Egner, *The New York Times*, 2016). The violence in 7.01 was an extreme example for some critics, of the “story displacement” that I explored in the previous chapter. For others, critics and viewers, the problem seemed to

⁷⁴ The gags for these two deaths were both complex and of a high skill level. Both characters have the tops of their heads smashed with force, by Negan's barbed wire covered baseball bat. The wounds are clear on both characters, and they both have extensive prosthetic work done on them. Glenn's death, the one most expected, was done with painstaking detail to his death in the comic. His eye in the comic is forced from the socket, and this is shown in close up detail in the TV version. When both are dead, the smashed skull and brain matter is repeatedly shown throughout the episode.

be more that it was the emotional attachment that some had to the characters killed, and the brutal and graphic way that it was realised. They simply did not want to see such beloved characters die this way. On Twitter, fans complained “#TWD that was too much. Too BRUTAL forever depressed.” Another tweeted “I think Im giving up on this show. I simply.. cannot #TheWalkingDead.” There have been many other extremely violent acts on the show, from humans, which did not warrant Nicotero having to attend a press conference in order to respond to the volume of complaints (Egner, *The New York Times*, 2016). The trough scene in episode 5.01 'No Sanctuary,' for example, sees humans smashing the heads of other bound and gagged humans who are knelt before a trough. Smashing them with a baseball bat I might add, before slitting their throats one by one, and letting them slump and drain over the trough. Hershal has his head cut off by The Governor, and in episode 5.03 'Four Walls and a Roof,' Rick with not a spot of remorse, hacks Gareth to death with a machete. While the reasons behind why critics were so upset by the content of 7.01, horror and affect, are beyond the scope of this study, it is worth touching upon here to highlight the impact of US television on the horror drama, and the visual horror contained in it. US television and serialisation as I have explored, have pushed and pulled *The Walking Dead* via generic layering and the expansion of the story across 7 seasons, into more than just a zombie text. While this is positive for AMC (see the outstanding ratings and advertising revenue), it engenders attachment to the show and the characters. This leads to the features of serialisation encountering tension with the demands of horror. Drama encompasses deep character exploration and development and therefore fan attachment, horror demands that nasty things happen to them. While *The Walking Dead* as I have shown has strived for technical excellence and high level standards of the practice of visual horror, when applied to certain characters, for some, it was a step too far.

This section has explored how the expectations were high for the visual horror on *The Walking Dead*, especially as it was discursively positioned as a movie. The transition from comic to screen saw the zombies get bloodier, and realised in the combination of practical and CGI effects. *The Walking Dead* set its own bar high with practical hero zombies like Bicycle Girl and the zombie in the well in season 2, but short shooting

windows as demanded by US television, mean that CGI must be used in order to stay on schedule. Visual horror while abundant in *The Walking Dead*, engages with more than just zombie gore: it considers the philosophy of right and wrong, and toys with emotional impact. Surrounding the gore with pathos eases the tension between visual horror and US television. These scenes bring viewer pleasure, but the disturbing nature of this is somewhat removed by the framing of the gore and violence with poignancy. As the seasons have continued, the zombies have become displaced as the genre layers have built up. The zombies have developed aesthetically – more rotten or affected by different environments, like sand, water, or napalm – but they have lost their potency as main threat. The zombie gene is still there, but it is layered beneath hybridised with other genres. Though the zombies in show might not be the central cause for death as they once were, they serve now as industrial promoters of the show, and the showcasing of technical skill, whilst at the same time, maintaining generic fidelity to the zombie text and the original material. What this tells us about horror drama whilst US television overall has become more aesthetically focused, is that some visual horror is acceptable and some still, is not. As already demonstrated, zombie gore and human to zombie violence is fine, but human to human violence remains problematic. Or rather, too much emotion combined with too much violence, is still uneasy ground to cover. While horror on US television has undergone many developments, and its visual horror and its accompanying craft can be used to showcase technical skill, *The Walking Dead*, US television and its threshold pushing technical skill, is still in conflict when serialisation and the inherent characters attachment that this builds, comes into contact with horror.

4.10 Case Study Conclusion.

This case study sought to begin to answer the second and third aims of this thesis overall:

- To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes in US television industry – and how these changes shape horror on US television.

- To discover how the horror genre is acceptable now, and why.

To answer these aims, this chapter has considered the industrial context in which *The Walking Dead* was made; how genre and drama work together inside *The Walking Dead*; how the show presents the visual horror and what other benefits this once avoided by US television element has for AMC. My findings have shown that while on the surface *The Walking Dead* appeared to be an odd choice for AMC to make, it was in fact a sensible decision for the channel to attempt a horror drama. AMC saw the valuable audience inbuilt in both the existing horror film fan base (having success with MonsterFest and then FearFest), and inbuilt in the original comic material. Combining this with a prestigious creative team (Darabont, Hurd, Nicotero), AMC were giving their new drama as much of a sure start as possible. By utilising fan practice and pleasures that come with horror – dedication and a love of intertextuality – AMC could mine on its existing movie library and its knowledge of genre, to build a long running horror drama. A sister show, *Talking Dead*, which is cheap to make, further capitalises on fan practice, as only the most dedicated and loyal viewers stay tuned for the after show.

I explored two strands of promotion of the show. The first, the promotional posters that look very much like movie posters, in a continuing attempt to elevate of *The Walking Dead* by aligning it with film. The second strand of promotion lies with the visual horror and its technical skill and craft, for *The Walking Dead* this has served as an industrial promotional tool for the show. This coverage of the technical skill in creating such visually horrifying gags alleviates some of the tensions between US television and horror. *The Walking Dead* promised authentic visual horror and circumnavigates the disturbance of such imagery by showing the viewing public how it is done in trade and entertainment press articles, video shorts on AMC and in DVD extras.

AMC and their understanding of genre as a result of being a movie channel in turn results in *The Walking Dead* being driven by different genres each new season. The industrial conditions of AMC as a film channel and the generic layering that this produces, take the show in different directions, while keeping certain elements the same. The characters stay the same, but in different situations, and importantly, they

never learn. For the zombies, the original horror driver of the show, they have developed due to the simple passage of time. They have rotted further or severely affected by the environment in which they have been, and this is employed by the episodic nature of a serialisation, to present the zombies as monsters-of-the-week.

While the incredible skill of the artists that make such zombies are praised over and over for their craft, *The Walking Dead* has not solved all the tensions between horror and US television. Taste and opinions will always differ on what is acceptable and what is not. *The Walking Dead* clearly shows that there is a new tension between serialisation and horror. Serialisation demands deep and detailed character development. Horror fundamentally means that bad things are going to happen to those characters, and this, as we saw after 7.01, upset critics and viewers alike.

The Walking Dead demonstrated to the rest of the industry that horror was a viable, valuable, and profitable product. Viable because it is technically possible to make horror in the short shooting schedules of US television. Valuable in the key demographic ratings that *The Walking Dead* drew. And profitable in the huge amounts of advertising revenue it gained. In short, *The Walking Dead* encouraged the rest of US television to change their attitudes to horror drama. While *The Walking Dead* and its monetary success can be arguably said to be the catalyst to the surge in horror drama in the five years after 2010, *The Walking Dead* does not tell us what impact other the industrial conditions of other platforms and channels has on their own contemporary horror drama. *The Walking Dead* tells us what horror is on AMC, a movie channel, but what of the horror that appeared on a channel that does not have a huge film library to support the launch of a horror show? *The Walking Dead* does not tell us how horror fits on a network channel (FOX's *Scream Queens*), or on in the model of a streaming service (*Hemlock Grove* on Netflix). *The Walking Dead* does not tell us how other horror dramas alleviate tensions between TV and horror, or how other horror dramas and their channels develop the genre on US television. The next case study, *Hemlock Grove*, will answer these questions with regards to its own industrial conditions as a streaming service.

Chapter 5 *Hemlock Grove* Case Study

5.1 Introduction

The previous case study considered *The Walking Dead* and its development as a horror serialisation, and the impact it had on the rest of the TV industry and drama trends. *The Walking Dead* demonstrated that horror was both viable and valuable as a TV drama product, and so a new cycle of horror drama on US television began. This case study, *Hemlock Grove* (Netflix, 2013 – 2015), will consider a horror drama on a premium subscription service and what horror drama is in a TV world that is post *The Walking Dead*. I have chosen *Hemlock Grove* because as chapter 3 of this study has shown, there have been dramatic shifts in the US television industry, meaning that what we think of as US television and US television drama, has changed in the last fifteen years or so – TV has come to include the traditional models (free to air network), basic cable, subscription / premium channels, and online streaming and catch up services. In order to give a broad look at horror on US television in the configuration that the industry was in during this horror cycle, it is important to consider a horror drama from across the board. As Netflix has become a solid figure in the US television landscape it is important to this study to consider its version of the contemporary horror drama. *Hemlock Grove* was only the second original drama from the service, after *House of Cards* (Netflix, 2013 -), forming a key part of Netflix's shift to becoming a programmer as well as distributor. It is interesting that Netflix chose to do a horror – and it supports a key point in my research question, that there was a rise of horror on US television post 2010 and *The Walking Dead*. *Hemlock Grove* is useful because it will tell us what horror drama is on the newest form of US television. To revisit my research question: How has the rise of horror on US television impacted on the style spectacle and acceptability of the genre? As with *The Walking Dead* case study, I have already accounted for the rise of horror in chapter 3, covering the first aim of this thesis (as outlined at the end of the literature review). This case study on *Hemlock Grove* will continue with the previous and subsequent chapter, to answer the second and third aims:

- ⤴ To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes to the US television industry outlined in chapter 3 – and how these changes have shaped horror on TV.
- ⤴ To discover how the horror genre is deemed culturally legitimate and acceptable on US television now, and why.

My multi perspectival approach consisting of industrial context, discourse and textual analysis, is the best way to deal with a drama that both followed *The Walking Dead*, and that was made by Netflix, who were relatively new at producing drama series. Through this methodology I can look at the bigger picture of *Hemlock Grove* and its position inside Netflix, and the wider trends within US television. Through textual analysis I can assess generic conventions, aesthetics and structural elements within the show, across the three seasons, and when needs be, concentrate on specific episodes and scenes. This multi perspectival approach provides the tools to study the impact of the US television industry and Netflix's distinct processes and practices, on horror and *Hemlock Grove*.

This case study aims to consider *Hemlock Grove* post *The Walking Dead*: as the previous case study demonstrated how and why *The Walking Dead* caused US television more generally to change their attitude towards horror, sparking a surge of horror programming. This case study will consider the conditions at Netflix and how this affects horror: the ambitions of Netflix at the time (2013), as a service moving into programming. This case study will revisit notions of quality TV and renegotiate them in terms of the cultural legitimacy and acceptability of contemporary horror drama that came after *The Walking Dead*. It is this discussion which will unlock how Netflix worked towards their goal to “become HBO faster than HBO can become us” (Sarandos, 2013). This case study aims to build on the exploration of genre and drama, and how this functions inside Netflix and *Hemlock Grove*. *The Walking Dead* utilised a knowledge of film genre in its position a movie channel, what impact does Netflix and its masses of customer data have on a horror drama. This case study will consider how Netflix and their move into original content caused some confusion in the industry, and what impact this had on *Hemlock Grove* and how the show itself was received. Lastly, this case study

aims to consider the visual horror in *Hemlock Grove* with regards to the cultural legitimacy, genre TV and showrunner Eli Roth.

As said in the previous case study, *The Walking Dead* could not tell us about horror on a streaming service, or horror without a horror film festival (FearFest) to launch off. This case study will fill some of those gaps. But this case study cannot tell us about horror on a free to air network: both this case study and the previous have come from platforms that incur some sort of financial cost for the viewer. How a network that is 100% reliant on advertising revenue deals with horror, will be answered in the next case study. Both *Hemlock Grove* and *The Walking Dead* have source material, in print (a graphic novel and a Gothic novel). Neither of these can tell us about horror drama when it is solely created for US television, or how a free to air network alleviates tension between horror and US television. Neither *Hemlock Grove* nor *The Walking Dead* can tell us about horror on a channel that has no clear links to film, or masses of data on subscriber views and behavior.

5.2 Revisiting Quality and cultural legitimacy.

Before I get to *Hemlock Grove*, I want to first revisit discussions of quality US television, and rethink them with regards to cultural legitimacy⁷⁵, as I argue that boundaries of what might be perceived as quality and to whom, are so blurred by the shifting US television landscape and the rise of seriality. It is instead more useful to consider horror drama and its cultural significance, now that US television deems it to be worthy of production. It is important to consider and rethink quality and cultural legitimacy with regards to *Hemlock Grove* because of the ambitions of Netflix to rival HBO. I will examine this in more detail

⁷⁵ I will be using the term culturally legitimate, or cultural legitimacy throughout this case study and the next, so I want to clarify the term here. By culturally legitimate I mean something that is deemed to be worthy of a place in culture, specifically, worthy of a place on US television. Cultural legitimacy points to a text having a validity within the language of US television, a basis in the logic of TV. In the case of *The Walking Dead*, it was legitimated via its revenue, its showcasing of technical skill and the storytelling potential of horror as serialisation. I view cultural legitimacy as differing from acceptability. Acceptability refers to what is allowed on US television. As Broadcasting Standards and Practices departments have stretched their boundaries as part of the more general shifts in US television drama trends, as explored in chapter 3, other dramas working with visual horror, *True Blood* for example, and according to the TV horror cycle that came after *The Walking Dead*.

below. For now, I want to look at broader notions of quality and cultural legitimacy. In the literature review I illustrated that there is a considerable body of work that considers horror on film, and importantly, takes horror film seriously. Horror on US television was for the most part, either ignored by scholars or considered as lacking when in comparison to its cinematic counterpart (King; Hills; Waller; Prawer). Jowett and Abbott did consider horror US television with more sympathy and a solid acknowledgement of the conditions of US television, and the impact that this has on horror. What needs renegotiating here then, is where does the contemporary horror drama sit in a US television landscape which has seen shifts in attitudes to genre programming; a rise in seriality; an increase in spectacle and display which has led to an increase of visual horror, and specifically, where does horror sit in a TV landscape post *The Walking Dead*? *The Walking Dead* was a crucial moment in the development of TV horror. In this TV landscape in which *The Walking Dead* demonstrated the value of horror on US television, we need to rethink the way in which horror can be considered quality, or as I prefer, culturally legitimate. Horror has, as *Hemlock Grove* will show, blurred the boundaries between populist and quality. I argue that there are limitations in existing notions of quality, and the assumptions of what quality is, because it simply does not allow horror to exist. To renegotiate genre programming to fit the quality mold, then horror must surely be included. Populist genres that were enjoyed by the masses were before not culturally significant, but now they are. Let us take the example of *Deadwood* to begin to unlock how the demarcation and assumptions of what makes a legitimate text need to be redrawn. As discussed in chapter 3, *Deadwood* was a key work in pushing the limits on the levels of extreme violence and profanity on US television (Akass & McCabe, 2008, p. 89). The levels of profanity in particular have been described by scholars as “Shakespearean [...] poetic [...] Biblical [...] Miltonic” (Newcomb, 2008, p. 96). Perlman described the outlandish barrage of the word ‘fuck’ as “ornately poetic [and] spectacularly vulgar” (2011, p. 102). And all of this credited to the “brilliance of the show’s creator David Milch” (2011, p. 102)⁷⁶. *Deadwood* was a Western – a genre not

⁷⁶ Milch being widely recognised as a huge TV talent with his work on amongst others; *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981 - 1987), *NYPD Blue* (ABC, 1993 - 2005), *Murder One* (ABC, 1995 - 1997), and *Brooklyn South* (CBS, 1997 - 1998).

immediately identifiable as quality – being as it was for a long time the most popular Hollywood genre (Indick, 2008, p. 2). On US television, the Western was a family favorite in the Network Era (Lotz, 2014), with a collection of shows including *The Lone Ranger* (ABC, 1949 – 1957); *The Roy Rodgers Show* (NBC, 1951 – 1957); and *Rawhide* (CBS, 1955 – 1966). HBO's version of the Western while containing all the recognisable iconography of the Western, *Deadwood* transcends the populist Western genre and “reinvents the Western as quality US television [as it] undermines the generic conventions of the US television Western” (Perlman, p. 102). *Deadwood* was honest about the brutality of the past, rather than romanticising it as the previous TV incarnations of the Old West did (*The Lone Ranger*, etc). *Deadwood* responded to, Contemporary expectations of quality US television [it was] a Western for the savvy and the cynical: the discerning audience willing to face the brutalities of its collective past to eschew the comforting narratives of myth, and to reject the popular forms that cohere to the 'masses' (Perlman, 2011, p. 110).

Deadwood was a Western produced through HBO's model of developing “capital from cultural snobbery around US television” (McCabe & Akass, 2008, p. 85), and is a crucial element to a renegotiation of what a culturally significant text is or is assumed to be. In TV world post *The Walking Dead* – which demonstrated the value of horror to US television - *Hemlock Grove* is the perfect case study to show us how the boundaries between horror and the culturally legitimate and acceptable have been blurred. As I will show, in Netflix turning to the HBO model of reinventing established genres, genre US television has moved from popular to legitimate: horror has crossed the divide through Netflix taking the HBO model and making a horror text that is both populist and culturally legitimate.

Hemlock Grove seeks to elevate itself to middlebrow and as this case study will show, *Hemlock Grove* and its content as a product of the aims of Netflix at the time, thoroughly complicate the markers of cultural legitimisation. “Categories like high and low are not permanent or natural but undergo negotiation with the emergence of new circumstances” (Newman & Lavine, 2012, p.8) For horror and *Hemlock Grove*, these “new circumstances” are a combination of the shifts in US television as described in

chapter 3, and the state of TV drama / horror drama in an industry after *The Walking Dead*. Newman & Levine (2012) consider the “systems of value within media” and the method of legitimising a work by aligning it with that which is already legitimate (2012, p. 5 – 6). We can look back to *The Walking Dead* to see this in action with the persistent aligning of that TV series with film. In *Hemlock Grove*, this act of legitimisation occurs through the cultural significance of Netflix as a subscription service and therefore ‘not’ US television (avoiding any snobbery around US television as low art for the masses), and the cultural significance of Eli Roth, showrunner on *Hemlock Grove*, and the use of the Gothic.

It is important to draw attention to the problem of critics comparing or defining what text might be culturally legitimate by the output of HBO. The cultural capital that HBO engenders must be taken into account, which it does so by virtue of its claims to not be US television. Netflix is also ‘not US television.’ It is an online streaming service and by nature of its economic model, like HBO, Netflix sells its content to viewers, as opposed to the networks who sell their viewers to the advertisers (McCabe & Akass, 2008, p. 84). Netflix can then, attempt to transcend as HBO does, the rest of US television. HBO’s dramas are culturally worthy by default of being on HBO, as Akass & McCabe explain “the phrase ‘a HBO style series’ has, in fact, now trumped quality US television as a description of high artistic achievement in the medium (2007, p. xvii). Part of this is a result of the conditions of HBO and its freedom from the FCC and advertisers. Another part of this is because of the PR machine around the HBO dramas (Anderson, 2008). HBO have managed to position themselves as culturally significant despite only a small part of their actual programming consisting of the quality and significant dramas that critics and academics bestow with praise and capital. The ‘HBO style drama’ has become common parlance and a critic’s description to loosely draw their own boundaries of what might have any cultural worth. This leads then, to practitioners and industry creatives repeating this, as I will show below with the goals laid out by Netflix as they began making their own original content. HBO make their drama content for the elite viewers, the “college – educated audience who supposedly do not watch US television” (McCabe & Akass, 2008, p. 85) At Netflix, they take a similar drama ideal and

then make it for the masses. Netflix is renegotiating genre and populist texts, redefining notions of cultural significance through as I will show, generic awareness, visual effects, and constructing a horror series that appeals to different facets of the potential audiences (the subscribers)⁷⁷. To properly examine *Hemlock Grove* as a work of contemporary horror drama, I will first explore Netflix and how they came to make their own original drama and then *Hemlock Grove*.

5.3 Netflix and Original Drama

Netflix was co-founded in 1997 by Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph, as an online movie rental and sales service. In 1998, the Netflix website went live, and the DVD by post service was launched. After 12 months, Netflix dropped the sales side of the business, and concentrated on DVD rentals only. In 1999 they debuted the monthly subscription – unlimited rentals for a monthly fee. 2000 saw the personalisation of Netflix, with an individual recommendation system for each user. In 2007 Netflix debuted their online streaming service; it was only by 2007 that bandwidth and data streaming became able to provide such a service. Netflix went from strength to strength, building its film library and gaining more subscribers⁷⁸. Netflix was on its way to becoming “one of the biggest names in entertainment” (Bond, *DailyDot*, 2014).

In 2011 Netflix start to acquire original content, content that Netflix co-produce, produce or distribute exclusively on their service (Masters, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2016). One of the key differences, or rather, a product of the industrial conditions that are unique to Netflix, is the lack of pilot system. Netflix will order and fund a complete series, and then it is released, or 'dropped,' on Netflix to view on demand. A series will not get cancelled

⁷⁷ I will use the plural of audiences when discussing the many audience sections and pools that Netflix targets. I will use ‘audiences’ because the contemporary TV audience is a very mixed group; it is complex and ever shifting. When I refer to the audiences of *Hemlock Grove* and / or Netflix in general, this term will reflect this complexity.

⁷⁸ Netflix had a drop in their subscriber base after the Qwikster debacle: In 2011 Netflix announced that they would split the DVD rental by mail and the streaming service online, with the by mail service to be renamed Qwikster. The subscribers did not like it and many left. The stock price of Netflix tumbled, after it became clear that should a person want both by mail and online, they would have to pay two subscriptions, and deal with two separate websites. In October, Hastings backtracked and pulled the plug on the Qwikster split. Netflix remained the one place for both streaming and DVD rental by mail (Wingfeld, *New York Times*, 2011; Cohan, *Vanity Fair*, 2012).

at the pilot stage. No pilot process means no “money sucking hole” (Hastings, 2013): less chance of wasting money and time. After *Lilyhammer* (Netflix, 2012 – 2014), a Norwegian drama that Netflix exclusively distributed, Hastings said that original programming “had gone from strategic experiment to strategic expansion” (Hastings, 2012). Then after *House of Cards* came *Hemlock Grove*, and an announcement that Netflix was to revive *Arrested Development* (Fox, 2004 – 2006; Netflix, 2013 -).

Hastings, in an interview with Hass at *GQ* magazine, claimed that the traditional models of US television are artificial, manufactured, and “managed dissatisfaction” (Hastings, Hass, 2013). For Hastings, the old ways of waiting week to week for new episodes, means that there is “pent-up demand ... waiting is dead.” Hastings saw Netflix as intervening in that wait and giving people what they want and when they want it, and importantly, a large amount of what they want. Hastings said that it was not simply about “keeping up with the big boy networks” but beating them. The ambition of Netflix was summed up by Ted Sarandos, Chief Content Officer when he told *GQ* that “the goal is to become HBO faster than HBO can become us” (Sarandos, Hass, 2013). Implicit in his words – and also mirroring what Collier said about AMC and “bringing premium to cable” - is that Netflix were to be as culturally and industrially significant as HBO. That is to say, in the hierarchy of prestige upon which HBO has sat at the top: “HBO has placed itself at the top of this hierarchy, as it must do due to its subscription status” (Anderson, 2013, p. 29). Anderson states that HBO does this through the content of HBO being made in such a way that it requires an “aesthetic disposition” to watch it. That the viewer must “have cultural competence ... to perceive the artistic vision,” even when the content in question is violent, and full of sex, drugs, and profanity (see *Deadwood* or *True Blood*).

Netflix also have a “subscription status,” and so would be engaging in a battle for the top of the hierarchy, which they (Sarandos and Hastings) explicitly said. Sarandos was repeating what I described earlier with regards to the 'HBO style drama' being common parlance – a shorthand for explaining what content Netflix were going to produce - drama that would be as culturally significant and filled with capital. This is problematic though because as said, much of HBO is not drama. But this point is conveniently avoided by critics and the culturally positioning of HBO as a place for exceptional content.

The move into original content led to some confusion and inconsistency both within the industry, and for *Hemlock Grove* itself and its target audiences. The attempts on creating capital (in their HBO boasts) from Netflix can be seen in caliber of the creative team on *Hemlock Grove* (Eli Roth and renowned effects artist Todd Masters, for example). The comparison of the content of Netflix's new dramas to HBO fare, was underlined by *Hemlock Grove* producer Brian McGreevy, when at the US television Critics Association Conference in 2013, he compared *Hemlock Grove* and its level of violence with the output of HBO, and directly cited *Game of Thrones* (McGreevy, 2013). By aligning themselves, or rather, posturing that they, Netflix, can challenge HBO, goes some way to attempt to elevate and label the Netflix original drama as culturally significant. I will explore later, how *Hemlock Grove* does this through the frequent use of the Gothic and classic monsters. But for now, I will focus on the more practical conditions at Netflix, which developed *Hemlock Grove*.

By 2013, the “new breed of the TV auteur” (Sarandos, 2013) was recognised, as filmmakers were moving into US television. As I explored in chapter 3, the hierarchy of film and US television had shifted, and the potential creative benefits of US television were alluring to filmmakers. Much like HBO, Netflix offered its creative teams a similar situation with relaxed regulations and no advertiser hoops to jump through. What Netflix offers that HBO cannot though, is a lack of schedule. Because a series drops in its entirety on Netflix there is no danger of cancellation after a pilot or because of poor ratings. For directors and producers this is very tempting indeed. Netflix does not rely on ratings in the same way that traditional US television does. Speaking to *Broadcasting & Cable*, Sarandos said that he has,

No relationships with cable operators, no advertising. There's no financial benefit if you watch *House of Cards* on February 1st 2013, or February 1st 2014. What I want to do over a very long time is build the perfect, huge audience for *House of Cards* (Morabito, *Broadcasting & Cable*, 2013).

So, while *The Walking Dead* made the industry look at both its high ratings and huge amounts of advertising revenue, for Netflix, it can take those things that horror offers (the subscribers and the views). This section has demonstrated the extent of the ambition of

Netflix, after only two original dramas. What this tells us about TV horror and *Hemlock Grove* is, that horror was a key part of Netflix's move into distributor. The next section will consider what it was about the conditions and models of Netflix, the US television industry and drama trends, which culminated in *Hemlock Grove* as part of the move by Netflix into original drama programmer.

5.3.1 Netflix, data and algorithms.

Netflix employs analytics which gather information on subscriber behavior. Netflix hired a group of mathematicians who had experience in programming to break down, define and cluster movies together. In other words, to give everything that Netflix has in its library genre tags. This tagging allows Netflix to connect the rankings (likes or dislikes) that customers have given what they have viewed, and then evaluate other rankings, along with the previous behavior of a subscriber. All of this together provides the personalised service for each subscriber. With regards to decisions over original dramas, Netflix considers this data and from it can predict what drama will work. To take the *House of Cards* example as Sarandos does above, Netflix can see that they have a high number of views of films by Fincher; a high number of subscribers watching films starring Kevin Spacey, and they know that plenty of subscribers rented the BBC version of *House of Cards*: put all that together and a serialisation of *House of Cards* directed by Fincher and starring Spacey, was a safe bet.

For *Hemlock Grove* then, Netflix looked at the success that horror was having across US television and put that together with their data to settle upon *Hemlock Grove*.

Showrunner Eli Roth spoke to *The Hollywood Reporter* and said that,

Netflix had independently sought me out because they knew from how many people rented their DVDs, they had all these algorithms that said my name was very high on the Netflix index. And it was just perfect timing (Richford, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2013).

The timing being the surge in popularity that horror was having on US television at that moment. Roth went on to discuss the structure of Netflix and the no pilot technique. "I loved the idea that [they were] greenlighting the whole series at once (Richford, *The*

Hollywood Reporter, 2013), illustrating the allure that the model of Netflix has for film personnel who are moving into US television. The shift that Netflix made into programming blurred what the service actually was. Was Netflix US television now? Was it still a film distributor? And so therefore, what was the content that they were producing? Showrunner Roth saw Netflix and *Hemlock Grove* as the forefront of content making.

We can now make a ten or thirteen-hour movie, or thirteen one hour movies. It's just a whole new field in essence. It's not film. It's not US television. It lives somewhere in between. Because the audiences are so sophisticated these days, it was the perfect time to come up with content of that high quality (Roth, 2014).

Lee Shipman, producer on *Hemlock Grove* said of the show that "this isn't a US television show. We're bringing the big screen to the small screen" (Shipman, 2013). For *Hemlock Grove* and Netflix's plans to "become HBO," and rival their drama output, Shipman's words muddy the waters. Both Roth and Shipman are aligning with film. Netflix say they want to "out HBO, HBO" with US television drama. This highlights the confusion for all involved as to what Netflix was, or was trying to be: distributor, programmer, another type of US television. This confusion and inconsistency I will again pick up on, when I discuss how *Hemlock Grove* was targeted to different audiences, and why the content of the show was for some critics, somewhat bewildering.

5.4 Eli Roth and Horror legitimacy.

Despite the blurring of what Netflix was becoming (programmer / distributor) for Roth, Netflix was the perfect place for himself to make a TV horror. For Netflix, Roth represents much horror cultural capital, which serves the goals of Netflix in their challenge to HBO. *Hemlock Grove* was responding to the changing notions of what makes a text culturally significant, as I explored earlier with the example of *Deadwood*. Practically, Netflix arrived at *Hemlock Grove* and Eli Roth through their data, but for some horror fans, Roth is a marker of horror legitimacy. The addition of Eli Roth conforms to the showrunner as auteur and proof of artistic endeavor that Newman & Levine saw as crucial to the marking of a text as legitimate. Roth rose to horror

prominence with *Cabin Fever* in 2002, *Hostel* in 2005, and *Hostel part II* in 2007⁷⁹. David Edelstein in the *New York Magazine*, in 2006, coined the phrase 'torture porn' which credited Roth with the creation of a brand new sub-genre of horror which used very graphic violence to excite audiences, akin to a sexual act. In addition to his contribution to horror, Roth was part of a popular cycle of horror of the 2000s along with a group of esteemed horror artists – Robert Rodriguez, Rob Zombie, Edgar Wright, Alexandra Aja, James Wan, Darren Lynn, Neil Marshall, Greg McLean, and Leigh Whannell – collectively referred to as the “splat pack,” coined this time by Alan Jones in *Total Film* (2006). Roth also worked with Tarantino on the *Grindhouse / Deathproof* (2007) project, another artist with substantial cultural capital and recognition as an artist. Newman & Levine discuss the use of the powerful showrunner as a “commercial strategy of product differentiation and as a marker of quality” (2012, p. 42). Having Roth’s name attached to *Hemlock Grove* marks it out as quality or legitimate horror: even more so than the use of Darabont on *The Walking Dead*. Darabont was bringing only the credibility of film to the TV horror series. Roth brings actual horror film and genre credibility to the *Hemlock Grove* - Roth is culturally significant to the horror audiences. The broadcast networks had been asking Roth to do a horror series for TV ever since *Cabin Fever* (Roth, 2002). It should be noted that *Cabin Fever* was well before *The Walking Dead* appeared on AMC in 2010. The broadcast networks asking Roth – the man who would become famed for his torture porn – to do a TV horror were asking him to make something that would be the neutered, watered down horror, that scholars like Hills have seen as lacking in the past. When asked why he did not make any horror for the networks, Roth said he would only do it if he could put his “own spin on it” (Roth, *Anatomy of a Kill*, 2013). Meaning that he would only do horror for TV if he would be able to do it to his standards, and not of a tough broadcasting standards and practices department, or the FCC. Roth went on to say that the visual horror is an aspect he would “not compromise on.” For the horror fans, Roth's no compromise attitude is where his credibility, his legitimacy, lies. They will have certain expectations from a serialization done by Eli 'torture porn' Roth. I will explore this further in the visual horror section of this case study.

⁷⁹ *Cabin Fever* was Lionsgate biggest grossing film of 2002, earning \$22 million in the US box office, and \$35 million worldwide. *Hostel* in 2005 made \$20 million in its first weekend in the USA.

From the point of view of how Netflix works internally in their use of data in their decision making with regards to original content, Netflix approached Roth with the want to make a horror series. For Roth, the model and conditions at Netflix were the perfect place to do make a serialisation of a horror because of the relaxed regulations⁸⁰. For Netflix, a horror series done by Roth could reach a high number of subscribers. What this tells us is that while the decision to make a horror might have been a relatively clinical one from Netflix – their data told them that Roth would be a suitable choice, and trends across the rest of US television told Netflix that horror was viable – the use of Roth and the horror capital that he is worth, fit the goals of Netflix looking to the HBO model of both reinventing existing genres (as I will look at in more detail next) and the emphasis of Roth as showrunner, combining to elevate the popular horror genre to a middlebrow serialisation.

Roth is already a culturally significant figure in the horror community, and so to bring him and his capital to Netflix and *Hemlock Grove*, is a move that illustrates the ambition of Netflix to challenge HBO and their culturally significant drama output. Now that I have demonstrated how Netflix came to make *Hemlock Grove*, I can consider the show itself in more detail. *Hemlock Grove* was originally a novel, written by Brian McGreevy, and is a Gothic tale centered on werewolves and vampires. Both novel and Netflix version of *Hemlock Grove* sit inside an enormous canon of texts that deal with the same. Werewolf and vampire texts have appeared on small screen, silver screen and print, and for decades, centuries even. There are many other studies that explore specifically the vampire and the werewolf on film and US television and it is outside the perimeters of this study to attempt to lay out the full history of these creatures on the screen⁸¹.

⁸⁰ In *Hostel*, Roth took a small salary of \$10,000 in order to take as little as possible from the already meagre budget of \$4 million. He did this so as to keep as much money as possible available to ensure there would be no limits on what was technically achievable with the levels of realistic looking violence in the film (Edelsteien, *New York Magazine*, 2006).

⁸¹ For werewolves; Creed's 2004 work *Phallic Panic*, and chapter 6 'Fear of Fur;' *The Complete Book of Werewolves* (2001) by L. Ashley; and Du Coudrayrl's 2006 *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror and the Beast Within*. For Vampires, see Freeland's 2000 *The Naked and the Undead*, chapter 4 'Seductive Vampires;' Crane chapter 3 'Nostferatu' in the 1994 *Terror and Everyday Life*; Geldrick (1994) *Reading the Vampire*; Gordon and Hollinger's

5.5 Genre, the Gothic and Netflix Drama.

This section will build on the exploration of the horror genre on US television, within the context of the data driven model of Netflix. This will lead to a discussion of how *Hemlock Grove* renegotiates notions of a culturally legitimate text, via its own generic awareness, rethinking what this might mean for the horror genre on US television. In entering the fold as a programmer with *House of Cards*, Netflix then brought their second original drama *Hemlock Grove*. Netflix observed the trends in the rest of the US television industry, around 2012 / 2013. Speaking to the MiP TV conference, showrunner Roth said,

With *The Walking Dead* getting 12.5 million viewers [...] people want shows like this [...] what you're seeing is a real shift [...] you wanna see sex and you wanna see the killing and the violence. You want the murder to be scary and horrible (Roth, 2013).

Roth's words, while seemingly explaining away the levels of gore and violence in *Hemlock Grove*, they also point to more complex ambitions and strategies that resulted in Netflix creating a horror in the first place, and what impact those ambitions and strategies have on their horror drama. On the ambitions of Netflix to “become HBO” Conliffe noted that “it [Netflix] isn't just keeping up with the big boy cable networks, it plans to beat them at their own game” (*Gizmodo*, 2013). Surveying drama trends on US television at the time would reveal horror to be doing well and – as Roth noted – would mean that Netflix would compete with the other “big boy cable networks.” The unprecedented success of *The Walking Dead* changed the attitudes of both advertisers and the rest of TV, causing a trend of horror programming. Making a horror serialisation meant that Netflix would be as they stated, challenging existing US television hierarchies. To explore this, I want to look specifically at the generic content of *Hemlock Grove*, and its place on a streaming subscription service.

1997 *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*; and Rickel's *The Vampire Lectures*, 1999.

I will approach this in two ways. The first will consider how Netflix through their data gathering, conceptualise a horror series. I will do this by looking closely at the three trailers that were made for season 1 of *Hemlock Grove*⁸². These trailers show an awareness of the codes and generic conventions of horror which Netflix has gained through its data gathering. They know which audiences watch which types of horror, and where these might overlap. While having three separate trailers is a commercial move so Netflix can reach more potential viewers, it also shows an engagement with generic knowledge. This data tells Netflix what is popular and to whom; in the previous section I explained how and why Netflix approached Roth. The data transforms the generic elements contained within the show into strategies for targeting specific groups of subscribers whom Netflix deems to be potential viewers. In looking at the promotion of *Hemlock Grove* through its three trailers, I will also examine how the gore of the show was used to draw attention to *Hemlock Grove* amongst industry peers and potential viewers through the Netflix channel on YouTube. The second way I will be approaching the horror genre and drama in Netflix and *Hemlock Grove*, is collapse all three seasons together and consider the use of the Gothic and classic monsters in relation to Netflix looking to the HBO model, and the potential elevation of horror text to a culturally legitimate text. This second approach will then to consider more broadly, the horror 'niches' used across the show, to maintain its audiences. The data that Netflix holds about its viewerships combined with the generic knowledge held by the makers of *Hemlock Grove*, is clearly visible in the three differing trailers that Netflix made for promotion of the show. The audience for horror is much more nuanced and sophisticated than previously thought – as proven by achievements of *The Walking Dead* with its high numbers of valuable demographics: the 18- 49s, and not merely teens on dates in the cinema. At this point it should be noted clearly here, that the audiences that I suggest that *Hemlock Grove* is intended for, are the result of my own thoughts and consideration as I have conducted the research for this thesis, and through my own analysis of the trailers. This is because Netflix makes no data public with regards to who

⁸² For the purposes of staying within the space allotted for this thesis I am going to restrict the trailer analysis to the first season. The trailers for season 1 presented the clearest of distinction between each other; the trailers for season 2 and 3 while differing in tone, feature many of the same voice overs taken from the show and suggest the upcoming developments for characters already known.

actually watches their content. It was not until 2017 that there began to even be calls for, and negotiations with Neilson for Netflix to release such viewership data (Oller, *Forbes*, 2017). My analysis of the three trailers will reveal how Netflix conceptualises contemporary horror drama. Morabito noted that Netflix uses its data to see who watches what, and “how Netflix markets the same show but differently to different viewers” (*Broadcasting & Cable*, 2013). I want to here now take a close look at how Netflix did this with *Hemlock Grove*, through analysis of the trailers for season 1.

5.5.1 Trailer 1: 'Allies and Enemies.'

The first trailer focusses on the teenage characters in *Hemlock Grove*, revealing the ensemble cast that consists of the high school attendees around whom the murder mystery and the suggestion of the supernatural revolves. Like movies such as *Scream* (Craven, 1996) and *I Know What You Did Last Summer* (Gillespie, 1997), the teens are the ones to solve the riddle of what happened to the murdered girl, and adults appear powerless (a common trait in horror, especially slashers). In renegotiating notions of cultural legitimacy, 'Allies and Enemies' is distinctly reworking previous and / or existing US television incarnations of teens, high school, and the supernatural, along the same lines of *Buffy*, *Supernatural*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and *The Originals*. These supernatural and Gothic elements, have been traditionally seen to appeal to women – as can be seen in the audience breakdown and target demographics for the supernatural soaps on The CW (*Supernatural*; *The Vampire Diaries*; *The Originals*). According to www.tvbythenumbers.com, in 2009 *The Vampire Diaries* and *Supernatural* were increasing year on year with the number of women 18-34 watching these shows. Netflix in this trailer, appear to be targeting the same groups as *The Vampire Diaries*, with *Hemlock Grove* sitting somewhere between *Twilight* and *True Blood* (Hinkley, *The Daily News*, 2009). This trailer is in very much in the tradition of such shows, drawing on *Buffy* but with more spectacular gore. In *Variety* Lowry commented that *Hemlock Grove* “has more blood, which makes it different from CW supernatural soaps” (2014).



Figure 26 : Handsome teen Roman Godfrey shown in the high school grounds. 'Allies and Enemies'

This trailer is aware of the subscribers with a taste for teen supernatural texts, who would have been fans of *Twilight* in previous years. These fans will be adults now, perhaps with a taste for more brutality, more blood and more guts. It is this blood and guts that is part of the generic promise made by having Roth show-run a horror contemporary drama. 'Allies and Enemies' is engaging with a certain type of genre programming known to US television and its audiences – the teen supernatural thriller – and yet promising more adult content via both its platform that has more relaxed regulations, and the connection to Eli Roth and all of his horror capital.

5.5.2 Trailer 2: 'Blood Ties.'

This second trailer had an almost complete focus of the evil female matriarch of *Hemlock Grove*, Olivia Godfrey. She is shown to us as a powerful, sexual and seductive woman, both reviled and hated for her power, beauty and wealth. This trailer is drawing in female viewers who would be older than the demographic targeted for the first trailer,

'Allies and Enemies.' The focus is far away from the school and is instead considering the conflicts between the older and wealthy family members. This Godfrey family is one of secrets, and it draws on the codes and conventions of other dramas that explore the more mature, beautiful, yet deadly woman who is importantly, not a pretty teenager.



Figure 27: The powerful Olivia Godfrey in an adulterous post sexual repose. 'Blood Ties'

'Blood Ties' presents *Hemlock Grove* as an almost horror version of *Desperate Housewives*, a drama that reached an older audience of 18 – 49s, gaining an average 10.7 rating in this target group (O'Connell, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2012). Olivia is a villain, a bad parent - her son is one of the heroes and their relationship is clearly dysfunctional. She mirrors women such as Samantha Jones in *Sex and the City*, with her overt sexuality. The female led drama worked incredibly well for HBO, when the finale of *Sex and the City* drew 10.6 million viewers, which for a premium service that only 30% of the American viewing public have access too, is very impressive indeed. This is the audience that this trailer is clearly aiming for (Carter, *New York Times*, 2004). Olivia Godfrey is dangerous, reflecting the wealthy maenad character Maryann Forrester

in *True Blood*. Although HBO like Netflix need not worry about ratings and care more about luring and maintaining subscribers, “*True Blood* was HBO's most popular series 2009 – 2012” (Kissell, *Variety*, 2014). This trailer features the sexy, Gothic elements of *Hemlock Grove*, those that closely mirror *True Blood*⁸³ 'Blood Ties' while showcasing Olivia and her power, is lacking, or rather, is not focusing on the outright horror of *Hemlock Grove*. This trailer is for those potential viewers who would not ordinarily watch an Eli Roth movie, but instead enjoy a sexy thriller drama with a powerful female lead, with an implication of the supernatural and monstrosity.

5.5.3 Trailer 3: 'Monsters within.'

The third trailer is the horror trailer. Featuring Roth's name and previous works right at the start, this trailer is to appeal to fans of both Roth's work and of horror in general. Jacobs noted that *Hemlock Grove* was “absolutely dreadful ... but horror aficionados may lap this up” (*Daily Beast*, 2013). The visual spectacle and horror tropes are the focus of this trailer, clearly demonstrating the authorial mark of Roth as the bloody imagery is repeatedly shown. In a TV horror drama in the cycle that I have argued peaked after and because of *The Walking Dead*, the visual spectacle of *Hemlock Grove* is the central theme of 'Monsters Within.' The high production values are showcased through the gorier and bloodier imagery than the previous two trailers. This trailer shows the larger ensemble cast – we see more of Destiny, Christina and Norman. The trailer is drawing on film codes and conventions; the soon to be dead cheerleader, and the chasing of Brooke Bluebell through the woods before her bloody murder. By directly citing Roth's work in the captions – *Hostel*, *Cabin Fever* - Roth's cultural capital in horror film circles are being highlighted by, Netflix and its serialisation of the horror genre. This generic awareness is demonstrated in 'Monsters Within,' acknowledging what the sophisticated horror audience will expect from a work by Roth.

⁸³ It should be noted here, that *Hemlock Grove* features Bill Skarsgard as a vampire. His older brother, Alexander Skarsgard, plays a vampire in *True Blood*.



Figure 28: Eli Roth's previous work is showcased in the third trailer. 'Monsters Within'

In addition to 'Monsters Within', Eli Roth himself screened the full werewolf transformation scene from episode 1.02 'The Angel,' to the MiP TV conference⁸⁴ as promotion for the first season of *Hemlock Grove*. *Hemlock Grove* arrived in 2013 when the TV horror cycle was arguably peaking, with gore and visual horror becoming an acceptable and expected element of TV horror drama. Roth noted “people love *The Walking Dead*, and that’s become the norm for gore. But the blood isn’t seen as violence; it’s just seen as a story point” (Linehan, *Maxim*, 2014). Using this sequence (the transformation) as promotion further explains how *Hemlock Grove* and TV horror was conceptualised by Netflix, and what was expected from Roth. As said, a director with such cultural legitimacy via his own impact on the horror genre (his links to the cycle of torture porn and the 'splat pack') and having worked with other culturally significant figures such as Tarantino, means that *Hemlock Grove* had to be promoted without anything hidden. That is to say, if we compare the *Hemlock Grove* promotional material

⁸⁴ The MipTV Conference gathers together entertainment industry leaders and creatives from both US television and digital content. The conference showcases achievements, upcoming projects and new content.

to *The Walking Dead*, *The Walking Dead* material featured no zombies. *Hemlock Grove* and Roth showed its potential viewers that it would be horrific, supernatural, Gothic, have a monstrous female lead, and be all that one might expect from a legitimate horror director, Eli Roth. As explored in chapter 3, there is economic value in revealing such detailed and gory horror sequences, when used as a marketing tool.

All three of these trailers show a generic awareness by *Hemlock Grove* and Netflix: generic awareness is a key marker of TV shows that acquire cultural significance. As explored above with my consideration of *Deadwood*, it needed to understand the past incarnation of the Western before it can reinvent and transcend populist US television to become legitimate or middlebrow. *The Walking Dead* shifted the position of horror on TV by drawing on film codes and convention. The conventions of TV horror in a post *Walking Dead* world are demonstrated by *Hemlock Grove* and can be seen in these trailers. The horror audience is more sophisticated than previously thought and so the three trailers seek out these different fractions – the ones who like teen supernatural dramas; the older demographic who enjoys the female led sexy thriller, and the horror and Eli Roth fans. The audience expectations are therefore taken into account. The teens who watched *Halloween* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* are now grown up, sophisticated, and expect more from their horror. And they have also experienced other such US television – *The Sopranos*, *Deadwood*, *The Wire*, *Nip/Tuck* – they understand the conventions of contemporary drama. *Hemlock Grove* is blurring the lines between popular genre US television and cultural legitimacy. By demonstrating generic awareness and an understanding of audience expectation, which is seen in the strategy of separating and engaging with different horror aspects of *Hemlock Grove* (the supernatural; the Gothic thriller; the gory Roth horror), Netflix and *Hemlock Grove* are moving the boundaries of what constitutes cultural significance. By incorporating already established forms of perceived culturally legitimate drama, and mixing it with less legitimate forms, or rather, with legitimacy from another community – the horror community and Eli Roth.

Hemlock Grove has to “serve varied subscriber interests, including those who like gore, nudity and (given the mix of the macabre and high school) rent *Twilight* movies” (Lowry, *Variety*, 2013). But for some critics, the amount of horror tropes found within the series was too much. The show was described as “absolutely dreadful [...] an almost unwatchable muddle of horror tropes” (Jacob, *The Daily Beast*, 2013). Another critic at least observes that there is an audience for horror; “everyone loves supernatural bullshit, dead teenage girls and sex [but Netflix] just throw 'em all together and hopes for the best” (Handlam, *AV Club*, 2013). However, some critics were able to concede that *Hemlock Grove* and its plentiful tropes, was a useful strategic move by Netflix. *Hemlock Grove* would be “helpful in attracting a certain elusive niche of subscribers” (Lowry, *Variety*, 2013), and Jacob admitted that “horror aficionados may lap this up (Jacob, *Daily Beast*, 2013). These niche aficionados would be those fans of Roth’s previous work (*Hostel*; *Hostel II*), films which were not favoured by critics. Just as Hastings said that Netflix would “not all be programmed for one taste,” the horror in *Hemlock Grove* was a world away from the sparkly vampires and love sick werewolves in *Twilight*. *Hemlock Grove* could well be seen as being made for the said *Twilight* fans, now that there were all grown up (Richford, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2013).

What is important to acknowledge at this point is the complexity of *Hemlock Grove* and the complexity of marketing it to different audiences. Netflix were aiming for a broader range of content (with the inclusion of sitcoms and more populist fare), than that of HBO. Sarandos in *Broadcasting & Cable* said that upon considering all their data and how they could use it to create original content that,

All of a sudden you've got all these audience pools and you can look where they overlap. And then you have millions of people [who will] be perfectly targeted to love the show (Morabito, 2013).

With the trailers showing such different facets of *Hemlock Grove*, and targeting different audiences, this leads to an inconsistency within the show, and what critics perhaps found so jarring. *Hemlock Grove* was neither one thing nor the other – it was different things to different audiences. The impact of Netflix trying to on one hand made a horror drama as the rest of US television was doing, and then trying to emulate HBO work, plus

cashing in on the long time and reliable audience for teen supernatural series and franchises (see the loyalty of *Buffy* fans and *Twilight* fans). This means that *Hemlock Grove* is a very complex case in terms of all three aspects of it: the teen supernatural, a strive for cultural legitimacy (which is underwritten by the use of the Gothic as I will explain below), and the horror elements brought by Eli Roth.

This section tells us that Netflix observed that horror was enjoying success across US television, and in making their own horror drama, Netflix would be on trend, and in line with the cable networks. The trailers tell us that Netflix used the many facets of horror to tempt three overlapping sections of subscribers and their interests: teen supernatural; complex thrillers; more hardcore horror fans. This tells us that at the time (2013) the audience for horror was regarded in the TV industry as wide – not just teens watching other teens get slashed. “Quality [or culturally legitimate and significant] TV is precisely concerned with appealing to divergent desires, [such shows] offer their viewers the possibility of divergent, even conflicting interpretations within the one text” (Johnson, 2005, p. 97). This tells us that horror was being considered as a much more multi-layered and sophisticated genre for US television. These were the elements that Netflix picked out of *Hemlock Grove* in order to trail it to potential viewers. To continue to unpack *Hemlock Grove* and its generic and industrial complexity, I will now focus as said on the Gothic elements of the show, to explore how they manifest themselves within an attempt to elevate the show to cultural significance.

5.6 The Gothic and Classic Monsters.

Earlier in this case study I pointed to the ambitions of Netflix to challenge HBO and its cultural prestige. Netflix’s model for doing this was a focus on niche content enjoyed by the masses. It should be noted however, that in 2013 horror was becoming more commonplace on US television. This means that *Hemlock Grove* had to respond and not simply be yet another horror drama, another series with good looking vampires, or another movie director show-running a series⁸⁵. If Netflix were indeed going to challenge

⁸⁵ I have already discussed the sheer amount of horror series being launched in the years post *The Walking Dead*,

HBO, then *Hemlock Grove* needed elevation from low brow pulpy horror, to something that could be described as artistic, or requiring an “aesthetic disposition”, and at the very least, be middle brow. This section will examine which elements of the content of *Hemlock Grove* attempt to do this.

I previously mentioned the recognition of the “TV auteur” by Sarandos, which *Hemlock Grove* has with Roth, and the source material for season 1 is a Gothic novel. Both these things support the text in its attempts at legitimacy. With genre TV moving from popular to legitimate and even middlebrow, and with horror also crossing the divide, it must be explored how the horror genre is doing this: how is horror being elevated to cultural significance. We have seen that *Hemlock Grove* is generically self-conscious in the three trailers that expose the knowledge of the complex and sophisticated horror audiences. In the content of the show itself, I argue that the main element in *Hemlock Grove* which seeks to elevate the text to middlebrow and cross this divide into legitimacy is the use of the Gothic. The Gothic in *Hemlock Grove* does two things. One, it brings with it prestigious links to a literary past⁸⁶ – Horace Walpole; Edgar Allen Poe; Ann Radcliffe; Mary Shelley – which underline the differing “systems of value within media” (Newman & Levine, 2012, p.6). What this means is that while *Hemlock Grove* might saturate itself in Gothic themes and iconography to elevate the text above the rest of the horror that was on US television at the time, it is still a horror: it is still gory and nasty and the best it can hope to achieve is middlebrow. As Newman & Levine go on to state, “categories like high and low are not permanent or natural but undergo negotiation with the emergence of new circumstances” (2012, p. 8). The “new circumstances” I have laid out in chapter three with the developments in US television, and how *The Walking Dead* encouraged a new attitude to horror. The use of the Gothic then, serves in *Hemlock Grove* to aid horror as it takes on assumed notions of legitimacy.

and also in chapter 3, I explored some of the many film creatives moving into US television: Alan Ball, Neil Jordan, Frank Darabont, to name a few.

⁸⁶ Examples prestigious Gothic literature would be: *The Mysteries of Udolphe*, Ann Radcliffe, 1794; *The Castle of Ontranto*, Horace Walpole, 1765; *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley, 1818; *Melmouth the Wanderer*, Charles Martin, 1820; and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and My Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson, 1887.

The second thing that the Gothic does in *Hemlock Grove* – which is a consequence of the attempts to challenge HBO and seek cultural significance, is to surround and pretext the visual horror elements within the show. In situating the visual horror with the more ‘cerebral’ nature of the Gothic tradition, *Hemlock Grove* can transgress previous critical grievances on TV horror. It can cushion some of its most graphic imagery within a Gothic and legitimate alignment. To do this, I will collapse the three seasons together and look at the Gothic themes and monsters across *Hemlock Grove* as a whole piece. But before that, I want to first engage with a work that is key to any discussion of US television and the Gothic: Helen Wheatley's 2006 *Gothic US television*. I will explore the facets of the Gothic as drawn by Wheatley in more detail below, but for now I want to lay the foundations of my analysis of the Gothic and US television with regards to, and to set up my development of Wheatley's work.

For Wheatley, US television is the ideal medium for the Gothic, as the Gothic genre itself “is deeply concerned with the domestic [...] stories of unspeakable family secrets and homely trauma” (2006, p. 1). *Hemlock Grove* is a tale of family dramas, secrets and trauma, and this is explicitly shown in the 'Blood Ties' trailer. Wheatley states that Gothic is not a prefix used in the description of US television, stating that “unlike Gothic literature, Gothic US television is not a category which is utilised by US television industry professionals to define their programmes” (p. 2). Nor does Wheatley find the use of the term in any TV listings. While this remains to be true around 2013 / 2015 for the programme makers – the CEOs at Netflix when *Hemlock Grove* was part of the discourse in the trade and entertainment press, they did not refer to the show as Gothic, but the critics writing about *Hemlock Grove* did. In a TV world after *The Walking Dead*, the many facets of the horror genre and the complex and sophisticated horror audiences were being both acknowledged and utilised by programme makers and critics. To go back again to the “new circumstances” of US television that led to an increase in horror programming, these circumstances have necessitated for the press critics to differentiate between the types of horror that they were charged with writing about. Hale in *The New York Times* (2013) described *Hemlock Grove* as “CW Gothic horror;” Tartaglione at *Deadline* (2013) again, “Gothic horror;” Lowry in *Variety* (2013) labelled *Hemlock Grove*

a “Gothic soap;” and Lowry again in *Variety* (2015) when the series was coming to the end of season 3, described it as a “Gothic horror.” This use of the term Gothic could be as said to help discern one type of horror drama from another, but also an industry wide recognition of the varied subtypes of horror and its audiences. And as I have shown, the complexity of *Hemlock Grove* and its targets – is it for teens, the older thriller audience or for Roth's horror fans – the use of the Gothic I argue, is part of the attempt to elevate *Hemlock Grove* as a culturally legitimate text.

Wheatley in her historical account of the Gothic on US television notes that the horror is implied, that it is suggested (p. 9); “using oblique techniques of shooting and editing to imply, rather than reveal, the presence of the supernatural.” For my analysis of *Hemlock Grove*, I will expand on this, taking into account the changes in the TV industry following *The Walking Dead*, which in turn leads to the Gothic and its inherent supernatural beings which are now, or rather they can fully be shown in all their horrific incarnations. With that in mind, my analysis of the Gothic in *Hemlock Grove* will consider how its use seeks cultural legitimacy via its connections with the prestigious heritage of Gothic characters and themes. At the same time, *Hemlock Grove* employs the Gothic to frame and legitimate some of the more visually disturbing moments, that in previous years such as some of the TV texts Wheatley discusses – *Lights Out* (NBC, 1949 – 1952; *One Step Beyond* (ABC, 1959 – 1961; and *Night Gallery* (Universal TV, 1970 - 1973) - might have been executed via suggestion, implication, and a feeling of unease as opposed to visual spectacle. Before I get into the content analysis, I want to again refer back to Wheatley, for a taxonomy of what might lead to a TV text being defined as Gothic. I can then explore these details below, with regards to *Hemlock Grove*. A Gothic text will generate a mood of terror and of dread, and even feelings of disgust in the viewer. The characters involved will be recognisable and stereotypical of a Gothic text. A hero or heroine will be trapped in a situation – usually domestic, sometimes a town as we shall see in *Hemlock Grove*. They will be trapped there at the hands of an evil character, a villain. Here I would add the particular Gothic theme of bad, neglectful or willfully abusive parenting noted by Gelder (1994, p. 67). The heroes of the Gothic text are often orphaned or hurt by their parental figures.

The Gothic sees family secrets which are attempted to be covered up, and secrets and deeds from the past come back to disturb the present. There will be the representation of the supernatural; in *Hemlock Grove* these representations are overt and are displayed in the technical skill of the special effects team. Wheatley lists examples of the uncanny; “repetitions, returns, deja vu, premonitions, ghosts. Doppelgangers, animated inanimate objects, severed body parts etc.” The families within the Gothic text are haunted by their past, or their living places are haunted. The flashback sequence is commonplace, as is the use of “memory montage.” The Gothic text is “visually dark, with a mise-en-scene dominated by drab and dismal colours, shadows and closed-in spaces” (Wheatley, 2006, p. 3).

5.7 Classic Monsters

In addition to *Hemlock Grove* and its use of the Gothic, central to the whole series are the interactions and behaviors of the monsters that are at the epicenter of the show. It is after all, a show about the supernatural, about vampires and werewolves – to point back to the promotional use of the werewolf transformation that Roth exhibited to the MipTV conference. To contextualise these central monsters in *Hemlock Grove*, I will briefly though look at the progression of the vampire and the werewolf text on screen and consider key thematic elements of the werewolf and the vampire texts. This section will serve to bring together how certain manifestations of these monsters embody the Gothic, which I can then look at more closely within the content of *Hemlock Grove* itself.

5.7.1 Werewolves.

Like zombies, the werewolf has no specific literary origins. The werewolf is a product of European folk lore and oral storytelling customs; the half man half beast occurs in many cultures⁸⁷. The werewolf is linked to lycanthropy, a psychiatric condition in which the

⁸⁷ The first tales of a half man half wolf appeared as far back as Ancient Greece; Zeus turned King Lycaeon into a werewolf. Across Medieval Europe, wolves were eradicated, but the myths remained, and even caused a great number of werewolf trials. In France, there was a held belief of the loup garou, Bulgaria named it the varkulak,

sufferer believes they are part animal, commonly wolf, which leads them to exhibit animal behavior. On screen, the werewolf is a sympathetic monster, they are framed as a victim. A werewolf story will usually revolve around a person being attacked (bitten), developing the werewolf affliction, and then efforts to try and understand the curse with an ultimate goal to find a cure. The werewolf first appeared on screen in the 1913 silent movie *The Werewolf* (McRae). The 'rules' of the werewolf text as we know them, were set up by the 1941 film *The Wolf Man* (Waggner): silver bullets, the use of the pentagram, turning by the light of a full moon, and especially crucial to *Hemlock Grove*, the links between werewolves and the Romani people. In *The Wolf Man*, a Gypsy fortuneteller is the expert on all things werewolves, and informs the afflicted Larry, about his condition. She also knows how to defeat a werewolf, this role is fulfilled in *Hemlock Grove* by the very knowledgeable Destiny. The werewolf embodies the Gothic through the fear of savagery and nature that the werewolf represents: in Gothic tales that grapple with science versus nature, civilisation versus savagery, the werewolf in his shift from civilised man to rampant beast (the varghulf in *Hemlock Grove*) overtly deals with this Gothic theme. Other werewolf texts cover themes of puberty, coming of age and increasing sexuality; *Ginger Snaps* (Fawcett, 2000), and *Teen Wolf* (Daniel, 1995), and TV remake *Teen Wolf* (MTV, 2011 – 2017). In the 1980s the werewolf films developed elements of body horror, as the improvements in visual effects make up improved. For the werewolf, they could be much more 'realistic,' rather than men with hair glued to their faces, hands and feet. The transformation in *American Werewolf in London* (Landis, 1981) set the benchmark for technical skill in this critical scene. I will revisit this below.

5.7.2 Vampires.

The vampire began in myth but made its way into literature, with John Polidori's 1819 *The Vampyre*, J.S. Le Fanu's Gothic 1847 novella *Carmilla*, and later Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*. Since then the vampire has been a consistent creature of literature, print and then screen. The vampire appears in what is considered in hindsight, the first horror film, FW Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922). There were plentiful vampires in the Hammer

the oik in Albania, and the mardagoyl in Armenia (Fehy, 1988).

Horror cycle of horror films⁸⁸. The 1970s and 1980s saw many pastiches (as did the werewolf and the zombie text). The 1980s saw the iconic *The Lost Boys* (Shumacher, 1987), and then in the 1990s the vampire enjoyed popularity with a traditional retelling of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Coppola, 1993). *Interview with the Vampire* (Jordan, 1994); the ultra-violent *From Dusk Til Dawn* (Rodriguez, 1996); and *Blade* (Norrington, 1998), all began to reinterpret the vampire away from traditional Gothic tales. The 2000s brought *Twilight* (Hardwicke, 2008), and vampires that sparkled in sunlight. This breed of vampires were the pinnacle of the development of the monster from demonic murderer to romantic hero. Thankfully, the vampire was still being explored as an actual monster around this time, see *30 Days of Night* (Slade, 2007); *Daybreakers* (M & P Spierig, 2009); and *Stake Land* (Mickle, 2010). But it was the handsome melodramatic vampires with a conscience that featured most prominently in popular culture.

On US television the vampire has repeatedly appeared. From the Gothic soap *Dark Shadows* (ABC, 1966 – 1971); in *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (ABC, 1974 – 1975); *Kindred: The Embraced* (Fox, 1996); *Forever Knight* (CBS, 1992 – 1996); and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB / UPN, 1996 – 2003). As noted in chapter 3, the vampire and its various incarnations have proven popular to TV networks, as their innate horror, violence and gore, can be easily toned down for US television. Or rather, it has been done in the past. Goddu noted that in previous decades (for the series mentioned here above) that the vampire has had a relatively clean image on TV: the vampire can bite and only leave a trickle of blood; the destruction of a vampire can be realised with a puff of smoke, flashes or light, or piles of ash. The CW's *Vampire Diaries* (2009 – 2017) again had romantic vampires, with some degree of increased visual horror, but *True Blood* (HBO, 2008 – 2014), according to Jowett & Abbott, unleashed all the gore, sex and violence, that are the hallmarks of a true vampire tale (2013). To put it simply, in *True Blood*, the TV vampires became monstrous again.

⁸⁸ *The Kiss of the Vampire*, Sharpe, 1963; *Vampire Circus*, Young, 1971; *Captain Cronos: Vampire Hunter*, Clemens, 1974; *The Vampire Lovers*, Baker, 1970; *Lust for a Vampire*, Sangster, 1971; *Twins of Evil*, Hough, 1971.

Whether on US television or in film, there are common thematic elements to the vampire text. The creature has evolved from the pale and pasty bald vision in *Nosferatu*, to the highly sexed mainstreaming vampires in *True Blood*. Generally, the vampire has been unable to go outside in daylight, but the *Twilight* series changed that, and again in *Daybreakers*, shade was enough to protect them. Generally, the vampire is dead, and she needs to feed on blood. The vampire has superhuman strength and speed, she hunts at night, and sleeps in coffins or underground. The vampire can sometimes shape shift, and has been realised as bats, wolves, and fog. Some can fly, and some versions have survived on synthetic blood. The affliction, dark gift, or virus, or however a text considers the condition, is passed from one vampire to another human. The human must die their human death and then rise again as vampire. The vampire represents a rejection of God, as the vampire can create new vampiric life without God. With all of this in mind, the Gothic tropes from Wheatley's *Gothic TV* and the monsters, I can now look at the content of *Hemlock Grove* in more detail.

5.8 Revisiting Classic monsters in Hemlock Grove

Hemlock Grove revisits the vampire and the werewolf. The werewolf, Peter, is Romani, and his werewolf condition is genetic. Unlike some other werewolf texts as mentioned, he is at no point looking for a cure for his affliction. Peter can call on the wolf whenever he likes, although Destiny advises him against doing this. He calls on the wolf to complete a fake drug deal, 2.01 'Blood Pressure;' to escape from torture, and to help rescue the baby from the cult at the culmination of season 2, 2.09 'Tintypes'⁸⁹. Peter's transformation is the most visually expressive element of *Hemlock Grove* revisiting classic monsters, which I will look at in more detail in the visual horror section. If we are to consider Netflix emulating HBO's drama and taking known generic elements and formulating them in a different way, the werewolf transformation is a key example.

Hemlock Grove seeks to elevate and reinvent the horror drama through revisiting classic

⁸⁹ Peter's genetic wolf condition is more similar to the French creature the Loup Garou: a shapeshifter (between human and wolf) who can make the change whenever they like i.e. they do not change against their will like the classic werewolf and the full moon. There is another nod to French folklore in 2.08 'Unicorn,' when Olivia is captured in order to sign the peace treaty: everyone in this scene speaks French, and old French religious iconography fills the set design.

monsters, and so attaching literary prestige and cultural significance, but with more gore. What this means is, that which is revisited is not the genetic werewolf itself, but the method of his transition. As I will explore later, it a spectacle not to be ashamed of. One lives inside the other. The wolf is fully formed inside Peter, and the wolf in him.

The vampire in *Hemlock Grove* is altogether a more obvious revisit. In the series the vampires are referred to as upir, and the word strigoi is used by Uncle Nikolai. The word upir comes from Russian / Slavic languages, and is most common as a vampire creature found in Ukranian and Belarusian folk lore. Both these terms, along with the reference to a baby born with a caul (who in Romanian legend has a chance of developing into a strigoi), mark the upir in this text, as very old and with Eastern European heritage. The use of these words – upir, strigoi – are themselves generally unheard of on US television⁹⁰. I argue that the use of these words in the script and the framing of the monsters as archaic, works to steep the show in classic literary and folkloric kudos: it works to give this horror series depth, heritage and legitimacy, which would be appealing for those with an “aesthetic disposition.” These words and archaic links attract those that have the ability to recognise such references, comparisons, and subversions of such classic monsters and old myths. In season 1, Christina desires to become a werewolf herself. The myth goes that one can become a werewolf if that person drinks from the paw print of a shifted wolf. Christina does so, and it is she who becomes the varghulf as a result; unable to control herself and the amount of times that she shifts to her wolf form, and so sit is she is the serial killer / varghulf of the first season. In Gothic terms, she pushes the boundaries between man and beast too far and loses control to savagery and nature.

Across the three seasons there is a disintegration of morality in several characters. Central characters Peter and Roman both struggle: they both want to be heroes, but both are overtaken by their inherent monstrosity. Roman struggles with his blood

⁹⁰ FX series *The Strain*, which is about parasitic vampires, also used the term strigoi, and played with the Van Helsing character – again using old Europe as a basis for the mythology within the show. *The Strain* though, launched in 2014, after *Hemlock Grove*. The strigoi is a Romanian legend, a bloodsucking creature which is thought to have inspired Stoker’s monster, Dracula.

hunger as an upir in 2.01 'Blood Pressure;' 2.02 'Gone Sis;' and again in 3.04 'Every Beast.' In all these instances, Roman's natural instinct as upir overshadow the morality he wants to maintain from humanity⁹¹. For Peter, he does more of what he should not, which is to fully or partially shift to wolf on the 'wrong moon.' This could see him become permanently a varghulf (an out of control, fully wild and murderous wolf, like Christina in season 1). Episodes 1.11 'Children of The Night;' 2.01 'Blood Pressure;' 2.03 'Bodily Fluids;' 2.07 'Lost Generation,' all see Peter call on the wolf. In 2.09 'Tintypes,' Peter inevitably enters a varghulf state, and Roman literally pulls Peter out of the wolf.



Figure 29: Roman breaks open the varghulf with his bare hands and pulls the fully formed Peter out of the wolf. 2.09 'Tintypes'

The complete disintegration of Peter from moral human to wild varghulf is a Gothic themed character progression. Peter is drawn into the dark to a beast with no morals, which culminates in one of the goriest scenes in the whole of *Hemlock Grove*. In this

⁹¹ In the second season Roman begins treatment to restore him back to a human, but the treatment remains incomplete and Roman has to embrace his condition as upir.

scene, Roman rips apart the vargulf with his hands and pulls a fully formed Peter out. The Gothic then, is used to legitimise such imagery. The heroes, both Peter and Roman, are trapped by their individual states (upir and werewolf), Gothic states of supernatural monsters. These Gothic supernatural states are used to depict and cushion heavily graphic visual horror sequences.

Many of the inhabitants of *Hemlock Grove* have a dark history, a dark past that disturbs the present. Olivia Godfrey's past is frequently referred to, shown in flashback sequences, which explains the monster she is in modern *Hemlock Grove*. As a teen running away to be with her love only to be betrayed and robbed; resurrected by her father as upir; giving away her baby (the baby is the product of the romance with the gypsy boy who Olivia ran away with); and over the centuries murdering in order to slake her upir thirst. The murders she commits in modern day Hemlock Grove, along with breaking a treaty she signed back in 1884 (2.08 'Unicorn'), which was supposed to draw a truce between upir and The Order than hunts them, all gather Olivia's past to disturb the now. As Wheatley noted, the Gothic text contains flashback sequences and memory montages, which *Hemlock Grove* delivers to further develop and explain Olivia's character. She is beautiful and dangerous. She embodies the “heavily sexualised threat which the female vampire poses” (Wheatley, p. 66). Her murders and her past affect others: Norman when he discovers Olivia's true state as upir, and that Olivia murdered his wife. Olivia cannot shake her dark side and her dark past, however much she tries. She murders her lover (Norman), a secret she tries to cover, and she eats her daughter Shelley's 'new' body. By this time however, she is no longer covering up her misdeeds and has completely embraced her own selfish monstrosity. Olivia is the quintessential Gothic bad parent. It is told to us via flashback that she had rejected several of her other children for them not being perfect enough. She cares for Shelley but only in season 1, in the most minimal way possible. By season 3, she is willing to murder Shelley for her own gain. Olivia views her son Roman in her own image, the only of her children she views as worth to continue her own bloodline. She kills Roman so he can rise as upir. Olivia is playing God, she is upir, the vampiric creature who creates new versions of herself.

Peter and his Romani heritage share a dark past: a past filled with persecution. The image of the Romani as werewolf already seen in the classic film *The Wolf Man*. The genetic werewolf condition among the *Hemlock Grove* version of the Romani people, is a key reason for both Peter and his mother Lynda to be fearful when Roman comes into their lives and asks to view Peter shift. They wish to keep such things secret for fear of being run out of town. In season 1 and the murders of the school girls by an apparent beast, Peter is suspected of being the killer. The civilised town is afraid of nature, of Peter's potential savagery, and he is questioned outright by Clementine Chasseur as to whether or not he is a werewolf and was he responsible for the murders (1.03 'The Order of the Dragon').

Peter and Lynda are covering up their own secrets, but also those of other family members: they are covering up the secrets of Uncle Nikolai, whose trailer they are moving into. In season 2, Miranda is running from her past – a confession she makes to Peter in 2.06 'Such Dire Stuff.' Her past of moving from place to place, making questionable life choices and donating blood to make ends meet. Her past deeds finally catch up with her as the blood donations lead to her being 'chosen' and intentionally made to land in *Hemlock Grove*. Once trapped, she is drawn into the dark side of the town and its inhabitants. Her trapping in the town as we find out, is at the villainous hand of Dr Spivak, the demon who draws her then keeps her there through her inevitable maternal instincts, as she starts to care for baby Nadia.

Stories with Gothic tropes invite themes of claustrophobia, and of being trapped. In Gothic tales young vulnerable women are trapped or imprisoned, and invariably drawn into whatever evil is causing the inability to free themselves. As said, Miranda is stuck in the town. As she stays and becomes entwined in events, she becomes less able to leave. In the end, in 2.10 'Demons and the Dogstar.' the only options she sees of freedom, is suicide. In season 1, Shelley is trapped in her own body. Shelley is one of Wheatley's stereotypical Gothic characters. Resembling Frankenstein in stature, and named Shelley, for Gothic writer Mary Shelley. Shelley Godfrey has a sound and

intelligent mind, seen in her eloquent emails to her uncle Norman. In 2.07 'Lost Generation;' 2.08 'Unicorn;' 2.09 'Tintypes;' and 2.10 'Demons and the Dogstar,' Shelley has the opportunity to break out from the prison of her body⁹². But the opportunity fails at the hands of her selfish mother, Olivia. Peter and his mother attempt to leave the town of Hemlock Grove, but Peter is forced back as in 2.01 'Blood Pressure,' his mother is arrested and he is forced back to the town to seek help. Again we see the Gothic trope of a character being trapped in the “menacing situation” that the town of Hemlock Grove breeds.

Vampires and werewolves aside, further Gothic themes inside *Hemlock Grove* reside in The White Tower; the looming centerpiece of the small town of Hemlock Grove, housing The Godfrey Institute, with resident mad scientist present and correct. Dr Johan Pryce oscillates between calm man of science, medicine and reason, to an unhinged Dr Frankenstein character, as he meddles with life and ethics in the basement of the Tower. Project Ouroborus embodies the science versus nature exploration, a clear example of *Hemlock Grove* drawing on the ideas from classic movies, giving the show cultural legitimacy and they (the classic movies) are seen as culturally significant⁹³. Pryce creates new life in his lab, a girl born out of utero, Prycilla. Dr Pryce embodies the Gothic exploration of the rejection of God and nature, and instead embracing science. In conjunction with his role as the mad scientist, he also suffers a complete disintegration of his morals (if indeed he ever had any), and a descent into madness in season 3. Developing an addiction to amphetamine pills, Pryce works relentlessly on Olivia's illness and what Dr Spivak might be. In 3.03 'House In The Woods,' Pryce swings from administering sound medical advice regarding Roman's concussion, to gleefully conducting an autopsy on the zombie / upir, before being discovered by his assistant Lynskey, drumming on a kit fashioned from plastic buckets and surgical equipment. Pryce becomes increasingly unhinged, and in 3.04 'Every Beast,' Lynskey sees fit to

⁹² The mysterious project Oroborus that Dr Pryce has been working on, is in fact a fully formed human born outside of utero, and Pryce plans to implant Shelley's mind into this body. A body that is perfect, pretty, and 'normal' in appearance. Shelley desires to be free of her own body, and agrees to undergo the procedure. The caveat that her own imperfect body, will be dead. She will live on, or rather, her consciousness will live on, in the new model.

⁹³ *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931); *Bride of Frankenstein* (Whale, 1935); *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Flemming, 1941).

trigger the biological security breach, trapping Pryce in a safe pod within the laboratory. Over the rest of series up until his eventual death, Pryce has transferred his conscious onto a Greek delivery man, effectively creating a double of his mind. In 3.07 'Todos Santos,' Pryce convinces Olivia to go through the same 'transfer' process so she can keep living – her upir cancer is killing her. Later, the PA massacres most of the Godfrey Institute's board of directors in a meeting before turning the gun on himself. Pryce decapitates the now dead gunman and uses his head for further experimentation – tricking the head's central nervous system back into life with electricity. A violent scene in the boardroom is followed by a scene reminiscent of Dr Frankenstein (Pryce) as he awakens his monster (the PA's severed head): The Gothic pulls the violence away from gratuitousness.

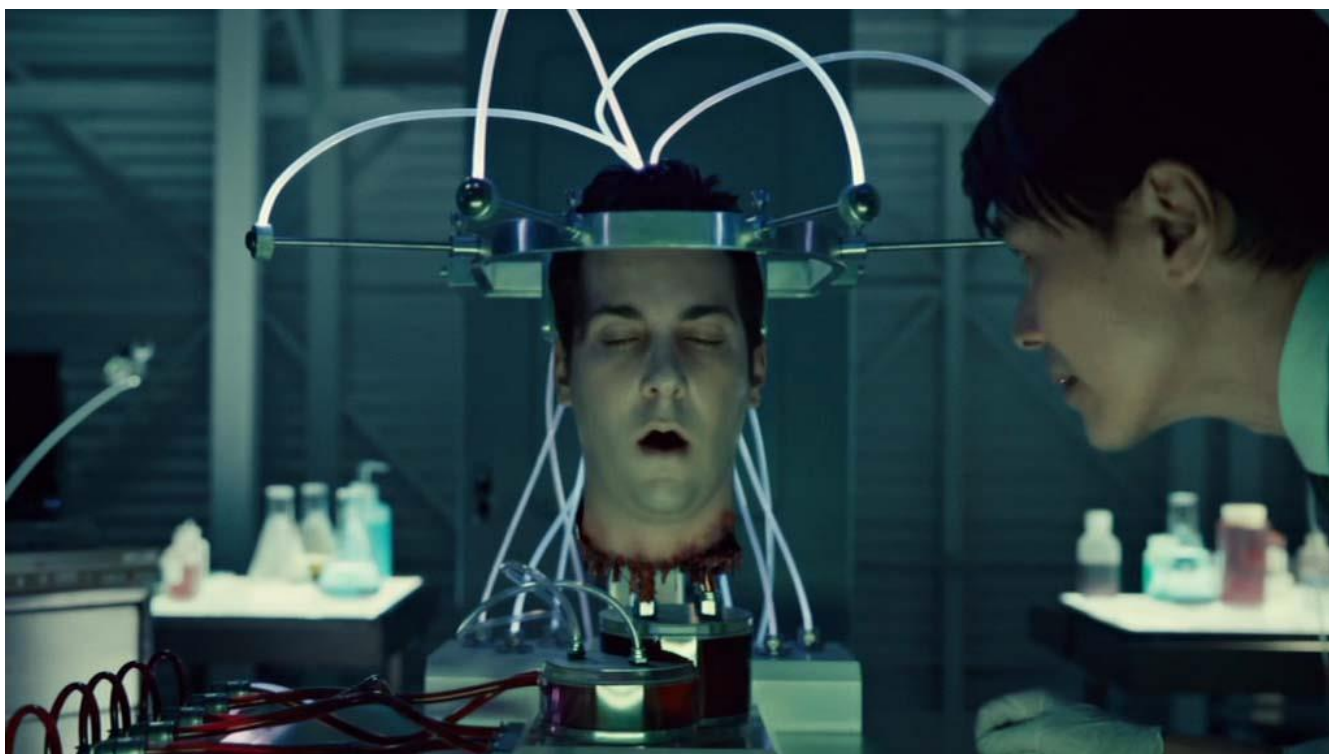


Figure 30: Dr Pryce momentarily brings the head back to life. 3.07 'Todos Santos'

Across the whole of *Hemlock Grove* there are other Gothic themes. For the purposes of staying within the limits of this work, I will only briefly highlight them here. In season 1 Christina has a fascination with the morbid – she seeks out the macabre and goes to

many lengths to fully immerse herself in a dark world. In season 3 Olivia unravels and goes mad at the hands of her cancer. Olivia's unravelling at the hands of her illness, combined with the crumbling power of the Godfrey family, draws on Poe's 1839 short story *The Fall of the House of Usher*⁹⁴. Olivia and Roman are the only remaining members of the Godfrey family, much as Roderick and Madeline are the only remaining Usher's. Olivia's upir cancer condition reflects Rodericks – hypersensitivity to light, sound, and taste. In Olivia's case, she can no longer tolerate human blood, her life source. In trying to stay alive and maintain the Godfrey line, Olivia's madness on account of her condition, forces her to do terrible things to her daughter (like Roderick and his burying of his sister), in order to keep herself and her 'house,' the Godfrey line, continuing into the future. And like *The Fall of the House of Usher*, this fails, and Olivia and her company, figuratively crumble to the ground. In addition, Olivia's bad parenting and her selfishness cause Roman Godfrey to reject her, to self-inflict a state of orphan hood on himself. His father is long dead – he killed himself as a result of Olivia's behavior. Peter, similarly, is self-orphaned, as again his father is absent and he helps his mother skip the country and escape a prison sentence, effectively leaving him alone. Both these instances of orphan hood reflect Gelder's ideas about the Gothic hero being an orphan. Both Peter and Roman aspire to be heroes, fail though they might.

Across the series various spells and rituals occur, usually at the hands of Destiny, who is a witch⁹⁵. In the Gothic tradition, Destiny sees several premonitions that tell her of the dark times ahead, and her cousin Peter also sees these times in his symbolic dreams. The Godfreys are a wealthy family, and while not aristocracy, they inhabit the mansion which looms over the rest of the town, a mansion comprised of Gothic architecture, as described by Wheatley, “ornate archways and staircases, dripping candelabras” (Wheatley, p.67). In accordance with many other Gothic texts, away from the mansion much of the action takes place in crumbling and ruined buildings: from the trailer where

⁹⁴ Also in screen adaptation, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1960, Corman.

⁹⁵ In 1.02 'Hello Handsome' Destiny summons the soul of murdered Willoughby; throughout season 1 she offers advice on the varghulf and how to kill it; In season 2 she uses her powers to interpret Peter's dreams, she makes a hallucinatory potion to help break Lynda out of jail; and she sees visions of what is to come through the rest of seasons 2 and 3.

Peter and Lynda live, the abandoned Godfrey mill, and the old ruined church. As Wheatley describes, these are all “visually dark [...] drab [...] closed in.” Another key element of the Gothic seen in *Hemlock Grove* is the clashing of time periods. The opposition between the very old (archaic) and the modern, forms the basis of many Gothic tales. In *Hemlock Grove*, the transition of the town from a hub of traditional steel industry, to the takeover by the Godfrey Institute and its modern industry of biotechnology and the subsequent unemployment, is the source of the general unease in the town.

This section has demonstrated that as a result of the ambition of Netflix to create cultural prestige around its dramas to mirror HBO, *Hemlock Grove* makes use of the Gothic and classic monsters to do this. *Hemlock Grove* draws on ideas and icons from classic movies, incorporating Gothic themes, characters and storytelling into what is also a graphically violent and visually horrific TV horror text. This use of the Gothic cushions the visual horror and serves to legitimate gory scenes. This section has also demonstrated a crucial element to my overall argument for this thesis: that TV horror has become much more graphic in its displaying of generic visual elements. Where Gothic TV was once as Wheatley described a genre that implied and suggested the horrific, in light of the shifts in the industry and post *The Walking Dead*, Gothic dramas contain more visual horror and gore. Even though the use of the Gothic serves to attempt cultural legitimacy, it should be noted again that *Hemlock Grove* as a horror was conceptualised by Netflix in three very different ways, clearly seen in the trailers. The complexity of *Hemlock Grove* and its content and the many audiences that it was targeted to, reflects Netflix at the time. There was confusion as seen by the critics responses to the show which I discussed towards the end of the section regarding the trailers. *Hemlock Grove* was lots of things to lots of audiences. What Netflix was and what Netflix was becoming, meant that *Hemlock Grove* was generically and thematically, very complex. For the critics, this was problematic⁹⁶. This section has touched upon the

⁹⁶ If we are to compare the complexity of the content of *Hemlock Grove* and its audience targeting to *The Walking Dead*, we see a huge difference. *The Walking Dead*, while not entirely upfront about its ensemble cast and absolute position as a TV drama and not a film; it was what it was. A zombie serialization. *Hemlock Grove* was trying to be lots of things and trying to attract lots of audiences.

visual horror in the series through the lens of the Gothic and legitimacy, the next section will look in more detail at the visual horror with focus on the industrial conditions at Netflix and across US television, and audience expectation and previous knowledge of works by Eli Roth.

5.9 Visual Horror

The previous section looked at the use of the Gothic and classic monsters in *Hemlock Grove*, and how this worked to both elevate the text to middlebrow and drive and cushion some of the visual horror. This section will move away from the Gothic and look specifically at the visual horror on display in *Hemlock Grove*. From AMC and *The Walking Dead* there were promises made that there would be “no cuts” in the visual horror – a promise that had to be made because *The Walking Dead* was on basic cable. A tier of US television that while freer than network, still has some degree of regulation with regards to advertiser’s needs. With *Hemlock Grove* and Netflix, there was no push to align with film, nor a multitude of promises regarding visual horror. Instead there was some confusion about what *Hemlock Grove* was in these early stages of Netflix making original drama. Because of Netflix and the blurred position it holds (programmer and / or distributor), there was less of a pressure to alleviate any tension between horror and US television. But the pressure that should be taken into account, Netflix put on themselves, with the “becoming HBO” boasts that Netflix made around the time of the *Hemlock Grove* launch. HBO, as explored in chapter 3, is known not only for its 'quality' content, but also for its considerable profanity, violence and adult scenes in its drama. If Netflix, as they said they aimed to do, were going to compete with HBO in the drama arena, then the content of Netflix originals must be able to do so. For horror, Netflix must be able to produce the visual elements of the genre.⁹⁷ Like HBO, Netflix have no advertisers to please, and looser regulations than those found on network or basic cable. A Gothic werewolf and vampire drama on Netflix then, should be packed with visual horror. To clarify again, what I mean by visual horror is that which is seen in the frame

⁹⁷ Of course, horror does not have to be gory to be scary. But in US television, as discussed, there was a more general trend of horror and other dramas becoming more and more about the visual spectacle.

that is horror. Not the theme, or the concept, but what is exhibited through the construction of the image that is horror. This section will break the visual horror in *Hemlock Grove* down into three distinct areas. The first will be a close look at the werewolf transformation, with a specific focus on season 1. I am keeping this element restricted to season 1 as it is in this season that the transformation happens both in full and with the most focus. By which I mean, the transformation is shown for the single point of showing the transformation, for the single point of spectacle⁹⁸. In subsequent seasons, the transformation is only partial, or hidden, or happens so fast it is difficult to see nuances within it. The second area of discussion will cover the money shots. I will look across the three seasons with regards to this, as it occurs with regularity across the show. I will frame this discussion of money shots and visual horror with regards to the audience's expectations, TV horror spectacle in an industry post *The Walking Dead*, and Netflix's ambitions as drama programmer. The generic knowledge of horror and Eli Roth fans will also be taken into account.

5.9.1 The Werewolf transformation.

The transformation scene is a key element of any werewolf story. The source of horror lies in the shift from human to beast, and so the visual realisation of this moment is crucial to the werewolf text. The audience expects a transformation scene “that has been a fixture of werewolf themed movies and TV series going back decades” (Marechal, *Variety*, 2013). 1980s cinema saw the biggest leaps forward in terms of technical skill in the area of visual effects, in visual horror. One of the most famous transformation scenes, and what has been claimed as the the benchmark of werewolf transformations on screen, is in Landis' 1981 *American Werewolf in London*. The scene is described as “the movies' knockout centre piece ... that would end up revolutionising the horror field” (Rothkopf, *Rolling Stone*, 2016); and “the staple for [the] beloved genre”

⁹⁸ In this scene, Peter transforms because it is the full moon, and Roman has requested to watch. The scene is merely spectacle and offers no real addition to the storytelling. Other instances in which Peter transforms, it is to further the story, or to change direction. Later, he transforms to fight another werewolf; in season 2 he transforms to fool drug dealers; in season 3 he partially transforms to escape from being tied down and tortured.

(Miska, *Bloody Disgusting*, 2017). Showrunner Eli Roth pointed directly to the scene when he introduced *Hemlock Grove* at the Mip TV Conference in 2013.

For me when I first saw *American Werewolf in London*, there was nothing that freaked me out more than that [...] That howling visceral transformation [...] For this, for *Hemlock Grove*, we wanted something that would be beautiful and horrific, but which would fuck up an entire generation (Roth, 2013).

The technical skill that brings the “grosser than ever” (Marechal, *Variety*, 2013) transformation scene combines both practical and post production CGI effects. This combination of practical and digital while being the industry standard across both film and US television, the developments in it serve the economic needs of US television and the tight shooting windows. I demonstrated this in the previous case study, with a look at Michonne's zombie kill scene, in season 4 of *The Walking Dead*. While the *American Werewolf in London* transformation scene is the benchmark, the creature that remains once the change is complete is a half man half wolf incarnation. In *Hemlock Grove*, when Peter changes, he becomes a full wolf. There is no trace of human left in his appearance⁹⁹. While the full wolf appears in previous werewolf texts, by and large, the creature that usually emerges is the man / wolf combination. More recent movies (*Twilight: New Moon*, Weitz, 2009) have realised the werewolf as a full wolf, but traditionally as it were, the creature is half man half wolf. *The Howling*, Dante, 1981; *Teen Wolf*, Daniel, 1985; *Ginger Snaps*, Fawcett, 2000; *Van Helsing*, Sommers, 2004; *Underworld*, Wiseman, 2008; *The Wolf Man*, Johnson, 2010; *Late Phases*, Bogliano, 2014, all feature a human / wolf combination, rather than full wolf. A detailed breakdown of all werewolf transformations is beyond the perimeters of this study, but I will provide a general breakdown of how I view the framing of the transformations within the werewolf text more generally, so as to demonstrate what impact the conditions at Netflix have had on the transformation scene.

There are broadly two types of transformation found in previous werewolf texts, whether into full wolf or wolf / human combination. With these types, I am referring to how the

⁹⁹ In the production of *Hemlock Grove*, real wolves were used for some shots. These wolves are of course trained, and they are still on leads and harnesses, which are taken out in post-production.

transformation is framed within the text: how the horror of this event is presented. The first type is a private spectacle. While this seems to be oxymoronic, in the texts where this occurs, the spectacle of the transformation, for the most part, occurs in private. The person afflicted with the curse witnesses their change alone, frequently in bathrooms and bedrooms. This private spectacle is heavily connected with puberty – seen in films such as *Teen Wolf* and *Ginger Snaps*. The changing teen views themselves in mirrors, or gaze at changing body parts, and contemplate alone the horror of their changing body from human to werewolf. The second type is a spectacle of fright. In *Late Phases*; *Company of Wolves*; *Wolf Man*; *The Howling*; the transformation is in the first instance, viewed by an onlooker, and in the second instance, that onlooker is in a state of fright. The onlooker is caught and rooted to the spot by the spectacle that they are seeing (as we are, as viewers of the text). They cannot look away, and do not make any attempt to run away until the transformation is complete. That way, the transformation of the werewolf is viewed through the eyes of the onlooker. Through the paralysis of fright, the whole spectacle of the transformation is presented in the text¹⁰⁰.

Hemlock Grove presents its full transformation scene differently. The transformation appears in 1.02 'The Angel,' as the final scene in the episode. Unlike the previous two types (the private spectacle and the spectacle of fright), the transformation takes place neither in private, nor is it a fright for the onlookers. The transformation in *Hemlock Grove* is a spectacle of display: the display of the key element of the werewolf genre, and the display of the visual horror contained, and expected from the series. The display is spectacle because it is framed through the viewing of the event by Roman Godfrey, and is displayed by Peter who transforms, allowing Roman to watch. It is also a spectacular display for Peter's mother, Lynda, who watches on with pride.

¹⁰⁰ There is another method of framing the transformation within a text, but this usually occurs when the werewolf is not the main monster. In films such as *Underworld* and *Van Helsing*, the werewolves are simply part of the universe. They are there, the transformations happen quickly and for the most part, are 'accepted' as part of the universe of the film.



Figure 31: Peter prepares for his transformation. 1.02 'The Angel'



Figure 32: Convulsing, Peter falls to the ground as blood pours from his eyes. 1.02 'The Angel'



Figure 33: In a nod to previous werewolf movies, Peter regards his hand as it turns to claws. 1.02 'The Angel'



Figure 34: Peter's skin tears open to reveal black fur underneath. 1.02 'The Angel'



Figure 35: Peter tears at his own face. 1.02 'The Angel'



Figure 36: The wolf snout emerges from Peter's face. 1.02 'The Angel'



Figure 37: The fully formed wolf eats the remains of the human skin that lays, steaming on the ground. 1.02 'The Angel'



Figure 38: Peter's mother Lynda watches on with pride, while Roman is transfixed by the spectacle. 1.02 'The Angel'

The wolf is fully formed inside Peter. In his display to Roman and his mother, he stands and prepares. He convulses, and screams in pain as his skin tears, bones crack and human teeth give way to canine teeth. The wolf breaks out of Peter and eats Peter's human skin that remains on the ground. This sequence is a combination of both CGI and practical effects. Peter is filmed acting out the shift and then puppetry, prosthetics and practical effects alongside some CGI, placed over the top in post-production. A full head cast of the actor was made that the wolf puppet snout breaks through. Other werewolf transformations – *True Blood*; *Twilight* – are fully CGI, and so for the 'real' horror fans, are inauthentic¹⁰¹. In combining practical and CGI for the essential transformation scene of a werewolf text, *Hemlock Grove* is maintaining generic heritage. While embracing new technology and expectations of contemporary horror drama (it must look seamless in today's landscape of visually driven US television storytelling), *Hemlock Grove* also continues the craft of classic horror puppetry and prosthetics. The sheer amount of work that goes into creating this sequence creates authenticity. During the transformation, Peter holds up his own hand in front of his face. This is an iconic image from many a werewolf transformation. Practically, it is relatively easy to have a puppet hand rise from the bottom of the frame, as the link between puppet and actor, or lack of it, cannot be seen, maintaining a suspension of disbelief. It is also a generic expectation, a convention in which the shifting creature will watch their hand as it splits and shows its claws. The recognition of this small nuance of a transformation, will be recognised by those with the generic knowledge of the werewolf text. This serves as a marker of "aesthetic disposition", alongside the authenticity of using puppets and practical effects alongside CGI.

For Peter, his lycanthropy is genetic: part of his Gypsy heritage. Unlike other texts, he is not trying to find a cure for his condition, and neither was it passed on to him from an attack by another werewolf. Roman Godfrey suspects Peter is a werewolf, and outright asks him if he can watch the transformation at the next available full moon (conveniently, later that very evening). Peter agrees, and so the transformation is therefore a spectacle of display. The spectacle of the transformation is presented through more than one lens.

¹⁰¹ I will explore notions of authenticity in the next case study, *Scream Queens*.

It is a spectacle of display within the text – Peter shows Roman what he can do. This spectacle of display is further magnified through the lens of how Netflix used this key scene to promote, or rather, display, the high levels of visual horror, the boundaries they were pushing with *Hemlock Grove*. It should be noted again, that this scene was shown by Eli Roth, at the MipTV Conference, and it was released on the Netflix YouTube channel prior to the series launch. As said, *Hemlock Grove* redresses and revisits classic monsters. It is the manner of the transformation from man to wolf, and the framing of this event as spectacular display, and the combination of practical and CGI and the labor involved creating authenticity: creating legitimacy through generic heritage. Instead of the transformation happening in private or as a source of terror for the onlooker, the transformation is presented, is revisited and redressed as something to be proud of. Something to be proud of for the characters within the text, and by Netflix as they use this scene for promotion, and display their generic knowledge, and *Hemlock Grove* as an authentic and legitimate horror product.

While this transformation scene is all that it promised: gory, visceral, gross etc. and drove the promotion of the show (season 1) as a werewolf drama (alongside the other sub-genres as seen in the three differing trailers), it takes a long time to happen. Some critics found this to be troubling, and that *Hemlock Grove* took far too long to get to this key werewolf transformation scene. “That this crucial scene takes place nearly 100 minutes into the series is symptomatic” (Hale, *New York Times*, 2013). It is symptomatic of the conditions of Netflix. Even though the werewolf transformation is key to two of the three trailers and so two of the audiences - the teen / high school supernatural targets, and the horror / Eli Roth targets, if *Hemlock Grove* was to go right in and open with a gory transformation scene, there is potential to alienate those audiences who came for the female led thriller after watching 'Blood Ties'. Put simply, the elliptical plotting is structured to ensure that all the sub-genres have their boxes ticked, all the audiences are pleased, before revealing the money shot that is directly linked to the werewolf thematic elements within the text. Roth himself said to the MiPTV conference, “knowing that it would be a full season drop meant that [he] didn't have to be bothered with a scare of the week or monster of the week, in each episode” (Roth, 2013).

The werewolf and the transformation is not the culmination of the story of the *Hemlock Grove*. In the film examples I gave above, there is a build towards the afflicted becoming the wolf. The story builds anticipation for the transformation scene. In *Ginger Snaps*, for example, Ginger changes over a period of days and weeks, culminating in her full transition at the next full moon and menstrual cycle. In *Hemlock Grove*, Peter is a werewolf – but he just is. That he is a werewolf contributes to the whole world of *Hemlock Grove*, his transition is not the single point of *Hemlock Grove*. The serialisation of a werewolf text means then that the transformation is not the culmination. Instead the new ways of telling stories as discussed in chapter 3, and the feeding of the behavior of cluster viewing and the regarding of Netflix dramas as stories with chapters rather than episodes (Debruge, *Variety*, 2016), then the implications of the werewolf and a Gothic universe in which the werewolf exists can be explored. This has of course been done before – *True Blood: Being Human*. What is poignant here is the method of transformation, the visual horror, what Roth and Netflix bring to the table in terms of the canon of werewolf texts and their transformation scenes¹⁰².

To sum up, if Netflix were going to challenge HBO, then the content must also offer what a service with less regulation can potentially offer – given the context of the cycle of horror on US television at the time, post *The Walking Dead*, the increased visual spectacle of horror across US television. In previous werewolf texts, the transformations are scenes of private spectacle, or spectacle of fright. In *Hemlock Grove*, the transformation is a spectacle of display both within the text and without. In the text Peter displays to Roman, and Netflix displays to the rest of the industry. The werewolf transformation is key to *Hemlock Grove* and the teen / supernatural and the horror audiences. Its placement 100 minutes in means that the other sub-generic elements that are promised in the trailers are also presented. The werewolf transformation is not a culmination; the plot is not driving to that point. It is however, a key visual horror and generic feature, and of generic heritage. Next I will explore the other elements of visual

¹⁰² In *True Blood* the transformation is very swift. A literal two seconds of a digital shift from human form to wolf. It happens in the blink of an eye.

horror with regards to expectations of Eli Roth and the horror genre more specifically with regards to a TV Horror cycle occurring after *The Walking Dead*.

5.9.2 The Money Shot

I have already discussed how for the horror fans, Roth's name would be a marker of significance. Roth himself stated that he would “not compromise on” the visual horror in *Hemlock Grove*. Roth cemented *Hemlock Grove* within the cycle of horror that was enjoying considerable success on US television in 2013, and he pointed to the high figures that *The Walking Dead* was generating, all whilst being a gory violent TV show. While Roth is alluding to the commercial success of *The Walking Dead*, he is also very clear on the increase in visual horror across US television more generally. In chapter 3, I described the conditions that led to an overall increase of visual storytelling across US television, which in turn led to the rise of visual horror. The developing technologies that allowed such imagery to be created with less of an economic burden on programme budgets. With horror flourishing on US television and Roth as showrunner, *Hemlock Grove* made the most of the lack of regulations at Netflix and could be “grosser than ever before” (Marechal, *Variety*, 2013).

Throughout this section I am going to refer to the money shot¹⁰³. By money shot I mean the reveal; the shot of the special effects; the shot that holds generic value. The money shot is the crucial moment of visual horror. While I refer to it as money shot, this does not necessarily relate to how expensive the shot is. It refers to the value of the shot, scene or visual horror sequence, to the generic expectations of both horror and a work from Eli Roth. I have already engaged with the werewolf transformation in detail above, so I will move on to other elements of visual horror in *Hemlock Grove*. Above I considered how for some critics, the werewolf scene took too long to happen. Other critics saw issues with the structure of *Hemlock Grove* and the spacing of the money shots. For Handlem, it was too “stretched out” (*AV Club*, 2013). He goes on to suggest that, “there’s some nudity, but it’s not enough, and the gore goes away for such long

¹⁰³ The phrase money shot originated in the pornography industry.

periods of time that when it does come back, it's almost like a bad joke." He says this is a problem because of the "demands of TV." These demands come from the rise of seriality as I explored in chapter 3. For horror, this means that if a story has to be "stretched out" into ten or twelve hours or more of content, then the big reveal, the money shot, the climactic death, cannot be given away in the first hour. These demands of US television (the rise of seriality) have fundamentally changed TV horror, as can be seen if we go back to Roth's words when he stated that there was no need to have a monster of the week. The issue of how often visual horror appears, how often there is a horror money shot, becomes a point that can only come down to personal preference in particular when discussing a text from Netflix. Roth himself said that "the show was made as though it were a thirteen-hour movie" (Tartaglione, *Deadline*, 2013). *Hemlock Grove* was a full season drop therefore it can be viewed at whatever pace a subscriber chooses. Whether or not there is a regular frequency of visual horror, depends on how the text is consumed¹⁰⁴. Because it is a full season drop, a regular frequency of visual horror is not required, or rather, the conditions of Netflix do not demand this of a horror series. A serialisation of horror for tradition US television – let's look back again to *The Walking Dead*, where there is a monster of the week. The monster or zombie of the week, even if it is just at the hands of Nicotero and team working to keep the zombies 'fresh,' as in later seasons the zombies have little plot drive and are essentially a genre fulfilling aesthetic necessity. *The Walking Dead* is made, written and structured for a week by week form (despite AMC making use of the plus three and plus seven catch up ratings), it is still a weekly show, and this structure demands a monster, or zombie of the week. Netflix does not demand this of *Hemlock Grove*.

5.9.3 Eli Roth and Visual Horror.

Earlier I discussed the notion of Roth himself being a marker of quality to the horror fan, and Roth's work (*Hostel*; *Hostel II*, in particular), spawning a horror movement labelled

¹⁰⁴ Should a person watch one episode of *Hemlock Grove* a week, then they may well find the visual horror, or death of monster or kill of the week lacking. But because of Roth's words regarding the show as a "thirteen hour movie," and the conditions which mean that it is a full season drop, I think that it is only fair to consider and then therefore analyse the show as one piece.

as torture porn. What should be noted is that the term torture porn was used in the main by those critics who were negative about Roth's work. "His detractors call it torture porn. By the premiere of the sequel [*Hostel II*] on June 8, Eli Roth had become his own brand name" (Egan, *Forbes*, 2007). This "brand name" promised certain generic elements to the audiences of his films, and so therefore the audiences of *Hemlock Grove*. *Hostel* was praised as "an achievement of gore" (Thuman, *Bloody Disgusting*, 2015), and some scenes in the movie certainly were that on both a technical skill level, and an acceptability (in mainstream cinema) level¹⁰⁵. In *Hemlock Grove*, we have already seen that the transformation scene was the central piece of the promotion of season 1. With the promotional material being so gory, the content of the rest of the seasons would surely live up to the Roth brand. I will organise the gory visual horror that is Roth's brand and what is expected by the TV horror audience in 2013, into three further subcategories; torture, body gore, and cannibalism¹⁰⁶.

5.9.4 Torture

Roth himself stated that the torture in his work is a debate about how pain is inflicted on those that do and do not deserve it (Roth, 2013). While I am not attempting to find any meaning behind the visual horror in *Hemlock Grove*, this is a good place from which to approach the recognition of visual horror sequences in *Hemlock Grove* that are a marker of Roth and his (rightly or wrongly labelled) torture porn brand. In episode 1.12 'Children of the Night' after being trapped in and then escaping from a cage, Detective Clementine Chasseur is attacked by Olivia Godfrey and is flayed from the waist up. We can clearly see her lungs and heart¹⁰⁷. From the first shot of Clementine's feet on the floor at 14

¹⁰⁵ *Hostel* and *Hostel II* contain scenes of a girl's eye being burnt out with a blow torch; dismemberment; carts full of body parts; close up of Achilles tendons being slashed; multiple throat slitting; a scalping; decapitation; death by scythe; death by hunting dogs; death by castration; and a head being kicked around by children like a football. While this is all fairly standard horror content, for some critics it was too much.

¹⁰⁶ By 2013, Roth was known for *Cabin Fever* – a film about a flesh-eating virus that causes general gory scenes of characters bodies falling apart or of them attacking each other: and known for the torture in *Hostel* and *Hostel II*: and cannibalism in *The Green Inferno* (2013). Because Roth was "brand name horror," these elements make up his brand of visual horror. So therefore, these are the areas I have split up the visual horror with regards to Roth and gore, in this section. I have also chosen to label it 'body gore' and not body horror, as that is something else entirely, as discussed in the literature review 3 and my discussion of medical drama, and Jacobs work.

¹⁰⁷ The prosthetic is laid over the actor, with the lung and heart parts gently inflated and deflated via a hidden tube, to give the appearance of the natural movement of the organs.

minutes into the episode, Pryce and Olivia talk for a further 4 mins and 50 seconds. All this time Clementine is on the floor, out of shot. In pointing out to Olivia that the murder of Clementine was “sloppy” as she “will be missed,” Olivia concedes that she could have left Clementine alone, she simply chose not to. After Olivia and Pryce are done talking she orders him to clean up the mess.



Figure 39: Clementine lies flayed on the cold floor of the abandoned Godfrey Mill. 1.12 'Children of the Night'

The camera pans to reveal the money shot. All through this conversation we do not know what Olivia has done to Clementine, or that she is still alive. And then we finally see the still alive, flayed Clementine. Olivia's pleasure in Clementine still being alive is recognised in hindsight: she sits and smokes while viewing the (out of shot) body. She takes pleasure in Clementine's slow and torturous death. A painful death that Clementine did not deserve.

Season 2 sees Roman Godfrey horrified that his body needs blood to live. He embarks on a mission to 'cure' himself and asks Dr Pryce for help. In 2.06 'Such Dire Stuff,' Roman begins treatment to reverse his upir status. Part of the treatment involves Roman being strapped to a table and tortured. The pain of this torture Roman inflicts upon himself. Roman is rendered immobile and needles are inserted into his held open eyes.



Figure 40: As part of his cure, needles are inserted into Romans eyes. 2.06 'Such Dire Stuff'

These needles then suck out all the vitreous jelly from his eyeballs. During this sequence there is no cut away – the needles go in, the eyeballs collapse. This is possible because of the developments in CGI technology, that such a close up / no cut money shot can be made. In terms of visual horror that has generic value, and with consideration that the showrunner is Roth, that this scene has no cut, and is the money shot, is symptomatic of both creative team and the conditions offered by Netflix. Fans who have come to watch *Hemlock Grove* who were targeted because of their previous views or rents of Roth's films, would be expecting such scenes, which would be "serving

rabid fans with heavy gore expectations” (Marachal, *Variety*, 2013). This scene then, is a crucial generic money shot in every sense.

Seasons 2 and 3 see two more standard torture scenes; standard as the torture in each is being used to extrapolate information. 2.09 'Tintypes,' opens with Peter tied to a chair, flashes of his bonds, torture tools and also the wolf. The scene is lit from above, dark and green in colour, Peter is held in a room by the cult who wish to find and kill baby Nadia¹⁰⁸. Two men are present, one asks questions, one sharpens a blade. Peter has a spiked collar around his neck, and wounds to his chest. The torturer tells Peter he has a phial of quicksilver, the only thing to kill a demon like himself (Peter). A single drop is poured on to Peter – which we see in close up, and this is our money shot, as the drop fizzles and smokes in the wound. Peter is being tortured for information but the torture here in 2.09 is steeped in the supernatural. Instead of inflicting pain on Peter with the aforementioned sharpened blade, Peter is instead tortured with the quicksilver.



Figure 41: Peter awaits his painful torture at the hands of the cult members. 2.09 'Tintypes'

¹⁰⁸ Baby Nadia is Roman and Letha's daughter – later in 2.09 Nadia begins to display her powers. She kills a cult member with her mind.

To escape, Peter calls on the wolf, his fingers crack and break so and he can break his bonds and fight off his torturer. Peter removes his collar and throws it at the cult member, whereupon the blades bury themselves in the skull. The camera lingers on the dead man with the collar embedded in his head; the culmination of the torture, Peter's escape and the generic money shot of this sequence: the person who deserves the pain eventually receives it¹⁰⁹. Episode 3.08 'Dire Night of the Worm Moon,' sees Destiny dead and Peter trying to find out where she is¹¹⁰. Tying the gangster to a chair in his own home, Peter and Roman ask for information. Again here, the physical act of inflicting pain is achieved through the supernatural. Roman drops his jaw and bites the gangster and feeds on him. Peter lets his eyes glow green as they do when he calls on the wolf. Later in the torture sequence when they feel that the gangster is not cooperating, Roman bites him again, chews on him, and all in close up.

¹⁰⁹ This mirrors the members of the Elite Hunting clubs in the *Hostel* movies: they eventually get what is coming to them.

¹¹⁰ Destiny's new husband is dead at the hands of Peter, after Peter learned of Andreas' nefarious ways and threats to the family. Andreas was involved in all sorts of gangland activity, and it was the gangsters that Destiny blamed for his death (she has no knowledge that it was Peter). So Destiny seeks to kill the gangster. In her anger over Andreas, Destiny rows with Roman, who kills her. In trying to cover his tracks, Roman suggests that he and Peter should get some information from the gangster as to Destiny's whereabouts.



Figure 42: Roman drops his jaw to bite the captive gangster. 3.08 'Dire Night of the Worm Moon'

The digital creation of Roman's jaw and the close ups of the wound he inflicts provide the generic money shots, both for the Roth torture brand, and for the supernatural elements of *Hemlock Grove*. For Roth's brand, the torture in this scene is not justified – the man in the chair with chewed shoulders and later a broken femur, does not deserve this pain. He has done nothing to Destiny. Instead of the 'classic' methods – cutting and burning – both these examples of torture for information use the supernatural elements of the characters to either inflict pain on them (Peter and the quicksilver) or others (Roman as upir feeds on the gangster).

5.9.5 Body Gore.

Away from the representations of visual horror via torture, Roth is known for body gore. *Cabin Fever* in particular, brings to mind several bodies in a state of gore. By 2013, the TV industry had seen many bodies in a state of gore on *The Walking Dead*, and so *Hemlock Grove* with Roth at the helm would respond. Episode 1.01 'Jellyfish in the Sky'

sees the murder sequence of Brooke Bluebell beginning at 4 minutes in. She is ejected from her car, point of view shots show us her hands on the ground as she struggles to get up and running, her shiny blue nails glisten. She runs through the woods, more point of view shots of her hands, her nails, the ground, and her running feet. Brooke hides in the playhouse and then is dragged out by whatever is chasing her. In effort to save herself she grabs the sides of the playhouse door frame with such force that her shiny blue nails are torn off, in full, bleeding close up.

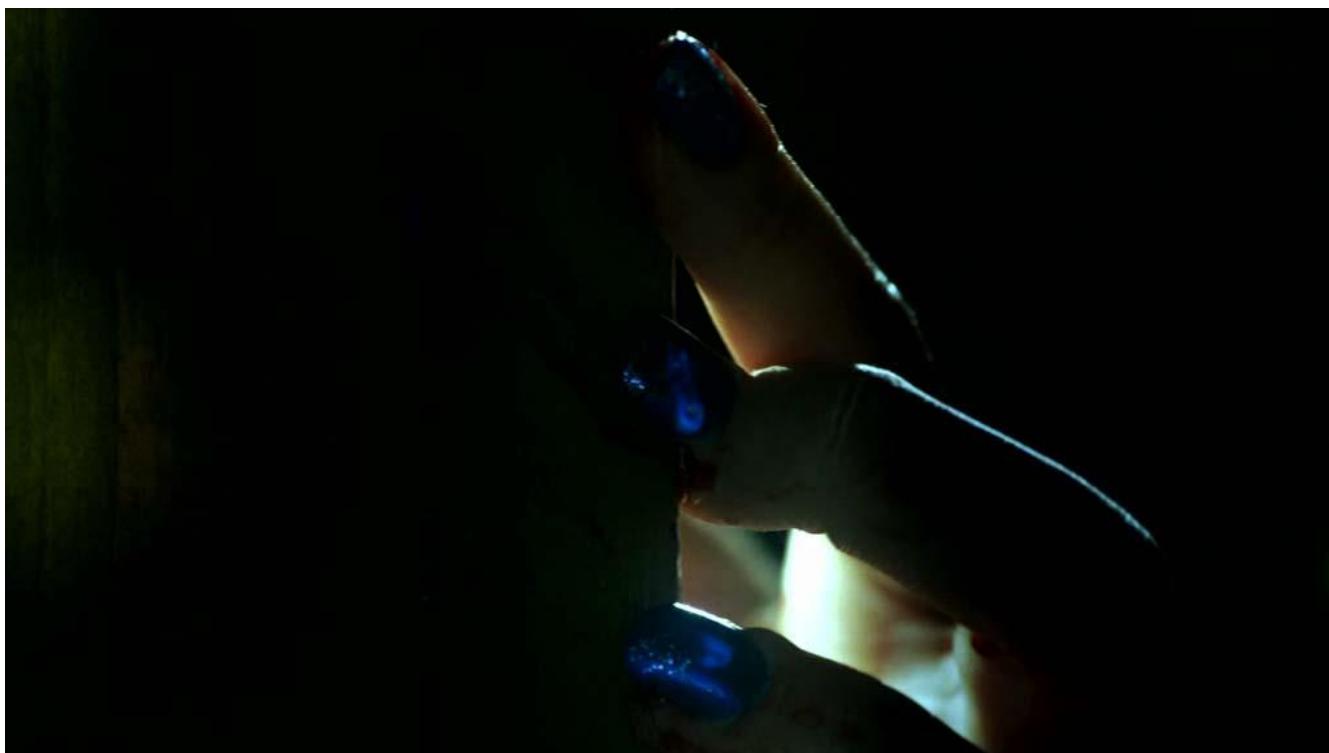


Figure 43: Brooke's fingernails tear off during her brutal murder. 101 'Jellyfish in the Sky'

In the climactic scene of 1.12 'Children of the Night,' the serial killing varghulf is revealed to be Christina. In moves to defeat the varghulf, Peter covers his face in bacon grease¹¹¹ and the wolf attacks. The actual attacking of Peter's face is obscured, but this instead builds to a gory money shot. As Peter emerges, hands to his face with blood coursing

¹¹¹ In 1.11 'The Price,' it is explained to Peter that he will pay a price to defeat the varghulf, that he will lose his human face. He asks Roman to gather said bacon grease, which Peter then smears on his face to encourage the varghulf to attack him.

through his fingers. The camera stays on Peter as he removes his hands to reveal his missing face. Right down to the bone and brain, broken jaw swinging, this money shot is slowed right down for full display of Peter's missing face. He eventually falls to the floor.



Figure 44: Peter is mortally injured during his fight with Christina the varghulf. 1.12 'Children of the Night'

Episode 2.01 'Blood Pressure' contains the fake drug deal Peter creates to raise cash for his incarcerated mother. To fool the drug dealer boys, he gives them a harmless drop to the eye each, and then partially changes. This makes the drug boys think that the drops, the gear Peter is selling, is a powerful hallucinogen. Peter sets his scene, puts some music on, takes off his shirt, and calls on the wolf. Peter starts his bone crunching change and tears off a section of his own shoulder skin. The wolf snout emerges from Peter's face, his cheeks tear, and then Peter is the body of a man with the head of a wolf. He approaches one of the drug boys, and Peter's hand emerges from the wolf's mouth, and strokes the drug boy's face. This money shot, or even, money sequence for

it is two minutes in length, is focused on Peter's body as a site of gore and revulsion for the on looking drug boys.

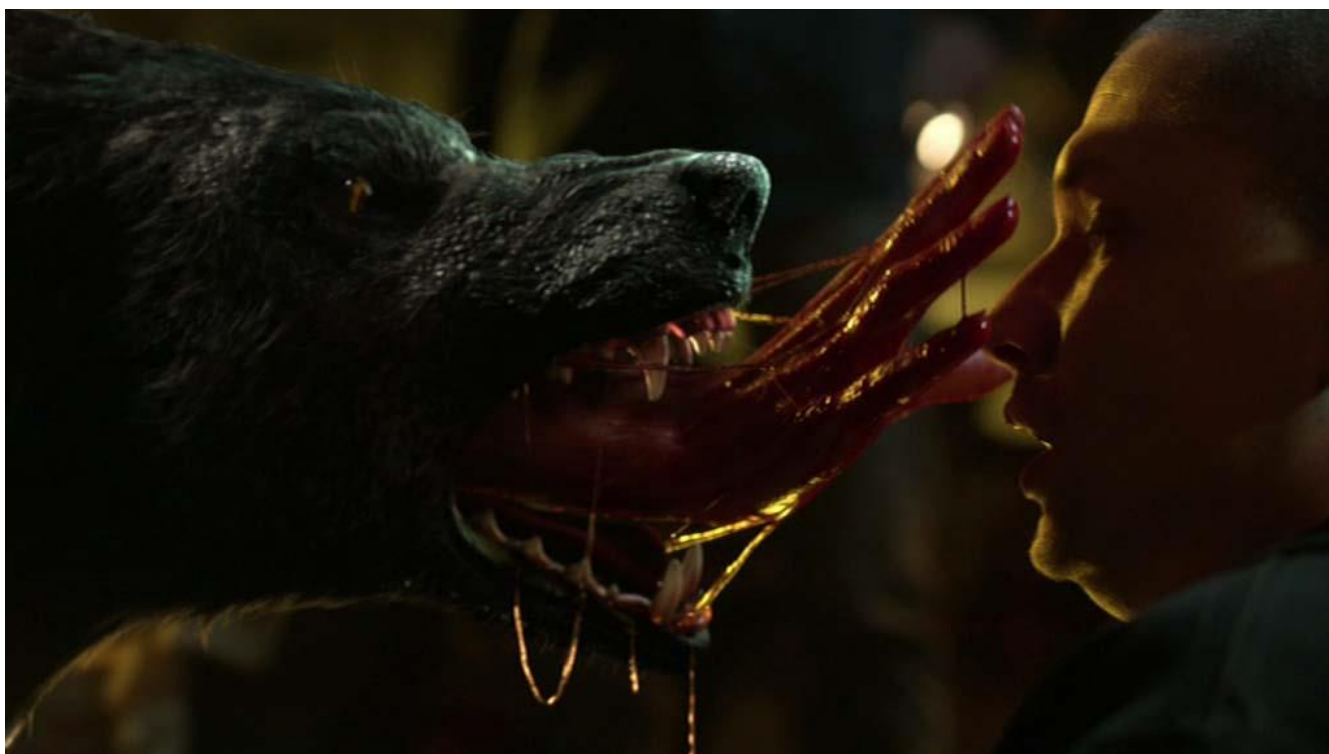


Figure 45: Peter fools the drug dealers into thinking they have taken a powerful hallucinogen. 2.01 'Blood Pressure'

Episode 3.03 'The House in the Woods' fulfills many horror tropes¹¹², but the autopsy of the crazed upir that attacked Roman in his house at the end of 3.02 'Souls on Ice,' provides some key generic money shots from the depths of the Godfrey institute and Dr Pryce. Pryce reveals the dead upir on the table, drawing back the sheet with a flourish. There are close ups of the horrific face; the torso with melanoma-like growths; claw hands. Pryce flexes the creature's jaw and removes a tooth. With a bone saw the chest cavity is opened revealing in great detail and lingering shots, the insides of the upir and the parasitic cancer organism that lives inside and moves when touched. Pryce removes

¹¹² The episode features many horror tropes from both film and US television. Roman meets a group of upirs who mirror very much some of those vampires in *True Blood*, living opulent lifestyles and with preferences for certain blood types. There is also an extended sequence with Roman, Anna and other upirs hiding in an outhouse; they are under attack from the cancerous, zombie like fellow upirs. This whole sequence feels very much like a scene from any zombie text, or even *The Walking Dead*.

the brain, we see the scooped-out skull cavity. All of this sequence is while horror, it is also reminiscent of the medical dramas discussed in the literature review. TV drama audiences are used to and expect to see the body upon which the doctors or the pathologists are working. *Hemlock Grove* reflects this in addition to showing the audiences the gory money shot that would be expected of a horror on US television around 2013 and from Roth. Pryce eventually comes to his conclusion that this is a cancerous parasite that causes the upir to attack its own kind, to become cannibalistic. This cannibalism is the next set of visual horror shots that I want to discuss, with regards to Roth and the TV horror audience expectation.



Figure 46: The autopsy of the cannibalistic upir. 3.03 'The House in the Woods'

5.9.6 Cannibalism

Hemlock Grove touches upon cannibalism and presents it for visual horror but in ways different to the expected. There is no Hannibal Lector type character, nor is there a lost Amazonian tribe hunting people to ritualistically eat. Instead the cannibalism like the

torture, is steeped in the supernatural. There are two key examples from *Hemlock Grove*, the first in season 1, the second in season 3. In 1.05 'Hello Handsome,' Destiny carries out a magic procedure to help figure out who killed Willoughby¹¹³. Destiny takes a caterpillar and places it in the jar of human guts and leave it to sit overnight. The next day she eats the caterpillar, which is now swollen with human matter.



Figure 47: Destiny retrieves the swollen caterpillar from the jar of dead Willoughby's innards. 1.05 'Hello Handsome'

Destiny is through her cannibalism momentarily possessed by the spirit of the murdered Willoughby, and she can shed some light on the events of that fatal night¹¹⁴. While the procedure that Destiny goes through is supernatural, it delivers a series of gross money shots that fulfill the audience's expectations. Season 3 sees the eventual downfall of Olivia. She has the upir cancer. In the finale 3.10 'Brian's Song,' she self cannibalizes, eating her own arm in her final moments of delirium and sickness.

¹¹³ Peter and Roman have already dug up Willoughby and taken some of her guts and placed them in a jar.

¹¹⁴ This is a common myth surrounding cannibalism. That eating the flesh of the human dead will somehow give the eater their power, their strength.



Figure 48: Dying Olivia takes a chunk out of her own arm. 3.10 'Brian's Song'

This section on the visual horror in *Hemlock Grove* has taken into account the werewolf transformation as key to any werewolf text, and its different function in this particular telling of a werewolf story. The visual horror of the transformation is a spectacle of display both within the text and for Netflix to display to the rest of the TV industry. Symptomatic of being on Netflix, the visual horror does not occur (for some critics) with enough regularity. Not being a weekly structure, there was no need for a monster of the week. The visual horror that was in *Hemlock Grove* fit both Eli Roth's brand of horror, engaging with torture, body gore and cannibalism.

5.10 Case Study Conclusion.

This case study continued to answer the second and third aims of this thesis:

- To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes in

the US television industry – and how these changes shape horror on US television.

- To discover how the horror genre is acceptable now, and why.

To answer these aims this case study first considered notions of cultural legitimacy with regards to HBO style dramas. Through this I built a picture of where horror sits in the TV drama landscape, and how horror is being shaped by the changes in the industry. These changes have meant that US television is making and using horror to make culturally legitimate US television texts. *The Walking Dead* changed attitudes across US television (and advertising) to horror, and *Hemlock Grove* further blurred the boundaries between popular and legitimate or middlebrow. *Hemlock Grove* elevated itself to middlebrow, partly through the ambitions of Netflix to challenge HBO. *Hemlock Grove* does this through generic awareness and appealing to the sophisticated and multi-faceted horror audience. The three trailers demonstrated how Netflix conceptualised their horror audiences and so their horror drama. *Hemlock Grove* was made to suit fans of supernatural and high school dramas, complex and sexy thrillers, and the Eli Roth and horror genre fans. Roth himself helps to cite *Hemlock Grove* as culturally significant as he himself in horror circles, is a significant figure.

Hemlock Grove used the Gothic – its themes, character types and iconography to align the show with literary prestige, and further developed this through the revisiting of classic monsters (vampires and werewolves). The visual horror in *Hemlock Grove* utilised the werewolf transformation as a spectacle of display for the characters in the text and for the rest of the TV industry. The visual horror away from the werewolf transformation served the expectations of fans of Roth's work, and of TV horror fans post *The Walking Dead*. This has exposed what is acceptable on US television now – torture, body gore and cannibalism – elements that previously been dismissed by critics when in Roth's films. *Hemlock Grove* was many things to many audiences. For some it was a muddle of too many horror tropes. But this is what horror was on Netflix in 2013 – 2015. Netflix was still finding its feet as a programmer and was still looking to grow and maintain its subscriber base.

This case study has explored horror on a subscription service in the middle of the horror cycle as the genre as a drama trend was peaking. It cannot tell us about the acceptability of horror by 2015. *Hemlock Grove* and Netflix cannot tell us about how the conditions at FOX, affect a horror drama. How a horror drama on a channel with no masses of data to mine, or horror film festival to launch a new horror series off. Neither *Hemlock Grove* nor *The Walking Dead* can tell us about a horror drama that has no original material in print. The next case study, FOX's *Scream Queens*, will explore horror on a free to air network, build on these notions of middlebrow and cultural legitimacy, and how the conditions at FOX and the horror cycle on US television more generally, shape a horror drama that combines horror, comedy, and a plethora of horror film homages.

Chapter 6 *Scream Queens* Case Study

6.1 Introduction

The previous case study considered TV horror on Netflix and how the ambitions of the service in its goals to rival other outputs demanded a call for a renegotiation of what makes a culturally significant, or legitimate text when considering horror TV drama. *Hemlock Grove* showed us that the 'traditional' elements that seek to engender cultural prestige – in *Hemlock Grove's* case the use of the Gothic; in *The Walking Dead* an alignment with film – all conspire to elevate TV horror to middlebrow. This case study, *Scream Queens*, will consider horror drama on a free to air network channel, FOX, the tier of US television arguably be the most problematic place for horror. Like *Hemlock Grove*, this *Scream Queens* case study will be mindful of US television after *The Walking Dead*, demonstrating that network executives had changed their attitudes to horror following the commercial success of *The Walking Dead*. This case study will support the key argument of this thesis: that there had been a rise of horror on US television, and horror has overall become more acceptable on TV. More acceptable even to have a slasher drama on a free to air advertiser supported network¹¹⁵. To again revisit my research question: How has the rise of horror on US television impacted on the spectacle and acceptability of the genre? As with the previous two case studies, I have already accounted for the rise of horror in chapter 3: where I laid out the shifts and developments that encouraged the genre to grow. This covers the first aim of the thesis (as outlined at the end of the literature review). This *Scream Queens* case study will continue to answer the second and third aims:

- To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes to the US television industry outlined in chapter 3 – and how these changes

¹¹⁵ To clarify the slasher label, I would point to Pinedo's summary: "A masked or hidden (largely off screen) psychotic male propelled by psychosexual fury stalks and kills a sizable number of young women and men with a high level of violence." Pinedo is herself drawing on the works of Clover (1992); Dika (1987) and Creed (1993) and their combined time frame of this particular cycle of slasher films, from 1974 to 1988. I will later discuss the cycle of slasher films from the mid-1990s.

have shaped horror on TV.

- To discover how the horror genre is deemed culturally legitimate and acceptable on US television now, and why.

My multiperspectival approach consisting of industrial context, discourse and textual analysis is the most useful way to deal with a horror drama that both came after *The Walking Dead*, and at the time of its launch (2015) appeared on network around the time the horror cycle on US television was arguably peaking. Through this methodology I can look at the bigger picture of *Scream Queens* in its position on FOX, and its position in the horror drama cycle on US television at the time. Through textual analysis I can assess key genre conventions, structural and aesthetic elements that are arguably more rigid than the previous two incarnations of horror genres and monsters already examined (zombies, werewolves and vampires). This approach provides the tools to study the impact of the TV industry and the strategy at FOX on the slasher in *Scream Queens*: a US television horror drama that utilised the conventions of the teenage slasher film.

This case study will show how acceptable horror had become on US television through the appearance of a slasher on free to air network. This case aims to study the strategy at FOX: why would they make a slasher, what were the conditions at FOX, and how did this impact on the show. This case study aims to show that when approaching horror drama, discussion around cultural legitimacy suits the current circumstance of horror drama on TV. This case study will show that the broader relationship between the FOX networks and *Scream Queens* showrunner Ryan Murphy – who has no connection to film¹¹⁶ - had an impact on the speedy development of the show. This case study will also show that despite *Scream Queens* only running for two seasons, for FOX, it allowed them to make an industrial leap forwards in terms of how the viewing audience is measured. For FOX, a slasher was part of their strategy to target the younger audience who were not watching US television in the traditional way. This case study will continue to build on the exploration of the horror genre on US television, how this functions for a

¹¹⁶ *The Walking Dead* season 1 showrunner was Darabont, and in turn, the show was constantly positioned as film; and *Hemlock Grove* heavily relied on the horror film credentials of Eli Roth.

slasher when serialised, given the rigid structures of the slasher. And finally, a look at one of the crucial elements of the slasher, the spectacle of murder. The spectacle of violent murder is elemental to the slasher text, and what was once seen as almost pornographic in its lingering focus on the violent deaths, was in the trade and entertainment press, for *Scream Queens*, praised for its creativity. This case study will show how tensions between network US television and the violent slasher are alleviated to such an extent via cultural legitimisation, that such murder sequences can gleefully be shown.

6.2 FOX and the Horror Cycle

In chapter 3 I discussed how FOX alongside the growth of other basic cable channels fragmented the US television audience and drove the shifts that would eventually see more differentiated programming, specifically targeted demographics and the rise of seriality. FOX itself launched on 9th October 1996, as a free to air, advertiser funded channel¹¹⁷. In chapter 3 I discussed the types of programming that advertiser supported US television produced, Least Objectionable Programming. FOX however, sought to target a younger and more diverse audience, with content that was to be more edgy than its Big Three rivals. While FOX might have been exposing a whole section of the market – young, African American, those that want more than cop shows and game shows – it was still driven by advertiser demands. I charted the rise of horror in chapter 3 so I do not need to repeat it here¹¹⁸. To consider FOX and *Scream Queens*, it is more useful to consider both the network and the case study text within the context of the horror cycle at the time. *Scream Queens* launched in 2015, at which time since 2010 and *The Walking Dead*, new horror dramas had been steadily rising. 2015 saw the most new launches with seven new horror dramas that year. In 2015 there were twenty two horror dramas (including *Scream Queens*) on the air¹¹⁹. The dramas that followed *The*

¹¹⁷ In chapter 3 I explain in more detail what an advertiser funded network is, what the model is.

¹¹⁸ In chapter 3 and in *The Walking Dead* case study, I looked at how advertisers were more willing to place adverts in programming that was more diverse. It became clear to the networks that they should look not where the advertisers are placing their money, but what were the types of shows they were putting their money to.

¹¹⁹ *Vampire Diaries; The Walking Dead; American Horror Story; Teen Wolf; Hannibal; Sleepy Hollow; Bates Motel; Hemlock Grove; The Originals; The Strain; Penny Dreadful; From Dusk Til Dawn; iZombie; Scream Queens; Fear The Walking Dead; Scream: The TV Series; The Returned; South of Hell; Supernatural; Ash v Evil Dead;*

Walking Dead built on the foundations that had been laid by AMC. Several patterns of capitalising on *The Walking Dead* model can be noted in the horror dramas that followed 2010. New dramas aligned themselves with existing films (*Teen Wolf*, MTV, 2011 -; *Hannibal*, NBC, 2013 – 2015; and *Bates Motel*, 2013 – 2017). Some dramas built upon the zombie theme which *The Walking Dead* had proven to be so valuable on US television. *Z Nation* (SyFy, 2014 -); *iZombie* (The CW, 2015 -); and *Fear the Walking Dead* (AMC, 2015 -). With horror being firmly established on US television come 2014 / 2015, the genre began to expand beyond the perimeters of what was realised by *The Walking Dead*. Shows like *The Strain* (FX, 2014 – 2015) with a most gory vision of the parasitic vampire, and *Returned* (A&E, 2015), a remake of a quiet, brooding French horror series (*Les Revenants*, Canal+, 2012 - 2015), a drama that was creepy and eerie, rather than spectacular. These patterns and stages – initially building directly on what *The Walking Dead* had achieved with film alignment and zombies, before moving into new ground again for contemporary horror drama – had never really happened before with horror, as already explored in works in the literature and in chapter 3. The dramas that followed *The Walking Dead* pushed forward the types of horror that could be explored on US television. In their wake TV horror drama was becoming culturally significant in that the horror stories now warranted being told, TV horror had become culturally legitimate and middlebrow – legitimate in its commercial success. The commercial success and expansion of horror on US television brings us to *Scream Queens* and the space for a slasher to be deemed suited for US television.

In 2014 as noted in *The Walking Dead* case study, seasons 4 and 5 of *The Walking Dead* were drawing huge figures: both in the key demographics and the advertising earnings (13.3 million viewers; 8.6 million in the 18-49 demographic; and 30 second adverts costing upwards of \$400,000). These numbers are hard to ignore, and when Gary Newman and Dana Walden became chairman-CEO's of the FOX TV group in 2014, one of the first calls they made was to Ryan Murphy (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015). Newman told *Variety* that he and Walden were firm that they had “got to get a series out of Ryan Murphy.” Newman and Walden told the US television Critics Association in 2015

that what they wanted from Murphy was a “project that would get attention” (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015). Between the clear evidence from *The Walking Dead* figures and the trend of horror drama across US television, and the previous work from Murphy for FOX networks, a horror for FOX from Murphy appeared to be a logical move. To point back to chapter 3, I explored how the networks were using drama to retain their viewership, to try and stop them from moving over to cable and subscription. In short, FOX could use horror and a horror by Murphy, to attempt to retain some of their younger demographic.

Ryan Murphy by 2014/15 had been enjoying considerable success with the FOX networks. *Nip/Tuck* on FX (2003 – 2010); *Glee* on FOX (2009 – 2011); *American Horror Story* on FX (2011 -); and in 2014 *American Crime Story: The People v OJ Simpson* had been given the green light. Walden and Newman were already known for previous work at 20th Century Fox TV and their “close knit relationships with top talent” (Littleton, *Variety*, 2014), and suggested to Murphy that “what really works well with young viewers is genre” (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015). The young viewers that were the target demographic at FOX right from its outset. But what was it about Murphy, and his route through his US television career, that warranted an immediate call from the new CEO's as they took up their new positions?

6.3 Ryan Murphy and Middlebrow.

Even before *American Horror Story*, which might seem the more obvious reason that Walden and Newman might call Murphy to make them a horror series too, Murphy had signed an agreement with FOX networks for \$15 million, which in addition to keep developing *Nip/Tuck*, was also to “develop new projects for the FOX networks” (Schnieder & Flemming, *Variety*, 2006). Murphy, it seems, was the FOX networks go-to man for new drama projects, and his previous success with shows like *Nip/Tuck* and *American Horror Story*, meant that Murphy and *Scream Queens* “stood a better chance” of standing out in the (now in 2015) cluttered horror TV drama landscape. Murphy has been hailed as a “mega producer” (Wagmeister & Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2017), a “mastermind” (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015), and a “genius” (Stack, *Entertainment Weekly*,

2016). In 2016 he was awarded TV Showman of the Year due to his “high consistency” and being “up there with a select few” who deserve such recognition (Steven Poster, National President of the International Cinematographers Guild, speaking to McNanny, *Variety*, 2016). This calls again for another look at received notions of what makes a culturally legitimate text, after my exploration in *Hemlock Grove*. With *Hemlock Grove*, I illustrated Netflix was taking legitimate forms – the Gothic, Eli Roth – and repackaging them for the mass market. An approach that reflects the shifts as explained in chapter 3 which have led to horror crossing the border into culturally significant drama products. For this case study and the discussion of cultural significance that I will raise later, it is useful to go back to *Nip/Tuck*, and Murphy in his rise to “mega producer.”

When the first season of *Nip/Tuck* drew to a close, *US television Week* interviewed Murphy (who had only been previously known for his journalism and teen comedy *Popular* on The WB, 1999 – 2001). *Nip/Tuck* was a controversial show, melding graphic scenes of plastic surgery with both thoughtful and sensational storylines. Murphy told *US television Week* that “when I was a kid the things I was really attracted to were dark things like *The Conversation* and *The Exorcist*.” *Nip/Tuck* became the highest rated show on FX, helping to build the FX brand, and was the number one show on basic cable in 2003 (Ryan, *US television Week*, 2003). While *Nip/Tuck* was building FX as a place for drama, it was also where Murphy began to build his own personal brand of TV: he was upending “the pieties of modern US television” (Mussbaum, *The New Yorker*, 2018). Murphy was pushing the envelope of what was acceptable and experimenting with subject matter that was previously taboo on US television¹²⁰. In Kaveney and Stoy's 2011 edited collection on *Nip/Tuck*, all elements of the show are under discussion, but the most pertinent is Virino's chapter on *Nip/Tuck* and the acknowledgement of the permeation of such dramas across US television more generally, as explored in chapter 3, the rise of seriality.

What were exceptions of heroic efforts in the past [the ensemble cast, seriality, complex layered stories, elaborate references to high and popular culture and

¹²⁰ “In the course of six years it [*Nip/Tuck*] handled incest, addiction, amnesia, serial killing of various kinds, castration, defenestration, rape, torture, burial alive, Nazism, Scientology, organ theft, and drug cartels, as well as more standard plot elements like infidelity, love and divorce” (Kaveney, 2011, p. xvi).

sophisticated themes are now not just commonplace, but almost the rule of thumb (Verino, 2011, p. 114).

The “rule of thumb” that Verino is referring to, is the expansion of this type of drama across all of US television. *Nip/Tuck* took taboos, sex and violence which had previously in the right text being the bedrock of critically acclaimed dramas (see the exploration of *Deadwood* in the *Hemlock Grove* case study) and pushed them to their limits on basic cable and premium, and in doing so received much critical acclaim and awards (Virino, 2011). As explored in the literature review, Lyons (2007) noted that *Nip/Tuck* was framed as Gothic meaning the show could evade the disapproval of its taboo subjects and gory surgery sequences. Murphy had built his brand with an aesthetic that was becoming recognisable in the trade and entertainment press. Murphy's work was described as “stylised extremity and rude human shock conjoined with sincerity and serious themes wrapped in circus bright packaging” (Nussbaum, *The New Yorker*, 2018). By the time Murphy comes to make *Scream Queens* (after the FOX CEO's call him up and demand a horror series for the network from him), by this stage in his career he has “all the creative leeway a successful track record can provide” (Valentine, *AV Club*, 2015). Murphy's brand has “clout,” (Stack, *Entertainment Weekly*, 2016). The path that Murphy took through his career saw a veneer of prestige via the Gothic framing of *Nip/Tuck* and then legitimation through his work with *American Horror Story*. Murphy was by the time of *Scream Queens*, culturally legitimate, and worthy of a straight to series order from FOX, for *Scream Queens*.

In the previous case studies the elevation to middlebrow via aligning with another form that it is already deemed legitimate helped to pull the horror series up to middlebrow and to enter the circles of culturally significant drama. Unlike *The Walking Dead* and *Hemlock Grove* who aligned themselves with legitimate film creative personnel (Darabont and Roth), *Scream Queens* aligns itself with legitimate US television creative personnel (Murphy), and any use of horror film legitimisation is woven into the text itself and exploited and inflated, as I will explore in more detail in the Genre and Intertextuality section. Murphy as a culturally significant figure in US television and the *Scream Queens* product invites an exploration of middlebrow, in particular, how the middlebrow

and horror might operate together. David Cardeff describes the middlebrow as something that takes art and makes it accessible (1988). Similarly, Halford explained that middlebrow is,

Making art accessible to the many, bringing ideas that might remain trapped in ivory towers and academic books, or in high art (or film or theatre) (Halford, *The New Yorker*, 2011).

Both these works describe middlebrow as a process that runs from the top down. Taking the highbrow and pulling it down to middlebrow. The horror cycle on US television that this thesis deals with, has through the process of the development of horror on TV after *The Walking Dead*, brought horror from the bottom up. This horror cycle has taken horror genres and elevated them up to middlebrow. The notion of the middlebrow running from the top down, as Halford suggests above, is relevant to notions of cultural legitimacy and significance and the repackaging of such for the masses (see *Hemlock Grove* and the Gothic and Netflix). To elevate a genre or a text from lowbrow to middlebrow it must go through a process of cultural legitimisation. Bastien stated that “much of the best modern middlebrow US television today exists within genres that are often looked down upon” (*Vulture*, 2016). This can certainly be said for my case studies: a zombie text, a werewolf text, and a slasher. She goes on to comment that the tension between middlebrow and highbrow centres on “asking what kind of stories are culturally significant,” and that,

What defines it [good middlebrow] more than anything else is the idea that audiences (and the show itself) need to have fun [...] middlebrow is concerned with the visceral experience and pleasure that can come from US television (Bastien, *Vulture*, 2016).

As the Genre and Intertextuality section will show, *Scream Queens* does have fun through its engagement with horror homage, the slasher genre and the cartoonish visual horror. *Scream Queens* is built on the movement of horror (and the films that *Scream Queens* plays with) being brought into the middlebrow, as horror on US television became viable and valuable. As horror has become more commonplace on US television it inevitably will confront notions of authenticity, especially between horror fans. A slasher (given its previously transgressive readings) on US television may be

constructed by the 'real' fans to be “mindless, conformist [...] associated with mass middlebrow culture.” Though *Scream Queens* engages with both 'mainstream' horror texts and lesser known slasher films, for the 'real' fans, the surface glamour and glitzy promotion of the show could be viewed as “inauthentic appropriation” of the genre (Jancovich, 2002, p. 154). Therefore, as the following section will explore, this complicates *Scream Queens*, its content, and its promotion and intended audience.

The existing texts that *Scream Queens* engages with have been on a journey of cultural renegotiation (as I will explain in the section that explores the slasher and its past) and have themselves become culturally valued and celebrated. The works of Carpenter and Craven that *Scream Queens* draws heavily are now taken seriously and viewed critically and worthy of scholarship (Carroll, 1990; Clover, 1992; Paul, 1994; Hutchings, 2004; Phillips, 2005; Hantke, 2010; Leeder, 2010; Addison, 2012), and other scholars celebrate the slasher as its own genre (Rockoff, 2002). *Scream Queens* did not need to point to the HBO model as *The Walking Dead* and *Hemlock Grove* did. It cannot be compared to the HBO 'type' of seriality or *True Blood*, for instance *Scream Queens* draws on the discourse which attaches cultural legitimacy to such original texts (*Psycho*; *Halloween*; *Scream*), and the development and elevation of TV horror since *The Walking Dead*. *Scream Queens* was framed by the hype around its showrunner, Murphy, who brought his own cultural legitimacy to the show. As explored in chapter 3 and with Dunleavy's work, the rise in seriality as reaction to increased competition, led to the creative autonomy of production staff and showrunners (Dunleavy, 2009). This is illustrated in its most explicit form by the straight-to-series order of *Scream Queens* as FOX put complete trust in Murphy. *Scream Queens* demonstrates that what is deemed to be acceptable for US television, what is a story worth telling, has shifted. The slasher at the hands of Murphy had become culturally legitimate and worthy of a story to be told.

Scream Queens asked of some of its viewers high levels of horror genre knowledge and awareness. Such high levels of generic awareness in the show require that the original texts be understood before they can be rejuvenated by the creative team and understood by the viewers. This generic content – both seasons of *Scream Queens* are

packed with horror movie homage and pastiche which vary in subtlety and obscurity – while not crucial to the enjoyment of *Scream Queens*, complicate what *Scream Queens* is and who it was for. This complication is best illustrated through an exploration of the promotion of the first season, and the changes made in the second season with regards to casting and location of the story.

6.4 The Promotion of *Scream Queens* season 1.

After Walden and Newman made their call to Murphy, *Scream Queens* was ordered by the CEO's as straight-to-series with an order of 15 episodes. On the speed of this move Walden said,

As a programmer, you're always looking for something that's not on the air, so you can give an audience something they're not getting [...] no one is playing in that space. And certainly not in broadcast (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015).

What the audience was not getting from broadcast then, was a slasher. There were other horror dramas on network, but no slashers. There was a slasher in *Scream: The TV Series*, a reboot of Craven's 1996 work, but this was on MTV, a basic cable channel. This method of straight-to-series was unusual. What normally happens is that after a pitch, a network will order a script, then a pilot, and then make a series order. FOX put full trust in Murphy and his team (Ian Brennan and Brad Falchuck) and ordered a full series without seeing a pilot. It meant that the promotion teams could get to work on marketing the show before even a single frame had been shot. Joe Earley, Chief Operating Office at FOX US television Group noted that “its a rarity to have a series order with these auspices [...] where we can trust the creators without seeing footage” (Addalain, *Vulture*, 2015).

Teaser trailers began to appear, first on Murphy's Twitter, of a blonde girl blowing up bubblegum which is skewered by knife, and then the title card appears. This trailer featured none of the cast, because at this point, there was no cast. This appeared on the 13th February 2015, with the premiere not actually scheduled until September 2015, giving *Scream Queens* a nine month build up. Because *Scream Queens* was ordered

right away, it meant that Murphy could get to work on getting the high profile, star cast that he wanted. The cast were from all corners of performing arts, from various genres and platforms. From Nickelodeon, The Disney Channel and from pop music; Ariana Grande, Nick Jonas and Skyler Samuels: From US television, Broadway and comedy; Lea Michele, Oliver Hudson and Niecy Nash: From film and horror cinema; Jamie Lee Curtis; Emma Roberts and Abigail Breslin. All of the cast were active on social media, and as each new cast member was added, each one was treated as a mini event on social media, with the cast themselves tweeting and posting on Instagram about their upcoming roles (Adalain, *Vulture*, 2015). The employment of such high profile cast members and their social media illustrates the cultural legitimacy sought by FOX with *Scream Queens*. To look back to *The Walking Dead* case study and shifts explored in chapter 3, networks want big audience numbers and within those numbers, high levels of “audience commitment” (Abbott, 2010). *The Walking Dead* demonstrated that horror could bring high numbers of committed viewers to the rest of the TV industry, meaning that the cultural legitimacy of horror was therefore demonstrated through its commercial value. *Scream Queens* attempted cultural legitimacy in the first instance through Murphy's name being attached, and then through the star cast. The cast already had committed fans. Fans who could potentially be an inbuilt audience¹²¹. Unlike *The Walking Dead*, *Scream Queens* was not attempting to be 'premium' or a HBO style drama, it was instead attempting to be popular which would legitimate its horror content. FOX could see what the advertisers were backing, as Steinburg noted that “edgy drama” was the content that was valuable and connecting to those “hard to reach demographics” (*Variety*, 2016). From *The Walking Dead* and the many other horror dramas that emerged afterwards, horror was both culturally legitimate and valuable.

¹²¹ *The Walking Dead* had an inbuilt audience from the fans of its comic and through the viewers of FearFest. *Hemlock Grove* also had an inbuilt audience from fans of Roth's work, readers of the original novel, and because people were already subscribed to Netflix. The viewers were already there.

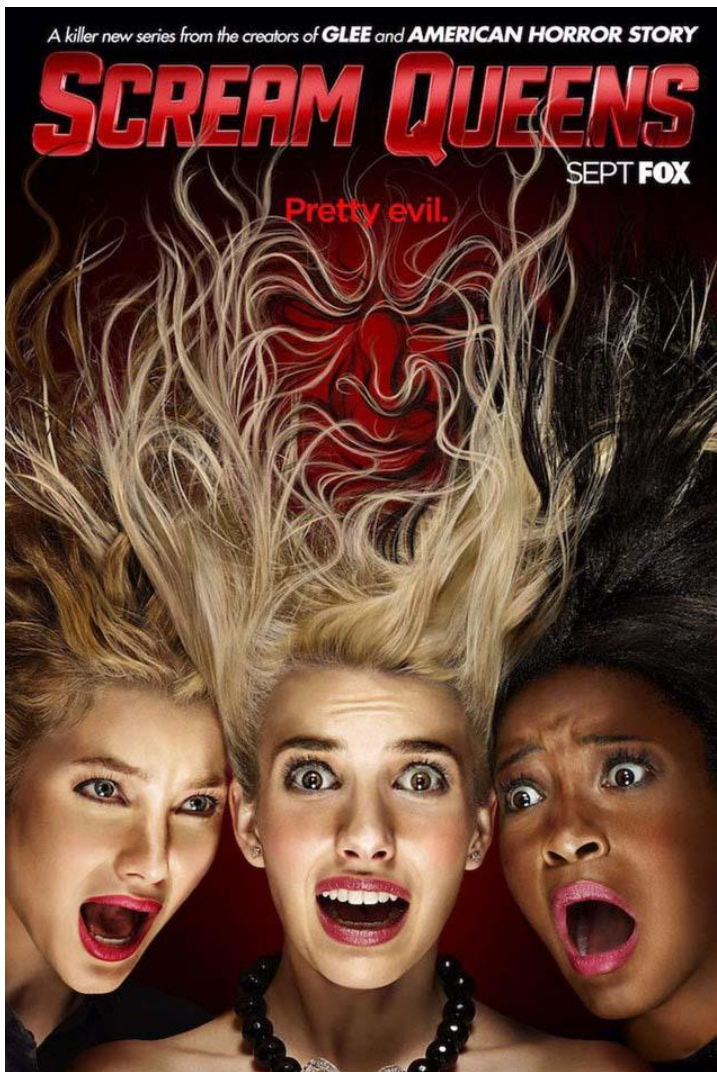


Figure 49: Poster from the Six Flags theme parks.

Conveniently, 2015 had two Friday 13ths, one in February one in March. On Friday 13th March, the same teaser appeared on social media and on the FOX channel itself, this time featuring Emma Roberts, who plays lead sorority sister Chanel Oberlin. Now that *Scream Queens* had its star cast, promotional posters began to appear in April 2015, but not on billboards or in magazines, but instead at six different Six Flags Theme Parks across the US¹²², alongside themed *Scream Queens* rides. Themes such as this would usually be around the Halloween season. The inclusion of *Scream Queens* / slasher themed rides in April certainly does point to an acceptance of horror, especially when

¹²² Georgia, Texas, Illinois, California, St Louis, and New England.

positioned outside the Halloween season. In May, fraternity brothers and sorority sisters with knives in their backs were staggering around the streets of New York, as FOX increased the frequency of the teasers on the channel, showing them in the series finale of *Glee*, the season finale of *Empire* (FOX, 2015 -), and inside a showing of Craven's *Scream*. FOX delivered pumpkin-spice branded lattes, Tassimo coffee machines and killer themed cupcakes to various advertiser agencies in Manhattan (Adalain, *Vulture*, 2015). Walden and Newman said that they wanted to build anticipation, to lock in the viewers and get them invested in the show months in advance, especially through the social media presence of the stars of the show. The overall aim was to build up *Scream Queens* as an event not to be missed. In presenting *Scream Queens* as an event, FOX were trying to avoid network US television being left behind, as something to catch up on later (Simms, *The Atlantic*, 2015).

6.4.1 Season 1 premiere and the ratings spin.

Despite the “splashy you-can't-miss-it marketing campaign” (Wagmeister, *Variety*, 2015), the premiere only attracted 4 million viewers. However, the show had an 80% increase and jumped to 7.3million views after the live-plus-three-day ratings (C3) were released. FOX CEO's Dana Walden and Gary Newman said of the show that,

different kinds of viewers watch TV in different ways. If you're going to be a broadcast platform you've got to understand that [...] we knew in our heart of hearts that it [*Scream Queens*] would be the number one show among 18-34 (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015).

Explicit in these words is that in knowing that the show would be popular in the 18-34s, FOX knew that *Scream Queens* would be watched by those that no longer watch US television in the traditional linear schedule. That the *Scream Queens* fans were the section of the TV audience that prefer to watch on their own terms, on their own schedule. On jumping on the next day figures, Walden said,

It's no longer the way we can look at our business. This is the water-cooler show. We knew once we had greater measurements to look at, it would be told in an accurate way” (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015).

Newman and Walden even used *Scream Queens* as a case study to map out the increasingly complex TV landscape and their model for dealing with it at the US television Critics Association press tour, in 2016. Newman presented *Scream Queens* in terms of its figures stating that 30% of the total viewership watched on the night, 26% on DVR, and 44% on streaming / catch up VOD services (Hulu or FoxNow). This means, Newman pointed out, that 62% of the views of *Scream Queens* were away from the traditional linear schedule, which then therefore means that the overnight figures only tell one third of the story (Littleton, *Variety*, 2016). Such a large amount of the total viewership of *Scream Queens* has broader implications for the future of network US television and the kind of programming it makes. Given the changes outlined in chapter 3 and the changing viewing habits, even network US television is not the way it was – their economic model is shifting if they are to drop the overnight ratings as the picture of what they can offer potential advertisers. If network US television are shifting their sights to the audience outside of the linear schedule, then so are the advertisers who fund them, and so therefore, networks can make different types of programming to suit that audience, the 62%. The multi-platform viewings of the show were employed to demonstrate that the younger audience are turning away from traditional linear US television. As Newman stated “the young [...] audience watching on their own terms” (Littleton, *Variety*, 2016). The premiere was “the number one new series on social media according to FOX [and FOX became the] only broadcast network to drop same-day ratings releases” (Wagmeister, *Variety*, 2016). All the promotion for *Scream Queens* season 1 was building up to this huge and hopefully well anticipated event, which given the ratings for the live viewing inside the traditional linear TV schedule, fell somewhat flat. This caused the FOX CEO's to climb down from *Scream Queens* as this big event, and instead spin and the use the live plus 3 ratings and VOD and DVR to their favor. The multi-platform viewing of the show encouraged a renewal of the show by FOX for a second season, as this was a show that was appealing to that young demographic that watch on other platforms. *Scream Queens* was a way of ensuring contact with that elusive and valuable to advertisers' audience demographic.

6.5 Promotion of *Scream Queens* season 2.

Upon its return for season 2, *Scream Queens* brought a new setting, additional cast and darker themes. Both Murphy and FOX “knew that the show could not return without a wider appeal, as the sorority theme of season 1 alienated viewers, mainly appealing to young females” (Wagmiester, *Variety*, 2016)¹²³. The move to the hospital is explained after the past event trauma trigger is shown in 2.01 'Scream Again.' This time it is the baby in the belly – the murder of its parents through medical malpractice sets in motion the events at the hospital, the C.U.R.E. Institute, which construct season 2. If we are to view the serialisation of horror as filling the same storytelling space as the horror film sequel, as explored in chapter 3, then the move to the hospital with the survivors from season 1, exactly matches that of inspiration for season 2, *Halloween II*. Co-Creator Brad Falchuck said season 2 would “draw inspiration from the classic horror [film] which was partially set in a hospital and starred Curtis” (Roshanian, *Variety*, 2016). The medical setting was hoping to expand the show into male viewership. Terrence Carter, Executive Vice President of Drama Development told *Variety* that the hospital and medical setting had a broader gender and age appeal. Murphy himself stated that “we know very well that medical shows and hospital set shows are fantastic story generators. There are so many cases that walk in your door” (Wagmeister, *Variety*, 2016). The medical setting has done well for Murphy before with *Nip/Tuck*. As explored above, *Nip/Tuck* elevated Murphy to his status as an author of US television, the “genius,” the “mega-producer.” While Falchuck might directly cite the *Halloween* franchise in his words to the press, I argue that the switch in location with the adding of new cast members (explored below), is where the cracks in the slasher as serialisation start to reveal themselves. The positives – the ease in which cast members and storylines can be killed or added – do not outweigh the rigid structure of the slasher. *Scream Queens* as a slasher has to be stretched out inside the demands of US television serialisation. *Scream Queens* season 2 relies on the tried and tested formula of a medical drama, and the tried and tested formula of a drama in medical setting with Murphy at the helm. Because the first season combined so many references from horror film with a cast that

¹²³ The first season was ranked number one among women 18-34 (Wagmeister, *Variety*, 2016).

represented pop culture, the press were moved to ask “what am I watching and who is the show for?” (Ferguson, *AV Club*, 2015). The new location and cast additions in the second season, sought to answer this question.

Carter said that season 2 was aiming for a broader age range, evident in the new cast additions. John Stamos, Taylor Lautner and Kirstie Alley¹²⁴. The addition of these three cast members then, expands the audience reach to fans of dramas – those that remember Stamos in the 1980s and early 2000s; sitcom fans from Alley's previous works; and with Lautner, much like *Hemlock Grove*, addressing those millions of teen *Twilight* fans who are now grown up and nostalgic for past loves. Lowry noted that “by killing off much of the cast, the producers can enlist a flurry of demo-friendly stars to try wooing viewers back” (*Variety*, 2015). All of these cast members bring with them a feeling of nostalgia, either for older US television shows or for youthful crushes. This nostalgia compliments the nostalgia explored in taking inspiration from *Halloween II* for the second series of *Scream Queens*. In addition to the nostalgic value that these cast additions had, they also have specific demographic reach. The targeting of specific groups through genre programming I have explored both in relation to the rise of horror drama (chapter 3), and with the use of films genres in *The Walking Dead*, and then the nuances of horror for a sophisticated audience with *Hemlock Grove*. In *Scream Queens*, specific demographic targeting was used as a tool to expand the reach of the show, after the first season came up short on the ratings.

Horror was so on trend in 2015 and FOX had so much trust in Murphy that they dove headlong into a horror series, which was to be the event of the autumn schedule. With backgrounds in pop music, children's US television, musical drama, film and longer standing US television actors (Alley, Stamos), the cast represented a potential built in audience. As the section on Genre and Intertextuality will show, this was not quite in coherence with the actual content of the intertextual sophistication of *Scream Queens*,

¹²⁴ From 1982 to 1984 Stamos played Blackie Parrish on ABC's *General Hospital* (1963 -), and then Dr Tony Gates on *ER*, 2005 to 2009 (NBC, 1994 – 2009). Kirstie Alley was Rebecca Howe in *Cheers* (NBC, 1982 – 1993), from 1987 to 1993, and then later, Ronnie Chase in *Veronica's Closet* (NBC, 1997 – 2000). Taylor Lautner is widely known for his portrayal of Jacob Black in the *Twilight* franchise of films.

which lay underneath the veneer of glamour that the promotion pushed forward. Season 2 saw the expansion of the cast to include more males and older actors. Again, the cast were the promotion vehicle for the new season. Wanting to attract more than young females, FOX and *Scream Queens* turned to actors with a deeper attachment to long standing dramas (*ER*; *Cheers*), and older females via the nostalgic value of teen franchise *The Twilight Saga*. Alongside the cast, promotion was driven by Murphy's name and his credibility as a powerful showrunner. What this tells us is that the cast and their cultural significance and Murphy's position as recognised US television author, drove the promotion of *Scream Queens* rather than the story content. The next section will demonstrate why there was a clash or a mismatch, between those targeted for *Scream Queens* and the actual content of the show, when considered in the context of the horror cycle on US television at the time, and the now known to TV sophisticated horror audience. Through an exploration of previously disreputable and lowbrow horror texts being elevated to the middlebrow, I will demonstrate how *Scream Queens* engages with the codes and conventions of the cycles of slasher films from 1970s and 1980s, and the post *Scream* cycle of the late 1990s. Through generic awareness I will examine how *Scream Queens* presents cultural and generic capital through an undercurrent of genuine affection and admiration for the slasher and other classic horror movies.

6.6 The Slasher and *Scream Queens*: Building on the classics.

Pindeo describes the slasher as “the most disreputable form of the horror film” (1997, p. 71). In relation to the rest of the horror genre, Valerie Wee said that “the slasher film was languishing at the bottom of the horror heap” (2006). Wee in her paper on *Scream* and its resurrection of the slasher in the mid-1990s describes the position of the slasher film as popular amongst teens in the 1970s and 1980s and dismissed by critics. The slasher was deemed by moral crusaders as “indicative of the decline of Western civilisation” (Rockoff, 2002, p. 1). A combination of the high levels of violence and gore, the apparent inherent misogyny in the killing of so many young women, and the endless sequels¹²⁵, meant that the slasher was largely dismissed by critics and scholars. In the

¹²⁵ The supernatural aspects of the certain killers, Freddie, Jason, Michael, were driven by economics. An

intervening years, views on the slashers have changed, with the misogyny and 'weak woman' perception challenged to bring to light the resourceful Final Girl (Clover, 1992), and the political and social commentary found within allegorical readings of the slasher cycle (Twitchell, 1985; Dika, 1990; Stell, 1998; Hutchings, 2004). Disreputable as the slasher was, it has produced some of the most well-known monsters from the horror genre. The supernatural killers from the slasher cycle – Freddie, Jason, Michael – are recognisable as screen icons who also made their way into American culture. From trading cards, toy figures, Nintendo games, and countless Halloween costumes, the slasher and its most famous killers “had entered [into America's] national consciousness” (Rockoff, 2002, p.1).

One reason that the slasher permeated so far into American culture while at the same time carrying its reputation of disrepute, is that the slasher has a very fixed structure. There are key character types and motifs within a slasher, that while formulaic, form part of the pleasures of the genre (Wee, 2006). The slasher typically has a link to a past event. Some trauma that causes the events in the present. The killer is usually the product of some sort of traumatic event; abuse, a rape, bullying or humiliation, or even the death of a family member, which drives them to seek revenge and / or vengeance. The killer might have had little contact with the outside world (Leatherface in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*). The reasons for the psychological state of the killer are clear – either from the start (*Halloween*, Carpenter, 1978 – Micheal kills his sister because she was having sex instead of looking after him), or exposed at the end (*Sleepaway Camp*, Hiltzik, 1983) – Angela reveals herself to actually be a male, having been raised as a girl after her brother was killed in a car accident. The slasher focusses on the killings rather than exploration of the past event. The past event gives some loose reasoning for the killings to be happening, but the focus of the slasher film is the spectacle of violent murder. The victims are picked off one by one, with point of view camerawork positioning the viewer in the place of the killer; a directorial tactic that came under fire as I will explore below. The events of a slasher take place at sites that are often associated with teenagers: the high school (*Prom Night*, Lynch, 1980); the university campus (*Hell*

indestructible killer means he can come back for film after film and create the franchise.

Night, DeSimone, 1981); summer camp (*Friday the 13th*, Cunningham, 1980); or the family home in which the parents and the adults are away or useless (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Craven, 1984; *Slumber Party Massacre*, Holden Jones, 1982). But key to all of these is isolation. In order for the killing spree to take place, help or escape must remain unavailable (Rockoff, 2002). Clover described the “terrible place” (1992, p. 24) where a slasher movie might be located. This “place” would appear to offer safety, but instead becomes a trap (abandoned rural homes – *Don't Go in the Woods ... Alone*, Bryan, 1981; the KKT sorority house in *Scream Queens*).

Scream Queens fulfills all of these above criteria of the slasher. *Scream Queens* models itself on these conventions from the 1970s and 1980s and in addition, takes the codes and conventions of the post 1995, post-*Scream* slasher cycle, and develops them for US television¹²⁶. The killers (season 1) are the product of a past trauma (the babies in the bathtub and their dead mother); they are raised in an asylum and so have no contact with the outside world, and the sick family that Hester and Boone come from (the Red Devil killers) has several incarnations. The 'family' that was created for them by Gigi in the asylum where she taught them from children to be ruthless killers, or the sorority and fraternity families, that they pledge into. It was the sorority family in which the original event in 1995 took place. So selfish were the sorority sisters when their fellow KKT sister gave birth, that they were more concerned with dancing to their favourite song, than they were of their sister slowly bleeding to death postpartum. *Scream Queens* develops this notion of the sick family by presenting more than one family group. When we see Chanel # 3's family, we get yet another glimpse of a disturbed family, and again when we meet the Radwells¹²⁷.

The *Scream* franchise introduced a new kind of young attractive teenage killer, who is an insider, who has (and kills) many friends. According to Wee, this was representative of teenage fears at the time (mid 1990s). It was their peers who were murdering them in

¹²⁶ I will look more closely at the slasher movies of the 1970s and 1980s in the Genre and Intertextuality section below.

¹²⁷ Chanel # 3's family are rich, rude and dismissive of her. Her father, she discloses, is Charles Manson. The Radwells are a grotesque example of a family. They care only for money and pure bloodlines.

real life in school and college shootings (Wee, 2006). For Wee, killers looked just like the victims, and not the misfit freaks of *Halloween* or *A Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. *Scream Queens* presents its killers are both insiders and misfits. Boone is a fraternity brother. Hester, with her neck brace and scoliosis (which is revealed to be a disguise so she appears to be non-threatening), is a misfit, an ugly duckling. However, upon Dean Munsch changing the rules so that KKT must accept all pledges, Hester rises to become a made-over, pretty sorority sister: Chanel # 6.

While the slasher killers and the formulaic structure of the slasher text have made their way into US culture and consciousness, so too has the concept of the Final Girl. Clover recognised that the lone survivor of many slasher films was a female, that she was resourceful, clever, and frequently virginal. The press were citing Grace and / or Zayday as the final girl (*Ferguson, AV Club, 2015*) as early as episode 1.01 'Pilot' and 1.02 'Hell Week.' While they both survive, alongside the (remaining) Chanel's, I argue that through the serialisation of the slasher and the storytelling space that this allows, and through the use of generic awareness and subversion – that Hester (one of the killers) is the actual final girl, come the close of season 1. *Scream Queens* merges the killer with the final girl: the border between the two collapses. Hester manages to frame the Chanel's for her crimes, but it is only Hester who continues her life on campus. Unlike previous slasher texts, the killer is not defeated by a final girl (*Scream* franchise) or escaped from (*Texas Chainsaw Massacre*), or mysteriously disappears to kill again (*Halloween* franchise)¹²⁸. In this respect, Hester is the final girl. As *Scream Queens* moves into season 2, it is the collection of remaining alive women (though not necessarily final girls) that link the seasons together. It is not the killer – apart from a glimpse of the Red Devil in the final shot of 1.12 'Final Girls' – only the characters move forward. Season 2 sees a new killer, with a new past trauma¹²⁹.

¹²⁸ The Chanel's are sent to an asylum. The other killer Boone, he is killed (by Hester). The third Red Devil, Pete who helps the Red Devil's, is also killed. The person orchestrating the killing, Gigi, is also killed. Of the teens left alive, Hester continues her life (until season 2). In season 2 it is also revealed that while Grace survived, she went insane and had to be institutionalized, and Zeyday dropped out of college. Hester at the close of season 1, is the killer but she is still alive, and free and able to carry on her life.

¹²⁹ In the *Scream* franchise, the central trio moved forwards through each film: Sidney, Gale and Dewey. The first installment sees the action around the family homes, the second moves to a college, and third occurs on film sets in Hollywood. Each location sees the central trio always survive – like the Chanel's, Dean Munsch, Zeyday, Chad

The extreme violence, the murder spectacle, the placing of the viewer in the position of the killer, the implausible situation and the sometimes indestructible killers, and the formulaic nature of the slasher, conspire to make a horror genre that would appear to be on the one hand, impossible for network US television, and on the other, far away from a discussion of middlebrow and cultural legitimacy. This is why *Scream Queens* is a case study worth considering in light of the reputation and structure of the slasher, the rise of seriality, and horror on US television in the years after *The Walking Dead*, and discussions on middlebrow and cultural legitimacy. While I am not making an argument that *Scream Queens* is or is not a “good middlebrow” text (Bastien, *Vulture*, 2016), it is worth testing notions of middlebrow with regards to *Scream Queens* using previous horror texts that were once seen as very low brow – the slashers and other horrors – which have overcome their negative associations and have become middlebrow or 'classic.' Horror drama as I have shown, has overcome its negative associations and also become middlebrow (*Hemlock Grove*) or extremely valuable (*The Walking Dead*). The position of both horror on US television and the horror texts that *Scream Queens* plays with have shifted alongside industrial practice and cultural acceptability and legitimacy. To illustrate this further, I want to briefly show how opinions have changed on three films that are key to the *Scream Queens* series.

6.6.1 The Slasher: From Trash to Middlebrow.

Hitchcock's 1960 *Psycho* in hindsight set the 'rules' for the slasher movie. It had the spooky “terrible place”; the psycho-sexually confused killer¹³⁰, the point of view camera; the victim is slashed with a knife (slasher killers never use guns – the killing is always up close and personal), and *Psycho* killed its leading cast member¹³¹ halfway through the

Radwell and Hester – and each new location brings a new collection of characters to be killed, and ways in which to stalk and kill.

¹³⁰ Several of the slasher killers have psycho-sexual attributes. Some examples would be Angela or Peter, who was raised as a girl in *Sleepaway Camp*, Micheal in *Halloween* is confused by his sister having sex; Leatherface is revealed to be castrated in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre II*, in which his chainsaw is his phallic replacement.

¹³¹ A tactic later picked up on in *Scream* with the opening scene murder of Drew Barrymore, and again in the 1990s cycle of slashers with big name actors not surviving: *Scream 2* kills off Sarah Michelle Gellar – a star of the late 1990s.

movie (Janet Leigh). At the time of its release it was described as; “a blot on an otherwise honorable career” (*New York Times*, 1960); “plainly a gimmick movie” (*Newsweek*, 1960); and (merely one of those TV shows padded out to two hours” (*Esquire*, 1960). “Those TV shows” being at the time one of *Alfred Hitchcocks Presents* (NBC, 1955 – 1962), a mystery anthology series. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* (1960) said it was “obviously a low budget job.” Hollywood at the time was still led by the Hays Code, and such material would never be funded by a big studio. Hitchcock reportedly used his house as collateral to pay for the movie himself (Zinnoman, 2011), though Paramount still distributed and marketed *Psycho*. While a big studio would not fund the material, it also meant that audiences had not seen this kind of film before. Now however, the film is viewed in a very different light. Gleiberman describes the film as a “game changing masterpiece of horror.” On the murder of Marion Crane in the shower, he states that it is,

The ultimate dirty trick. He killed off his lead actress, Janet Leigh, halfway through the movie [...] exposing movie goers to a dark side that few, at the time, could ever have dared to imagine [changing the form of the] orderly and cohesive [...] classic Hollywood. Every time you see a slasher movie [...] you're watching a remake of *Psycho*” (*Entertainment Weekly*, 2009).

Other critics and writers have pointed to *Psycho* as a classic and the roots of the slasher genre (Twitchell, 1985; Waller, 1987; Pinedo, 1997; Rockoff, 2002), with its “notorious shower sequence which has become perhaps the most iconic murder scene in the history of cinema” (Kermode, *The Guardian*, 2010). I will revisit the shower scene in the Genre and Intertextuality section below. What this tells us is that at the time, 1960, *Psycho* was deemed to be low brow. Now *Psycho* is perceived as a masterpiece of cinema, not just horror, and has inspired many other works, the multitude of slashers that followed in the 1970s and 1980s: *Halloween*; *Terror Train* (Spottiswode, 1980); *The Initiation* (Stewart, 1984).

Two other works that are key to *Scream Queens* and its use of generic history, are *Halloween* and *Halloween II* (Rosenthal, 1981). Both these movies have in the trade and entertainment press been cited as inspiration for *Scream Queens*, either by critics or

directly by the creative personnel (Falchuck, talking to Roshanian, *Variety*, 2016). However, like *Psycho*, at the time of their release, they were not well received by the mainstream press¹³². Kael in *The New Yorker* said of *Halloween*,

It isn't ashamed to revive the stalest device of the genre (the escaped lunatic), it satisfies part of the audience in a more basic, childish way than sophisticated horror pictures do (1978).

While Kael here is acknowledging that there is a wider scope of horror apart from the slasher, she is placing the slasher at the bottom of the heap, as the section of horror that debases the rest. Allen in *The Village Voice* described *Halloween* as a “sociologically irrelevant [...] schlock film” (Anthony, Medium, 2018). The use of the point of view camera came under fire. In their movie guide book, Martin & Porter exclaim that “the camera moves in on the screaming pleading victim, looks down at the knife, and then plunges it into chest, ear or eyeball. Now that’s sick” (1986, p. 60). Rogers in *TV Guide* even in 2008 when *Halloween* was being shown on US television, blamed the film for the rest of the slasher trend which was “sadistic and misogynistic.”

By 1981 and the release of *Halloween II*, there was some recognition that *Halloween* had made some positive contribution to cinema, or at least showcased the skill of Carpenter¹³⁴. Ebert in the *Chicago Sun Times* noted that *Halloween II* “doesn't even attempt to do justice to the original [it only] tries to outdo all the other violent *Halloween* rip offs of the last several years” (1981). By 2004 and with some retrospect, Harper concedes that *Halloween II* was better than “the slew of imitation slashers that swamped the [horror] genre in the eighties” (2004, p. 17). It seems that the main issue that critics and scholars¹³⁵ had with slashers into the 1980s was the sheer number of them, and the inevitable low budget offerings. The formulaic nature of the slasher suggested poor and lazy filmmaking.

¹³² By 1978 and *Halloween*, horror cinema had developed a large and loyal following. Fan magazines like *Fangoria* started in 1979, and *Scream* magazine in 1984, feeding the voracious appetite for horror and all the skills behind the scenes. In dedicated publications horror was in the main, discussed positively.

¹³⁴ Although, the argument could be made that critics might have been a bit softer on *Halloween II* after seeing how much money *Halloween* made. Its budget was \$300,000, and made \$47million in the US, and a further \$23million worldwide (*Box Office Mojo*).

¹³⁵ Many film scholars either ignored slashers in their works about horror, or were dismissive of them (McCartney, 1984; Newman, 1988; Schoell, 1985)

Critics have since offered new perspectives on *Halloween* and *Halloween II*. *Halloween* in particular is described over and over again as a classic. *Esquire* said it is a “classic [with] ominous power” (No Author, 2017). Murrain said of Carpenter and *Halloween* that it clearly shows someone “in love with the art of filmmaking [and that it was] highly influential” (*Parade*, 2017). Murrain also praises the use of suspense instead of blood and gore, as the slasher genre gave way to the splatter films of the late 1980s. Carpenter again described as a “horror master [and *Halloween*] is a classic [that] rewrote the rules of horror movies” (No Author, *CBS News*). *Halloween II* again in recent years has been recognised as “a bedrock for a whole host of films that come after it” (Sophie, *Bloody Good Horror*, 2015). Tobias at *The AV Club* likens the “expressive mood to a Dario Argento movie,” and that director Rosenthal “excels at giving the location itself a pervasive menace” (2012). The slasher film has undergone a transition from a chaotic and formulaic movement of horror cinema that was viewed as exploitative and morally corrupt, to horror texts viewed as classic and culturally significant (or rather, some of the slasher films have. I have yet to find a critic in the mainstream press applaud *Slumber Party Massacre*, or *He Knows You're Alone* as horror classics). The slasher in cinema has undergone a journey that has taken it from trash to middlebrow. *Scream Queens* builds on this and the acceptability of horror on US television, to itself engage with the codes and conventions of the slasher.

6.7 Genre and Intertextuality.

This section will consider genre, intertextuality and how *Scream Queens* engages with and celebrates the slasher. This section will continue to work on the second aim of this thesis in determining how shifts in the US television industry have shaped horror drama. With the slasher and its rigid structure and tendency for multiple sequels, this section will take into account that the cultural significance of the older texts has been recognised, and how this translates to *Scream Queens* in its middlebrow rejuvenation of the slasher for serialisation. The original *Scream* movie was both a slasher and not a slasher – its knowingness and high levels of intertextuality alongside characters being aware of their circumstances – meant that *Scream* rose above and transcended the slasher structure.

Like *Scream*, *Scream Queens* both engages with the slasher 'rules,' and rises above them as the demands and forces of US television and serialisation shape the genre. Because of this sophistication which lies under the glamorous facade of *Scream Queens* this section will illustrate how the content of the show did not reflect the promotion of *Scream Queens* via its star cast. For this section of this case study, I will discuss the slasher genre and intertextuality alongside the visual horror. Because much of the visual horror in *Scream Queens* stems from the horror movie references that are contained in the show, it will make for more succinct analysis to consider the visual horror at the same time as the genre play inside the text.

6.7.1 Intertextuality in Season 1.

The promotion of season 1 of *Scream Queens* I have already explored in terms of strategy employed by FOX to build anticipation for their new show. FOX teased the show before any cast had been assigned, and the marketing department were quick to begin promoting the show without any actual footage to refer to. The teasers¹³⁶, according to Murphy, and the posters when they finally did appear, were to only give away the “tone of the show” (Murphy, *Variety*, 2015). This tone promises two things. One, a teen orientated drama series which when eventually cast featured popular actors with varied backgrounds in TV drama, pop music, and film. The tone refers to FOX's heritage and its pioneering of content for the younger demographic. Ensemble dramas that feature younger cast members have been a feature of FOX for some time: *Beverly Hills 90210* (FOX, 1990 – 2000); and *Melrose Place* (FOX, 1992 – 1999) for example. The second, the tone to those that recognise it, was that of a classic slasher, with screaming girls, a masked killer, a bloodied knife and on a university campus. The teens of the slasher combined with the teens of the drama heritage as seen on FOX. Murphy and CEOs Walden and Newman described *Scream Queens* as a “genre bending concept” (Goldberg, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2014), combining as it was both horror and comedy¹³⁷.

¹³⁶ The teasers consisted of a blonde university girl in a sorority themed T shirt, blowing up a pink bubble with her gum, which is popped by a knife.

¹³⁷ I should note here, that the comedy aspect of *Scream Queens* I will largely leave out of this thesis, as it is beyond

While horror had been done on network before *Scream Queens*, no one had yet tried the slasher. It should be pointed out here, that a slasher on network could be viewed as a bold move, in light of both the conditions in network (advertiser supported), and the notoriety of the slasher film in the past. It should also be noted here that MTV, a basic cable channel, in 2015 also launched a slasher series, *Scream: The TV Series*, based on Craven's original 1995 work¹³⁸. The slasher as a genre for TV serialisation was thought to be worth tackling, given the rise of horror across US television more generally. Given the codes and conventions of the slasher already outlined, in particular the teen orientation of the genre, perhaps the audience of MTV was more appropriate for a slasher series.

However, it was not until *Scream Queens* had premiered that the press began to refer to the series as a slasher. There was much talk about Murphy's new horror / comedy series in the run up to the launch, and then thereafter, the slasher label was applied. After episode 1.01 'Pilot,' and 1.02 'Hell Week,' Ferguson noted,

The first two episodes of *Scream Queens* make it clear that this is a show that embraces the fact that it is a weekly slasher series; and as such it's going to do some weekly slashing (Ferguson, *AV Club*, 2015).

Murphy's "tone" then, was perhaps hiding the true slasher nature of the show. No one at FOX said in the promotional material that *Scream Queens* was to be a slasher. And the tone seemed to mirror FOX's ancestry of ensemble teen dramas rather than the darker side of the genre.

The trade and entertainment press however, were quick to draw on the 'rules' of the slasher. As said it is a genre with a very rigid structure, archetypes and storytelling. The press were recognising and describing the formula and highlighting the slasher 'rules' in

the scope of this work to consider comedy serialization alongside horror. Horror fans are used to comedy and its hybridization with horror – see the later films with Freddy Krueger: Freddy became a comedian of a killer, with his one liner jokes and cartoon-like attitude to the murders he was committing. See again *The Evil Dead* franchise and its addition to horror comedy.

¹³⁸ In 2016 came *Slasher* (Super Channel, 2016) on Canadian US television.

the show. Ferguson referred to Grace as the “designated final girl,” and points out that at least one character knows not to run upstairs when the killer is in the house. Ferguson also notes that in her final moments, Sam asks the killer to reveal him or herself to her, and Sam of course recognises her murderer (*AV Club*, 2015). Ferguson also questions whether the sorority sisters in *Scream Queens* know they are in a slasher universe. This knowingness arguably stems from the *Scream* franchise of slasher movies. Starting with the first installment and Randy's knowledge of precisely what is happening to himself and his friends, and his advice offered on how to stay alive – even from beyond the grave in *Scream 3* (Craven, 2000). The mid to late 1990s slasher cycle played with slasher conventions to the point of characters knowing they are in a movie¹³⁹, or at least what movie rules they have learnt and must impart in order to stay alive. This request for knowingness inside a slasher text, suggests that this is expected of a slasher because that is what the last cycle taught us (*Scream*; *Cherry Falls*, Wright, 2000; *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, Gillespie, 1997 etc). The majority of the characters in *Scream Queens* know nothing of their situation, they are not close enough to the original slasher texts in that they do not display any love or knowledge of the material (there is no equivalent to *Scream's* Randy, or Noah in *Scream: The TV Series*). Jamie Lee Curtis however, in her role as Dean Munsch does appear to have an idea of what is going on. Curtis herself homages previous slasher texts (explored below) and she herself engages personally with slasher codes. In season 1, Dean Munsch would appear to be invincible, much like a slasher killer (like Krueger; Vorhees; or Myers). She survives the attacks on her life by Grace and the Chanel's in episode 1.11 'Black Friday'¹⁴⁰. She tells the Chanel's when the Institute staff are attempting to draw the Green Meanie killer out with a Halloween party that they should “feel free to wander off alone” ('Halloween Blues,' 2.04). The other characters display an overt lack of knowledge on the slasher. In 2.04 'Halloween Blues,' when Agent Denise Hemphill allows Hester out of her cell, she gives her a Jason Vorhees costume as disguise. Denise is of the opinion that no one ever wants to dress up as Vorhees on Halloween night. Neither Denise nor Hester have seen *Halloween*, and Denise mistakes Micheal Myers (*Halloween* killer) for actor Mike Myers

¹³⁹ In *Cherry Falls* the characters know that usually virgins stay alive in a slasher situation, but this killer targets only virgins. The teens then all seek to lose their virginity as soon as they can.

¹⁴⁰ Munsch survives a lethal poisoning and being frozen.

(*Wayne's World*, Spheeris, 1992). This in-text knowingness is not expected of any of the previous two case studies. In *The Walking Dead* the monsters are never referred to as zombies, it is a universe where the zombie, or Romero's films, do not exist. In *Hemlock Grove*, the Godfrey's upir status bears no connection to nor mention of Dracula in any of his forms. The characters inside the slasher are expected to know the rules, the structure and the codes and conventions, as we the viewers do.

These rules and expectations make for a horror text with a rigid structure. The repetitiveness of the slasher was in part responsible for some of the critical disdain. Multiple sequels that did little to develop the first installment of a franchise, labelled the slasher genre as formulaic with weak plotting. However, as Wee points out, the formulaic nature of the slasher is part of the fun. She states that “the popularity of the slasher is in part credited to the familiarity contained within them” (Wee, 2006). This fun is a key element of the middlebrow, as suggested by Bastien (2016). The fun in the understanding of the slasher meaning that it can be rejuvenated, recognised and played with. Knowing in advance what the plot would be, who would die, this is one of the key sources of pleasure in the slasher film, and then therefore, the “pleasure that can come from” a US television slasher that builds on the elevation to middlebrow of the horror and slasher text. This generic rigidity allows for a knowingness both within the text and without – the audience of a slasher will have certain expectations. To go back to Murphy's “tone” as the only element he wanted to give away about the show before it aired, is where *Scream Queens* becomes complex and problematic. The tone was teen, pink, glossy, and smart – fitting of a FOX teen drama - and only when *Scream Queens* was eventually broadcast, did it become a slasher. *Scream Queens* took two things – the rigid formulaic slasher and the generic subversion of middlebrow horror drama and combined them to create what Ferguson described as “a love letter to its source material” (*The AV Club*, 2015).

To again point back to the marketing of *Scream Queens* and who it was targeted at, forms the basis for the confusion, or rather, the misfire that *Scream Queens* was. It is clear from the turnaround FOX had to do when their overnight ratings were not as high

as they would have liked given the huge promotional campaign, which *Scream Queens* did not deliver what they had hoped. Carrying much of the promotion was its cast: Nick Jonas, Lea Michele and Keke Palmer, and their presence on social media¹⁴¹. Given their fan base, it must be asked whether or not the promotion – making each new casting an event – suited the material inside *Scream Queens*. Slashers are indeed formulaic, but they also rely much on intertextuality and the relationship between one slasher text and another. Be that the proceeding film in a franchise, or a reboot, or as is often seen, the homage or pastiche. *Scream Queens* is littered with such homages, and it is arguably the sometimes obvious but sometime oblique previous horror movie references, that caused *Scream Queens* to struggle to find its audience when airing. To refer back to *Amazing Stories* as explored in chapter 3, that also 'missed' its audience. Mick Garris through some of the episodes were scary and mysterious, so perhaps there were others who might have thought so too, had they been persuaded to watch the show in the first place. Those in the audience with the knowledge, with the horror capital to see and understand all the references, might have dismissed the promotion of the show as being not for them, if such individuals as Nick Jonas are promoting their new role on TV. If *Scream Queens* appeared to be popular, then 'real' horror fans might have dismissed the show on the promotion. The authenticity that horror fans seek, is missing in the promotion of *Scream Queens*. When a text is popular, horror fans move away and seek something more underground, more authentic. This means that the many horror film references (some of which are very oblique), might have gone unnoticed as those that would notice and gain pleasure from them, did not tune in. With no footage for the marketing team to lean on, and Murphy only wanting to expose the "tone" of the show, the horror homages were either lost on the viewers who actually tuned in, or missed by those that did not tune in. To illustrate this point and to show the depth of the horror movie knowledge in *Scream Queens*, I will explore the horror movie homages, first the more oblique and then the more obvious. To fully explore *Scream Queens* as a slasher on network US television and notions of genre and intertextuality, I will consider the

¹⁴¹ Jonas, a singer songwriter who with his brother was a prominent figure on the Disney Channel, and was famous for wearing a 'purity ring'. Michele, had a thriving career on Broadway, appearing in *Les Miserables*, *Ragtime* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, before starring in *Glee*. Palmer, also a singer songwriter, who had also starred in Nickelodeon's *True Jackson*.

horror movie references together with the visual horror that is delivered through these references, demonstrating how *Scream Queens* engages with the existing codes and conventions of the slasher. Through the use of these references, the visual horror is presented through the cultural legitimacy of the the now taken seriously, classic horror texts. To conclude this section, I will discuss how *Scream Queens* develops as its own slasher, through the spectacle that *Scream Queens* brings to the slasher canon, and finally a look at how *Scream Queens* combined the gruesome murders expected of the genre with comedy.

6.8 Horror intertextuality and Visual Horror: season 1.

In episode 1.01 'Pilot,' the first shot we see is that of a sorority sister with bloody hands, confused, scared, and looking to her house sisters for help. Reminiscent of Carrie's bloody hands in *Carrie*, when she looks to her classmates for help on the shock start of her menstruation.



Figure 50: Sorority girl with the blood of her post-partum sister on her hands. 1.01 'Pilot'

Later in 1.01 in flashback we see the acid burn of Melanie Dorkus, as her spray tan goes away, referencing the tanning bed death in *Sleepaway Camp*. Still in 1.01, the pledges are buried up to their necks in the grass, mirroring the croquet scene in *Heathers* (Lehmann, 1988). Like in *Heathers*, the sisters and friends of Chanel Oberlain, no longer go by their real names. Instead they are Chanel # 2, Chanel # 3 etc. In episode 1.02 'Hell Week,' Dean Munsch tilts her head, in direct homage to Myers, as he tilts his head as he considers himself in a mirror in *Halloween*. 3.03 'Chainsaw,' sees Dean Munsch and Gigi Caldwell, President of the National Chapter of Kappa Kappa Tau move into the KKT sorority house, effectively spoiling any fun Chanel and her minions might have in hazing new pledges. This is a direct reference to the house mothers in *The House on Sorority Row* (Rosman, 1983), who say the sorority is over after graduation, and they need to stop their party.



Figure 51: The pledges are buried up to their necks in a cruel hazing ritual. 1.02 'Hell Week'



Figure 52: The Red Devil bothers Chanel #3 in the bath, in the title sequence. 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch'

Episode 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch' is the only episode that features the full title sequence. Chanel # 3 is in a bath, and the Red Devil killer rises from between her legs, echoing Freddie's clawed gloves rising out of the water, as Nancy drops off to sleep in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch' sees *The Shining* maze, but it is the death of Dodger that both legitimises the visual horror by recreating the frozen Jack Torrence, and at the same time magnifies the visual horror by having the dead Dodger's intestines spilled all around him, after the Red Devil had gutted him with a pair of garden shears.



Figure 53: Dodger lies dead in the maze. 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch'

The use of *The Shining* iconic imagery frames the gory scene by removing some of the shock value of a dead, frozen, gutted teenager, and replacing it with knowledge of a culturally significant work. In 1.06 'Seven Minutes in Hell,' Dodger's twin brother Roger meets his end, again with imagery that mirrors another horror work. The Red Devil murders Roger with a nail gun and dots the whole of Roger's head and face with many nails. As Roger falls to the floor, he resembles Pinhead from *Hellraiser*. A small horror movie reference, but for the purposes of such violence on network, it encases the brutality of the murder sequence in the pleasure of understanding the reference. This episode also reveals that there are secret tunnels under the KKT sorority house, much the same as in *Hell Night* (DeSimone, 1981). 1.07 'Beware of Young Girls' sees a decapitated head in a fish tank – also seen in *He Knows You're Alone*.



Figure 54: Roger resembles Pin Head after the Red Devil kills him. 1.06 'Seven Minutes in Hell'

Aside from the obvious and copious use of the chainsaw by the Red Devil killer, mirroring Leatherface's weapon of choice in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the episode with the most homage and pastiche is 1.04 'Pumpkin Patch.' This episode spends much of its plotting and aesthetic design on *Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991) and *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980). At the end of the previous episode, Zeyday was attacked by the Red Devil. In 1.04 she is revealed to as held captive by the Red Devil in his (or her) lair. Held in a pit, given skin products lowered down in a bucket and with a fluffy white dog, the two sequences in this location mirror that of Buffalo Bill in *Silence of the Lambs*. Later, as Grace, Gigi, Denise and company infiltrate the lair (which the competent Zeyday has already escaped from), the Red Devil kills the lights, leaving Gigi and Denise staring into the darkness. In a direct homage, we see Gigi and Denise through the point of view of the Red Devil, who is wearing night vision goggles. The Red Devil's hand reaches out and nearly but not quite, touches the back of Denise's hair.



Figure 55: The head of the Dean's ex-husband in the fish tank. 1.07 'Beware of Young Girls'



Figure 56: The lights go out in the Red Devil's now infiltrated lair. 1.05 'Pumpkin Patch'

While the homages to these two films are clear, none are as clear as the shower scene in 1.08 'Mommie Dearest.' The iconic murder scene from *Psycho* was recreated shot for shot – even to details on which hand Munsch (Jamie Lee Curtis) would use to pick up the soap. Curtis said “my entire life I have refused to step into the shower because it belongs to my mother” (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015). Curtis said that she was “honoring” Janet Leigh, and that she thought that “genre fans will love it” (2015).



Figure 57: Jamie Lee Curtis tweets this image of herself and her mother in the infamous shower.

The scene runs shot for shot up until a point. When the killer pulls back the curtain, the shower is empty. Munsch attacks the Red Devil and successfully beats her assailant. On giving the Red Devil one last punch, Munsch tells him (or her) that she “saw that movie fifty times.” (*Scream Queens*, 2015). The original shower scene and its accompanying musical score from Bernard Herrman is well known even to those that have not seen the movie. Endlessly scrutinized by scholars, critics and the subject of parodies from all across media, the scene has infiltrated US culture. By taking such an iconic scene with Curtis in the role of her mother, FOX, *Scream Queens* and Murphy, are capitalising on the value of the original. It should also be noted that the scene was made know well before it aired. Curtis tweeted the black and white photo of herself and her mother some weeks before the episode, before the pilot premiere¹⁴². *Scream Queens* was building on the rise of certain horror films being elevated to middlebrow, and of horror on US television infiltrating into cultural legitimacy.

A hardened horror and slasher fan will of course see all these references, but I would argue that the audience for *Scream Queens* targeted via the fans of Nick Jonas, will perhaps not understand the scope of the references in *Scream Queens*. That is not to say of course, that a viewer must 'get' all the homages in order to enjoy the series, but much was made of the failure of *Scream Queens* to find its audience as a reason for the show being cancelled after only two seasons. The obvious and the not so obvious references and homages are asking a lot of the *Scream Queens* audience. An audience who would understand it fully, were perhaps missed or put off by the “tone” that Murphy was allowing out in the teasers, or by the cast themselves. Because there are so many horror homages and references woven into the show, there can be an argument made for the legitimisation of *Scream Queens* via its understanding and use of the horror texts that came before it. However, the sequences such as the shower scene, the night vision goggles and the *Shining* maze, are inflated to the point of cartoonish. That is to say, *Scream Queens* is taking the original horror material and debasing it. By being so overt

¹⁴² Curtis tweeted the picture on September 15th, 2015. The *Scream Queens* premiere was not until the 22nd September.

with the horror movie homages, the value within them could be argued to be lost and degraded.

6.9 Horror intertextuality and Visual Horror: Season 2.

Despite less than desirable ratings for season 1, the multi-platform performance of *Scream Queens* was enough to warrant renewal for a second season. *Scream Queens* became “a model for modern day viewing habits” but needed expansion if it was going to continue for a second season. The location was changed to a hospital, and new cast members were added with intention to increase the viewership. “They knew the show could not return without a wider appeal, as the sorority theme of season 1 alienated viewers, mostly appealing to younger females.” Season 2 was to be a lot “less bubblegum” and a lot darker (Wagmeister, *Variety*, 2016). The anthology format means that it can reset every new season. If something is not working, it can be put to one side in favour of something else. For *Scream Queens*, the location changed to a hospital, but the slasher itself does lend itself to this method of the restart. Despite season 1 being criticised for not killing off enough characters and many more than the promised only four surviving, season 2 of a slasher means that many characters – peripheral or central – can be added. That is to say, the nature of the slasher text invites new blood and a new location with the start of each new story.

The inspiration taken from *Halloween II* takes obvious forms in the clear homages. There are myriad chase sequences through the dark hospital corridors, as the Green Meanie (the killer, or killers, in season 2) pursues several victims through the C.U.R.E. Institute, much like the long protracted chases through Haddonfield Memorial Hospital in *Halloween II*. In *Halloween II*, Nurse Karen is scalded to death; season 2 opener, 2.01 'Scream Again' sees patient Catherine take a very hot, almost scalding bath whereupon she is decapitated by the Green Meanie. Nurse Alves in *Halloween II* is drained of all her blood. Chanel # 9 is murdered in the very same way in 2.06 'Blood Drive.' Episode 2.06 'Blood Drive,' Chanel # 9 is drained of all her blood. Mirroring the blood draining in *Halloween II* (the death of Nurse Alves), this set piece death in season 2 is altogether

more exaggerated and extravagant. In *Halloween II* the victim is found with one IV drain and a pool of blood on the floor. 'Blood Drive' has the Green Meanie insert multiple IV drains to exsanguinate Chanel # 9. Blood bags are hung all around her, surrounding her with IV lines, creating a staged murder scene that reflects more the elaborate set ups of other, more complex serial killers (see the detailed staging of the victims in *Hannibal*, for example). *Scream Queens* takes the hospital setting and the death by exsanguination from *Halloween II* and inflates them to almost cartoonish proportions. These three examples show how *Scream Queens* alleviates some of the tension between visual horror and network US television by calling on previous horror work. By calling on previous horror works the visual horror is excused or cushioned by the pleasure in spotting the horror work at play, or the cultural legitimacy that the previous horror works hold.

6.10 *Scream Queens* and the spectacle of the slasher murder.

Scream Queens overtly engaged with existing slasher texts, but it also developed slasher conventions of its own. The spectacle of murder and the combining of the slasher with comedy. Some of *Scream Queens* own spectacles are possible due to the developing techniques and technologies in special effects, and the increase in the use of special effects across US television drama more generally, as explored in chapter 3, and the increase of horror and its associated imagery after *The Walking Dead*. Despite graphic horror spectacle, the visual horror, being more commonplace on US television come 2015, the very thing that made the slasher disreputable was the violent and multiple murders as spectacle. In the 1970s and 1980s the slasher was largely ignored by press and critics. Martin & Porter described the slasher as "sick," the genre was regarded as the worst of horror, demonstrating everything that was lowbrow and trashy about the genre (Clover, 1992; Pinedo, 1997; Wee, 2006). Dismissed for its focus on the spectacle of murder, the very element that made the slasher so abhorrent (to some) was the relentless graphic killing of multiple victims. This relentless killing was for some critics, the only redeeming feature of *Scream Queens*. Kornhaber said "You can say this about *Scream Queens*: it has some nice killings" (*The Atlantic*, 2015). He went on to

praise the “deranged creativity of the slayings [that contain] exquisite gross -out.” For Kornhaber, he could not believe that they (FOX) were showing these images. Noting that the “camera holds steady” rather than cutting away, Kornhaber astutely picks up on in his review of 1.01 'Pilot' and 1.02 'Hell Week,' that a network channel is not only engaging with a slasher, it is not cutting out any of the visual horror. As the first season progressed, critics were complaining about the lack of killings. For most of the press, there was not enough murder in Murphy's slasher series, with too much of a focus on the killing off of “cannon fodder,” as opposed to the star cast that drove the promotion. Ferguson in particular was quite put out by the dearth of big name deaths and said that the *Scream Queens* creators (Murphy, Brennan and Falchuck) forgot to do what the “show promised to do: slash characters” (*AV Club*, 2015). This wanting for more killing, more murder spectacle, points to the journey that horror had made on US television by 2015 / 2016. If a slasher can in the first instance be made for a free to air network, and then in the second instance be criticised for not being violent enough, horror had indeed become altogether more acceptable on TV. The pushback that Murphy received from FOX Broadcasting Standards and Practices on the content of *Scream Queens* was not on the violence, but instead on the sorority hazing rituals that Murphy wanted to touch upon in the early episodes¹⁴³ (Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2015). Away from the homages to previous horror texts, *Scream Queens* as a slasher and as a horror comedy, presented its own contribution to the key element of the slasher, the murders, via two incarnations: The absurd slasher spectacle and comedy.

6.10.1 The Absurd Slasher Spectacle.

The slasher focusses on murder as spectacle. Across US television more generally, drama has been focusing on spectacle, as explored in chapter 3. For the growth of horror on US television, part of the shift has been to include in contemporary horror drama more visual horror as spectacle. And crucially, more visual horror that is of a high technical skill. I demonstrated in *The Walking Dead* case study that the zombies that

¹⁴³ Across the US, hazing rituals for entrance into sororities and fraternities have led to injury and even death. Alcohol poisoning, physical and sexual abuse, have all caused many to want to abolish the Greek system.

Nicotero creates form a good portion of the show's promotion. In *Hemlock Grove*, the werewolf transformation scene was the first footage to be shown to the TV industry; illustrating both the levels of visual horror to be expected in the show and the level of skill and labor involved. In the adding of a horror to FOX's slate, and by Murphy as well – *American Horror Story* certainly does not hold back on the visual horror – when the horror drama cycle on TV was peaking, *Scream Queens* had to present its own technical skill and spectacle of visual horror. That it could do this on network points to again the rising acceptability of horror on US television.

Episode 1.01 'Pilot' features two spectacular deaths, neither of which cut away, and both are gruesome. In a failed prank to scare away the undesirable pledges, Chanel fries the face of Kappa house maid, Miss Bean by dunking her head in the deep fat fryer. Upon rising from the burning oil, Miss Bean pulls off her crispy face skin, in a skillfully made prosthetic piece. Miss Bean, understandably, dies from shock. This scene is both ridiculous and spectacular: the absurd way in which Miss Bean dies and the highly realistic pulling off of the skin, all with no cut away. Later in 'Pilot,' hopeful pledge Deaf Taylor Swift is decapitated by lawn mower in an elaborately constructed set piece death. Buried up to their necks, the pledges await dawn until the Red Devil appears on a ride on lawn mower. The Red Devil then drives over Swift, and the mower explodes her head. While the damage to Swift's head occurs out of sight underneath the mower, the grinding sound and the gore spray out from the mower is spectacular: the camera is low, at ground level as we are shown the point of view from the front bumper of the lawn mower as it approaches Swift. The shot remains low but moves round to the side of the mower for full detail on the gore spray.



Figure 58 : Miss Bean tears off her own fried face. 1.01 'Pilot'



Figure 59: The Red Devil on a lawnmower approaches Deaf Taylor Swift. 1.02 'Hell Week'



Figure 60: Deaf Taylor Swift's head sprays out from under the mower. 1.02 'Hell Week.'

Season two in total features nine deaths by machete and two by scythe (Episodes 2.01 'Scream Again;' 2.02 'Warts and All;' 2.03 'Handidates;' 2.05 'Chanel Pour Homme-icide;' 2.07 'The Hand;' and 2.10 'Drain the Swamp')¹⁴⁴. Some of them are standard stab and slashes, some slow down the actual act to fully focus in on the murder as spectacle. In 2.01 'Scream Again' Doctor #1 has his throat slit in slow motion, by a thrown, spinning machete. A CGI effect, the machete glides across his throat as he lies down, inebriated at the Halloween party. In 2.03 'Handidates,' the Green Meanie throws a scythe which decapitates cured patient Sheila, as she chats with Zayday and Chamberlain. Sheila spots the killer just as he throws the weapon.

¹⁴⁴ By machete: Catherine Hobart; Doctor #1; Doctor #2; Doctor #3; Dr Mike; Nurse Thomas; Tristen St Pierre; Chanel #11; Slade Hoborn; and Dr Cassidy Cascade. By scythe; Randall; and Sheila Baumgartner.



Figure 61: The Green Meanie throws the scythe. 2.03 'Handidates'



Figure 62: Sheila spots the incoming scythe. 2.03 'Handidates'



Figure 63: The Scythe decapitates Sheila. '2.03 'Handidates'



Figure 64: The camera pans around with the spinning scythe and then Sheila's spinning head. 2.03 'Handidates'

The camera switches between the point of view of the killer and Sheila, but each shot has the spinning scythe in focus. As it neatly slices through her neck, the camera pans around her head showing the injury through 360 degrees. Witnesses to the event, Zayday and Chamberlain, are shown screaming from the point of view of the spinning off head. These deaths and others in the two seasons of *Scream Queens* are simultaneously absurd and gory, which is the nature of a slasher. The absurdity of the spectacle of these killings is the essence of what alleviates tension between horror and network US television. They are so absurd that the spectacle of murder becomes lessened. This absurdity in the spectacle is inflated even more when combined with the other half as it were, of *Scream Queens*, the comedy.

6.10.2 Visual Horror and Comedy

In the promotion of *Scream Queens* there were claims that Murphy was inventing a new genre – the horror-comedy. The comedy then can go some way to frame the actions of the killer(s) and soften the violence. The disturbance in the “participatory pleasure” (Freeland, 2000) is lessened through comedy and slapstick. In 1.01 'Pilot' again, Chanel #2 converses with the Red Devil via her phone; whilst the killer is standing right in front of her. After being stabbed in the chest, instead of crying or calling for help, Chanel #2 texts the killer again asking him (or her) to stop, dives for her laptop and posts on Twitter that she is being killed. Chanel #2 is brutally murdered but located in a comedic moment. Fraternity brother Caulfield meets the Red Devil twice – he has his arms chain sawed off in 1.03 'Chainsaw' and is decapitated in 1.06 'Seven Minutes In Hell.' In 1.03 'Chainsaw' the Red Devil saws off Caulfield's arms, first one then the other, leaving huge wounds with cartoon-like blood sprays.



Figure 65: Dicky Dollar Scholar brother Caulfield, is left dismembered by the Red Devil. 1.03 'Chain Saw'

In comparison to all the other injuries that the Red Devil causes, this one lacks any realism. Caulfield remains standing, with no arms, and blood spraying from his wounds as if from a garden hose. The sequence is slapstick in its physical construction; making the visual horror less horrifying. Caulfield eventually meets his end in 1.06 'Seven Minutes In Hell,' and the slapstick continues. After trying to climb a ladder, armless, to escape the Red Devil, he falls and the Red Devil approaches. His fraternity brothers and sisters watch from the window, unable to help. The only thing they can do for him (according to brother Chad Radwell) is to “give him the dignity of watching him die.” And so his brothers and sisters watch the Red Devil first axe Caulfield in the stomach, before decapitating him. Again, the slapstick construction of the scene – an armless man trying to climb a ladder – renders the visual horror safe. It is funny rather than horrifying. Episode 2.05 'Chanel Pour Homme-icide' kills off Chanel #11 almost immediately after she becomes a 'Chanel.' She has an eleventh finger, which the Green Meanie cuts off

with the machete. Chanel #11 thanks the killer for this act, and then he (or she) stabs Chanel #11 in the stomach.

FOX set out to be and continues to try, to be edgy, and to appeal to a younger demographic. Playing the violent spectacle of murder in a slasher for laughs might appear to debase horror again: debasing TV horror after it has over the previous years since *The Walking Dead*, elevated itself to middlebrow. But then the slasher and the pleasure of the slasher text, comes from repetition and meeting audience expectations. As Wee noted, slasher audiences of the 1970s and 1980s were sometimes laughing at the violence on screen, as ridiculous as it was. So, while the exploitation of the visual horror now afforded to even network US television to generate laughs might appear to debase the horror genre on US television, it might actually be a more authentic version of an the already established horror genre, the slasher.

Despite best efforts to expand the scope and reach of *Scream Queens* in its second season, the slasher series was not renewed for a third. Even though it “performed well in delayed viewing and was extremely buzzy on social media,” over the two seasons it “struggled to find an audience” (Wagmeister & Birnbaum, *Variety*, 2017). It struggled to find its audience I argue, because the content did not match the promotion. The cupcakes and the “bubblegum” tone that mirrored the past teen featured dramas of FOX heritage, did not match with the horror homages that were woven into the show. While a deep understanding of horror movies is not needed to enjoy the show, those that came because of Nick Jonas may well not find pleasure in set piece slasher killings. Those that came for Jamie Lee Curtis may also not find pleasure in the “deliberately constructed [...] hyper-articulate speeches” delivered by Chanel Oberlin, as she spits bile at anyone and everyone she comes into contact with (Scherer, *The Atlantic*, 2015). *Scream Queens* was however, multi layered – the star cast; the promotion of cast and Murphy; the many references; the comedy. All these components of *Scream Queens* should have led to it being successful – especially given the horror cycle on US television at the time enjoying success elsewhere. *Scream Queens* however, was not a

pivotal moment in US television horror history. By 2015, and 2017 when *Scream Queens* ended its two season run, it could be argued that horror had reached saturation point on US television. Horror had enjoyed a run of dramas on TV after *The Walking Dead*, and the cycle had experimented with a great range of horror sub-genres. While US television was ready for the slasher (also appearing on MTV and on Super Channel in Canada), *Scream Queens* appealed to lots yet reached few. The surface glamor of *Scream Queens* was only a small part of the show. The depth of the horror film references illustrate a strong knowledge of horror and what pleases horror fans – the intertextuality was a key element of the rejuvenated slashers of the mid 1990s (Cherry, 2009; Wee, 2006). But the positioning of *Scream Queens* via its pop culture cast, meant that the slasher became mainstream; the features of the slasher that gave it its “(sub) cultural capital” (Hills, 2012, p. 98); the low budget authenticity, and how the “taboo [of] the slasher film lies by and large beyond the purview of the respectable audience” (Clover, 1987, p. 187), was missing in the pop culture promotion of *Scream Queens*.

6.11 Case Study Conclusion.

In the years since *The Walking Dead* horror grew in popularity and frequency on US television, presenting a detectable horror cycle. Being advertiser supported, FOX as a broadcast network strives for large numbers of dedicated viewers. *The Walking Dead* and the horror shows that came after it demonstrated that it was possible. Murphy had a fruitful career at the FOX networks and the FOX CEO's wanted to capitalise on the horror trend, so called Murphy for a horror series for FOX that experimented with genre. Murphy's career path had carved out a middlebrow brand, and contemporary middlebrow drama tends towards genre US television: genres that in the past have never been considered for expensive serialisation. To develop a slasher for US television, the promotion was largely centred on the young cast (and the more established TV drama stars in season 2), and the credentials of Murphy. The horror content of the show was not key to the promotion, despite a large part of the show consisting of in depth and sophisticated knowledge and engagement with previous horror texts and horror codes and conventions. Elements of the slasher once discredited

were now praised in the press, with some critics calling for a higher body count in *Scream Queens*. *Scream Queens* consists of several layers: the surface glamour of the star cast; slasher codes and conventions; horror references; seriality and its effect on the slasher; and comedy. In season 1 the multiple horror references both obvious and oblique fulfill both slasher conventions as a work that engages with intertextuality, and support *Scream Queens* as it builds on the journey that such texts have made from low to middlebrow. While *Scream Queens* presented the older, more classic slasher movies in homage, in its own story construction, it was also a child of the post-*Scream*, late 1990s cycle of slasher. *Scream Queens* built on the commercial success of horror on US television seen with *The Walking Dead*; the cultural legitimation via the elevation to middlebrow of horror, as created by *Hemlock Grove*; the development of the showrunner as TV author with Murphy, and the elevation of older horror texts that were once disreputable now viewed as classic. *Scream Queens* demonstrated that horror had risen to such an extent on US television, that a slasher was deemed acceptable on a broadcast network. However, the extent to which horror had become acceptable on US television meant that *Scream Queens* combination of horror and popular culture, pushed horror and the slasher, too far into the mainstream, resulting in cancellation, and perhaps signaling the decline of the cycle of horror drama that flourished after *The Walking Dead*.

Final Conclusions.

This thesis asked How has the rise of horror on US television impacted on the spectacle and acceptability of the genre? I approached this question by first acknowledging the rise in horror programming through examining and presenting the evidence for the shifts in the US television industry that allowed horror to enjoy a steep growth, with and after *The Walking Dead*. Once the evidence and explanation for the rise of horror was established, I concentrated on three case studies that examined horror dramas across the three tiers of US television. Through industrial analysis, textual analysis and examination of discourse in the trade and entertainment press, I have met the aims of the research question, which were as follows:

- △ To account for and provide evidence for, the rise of horror on American US television.
- △ To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes in the US television industry – and how these changes have shaped horror on TV.
- △ To discover how the horror genre is acceptable on US television now, and why.

To conclude this thesis, I will address each of these above aims in turn.

To account for and provide evidence for, the rise of horror on American US television.

Over the last thirty years, US television has seen some radical changes. The introduction of more channels across differing models of TV – from free to air advertiser supported networks, basic cable and subscription channels and services – led to the fragmentation of the viewing audience and growing competition between services. Some channels began to cater to very specific groups (music US television, children's US television, sports networks), while others sought loyalty and dedicated viewers through genre US television. Genre TV (loosely defined as fantasy, science-fiction themed US television drama) was employed to target specific audiences and important demographics. The high levels of dedication from fans of genre TV was demonstrated through shows like *Buffy* and *Lost*. In particular, *Lost* coincided with the expansion in

social media, demonstrating to US television just how important and useful the dedication of fans to genre, and fan practices, could be to TV. US television began to harness this potential and turn to genre dramas to either attract viewers or keep viewers¹⁴⁵. The rise of seriality across US television more generally, took existing forms and developed them – usually making them grittier, harder, and more 'adult.' See cop show *The Wire*, and the Western *Deadwood*. The developing technology both at production level and for exhibition allowed for more spectacular US television drama. As technologies developed, the methods of creating such drama became cheaper, and wide screen HDTV sets in the home meant that it was worth making drama that included visual storytelling. The 2000s and 2010s saw the rise of such visual texts – both within the horror genre and without: *Lost*; *Boardwalk Empire*; and *Game of Thrones*.

This developing trend of US television affording the spectacular, for horror, drew the genre in a different direction than (some) contemporary horror cinema. As TV horror drama became gorier, horror cinema became more suggestive. Horror on US television was reveling in the “aesthetic excellence” (Lotz, 2014) that was expected of expensive serial dramas. These changes in the US television industry encouraged a shift in the hierarchy of film and TV. US television was offering both scope and scale of complex storytelling, and visual effects and budgets, which appealed to film personnel. TV was now no longer a step down for filmmakers, and instead offered a platform in which to indulge their craft away from Hollywood and the cycle of superhero blockbusters. All the doors were opening for the horror genre to be explored on US television: with the industry aware of the potential held in genre TV, the rise of seriality and the affordances TV now made for visual storytelling, the turning point came in 2010 with *The Walking Dead*.

To determine what contemporary horror drama is now – given the changes in the US television industry – and how these changes have shaped horror on TV.

¹⁴⁵ This exploitation of fan practice was apparent in my case studies: for all of them their promotion at Comic-Cons, and more specifically, *Talking Dead* that follows episodes of *The Walking Dead*; promoting *Hemlock Grove* through the credentials of Eli Roth; and *Scream Queens* generation of chatter on social media through the existing fans of its cast.

The key point that my argument stems from, is that *The Walking Dead* was the revolutionary moment that generated the surge of horror programming that followed from 2010 to 2016. The changes in the US television industry as explored and met in the answer to the first aim (above) allowed for *The Walking Dead* to occur. My research into *The Walking Dead* looked at how the TV industry in its configuration during the cycle of horror in question, and the unique conditions at AMC, how these shaped this zombie text. AMC is a movie channel that expanded into original drama series. The conditions of AMC as a film channel meant that *The Walking Dead* was driven by movie genres, giving each season a new direction in which to take the zombie saga. *The Walking Dead* was repackaged every season with a different overlaid genre, which served to promote the longevity of the show, and as the other case studies showed, pointed to a strong acknowledgment of generic awareness, and the use of film elements, codes and conventions, essential to build a TV horror text.

AMC positioned *The Walking Dead* as film in its promotion. The promotional posters resembled film posters despite the ensemble cast and serial structure. Cast, showrunners, producers and the AMC President, all likened *The Walking Dead* to a movie. As the demarcation lines between film and US television and their perceived hierarchies of significance began to blur, US television and *The Walking Dead* were shaping TV horror drama as a new form of screen horror. The demands of US television however, took precedent and the success of *The Walking Dead* was measured according to the rules and language of US television. The high ratings, the key demographics and the millions of dollars in advertising revenue. It was these figures in this language, that changed the attitudes of other networks, services, personnel and CEO's, in favour of horror.

The US television landscape expanded to include Internet native sites also making original drama. Similar to AMC, Netflix moved into drama production, and had ambitions for its drama content to be culturally significant, like that of HBO. *Hemlock Grove* was a product of Netflix' early foray into drama, the trend of TV horror more generally that had been kick started by *The Walking Dead*, and a desire from Netflix to rival HBO. For

Netflix, Eli Roth as showrunner represented cultural significance from his standing in the horror community. A significance that Netflix hoped to harness with their drama output. The masses of data that Netflix gathers drives their generic awareness. Because Netflix can identify all their subscriber preferences and track what does well and what does not, this shaped their version of a horror drama. *Hemlock Grove* was made to cover a large section of the Netflix viewership that comprised of smaller groups with their own specific likes. The three trailers for the first season of *Hemlock Grove* demonstrated this generic knowledge through data collection: the first appealed to fans of teen supernatural texts, the grown-up *Twilight* fans. The second appealed to the more mature audiences, who favour complex thriller drama with strong female leads, and the third was the horror trailer for the Eli Roth fans.

Hemlock Grove and Netflix continued with the process of taking previously seen forms of drama and developing them – as the rise of seriality demonstrated. In *Hemlock Grove*, the revisiting of classic monsters saw TV vampires and werewolves made edgier and gorier. The model of Netflix and its method of full season drops meant however that the show took a long time to reach such gory sequences. But with no weekly rhythm of episodes, there was no need for any sort of monster / scare / kill of the week structure that makes more sense over on cable or network. *Hemlock Grove* could indulge then in the story leading the structure of the episodes and allow the story to unfold as it needs to.

By 2015, horror was widespread on US television, and free to air network FOX ensured that they did not miss out on the trend of horror drama. *Scream Queens* developed existing horror film texts in direct reference and homage, wrapping the slasher film in pop culture and populated the series with well-known stars from film, US television and music. *Scream Queens* took advantage of the growth of horror on US television and its accompanying success and acceptability, by poking fun at established horror codes and conventions, playing them for laughs and inflating known horror sequences to spectacular, cartoon-like levels. Like the previous two case studies, *Scream Queens* blurs the line between US television and film. This blurred line between horror and

authenticity – while the show was filled with many horror film references, some obvious some oblique, it was cushioned and surrounded by comedy and intertextual exploration that jumped in and out of pop culture, the slasher universe, and reality. In short, it was unclear who *Scream Queens* was for, and what it was trying to be.

To discover how the horror genre is acceptable on US television now, and why.

In the first instance, *The Walking Dead* made horror acceptable on US television and changed the attitudes of the TV industry towards horror through its enviable high ratings, high numbers of key demographics, and revenue gained through advertising. *The Walking Dead* demonstrated the viability of horror but it still had to first make it acceptable. One of the central issues that have in the past caused horror to be problematic for US television previous to *The Walking Dead* and the 2000s, was the lack of visual horror. Or rather, the medium of US television, its models, strategies and funding, not allowing graphic horror space to develop. *The Walking Dead* circumnavigated these issues by harnessing the skill in the production of the special effects team and using it for promotional purposes. In addition, while *The Walking Dead* was driven by the different overlaid genres from film – the Western; the road movie; the action and the gangster – it was still a weekly drama series based on zombies. The zombies took a background role when considering how the threats to the characters developed, but to maintain generic fidelity the zombies developed aesthetically over the course of the seasons. The skill in making more gory and unique featured hero zombies, and having them change week to week, is shaped by the demands of a weekly US television series. Even though *The Walking Dead* is a serialisation, the zombies developed as a monster of the week. That is to say, each weekly installment of *The Walking Dead* gets its own zombie set piece, with different zombies under the influence of different environmental factors: water logged zombies, swamp zombies, sandy mummified zombies etc.

In the TV drama landscape after *The Walking Dead*, the use of gore and special effects as promotion was adopted by others. *Hemlock Grove* presented its gory werewolf

transformation scene as a spectacle of display both within the text and without. Away from the gore and promotion, Netflix were seeking cultural significance through the legitimacy of their drama output. In chasing this legitimacy, *Hemlock Grove* presented itself as Gothic text. Aligning itself with the literary prestige of Gothic literature, *Hemlock Grove* develops itself as a middlebrow text – the process of top down cultural legitimisation. This Gothic and legitimacy, cushions the horror in *Hemlock Grove*, and allows *Hemlock Grove* to combine the Gothic and the gory. In a world post *The Walking Dead*, and the rise of visual spectacle across US television more generally, visual horror spectacle is expected of a horror drama. The Gothic has cultural legitimacy through its historical past in literature and on US television, and Eli Roth has cultural significance in the horror community. Together, they make *Hemlock Grove* and its horror acceptable.

Scream Queens demonstrates the process of bottom up elevation to middlebrow and cultural legitimacy. *Scream Queens* builds on the journey of both film horror and US television horror. The horror films that *Scream Queens* draws on, have become classic and culturally significant works. TV Horror since *The Walking Dead* has been on its own journey from outlier to TV trend. Showrunner Ryan Murphy also added some credibility to the series, with his position as a successful US television creative. *Scream Queens* serialised the slasher and paid homage to previous slasher and horror texts, but the elevation to middlebrow of these texts and for *Scream Queens*, implies a lack of authenticity. The middlebrow appeals to many, it is mainstream. For horror to have reached such a place where a slasher could be on free to air advertiser supported network and be cast with pop stars and TV stars from children's US television and comedy, this horror text is no longer part of the horror subculture.

Twenty years ago horror was deemed unsuitable for US television, but then shifts in the industry opened the door for horror. *The Walking Dead* demonstrated to the rest of the industry that horror was worthwhile and profitable. *Hemlock Grove* then explored all the nuances of horror and the sophisticated horror audiences and demonstrated that horror drama could be a culturally legitimate form. *Scream Queens* showed us just how far horror had come on US television with the serialisation of the slasher, yet in celebrating horror

classics while wrapping the slasher in pop culture and glamour, *Scream Queens* debased horror on US television by inviting questions regarding the authenticity of horror in the mainstream. However, horror drama has continued on US television past the cancellation of *Scream Queens*. *The Walking Dead* continues, as do other dramas (at the time of writing): *American Horror Story*; *Z Nation*; *iZombie*; *The Exorcist*; *Fear the Walking Dead*. Later years saw new horror launches¹⁴⁶, and though the growth of TV horror was not as steep as the years between *The Walking Dead* and *Scream Queens*, horror has become a cornerstone of US television drama. There was a detectable surge in horror drama in the years after *The Walking Dead*, a surge that peaked and then plateaued, leaving TV horror as a solid contributor to the screen horror canon. Horror drama on US television now sits firmly inside received notions of cultural significance, with the long running examples like *American Horror Story* about to begin its eighth season as I write, and current cinema offerings appearing in serialised form almost in tandem: *The First Purge* (2018, McMurray) released in cinemas in July in the US, and its sister TV drama *The Purge* coming to the SyFy channel in September 2018. The cycle of horror that I examined in this thesis were clear and obvious horror. That is to say, they were recognisable horror themed texts - recognisable through their monsters (zombies, vampires, werewolves and slashers). US television drama hybridises genres in order to create new texts. Horror on US television now, post the cycle of horror that this thesis deals with, is seeing horror dramas merge with other genres and interestingly, other methods of production. *The Alienist* (TNT, 2018) is a horror come murder investigative series; *Siren* (Freeform, 2018), a horror twist on the legends of ancient sea creatures; *The Crossing* (ABC, 2017), a science fiction horror thriller; *Devilman Crybaby* (Netflix, 2018), a Japanese anime horror; and *Constantine: City of Dreams* (CW Seed, 2018), another animated horror comic book adaptation. That horror has become a cornerstone of US television is truly reflected in the TV horror being merged, hybridised and re appropriated, and even animated, for new genre drama cycles and experiments. In examining the industrial contexts that underpin the cycle of contemporary horror drama, I have identified, historicized and contextualized a cycle of screen horror, the contemporary horror drama on US television. I have

¹⁴⁶ *Stan Against Evil* (IFC, 2016-); *Lore* (Amazon Video, 2017 -); *Ghost Wars* (SyFy, 2017 – 2018); *Castlevania* (Netflix, 2017 -); *Channel Zero* (SyFy, 2017 -); *Castle Rock* (Hulu, 2018 -); *The Terror* (AMC, 2018 -); and *The Purge* (SyFy, 2018).

historicised horror drama in the developing US television industry itself and examined and explained the impact of the TV industry and modern US television as a medium – in all its incarnations – on the horror genre as a serialized drama.

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[nominations/?mtrref=undefined&gwh=3E4449FEB0023234C7D3C4B20A899B84&gwt=pay](https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/18/watching-for-the-2013-primetime-emmy-nominations/?mtrref=undefined&gwh=3E4449FEB0023234C7D3C4B20A899B84&gwt=pay)

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[plan.html?mtrref=undefined&gwh=A0EDD273FBDA2665F08152E0396582FA&gwt=pay](https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/technology/netflix-lost-800000-members-with-price-rise-and-split-plan.html?mtrref=undefined&gwh=A0EDD273FBDA2665F08152E0396582FA&gwt=pay)

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Selected TV and Filmography

TV

American Horror Story (FX, 2011 -)
Boardwalk Empire (HBO, 2010 - 2014)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (The WB / UPN, 1997 – 2003)
Cagney & Lacey (CBS, 1982 - 1987)
CSI (CBS, 2000 - 2015)
Deadwood (HBO, 2004 – 2006)
Desperate Housewives (ABC, 2004 - 2012)
Dexter (Showtime, 2006 – 2013)
Dynasty (ABC, 1981 - 1989)
ER (NBC, 1994 - 2009)
Exorcist, the (FOX, 2016 -)
Game of Thrones (HBO, 2011 -)
Hannibal (NBC, 2013 - 2015)
Haunting Passion, The (NBC, 1988)
Hemlock Grove (Netflix, 2013 – 2015)
Heroes (NBC, 2006 – 2010)
Hill St Blues (NBC, 1981 – 1987)
House of Cards (Netflix, 2013 -)
Knots Landing (CBS, 1979 - 1993)
iZombie (The CW, 2015 -)
Lost (ABC, 2004 – 2010)
Mary Tyler Moore Show, The (CBS, 1970 - 1977)
Masters of Horror (Showtime, 2005 – 2007)
Nip/Tuck (FX, 2003 – 2010)
OA, The (Netflix, 2016)
Penny Dreadful (Showtime, 2014 - 2016)
Sex and The City (HBO, 1998 - 2004)

Scream: The TV Series (MTV, 2015 -)
Scream Queens (FOX, 2015 – 2017)
Sopranos, The (HBO, 1999 – 2007)
Strain, The (FX, 2014 -)
Strange Possession of Mrs Oliver, The (NBC, 1977)
Supernatural (The WB / The CW, 2005 -)
Talking Dead (AMC, 2011 -)
Terra Nova (FOX, 2011)
True Blood (HBO, 2008 – 2014)
Ugly Betty (ABC, 2006 - 2010)
Vampire Diaries, The (The CW, 2009 – 2017)
Walking Dead, The (AMC, 2010 -)
Wire, The (HBO, 2002 - 2008)

Film

American Werewolf in London (Landis, 1981)
A Few Dollars More (Leone, 1965)
A Nightmare on Elm Street (Craven, 1984)
Cabin Fever (Roth, 2002)
Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, The (Weine, 1921)
Die Hard (McTiernan, 1988)
Doomsday (Marshall, 2008)
Fall of The House of Usher, The (Corman, 1960)
Godfather (Coppola, 1972)
Godfather II (Coppola, 1974)
Goodfellas (Scorsese, 1990)
Halloween (Carpenter, 1978)
Halloween II (Rosenthal, 1981)
High Noon (Zinneman, 1952)
Hostel (Roth, 2005)

Hostel II (Roth, 2007)
How the West Was Won (Ford, Hathaway, Marshall, 1962)
It Follows (Mitchell, 2014)
Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers, The (Jackson, 2003)
Night of The Living Dead (Romero, 1968)
Paranormal Activity (Peli, 2007)
Psycho (Hitchcock, 1960)
Saw (Wan, 2004)
Scream (Craven, 1995)
Shining, The (Kubrick, 1980)
Silence of The Lambs, The (Demme, 1991)
Texas Chain Saw Massacre (Hooper, 1974)
True Grit (Hathaway, 1969 / Coen Bros, 2010)
Twilight (Hardwicke, 2008)

Appendix

Appendix 1

Promotional posters for *The Walking Dead* that persist in featuring Rick Grimes and little to none of the rest of the cast.



Figure 66: Season 2 promotional poster

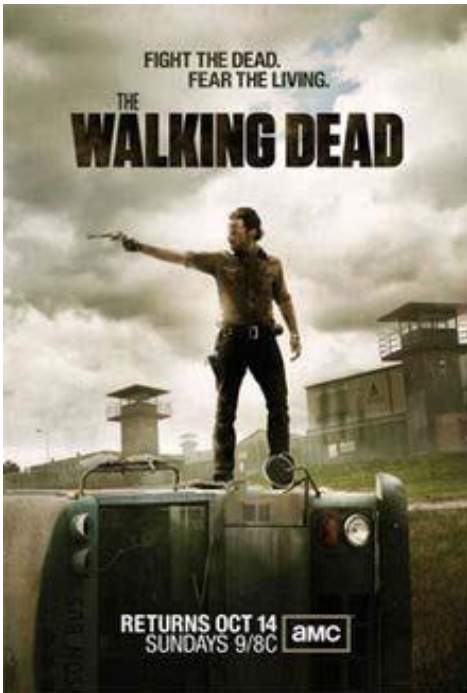


Figure 67: Season 3 promotional poster



Figure 68: Season 4 promotional poster

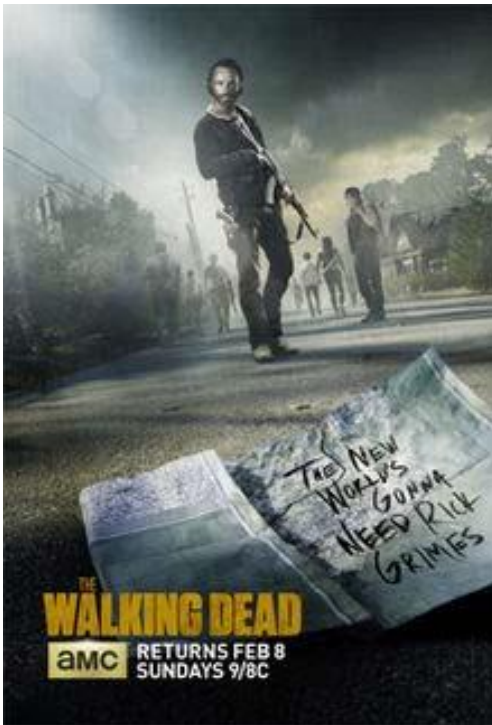


Figure 69: season 5 promotional poster



Figure 70: season 6 promotional poster. Each central cast member got their own version.

