1. LONG TIME DEAD

In 2002, the filmmaker Richard Stanley sounded the death knell of 'the great British horror movie'. His 'obituary', which appeared in Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley's edited volume *British Horror Cinema*, lamented the general absence of any real directorial talent at the turn of the millennium, noting that the horror film directors 'who really knew what they were doing escaped to Hollywood a long time ago' (Stanley 2002: 194). Stanley cited the direct-to-video occult horror *The 13th Sign* (Jonty Acton and Adam Mason, 2000) as offering a glimmer of hope, but concluded that it was 'still a long way below the minimum standard of even the most vilified 1980s product' (2002: 193).

Stanley's pessimism was not unfounded (even if his assessment of *The 13th Sign* was perhaps a bit unfair). Hammer Films – the once-prolific film studio responsible for the first full-colour horror film, *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher), in 1957, and a host of other classic British horrors over the next two decades – buckled under market pressure and ceased making feature films in 1979. The 1980s, therefore, saw the production of only a handful of British horror films, which, at any rate, were mostly thought of as American productions that had peripheral British involvement, such as Stanley Kubrick's blockbuster *The Shining* (1980) and Clive Barker's franchise-initiating *Hellraiser* (1987). Others from the decade were artsy one-offs, such as the Gothic fairy tale *The Company of Wolves* (Neil Jordan, 1984), or (as was most often the case) amateurish flops, such as the cheap and clumsy monster movie *Rawhead Rex* (George Pavlou, 1986). Aside from the *very* occasional hit,[1] most of these were critical and commercial failures (Conrich 1998).

The following decade was similarly dire.[2] With the exception of a smattering of micro-budget releases like Richard Stanley's own *Hardware* (1990), *Funny Man* (Simon Sprackling, 1994), *Razorblade Smile* (Jake West, 1998) and *Darklands* (Julian Richards, 1996), the 1990s did not proffer the most encouraging environment for indigenous horror film production. The 'video nasty'[3] moral panic that had plagued the 1980s was given new life in 1993, when toddler James Bulger was murdered by two children who had allegedly been inspired by the video release of Jack Bender's killer doll film *Child's Play 3* (although no evidence was ever found to support this claim).[4] Moreover, media furores continued to be sparked around the potential corrupting effects that violent films could have on weak-minded audiences (specifically children), following the theatrical releases of controversial titles such as *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994) and *Crash* (David Cronenberg 1996).[5] As Chibnall and Petley have put it, 'no one in their right mind' would have produced a British video nasty equivalent at this sensitive time, 'and just *imagine* what would [have happened] were a film company to [have suggested] making a film about, say [British serial killers] Fred and Rosemary West . . . or the Bulger murder' (2002: 7–8; emphasis in original).

Despite the premature publication of its obituaries, however, horror became one of the most prolific British film genres in the years following the new millennium, with hundreds of films being produced either in the UK, or elsewhere, with the support of British finance and resources. In fact, the year that saw the publication of Chibnall and Petley's *British Horror Cinema* was also the year that saw the release of one of the highest grossing British horrors of the period, Danny Boyle's post-apocalyptic *28 Days Later* (2002), as well as the release of *Dog Soldiers* (2002), a werewolf movie responsible for launching the career of revered horror darling Neil Marshall. This ironic state of affairs spilled over into the years that followed, with the production and release of a part-British sequel to the film that was said to have influenced Bulger's killers, *Seed of Chucky* (Don Mancini, 2004), as well as the release of *Mum & Dad* (Steven Sheil, 2008): a British film accused by the British press of distastefully turning 'the crimes of Fred and Rosemary West into an exploitation film' (Tookey 2008a). There were also a few international box office smashes such as *Resident Evil* and its sequels (2002–), *The Descent* (Neil Marshall, 2005) and *The Woman in Black* (James Watkins, 2012); widely popular horror-comedies such as *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004) and *Attack the Block* (Joe Cornish, 2011); less-popular ones such as *The Cottage* (Paul Andrew Williams, 2008), *Lesbian Vampire Killers* (Phil Claydon, 2009), *Doghouse* (Jake West, 2009), *Zombie Women of Satan* (Steve O'Brien, 2009), *Stitches* (Conor McMahon, 2012) and *Stalled* (Christian James, 2013); regionally set (and sometimes regionally funded) films, such as *Eden Lake* (James Watkins, 2008), *Salvage* (Lawrence Gough, 2009), *Outcast* (Colm McCarthy, 2010),

Citadel (Ciaran Foy, 2012), *The Borderlands* (Elliot Goldner, 2013) and *White Settlers* (Simeon Halligan, 2014); a string of international co-productions such as *The Ferryman* (Chris Graham, 2007, New Zealand/UK), *Wind Chill* (Gregory Jacobs, 2007, US/UK), *Surviving Evil* (Terence Daw, 2009, UK/South Africa), *Strigoi* (Faye Jackson, 2009, UK/Romania), *Black Death* (Christopher Smith, 2010, Germany/UK) and *Let Me In* (Matt Reeves, 2010, US/UK); a huge array of independently produced films for the home video market such as *Dead Creatures* (Andrew Parkinson, 2001), *Sanitarium* (Johannes Roberts and James Eaves, 2001), *The Zombie Diaries* (Michael Bartlett and Kevin Gates, 2006), *Reverb* (Eitan Arrusi, 2008), *The Sick House* (Curtis Radclyffe, 2008), *Bane* (James Eaves, 2008), *Spiderhole* (Daniel Simpson, 2010), *Patrol Men* (David Campion and Ben Simpson, 2010), *Psychosis* (Reg Traviss, 2010), *Devil's Bridge* (Chris Crow, 2010), *Little Deaths* (Andrew Parkinson *et al.*, 2012), *Panic Button* (Chris Crow, 2011), *Truth or Die* (Robert Heath, 2012), *The Reverend* (Neil Jones, 2011), *Deviation* (J. K. Amalou, 2012), *The Captive* (*Armistice*) (Luke Massey, 2013) and *The Clinic* (*The Addicted*) (Sean J. Vincent, 2014); and even some films that deliberately obscured the oft-invoked binary between 'art' and 'horror', such as *The Last Great Wilderness* (David Mackenzie, 2002), *Puffball* (Nicolas Roeg, 2007), *The Devil's Business* (Sean Hogen, 2011), *Kill List* (Ben Wheatley, 2011) and *Under the Skin* (Jonathan Glazer, 2013). Put simply, the 2000s and 2010s marked a dramatic change in tide for the genre, and signalled the first sustained period of British horror production since Hammer's golden era.

Contemporary British Horror Cinema: Industry, Genre and Society charts the rebirth of the British horror film in the twenty-first century, paying close attention to both the cultural and economic factors that contributed to the horror genre's buoyancy amid UK film production. Using primary research – including data from funding institutions and primary interview material with key industry players – and detailed film analysis, this book will show in what ways horror offered a significant contribution to British film production post-2000, and how it evidenced diversity across a broad spectrum of filmmakers, industrial trends, technologies and social issues.

A heritage of horror: the 'Hammer Hegemony'

Of course, I am not the first person to write of the horror film's 'significance' to British film history and culture. As noted above, one of the most famous horror studios in the world, Hammer Films, is of British origin, and for a period from the late 1950s to the late 1970s it produced a series of films that have since been heralded both for their innovation and parochial inflections. In fact, the popularity of Hammer's numerous loose adaptations of Gothic novels, such as the aforementioned *The Curse of Frankenstein*, *Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958)

and their many sequels, led critic David Pirie to argue in his landmark work from 1973, *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema 1946–1972*, that Hammer's penchant for the Gothic granted the horror genre a cultural grounding that was *unique* to Britain. As he famously put it:

> [T]he horror genre, as it has been developed in this country by Hammer and its rivals, remains the only staple cinematic myth which Britain can properly claim as its own, and which relates to it in the same way as the western relates to America. (Pirie 1973: 9)

Pirie certainly wasn't wrong to underscore Hammer's significance at this time. The company's period-set films, and others inspired by its successes,[6] would go on to define the Golden Age of British horror film production and would secure Hammer's reputation as a British household name (McKay 2007: 1–5). In Pirie's (1973: 9) view, Hammer's innovation, widespread popularity but, above all, the recurrence of 'various Gothic motifs' in its films evidenced a modality unsusceptible to foreign influence:

> [T]he British cinema (including not just Hammer but other smaller companies: this is a national phenomenon) has effectively and effortlessly dominated the 'horror' market over a period of almost twenty years with a series of films which, whatever their faults, are in no way imitative of American or European models but derive in general from [English] literary sources. (Pirie 1973: 9–10)

Until the publication of Peter Hutchings' academic monograph *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film* in 1993, *A Heritage of Horror* was the only book-length study available on the subject of British horror cinema. Aimed at a more general readership than Hutchings' scholarly tome, Pirie's core argument became a highly influential one in and out of academe. For filmmakers working in the disreputable horror genre, it afforded them a critical reassessment and to an extent 'validated' their work, by situating them amid a rich cultural tapestry, and offering their films some serious analysis. Indeed, while it was common for Hammer's films to have been mocked or shunned by contemporary critics, Pirie conversely heralded one of Hammer's most constant directors, Terence Fisher, an auteur (1973: 50–65). For cultural historians, *Heritage* became the yardstick of British horror film criticism and would occasionally be invoked in later discussions that lamented a perceived lack of nationally oriented contemporary horror productions (Chibnall and Petley 2002). But perhaps the most lasting result of Pirie's tome, however, is what Hutchings has dubbed the 'Hammer hegemony' in British film studies – that is to say, the centrality of Hammer to much of the critical work on British horror that

followed Pirie's book, which made difficult the appraisal of films that 'do not sit easily with those critical accounts that have sought to identify British horror as a purely indigenous cultural phenomenon' (Hutchings 2002a: 131). And in spite of the best efforts of a number of scholars to fill gaps in British horror's history (such as Petley 1996 [1986]; Hunt 1998; Chibnall 1998; Rigby 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006), nostalgia for a certain type of Hammer film also retained the upper hand in pop culture throughout the 1980s and 1990s, bolstered by several high-profile conventions and events, a number of Hammer seasons at the National Film Theatre (now known as BFI Southbank), retrospective TV shows such as *The World of Hammer* (Robert Sidaway, 1990), celebratory late-night television screenings of classic Hammer horror films, video re-releases, articles in fanzines such as *Little Shoppe of Horrors*, *Shivers* and *The Dark Side*, and a string of officially studio-licensed merchandise. These factors continued to reaffirm the notion that Pirie initiated: that 'Hammer' would very much remain a catch-all term for 'British horror cinema' in the decades to follow.

As I discuss in Chapter 6 of this book, Hammer actually returned to film production in 2007 to make films aimed at young contemporary audiences. But its name was nowhere near as central to British horror film culture as it had been in previous decades. Indeed, one of the most striking things about British horror cinema after the year 2000 was, on many levels, its variedness. For starters, there was no main horror studio producing films with the visibility or the aesthetic and thematic coherence that Hammer once laid claim to. On the contrary, the British horror revival stretched across many styles, technologies and budgets, and most films were detached from the period style and the 'Gothic tradition' that Pirie deemed so important to British horror. Films like *The Hole* (Nick Hamm, 2001), *The Descent* and *The Devil's Chair* (Adam Mason, 2007) – and hundreds of others – were, as this book argues, influenced by a whole host of cross-cultural factors,[7] so it would be rather limiting to view recent British horror films solely in light of Gothic literary antecedents.

To be clear, in writing this, I am not trying to shut out history in any way and deny the horror genre its legacy in popular culture. After all, tropes that one may dub 'Gothic' can certainly be found across much contemporary horror production. But, to my mind, viewing British horror solely in terms of a literary heritage would be to neglect the many other factors that contributed to the genre's UK revival after 2000. In fact, Pirie himself did attempt to account for the divergences in more contemporary product in a second edition to his original book in 2008 – *A New Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema*, which features extensive rewrites and, crucially, a lengthy chapter on British horror in the new millennium. However, even in this new edition, in spite of the broader pool of films that Pirie draws on, he maintains his original argument, claiming that although the original Gothic 'novels and poems themselves

(with a few exceptions) are now largely forgotten', English Gothic resonates throughout contemporary horror, because the 'idioms and emotions [that the original novels and poems] created have entered our DNA' (Pirie 2008: 221). It is my contention that, for all that Pirie's book is a master class in film history and criticism, we need to move beyond the literary gothic if we are to ever fully understand the real reasons and impetuses that led to the boom in contemporary British horror cinema. Indeed, in a global marketplace, and in a transnational context, a clear understanding of British horror cinema hinges more on an awareness of influencing industrial factors, as well as an understanding of those more direct creative influences that have impacted on contemporary filmmakers (such as cult horror films from Europe and America).

Of course, it should be made clear that Pirie's argument has been debated in academe before, as has the dominance of Hammer Films in academic and non-academic discussions of the British horror film. For example, Peter Hutchings, in *Hammer and Beyond*, recognised how restricting the analysis of British horror cinema to a literary heritage risks undermining, or avoiding entirely, the 'aesthetic and ideological properties' of certain films, and how such films may draw on, on the one hand, prevalent social concerns, and on the other, broader trends in horror cinema happening elsewhere in the world (1993: 12). Hutchings also made the crucial point that 'the story of British horror involves much more than the activities . . . of Hammer' because 'well over one half' emerged from other companies (1). Indeed, part of the reasoning behind Chibnall and Petley's *British Horror Cinema* was to 'explore more neglected areas' of British horror cinema (2002: 1), while Hutchings' essay in the same volume seeks to further 'challenge . . . the Hammer hegemony' by examining Hammer's main rival, Amicus, in hope of shining some light on the oft-ignored 'heterogeneity of British horror cinema' (Hutchings 2002a: 131). As Hutchings notes, Amicus, which was headed by two Americans, drew mostly on American source material rather than English Gothic novels. Additionally, studies from Leon Hunt (1998) and Steve Chibnall (1998) offered the first lengthy studies on maligned British horror directors such as Pete Walker; Alison Peirse's *After Dracula* (2013) contains a chapter on British horror of the 1930s; while the most rigorous of all studies, Jonathan Rigby's pivotal *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema*, also looked way beyond Hammer to other once-neglected areas. The last editions even included a short section on contemporary films (2002, 2004, 2006), and the forthcoming edition promises to cover even more.[8]

The more recent studies to address British horror – with the exception of Barry Forshaw's tellingly entitled *British Gothic Cinema* (2013) – are even less bound to literary Gothicism, such as: James Leggott's (2008) *Contemporary British Cinema: From Heritage to Horror*, Linnie Blake's (2008) *Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity*, James

Rose's (2009) *Beyond Hammer: British Horror since 1970*, I. Q. Hunter's (2013) *British Trash Cinema*, and various articles by Peter Hutchings (2009a) and others (Peirse 2009; Hantke 2010a; Hockenhull 2010; Walker 2011, 2012 and 2014). Yet, while these interventions are helpful starting points for broader considerations of the genre in contemporary British cinema, they are also limited by the small body of films that they cover and the brevity with which they do so. And with the exception of M. J. Simpson's recent *Urban Terrors: New British Horror Cinema, 1998–2008* (2012), which presents the reader with a detailed filmography of contemporary British horror films, elsewhere there remains a general reluctance to consider British horror in any detail at all. A case in point is Andrew Higson's otherwise comprehensive *Film England: Culturally English Filmmaking since the 1990s*, which draws attention to romantic comedies, dramas, thrillers and family films (2011: 30–6) but not to the explosion in British – or for that matter, English – horror film production.

While we are repeatedly reminded in academic literature of the worthiness of horror cinema of yesteryear – such as British horror of the 1950s or American horror of the 1970s – twenty-first century horror films are repeatedly dismissed as being inferior to those that preceded them. Sometimes they are dismissed as derivative; other times they are seen as lacking the radical social critique that critics like Robin Wood (1979) afforded such paradigm-shifting films as *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968) and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974) (see, for example, Sharret 2009). Other times, contemporary horror cinema is framed, quite simply, as just not being very good. For example, if some journalists and academics were to be believed, the first ten years of the 2000s saw American horror cinema 'at its worst' (Hantke 2010b: vii). The general lack of interest in new British horror cinema at this time, then, may well be attributed to a possible assumption that the films are not dissimilar enough from similarly terrible contemporary American productions to warrant extended analysis on their own terms. (This is certainly an opinion that resonates throughout contemporary film criticism, and will be considered in more detail in Chapter 3 of this book.)

Contemporary British Horror Cinema seeks to address these misgivings, by moving beyond the Gothic tradition and unhelpful accusations of inferiority, to offer the first academic study of British horror cinema in the new millennium. The book charts an era when horror production was arguably at its most global and most varied. Indeed, amid cynical claims in light of a slurry of American remakes that horror is so unoriginal these days that it 'will eat itself' (Newman 2009: 36), horror films in the twenty-first century straddled a broad church of styles and demographics, from big-budget Hollywood efforts such as the *The Twilight Saga* (2008–12) (Clayton and Harman 2014), to low-budget films produced for the DVD market (Wood 2007: 95–6; Bernard 2014), to the

corporeal horrors of the torture porn cycle (Jones 2013), and a 'new wave' of European horror in light of the *cinema du corps* ('new French extremism') (Horeck and Kendall 2011; Austin 2012). British horror makers, this book contends, were firmly positioned to respond to the scope and diversity of the genre during this period, and that they did, with gusto.

In light of horror's magnitude and diversity, the genre had a central role in British film production across the board: in relation to what was promoted as being the dawning of a 'new' British film industry following the instating of the UK Film Council (UKFC) quango in 2000 (see Chapter 2), and over the next fourteen years, in relation to smaller, independently/self-funded productions. The British horror films produced after 2000, I argue, testified to the UK film industry's economic and cultural preoccupations of the period, including the successful utilisation of funding initiatives, an increase in the accessibility of filmmaking technologies to up-and-coming directors, the increased economic sustainability of home-viewing platforms, and how such platforms have impacted on what cinema 'means' in the twenty-first century (see Murphy 2002; Petrie 2002; Ryall 2002; Hill 2012; Perkins 2012; Street 2012). Also considered in these pages are several of the major themes and film cycles that became prevalent during the period. I will pay specific attention to the role of the fan filmmaker, as well as to how British horror films have functioned at a socio-political level and have engaged with current national concerns. Ultimately, by considering these factors, this books hopes to offer a sense of coherence to a genre now recognised as a 'considerably more varied and consequently less cohesive phenomenon' (Hutchings 2009b: 149) than it has been thought of in the recent past.

The new film history

It should be made clear from the outset that *Contemporary British Horror Cinema: Industry, Genre and Society* is more a work of film *history* than film *theory*. That is to say, methodologically, it is informed by the philosophies of the 'New Film History', as outlined by James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper in their significant edited collection from 2007: *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*. Using British horror films released in the 2000s and 2010s, this book will partly 'demonstrate . . . how the principles of historical investigation can be applied in practice in order to illuminate the structures and processes that have determined the nature of the medium of film and its social institutions' (Chapman *et al.* 2007: 1–2). As Chapman persuasively argues, a 'characteristic of the New Film History, as opposed to the old, is that it regards all films, whatever their critical or cultural status, as worthy objects of analysis' (Chapman 2007: 55). This is not, however, to completely discount the many benefits of textual analysis: something that is often solely

associated with non-empirical approaches to the study of film. After all, as Jeffrey Richards has argued, neither an empirical approach to film history, nor text-based critical analysis 'has an exclusive monopoly of wisdom' (2000: 21). Rather, it is the case that empiricism should too be recognised as a 'theory', but 'one that is longer established and more thoroughly tried and tested than some of the more fashionable but short-lived theories of recent years' (22). It is certainly true that the study of horror cinema has been particularly limited by voguish cultural theory such as psychoanalysis, where 'history has been conceptualized as nothing more than a discontinuous succession of discrete moments, each characterised by a different basic version of the genre' (Altman 1984 [2004]: 686). Therefore, to avoid such limitations, when critical and theoretical ideas are considered in this book – such as the theories of cult film and gendered practices advanced by Joanne Hollows (2003) and Jacinda Read (2003) in Chapter 4, or Richard Dyer's (2009 [1993]) theories of stereotyping acknowledged in Chapter 5 – these are not used to reify 'the idea that films [possess] a meaning that [is] independent of the prevailing social, cultural, political and economic contexts' (Richards 2000: 22). On the contrary, such approaches are explored in direct relation to historical contexts, or are used to expose and redress the limiting nature of reductive taxonomies, which, in spite of their shortcomings, maintain currency in film studies and society more generally (in relation to, for instance, the 'underclass' in British film and media, as per Chapter 5). As such, it is my contention that empirical research (into industry, production, reception, distribution patterns and social context) can further complement more analytical readings of specific films when their historical and social contexts are explicitly identified.

Categorisations

The pool of films considered in this book was determined, some may say crudely, considering a broad range of factors. First was the understanding that neither 'genre' nor 'horror film' are hermetic concepts but are susceptible to interpretation and categorical overlap. To borrow an expression from Matt Hills, '*the horror genre is not where it is*; it exists, intertextually, rhetorically . . . outside its major and explicitly labelled generic traditions/sites/texts' (2005: 6; emphasis in original). My own research into the horror film is therefore indebted to these kinds of understandings, as well as to Jeffrey Sconce's concept of 'paracinema': 'a most elastic textual category' of 'cult' cinema that covers a wide range of genres,[9] which are typically relegated in cultural hierarchies, and prone to influence and classification by a variety of ways and means (1995: 372). Resultantly, each contemporary British horror film has been incorporated (subjectively, but) sensibly, with consideration given to how the rigid theoretical paradigms imposed on the genre in the past have generated

more questions than they have answered – not least in terms of the varied 'philosophical' approaches to the horror film that rarely factor historical context into the equation at all (such as Twitchell 1985; Carroll 1990; Fahy 2010). To this end, I have considered the genre in relation to how it has been approached industrially (by production companies and through marketing), textually (in terms of key tropes and themes, and a historical understanding of horror) and extra-textually (in terms of fan communities and audience demographics). I have therefore relied on my own personal designations as well – 'though the edges may be rather blurred' (Tudor 2003: 6) – and the classificatory system provided by professional industry resources (such as by Screen International and IMDBPro), specific press-releases for films, personal interviews with directors, screenwriters and producers, and the ways that films have been marketed *as horror*, and how they have been discussed within the media, and promoted through their official (and fan-run) websites and discussion forums (such as www.britishhorrorfilms.com). More often than not, I have relied on others' perceptions of what a horror film is (or may be), purely to avoid isolating horror as a genre that is not informed, and infinitely reassessed, by consumers, critics and other culture-makers. In other words, I accept that genre is 'what we collectively believe it to be' (Tudor 2003: 7), but also how 'we' as individuals and communities, within different contexts of production, marketing, textual and extra-textual discussion, contest it, embrace it and interpret it.

Designating films as 'British' here has also relied on a similar looseness. As Andrew Higson has recently discussed, designations such as 'British' or 'English', while still useful in some contexts, are arguably at their most controversial because 'most national cinemas are now a complex amalgam of often competing local, national and international forces' (2011: 5). To this end, I have not subscribed to one cohesive notion of 'Britishness' due to the complex transcultural bases for many British horror films in the 2000s and 2010s (in terms of funding sources, for instance). As discussed above, I also contest the idea that horror is itself an 'English genre' because of its links to English Gothic fiction. That having been said, *Contemporary British Horror Cinema* does foreground what could be understood as 'national' concerns, including the aftermath of the 'video nasties' era, 'New Lad' culture and fears about 'broken Britain': all which have been positioned in media discourse as notably local phenomena despite their similarities with other traits, practices and cultures overseas. But these instances of parochialism on my part are to be perceived as essential in my attempt to locate contemporary British horror and its influences amid more immediate (and, one may argue, more relevant) textual, historical and social trajectories than the English Gothic literature referred to above. In doing so, this book presents a detailed account of British horror cinema, taking note of both national and international factors, and emerges at a time when contemporary British cinema is highly popular all over the world (Perkins

2012), and when the horror genre remains one of the most intriguing, yet overlooked, areas of production.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Chapter 2 contemplates why British horror was revived at the dawning of the new millennium, and also considers some of the reasons why British horror films produced in the 2000s and 2010s can be viewed as constituting a distinctive aspect of contemporary British cinema. I discuss the establishment of the UK Film Council (UKFC) in 2000 and contextualise the contemporary British horror film in the international film marketplace, drawing parallels between British horror and British film production more broadly, British horror and international horror production, and the audience demographics targeted by distributers and film production companies. This involves examining British horror's shift from a theatrical genre to one associated primarily with the home video and online market.

Chapter 3, in light of the broader international concerns outlined in the previous chapter, works towards locating cultural specificities within British horror at a time when it has drifted from its better known 'English' heritage. By considering the social and historical context during which many contemporary filmmakers grew up (namely, the late 1970s and 1980s), I reassess how recent British horror's 'heritage' may be more immediate than we initially presume. To do this, I argue that several films responded to the typically negative British critical response to horror cinema (Petley 2002a), and, through textual analysis, argue that such films are products inspired by nostalgia for the video nasties panic of the 1980s. Through doing so, I consider how cultural specificity can be extracted from films by directors who not only have a passion for the horror film (that is, are self-confessed fans of the genre), but are also aware of how British horror (and horror in Britain) has been figured and derided within British culture.

In Chapter 4, I extend some of the issues surrounding fan filmmakers as discussed in the previous chapter, and deliberate the representation of masculinity and cult film fandom within a series of horror-comedy hybrids. Through acknowledgement of the ways in which cult film fandom has traditionally been gendered as 'male', and often as immature, crude and boyish, I draw parallels between recent horror-comedies that use these stereotypes as ironic self-critiques of the filmmakers' themselves and their desired audience. I ultimately locate these films within discourses surrounding 'New Lad' culture of the 1990s, which has similarly been linked to contemporary cult film fandom (Hollows 2003; Read 2003). Through a discussion of themes, industry statistics and textual analysis, I show how films such as *Shaun of the Dead*, *Doghouse* and *Lesbian Vampire Killers* satirise the social marginality

of laddish behaviour by placing fannish 'New Lad' types within a horror film environment, thus literalising many of the stereotypes that have figured within contemporary academic writing on cult film audiences.

The practice of stereotyping is also the focus of Chapter 5, which considers a cycle of films that are designed to elicit fear from media representations of the contemporary working classes. Through analysis of films in the 'hoodie-horror' cycle, which typically presented the youth of the white British under-class as feral and monstrous, I analyse the social context from which these films stemmed and examine how they tapped into current anxieties surrounding contemporary fears of British youth (an apparent groundswell in gang culture that culminated in the 'August Riots' of 2011).

Chapter 6 returns to industry, and charts the re-emergence of Hammer Films, which, after thirty years, finally went back into film production in the 2000s. Drawing from primary sources such as the industry trade press and interviews, the chapter reflects on Hammer's recent history, considering briefly the tumultuous 1980s and 1990s, before assessing the company's market positioning between its re-launch in 2007 with the web serial *Beyond the Rave* (Matthias Hoene, 2008), through its theatrical success with the blockbuster *The Woman in Black* in 2012, up until the release of its lower-budgeted ghost story, *The Quiet Ones* (John Pogue) in 2014. Ultimately, taking into account Hammer's prominence in much discourse around classic British horror, I use its millennial incarnation to assess its relevance (or not) to the identity of British horror in the twenty-first century.

By considering contemporary British horror in the terms outlined above – from the perspectives of industry, the personal tastes of directors, the ways in which horror audiences have been theorised and how horror cinema can tap into deeper social concerns – I present the contemporary British horror film as curious and varied, but also prolific and distinctive. What will hopefully become clear in this book is how restrictive and unhelpful it is to pigeonhole British horror cinema into one theoretical paradigm or cultural tradition. Conversely, it will be revealed how the genre has been diverse – if, at times, unwieldy – in the twenty-first century and that these factors alone are enough for it to demand our attention.

Notes

1. *The Shining* and *Hellraiser* fall into this camp.
2. Robert Murphy's collection *British Cinema of the 90s* (1999a) makes no mention of the horror genre at all.
3. 'Video nasty' was a term initially given by the British media and pressure groups to horror/violent films that were released on video in the UK prior to the Video Recordings Act of 1984. It resulted in thirty-nine films being banned by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), and the ruining of hundreds of independent distributors, who could not afford to pay the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC's)

high classificatory fees. I discuss this era in relation to British horror film production in more detail in Chapter 3. For contextual overviews see Barker (1984), Barlow and Hill (1985), Kerekes and Slater (2000) and Petley (2011).

4. As Kerekes and Slater have noted 'similarities were pointed out between scenes in the film and events of the incident. For instance . . . the killers admitted that Bulger constantly got back on his feet no matter how hard they hit him and the doll in the film shows a similar indestructibility. (The suggestion that Bulger repeatedly rose to his feet after being struck down because of a scene in the film, poses the ridiculous and outrageous notion that Bulger must have seen the film and was mimicking it himself)' (Kerekes and Slater 2000: 325).

5. For an account of the presence of *Child's Play 3* in reportage of the Bulger case see Petley (2011: 87–102). For a detailed account of the '*Crash* controversy' see Barker (*et al.* 2001).

6. Other studios making British horror fare at this time included Amicus, Tigon and Tyburn.

7. Pirie's comparing of British horror with the western – if we are to read the western as representative of cultural purity – is problematic, especially in light of Austin Fisher's recent work on the Italian western, which looks at how a genre deemed so 'American' could communicate 'revolutionary [Italian] political views in the national and international contexts of [Italy in] the late 1960s' (2011: 1).

8. Personal email correspondence with Jonathan Rigby (2013).

9. Sconce does not specifically include horror in this list, but 'splatterpunk, "mondo" films, sword and sandal epics, Elvis flicks, governmental hygiene films, Japanese monster movies, beach party musicals, and just about every other historical manifestation of exploitation cinema from juvenile delinquency documentaries to soft core pornography' (1995: 372). Yet, as Jancovich et al. point out, 'it should be noted that even this list is not even meant to cover all aspects of the cult movie, but only those aspects that Sconce identifies as "paracinema", a small and select subsection of a larger set' (2003: 1). Horror, thus, can also be understood as a cult genre, and is often framed within Sconce's paracinema mantra (see, for example, Hawkins 2003; Hutchings 2003a; Jancovich 2008 [2002]; Willis 2003; Wu 2003).