

BECKY SIEGEL SPRATFORD

**THE READERS' ADVISORY GUIDE TO
HORROR**

SECOND EDITION



The Readers' Advisory Guide to Horror

Becky Siegel Spratford

American Library Association

Chicago 2012

www.alastore.ala.org

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Becky Siegel Spratford coauthored the first edition of *The Horror Readers' Advisory: The Librarian's Guide to Vampires, Killer Tomatoes, and Haunted Houses*. She has been a readers' advisor since 2000 at the Berwyn (Illinois) Public Library. She graduated with honors from Dominican University's Graduate School of Library and Information Science in January 2001. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at the same school, teaching Readers' Advisory Service two semesters a year. Spratford also contributes content to NovelList, is a member of both the Adult Reading Round Table Steering Committee and the Horror Writers Association, and is the author of the blog *RA for All: Horror*.

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PREFACE

Why We Need Horror

Readers love fantasy, but we *need* horror. Smart horror.
Truthful horror. Horror that helps us make sense of a cruelly
senseless world.

—Brian K. Vaughan¹

It is hard to go anywhere in America today without confronting a vampire, zombie, or witch in some form or another. While Sookie Stackhouse teams up with vampires on TV and in the pages of Charlaine Harris's best-selling novels, zombies have stormed the world of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* bringing thousands of readers along for the ride, and Harry Potter has become the universal symbol of the witching world.² Although these creatures have gained mainstream traction in popular culture over the last twenty years, they have done so by slowly moving away from the world of horror where they were first conceived. Just the presence of a vampire, zombie, or witch on the pages of a novel or on the big screen no longer automatically makes the story "horror."

We are in the midst of a supernatural explosion in all fiction. If I had to name one trend in all popular fiction released in the last decade it would be the fact that supernatural elements have snuck their way into every genre. For example, readers can now find zombies populating the pages of political thrillers (Mira Grant's *Feed*), wizards running detective agencies (Jim Butcher's Dresden Files series), and ancient demons appearing as love interests (Sherrilyn Kenyon's *Night Pleasures*).³ This trend is both a blessing and a curse for the readers' advisory librarian. We now have many more supernatural options for our patrons than we used to, but on the other hand, we have to pay much closer attention to *why* our patrons are seeking out paranormal scenes, plots, and characters in their leisure reading.

That is the big quandary which this book attempts to tackle head on. How does today's readers' advisor untangle true horror works from the larger mass of paranormal offerings? As the epigraph to this chapter reminds us, "we *need* horror." Readers have been drawn to works of

horror fiction for centuries, and as readers' advisors, we have become their navigators. This book, then, becomes your map.

Advisors new to horror might find the prospect of the horror genre daunting, but remember, our horror readers are not monsters themselves, they just like to read about them. If you are worried about not knowing enough to field a horror-related RA question, don't be. Using this book, you can handle even the scariest of horror-related questions. I have included chapters on the history of horror, its appeal, and a "Horror 101" guide to the genre. There are chapters with annotated lists of horror novels categorized by their subgenres to help our patrons find the books that they would most enjoy, ideas on what other genres and formats our horror readers might enjoy, and tips on how to develop and market our horror collections—basically, everything we need to help our patrons find their next good scare.

Everything in this second edition has been updated and reevaluated, with new authors, trends, annotations, and suggestions. However, the biggest change is that this edition comes with a free electronic update—a blog that will continue to keep you apprised of the world of horror fiction specifically as it applies to librarians and their patrons.⁴ No other horror resource is so tailored to your specific library needs.

So what are you waiting for? Enter if you dare . . .

NOTES

1. Brian K. Vaughan, introduction to *Locke and Key: Crown of Shadows*, by Joe Hill, illustrated by Gabriel Rodriguez (San Diego, CA: IDW, 2010).
2. Adapted from the Sookie Stackhouse novels of Charlaine Harris, *True Blood* currently airs as a series on HBO and is distributed on DVD by Warner Home Video. Harris's series begins with *Dead until Dark* (New York: Berkley, 2001). Seth Grahame-Smith and Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Classic Regency Romance—Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem!* (Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2009). J. K. Rowling is the author of the Harry Potter series beginning with *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 1998). The Harry Potter films are distributed by Warner Home Video, Burbank, CA.
3. Jim Butcher's Dresden Files series begins with *Storm Front* (New York: Roc Books, 2000).
4. *RA for All: Horror*, www.raforallhorror.blogspot.com, is produced and maintained by Becky Spratford as the online home of this text.

1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HORROR How the Past Haunts the Present

I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay may be very interesting.

—Bram Stoker, *Dracula*¹

In 1974, Stephen King published *Carrie*, and the world of horror fiction changed forever. However, although Stephen King may be the most accomplished and best-known horror writer ever, he was not the first to write in the genre. Horror has a long and interesting history. Arming yourself with knowledge of this history will assist you as you guide your patrons through the dark passages of horror. Although most of this book will focus on the present state of horror, I am a big proponent of the saying that in order to know where you are now (or even where you are going), you need to know where you have been.

In that spirit, I offer this very brief history of horror. By no means is this review meant to be the definitive word on the genre. For that, you can turn to the many full-length books dedicated to the subject.² This is a history for the general librarian, the person sitting at the service desk and helping leisure readers each and every day. This is the history you need to know, the bullet points, major themes, and changes over time—the history that will let you see the whole picture so that you can feel comfortable talking about the genre to your patrons.

The history of horror is complicated. Horror, like romance, has been slow to gain legitimacy in the literary arena, partly because it has been the victim of fuzzy and overlapping genre boundaries. Horror has moved

from being a literary element within the pages of science fiction, the serial-killer thriller, and dark fantasy novels to having its own defined genre. The merging of horror into other genres continues, and under the umbrella classification of speculative fiction, we often still find horror partnered with fantasy and science fiction. Regardless of our tendencies to blend genres, horror fiction contains elements that differentiate it from other genres. The most prominent of these is the author's intention of creating a frighteningly uneasy atmosphere. This emotional punch feeds readers' powerful voyeuristic desire to explore the dark, malevolent side of humanity in an imaginative framework. This feeling, a mainstay of the horror novel, gets at the heart of why readers have been drawn to these stories for centuries.³

The rest of this chapter is a peek into what horror was and how it evolved into what it is today—a genre I define as a story in which the author manipulates the reader's emotions by introducing situations in which unexplainable phenomena and unearthly creatures threaten the protagonists and provoke terror in the reader.⁴

THE GOTHIC NOVEL

In 1765, Horace Walpole published the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*.⁵ This publication is widely considered to mark the beginning of the horror genre. Horror elements had been present in literature before this, of course, but after this date there was an explosion of Gothic writings with recurring themes and plot lines characterized by “an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the prescience of highly stereotyped characters, and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense.”⁶ These are stories of ancient castles, dark passageways, and ghosts. Typical plots involved an evil villain pursuing a young woman, and although she is confused and scared, she ultimately triumphs, and the villain is exposed.

Emphasizing atmosphere over plot development, the Gothic novel became synonymous with excess and exaggeration, portraying the terrors of the haunted house, vampires, werewolves, and soulless monsters unleashed on society. Classic examples include Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), which shocked readers with its account of rape and torture, and John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), one of the first novels to feature such a being.⁷ But arguably the most influential Gothic novel of this era

was Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1765). Set in the sixteenth century, this popular novel told the story of the orphaned Emily St. Aubert, who upon her parents' deaths was made the ward of her aunt, Madame Cheron. The aunt marries the sinister Italian Count Montoni, who carts Emily off to a dilapidated castle in the Apennines and plots to steal her inheritance. Emily must find a way to escape.

Although the Gothic period is said to have ended with the publication of *Frankenstein* in 1818, the Gothic tradition continued to influence some of our best-known classics such as the Brontë sisters' *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, as well as Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. The Gothic influence is also evident in the writings of nineteenth-century American authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James. Today we see novels written in the Gothic tradition by authors as varied as Joyce Carol Oates, Alexandra Sokoloff, and Charlaine Harris. Box 1.1 lists some Gothic authors of note.

Box 1.1 Gothic and Gothic-Influenced Authors

Charlotte Brontë	Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu
Emily Brontë	Matthew Lewis
Wilkie Collins	Edgar Allan Poe
Charles Dickens	John Polidori
Nathaniel Hawthorne	Ann Radcliffe
E. T. A. Hoffman	Horace Walpole

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE

At the close of the eighteenth century, social critics and intellectuals of the time were uniquely situated to witness the rise of science and technology as well as what some perceived to be the social and moral decline of the West. The Enlightenment brought an increased knowledge of the natural world and a weakening of religious dogmas. People began to question what happened after death as well as the existence of God. The works and lectures of T. H. Huxley, a Darwin defender, serve as great examples of the issues and ideas of the era. Huxley believed that science emerged when the human brain had evolved to a certain level of complexity.⁸ If wisely used, the marvels of science would allow civilization to reach new heights, and humanity would evolve even further. But, he warned, humans had begun as lowly creatures and still had a primitive side to their nature.

Motivated by this dark side, people could use science to enslave others and manufacture weapons of destruction. The use of science for good, or evil, and humankind's evolutionary process and primal fears became central themes for the horror genre. The fear that technology and science were taking over our lives was real, and it manifested in writings about the terrible things science could do in the hands of the wrong people.

The Enlightenment and the ideas it spawned were debated by intellectuals and social thinkers for decades, but the first novel to explore these ideas was Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), which gave readers the first mad scientist who attempted to circumvent God and create life in man's image. The results were disastrous for Dr. Frankenstein, and readers were left with a lasting warning about the consequences of playing God.

Another example from this era is *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, which delved into the mental health of man, the structure of personality, and the fear that we can unknowingly become our own worst nightmare. The possibility of transforming ourselves only to discover that our alter ego is a monster is as terrifying now as it was back then. The grandfather of science fiction, H. G. Wells, was also experimenting with the new scientific discoveries of the time, focusing on the scarier aspects of these ideas and extrapolating them into a frightening future. In *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), Wells specifically warned of what the world could expect if it failed to control the outrageous pace of scientific progress. On the surface, Moreau is a mad scientist, in the mold of Dr. Frankenstein. He heartlessly contours the shapes of his innocent animal subjects in a blind search for forbidden knowledge. But what he is really doing is far worse. Moreau has set himself up as the divine creator of vivisectioned creatures who in turn view him as their god. At a time when scientific progress seemed to be supplanting religion, these books were the scariest stories imaginable.

The nineteenth century came to a close with the most recognizable horror novel of all time. With the publication of *Dracula* (1897), Bram Stoker created a novel that has now become synonymous with the vampire motif. *Dracula* is one of the best-selling novels of all time, has never been out of print, and, in fact, has only become more popular over time.⁹ Stoker's vampire was not the first to ever appear in literature, but in this epistolary novel, Stoker created the stereotype of the vampire as an aristocratic bloodsucker who preys on young women.¹⁰ Stoker's image of the vampire has become so pervasive in popular culture that *Dracula* is now the most frequently portrayed character in all horror films.¹¹ As Brian

Stableford has noted, “No other novel of any kind has ever stamped out an image so firmly and so decisively.”¹² To most people, Count Dracula is not only *the vampire*, he is the definition of horror. See box 1.2 for a list of authors from this era.

Box 1.2 Key Horror Authors of the Enlightenment

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley	Bram Stoker
Robert Louis Stevenson	H. G. Wells

THE GHOST STORY AND BEYOND

The early years of the twentieth century were the golden age of the ghost story.¹³ M. R. James set the tone and developed many of the genre classifications of the ghost story, a subgenre that is still very popular. In a ghost story, characters are haunted by a spirit and are forced to battle both the spirit and their own inner demons in order to survive the ordeal.¹⁴ Authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, Edith Wharton, H. G. Wells, Anne Rice, and Stephen King have all experimented with ghost stories, leaving a rich tradition of the haunted. For a longer list of the ghost story writers of this golden age, see box 1.3.

Box 1.3 Ghost Story Authors

Ambrose Bierce	Henry James
Algernon Blackwood	M. R. James
Robert W. Chambers	Arthur Machen
Walter de la Mare	Oliver Onions
W. W. Jacobs	

However, the most influential horror writer of the early twentieth century was the eccentric hermit H. P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft influenced a number of other writers of his time and beyond with his stories about human encounters with ancient beings of horrific and alien appearance who occasionally intrude into our world from other dimensions. These works are called the Cthulhu Mythos stories, and many of them were published in the popular magazine *Weird Tales*.¹⁵ Both Lovecraft’s stories and the magazine attracted a cult following. In fact, after Lovecraft’s death, writers continued to publish Cthulhu-inspired stories. Even into the twenty-first

century, new tales of Cthulhu continue to appear every few years, and you can find YouTube feeds and entire websites devoted to Cthulhu themes.¹⁶

THE PULP ERA: 1930–1973

What Lovecraft started took on a life of its own, and a new era of horror literature became popular. Sometimes referred to as the pulp era, this period produced the beginnings of modern horror as we know it. Readers had been primed by Lovecraft's outrageous and terrifying stories, and after his death in 1937, they craved more. Authors such as Ray Bradbury, Shirley Jackson, and Richard Matheson who grew up reading Lovecraft began their popular and influential careers writing horror novels and stories during this era. Their work is now widely considered among the best genre fiction ever produced and is still being mined by the film industry for popular movies.

In fact, a trip to the movies is the next big step in the history of horror literature. Since cinema's infancy, horror novels and films have shared themes and characters, such as vampires, zombies, ghosts, and werewolves, and the popularity of horror movies helped to pull horror novels into the mainstream consciousness. During the 1930s and '40s, Universal Pictures produced classic, atmospheric horror films based on earlier novels. In 1931, Bela Lugosi played his signature role as Dracula, and Boris Karloff brought Frankenstein to the big screen. Karloff showed his theatrical abilities again in 1932 in the portrayal of Imhotep, a 3,700-year-old Egyptian brought back to life in *The Mummy*. Then in 1941, Universal made the quintessential werewolf film, *The Wolf Man*, with Lon Chaney Jr. and Bela Lugosi. The impact of these films on popular perceptions of these monsters, invented first in the pages of novels, was enormous. The movies expanded and added to the original creations, providing visual images of the classic stories, images that persist. Since that time, the horror movie and the horror novel have been irrevocably linked.

In the 1940s and '50s horror fiction was struggling. There was less time for leisure reading in general with the country focused on the war effort, but the movies brought back the genre, which in turn reignited an interest in horror novels. The 1960s brought popular retellings of Poe's Gothic tales to films starring Vincent Price. However, the most influential horror film of the decade was undoubtedly George Romero's 1968 classic zombie film, *Night of the Living Dead*. Not only did Romero set the stage for an increase in the explicit gore in horror films, but he also set the standard for all zombie stories, in all formats, forever after.¹⁷

Although *Night of the Living Dead* began its life as a movie, two notable horror novels from this era were also made into hugely popular and critically acclaimed motion pictures: Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) and William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971). The former is about a woman impregnated with Satan's son, while the latter is about the battle for the soul of a young girl who is possessed by an ancient demon. Specifically, *Rosemary's Baby*, both the novel and Roman Polanski's 1968 film version, is considered one of the classics of the horror genre and instrumental in its evolution.¹⁸ The film was nominated for numerous awards, including two Academy Awards.¹⁹ *The Exorcist* did even better. When the film came out in 1973, it was the highest grossing film of all time until it was surpassed by *Jaws* in 1974.²⁰ *The Exorcist* was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and won two, including one for Blatty's work on adapting his novel for the screen.²¹ The legacy of these two novels lives on through their films, drawing new readers to their pages year after year. These classic horror novels are also extremely important because of their place at the end of an era. Consult box 1.4 for a further list of the major horror authors of the first seventy-five years of the twentieth century.

Box 1.4 Major Twentieth-Century Horror Authors, 1900–1973

Peter Benchley	Roald Dahl	H. P. Lovecraft
A. G. Birch	August Derleth	William March
William Peter Blatty	Daphne du Maurier	Richard Matheson
E. F. Bleiler	L. Ron Hubbard	E. Hoffman Price
Robert Bloch	Shirley Jackson	Donald Wandrei
Ray Bradbury	Fritz Leiber	Henry S. Whitehead
Hugh Cave	Ira Levin	

Things in the world of horror, however, were about to change forever, as a new author took the reins as horror master.

THE DAWN OF MODERN HORROR: 1974–1999

As well as things were going for horror fiction up to this point, everything changed in 1974 when Stephen King published his first novel, *Carrie*. Not only did this event mark the beginning of horror's modern era, but King has also become one of the most important authors in America.²² After King began publishing, all horror novels would come to be judged by

the high standard he has set throughout his still vibrant career. The 1970s also introduced readers to Anne Rice's vampire, Louis de Pointe du Lac, and his confessions in the best-selling *Interview with the Vampire*. Rice went on to romance her readers with many novels of vampires, witches, and mummies for over twenty years and served as the inspiration for today's immensely popular paranormal titles. Dean Koontz also began his long domination of the best-seller charts with his genre-bending, horrific thrillers in the 1970s. The combination of these three powerhouses moved horror novels into the spotlight; it seemed that just about everyone in America was reading a book by one of these authors. Even more amazing, all three are still widely read, even Rice, who has not written a new horror novel in over a decade.²³

As we moved into the 1980s, King, Koontz, and Rice were still leading the charge, but Clive Barker entered the horror scene, intensifying the sex and violence in the genre. Barker's novels and stories also fed the growing fascination with slasher films—such as the *Halloween* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* series—by adding one of his own in the *Hellraiser* films, featuring the terrifying sadomasochist villain, Pinhead.

Inspired by the writings of these stalwarts, many new horror writers found a readership and prospered during this time. (See box 1.5 for a more complete list.) In fact, horror became so in demand that in 1984, one of its more popular authors, Robert McCammon, used an interview with *Publishers Weekly* to publicly declare his desire for a writers' association strictly geared toward the "needs of fellow writers of fear."²⁴ Working with fellow novelists Dean Koontz and Joe Lansdale, McCammon formed the Horror Writers of America in 1986. The association began issuing the highest honor in horror literature, the Bram Stoker Award, in 1987. The group has since changed its name to the Horror Writers Association and continues to be the leading voice of the horror writing community, promoting the work of its members, issuing internationally recognized genre awards, and educating the world about horror.

The 1990s brought more of the same with King, Koontz, and Rice ruling the genre, but as a result of their intense popularity, a new genre was beginning to emerge. Led by the literary novels of Neil Gaiman, dark fantasy gained popularity as we approached the new millennium. With the sales of horror books staying high and the Horror Writers Association working to promote horror, readers wanted more. Just as past horror writers borrowed from other genres, now fantasy writers were looking toward horror to inject new life into their work. Stephen King even tried his hand at dark fantasy, writing the bulk of his popular *Dark Tower* series during this decade.²⁵

Box 1.5 provides a longer list of influential horror authors from 1974 to 1999.

Box 1.5 Major Horror Authors, 1974–1999

Clive Barker	Joe Lansdale	John Saul
Ramsey Campbell	Richard Laymon	Dan Simmons
Douglass Clegg	Bentley Little	Michael Slade
Tananarive Due	Brian Lumley	Brian Stableford
John Farris	Graham Masterton	Peter Straub
Christopher Golden	Robert McCammon	Whitley Strieber
Charles Grant	Christopher Moore	F. Paul Wilson
Jack Ketchum	Kim Newman	Chelsea Quinn Yarbro
Stephen King	Tom Piccirilli	
Dean Koontz	Anne Rice	

A NEW MILLENNIUM: 2000–PRESENT

The draw of dark fantasy continued to overshadow much of what would be considered true horror as the 2000s began. Popular paranormal series like Jim Butcher’s Harry Dresden series, Charles de Lint’s Newford books, and Charlaine Harris’s Sookie Stackhouse series dominated the decade, often overshadowing true horror.²⁶ Although these dark fantasy series use common horror monsters or dark, unsettling atmospheres, or both, in their stories, their main appeal is not to induce fear. Rather, their focus is more grounded in the traditional fantasy appeal of creating a magical landscape, albeit a darker one. But the biggest difference between this century’s popular dark fantasy and pure works of horror is the fact that in dark fantasy, the monsters are often the heroes, while in horror, monsters remain monsters.²⁷

The attention paid to dark fantasy does not mean that horror novelists have not been producing work of note. The new millennium has seen a reemergence of the paperback horror novel similar to the pulp novels of the mid-twentieth century. Horror writers have also been among the first to embrace new technology, using blogs and e-books in large numbers. One popular horror writer, Scott Sigler, takes the use of technology one step farther by releasing his novels in serial form via free podcasts before they come out in print. Horror has also moved into the graphic novel format with much success. And a true new horror master of the twenty-first

century, Joe Hill, has emerged as a best seller in the vein of his father, Stephen King, to lead the genre into a new century. Box 1.6 lists some of the most influential horror novelists of the 2000s.

Box 1.6 Major Horror Authors of the Twenty-first Century

Gary Braunbeck	Sarah Langan	Harry Shannon
Max Brooks	Deborah LeBlanc	Scott Sigler
John Everson	Edward Lee	John Skipp
Greg Gifune	Jonathan Maberry	Bryan Smith
Joe Hill	Robert Masello	Alexandra Sokoloff
Brian Keene	Joe McKinney	Jeff Strand
Nate Kenyon	Weston Ochse	
Michael Laimo	Sarah Pinborough	

TIME TO MOVE ON . . .

Horror has evolved over time into its own best-selling genre by borrowing themes and techniques from the past as well as by forging new territory and expanding its boundaries. Today's horror novelists understand this. References to Poe, Lovecraft, Stoker, and many of the pulp writers pop up frequently in horror books. Readers respect this, and they will also expect you to have a basic understanding of the genre's deep traditions.

For those who are interested in delving further into the books upon which the history of the genre is based, I suggest familiarizing yourself with the twenty-one books Robert Weinberg suggests that all horror writers read for themselves in his article, "What You Are Meant to Know: Twenty-One Horror Classics."²⁸ The list is annotated to help you to better understand each title's place within the larger context of the history of horror literature.

But now it is time to leave the past behind and enter the world of horror in the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. The epigraph is taken from the first chapter of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/345 (accessed September 7, 2011).
2. For a more detailed history I suggest you begin with David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the Present Day* (New York:

- Longman, 1996). I also like David Pringle, *The St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost and Gothic Writers* (Detroit: Gale, 1998). You can use both books' extensive bibliographies to guide any further research into the history of horror literature.
3. Chapter 2 will provide a more detailed discussion of the appeal of horror.
 4. This definition is further discussed in chapter 2, "The Appeal of Horror: Feel the Fear, Find the Readers."
 5. The 2001 Penguin edition of *The Castle of Otranto* has been edited and includes an introduction and notes by Michael Gamer.
 6. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 1.
 7. The 2002 Oxford University Press edition of *The Monk* has an introduction by Stephen King.
 8. T. H. Huxley, *The Advance of Science in the Last Half-Century*, Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15253 (accessed October 8, 2010). A full listing of Huxley's works can be found at www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/h#a595.
 9. Nina Auerbach and David Skal, eds., *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), preface.
 10. Lawrence J. Trudeau, ed., *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 238 (Detroit: Gale/Cengage Learning, 2010), 256.
 11. *Guinness Book of World Records*, www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2007/10/071031.aspx (accessed October 10, 2010).
 12. Brian Stableford in Pringle, *The St. James Guide to Horror*, Literature Resource Center database (Gale/Cengage Learning; accessed October 10, 2010).
 13. Michael Stuprich, ed., *Horror* (San Diego: Greenhaven, 2001), 21.
 14. Chapter 5 contains a lengthy discussion of the ghost story, its history, and suggested titles to read.
 15. *Weird Tales* has been resurrected recently and can be accessed at <http://weirdtales.net/wordpress/> (accessed October 13, 2010).
 16. Examples include an ongoing Cthulhu-inspired graphic novel series titled Fall of Cthulhu written by Michael Alan Nelson, beginning with *The Fugue* (Los Angeles: Boom! Studios, 2008). See also the various collections of new Cthulhu stories, such as John Pelan and Benjamin Adams, *The Children of Cthulhu: Chilling New Tales Inspired by H. P. Lovecraft* (New York: Ballantine, 2002). A Google search for Cthulhu brings up almost 4 million results, and Cthulhu is represented close to 4,000 times on YouTube (accessed October 10, 2010).
 17. In Mira Grant's zombie-filled novel, *Feed* (New York: Orbit, 2010), the protagonist tells the reader that Romero is a godlike figure to her society. His film, she argues, saved their lives when zombies really did come back from the grave. In this fictional world, the zombie of Romero is kept alive for scientific study as a tribute to his importance.
 18. In his seminal work on the genre, *Danse Macabre* (New York: Everest House, 1981), Stephen King includes a discussion of both the novel and the film in chapter 9, "Horror Fiction."
 19. *Rosemary's Baby*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosemary%27s_Baby_%28film%29#Awards_and_honors (accessed October 13, 2010).
 20. *The Exorcist*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exorcist_%28film%29 (accessed October 13, 2010).

21. Ibid.
22. I'm not the only one who makes these claims. In 2003, King was awarded the National Book Award for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters by the National Book Foundation. Recipients of this award are chosen because they have "enriched our literary heritage over a life of service, or a corpus of work" (www.nationalbook.org/amerletters.html).
23. For more about King and Koontz, see chapter 3 of this text.
24. The Horror Writers Association, "A Shockingly Brief and Informal History of the Horror Writers Association," www.horror.org/aboutus.htm (accessed October 13, 2010).
25. Stephen King's Dark Tower series begins with *The Gunslinger* (New York: Signet, 1982).
26. Jim Butcher's Dresden Files series begins with *Storm Front* (New York: Roc Books, 2007); Charles de Lint's linked Newford books begin with *Dreams Underfoot* (New York: Orb, 2003); Charlaine Harris's Sookie Stackhouse series begins with *Dead until Dark* (New York: Ace Books, 2008).
27. Chapter 13 addresses the dark fantasy/horror debate in more detail.
28. In Mort Castle, ed., *On Writing Horror: A Handbook by the Horror Writers Association*, rev. ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 2007).

TITLE/AUTHOR LIST

Carrie, by Stephen King

The Castle of Otranto, by Horace Walpole

Dracula, by Bram Stoker

The Exorcist, by William Peter Blatty

Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley

Interview with the Vampire, by Anne Rice

The Island of Doctor Moreau, by H. G. Wells

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë

The Monk, by Matthew Lewis

Mysteries of Udolpho, by Ann Radcliffe

Northanger Abbey, by Jane Austen

Rosemary's Baby, by Ira Levin

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, by Robert Louis Stevenson

The Vampyre, by John Polidori

Wuthering Heights, by Emily Brontë

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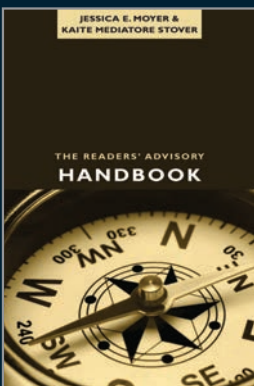
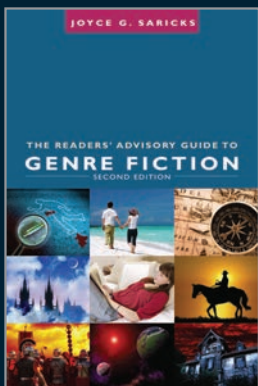
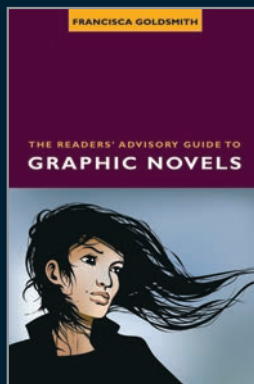
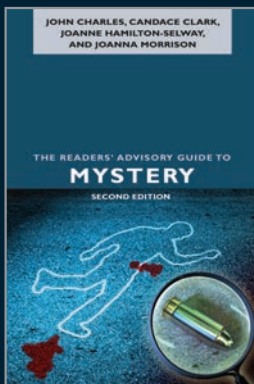
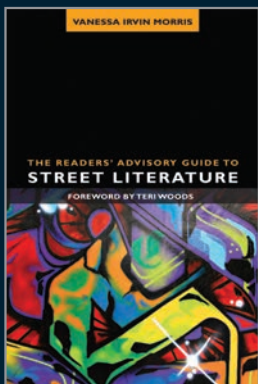
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Becky Siegel Spratford coauthored the first edition of *The Horror Readers' Advisory: The Librarian's Guide to Vampires, Killer Tomatoes, and Haunted Houses*. She has been a readers' advisor since 2000 at the Berwyn (Illinois) Public Library. She graduated with honors from Dominican University's Graduate School of Library and Information Science in January 2001. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at the same school, teaching Readers' Advisory Service two semesters a year. Spratford also contributes content to NovelList, is a member of both the Adult Reading Round Table Steering Committee and the Horror Writers Association, and is the author of the blog *RA for All: Horror*.

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PREFACE

Why We Need Horror

Readers love fantasy, but we *need* horror. Smart horror.
Truthful horror. Horror that helps us make sense of a cruelly
senseless world.

—Brian K. Vaughan¹

It is hard to go anywhere in America today without confronting a vampire, zombie, or witch in some form or another. While Sookie Stackhouse teams up with vampires on TV and in the pages of Charlaine Harris's best-selling novels, zombies have stormed the world of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* bringing thousands of readers along for the ride, and Harry Potter has become the universal symbol of the witching world.² Although these creatures have gained mainstream traction in popular culture over the last twenty years, they have done so by slowly moving away from the world of horror where they were first conceived. Just the presence of a vampire, zombie, or witch on the pages of a novel or on the big screen no longer automatically makes the story "horror."

We are in the midst of a supernatural explosion in all fiction. If I had to name one trend in all popular fiction released in the last decade it would be the fact that supernatural elements have snuck their way into every genre. For example, readers can now find zombies populating the pages of political thrillers (Mira Grant's *Feed*), wizards running detective agencies (Jim Butcher's Dresden Files series), and ancient demons appearing as love interests (Sherrilyn Kenyon's *Night Pleasures*).³ This trend is both a blessing and a curse for the readers' advisory librarian. We now have many more supernatural options for our patrons than we used to, but on the other hand, we have to pay much closer attention to *why* our patrons are seeking out paranormal scenes, plots, and characters in their leisure reading.

That is the big quandary which this book attempts to tackle head on. How does today's readers' advisor untangle true horror works from the larger mass of paranormal offerings? As the epigraph to this chapter reminds us, "we *need* horror." Readers have been drawn to works of

horror fiction for centuries, and as readers' advisors, we have become their navigators. This book, then, becomes your map.

Advisors new to horror might find the prospect of the horror genre daunting, but remember, our horror readers are not monsters themselves, they just like to read about them. If you are worried about not knowing enough to field a horror-related RA question, don't be. Using this book, you can handle even the scariest of horror-related questions. I have included chapters on the history of horror, its appeal, and a "Horror 101" guide to the genre. There are chapters with annotated lists of horror novels categorized by their subgenres to help our patrons find the books that they would most enjoy, ideas on what other genres and formats our horror readers might enjoy, and tips on how to develop and market our horror collections—basically, everything we need to help our patrons find their next good scare.

Everything in this second edition has been updated and reevaluated, with new authors, trends, annotations, and suggestions. However, the biggest change is that this edition comes with a free electronic update—a blog that will continue to keep you apprised of the world of horror fiction specifically as it applies to librarians and their patrons.⁴ No other horror resource is so tailored to your specific library needs.

So what are you waiting for? Enter if you dare . . .

NOTES

1. Brian K. Vaughan, introduction to *Locke and Key: Crown of Shadows*, by Joe Hill, illustrated by Gabriel Rodriguez (San Diego, CA: IDW, 2010).
2. Adapted from the Sookie Stackhouse novels of Charlaine Harris, *True Blood* currently airs as a series on HBO and is distributed on DVD by Warner Home Video. Harris's series begins with *Dead until Dark* (New York: Berkley, 2001). Seth Grahame-Smith and Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Classic Regency Romance—Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem!* (Philadelphia: Quirk Books, 2009). J. K. Rowling is the author of the Harry Potter series beginning with *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 1998). The Harry Potter films are distributed by Warner Home Video, Burbank, CA.
3. Jim Butcher's Dresden Files series begins with *Storm Front* (New York: Roc Books, 2000).
4. *RA for All: Horror*, www.raforallhorror.blogspot.com, is produced and maintained by Becky Spratford as the online home of this text.

1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HORROR How the Past Haunts the Present

I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool; if so my stay may be very interesting.

—Bram Stoker, *Dracula*¹

In 1974, Stephen King published *Carrie*, and the world of horror fiction changed forever. However, although Stephen King may be the most accomplished and best-known horror writer ever, he was not the first to write in the genre. Horror has a long and interesting history. Arming yourself with knowledge of this history will assist you as you guide your patrons through the dark passages of horror. Although most of this book will focus on the present state of horror, I am a big proponent of the saying that in order to know where you are now (or even where you are going), you need to know where you have been.

In that spirit, I offer this very brief history of horror. By no means is this review meant to be the definitive word on the genre. For that, you can turn to the many full-length books dedicated to the subject.² This is a history for the general librarian, the person sitting at the service desk and helping leisure readers each and every day. This is the history you need to know, the bullet points, major themes, and changes over time—the history that will let you see the whole picture so that you can feel comfortable talking about the genre to your patrons.

The history of horror is complicated. Horror, like romance, has been slow to gain legitimacy in the literary arena, partly because it has been the victim of fuzzy and overlapping genre boundaries. Horror has moved

from being a literary element within the pages of science fiction, the serial-killer thriller, and dark fantasy novels to having its own defined genre. The merging of horror into other genres continues, and under the umbrella classification of speculative fiction, we often still find horror partnered with fantasy and science fiction. Regardless of our tendencies to blend genres, horror fiction contains elements that differentiate it from other genres. The most prominent of these is the author's intention of creating a frighteningly uneasy atmosphere. This emotional punch feeds readers' powerful voyeuristic desire to explore the dark, malevolent side of humanity in an imaginative framework. This feeling, a mainstay of the horror novel, gets at the heart of why readers have been drawn to these stories for centuries.³

The rest of this chapter is a peek into what horror was and how it evolved into what it is today—a genre I define as a story in which the author manipulates the reader's emotions by introducing situations in which unexplainable phenomena and unearthly creatures threaten the protagonists and provoke terror in the reader.⁴

THE GOTHIC NOVEL

In 1765, Horace Walpole published the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*.⁵ This publication is widely considered to mark the beginning of the horror genre. Horror elements had been present in literature before this, of course, but after this date there was an explosion of Gothic writings with recurring themes and plot lines characterized by “an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the prescience of highly stereotyped characters, and the attempt to deploy and perfect techniques of literary suspense.”⁶ These are stories of ancient castles, dark passageways, and ghosts. Typical plots involved an evil villain pursuing a young woman, and although she is confused and scared, she ultimately triumphs, and the villain is exposed.

Emphasizing atmosphere over plot development, the Gothic novel became synonymous with excess and exaggeration, portraying the terrors of the haunted house, vampires, werewolves, and soulless monsters unleashed on society. Classic examples include Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), which shocked readers with its account of rape and torture, and John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), one of the first novels to feature such a being.⁷ But arguably the most influential Gothic novel of this era

was Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1765). Set in the sixteenth century, this popular novel told the story of the orphaned Emily St. Aubert, who upon her parents' deaths was made the ward of her aunt, Madame Cheron. The aunt marries the sinister Italian Count Montoni, who carts Emily off to a dilapidated castle in the Apennines and plots to steal her inheritance. Emily must find a way to escape.

Although the Gothic period is said to have ended with the publication of *Frankenstein* in 1818, the Gothic tradition continued to influence some of our best-known classics such as the Brontë sisters' *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, as well as Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. The Gothic influence is also evident in the writings of nineteenth-century American authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry James. Today we see novels written in the Gothic tradition by authors as varied as Joyce Carol Oates, Alexandra Sokoloff, and Charlaine Harris. Box 1.1 lists some Gothic authors of note.

Box 1.1 Gothic and Gothic-Influenced Authors

Charlotte Brontë	Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu
Emily Brontë	Matthew Lewis
Wilkie Collins	Edgar Allan Poe
Charles Dickens	John Polidori
Nathaniel Hawthorne	Ann Radcliffe
E. T. A. Hoffman	Horace Walpole

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE

At the close of the eighteenth century, social critics and intellectuals of the time were uniquely situated to witness the rise of science and technology as well as what some perceived to be the social and moral decline of the West. The Enlightenment brought an increased knowledge of the natural world and a weakening of religious dogmas. People began to question what happened after death as well as the existence of God. The works and lectures of T. H. Huxley, a Darwin defender, serve as great examples of the issues and ideas of the era. Huxley believed that science emerged when the human brain had evolved to a certain level of complexity.⁸ If wisely used, the marvels of science would allow civilization to reach new heights, and humanity would evolve even further. But, he warned, humans had begun as lowly creatures and still had a primitive side to their nature.

Motivated by this dark side, people could use science to enslave others and manufacture weapons of destruction. The use of science for good, or evil, and humankind's evolutionary process and primal fears became central themes for the horror genre. The fear that technology and science were taking over our lives was real, and it manifested in writings about the terrible things science could do in the hands of the wrong people.

The Enlightenment and the ideas it spawned were debated by intellectuals and social thinkers for decades, but the first novel to explore these ideas was Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), which gave readers the first mad scientist who attempted to circumvent God and create life in man's image. The results were disastrous for Dr. Frankenstein, and readers were left with a lasting warning about the consequences of playing God.

Another example from this era is *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, which delved into the mental health of man, the structure of personality, and the fear that we can unknowingly become our own worst nightmare. The possibility of transforming ourselves only to discover that our alter ego is a monster is as terrifying now as it was back then. The grandfather of science fiction, H. G. Wells, was also experimenting with the new scientific discoveries of the time, focusing on the scarier aspects of these ideas and extrapolating them into a frightening future. In *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), Wells specifically warned of what the world could expect if it failed to control the outrageous pace of scientific progress. On the surface, Moreau is a mad scientist, in the mold of Dr. Frankenstein. He heartlessly contours the shapes of his innocent animal subjects in a blind search for forbidden knowledge. But what he is really doing is far worse. Moreau has set himself up as the divine creator of vivisected creatures who in turn view him as their god. At a time when scientific progress seemed to be supplanting religion, these books were the scariest stories imaginable.

The nineteenth century came to a close with the most recognizable horror novel of all time. With the publication of *Dracula* (1897), Bram Stoker created a novel that has now become synonymous with the vampire motif. *Dracula* is one of the best-selling novels of all time, has never been out of print, and, in fact, has only become more popular over time.⁹ Stoker's vampire was not the first to ever appear in literature, but in this epistolary novel, Stoker created the stereotype of the vampire as an aristocratic bloodsucker who preys on young women.¹⁰ Stoker's image of the vampire has become so pervasive in popular culture that *Dracula* is now the most frequently portrayed character in all horror films.¹¹ As Brian

Stableford has noted, “No other novel of any kind has ever stamped out an image so firmly and so decisively.”¹² To most people, Count Dracula is not only *the vampire*, he is the definition of horror. See box 1.2 for a list of authors from this era.

Box 1.2 Key Horror Authors of the Enlightenment

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley	Bram Stoker
Robert Louis Stevenson	H. G. Wells

THE GHOST STORY AND BEYOND

The early years of the twentieth century were the golden age of the ghost story.¹³ M. R. James set the tone and developed many of the genre classifications of the ghost story, a subgenre that is still very popular. In a ghost story, characters are haunted by a spirit and are forced to battle both the spirit and their own inner demons in order to survive the ordeal.¹⁴ Authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, Edith Wharton, H. G. Wells, Anne Rice, and Stephen King have all experimented with ghost stories, leaving a rich tradition of the haunted. For a longer list of the ghost story writers of this golden age, see box 1.3.

Box 1.3 Ghost Story Authors

Ambrose Bierce	Henry James
Algernon Blackwood	M. R. James
Robert W. Chambers	Arthur Machen
Walter de la Mare	Oliver Onions
W. W. Jacobs	

However, the most influential horror writer of the early twentieth century was the eccentric hermit H. P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft influenced a number of other writers of his time and beyond with his stories about human encounters with ancient beings of horrific and alien appearance who occasionally intrude into our world from other dimensions. These works are called the Cthulhu Mythos stories, and many of them were published in the popular magazine *Weird Tales*.¹⁵ Both Lovecraft’s stories and the magazine attracted a cult following. In fact, after Lovecraft’s death, writers continued to publish Cthulhu-inspired stories. Even into the twenty-first

century, new tales of Cthulhu continue to appear every few years, and you can find YouTube feeds and entire websites devoted to Cthulhu themes.¹⁶

THE PULP ERA: 1930–1973

What Lovecraft started took on a life of its own, and a new era of horror literature became popular. Sometimes referred to as the pulp era, this period produced the beginnings of modern horror as we know it. Readers had been primed by Lovecraft's outrageous and terrifying stories, and after his death in 1937, they craved more. Authors such as Ray Bradbury, Shirley Jackson, and Richard Matheson who grew up reading Lovecraft began their popular and influential careers writing horror novels and stories during this era. Their work is now widely considered among the best genre fiction ever produced and is still being mined by the film industry for popular movies.

In fact, a trip to the movies is the next big step in the history of horror literature. Since cinema's infancy, horror novels and films have shared themes and characters, such as vampires, zombies, ghosts, and werewolves, and the popularity of horror movies helped to pull horror novels into the mainstream consciousness. During the 1930s and '40s, Universal Pictures produced classic, atmospheric horror films based on earlier novels. In 1931, Bela Lugosi played his signature role as Dracula, and Boris Karloff brought Frankenstein to the big screen. Karloff showed his theatrical abilities again in 1932 in the portrayal of Imhotep, a 3,700-year-old Egyptian brought back to life in *The Mummy*. Then in 1941, Universal made the quintessential werewolf film, *The Wolf Man*, with Lon Chaney Jr. and Bela Lugosi. The impact of these films on popular perceptions of these monsters, invented first in the pages of novels, was enormous. The movies expanded and added to the original creations, providing visual images of the classic stories, images that persist. Since that time, the horror movie and the horror novel have been irrevocably linked.

In the 1940s and '50s horror fiction was struggling. There was less time for leisure reading in general with the country focused on the war effort, but the movies brought back the genre, which in turn reignited an interest in horror novels. The 1960s brought popular retellings of Poe's Gothic tales to films starring Vincent Price. However, the most influential horror film of the decade was undoubtedly George Romero's 1968 classic zombie film, *Night of the Living Dead*. Not only did Romero set the stage for an increase in the explicit gore in horror films, but he also set the standard for all zombie stories, in all formats, forever after.¹⁷

Although *Night of the Living Dead* began its life as a movie, two notable horror novels from this era were also made into hugely popular and critically acclaimed motion pictures: Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) and William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971). The former is about a woman impregnated with Satan's son, while the latter is about the battle for the soul of a young girl who is possessed by an ancient demon. Specifically, *Rosemary's Baby*, both the novel and Roman Polanski's 1968 film version, is considered one of the classics of the horror genre and instrumental in its evolution.¹⁸ The film was nominated for numerous awards, including two Academy Awards.¹⁹ *The Exorcist* did even better. When the film came out in 1973, it was the highest grossing film of all time until it was surpassed by *Jaws* in 1974.²⁰ *The Exorcist* was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and won two, including one for Blatty's work on adapting his novel for the screen.²¹ The legacy of these two novels lives on through their films, drawing new readers to their pages year after year. These classic horror novels are also extremely important because of their place at the end of an era. Consult box 1.4 for a further list of the major horror authors of the first seventy-five years of the twentieth century.

Box 1.4 Major Twentieth-Century Horror Authors, 1900–1973

Peter Benchley	Roald Dahl	H. P. Lovecraft
A. G. Birch	August Derleth	William March
William Peter Blatty	Daphne du Maurier	Richard Matheson
E. F. Bleiler	L. Ron Hubbard	E. Hoffman Price
Robert Bloch	Shirley Jackson	Donald Wandrei
Ray Bradbury	Fritz Leiber	Henry S. Whitehead
Hugh Cave	Ira Levin	

Things in the world of horror, however, were about to change forever, as a new author took the reins as horror master.

THE DAWN OF MODERN HORROR: 1974–1999

As well as things were going for horror fiction up to this point, everything changed in 1974 when Stephen King published his first novel, *Carrie*. Not only did this event mark the beginning of horror's modern era, but King has also become one of the most important authors in America.²² After King began publishing, all horror novels would come to be judged by

the high standard he has set throughout his still vibrant career. The 1970s also introduced readers to Anne Rice's vampire, Louis de Pointe du Lac, and his confessions in the best-selling *Interview with the Vampire*. Rice went on to romance her readers with many novels of vampires, witches, and mummies for over twenty years and served as the inspiration for today's immensely popular paranormal titles. Dean Koontz also began his long domination of the best-seller charts with his genre-bending, horrific thrillers in the 1970s. The combination of these three powerhouses moved horror novels into the spotlight; it seemed that just about everyone in America was reading a book by one of these authors. Even more amazing, all three are still widely read, even Rice, who has not written a new horror novel in over a decade.²³

As we moved into the 1980s, King, Koontz, and Rice were still leading the charge, but Clive Barker entered the horror scene, intensifying the sex and violence in the genre. Barker's novels and stories also fed the growing fascination with slasher films—such as the *Halloween* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* series—by adding one of his own in the *Hellraiser* films, featuring the terrifying sadomasochist villain, Pinhead.

Inspired by the writings of these stalwarts, many new horror writers found a readership and prospered during this time. (See box 1.5 for a more complete list.) In fact, horror became so in demand that in 1984, one of its more popular authors, Robert McCammon, used an interview with *Publishers Weekly* to publicly declare his desire for a writers' association strictly geared toward the "needs of fellow writers of fear."²⁴ Working with fellow novelists Dean Koontz and Joe Lansdale, McCammon formed the Horror Writers of America in 1986. The association began issuing the highest honor in horror literature, the Bram Stoker Award, in 1987. The group has since changed its name to the Horror Writers Association and continues to be the leading voice of the horror writing community, promoting the work of its members, issuing internationally recognized genre awards, and educating the world about horror.

The 1990s brought more of the same with King, Koontz, and Rice ruling the genre, but as a result of their intense popularity, a new genre was beginning to emerge. Led by the literary novels of Neil Gaiman, dark fantasy gained popularity as we approached the new millennium. With the sales of horror books staying high and the Horror Writers Association working to promote horror, readers wanted more. Just as past horror writers borrowed from other genres, now fantasy writers were looking toward horror to inject new life into their work. Stephen King even tried his hand at dark fantasy, writing the bulk of his popular *Dark Tower* series during this decade.²⁵

Box 1.5 provides a longer list of influential horror authors from 1974 to 1999.

Box 1.5 Major Horror Authors, 1974–1999

Clive Barker	Joe Lansdale	John Saul
Ramsey Campbell	Richard Laymon	Dan Simmons
Douglass Clegg	Bentley Little	Michael Slade
Tananarive Due	Brian Lumley	Brian Stableford
John Farris	Graham Masterton	Peter Straub
Christopher Golden	Robert McCammon	Whitley Strieber
Charles Grant	Christopher Moore	F. Paul Wilson
Jack Ketchum	Kim Newman	Chelsea Quinn Yarbro
Stephen King	Tom Piccirilli	
Dean Koontz	Anne Rice	

A NEW MILLENNIUM: 2000–PRESENT

The draw of dark fantasy continued to overshadow much of what would be considered true horror as the 2000s began. Popular paranormal series like Jim Butcher’s Harry Dresden series, Charles de Lint’s Newford books, and Charlaine Harris’s Sookie Stackhouse series dominated the decade, often overshadowing true horror.²⁶ Although these dark fantasy series use common horror monsters or dark, unsettling atmospheres, or both, in their stories, their main appeal is not to induce fear. Rather, their focus is more grounded in the traditional fantasy appeal of creating a magical landscape, albeit a darker one. But the biggest difference between this century’s popular dark fantasy and pure works of horror is the fact that in dark fantasy, the monsters are often the heroes, while in horror, monsters remain monsters.²⁷

The attention paid to dark fantasy does not mean that horror novelists have not been producing work of note. The new millennium has seen a reemergence of the paperback horror novel similar to the pulp novels of the mid-twentieth century. Horror writers have also been among the first to embrace new technology, using blogs and e-books in large numbers. One popular horror writer, Scott Sigler, takes the use of technology one step farther by releasing his novels in serial form via free podcasts before they come out in print. Horror has also moved into the graphic novel format with much success. And a true new horror master of the twenty-first

century, Joe Hill, has emerged as a best seller in the vein of his father, Stephen King, to lead the genre into a new century. Box 1.6 lists some of the most influential horror novelists of the 2000s.

Box 1.6 Major Horror Authors of the Twenty-first Century

Gary Braunbeck	Sarah Langan	Harry Shannon
Max Brooks	Deborah LeBlanc	Scott Sigler
John Everson	Edward Lee	John Skipp
Greg Gifune	Jonathan Maberry	Bryan Smith
Joe Hill	Robert Masello	Alexandra Sokoloff
Brian Keene	Joe McKinney	Jeff Strand
Nate Kenyon	Weston Ochse	
Michael Laimo	Sarah Pinborough	

TIME TO MOVE ON . . .

Horror has evolved over time into its own best-selling genre by borrowing themes and techniques from the past as well as by forging new territory and expanding its boundaries. Today's horror novelists understand this. References to Poe, Lovecraft, Stoker, and many of the pulp writers pop up frequently in horror books. Readers respect this, and they will also expect you to have a basic understanding of the genre's deep traditions.

For those who are interested in delving further into the books upon which the history of the genre is based, I suggest familiarizing yourself with the twenty-one books Robert Weinberg suggests that all horror writers read for themselves in his article, "What You Are Meant to Know: Twenty-One Horror Classics."²⁸ The list is annotated to help you to better understand each title's place within the larger context of the history of horror literature.

But now it is time to leave the past behind and enter the world of horror in the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. The epigraph is taken from the first chapter of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/345 (accessed September 7, 2011).
2. For a more detailed history I suggest you begin with David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the Present Day* (New York:

- Longman, 1996). I also like David Pringle, *The St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost and Gothic Writers* (Detroit: Gale, 1998). You can use both books' extensive bibliographies to guide any further research into the history of horror literature.
3. Chapter 2 will provide a more detailed discussion of the appeal of horror.
 4. This definition is further discussed in chapter 2, "The Appeal of Horror: Feel the Fear, Find the Readers."
 5. The 2001 Penguin edition of *The Castle of Otranto* has been edited and includes an introduction and notes by Michael Gamer.
 6. Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 1.
 7. The 2002 Oxford University Press edition of *The Monk* has an introduction by Stephen King.
 8. T. H. Huxley, *The Advance of Science in the Last Half-Century*, Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15253 (accessed October 8, 2010). A full listing of Huxley's works can be found at www.gutenberg.org/browse/authors/h#a595.
 9. Nina Auerbach and David Skal, eds., *Dracula*, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), preface.
 10. Lawrence J. Trudeau, ed., *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 238 (Detroit: Gale/Cengage Learning, 2010), 256.
 11. *Guinness Book of World Records*, www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2007/10/071031.aspx (accessed October 10, 2010).
 12. Brian Stableford in Pringle, *The St. James Guide to Horror*, Literature Resource Center database (Gale/Cengage Learning; accessed October 10, 2010).
 13. Michael Stuprich, ed., *Horror* (San Diego: Greenhaven, 2001), 21.
 14. Chapter 5 contains a lengthy discussion of the ghost story, its history, and suggested titles to read.
 15. *Weird Tales* has been resurrected recently and can be accessed at <http://weirdtales.net/wordpress/> (accessed October 13, 2010).
 16. Examples include an ongoing Cthulhu-inspired graphic novel series titled *Fall of Cthulhu* written by Michael Alan Nelson, beginning with *The Fugue* (Los Angeles: Boom! Studios, 2008). See also the various collections of new Cthulhu stories, such as John Pelan and Benjamin Adams, *The Children of Cthulhu: Chilling New Tales Inspired by H. P. Lovecraft* (New York: Ballantine, 2002). A Google search for Cthulhu brings up almost 4 million results, and Cthulhu is represented close to 4,000 times on YouTube (accessed October 10, 2010).
 17. In Mira Grant's zombie-filled novel, *Feed* (New York: Orbit, 2010), the protagonist tells the reader that Romero is a godlike figure to her society. His film, she argues, saved their lives when zombies really did come back from the grave. In this fictional world, the zombie of Romero is kept alive for scientific study as a tribute to his importance.
 18. In his seminal work on the genre, *Danse Macabre* (New York: Everest House, 1981), Stephen King includes a discussion of both the novel and the film in chapter 9, "Horror Fiction."
 19. *Rosemary's Baby*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosemary%27s_Baby_%28film%29#Awards_and_honors (accessed October 13, 2010).
 20. *The Exorcist*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exorcist_%28film%29 (accessed October 13, 2010).

21. Ibid.
22. I'm not the only one who makes these claims. In 2003, King was awarded the National Book Award for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters by the National Book Foundation. Recipients of this award are chosen because they have "enriched our literary heritage over a life of service, or a corpus of work" (www.nationalbook.org/amerletters.html).
23. For more about King and Koontz, see chapter 3 of this text.
24. The Horror Writers Association, "A Shockingly Brief and Informal History of the Horror Writers Association," www.horror.org/aboutus.htm (accessed October 13, 2010).
25. Stephen King's Dark Tower series begins with *The Gunslinger* (New York: Signet, 1982).
26. Jim Butcher's Dresden Files series begins with *Storm Front* (New York: Roc Books, 2007); Charles de Lint's linked Newford books begin with *Dreams Underfoot* (New York: Orb, 2003); Charlaine Harris's Sookie Stackhouse series begins with *Dead until Dark* (New York: Ace Books, 2008).
27. Chapter 13 addresses the dark fantasy/horror debate in more detail.
28. In Mort Castle, ed., *On Writing Horror: A Handbook by the Horror Writers Association*, rev. ed. (Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 2007).

TITLE/AUTHOR LIST

Carrie, by Stephen King

The Castle of Otranto, by Horace Walpole

Dracula, by Bram Stoker

The Exorcist, by William Peter Blatty

Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley

Interview with the Vampire, by Anne Rice

The Island of Doctor Moreau, by H. G. Wells

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë

The Monk, by Matthew Lewis

Mysteries of Udolpho, by Ann Radcliffe

Northanger Abbey, by Jane Austen

Rosemary's Baby, by Ira Levin

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, by Robert Louis Stevenson

The Vampyre, by John Polidori

Wuthering Heights, by Emily Brontë

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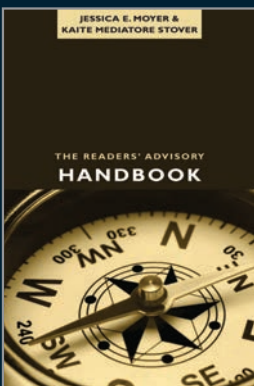
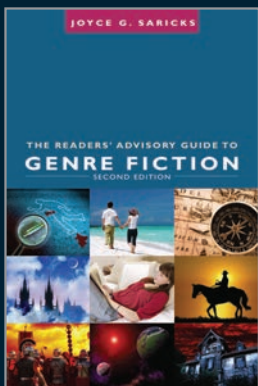
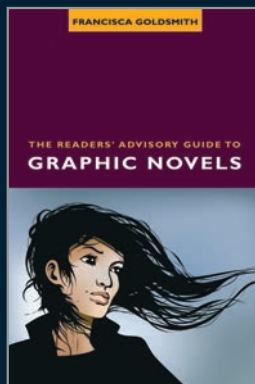
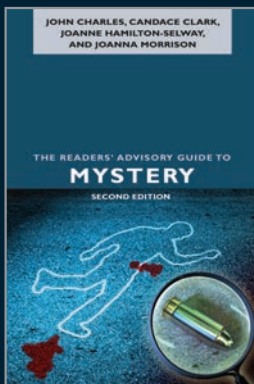
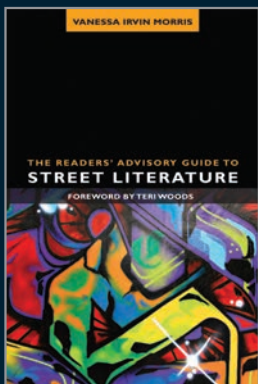
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