



Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror

James B. Twitchell

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Dreadful Pleasures offers a lively look at those stories that make our hair stand on end--their persistence in our culture, their manifestations in art, and our need for the *frissons* they provide. James Twitchell traces our fascination with horror from the cave paintings at Lascaux to the "slasher" movies today.

Twitchell finds that three particular stories have had a special resonance in our culture: the bloodsucker (*Dracula*), the deformed creature (*Frankenstein*), and the transformation monster (*The Wolfman*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*). Why have these stories persisted to the point of becoming mythic and to the exclusion of others? Whatever happened to the Phantom of the Opera or the Hunchback of Notre Dame or the Creature from the Black Lagoon? Using a psychoanalytic approach, Twitchell argues that the stories we seek out and preserve are th ones that carry certain information as well as horror. These myths, he contends, warn their adolescent audiences of the dangers of careless sexual behavior: they seem to say--subliminally--that sex itself is not horrible, but sex with certain people is.

Whether discussing the engravings of William Hogarth or *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Twitchell is consistently insightful, provocative, and entertaining. Film buffs and scholars literary critics and devotees of the Gothic novel will all welcome this study.

About the Author:

James B. Twitchell is Professor of English at the University of Florida, Gainesville. His previous books include *GThe Living Dead: The Vampire in Romantic Literature* and *Romantic Horizons: Aspects of the Sublime in English Poetry and Painting*.

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