



HORROR MEN

They should know—these men who have

SHALL I brew you a broth of horror? Shall I put into the caldron tremors and trepidations, palpitations and panic, to make you quake and quiver, shrink and shudder? Shall I make your flesh creep, your breath stop, your teeth chatter and your hair stand on end?

Then how can I better achieve this eerie, enjoyable end than by talking with the heart-quaques of Hollywood—than by asking the men who have “supped full with horrors.” Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Basil Rathbone, Lionel Atwill, to define horror for us, to tell us what horror means to them. They should know—these men who have given us “Dracula,” “Frankenstein” and “The Son of Frankenstein,” “The Hound of the Baskervilles,” “Doctor X,” “The Wax Museum” and “Murders in the Zoo.” They’ve played characters sinister and perverse, macabre and ghostly, drenched in horror and the clamminess thereof.

So I began with Basil Rathbone. I said, “What constitutes real horror to you?”

“War!” screamed Rathbone, instantly. And I mean he screamed the word at me, horribly, so that its echoes hung around the room we sat in. “Going into an attack, paralyzed with fear, knowing that if we had our own free will, not a living man of us would go! Every living man

BY
MARTHA
KERR



Have you ever wondered why people enjoy books and pictures that make their flesh creep and their blood run cold? Lionel Atwill explains it for you.



TALK ABOUT HORROR

given us Dracula, Frankenstein and the rest of the sinister, hair-raising clan

of us would funk it. We go because we cease to be individuals. We become a mass machine. We are dominated by mass psychology. We become a composite Thing of arms, legs, heads and wills. We move into the attack only because it is the only way out. If we do not go into the attack, if we turn back one quivering inch, we are shot down like dogs—deserters. So we are forced to go forward, not because we are brave and gallant gentlemen, but because we are in a trap.

"War is a trap, a monstrous, gigantic, inconceivably barbarous trap. And there you have it. A trap is the most horrible thing in the world. Any kind of a trap. Because in a trap you are alone, crouched there with fear. There is Death screaming at you in front. There is Death sticking his tongue out at you from behind. You go over the top because it is the only way to get out. If there were any other way, a million voices would chorus, 'I can't face it! I can't face walking over the broken bodies of my comrades, over their spilled hearts and hopes and dreams. I can't and I won't.'

"I never stuck a bayonet into a man in my life. If I had, I would have known such horror that I would have screamed aloud and the scream would have wakened me

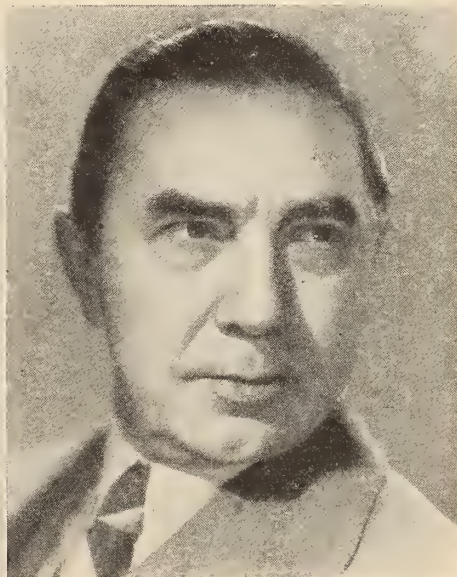
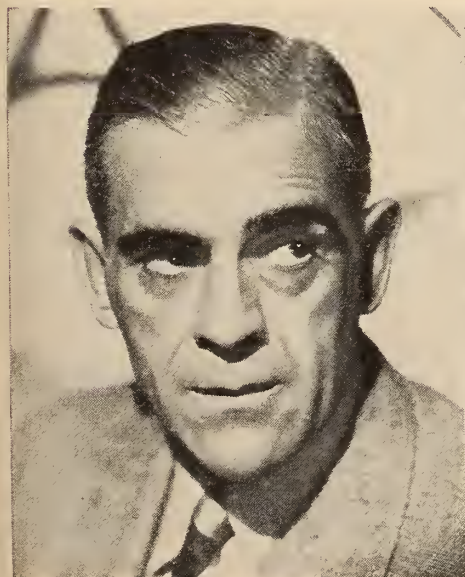
out of the mass murder psychosis which alone preserved my reason. I would then have become an individual and would have lost my mind. I would have spent the rest of my life cutting out paper soldiers, tearing them apart, like that poor chap glimpsed in "The Little Princess." How many of him I have seen—not in pictures for the kiddies!

"War, I say, that's horror! It is a trap. In the trap a man, no longer a man, lives with Death. There is no horror like it!"

Boris Karloff faced me across the narrow confines of his portable dressing-room on the set of "Enemy Agent." His face was seamed from eye to chin. When he walked, he walked with a limp. Out of his maimed face his heart and spirit looked out, seeming to be maimed also.

Perhaps, I thought, when one walks with horror most of one's working, waking hours, one becomes twin to horror. One speaks with horror's twisted tongue, reaches out with horror's gruesome gestures, limps as horror limps, maimed and mutilated.

Mr. Karloff does not think so. Mr. Karloff says, "No, living with the macabre, as I do—I prefer to call it the macabre, not 'horror'—does not (Continued on page 68)



What does it do to a man to spend most of his working hours scarred, seamed, crippled or misshapen? Boris Karloff, who has done it, tells you.

Basil Rathbone's ideas on the subject are based on the most terrifying experience he has lived through. Prepare to have your hair stand on end!

Bela Lugosi has caused more shudders and chills than any man on the stage or screen and yet there's nothing supernatural in what he knows as real horror.

HORROR MEN TALK ABOUT HORROR

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induce in me the morbidities you may suppose. Much of the "credit" for horror should go to the make-up men of pictures, the unsung heroes of much of our "beauty" as well as much of our disfigurement. Gordon Barr, my make-up man, who wrestles with the Monster as neither Frankenstein nor his son have ever had to do, is largely responsible for the chills and fever I have given the world.

"To play a murderer, one does not have to be a murderer. Playing the macabre, living much of my life, as I certainly do, scarred, seamed, crippled or misshapen, as the case may be, does, if it does anything, arouse my imagination to an abnormal pitch. You cannot play abnormalities, disfigurements, distortions and mutilations of the flesh and brain, and just pull them out of the air. If you play a man with a third ear growing out of his forehead, you've got to think him out. You've got to invent his background. You've got to figure out his reactions to a world not composed of men with third ears.

SO that playing the characters I play does make me, possibly, more imaginative, more thoughtful than I would be if I played perfectly normal men. It is like the difference between travelling a main highway, paved, lighted, policed, and travelling a dark and jungle trail, where morasses, leprous trees, hidden ravines may trip or trap the path-finder.

"And so, I have thought on horror. I have given thought to what horror would most chillingly harrow up my soul, make my flesh creep and my hair stand on end. I say that horror is most horrible when it occurs in absolutely normal circumstances. If, for instance, you found someone's head under the sink in the kitchen where, ordinarily, you'd find a turnip—that is horror!

"To be physically repulsive and revolting to your fellow men, to walk, a pariah, among all peoples through no fault of your own, must be a bitter horror. Such a seam as I wear now, across my face, so that looking at me this way you do not see it, but turning my face suddenly, at this angle, you do see it and are smitten with a kind of terror like sickness. The cruel hideousness of Frankenstein's monster stalking a world of normal people. Anything that does not evoke the beneficent balm of pity is horror. We do not pity horror which is what makes it horror.

"Another horror is stone deafness. I really consider stone deafness the most horrible thing that could happen to me. I have listened to many people say that to them total blindness would be the Ultima Thule of horror. But stone deafness harks back to what I meant when I said that sheer horror is that which brings no pity. Blindness manifests itself and automatically demands and gets attention and sympathy. Stone deafness does not manifest itself and induces impatience and annoyance.

"I have heard a man, suddenly struck stone deaf, describe his experience. First, he senses fiery wheels going round and round in his bursting head—the whole world turning upside down. Then the curtain of absolute silence. He finds himself living in a world of puppets, making senseless, witless gesturings in his stony silence. Have you ever noticed the difference in disposition between one who is totally blind and one who is

stone deaf? The blind are habitually sunny and gay and high of spirit and ready of laughter. Their pain is manifest and so is leavened and sweetened with constant attention, sweet sympathy and understanding. The deaf are liable to be petulant, morose, low of spirit, because their trouble is not sweetened with sympathy.

Mr. Karloff laughed a little. He was called to the set. He turned his seamed face toward me and we said goodbye. He said, "So you can say for me that horror in normal surroundings, and pain without pity is the real horror."

Bela Lugosi, famed Dracula of stage and screen, purveyor of more shudders, creeps and chills than any man on stage or screen, gave me his idea of horror. A more practical, everyday, utilitarian brand of horror than that expressed by Mr. Rathbone or Mr. Karloff.

Bela Lugosi said, "I have just emerged out of a period in my life, a period of such horror as neither rattling bones, ghosts that walk, vampires that arise out of their graves, Dracula himself, nor Frankenstein's monster could possibly give me. I have felt my spine melt to jelly as I read "The Beetle," "Singers of Fear," "The Turn Of The Screw," famed among horror stories, but I could read them on my death-bed now and laugh as I read, by comparison with the horror I have known.

"Horror, to me, comes not from the other world but from this one. I did not work for two years," said Mr. Lugosi with such stark simplicity that the very skeleton of Fear rattled its lean, bared bones. "During that time I had a son. My first child. Horror, to me, is what I lived through during those two years. Horror, to me, is sitting, as I sat, night and day, day and night, by the telephone, thinking, 'Now comes the call . . . now . . . now . . . now!'" Horror, to me, is knowing that if the call did not come, there would not be food in the ice-box, nor light nor heat nor a place for my unborn baby to lay his head, nor a roof over the head of his mother. There is no agony like it.

"Horror, to me, is losing our home as we did. Our home into which I had put all of my savings. Horror, to me, is learning that you cannot influence your Destiny. Horror, to me, is the reptilian sting of the knowledge of my own stupidity, my own lack of foresight, my be-

lief that because I had always worked, I would always work.

"I sat by the phone until I grew to the chair. I haunted, as Dracula himself could not have haunted, agents, studios, casting offices, places where Lugosi might profitably be seen, be remembered. Horror, to me, is the moving picture of myself, an actor, struggling for another chance, a contract, a week's work, a day's work, a bit, an extra job. And knowing that the more I struggled, the more frantic and therefore the more obvious my squirmings and gaspings, the more I was defeating my own ends. For horror is knowing that you won't find anybody to give you a hand when you are down. A down-and-out actor is already a ghost haunting the corridors where once he walked a star.

"At long last, you come home one day, as I came home, and your wife tells you that the call has come and the gates are opened again!

"No, I am not afraid of the supernatural. I am afraid only of the horror I have just described. Now horror, to me, concerns my baby. Horror that an automobile may pass over him when he is old enough to run about at play. Horror that a hand may snatch him from where he sleeps. Fear, of course, fear is what I am trying to say. Fear is horror. Not fear for one's self—fear for those you love better than yourself. Fear lest through your failure they may go hungry, go cold, go homeless or be hurt. Fear for those I love—that is what horror means to me."

WHAT did Lionel Atwill have to say of Horror? Mr. Atwill, whose pictured eyes can be so cold, whose mouth can twist with a thin, sardonic smile which does indeed forebode the worst, said, "Paralysis would be the real horror to me. It would be pretty horrible to have an arm or a leg torn off. But you cannot feel horror without imagination and at the time of such a fatality the imagination is paralyzed, ceases to function. Pain stultifies conscious thought. Horror is more mental than physical. Therefore, when the mental processes are frozen by pain, horror is held at bay."

"But paralysis, the body inactive, the brain over-active—paralysis where there is no pain, where the body reduced to futility, the brain must grow preternaturally voracious and strong and fat on the inutile body. This, to me, constitutes horror.

"Fear of the unknown is the strongest of the human emotions. We do not fear what we know, but only what we do not know. And, perversely, we all love Fear. As all men love Death, denying it. The love of fear is why horror pictures are so overwhelmingly popular, why men and women devour murder mysteries. Any librarian will tell you that she cannot feed her customers horrors and murders fast enough. We all enjoy what I call the "safe goose pimples" that seeing horror pictures and reading murder mysteries give us. For at such times we can pull ourselves together with a snap and say 'I am really safe in the theatre,' or 'I am really snug in bed with the night light going.'

"But paralysis," said Mr. Atwill, with a rare Atwillian shudder, "is my real symbol of horror."

Now, I have brewed you a broth of real horror. Can you take it?



The "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" gal, Mary Martin, makes her screen debut in "The Great Victor Herbert."