Darryl Jones, *Sleeping with the Lights On: The Unsettling Story of Horror*
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

Darryl Jones's ambitious book, *Sleeping with the Lights On: The Unsettling Story of Horror*, packs an impressively wide breadth of material into this petite and well-designed text. At a mere 181 pages, including back matter, it traverses many of the horror tradition's key areas. Jones disregards the format of a conventional study limited to the most well-known films or novels, in favour of a more diverse inclusion of topics, texts, and time periods. He boldly claims that 'the Western literary tradition *is* a tradition of horror', which widens the scope of his project considerably (p. 5).

Organised thematically rather than chronologically, then, Jones's chapters demonstrate his characterisation of horror's influence as 'tentacular, spreading everywhere' (p. 139). Stylistically, it is also 'tentacular', straying into divergent areas that at times seem disparate but, in the process, presenting unexpected approaches to common topics. Though the historical layering is at first disorienting, its repetition throughout other chapters is helpful in acclimating the reader to his approach. For example, the text opens with the 'video nasties' of the 1980s, before jumping to classical literature from 400 BC, and then back again, achieving an 'interweaving of culture, religion, and horror' (p. 3). While the brevity of some of these examples may frustrate some academics, its strength is in creating unusual conversations across time and disciplines, even if the examples themselves are not explored in depth. Jones avoids making strong arguments, in favour of informative connections that spark curiosity more than fulfilling it. His approach is akin to an informal lecture by a knowledgeable professor, with a quick pace steered by frequent digressions that are interesting, insightful, and valuable.

Jones prefaces the book by asking why people are drawn to horror, what it says about audiences, and how it fits into their societies. Counter to the common psychological argument for catharsis, he argues that 'its real purpose is to force its audiences to confront the limits of their own tolerance – including, emphatically, their own tolerance for what is or is not art' (pp. 6-7). This sets the tone for his mixture of high and low culture, big-budget and low-budget horror, and the types of respect or disrespect they receive from different audiences. While scholars of horror and the gothic are well acquainted with the rescue and re-evaluation of 'trash lit' and bad movies, this may be refreshing and legitimising to readers new to horror as an object of serious study. The Introduction also includes a significant discussion of the history of the Gothic, as well as horror's engagement with politics and its function as a ritual

that is 'based on repetition, on the acting out of predetermined roles, on the precise fulfilment of expectations' (p. 16).

The chapters cover six broad topics within horror: 'Monsters', 'The Occult and the Supernatural', 'Horror and the Body', 'Horror and the Mind', 'Science and Horror', and 'Horror Since the Millennium', which also serves as the Afterword. Because these topics are so extensive, each chapter helpfully includes subheadings that guide the discussion, though they do not necessarily limit the range of examples. For instance, under the subheading of 'Psychos and Slashers: The Serial Killer' in the 'Horror and the Mind' chapter, the content meanders through true crime; *Silence of the Lambs* (dir. by Jonathan Demme, 1991) and the question of the devil; the urban influence on *American Psycho* (Bret Easton Ellis, 1991) and *Se7en* (dir. by David Fincher, 1995); nineteenth-century London's Sherlock Holmes and Jack the Ripper; *Peeping Tom* (dir. by Michael Powell, 1960) and its comment on voyeurism and film; Roald Dahl and his under-read story about human taxidermy; the influence of the suburbs on horror; *Halloween* (dir. by John Carpenter, 1978) and several other slasher films; and finally, the human and non-human aspects of slashers such as Jason Vorhees. Within this whirlwind of ideas are threads of light narrative theory that help hold them together, such as the assertion that '[t]he slasher movie is barely peopled by "characters" at all, but rather by narrative functions and agents, all acting out predetermined roles' (p. 119). For the most part, these webs of history, literature, and film are finely constructed and easy to follow.

While the wide scope of the book makes the text unique and applicable to a wide audience, the downside to including so much tangential material is that other more obvious ideas and topics are left out. The chapter that seemed farthest outside the scope of the project is disappointingly the chapter on 'Science and Horror'. As expected, the chapter describes the fascinating scientific context of texts like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), but it ventures too deeply into science fiction in the second half, even going so far as to include a few paragraphs on the Marvel Universe. Certainly, a valid argument could be made for the blurred boundary between horror and science fiction in a much longer text, and many science-fiction texts include vivid elements of horror, even if they are not typically classified as such. However, the inclusion of science fiction that too lightly dabbles in horror in Jones's short volume takes space away from texts that demonstrate a stronger relationship between science and horror, such as horror texts about medicine and medical experimentation, the association between ghosts and technology, and eco-horror, though the last is included in the Afterword.

This final section is strikingly different from the other five in tone and organisation. Whereas the preceding chapters present a pleasant and knowledgeable exploration of diverse elements of horror, the Afterword becomes sharply critical, even hostile at times. This unexpected and irregular tone is heightened by the absence of helpful subheadings. Jones disparages what he calls 'unhorror', which 'resembles horror, and deploys, often in a very self-conscious and accomplished way, many of horror's tropes […] it is art which does the thinking for its audience, and ideally allows no space for even the possibility of opposition' (p. 141). In this category he includes the *Twilight* phenomenon (usually categorised as paranormal teen romance), Paul Tremblay's *A Head Full of Ghosts* (2015), *Cloverfield* (dir. by Matt Reeves, 2008), and, most stanchly, *Paranormal Activity* (dir. by. Oren Peli, 2007), directing most of his ire at the 'risk-averse, compromised, moribund condition of much mainstream cinematic American unhorror around the millennium, which seemed incapable of ever surprising or delighting its audience' (p. 159). He also dismisses the recent trend in remakes and the technique of 'jump-shocks' or jump scares, which show 'nothing about the state of your soul, your place in the universe, the social function of violence, the evils of political inequality, or any of the other serious questions horror is accustomed to asking' (pp. 143, 146). These critiques seem to contradict the significance of tolerance for both high and low art presented in the Introduction. Because he has been so uncritical of the various non-horror texts in previous chapters, his claims in this Afterword are confusing and disorienting. It also, however, includes discussions of other important phenomena: eco-horror, polar horror, race within horror, folk horror, global horror (Asian and Hispanic), horror TV, and the internet's impact on horror, all of which return to the inclusive approach of the previous chapters.

Part of the appeal of *Sleeping with the Lights On* for both scholars and popular audiences will be the aesthetics of the book as an attractive object, particularly as it is paired with the prestige of Oxford University Press. With its black-edged pages, corrugated texture, and cut-out cover design over a bright red interior, the book's format is charming. Its relatively low price will also make it accessible to a wide audience. As such, its form embodies the prioritisation of audience, as well as an interplay between high and low culture, which are guiding threads throughout its vast range of topics. One hopes that, for many, it will function as an enjoyable entryway into complex and rewarding further study of horror.

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