Review

Reviewed Work(s): Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema: Traces of a Lost Decade by Mario Degiglio-Bellemare, Charlie Ellbé and Kristopher Woofter

Review by: Jane M. Kubiesa

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Book Reviews

Degiglio-Bellemare, Mario, Charlie Ellbé, and Kristopher Woofter, eds.
  Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema: Traces of a Lost Decade.
  Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015. 378 pages.

The concept of "recovering" a whole decade of cinematic genre material raises several key questions, not least amongst which are "Is there a decade which requires recovery?" and "Can such a vast investigation be mounted in a sustained and thorough manner within one text?" Whilst research on horror cinema of the 1930s golden age proliferates and the 1950s has frequently been cited as the decade from which to research the horror genre, the 1940s horror film has largely been overlooked or undervalued from an academic standpoint. This is the premise from which the editors of this book are operating, with the intention of furnishing the reader with a reframing of the "pervasive devaluation of 1940s horror" using the lexicon of the Gothic to provide "in-depth explorations" of a "lost" decade.

The first three sections of this book are dedicated to the Gothic themes of interventions, hybridity, and history, and they provide a sound platform for the examination of subjects including Gothic Realism, Proto-Slasher Cinema, the demise of the zombie, and monstrous psychologies. They impress upon the reader the importance of this period as a creative force within cinema at large, during a time the editors aptly describe as one of "significant experimentation." Rather than positioning the 1940s as the poor relation to the preceding decade or as less adventurous than the 1950s, the opening sections of this book champion the unique nature of cinematic representations within this decade via readings of the monster, the body, the mind, and gender in relation to very specific cultural associations. The final section of the book offers an illuminating celebration of Poverty Row cinema, whose B-movies have often been regarded as the epitome of post-1930s cinematic decline, but which are treated with a revisionist approach to establish their worth from an academic standpoint and to bring their importance in line with that of the productions of the major studios.

Vampires, ape men, and body snatchers number amongst the monsters under discussion in *Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema*, but it is the monstrosity of war which most stands out in this volume. An exploration of films produced in the shadow of the Second World War or its aftermath cannot be made without referencing the pervasive effects of warfare upon the artistic output of those at war. As such, this

book deftly deals with topics including wartime horrors, Nazi-occupied France, and the American horror film in the aftermath of the war. If one criticism could be leveled here, it might be that a full section was not reserved for the dissemination of this area of study; however, that would admittedly alter the tone of the entire text. Another potential, but minor, criticism might be that the chapters referencing different aspects of the war were not featured in a chronological manner, thus slightly skewing the historical timeline in question.

Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema is equally suited to an academic looking for a gateway text for further research into period horror cinema or a student researcher seeking an expansive investigation into 1940s genre horror. It thoughtfully foregrounds an oft-maligned and neglected decade in genre cinema and successfully sustains its investigations throughout, despite covering a voluminous topic. It does so in such a way that it could easily be considered as a definitive coverall text on the period due to its analysis of culture, history, and economy. In this book, 1940s horror cinema is reborn, and its history is recovered and reinstated, in true Gothic fashion.

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Jane M. Kubiesa
University of Worcester

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Beeler, Karin, and Stan Beeler, eds. *Children's Film in the Digital Age: Essays on Audience, Adaptation and Consumer Culture*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2015. 202 pages.

Children's literature and pop culture are genres currently under-examined in the academic world. They often get lumped in with other "popular" forms of fiction considered "simple" and unworthy of deep analysis. This is why books like *Children's Film in the Digital Age* are welcome because they attempt to fill in the large gap that currently exists in our academic culture.

Edited by Karin and Stan Beeler from the University of Northern British Columbia, *Children's Film in the Digital Age* is a collection of essays that examine films aimed at younger ages from various angles ranging from the academic (such as gender and race studies) to the mundane (such as sales analysis). The strength of the book lies in its breadth of content. There are thirteen essays in here, and none of them overlaps in any significant way, each possessing its own approach. Although there are technically three different sections that the essays are grouped into, the reality is that the selections in each group are only vaguely related to one another, providing a good, broad overview