Vampires, Race, and Transnational Hollywoods by Dale Hudson
(review)

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ing latent homeland insecurities into a full-blown case of national anxiety and fear. Schweitzer tracks how the post-9/11 viral outbreak narrative can be seen as mutating and seeping into stories about threats from foreign (especially Arab) terrorists. We know that such a conflation became politically manifest in recent years, not only in then candidate—and now president—Donald Trump's warning of "porous borders" but also in his stunningly apocalyptic declarations that "tremendous infectious disease is pouring across the border" (45).

The glibly reflexive tagline for 2011's *Contagion* was "Nothing Spreads Like Fear"; since the mid-1990s, nothing much has spread like the neo-zombie narrative that stalks today's movies, remakes, TV shows, books, and even video games (*Resident Evil*, 1996). Although the ubiquitous—shall we say infectious?—"living dead" horror/sci-fi scenario is prolifically alive and well in pop culture, Schweitzer suggests that it is more than simply a mutating cycle of film genre. In hit TV shows such as *The Walking Dead* and movies such as *28 Days Later* and a (reborn) *Dawn of the Dead* sequel, pathogenic fears not only have multiplied but also have been grafted onto a dehumanized and ghastly enemy "other." The author is dead-on in arguing that these brutally postmodern (arguably posthuman) programs distill a reactionary urge to return to a primitive us-versus-them, trigger-happy code of the West, liberating the programs' tribalized survivalist heroes from a deadening social order and the so-called governmental nanny state. These everyman macho heroes are thus allowed to kill and butcher their faceless foes with impunity and even glee. (One can argue that such atavistic longings also are at play in HBO's phenomenal *Game of Thrones* series.)

Despite such insights, Schweitzer could have further untangled the genetic strands that keep *The Walking Dead* and its ilk trucking into rerun heaven. She points to the series' weirdly resurrected patriarchal mindset—especially in its early seasons—hitched to a gun-toting cowboy strain that would make even John Wayne feel at home on this range. But she skips over the show's explicitly rural (and southern) settings and denizens, which march in lockstep to a paranoid nativist vision of a once-great America now fighting for survival against hordes of creeping, human-eating alien monsters.

So where is all this going? Judging by *Going Viral* and other pop-culture prognoses, at this juncture the virulent, ultra-violent zombie contagion in all its mutations is nowhere close to being contained.

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VAMPIRES, RACE, AND TRANSNATIONAL HOLLYWOODS
Dale Hudson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 296 pp.

Dale Hudson's new book *Vampires, Race, and Transnational Hollywoods* is framed by two vampire capes, as if by curtains: that of Count Dracula in Tod Browning's 1931 eponymous classic and that of a hijab-clad female vampire in Ana Lily Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014). Their black fabric fluttering dramatically in the wind may look similar, but the meanings could not be more different. Count Dracula, played by Hungarian newcomer Bela Lugosi, with his deathly pallor and foreign accent, defined for decades to come the image of a sexy, alluring, and dangerous vampire. Despite his white makeup and masculine virility, he is not-quite-white and not-quite-alive. Alternatively, Amirpour's heroine redefines the vampire image. She is riding a skateboard alone on the dark streets of fictional Iranian Bad City (shot in Taft, California, near Los Angeles). Count Dracula's cape lends him the

power of allure and seduction by helping him stand out; her chador, conversely, gives her anonymity. It protects her from the suspicions of her victims and from predatory men. She is a Muslim feminist figure, a vigilante with fangs, liberating the victimized from oppression and marginalization.

Vampires, Race, and Transnational Hollywoods talks about these two key figures—and everything in between them. Hudson's analysis includes some two hundred films, TV productions, Web series, and other media products about vampires, made by Hollywood in the United States or created offshore in Canada, Europe, Mexico, the Philippines, and elsewhere. This staggering scope of the monograph is both an asset and a curse—an asset because the book covers such tremendous ground, a curse because not all of the works can be equally covered. Although key films, such as the ones mentioned previously, are closely read and analyzed, other productions, by necessity, receive only relatively brief analysis, leaving the reader yearning for more. That is because Hudson's reading of the cinematic and other media text is so rich, precise, and innovative that it makes the reader see even familiar films in a new light.

Unlike most scholarship on vampire films, Hudson's remarkable new book does not consider them first and foremost as horror films. He explicitly sets out to liberate his approach from the constraints of the genre theory, considering the vampire films as *transgenre* and *transmedia*, which allows us to see their rhizomatic connections to other genres and styles. This approach allows Hudson to show how the trope of a vampire has been deployed across different national, historic, and cultural contexts, from Hollywood's melodrama, romance, comedy, soap opera, and science fiction to Mexican *lucha libre* films and Latin American *telenovelas*. Hudson's discussion covers the oeuvre from the early days of vampire films and throughout the next eight decades, including art-house horror from Roman Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Hunters* (1967) and Paul Morrisey's *Blood for Dracula* (1974) to Guillermo del Toro's *Cronos* (1992), Abel Ferrara's *The Addic-*

tion (1995), and Guy Maddin's *Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary* (2001). The discussion concludes with the products of the new media ecology, such as professional Web series (often linked to television series) and amateur video mash-ups and memes.

The main point of Hudson's sweeping analysis is the significance of the vampire figure for understanding race and transnationalism. From the outset, Hudson points out uncanny parallels between the category of race and the vampire figure: both are mutable and migrating. Both are supernatural—disproven by science and not recognized by religion, they "don't exist," yet both have a tremendous force as social and cultural constructs. Race, like vampires, is neither living nor dead, but "undead." Hudson argues,

> Race persists; it never fades entirely or dies completely. It appears to disappear then resurfaces with an infinite and often unpredictable succession of afterlives that expose always-present traces of slavery and servitude, undying vestiges of colonialism and genocide, and under-acknowledged structural inequalities within US democracy. (14)

Paradoxically, vampire films and media allow us to think about racism and other forms of social oppression more clearly than traditional realist modes.

If vampire films have been read before through the notions of race, Hudson also reads vampires through the lens of immigration and multiculturalism, the most innovative analytical move in the book. He carefully analyzes early US immigration comedies, assimilation romances, and miscegenation melodramas and the visual and narrative tropes developed in them, especially those related to national belonging and citizenship, as realized in terms of race/ethnicity, sex, gender, class, and religion. The following analysis demonstrates how these tropes were later deployed in vampire films, conceptualizing vampires as white or non-white, as immigrants, invaders, or even naturalized citizens.

But the vampire trope is not only a way to understand race; in fact, vampirism provides

a productive metaphor for understanding Hollywood itself. In Hudson's words, "Hollywood comes to resemble a vampire that shifts shape, moves at unnatural speeds, and multiplies. Like a vampire, Hollywood mutates and migrates, sometimes escaping recognition. Like a vampire, Hollywood has an insatiable appetite and will likely also never die" (3). These parallels emphasize for Hudson that Hollywood needs to be understood as a transnational system, varying from studios to independent productions and from TV networks, cable, and streaming platforms to media conglomerates. Like vampire stories, Hollywood modes of production and distribution are deeply transnational, through outsourced and runaway production, absorption of foreign styles and talent, and the targeting of international markets.

Hudson's book draws on the previous multidisciplinary scholarship to offer three major contributions: first, conceptualization of Hollywood as transnational, as exemplified in the production of vampire film, television, and Web series and their distribution and transmission; second, an approach to vampire film and media as *transgenre* and *transmedia*, investigating not only their visual and narrative tropes across genres but also their political meanings; and finally, through reading vampire films for *critical pleasure*, an analysis that establishes race as a mutable yet ever-present category, constitutive of the fabric of daily life and national history in the United States. Thus, unusually for a book about vampire film and television, Hudson makes a contribution to the literature on race and race relations, as well as to literature about Hollywood and its transnational iterations.

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AVANT-DOC: INTERSECTIONS OF AVANT-GARDE CINEMA
Scott MacDonald. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 433 pp.

Scott MacDonald is prolific: he has published extensively on film, frequently using interviews with filmmakers, as was the case with his series *A Critical Cinema: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* and again with this text, *Avant-Doc: Intersections of Avant-Garde Cinema* (2015). *Avant-Doc* presents edited interviews conducted with a diverse range of filmmakers. The resulting oral history offers perspectives from makers on their work, emphasizing intersections between documentary and avant-garde filmmaking traditions. As MacDonald points out, both designations have different histories (1). As he illustrates in his text, the meanings and applications of "avant-garde" and "documentary" continue to evolve over time as the political, economic, and technological contexts in which films are made shift.

In the introduction, MacDonald provides a brief explanation of the interwoven histories of avant-garde and documentary filmmaking, explains his method (he records interviews with filmmakers, then refines transcriptions over many months with input from filmmakers), and identifies a temporal bent in *Avant-Doc* for recently made American films, many with a connection to Cambridge, Massachusetts, due in part to his academic affiliations (17). At the outset, MacDonald clearly outlines his methods, motivations, and limitations.

Although both "avant-garde" and "documentary" are malleable, vast terms, MacDonald explains that "avant-garde" was first used to describe films made by painters in the 1920s and that the category currently encompasses a wide range of styles. He defines "avant-garde" by stating that "the current value of the term is its inclusiveness, rather than its designation of any particular approach, though generally speaking, the films included can be understood