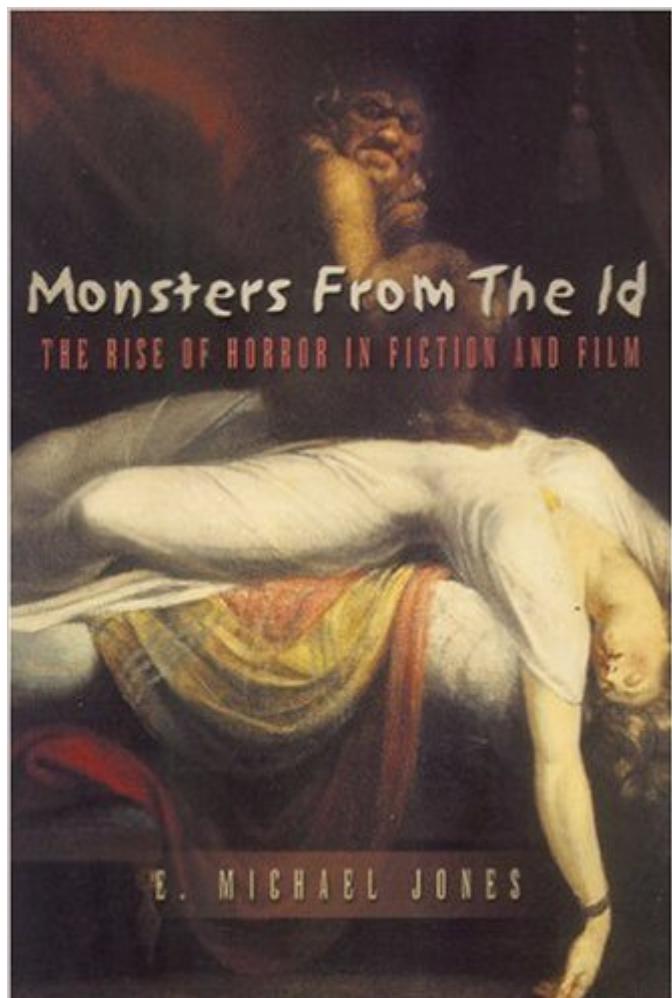


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Monsters From The Id: The Rise Of Horror In Fiction And Film



Synopsis

Tales of horror, so popular in modern literature and film, originated in the sexual decadence unleashed by the French Revolution. In a compelling new study of horror from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein to modern Hollywood, one of America's most original critics shows that the moral order, when suppressed, reasserts itself as an avenging monster in the midst of the chaos and suffering of cultural revolution. As the Age of Reason gave way to the Terror, not only in Paris but in Mary Shelley's own life, the first monster of the modern imagination was born. Like much of the English literary class, Shelley's family-including her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, and her husband, Percy-had embraced the French Enlightenment, throwing off old restraints on sexuality. The result of their ruinous dissipation was Frankenstein, in which Shelley's monster rises in repudiation of the very rationalism that produced it. The next monster to appear as moral decay spread from revolutionary France was the vampire, Frankenstein's rationalist fascination with electricity giving way to the romantic myth of blood. Jones follows the progress of horror from Victorian England and Bram Stoker's Dracula to Weimar Germany and Murnau's classic film Nosferatu. Bringing his account to the end of the twentieth century, he shows how the Western imagination has responded to the explosive force of the sexual revolution with horror of unprecedented intensity. In the Alien series and other contemporary horror films, the culture of abortion and pornography has unwittingly spawned a new and terrifying breed of avenging monster.

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Customer Reviews

How's this for a Grand Unified Theory of horror: All horror monsters (including aliens, vampires,

plagues, and slashers) are the personification of the guilty conscience that punishes unrepentant sinners (especially those who've transgressed God's sexual code). The Monster is Remorse, which author E. Michael Jones defines as regret without repentance. Jones's interpretive theory of horror is easy enough to apply, especially to what's been called the "have sex and die" cycle of films. Consider Halloween: P.J. Soles engages in premarital sex. She knows that she has violated the moral order, but she suppresses her guilty conscience, thus eschewing repentance. But the guilty conscience never relents, and returns in the personification of Myers. Myers is also Nemesis (another of Jones's metaphors), the Greek goddess of "retributive justice" who restores God's/Nature's moral order to balance. Appropriately, Jamie Lee Curtis, a "good girl," escapes Myers. After positing his theory of horror, Jones attempts to prove its validity by tracing the "trajectory" (a favorite term of his) of "Enlightenment thinking" over the past 250 years, paralleling it to the trajectory of the horror genre. Jones regards Enlightenment thought as the desanctification of Man. The Enlightenment redefined Man as a soulless animal, a biological machine in a mechanistic universe. Man-the-machine (a clockwork organge, as Anthony Burgess termed it) is not restricted by God's laws, and is thus free to improve himself (e.g., eugenics) and free to live according to his pleasure (e.g., free love).

Everyone who is tempted is attracted and seduced by his own wrong desire. Then the desire conceives and gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown it too has a child, and the child is death.

- James 1:14-5. Monsters from the Id: The Rise of Horror in Fiction and Film, published by Spence Publishing in 2000, by noted Catholic intellectual E. Michael Jones and founder of Culture Wars magazine offers a unique perspective on the horror genre in both fiction and film, seeing it as largely a conflict between Enlightenment "liberation" and the natural moral order (expressed in the form of the monster). Throughout this book, Jones will argue that we moderns do not understand horror because we are too immersed in the values of the Enlightenment and thus fail to appreciate the conflict between Enlightenment "liberation" and the natural moral order (as expressed in the Counter-Enlightenment). In particular, Jones will examine the case of sexual liberation (frequently championed by proponents of the Enlightenment), showing how remorse and guilt resulting from such liberation ends up taking on the form of the monster. Jones will argue that the reason why horror exists at all is because this conflict has not been adequately resolved in our society and that when the moral order is transgressed it comes biting back. Throughout the book, Jones traces the trajectory of horror along with the trajectory of the Enlightenment and sexual liberation, showing how bloodshed always results when the values of the Enlightenment are put into effect. In this way, the

monster that appears in the horror story or film may be seen as the repressed natural moral order coming back to its rightful place. Jones begins with some comments on "A Legacy of Horror".

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