Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema. Philip Hayward (ed.). London: Equinox, 2009. p/bk 286pp. ISBN 978-1-84553-202-4. Price £16.99; *The Simpsons in the Classroom: Embiggening the Learning Experience with the Wisdom of Springfield.* Karma Waltonen and Denise Du Vernay. Jefferson, NC.: McFarland & Co. (Publishers), 2010. p/bk 332pp. ISBN 978-0-7864-4490-8. Price £28.50.

For decades, scholars and aficionados of film music and sound design complained bitterly that the aural was the most overlooked, underestimated and misunderstood of the cinema's many sensory pleasures. More recently, however, this inexcusable gap in film studies' orthodox field of inquiry has been rectified by an abundance of critical literature on the thematic, tonal and affective resonance of the cine-soundscape. As the various contributors to *Terror Tracks: Music Sound and Horror Cinema* collectively point out, the horror genre has a particularly powerful sonic repertoire. This is evidenced throughout the genre's history: from F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and its telling-subtitled "symphony of horror" and the creaking doors, howling winds and "sweet music" of Lugosi's children of the night in *Dracula* (1931), on through the shrieking violins of *Psycho* (1960) and into the present via the abstract compositions that characterize the soundtrack of films such as the *Saw* franchise (2004-). Indeed, it is surely no coincidence a film specifically about film sound engineers - Brian DePalma's underrated *Blow Out* (1984) - is fascinated by the creative, ethical and psychological dimensions of building immersive soundtracks for lurid horror movies.

The sophisticated aural textures of the horror film have recently been explored both with circumscribed historical specificity by Robert Spadoni in *Uncanny Bodies: The Coming of Sound and the Origins of the Horror Genre* (U. of California Press, 2007) and, more expansively, in Neil Lerner's edited collection *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear* (Routledge, 2010). These closely related volumes are joined by *Terror Tracks*, an anthology which comprises "a series of in-depth analyses of widely recognized seminal film texts, film series and/or notable composer-director collaborations, together with studies of less prominent works that argue a particular significance for them in the history of the genre" (8-9).

This no-nonsense remit serves the volume well, and while *Terror Tracks* covers horror cinema in different national contexts (including

essays on British, Australian, Japanese and Italian horror movies, for example) the bulk of contributors focus upon American horror films. For example, Hayward's introductory chapter provides a useful overview of the historical development of musical, ambient and expressionist sound design in the genre, his essay underscoring the pivotal importance of classical Hollywood movies such as the first *King Kong* (1933), James Whale's *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People* (1942). These films are best known, of course, for their iconic visuals - expressionist set design, chiaroscuro lighting, groundbreaking special effects and so forth - but Hayward instead emphasizes their significant role in the evolution of horror's uncanny soundscape. This emphasis upon canonized horror films is continued elsewhere: somewhat inevitably, there is not one but two essays on Bernard Hermann's (in)famous score for *Psycho*, while Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) - already something of a critical fetish for scholars of film soundtracks - and Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) also attract sustained attention.

More interesting, perhaps, are those essays which look at well-known but less acclaimed films anew. In one of the most intriguing contributions to *Terror Tracks*, Hayward and Rebecca Coyle examine the sophisticated audio-visual terrain of Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974). Stressing that the most visceral and affective moments of the film "are graphically rendered through a series of intense and sonically inventive sound sequences that draw on pre-recorded music, score, human vocalization and skilfully blended sound effects" (129), the authors argue persuasively that this inventive low-budget shocker should be understood as a film which truly belongs in the tradition of the musical avant-garde. Elsewhere, in her discussion of Myrick and Sánchez's *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), Rebecca Coyle argues that the film is psychologically 'noisy' "despite the near absence of music or standard shocking horror sounds" (213). For Coyle, *The Blair Witch Project's* sparse but disquieting soundtrack connotes "the unnamed and unseen horrors within our social psyche" (224). Conversely, Lee Barron and Ian Inglis examine the use of deafening heavy metal as an appropriately 'demonic' aural presence in contemporary horror films such as Paul W. S. Anderson's *Resident Evil* (2002) and RonnyYu's *Freddy vs. Jason* (2003). More perceptively, Laura Wiebe Taylor demonstrates the ways in which horror's frequent use of popular songs and contemporary rock music serves to "expose the violence

that lies embedded in American history and society." Using director Rob Zombie's ultraviolent *House of 1000 Corpses* (2003) and *The Devil's Rejects* (2005) as illustrative examples, Taylor argues that the aural presence of popular music "prevents the horror from being 'othered'; just as the music belongs to society, so too does the violence" (236).

While some of the essays in *Terror Tracks* are too heavily skewed towards readers with a background in music studies to make the book accessible to a general audience, overall the collection is a useful and often insightful addition to a growing body of critical literature devoted to encouraging viewers to listen to popular movies.

Given the American horror film's predisposition to interrogate the nightmarish underbelly of the nuclear family unit, it is perhaps unsurprising that the most willfully intertextual of sitcoms, *The Simpsons* (1989-), has made repeated allusions to the genre throughout its near two-and-a-half decade run. Indisputably American culture's pre-eminent dysfunctional family, it is entirely fitting that - both within and without *The Simpsons*' much-loved Halloween specials - the show has paid recurrent visual and aural homage to many horror films - most obviously *Psycho*, *The Shining* and Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) - which explore the everyday horrors of hearth and home. While some may argue that the potency of The Simpsons' satirical bite has waned somewhat since the emergence of more virulent animated rivals such as *South Park* (1997-) and *Family Guy* (1999-), the world of Springfield nevertheless remains unequivocally carved into the fabric of late-20th and early 21st century American popular culture.

To this end, there can be few professional educators working within media, film or cultural studies who have not used *The Simpsons* to demonstrate, say, the way the show both illustrates and deconstructs the ideological machinations of the sitcom format, or as an accessible route into explicating postmodernism. As Karma Waltonen and Denise Du Vernay point out in *The Simpsons in the Classroom*, the show permeates American and other cultures to such an extent that to ignore or overlook *The Simpsons* runs the risk of seeming culturally illiterate. "What other show," the authors rhetorically posit, "so perfectly captures America while satirizing it at every turn?" (5). Such is the reflexive intelligence and cultural savvy of Matt Groening's crudely animated progeny that there is

already an abundance of Simpsons-related scholarly literature available. Rather than attempt to add a new critical intervention to this intimidating body of work, *The Simpsons in the Classroom* has a more direct pedagogical agenda. As Waltonen and Du Vernay state: "[t]his book aims to help high school and college teachers integrate *The Simpsons* into lessons smoothly, whether the course's focus is composition, literature, linguistics, theatre or film studies, or any humanities discipline" (1).

One might find in this statement of intent something of the hectoring liberal-humanist tones of Lisa Simpson - a teacher in waiting if ever there was one! - and it is true that *The Simpsons in the Classroom* mostly lacks the more irreverent and/or caustic pleasures that fuel the sharpest episodes of the show. This, however, does the book a disservice. Split into six coherent and readable chapters, *The Simpsons in the Classroom* methodically outlines the various ways the show can be used to helps students develop their awareness of linguistics, composition, Literature with a capital L, social and cultural literacy, and finally - in perhaps the book's strongest section - postmodernism. In addition, *The Simpsons in the Classroom* contains detailed listings of Simpsons resources and secondary literature as well as useful summaries of the various pedagogical issues present in individual episodes, lists of questions for classroom discussion and specific Simpsons-related assignments.

The embryonic Simpsons first saw light as brief animated shorts on *The Tracy Ullman Show* (1987-1990) during the tail-end of the Reagan administration; with 515 episodes under its belt, the show is now the longest running primetime television series in American history. Given the sheer volume of primary material it is understandable that *The Simpsons* in the Classroom emphasizes thematic breadth rather than detailed textual analysis. One pitfall of this approach is that issues of particular interest to individual readers are often covered in what can feel like a fleeting and/or perfunctory manner. For example, one strength of the volume is that the authors make numerous interesting points about the different ways in which *The Simpsons* espouses a feminist political viewpoint whilst remaining sharply attuned to the diverse range of political opinion and practice which fall under the banner of "the F-word." At the same time, discussion of the broader complexities of gender and sexuality in the show - a topic which could easily fill a book by itself - is painfully circumscribed. That said, this is testament less to the limitations of the book and more to

the sprawling thematic richness of *The Simpsons*' expansive universe. One could think of different ways of putting together a literary resource like *The Simpsons in the Classroom*, but it is hard to imagine how it could have been done much better.

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