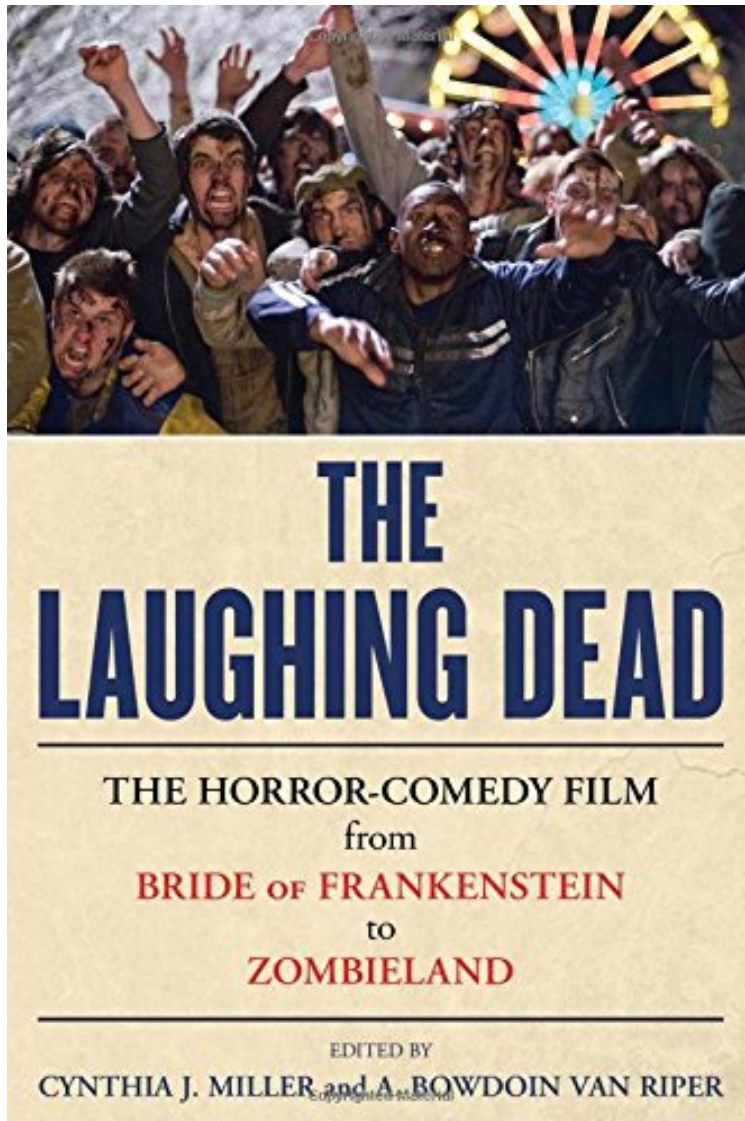


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## The Laughing Dead: The Horror-Comedy Film from Bride of Frankenstein to Zombieland

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## Laughing Dead: The Horror-Comedy Film from Bride of Frankenstein to Zombieland:

Hybrid films that straddle more than one genre are not unusual. But when seemingly incongruous genres are mashed together, such as horror and comedy, filmmakers often have to tread carefully to produce a cohesive, satisfying work. Though they date as far back as James Whales *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), horror-comedies have only recently become popular attractions for movie goers. In *The Laughing Dead: The Horror-Comedy Film from Bride of Frankenstein to Zombieland*, editors Cynthia J. Miller and A. Bowdoin Van Riper have compiled essays on the comic undead that look at the subgenre from a variety of perspectives. Spanning virtually the entire sound era, this collection considers everything from classics like *The Canterville Ghost* to modern cult favorites like *Shaun of the Dead*. Other films discussed include *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, *Beetlejuice*, *Ghostbusters*, *House on Haunted Hill*, *ParaNorman*, *Scream*, *Vampires Kiss*, and *Zombieland*. Contributors in this volume consider a wide array of comedic monster films from heartwarming (*The Book of Life*) to pitch dark (*The Fearless Vampire Killers*) and even grotesque (*Frankenhooker*). *The Laughing Dead* will be of interest to scholars and fans of both horror and comedy films, as well as those interested in film history and, of course, the proliferation of the undead in popular culture.

Miller and Van Riper provide a lively autopsy of a body of horror-comedy films. Grounded in Henri Bergson's theories, the essays excavate a veritable graveyard of comic horror films. The five essays in the first section, *Playing with Genre*, address generic transformations with the comic, transforming the horrific into the zany and providing cultural analyses. The six essays in the second section, *Horror, in Theory*, theorize horror films through unexpected comic perspectives, showing how mirth and menace play off each other. Chris Yogerst eulogizes the familiar rules for survival in films such as *Zombieland*. The final five essays, under the heading *There Goes the Neighborhood*, look at how the intersection of horror and comedy provides a lens to critique the basic conventions of the horror film and its spectators. In his essay, Van Riper considers how comedy enables viewers to contend with the angst of everyday life. Miller wraps up with a provocative essay challenging the scientific elite, giving the creative power of life to ordinary people. Insightful and remarkably readable, these stimulating essays will delight, leaving readers laughing, screaming, and thinking. **Summing Up: Recommended.** Lower-division undergraduates and above; professionals; general readers. (CHOICE) About the Author Cynthia J. Miller teaches at Emerson College. She is the editor of *Too Bold for the Box Office: The Mockumentary from Big Screen to Small* (2012) and coeditor of *Steaming into a Victorian Future: A Steampunk Anthology* (2012) and *Border Visions: Identity and Diaspora in Film* (2013), all published by Scarecrow Press. She is also film review editor for the journal *Film History* and editor for Rowman Littlefield's *Film and History* series. A. Bowdoin Van Riper is a historian and the author of *A Biographical Encyclopedia of Scientists and Inventors in American Film and Television* (Scarecrow, 2011). Miller and Van Riper are editors of *Undead in the West* (Scarecrow, 2012), *Undead in the West II* (Scarecrow, 2013), *International Westerns* (Scarecrow, 2013) and *Horrors of War: The Undead on the Battlefield* (Rowman Littlefield, 2015).