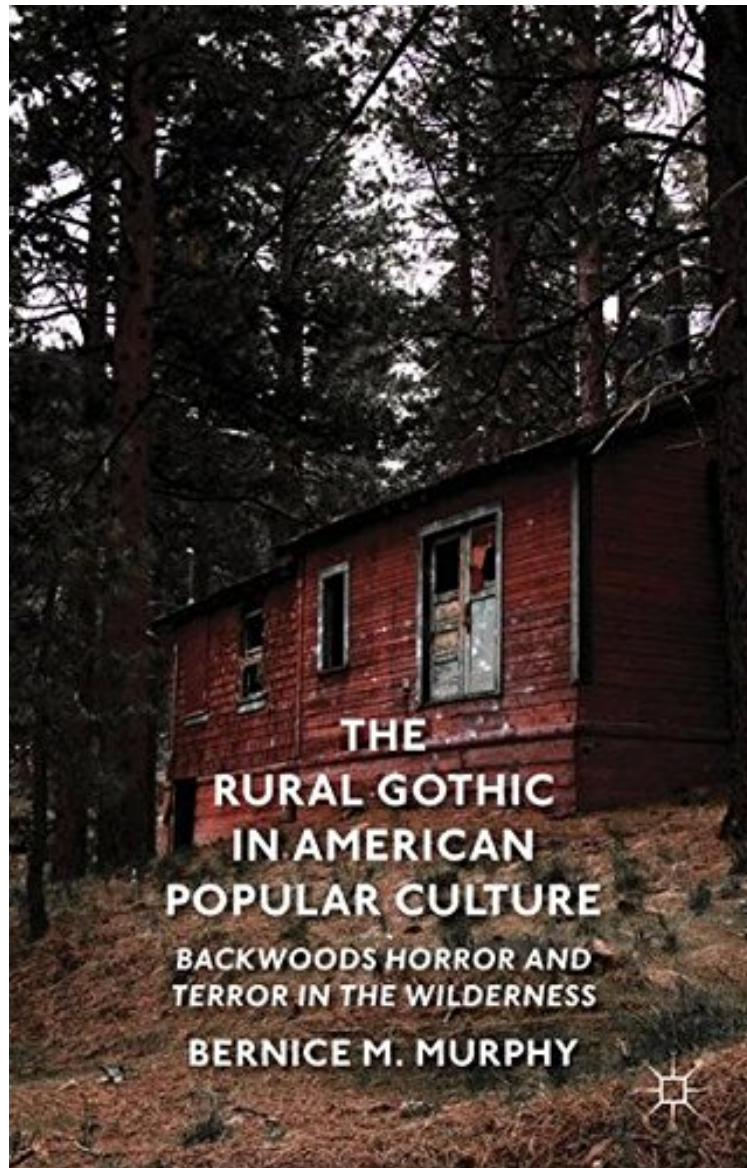


(Download ebook) The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness

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B. Murphy

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B. Murphy : The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rural Gothic in

American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Lovecrafts story *The Picture in the House* imports the cannibalism of the Congo to convert *The Rural Poor* as the Monstrous Other. Fenix "The cabin in the woods is to the American Gothic what the haunted castle is to the European - the seed from which everything else ultimately grows." This book gave me new perspective on the differences between American horror and its predecessors. The Salem Witch Trials and our clashes with the displacement of the Native Americans are at the root of many of our cultural fears. I never realized there were so many stories about Native American abduction and the savagery that their captives were subjected to. This includes not only Roanoke and Jamestown, but also the Rowlandson Indian Capture and stories of the Indian Wars. For example, the diet of the Native Americans was very alien to that of the European settlers, and the change in their diet was traumatic. Its simple to bend this one more step into painting the Native Americans as cannibals. Accusation of cannibalism is a time-honored tradition of colonialism to make Othering simple and the eradication of those people a Righteous Mission. This trend recurs throughout history with the Pacific Islanders and Africans. I remember growing up with Looney Tunes cartoons that included pygmy cannibals with bones in their noses trying to cook our heroes. If you think were past this trend, think about the last time you heard a joke about Chinese food involving cats. One skittered across my Facebook wall just this past week. To transition from this cannibalism to a more exclusively American situation, H. P. Lovecrafts story *The Picture in the House* imports the cannibalism of the Congo to convert *The Rural Poor* as the Monstrous Other. In this story, we have a degenerate rural man who has found a way to extend his life through the cannibalism presented in a book about the Congo. Our protagonist is a worldly urban man who takes shelter from a storm in this degenerates house and is one step away from being next on the butcher block. The Othering of the rural poor, particularly in Appalachia and The South, has excited the fears of the urban media centers since Reconstruction and created urbanoia. This fueled eugenics policies that were enacted on poor rural whites (as well as urban blacks). The county authorities were certain that the hill folk swept up in their raids were indeed mentally and genetically defective. As such, they would not be permitted to breed more of their kind. A combination of problems exacerbated by crippling poverty reinforced these attitudes, such as the prevalence of hookworm and pellagra due to industrialized diet. Though the racial theories that helped fuel this interest in genetic defectives were entirely discredited in the late 1930s (largely due to their undeniably fascist, and specifically, Nazi associations) they significantly influenced social and medical practice in the early twentieth century, and were an invaluable boon for conservative propagandists who disapproved of state-sponsored welfare programmes. The offensive stereotypes these supposedly scientific studies helped perpetuate left an imprint that lingers in popular culture until this very day. Southern Otherness allows a national audience to localize certain anxieties without feeling threatened themselves. This imprint has given birth to some of my favorite things for a complicated number of reasons. These things include *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *House of 1000 Corpses*, *The Evil Dead*, *The Cabin in the Woods*, *Deliverance*, *Home on the X-Files*, *Joe Hills Best New Horror*, much of Flannery OConnors work including *A Good Man is Hard to Find* and many more. This was even exported back to Europe with *Torchwoods Countrycide* episode. This fourth chapter on the Rural Poor as Monstrous Other provides the critical checkboxes to tick off when making horror of this nature, and explores each in significant detail. For example, the family in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is made all the more terrifying due to their lack of sexual appetite; they see their victims more as cattle than human and this reflection of the Urbanoia Othering is chilling. Any author looking to write in this milieu should read this and use it as guideposts and give strong consideration to their narrative choices. The final section on American Eco-Horror and the Apocalypse felt somewhat bolted on, as the nuclear fears of Mutually Assured Destruction dont quite fit with the remainder of the book. I find the Atomic Age horror a very different feel than some of the other material discussed, as its more a fear of humanity and its ability to destroy everything. Much of the earlier focus is one group pitted against The Other or a fear of the unknown or the wild satanic maliciousness of unbridled nature. Theres a lot of material to unpack with this book. I would love to have a copy for easy reference, but its tough to justify text book prices for a hobby. This book is absolutely worth a read, but I recommend that you exercise your Inter-Library Loan privileges. While a couple chapters didn't really give me much, the remainder has so significantly expanded how I look at this sub-genre that it's worth a 5-star review.

The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture argues that complex and often negative initial responses of early European settlers continue to influence American horror and gothic narratives to this day. The book undertakes a detailed analysis of key literary and filmic texts situated within consideration of specific contexts.

'This is a highly engaging read, full of great ideas and interesting connections. Each chapter has a well-chosen focus, and together they amount to the definitive scholarly commentary on the genre and its cultural significance. The book's readability and its breadth even within its tight focus in terms of genre means it will be widely used in film studies, cultural studies, literature, American studies, cultural geography, and beyond.' - David Bell, University of Leeds, UK
About the Author Bernice M. Murphy is Lecturer in Popular Literature at the School of English, Trinity College

Dublin, Ireland. Publications include *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture* (2009), *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture* (2013) and the collections *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy* (2005) and (with Darryl Jones and Elizabeth McCarthy) *It Came From the 1950s: Popular Culture, Popular Anxieties* (2011).