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Howard David Ingham's *We Don't Go Back: A Watcher's Guide to Folk Horror* (2018) is a collection of essays on selected Folk Horror films and television (TV). It is also, and that is my small disclaimer, a very difficult book to review without firstly talking about some of these movies in ways that include spoilers and, secondly, spending a lot of time on the book's paratextual elements, as well as Ingham's Introduction.

Ingham begins their collection with an Introduction that tries to explain what Folk Horror actually is. They initially seem to approach it by adopting a 'you will know it when you see it' mentality, treating it less as a genre and more as what Brian Attebery would term a "fuzzy set" in his *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992, 12-13). Ingham, using the words of Adam Scovell as a starting point, eventually presents a clear and comprehensive explanation of what is and is not Folk Horror. That definition acts as a summoning, not unlike the ones that we will read about in the following pages of the book. By creating a definition for Folk Horror, Ingham invites the spirit of it into the room; the isolation, the eeriness of a familiar landscape, the lack of an escape, the sense of inevitability, of determinism, and thusly serves as a rationale or justification for the inclusion of these works as archetypes of the genre.

To explain that strange summoning created by Ingham's writing, it is essential to take a step back and look at the paratext of *We Don't Go Back*. A Kickstarter project that has since been nominated for the Bram Stoker award, its contents belong in the gray area between critical essay and film review, with each having originally been published as a blog post on Room207Press.com. Ingham's pieces are still available at the webpage where one can also find essays about the book's two companion volumes *On a Thousand Walls* and *Cult Cinema*. That fact would be enough to make this physical copy feel superfluous, if it was not for the power of Ingham's initial summoning. Their Introduction, although fewer than ten pages long, ties the rest of the work together and creates a sense of cohesion and unity that reading the entries as simple blog posts completely fails to convey. Part of this effect stems from Ingham's decision to arrange the works thematically rather than chronologically, a move that emphasises the common themes between them, and best showcases the strong aesthetic that is so characteristic of the genre.

The movies are rated, not by age appropriateness or Ingham's attempts at objective quality –when dealing with a genre like Folk Horror either of those things would be difficult to define – but by a combination of six icons created by Steven Horry: if a film is deemed to be essential it receives a 'Standing Stones' icon, the films they find good can receive up to three 'Bony Thumbs,' and gory or "viscerally affecting" content earns a film a 'Bloody Knife.' This differs from the 'Spooky Skull' which denotes a film they found scary or disturbing, and from the 'Battered Stop Sign' which is reserved for films that have "content above and beyond simple horror" (12). The sixth icon is perhaps the most interesting of all and the only one that can appear more than once other than the 'Bony Thumb.' That is the 'Toad of Madness' which is earned if a film is "strange and wonderful and *fun*" and possessing of a "weird, creative brilliance" although it might not be objectively good (original emphasis, 12).

Throughout the book, those icons are used in various combinations: films can be given the mark of canonicity that the 'Standing Stones' imply without achieving even one 'Bony Thumb' to show Ingham's appreciation of them, while others (see *Psychomania*) might be given four 'Toads of Madness,' signifying what can only be described as a wild ride of a film. That creates a complexity that is often missing from ratings and reviews of films, but perhaps with good reason. I personally felt that the different icons affected my expectations and found myself taking note of films that earned the 'Toad of Madness' icon and almost skimming through the ones that were deemed 'essential' but had nothing else to recommend them: similar responses may therefore influence other readers in this way too. Whilst a novel system to employ, as with all reviews, caution should be urged as to how these subjective ratings may substantively impact on interpretation and engagement with a text even prior to reading.

With this text, Ingham explores numerous iterations of Folk Horror, spanning almost six decades of TV and cinema and covering content from Britain, America, Japan, and Europe. Each chapter includes at least one 'Standing Stones' film, that Ingham deems essential to the understanding of that specific sub-set of Folk Horror, with the exception of the third chapter "Secret Powers of Attraction: Folk Horror Variations," which focusses on Folk Horror films of the seventies. In many ways these films are lesser products of the same time, culture, and tradition as the ones featured in the first two chapters of the book, a fact that explains why Ingham does not consider any of them an essential watch. Sometimes the films that make it into this self-collected canon are obvious: for example, the essential film for Ingham's chapter on Asian Folk Horror is *Ringu* (1998), a hugely influential film that spawned sequels and American reboots alike and is well-known enough to make describing its plot feel almost obsolete: even Ingham introduces it by saying that it is "of course" the one about the cursed videotape (351). The 'Standing Stones' seem to signify Ingham's idea of canonicity, a slightly more objective version of the 'Bony Thumbs' that signify their personal preference.

The collection starts with an example of one of Ingham's additions to the canon, with a chapter appropriately called "The Unholy Trinity (Plus One)," describing the four pieces that Ingham considers to be at the heart of the Folk Horror fuzzy set: *Night of the Demon* (1957), *Witchfinder*

General (1968), *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1970), and, of course, *The Wicker Man* (1973). Of the four, the latter three are the films that make up what Mark Gatiss called "the central troika of ur-texts that define the genre," with *Night of the Demon* being Ingham's own addition to the canon (14). Despite their rating of the four movies as essential, Ingham argues that the films have more to do with each other than with the rest of the works that would attract the Folk Horror enthusiast, a claim supported by how similar these four films are, especially when compared to the vast variety of themes and nuances found in the rest of Ingham's selected Folk Horror texts.

Despite their importance, however, *We Don't Go Back* is more than just a collection of ratings. Depending on the source material and Ingham's connection to it, their essays range between being simple summaries and reviews, close readings of certain Folk Horror elements to be found in a film, or personal explorations of the deeper themes and questions posed by the narrative. This difference in depth and complexity can be frustrating for the reader, and makes parts of the book feel almost unfinished, like unpolished drafts of a more complex paper that Ingham could have delivered. The review copy also had a few printing errors: pages incorrectly numbered, citations that led to a different paper than the one mentioned, and similar issues that were not enough to make the work difficult or unpleasant to read, but were enough to draw notice. But just as there are weaker pieces there are also stronger ones: clear examples of Ingham's talent both as a writer and as a scholar. In many ways the essays are as varied as the movies they attempt to analyse, and Ingham cannot always escape their subjective opinion when working on a piece: they are at their best when intellectually challenged or emotionally affected by a film, and there is a distinct correlation between the number of 'Bony Thumbs' at the top of each page and the depth and complexity of the essay that follows.

The collection also includes some essays not written by Ingham but by friends and colleagues who helped them with the project: Jon Dear, Simeon Smith, Monique Lacoste, and Daniel Pietersen. Of them, the most prolific is Jon Dear, who pens four essays across the collection, and my personal favourite is Monique Lacoste - to my knowledge the only woman involved in the project - and author of the essay on *The Company of Wolves* (1984). Lacoste's addition is a welcome one, and her essay is well-structured and engaging, albeit lacking the personal investment found in the best of Ingham's own essays.

Slowly but surely the summoning that Ingham has cast comes to an end. Within its trappings we have traveled from isolation to isolation across a number of dreary landscapes and met with many people of skewed moral beliefs. Morality is a central theme in Folk Horror and remains so in Ingham's examination of the genre. Creating Folk Horror is a summoning in its own right, and Ingham is aware of the responsibilities of the artist and unforgiving when they feel these have not been adhered to. When a film starts gratuitously enjoying its own dark violence or when the morality of the filmmakers seems at odds with the morality of the work, Ingham is brutal. And that is good.

I will end this review by returning to the beginning, to Ingham's title. "We don't go back," a quote from the TV movie *Murrain* (1975), described by Ingham as a "wrong-headed statement that

is so true" (45). And they are right: if there is anything the popularity of Folk Horror has taught us is that people do go back, time and time again, in Britain and Asia, and America, through fairytales and children's shows, through documentaries, films, and TV. We turn to Folk Horror because it scares us, and because it allows us to go back to a past that might hold "fear and darkness" but it can also be used to help us move forward (45). For Ingham, the protagonists of Folk Horror films are lost because they refuse to go back, to arm themselves against the darkness. If that is true, then our acts of summoning when reading this book or watching those films are in their own way an opportunity for us to escape from facing the same fate. We go back, a little, in our own ways, and learn what can be taught, so we can then move forward, eyes open, and avoid the Wicker Man.

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Marita Arvaniti is a PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow, UK. Her doctoral research focuses on the relationship between theatre and the fantastic and explores the role played by drama and performance in the birth and evolution of contemporary Fantasy. Other research interests include the self-referential nature of Fantasy, Folk Horror, and she enjoys the works of Terry Pratchett, N. K. Jemisin, and Diana Wynne Jones. She can be reached at maritarvaniti@gmail.com or found on Twitter at @excaliburedpan.