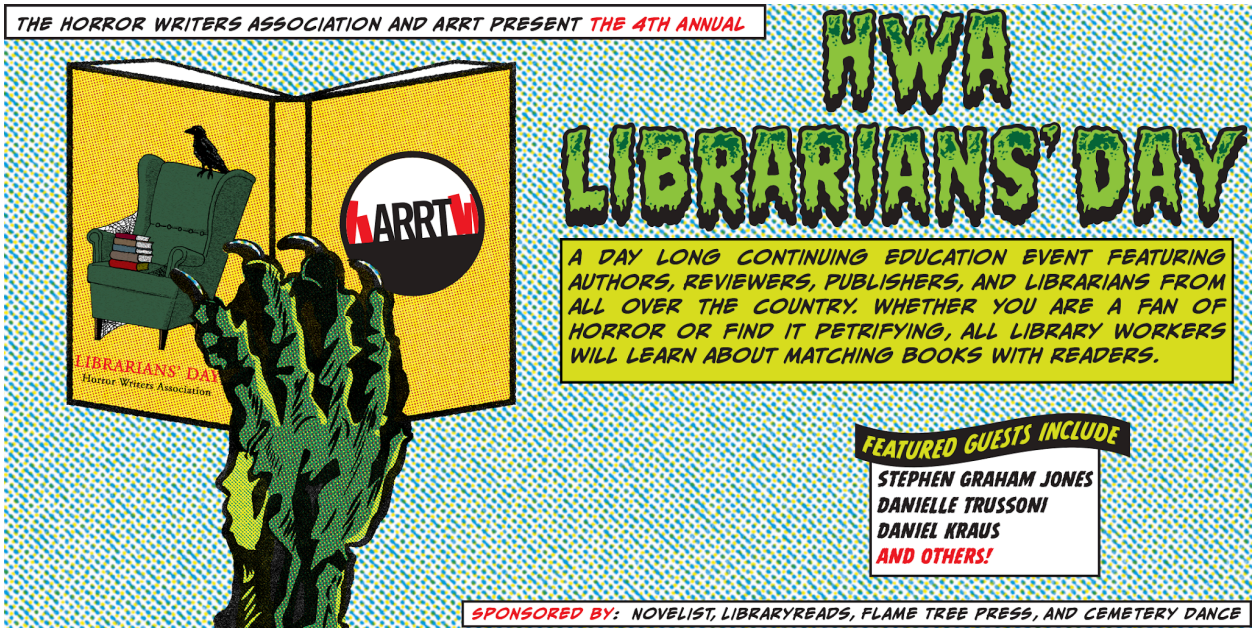


Questions for & Answers from Panelists

Question:
For Mr. Stephen Graham Jones:

I absolutely loved Night of the Mannequins, which was the first of your writings I have read. Similar to Lewis in The Only Good Indians (I'm thinking here especially of the pages leading up to page 115), I think part of the story's true horror is the shedding of light on the very disturbing, very terrifying nature of the "realities" any old stranger on the street may be living in, unbeknownst to others. Mannequins had an almost Catcher-in-the-Rye-gone-murderous feel, but the most immediate book-parallel that came to mind was Zombie by Joyce Carol Oates (the "protagonist" of which was based on Jeffrey Dahmer). Especially the wire hanger section—Jeffrey Dahmer dabbled in this sort of stuff, drilling holes into folk's heads, etc. Was Zombie an influence in the writing of Night of the Mannequins—or has the antics of history's most infamous killers informed your writing in general?

Also, bonus question! Could you describe a bit of your everyday writing routine? Do you have a word-count goal, or certain allotted amount of time? Are you primarily a nighttime or daytime writer—or does it depend on the deadline?

Answer:
I know *Zombie*—from so many years ago—and I've studied on Dahmer, too, but, if there was any model for Sawyer in *Night of the Mannequins*, I think it was just the whole genre of the slasher, really. Or? No, I can narrow it down. That Elijah Wood remake of *Maniac*, maybe. I was really impressed with how it climbed into that killer's head, and kind of turned the slasher upside down, in that it wasn't being told from the angle of the people around the bonfire, at the party, wherever the story has them, but out in the shadows with the person watching, the person doing these foul things. But rationalizing it every step of the way. That was very interesting to me. So: *Night of the Mannequins*.

As for writing routine: none. Just whenever I can. Sometimes I roll out of bed, am already reaching for the keyboard, and some days I don't get to that keyboard until eleven at night. Some days I don't write at all, and other days I go eight hours. Probably why I don't have a routine, aside from "life" not stopping around me to allow me to have one, is that I don't want to feel like I'm clocking in for work. Writing isn't work, to me, it's play. So, I play whenever I can, all through the week.