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Michelle J. Smith and Kristine Moruzi (eds.). *Young Adult Gothic Fiction: Monstrous Selves / Monstrous Others*. University of Wales Press, 2021. Pp. 301. UK £75 (hardcover). ISBN: 9781786837509.

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In *Young Adult Gothic Fiction: Monstrous Selves / Monstrous Others*, editors Michelle J. Smith and Kristine Moruzi weave together a collection that examines "youth culture at a moment in the twenty-first century when ideas about young people are in considerable flux" (2). By exploring the "marked increase" in "Gothic themes of liminality, monstrosity, transgression, romance and sexuality in fiction for young adults" (1), the chapters contained within this anthology seek to understand why elements of the Gothic have recently undergone a renaissance within the world of YA fiction while simultaneously considering the mechanisms through which the Gothic and its many phantoms and foes continually fascinate readers. In the words of the volume's co-editors, the collection "explore[s] how the contemporary resurgence of the Gothic in texts for young people signals the extent of anxieties, many of which centre on youth culture, in the twenty-first century" (2). This, coupled with a profound interest in the "connection between youth and monstrosity" (3), academic inquiry into the young adult protagonist's decidedly liminal state between the realms of the child and adult (7 – 8) and commentary on how "the taboo sexual experience is mediated through the Gothic, particularly for girls" (10), allows *Young Adult Gothic Fiction* to investigate the connection between the Gothic's desire to understand the complexities of life and YA fiction's determination to explore the shift into and beyond adolescence.

After a brief section highlighting the careers of the volume's contributors (xi – xv), *Young Adult Gothic Fiction* opens with an introductory chapter authored by the text's co-editors, then delves into the chapters that make up the bulk of the collection. These chapters are separated into five sections: "Genre Trouble: Gothic Hybrids," "Rewriting the Historical Gothic," "Gothic Places," "The Human and the Non-Human," and "Gothic Femininities."

Each section of *Young Adult Gothic Fiction* considers a different element of the Gothic-YA merger. The first section, for example, opens with Patricia Kennon's "*Zombies vs. Unicorns*: An Exploration of the Pleasures of the Gothic for Young Adults." Kennon's chapter explores a vast array of Gothic concepts, including "notions of innocence, abnormality and desire" (18)

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and "uncertainty regarding transgression of boundaries" (19). Elsewhere, this chapter puts "death, monstrosity and loss of personal autonomy" (22) and "wonder, trauma and violence" (23) in conversation with one another through a comparison of zombies and unicorns—polar opposite creatures that each allow the reader to unpack a different part of the individuality, selfdom, beauty, and decay that Gothic texts so often explore.

This chapter also addresses both monstrosity and desire—two of the book's most prevalent themes. Kennon's chapter reminds the audience of YA Gothic's unique ability to "allow the teenage reader to explore and enjoy the ambiguity and complexity of desire itself" (27). This is much of what fuels YA Gothic's fascination with the "sexually ambiguous" (54) vampire—a being that is oftentimes simultaneously seen as a ferocious undead foe and an object of intense sexual desire. In the book's fourth chapter, Sarah Olive argues that modern adaptations' addition of vampires to the infamous Shakespearean tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* "heightens the tabooed nature of the original protagonists' love" (69).

"Section III: Gothic Spaces" opens with Cecilia Rogers' work on the Gothic connections between islands and the experience of motherhood, the latter of which is described as being "abject" and "a monstrous space" (133). The next chapter, authored by Adam Kealley, focuses on "the Gothic nature of the Australian landscape" and the lost child motif within Australian YA Gothic fiction (153). Kealley continues near the end of the chapter, stating that "the horrifying uncanniness of the landscape reveals the abject conditions" of the young adult characters whose escapades serve as the focal point for much of the chapter (176). Kealley, like Rogers, uses the Gothic as a lens through which elements of the natural world and its inhabitants can be scrutinized.

Much of the scholarship contained within "Section IV: The Human and the Non-Human" possesses a technological component. For example, in the section's first chapter, Debra Dudek analyzes "how the multimodal aspects of the Gothic produce fear and desire" within two focal texts that were published in the late 2000s and early 2010s, respectively (181). This consideration of the multimodality of the Gothic is continued in Section IV's final chapter when Jennifer Harrison states that "[m]ultimodal Gothic texts have become a mainstay in the marketing of YA cultural products…they are complex and multilayered productions that probe at fundamental questions about ontology, identity, and reality" (221).

The text's discussion of the marketability of YA Gothic fiction is not limited to Harrison's chapter, however. In the book's final chapter, co-editors Michelle J. Smith and Kristine Moruzi comment on the "broader contemporary publishing trend of YA fairy-tale fiction written by women authors with female protagonists," which they argue "signal[s] a conscious return to the darker—and more adult—aspects of fairy-tale tradition" (270).

It is here that one of *Young Adult Gothic Fiction*'s less obvious connecting threads is illuminated: cultural trends and the marketability of YA fiction. Scholars interested in researching how the YA fiction market ebbs and flows over time will likely see this collection as not only an inquiry into the intersections between the Gothic and the YA genres, but also a text that seeks to understand why these intersections have become popular and profitable. Researchers that are particularly well-versed in modern marketing and publishing trends may even be able to use the analyses contained within *Young Adult Gothic Fiction* to learn more about the past and present states of the YA fiction market—and perhaps even look into its Gothic-themed future.

"Section V: Gothic Femininities" opens with "Testimony from Beyond the Grave: Comparing Girls' Narratives of Sexual Violence and Death in Gothic Fiction" by Lenise Prater. This chapter "examine[s] the narration of sexual violence and death in four texts" (239) that "feature ghostly girls, in suburban Gothic settings, all of whom give voice to their experiences of sexual violence" (240). Here, Prater argues that "ultimately the closure of these novels, and, in two cases, the conflation of rape with death, demonstrate the limits" (240) of the Gothic trope of "ghostly girls articulat[ing] their experiences from beyond the grave" (240). Prater's commentary effectively critiques this tactic's "capacity to challenge and disturb concepts of sexual violence" (240).

In the closing paragraphs of this chapter, Prater definitively concludes that "none of the three texts entirely evade key problems in representing sexual violence" (251). On the contrary, Prater argues, these narratives "reinforce the symbolic connection between rape and death, which is an insidious assumption in rape culture" (251) that Prater combats in the chapter's preceding pages. Researchers that seek more scholarship on YA literature will find Prater's comments pertaining to the traumatic experiences of female characters as enlightening as they are heartbreaking. It should be noted, however, that Prater's discussions of sexual violence and suicide could be upsetting to readers that are uncomfortable encountering such topics.

In the collection's thirteenth and final chapter, "Young Adult Gothic Fairy Tales and Terrifying Romance," co-editors Michelle J. Smith and Kristine Moruzi "examine a sub-type of fairy-tale retellings with a Gothic inflection that embrace narratives of captivity, fear and abuse as formulaic aspects of the romance script" (255). This chapter will pique the interest of many scholars. For example, adaptation studies scholars will find themselves drawn to the sections pertaining to YA fiction's current preoccupation "with rewriting canonical Gothic fiction and fairy tales" (257)—most notably "through the films of Disney" (258). Scholars of romance will feel a sense of familiarity upon encountering the chapter's commentary on "the imprisonment of the Gothic heroine" (260), "the uncontrollable nature of love, and its coexistence with female courage" (263), and the seemingly monstrous captor that becomes increasingly less monstrous as the narrative progresses (265). This transformation, according to the chapter's co-authors, is "central to the development of the romantic plot in Gothic YA fiction" (265). Smith and Moruzi even explore elements of the stereotypical YA love triangle—and how Gothic tensions can further complicate such interactions (269).

Young Adult Gothic Fiction is a powerful exploration of the complex relationship between the YA and the Gothic—a relationship that is fraught with haunting memories, emotional turmoil, love triangles, sexual tension, heartbreak, mystery, and monstrosity. This collection encourages the reader to consider the tensions of adolescence, the liminality of young adult life, and the questions of the self that philosophers have wrestled with far longer than the Gothic has showcased the moonlit howl of the werewolf or the sensual penetration of the vampire's bite.