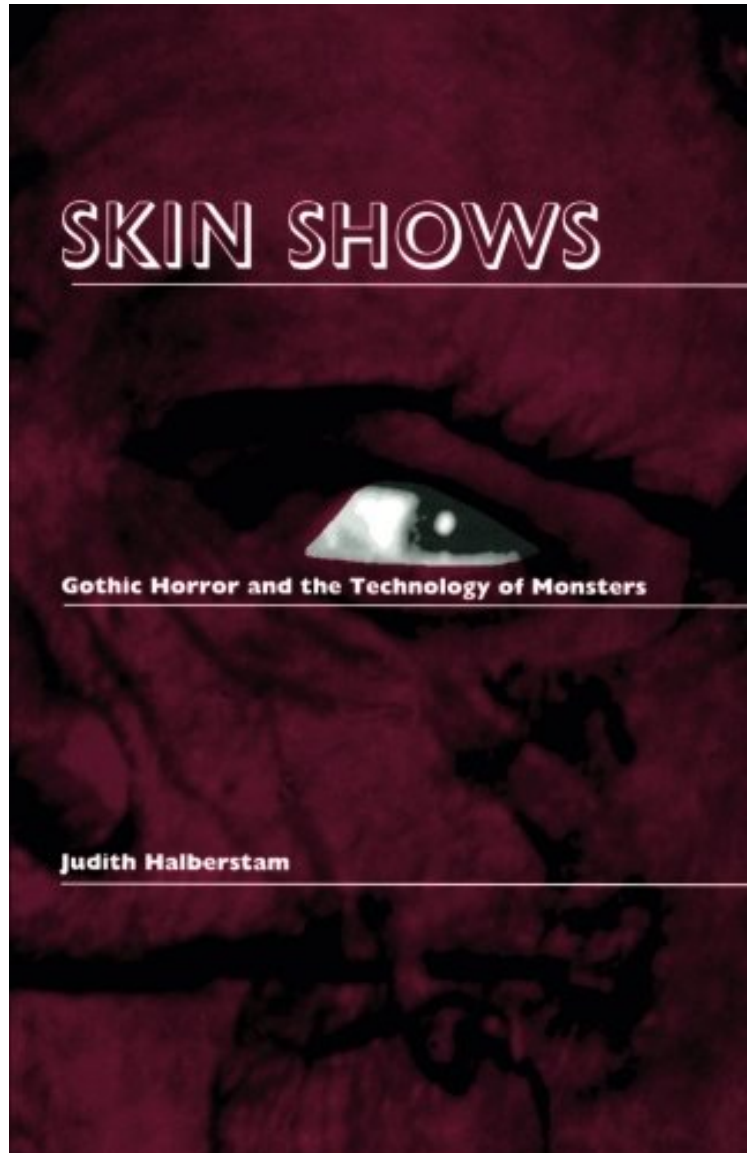


[Download pdf] Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters

Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters

Jack Halberstam

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Jack Halberstam : Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters:

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful. A New Approach to Gothic By Andrew Ng Hock Soon Indeed, the literary genre that we know as the gothic is inexhaustible in its interpretive capacity. From Freud's theory of the Uncanny and Mourning/Melancholia, to Feminist theories and reader response approaches (such as that of Norman

Holland's), the gothic as a literary outsider has come a long way from its inception as a marginal form of literature to become one of the most studied and complex form of writing. Halberstam's book is one of the latest critical offerings of reading the Gothic, and it is indeed a timely arrival of an otherwise over-determined reading of this particular genre from the various theoretical approaches (interesting as they may be). Halberstam's approach, grounded in history and racism, renews the gothic's early preoccupation with otherness and the fear of it, but which emphasizes the societal fear of the alien/foreign other, and not so much the struggle between the public and private selves (the beloved of psychoanalytical theory). Her most interesting chapter is the reading of Stoker's 'Dracula' as an anti-semitic propoganda text; indeed, I have appropriated some of her ideas in my view on postcolonial gothic, for I find that her theoretical stance has much to offer in this new and under-emphasized aspect of gothic literature. Halberstam's careful and brilliant intertwining of psychoanalysis, race-relations theory (history) and literary deconstruction is also critically executed in clear, precise language. I strongly recommend this book to anyone who wishes to have a fresh outlook on gothic literature.

In this examination of the monster as cultural object, Judith Halberstam offers a rereading of the monstrous that revises our view of the Gothic. Moving from the nineteenth century and the works of Shelley, Stevenson, Stoker, and Wilde to contemporary horror film exemplified by such movies as *Silence of the Lambs*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *Candyman*, *Skin Shows* understands the Gothic as a versatile technology, a means of producing monsters that is constantly being rewritten by historically and culturally conditioned fears generated by a shared sense of otherness and difference. Deploying feminist and queer approaches to the monstrous body, Halberstam views the Gothic as a broad-based cultural phenomenon that supports and sustains the economic, social, and sexual hierarchies of the time. She resists familiar psychoanalytic critiques and cautions against any interpretive attempt to reduce the affective power of the monstrous to a single factor. The nineteenth-century monster is shown, for example, as configuring otherness as an amalgam of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Invoking Foucault, Halberstam describes the history of monsters in terms of its shifting relation to the body and its representations. As a result, her readings of familiar texts are radically new. She locates psychoanalysis itself within the gothic tradition and sees sexuality as a beast created in nineteenth century literature. Excessive interpretability, Halberstam argues, whether in film, literature, or in the culture at large, is the actual hallmark of monstrosity.

.com In this academic work of film and literary criticism, Judith Halberstam examines the monster as cultural object. She discusses classic gothic texts such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, and then looks at the impact of changing technology (horror movies with special effects) for depicting monsters. Her argument is that the gothic in its more lurid, unabashedly violent, and perverse forms may be more empowering to the reader/viewer than in its carefully articulated, understated, and sublimated forms. H-Net s calls *Skin Shows* an "intelligent, well-informed, and provocative piece of writing" and writes that its "greatest strength ... is that it allows for other critics of the Gothic to proceed more self-consciously about the presuppositions that particularly psychoanalysis has introduced into the academic discussion." One caveat, though: the language is somewhat turgid, with awkward verbs such as "gothicize" and "metaphorize." Halberstams argument is elegant in its simplicity, but far-reaching in its implications. Providing a strikingly original account of the Gothic, she proposes through her work a cultural history of fear and prejudice and, thus, paves the way for a new scholarly enterprise." Ann Cvetkovich, University of Texas, Austin