

THIS YOUNG
MONSTER

CHARLIE FOX

Fitzcarraldo Editions

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This Young Monster is a hallucinatory celebration of artists who raise hell, transform their bodies, anger their elders and show their audience dark, disturbing things. What does it mean to be a freak? Why might we be wise to think of the present as a time of monstrosity? And how does the concept of the monster irradiate our thinking about queerness, disability, children and adolescents? From *Twin Peaks* to Leigh Bowery, Harmony Korine to *Alice in Wonderland*, *This Young Monster* gets high on a whole range of riotous art as its voice and form shape-shift, all in the name of dealing with the strange wonders of what Nabokov once called 'monsterhood'. Ready or not, here they come...

This Young Monster Details

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Dina says

Ensayo maravilloso, sorprendente y sobre todo repleto de curiosidades. Nos habla de lo monstruosa que puede ser la diferencia, el cambiar, el crecer y lo hace con una carta a La Bestia, muchos actores, directores, fotógrafos e incluso una visión de Alicia en el país de las maravillas de en que se ha convertido su propia vida.

Las referencias son realmente impresionantes!

Blair says

A spectacular collection of essays – actually, not so much essays as sublime, feverish phantasmagorias that pull apart the distinctions between fiction, fact and surrealism, exploring the intersections of pop culture, queerness, self-image and what it means to be (or feel like) a monster. *This Young Monster* opens with a letter addressed to the Beast (of *Beauty and the fame*, of *La Belle et la fame*) and closes with a series of diary entries about Arthur Rimbaud. My absolute favourite was 'Spook House': in the form of an imaginary screenplay, it's like being educated about horror classics by costumed characters and trick-or-treating kids while immersed in a setpiece that's a combination of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Over the Garden Wall* and Simon Hanselman's *Megg, Mogg & Owl*. Fox is an omnivorous consumer of media, a connoisseur of both high and low culture; the essays in *This Young Monster* reference mainstream TV shows and horror movies nearly as often as they do outsider art and arthouse cinema. This book made me want to read and see and hear everything mentioned, it made me want to write and create and rejoice in my own monstrousness. Exhilarating.

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Kirsty says

I really, really wanted this to be a clever, in-depth analysis of specific elements of the horror genre. It wasn't. But hey, not the book's fault if it's not what I want. The kicky, smart-arse, look-at-me prose style was very much not my cup of tea. But Charlie Fox clearly knows his stuff, even if he does insist on writing it as an experimental play script for some reason. I'd read more from him if it was written in a less show-offy style.

sevdah says

I really wanted to like this, which in itself is a bit weird. Did Eileen Myles spark my desire by uploading a picture of the book on her bathroom floor next to her naked feet? I'm not saying it didn't. My main problem with it was that it was written in a way that would work (only?) in a very specific situation: a horror fan getting lost on her way to the SF/F section in a bookshop sees this collection and opens it at random. Every second essay was designed with our subject in mind: "Ei dude - criticism is like, um, totally cool! Dude!" (an editor for all those catchy phrases wouldn't hurt, they're not too foxy.)

Bonus points for our author is definitely very interested in his subject of monstrosity and his passion is a nice thing to sense in those pages. In terms of finding new connections or introducing a fresh way of seeing (i.e. in being a good critical text), it had very little to offer.

If you're that sci-fi fan who doesn't usually read essays or criticism - this truly is for you, dismiss all my bitterness and proceed to reading it.

Seph Roofbeams says

I think it was because I read it immediately after *The Art of Cruelty*, which felt to me like a book that dealt very clearly and sensitively with artists who try to elicit shock and horror in their audiences, but this book felt to me like a really crude treatment of monstrosity in art. To start with, there are absolutely no artists of color to be found, except a one-sentence reference to Grace Jones and one paragraph dedicated to Missy Elliot. With a theme as racially fraught as monstrosity, this seems like an unforgivable oversight. Secondly, Fox makes no effort to distinguish between sexual and gender perversity (good, imo) and moral perversity (bad, imo). For example, the title comes from a line from Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*: "Well, it wouldn't be fair now or right, I mean, for me to go off and leave you two to the tender mercies of this young monster, who's been like no real son at all." Alex is a sexy character to be sure, but why is a straight white male rapist and murderer being put forth as the central monster of the book? The chapter on Diane Arbus doesn't satisfactorily redeem any of the critiques of her that it puts forth, because it doesn't take those critiques seriously. There just isn't a subtle distinction here between different kinds of horribleness going on. I liked the chapter on Leigh Bowery, because it feels like Bowery's interests and Fox's interests most closely aligned, so he was able to do some justice to Bowery's vision. Overall, the prose stylings are fun, but this book feels to me more like a series of notes from a white gay male writer about his identification with monsters than a serious or interesting exploration of monstrosity and queerness in art.

Lara says

Dizzying.

David says

The folks at London-based Fitzcarraldo Editions produce beautiful books, and I'm interested in reading more of their titles in the future. That said, Charlie Fox deserves a much larger readership. This *Young Monster* contains exactly the kind of essays I like to read but so rarely encounter; they are snappy, passionate, fearless, and unburdened by excess. Fox has introduced me to a range of new artists and artifacts, and his style gives me hope for the future of literature written by young people (he and I were both born in 1991).

Jesse says

From John Waters: By the Book:

What's the last great book you read?

My friend Bruce Hainley had told me about a new book coming out called “This Young Monster,” by Charlie Fox, but I had forgotten all about it until the publisher Fitzcarraldo Editions in London sent me this beautifully designed French-flap-style paperback original. Good God, where did this wise-beyond-his-years 25-year-old critic’s voice come from? His breath of proudly putrefied air is really something to behold. Finally, a new Parker Tyler is on the scene. Yep. Mr. Fox is the real thing.

A Parker Tyler comparison? I can't resist that!

Tensy Gesteira estevez says

Un libro para leer muy despacio.

Ben Robinson says

A compendium of essays about the art, film, poetry and celebrity of monstrousness, that quality of being which maybe best defines our own troubling times. I'm a fan of pretty much all the work discussed here, and Charlie Fox makes for an erudite guide around these cultural spooky houses.