



Kathleen Hudson (ed.), *Women's Authorship and the Early Gothic: Legacies and Innovations*.

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Women's Authorship and the Early Gothic: Legacies and Innovations offers a very insightful and thought-provoking reading of Gothic genealogies, seeking to “reframe [them] as a literary exchange shared between women authors and illuminate the complex developments and profound impact of such writers, which indeed still shape our understanding of the Gothic today” (18). Amid the continuities and disruptions of defining and redefining women's authorship and its contribution to the genre, this collection of essays considers how “the Gothic provides a unique vocabulary for understanding what it means to be a woman author, and [how] women authors, in turn, act as an intrinsic part of the mode's development as a responsive, continuously changing and vital form” (18). While the essays engage with well-known women writers of the Gothic, like Ann Radcliffe, they also examine a large body of literary work produced by less known women writers who have been dismissed from the literary canon and the Gothic genre itself. This includes the writing of Mary Robinson, Eleanor Sleath, Mary Julia Young, Sarah Wilkinson, Regina Maria Roche, among others.

Hudson's introduction critiques the historically gendered classification of the Gothic and shows how it marginalised the women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Hudson ultimately highlights the limitations of the so-called 'Female-Gothic' genre, pointing to its perceived association with 'terror' – which goes in parallel with the aesthetics of 'horror' in 'Male Gothic' – as an oversimplification of the complex contribution of women to the development of the genre which overlooks their oeuvre with its "diverse range of Gothic negotiations" (5), including gender, genre, and women's self-expression. As such, one of the main aims of the collection is to evidence that "the complicated long-term impact of even marginalised women's Gothic writing cannot be overstated, expanding over geographical borders and broad expanses of time" (6). The authors achieve this objective by examining the literary community created by these women, who not only interacted with one another's writing but also shaped the literary landscapes of their time whilst establishing authorial identities for themselves.

In the first chapter, "Alternative Genealogies: (Re)tracing the Origins of Women's Gothic in Sophia Lee's *The Recess* and Mrs. Carver's *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey*", Anna Shajirat explores the intersections between the writing of these two women writers of the Gothic. Shajirat examines Lee's and Carver's similar critiques of the culture of eighteenth-century Britain and the ways in which it disempowered women – through the doctrine of coverture, for instance – whilst focusing on discourses of progress and equality. In the face of material erasure of women's literary production, Shajirat uses a model of maternal inheritance to trace the origins of Carver's lesser-known novel *The Horrors of Oakendale Abbey* (1797) to Lee's *The Recess* (1783-5). The following two chapters, by Hannah Doherty Hudson and Yael Shapira respectively, examine the concepts of women's authorship and the external influences on their processes of creativity. Hudson investigates reviews of novels in the popular Minerva Press and how their language impacted the development of the Gothic as a genre, while Shapira explores how author Isabella Kelly's engagement with Matthew Lewis's work goes beyond mere imitation of his 'plan of a novel', arguing that her relationship with him had more independence than the stereotypical patron-protégée image that has previously led to the dismissal of Kelly's literary work.

The next chapter by Deborah Russell opens with Gothic author Mary Robinson's criticism of Mary Wollstonecraft's writing on gender roles, examining Robinson's focus on women's individuality and the potential for plurality within the notion of femininity. Russell highlights "how gendered behaviour and identity are imagined in the fiction that Robinson wrote in the late 1790s" (92) and explores several Gothic elements in Robinson's work, considering how ideas of surveillance, pursuit, concealment, confinement, and punishment are used to show how gender is socially constructed and gendered boundaries are imposed "in literature as in life" (108). The next two chapters are by Kathleen Hudson and Nicky Lloyd. Hudson argues that while Eleanor Sleath's work as a Minerva Press author is repeatedly considered to be derivative, her fiction, and that of other women writers, reflects appropriation and deliberate literary exchange as a way of creating a collaborative literary community among women writers. Lloyd examines Mary Julia Young's fiction and how it defies the label of mere imitation through Young's 'self-conscious intertextuality' and sisterly exchange with other women writers.

In the following two chapters, Franz Potter and Elizabeth Bobbit examine the commercialisation of the early Gothic novel and explore women writers' responses to precarity and the demands of the publishers of the genre. Potter looks into Sarah Wilkinson's mode of navigating the literary market by using self-appropriation within her novels and shows how Wilkinson employed different styles to meet the requirements of this ever-changing market.

Bobbit's chapter on Gothic Nationalism in some of Ann Radcliffe's later novels broadens the scope of the scholarship on Radcliffe's oeuvre by examining the ways in which Radcliffe resorted to 'adaptive practices', noting how her Gothic writing contributes to the understanding of the history of British nationalism. The next chapter by Christina Morin demonstrates the wide reach of Regina Maria Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* and its influence on the literary production of her contemporaries and those who came after them. It also examines the circulation of the Gothic through translation and adaptations that transcend national borders, allowing for the study of the Gothic in a global context. The final chapter by Elizabeth Neiman focuses on women writers' self-representation at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Discussing the use of the authorial 'I' when writing about grief and mourning, Neiman offers a revisionist view of women's self-representation and authorial identity and calls for a re-evaluation of how we approach these elements in Romanticism and in the Gothic.

Overall, this collection of essays engages with a wide range of texts written by women authors and provides insights into their contribution to the Gothic and its development, focusing on their experimentation and innovation. It also offers an insightful consideration of the way these women writers formed literary communities based on collaboration as well as literary and intellectual exchange. Readers of women's fiction and non-fiction in the long nineteenth century may find this volume particularly useful due to its engagement with the literary legacies of eighteenth-century women writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, and their impact on the literary production of their contemporaries and successors, and particularly on Victorian popular fiction and culture.