Like a vampire to blood, it is hard to resist a book with a title like this one. Why does it seem that every young adult fiction author is suddenly writing about supernatural monsters like werewolves, zombies and vampires? Are these books popular now because of the economic downturn? Or is the popularity due to a need of young adults to learn about monsters and demons, what they are, why they are dangerous and how to overcome their threats within the safe, controlled confines of a story? Do young adults live in a reality between an adult’s and a child’s world, like the fictitious monsters in these books? These are the questions Joni Richards Bodart addresses in this scholarly analysis of the ‘monster’ phenomenon in young adult fiction.

Dr Bodart is well placed to write on this topic. She holds degrees in psychology as well as a doctorate in librarianship. In addition Bodart is an expert in young adult literature, having written around 20 books on the subject. Despite the scholarly tone of this work, she writes in a very readable and enjoyable way, which tempts readers to seek out for themselves many of the books she discusses.

This book is not only a fascinating scholarly account of the reasons for the current proliferation of zombies and vampires in young adult fiction, but it is also a useful guide for librarians interested in current series of fantasy and horror books for these readers. The book lists horror/fantasy series and individual titles by sub-genre, such as vampires, shapeshifters, zombies and demons, as well as giving historical context to the current phenomenon. There is a US bias in the selection of titles, but, that aside, it is still an excellent selection guide.

As a mother of three young adults as well as a librarian, I thoroughly recommend this book both for its insight into the world of supernatural fiction and for its use as a guide to what is available in the horror/fantasy genre for young adults. This book is a worthwhile guide to enjoying the ‘darkness in all of us’ in a good story.

*Catherine Gilbert
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