

Miraculum Monstrum: A Hybrid Narrative

Kathline Carr

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Haunting and eerie, Miraculum Monstrum is a fun-house mirror where past, present, and future bounce off one another.

Kathline Carr's feminist fairy tale *Miraculum Monstrum* is arresting, ominous, and dialectic, equal parts an emergent mythology, a damning treatise, and a horror story.

Set in an apocalyptic near future, the book catalogues the transformation of Tristia Vogel from a woman to a "latter hybrid," a harpy-like creature both fragile and primal, able to survive an imminent ecological tragedy. The hybrid narrative uses art, poetry, narration, museum curating, and apocryphal texts to examine the constraint and construction of women.

It is particularly interested in the spaces of the dispossessed, from Tristia's closed medical wards to her drug-addict and hooker companions' hovels and underpasses. Tristia's miraculous, monstrous transformation allows her to escape and exist, however briefly, in a hostile environment where she's free and ultimately alone.

Tristia is deified in her dehumanization. As she rapidly loses her human appearance, there's a parallel degeneration in the treatment she receives at the hands of empowered human beings, and she emerges as a messianic figure for outcasts.

As humans lose the surface and submerge themselves deep underground, Tristia gains her freedom. But as each party trades sun for shadows, freedom for constraint, the dire price suggests that there's a toxic force in these binaries.

Sadly, as the first recorded latter hybrid, Tristia seems to have little to no sense of the importance of what is happening to her. Her time and space is liminal, the event horizon for a future to come, and her messianic hagiography is the result of posterity.

The book's presentation of her life as retrospective art show continues its play with social constructs, indicating just how much our bodies, our environments, our histories, and our very selves are creations informed and limited by forces that are deeply personal, even when they're often beyond our understanding or control.

Haunting and eerie, Carr's hybrid narrative offers a daring, prescient frame. *Miraculum Monstrum* is a fun-house mirror where past, present, and future bounce off one another, but the dangerous work of constructing meaning is left for reflection just beyond the page.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (Debut Fiction 2017)

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