Megen de Bruin-Molé, *Gothic Remixed. Monster Mashups and Frankenfictions in 21st-Century Culture* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 280 pp. ISBN 978-1-3502-3446-8; £26.09 (pb).

Gothic Remixed: Monster Mashups and Frankenfictions in 21st-Century Culture consists of five jam-packed illustrated chapters. The first chapter serves by way of an introduction to the author's field and methodology for inquiry, while the following four chapters deal with the related, but not entirely overlapping, themes of remixes and mashups, analysed from different angles, yet taken within the unifying broader framework of acceptable (that is, copyright-compliant) appropriation.

Since the term 'Frankenfiction' may not be immediately comprehensible to some, it seems fit to disambiguate it at an early stage. Frankenfiction refers to a commercial narrative that places popular monsters (for instance, vampires, abnormal scientists, zombies) in classic 'Victorian' literary and historical contexts. (The reader should be aware that in *Gothic Remixed* the term 'Victorian' extends back far enough to include Romanticism.) Although these textual forms are still posited as occupying the fringe of appropriation, Frankenfictions are actually successful cultural products that manage to engage multiple consumer communities through different media platforms.

Chapter 1 discusses how the transmedia recombinant is produced and consumed by audience communities who reassemble media and texts irrespective of source. Concurrently, producers/creators remix these media hybrids and distribute them across multiple platforms, circulation and profit being never far apart. These new media monsters issue challenges to monologic authoriality, both in terms of who is the author of a product (one? many? none?) and who is the copyright holder, if any such thing as copyright can be said to exist in this context. These methodological premises raise and indeed tease many questions, tensions and preconceptions, putting contemporary monstrosities and past settings into communication, within a framework of readerly pleasure revelling in fakery, anachronism and spectacle. The medium becomes the monster, and vice versa.

Chapters 2 and 3 aim to orient the reader, through a discourse of monsters and the monstrous, across and around the heteroglossic and heteronomic domain of Frankenfictions, which are not always easy to pinpoint. These chapters pivot on two texts that the author considers typical as well as exemplary of her critical discourse: on the one hand, Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula* (1992) and its sequels; on the other, Seth Grahame-Smith and Jane Austen's *Pride, Prejudice and Zombies* (2009). (Here, de Bruin-Molé rightly reminds us of how the discourse of acceptable appropriation is present even in the explicit, and somewhat parodic, four-hand authorship branding the latter novel.) The fourth chapter very successfully shifts the critical focus on the visual arts. While also being presented as a conclusion to the previous critical discourses, the fifth and final chapter focuses on the (un)death of the author, zooming in on the more or less faithful biopics dedicated to Mary Shelley and her literary circle.

Megen de Bruin-Molé comes across as a skilful, competent scholar, who tackles her topic of investigation with self-assured mastery, backed by a theoretical and methodological array that richly emerges in the wide-ranging and, in some ways, exemplary bibliography that supports the volume. What convinced me less is her bold attempt to 'mix' together (in turn, I appropriate the book's lexicon) arguments and approaches that do not always seem to fully cohere, within the domain of the so-called Frankenfictions, linked as they are by boundaries and connections that, by De Bruin-Molé's own admission, are now more tentative, now stronger (and, therefore, also more convincing). To whom is the book addressed, for instance? Since any text is (also) made by the communities of its readers/consumers, who precisely is the target audience the author had in mind, I could not help wondering.

Chapters 2 and 3 complement many existing studies devoted to the *Penny Dreadful* series, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and other well-known examples of camp(ish) post-Victorian parodies or homages. The student, even the advanced student, will find these pages very useful, not least because the author supports her argument with detailed references to previous critical studies, for each of which not only is the textual locus given, but also the source from which that critic drew. As a result, the bibliography is painstaking and definitely helpful. To me, these sections shape up as a first-rate compendium, a very well-crafted anthology of references and passages from which a good doctoral student could profitably draw and on which future in-depth studies could build. At times, the argument itself seems structured as a doctoral thesis, albeit on a high level, in which the researcher wants to demonstrate their full mastery of the primary and secondary works. I wonder, however, how much new ground the more experienced researchers will find in these two chapters, as paradoxically confirmed by the breadth and richness of the bibliography?

Much more original, in my opinion, is 'Remixing Historical Fictions', the fourth chapter dedicated to historiographic Frankenfictions. Indeed, these art forms still stand at the margins of contemporary critical discourse, fully justifying the sobriquet, elsewhere less convincing, of Frankenfictions. The intersection between past and present media results in monstrous creations: namely, copyright-acceptable transmedia aesthetic hybrids. While reading my way through from Travis Louie's use of acrylic paint to Kevin J. Weir's moving GIFs, I hit upon many useful and sometimes enlightening reflections enriching the overall discussion. The author seems at liberty to bring out finally her interpretative competence by freeing herself from the redundancy—perhaps the encumbrance—of the bibliographic support. The coveted meta-critical corroboration becomes less intrusive here, and more naturalised in the critical discourse. Likewise, the schematic argumentation—'as critic x argues', 'critic y conceptualises', 'as critic z expands'—to which de Bruin-Molé resorts elsewhere disappears too. Animation, freakery, revision of the past, disruptions of writerly codes and readerly expectations: each of the four contemporary visual artists discussed 'appropriates historical traces in order to communicate a particular

sense of the past and its monstrosity' (p. 188). I think that, here, we are right in the middle of visual Frankenfictions as I have come to understand them through de Bruin-Molé.

If Chapter 4 interested me the most in view of its consistency with the framework of Frankenfictions, astride the fine arts and the popular arts, the fifth chapter, by contrast, is the one that seemed to me to cohere the least with the overarching argument, almost a textual inset which felt, if not quite unjustified, at least a little out of place. Although related to the topic of the study at large, the discussion of authorial originality as developed in this final part is weakened by the section on Mary Shelley as 'remixer/remixed' (pp. 212–15), both the author/subject and the topic/object of Frankenfictions. If we go beyond the above brilliant label (admittedly, de Bruin-Molé is no stranger to clever definitions—clearly one of the merits of this book), the following pages retrace Mary Shelley's 'megastardom' in fictional films and television productions. Reference is made to the well-known biopic vulgate all too often referred to by literary and film critics (including Ken Russell's *Gothic*, 1986; *Haunted Summer*, 1988; *Frankenstein Unbound*, 1990), to then move on to adaptations of 'Shelley-as-scientist' (p. 222), including the well-known, gender-bending YouTube series *Frankenstein, MD* (2014). Once again, this concluding section hauntologically refers back to that ur-remix trailblazer, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, which has unsurprisingly been chosen by de Bruin-Molé as a kind of propitiator/dark shadow for the entire volume, used in the epigraph to all the chapters. After all, behind these Frankenfictions, as much as behind their critique, there can but lie that Shelleyan arch-admonition: 'Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void [...]; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded'. *Sic Mary dixit*.

In conclusion, *Gothic Remixed* is an important, if not always original study, certainly useful to the student, though offering valuable insights to the experienced researcher as well. The author's theoretical and critical competence emerges clearly throughout, especially in Chapters 2 and 3. On the other hand, in these same chapters the discussion of the many texts under investigation does not always come to original conclusions. Somewhat predictably, it focuses on works that have become mainstream academic and didactic capital by now, such as Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula* series and the re-imagined Quirk Classics (and their tie-ins, spanning movies to gadgetry), both gleefully appropriated for use in classrooms and doctoral theses. This canny authorial strategy and the ensuing selection of texts will make the book a valuable tool to many.

Beyond the predictable areas of Monster Studies and Neo-Victorian Studies, *Gothic Remixed* offers valuable openings for those interested in the heritage industry at large, popular art, Adaptation Studies and, peripherally, copyright law. The book is enriched by twenty-one illustrations, many of which are essential to visualise transmedia remixes of the past, and their own new (or Franken-) fictions of aesthetic traditions of monstrosity.

Francesca Saggini
University of Tuscia
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20067174>

Date of acceptance: 23 July 2023.

Stephanie Insley Hershinow. *Born Yesterday: Inexperience and the Early Realist Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 192 pp. ISBN 978-1-4214-3883-2; $32.00 (hb).

Stephanie Insley Hershinow's *Born Yesterday: Inexperience and the Early Realist Novel* is a delightfully rewarding experience for its readers. 'Reward' though may be too teleological a term for a book more focused on beginnings instead of winding downs, on experiences instead of endings. Hershinow's innovation is not so much in the texts about which she chooses to write: they are so familiar that she does not even spend much time quoting directly from them (detours into *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schimdt* and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* trilogy notwithstanding). *Born Yesterday*'s freshness is born of how it prompts its readers to re-experience the individual novels under consideration, the potentials and possibilities of realism itself, and the contours of narrative and narrative theory. By centring characters in novels who do not know the world at the centre of her account, Hershinow makes realism a surprisingly idealistic form. In Hershinow's telling, inexperienced characters point to ways that early realism imagines what the world should and could be. They achieve this by telling their stories in their own worlds instead of primarily showing our world as it really is.

In chapters on Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novels of the 1790s, Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1776) and *Camilla* (1796) and Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816), Hershinow charts the power of characters who do not know the ways of the world to bend it to their desires—even as the author herself remains ever attentive to the very real perils and pitfalls of doing so. *Born Yesterday*, then, does not precisely enact or embody its own argument—Hershinow is too experienced and elegant a writer for that—but it does in some ways *reproduce* it. The book persuades its readers to not know what we think we already know about the early stages of realism. What it is like to see early realism on its own terms and what it is like to see it not as it is but as it might be (which, it turns out, *is* as it is), is the delight and challenge of the book.

A book about inexperience is, of course, also a book about sex. Sometimes this is so obvious a fact that it need not be stated directly, and sometimes it's worth saying the obvious thing. Hershinow does both brilliantly. The act of sex in these novels is a narrative event that occurs in the context of other narrative events; a reality that makes it precisely like every other event in a novel, even as it is more significant than a great many of them. Hershinow, in other words, is

Curious History of Romantic Collectors, 2006). Her third book, *The Sarah Siddons Audio Files: Romanticism and the Lost Voice* (2011), was the recipient of the Bernard Hewitt Award for Outstanding Research in Theatre History. In her most recent book, *On the Bullet Train with Emily Brontë: 'Wuthering Heights' in Japan* (2017), which she completed as a Guggenheim Fellow, Pascoe wrote about Japanese Brontë adaptations and about foreign language mastery.

Francesca Saggini is Professor in English Literature at the Università degli Studi della Tuscia (Viterbo), Italy. Since 2017, she has been Senior Research Associate, Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge. Francesca is the author of, among others, *The Gothic Novel and the Stage: Romantic Appropriations* (2015, Honourable Mention at the 2016 ESSE Book Awards) and *Backstage in the Novel: Frances Burney and the Theater Arts* (2012, Walken Cowen Memorial Prize for an outstanding work in eighteenth-century studies). In 2021–2023, Francesca was the primary investigator on a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions-funded project at the University of Edinburgh, entitled 'Opening Romanticism: Reimagining Romantic Drama for New Audiences'. Francesca is the author of five books and she has edited twelve collections and special journal issues. Among the over ninety-five articles and chapters she has authored, many engage with popular fiction and genre literature, including the gothic, the fantastic and crime writing.

Matthew Sangster is Professor of Romantic Studies, Fantasy and Cultural History at the University of Glasgow, and the current President of the British Association for Romantic Studies. His recent publications include *Living as an Author in the Romantic Period* (2021), *Institutions of Literature, 1700–1900* (co-edited with Jon Mee, 2022), *Remediating the 1820s* (co-edited with Jon Mee, 2023), *An Introduction to Fantasy* (2023), *Realms of Imagination: Essays from the Wide Worlds of Fantasy* (co-edited with Tanya Kirk, 2023) and *David Bowie and the Legacies of Romanticism* (2023). He is currently working with Katie Halsey on a book exploring the results of the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded 'Books and Borrowing, 1750–1830' project. He is also writing about Tom Waits, Pierce Egan, J. R. R. Tolkien's legacies and rude student marginalia.

Zoë Van Cauwenberg (she/her) is a BAEF postdoctoral fellow in Irish Studies at Boston College and a research associate at the department of translation, interpreting and communication at Ghent University. Currently, she is researching female Irish antiquarians from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. She obtained a PhD in history from Ghent University and in literary studies from KU Leuven. This research (2020–2024) on the role of women in shaping Scottish and Irish histories during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was funded by the FWO (Research Foundation–Flanders).She has presented and published on orality and history in the works of Anne Bannerman and Mary St John, Romantic and gothic connections in the lyrics of Taylor Swift and the gothic heroine in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Zoë recently co-edited