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**Review: Megen de Bruin-Molé's *Gothic Remixed: Monster Mashups and Frankenfictions in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literature*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), ISBN 978-1-350-10305-4, 280 pages. Pbk: £26.09 Hbk: £85.50; ebook: £20.87**

Alison Bainbridge, Northumbria University, UK, [alison.bainbridge@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:alison.bainbridge@northumbria.ac.uk)

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*Gothic Remixed* is de Bruin-Molé's monograph on the late 20<sup>th</sup>/early 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon of remixed and mashed-up literature featuring monsters from 19<sup>th</sup> century gothic literature. Terming these remixes 'Frankenfiction,' de Bruin-Molé sets out to explore their approach to monstrosity, whether or not the subversive legacy of gothic monsters is upheld within these texts, as well as their contributions to contemporary gothic literature. In doing so, de Bruin-Molé sheds light on an understudied aspect of the gothic.

The first chapter of *Gothic Remixed* is dedicated to defining de Bruin-Molé's chosen texts, and to defending their worth as an object of study as well as a genre in their own right. De Bruin-Molé argues that, as contemporary media is increasingly consumed through multiple media platforms, re-mixes and mash-ups are an increasingly prevalent format. De Bruin-Molé offers Frankenfictions as an experimental media form, both in terms of content and in academic contexts, stating that 'Frankenfiction is [...] useful because it helps us track and respond to the rapidly evolving discourses of originality, intertextuality, and history, without first having to redefine the field' (2020: 10). In other words, de Bruin-Molé views Frankenfictions as a form upon which to test new theoretical approaches across multiple disciplines.

The theories which de Bruin-Molé uses throughout *Gothic Remixed* are taken from both remix studies and adaptation studies, however, de Bruin-Molé admits that neither approach is entirely perfect due to difficulties with terminology. Even though de Bruin-Molé states that 'the terminology of remix studies is often inadequate' (2020: 2), she privileges remix studies over adaptation studies as a theoretical lens because of the implications of the language used in remix studies. Difficulties with theoretical application mean that the majority of the first chapter is dedicated to explaining precisely how de Bruin-Molé intends for the terminology she uses to be applied. Particularly interesting is de Bruin-Molé's assertion that Frankenfictions not only feature monsters as characters, but are monstrous in their own right. According to de Bruin-Molé, Frankenfiction 'can have a monstrous function, pointing to the once transgressive tropes it now exploits for fun and profit' (2020: 11). For de Bruin-Molé, Frankenfiction is of interest because it acts as a hall of mirrors, reflecting back not only the texts upon which it is based, but also our changing cultural approach to those works and the monsters which feature in them.

The rest of the book discusses the application of remix theory to Frankenfictions from a variety of angles. In the second chapter, de Bruin-Molé asks what it means to be a monster in contemporary literature through close analysis of four different mash-up texts: *Anno Dracula* (Newman, 1992–2019), *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (Moore & O'Neill, 1999–2019), *Penny Dreadful* (Logan, 2014–16), and *The Extraordinary*

*Adventures of the Athena Club* (Goss, 2017–19). De Bruin-Molé provides an overview of each text and its use of gothic literature's classical monsters, highlighting the way each series adapts monstrosity's numerous metaphors to contemporary life – to varying degrees of success. In particular, de Bruin-Molé seems interested in the monstrous feminine and monstrosity as a metaphor for racism, and her analyses focus on the intersection of these two theoretical approaches. It is also where her chosen example texts seem to struggle the most with representation, with only Theodora Goss' *The Extraordinary Adventures of the Athena Club* proving to be more than simply reductive.

The third chapter is on humour and parody. De Bruin-Molé notes that many examples of Frankenfictions are not intended to be taken seriously; rather, they are designed to poke fun at their informing texts, and at the gothic genre as a whole. This chapter argues that parody is an essential part of the gothic as it allows 'repetitions and clichés [...] to revitalise the Gothic's transgressive impulse' (2020: 105). This revitalisation through parody can, however, have a softening effect on the gothic. Again, de Bruin-Molé's focus is on the monstrous feminine and the ways in which the novel-as-mashup transforms the female monsters of gothic literature into a more socially appealing form for contemporary audiences: for example, the exchange of madness for lycanthropy in *Jane Slayre* (Brontë & Erwin, 2010). De Bruin-Molé argues that this exchange of gendered monstrosity for a fantastical one distracts from the feminist messages of the original works and re-feminizes the characters instead.

Chapter four focuses on the historiography of Frankenfiction. The novels, comics and television series covered by *Gothic Remixed* thus far have all been historical in nature, in both setting and in choice of monstrous characters. In this chapter, however, de Bruin-Molé discusses artistic visual mash-ups, including the works of Dan Hillier, Travis Louie, Colin Batty, and Kevin J. Weir. The argument for a change of focus onto visual examples of Frankenfiction is a powerful one: de Bruin-Molé notes that 'Gothic fictions do not necessarily pretend to be objectively realistic, or to convey historically plausible events' (2020: 139), which makes it easier for audiences to overlook the inspiration behind the fictional events. In visual media, however, those historical influences become impossible to forget or ignore. The section on Weir's art is highly interesting in this regard, as he constructs monstrous GIF images from pre-existing photographs of real people. The insertion of the monstrous into images taken from real life is a potentially tricky subject matter – especially as Weir uses old war photos in his work – however, de Bruin-Molé handles the subject with respect.

The fifth chapter asks how Frankenfictions frame the figure of the original author of their inspirational texts. This chapter steps back from the visual arts to instead discuss the distinction between author and plagiarist, returning to focus again on the

novels, comics, and television series covered in the first three chapters of the book. This chapter queries the characterisation of original authors, in particular Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë, who are both listed as authors on the parody mash-ups based on their works: *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* (Austen & Grahame-Smith, 2009), *Sense & Sensibility & Sea Monsters* (Austen & Winters, 2009), and *Jane Slayre*. In this chapter, de Bruin-Molé links Frankenfiction to fan fiction – a connection touched upon in the first chapter – and thus opens the topic to an exploration through the lens of fan studies and convergence culture theory.

*Gothic Remixed* provides an insightful overview of gothic remixes and mash-ups from a multitude of approaches. With a careful approach to definitions and terminology, de Bruin-Molé outlines an understudied but fascinating sub-genre of the gothic, providing insight into authorship, monstrosity, and historiography. *Gothic Remixed* is not a definitive study – there is a notable lack in examples of cinematic mash-ups – however, it is an excellent starting point in the study of remix fiction.

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**Competing Interests**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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