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The Monsters in Our Closets:
A Cultural Look at Neo-Victorian Adaptation

by
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
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Introduction:

Naming the Beast

The literature of nineteenth century Britain is stereotypically characterized by images of societal repression. Characters suffer from an unfulfilled need to express their true desires, which may be at odds with social expectations. The result is masked sexuality or damaging psychological rifts. The twenty-first century has witnessed a reemergence of texts that make use of similar themes in Neo-Victorian adaptations. A quick channel surf or scan of recent film debuts attests to the popularity of these works. Whether it's Showtime's mash-up of iconic nineteenth century characters in *Penny Dreadful* or the 2009 revision of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to include a zombie infestation, Neo-Victorian adaptations abound. Defined in 2008 by *The Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* as a "cultural happening," a "reinvigorated historical consciousness," and a "critical interface between the present and the past," Neo-Victorianisms are adaptive works based on source material from nineteenth century Britain (Kohlke 1). The popularity and persistence of these adaptations suggests a thematic or a socio-cultural connection between the Victorian era and contemporary culture. A cultural studies approach holds that cultural artifacts, including adaptations, exist to fill a social need. In the case of these Neo-Victorian adaptations, that need is fueled by the modern audiences' identification with the dual nature of man as

portrayed through the monstrosity of the divided-self popular in nineteenth century literature.

Originally born as a consequence of the Victorian era's strict codes of propriety, a divided-self mirrors in fiction the way in which an individual presents a public façade to society, hiding his/her true self underneath. This trope has regained popularity with contemporary audiences because of the emphasis placed on virtual identity in modern culture. The tendency of individuals to carefully construct and protect social media profiles mimics the masking of identity performed by Victorians to hide their improprieties. This desire to pretend to be other than what one really is for the sake of social acceptance was commonplace in the nineteenth century but not isolated in it as it is still occurring in contemporary social media, resulting in renewed interest in Victorian themes and imagery as represented in Neo-Victorian adaptations.

The characters in Neo-Victorian adaptations are often gleaned from nineteenth century novels and serials that frequently portrayed monstrosity in the form of the divided self. This phenomenon plagued not only literature, but other areas of popular culture as well. In his book *Doubles*, Karl Miller says that by the nineteenth century, both literature and psychology were "in love with duality" and "collaborated in spreading the gospel [of] ...plurality of the mind" (329). These dualistic stories explore the consequences of pushing

the boundaries of self too far in response to what Walter Houghton refers to as “Victorian hypocrisy” (146). The Victorians, he says,

Concealed or suppressed their true convictions and their natural tastes. They said the “right” thing or did the “right” thing: they sacrificed sincerity to propriety...they pretended to be better than they were. They passed themselves off as being incredibly pious and moral; they talked noble sentiments and lived quite otherwise...They shut their eyes to whatever was ugly or unpleasant and pretended it didn’t exist. Conformity, moral pretension, and evasion—those are the hallmarks of Victorian hypocrisy. (146)

This practice of carefully constructing a public identity while continuously denying one’s true desires scars the psyche. In fiction, characters either intentionally or accidentally create a division of themselves that can act freely without tarnishing their reputation. In Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Henry Jekyll directly cites this desire as the reason he endeavored to sever his personality:

If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just would walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he

found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to the disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. (49)

Constructed under the restrictive influence of nineteenth century British society, texts like *Jekyll and Hyde* explore what happens to the mind when individual desires are stifled by societal conventions, and when individuals attempt to construct separate identities for public and private spheres.

Whether conscious or unconscious, this practice of duplicity leads to a psychological rift, paralleled in fiction through the literary double. These stories tell what it is for someone to “be two things at once where these things are...incompatible. This is the literature which...tells the tale of the cultur[al] escape” which is doomed to fail (Miller 25). They take root in highly moralistic eras like the nineteenth century because they reflect “an organisms efforts to live...[and survive under a] different system of values,” even if they don’t personally agree with its moral and social codes (Miller 34).

Late nineteenth century psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud considers the consequences of these conflicts in his *Studies on Hysteria* in which he identifies repressed feelings and desires as foreign to the mind, creating psychological trauma that can have a physical impact on the body. In his 1995 text, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, critic Jack Halberstam references Freud’s theory noting that long after a physical event, the memory of trauma remains “foreign to the body and the mind but active in both” (129). In an effort of self-preservation, these memories are

pushed into our conscious mind and when they cannot be reconciled with what remains unconscious, the individual experiences mental and physical distress. The process is exemplified more acutely during the Victorian period, which Houghton describes as one of rapid transition that made individuals feel torn between the security of the past and the promise of the future. He says that an age of transition itself has a dual nature; it is by default both a period of destruction and reconstruction on all levels, including identity. Houghton says, "the conscientious man was faced by the cruel alternative of either suffering the extreme penalties of confessing his real opinions or else of living a life of concealment and deception" (399). He describes a sense of haste that made individuals feel trapped within the whirlwind of society and being dragged along with it. He argues that the breakdown of the mind expressed in the literature of the period mirrors that of the society that produced it (8).

Houghton asserts the idea that conformity can be traumatic to the individual. He says that societal conventions of the period "assume[d] enormous force," placing the individual in a position to be "only too eager to...avoid any ideas or behavior which...might make him look like an outsider" (395). He also says that the drive to conform is so ingrained on people by society that "it might very well be unconscious or half-conscious: a conforming to the conventions out of sheer habit" or worse, "an understandable piece of self-deception" (413). He marks this self-deception as

pardonable because to refuse to conform is an act of “sheer terror” because if one were not accepted by society, they might not “be able to hold a job or support [their] family” (146-7). In this way, duality is a “recourse” – a reaction that aids in survival (Miller 23). Victorians became very good at “saving-face” by perfecting the ability to *appear* to say or do the right thing while denying their actual wants. This continuous repression of true desires or acts of internal secret keeping creates an irreparable rift in the personality, as the unconscious demands that it be known.

In his 1919 essay “The Uncanny,” Freud describes these secrets as “something which is secretly familiar which has undergone repression and then returned from it...something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light” (526-8). When we experience something uncanny, the misplaced sense of familiarity causes us discomfort. In the nineteenth century, this sensation is rooted in what Houghton refers to as “evasion,” which he says is a “process of deliberately ignoring whatever caused discomfort, which lead in turn to the further insincerity of pretending that this happy view of things was the whole truth (148). According to Freud, this evasion is never actually successful. The remnants of discomfort remain within the psyche, pushed into the unconscious, which feeds a potential schism. “The unconscious,” he says, “has no other endeavor than to break through the pressure weighing down on it for its way either to consciousness or to a discharge through some real action” (“Pleasure” 19).

For Victorian authors, the unconscious discharge was in exploring social freedom through doubling. Second selves were created to perform actions denied to the original self. Miller says, “one self does what the other self can’t. One self is meek while the other is fierce. One self stays while the other runs away” (416). The discontinuity amplified in the human psyche during the nineteenth century was ample fodder for the persistence of the double in its literature. The portrayal of protagonist and antagonist as one being who is at war with itself is an expression of the frustrations created by the desire to express themselves freely and the understanding of their social limitations.

Contemporary interest in these divided selves suggests that, whether due to the social constraints of Victorian England or the modern saturation of social media presence, individuals feel compelled to hide their true wants and desires from public view for fear of judgment. Research shows that as a social group, millennials are the first generation who see social networking behaviors such as Tweeting, texting, and Facebook, YouTube, and Google usage as commonplace parts of their everyday social lives, rather than modern innovations (Keeter “The Millennials” 1). Millennials are “history’s first ‘always connected’ generation” (Keeter *Millennials* 1). It’s not just their use of technology that makes them unique but the way that they’ve infused it into their lives (Keeter, *Millennials* 5-6). Most millennials – over ninety-four percent – carry cell phones at all times – even to bed – and over seventy-five

percent have profiles on a social networking site, with one-third of those checking their profiles daily (Keeter *Millennials* 28).

This immersion in a digital network creates the feeling of a social “place” where individuals build a sense of community; however, once the user disconnects from their device, the loss of that “sense of home” is detrimental to identity formation (Yust 134). As they’ve constructed their identity based on their role in that digital community, seclusion from that community leaves them identity-less, or feeling as if they don’t know themselves. The feeling of confusion and isolation from community draws modern audiences to the construct of the divided self as it is represented in Neo-Victorian works. The characters can be branded as misfits, or outcasts-all seeking to hide some “ugly” part of themselves from others. In a study on the effects of social media on children’s spirituality, one respondent mirrored this sentiment, stating that “it’s easier to pretend you’re someone amazing [online] than to face the reality that you have issues. It’s easier to make friends online who don’t know you than to go out in the real world and let everyone see who you really are” (Yust 136). This contemporary desire to avoid the risk of discomfort and rejection by creating another version of one’s self mirrors the evasion Miller describes in the Victorian era.

In her 2014 text, *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*, Danah Boyd takes an analytical look at the impact of social media on the lives of contemporary teenagers. She argues that, by and large, the issues

teens face haven't changed but "what is new is the way in which social media alters and *amplifies* social situations" (13). Her research attests to the persistence of duality as a social condition that has been magnified by the complicated era of digital connectedness. Some of this conflict is a result of teenagers ineffectively imagining their audiences. As individuals choose how to present themselves to an imagined audience, their identity construction is in a constant flux (Boyd 31-32). While the ability to reimage one's self is not always damaging, it does keep conflicts between true identity and a constructed persona close to the surface – as is the case in both nineteenth century literature and its Neo-Victorian counterparts.

In Karen-Marie Yust's article "Digital Power: Exploring the Effects of Social Media on Children's Spirituality," she says that "many everyday routines and rituals are developed alongside media use, and at the same time the media provides material for negotiating and defining social identities" (79). This digital immersion both complicates our construction of identity and provides the resources for our efforts to do so. Although the constant use of technology as a means of permanent connectedness is what defines millennials and the generations to follow, the connectivity does not breed trust; two-thirds report skepticism of other people (Houghton argues this is a holdover from Victorian feelings of doubt) and report some sort of privacy features that protect their social media profile. This tendency reflects the desire to protect one's identity in a very Victorian way, to hide one's personal

profile from the prying eyes of those who may judge. Also, 39 percent of the population says that this over use of technology makes people feel more isolated, further complicating identity construction (26).

Yust argues that social networking creates a digital third place where users can engage in communal activities like they do in their homes, church congregations, and schools. It is in these places that “identity is formed, memory is structured, and attitudes are formed” (134). Users construct a sense of home where they can “experiment with self, highlighting certain attributes or hiding others, or even creating whole new personas” from the ones they portray in person (134). Research shows that one-third of teens prefer texting to face-to-face communication because it allows them to be more thoughtful in their chosen identities (136). Scholars are referring to the problem as “detachment attachment” (140). Users form emotional bonds under their assumed identities and through these digital spaces, when in actuality they are in an isolated physical environment, accessing these relationships through the screen of their personal computer or mobile phone. Yust describes this as a “crisis of identity” because digital relations are essentially dehumanized by removing the actual contact between individuals (140).

This disconnection from genuine human interaction experienced by millennials resembles that of the Victorians’ struggles with identity formation. While millennials aren’t faced with the same sort of moral

pressures that cause them to conceal their true selves, the act of concealment through the careful construction of a digital identity forms the same sort of mental frustrations as it seeks to hide its true nature. Houghton cites the nineteenth century as the birthplace of several characteristics that permeated the twentieth century, including anxiety covered by a thin layer of optimism, a skepticism derived from Victorian doubt, and a lingering sense of loneliness and isolation. These tendencies are still evident in twenty-first century of constant connectivity and are both enabled and amplified because of it. He says that “to peer through the darkness of a hundred years and turn even a flashlight on the landscape of 1850 is to see our own situation a little more clearly” (xv). The feelings of uncertainty rooted in nineteenth century society sow the seeds of doubt that are still evident in our social consciousness, affecting our identity construction and feeding interest in fictional representations like *Penny Dreadful* and *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* that draw on these sentiments because their insight reflects the internal struggles of contemporary audiences.

Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, published in 1817, shows sentiments of frustrating social constraints in the early part of the nineteenth century. Although the characters don’t experience a division of self, they express a constant pressure to keep up proper appearances. Jane Bennett describes the Bingley sisters as “having a strong appearance of duplicity” even though she never confronts them about it (Austen 99). Austen’s

characters are restricted by the constraining sense of decorum and propriety society imposes on them, but they do not experience the monstrous psychological break that affects the characters in later nineteenth century texts because the conflict is resolved. Elizabeth, the independent and often impetuous protagonist, is pressured by society to marry, but luckily finds a match in the prosperous Mr. Darcy who loves her for her differences, relieving her of the need to adapt to survive. Seth Grahame-Smith's additions in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* present an Elizabeth who is openly "more pleased to [be] on the front lines than at the altar" but is often chastised for her warrior ability to slip into "a kind of absence – as if her soul had taken leave, so that compassion and warmth could not interfere" (115, 58). Grahame-Smith's adaptation adds emphasis to the duality of Austen's characters and inserts an overt monstrous element by way of the "sorry-stricken" zombies which draw the concept of duality clearly to the surface as they are both human and not, dead and alive at the same time.

As the nineteenth century progressed, novelists explored the consequences that followed when these conflicts are left unresolved. The divided self is a literary product of societal repression, taboos, and incongruities. *Penny Dreadful* draws its characters primarily from these later texts taking characters from stories published over the course of the nineteenth century and integrating them into an entirely new plotline that retains and emphasizes their duality. With Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, first

published in 1818, the projection of an outward appearance that does not match internal identity has a disastrous impact on Victor and those around him. Throughout the text, Victor refuses to acknowledge his internal desires for freedom; furthermore, he may not even be aware of them. As Miller says, “one self does what the other can’t” (416). The Creature releases Victor of all the social ties that impede his freedom by killing Victor’s closest friends and family members. As Victor loses control of his own internal desires in the form of the Creature, so Shelley projects the internal struggle of the Victorians who risk losing control of their own repressed urges.

In *Frankenstein*, Victor hides his desires for intellectual freedom from everyone, even himself. Following his mother’s death, Victor says that his “mind can’t persuade itself” to fill “the void that presents itself to [his] soul” (Shelley 25). When he arrives at university, he throws himself into his studies as “his sole occupation” in an attempt to fill this void (Shelley 29). Forced to forge an individual identity apart from the security of his family, Victor chooses to focus on his work rather than acknowledging his feelings. He finds his “imagination much exalted” by his freedom to explore the boundaries of science uninhibited by familial obligation (Shelley 31). His frenzied experiments culminate in the birth of the Creature into whom he has unconsciously buried his secret desires for freedom. The Creature, unbound to any other, represents Victor’s secret desires to sever the social ties that threaten his autonomy. Freud believed that, like Victor, we all have

repressed wishes and fears that we want to keep hidden from everyone else (Richter 1107).

Born of Victor's attempts to construct a controlled identity, the Creature functions as an externalization of Victor's efforts to repress his emotions and his true self. The Creature is born in the rain, invoking images indicative of Christian baptism and the idea of an individual's rebirth (Shelley 35). The imagery of birth and baptism underscore the rebirth of Victor after his burdensome efforts to resolve his internal struggle by purging the Creature from his psyche. Because Victor created the Creature in an attempt to bury his feelings, the Creature is infused with them. The Creature, in turn, pursues a course of action that will fulfill Victor's secret desires.

The presence of the Creature may also reflect the self's desire to escape the social determination of identity by creating its own autonomy. It is a second self – produced to avoid the predetermined social obligations Victor inherits from his domestic obligations. Halberstam also notes that “while superficially [*Frankenstein*] seems to be about the making of a monster, it is really about the making of a human, it is also about the destruction of otherness, the unmaking of monstrosity” (38). By making the Creature a component of Victor's identity, it's people, rather than monsters, that are truly terrifying, which suggests that monsters aren't some distant other that

can be used to make people feel more human, but a part of the human psyche created by attempting to ignore it.

As the Creature acts out Victor's hidden desires, it is Victor who is directly responsible for its actions. Miller asserts that dualistic fictions are both alibies and apologies (25). Hostile actions are performed by proxy, by some other self, that can be easily denied (Miller 25). Acting as a proxy, the Creature would not be monstrous if Victor's desires were not so. The Creature is Victor's attempt to create man in *his* own image, making any of its distortions reflective of him. The Creature's monstrous acts amount to the deaths of Victor's friends and family that serve to free Victor from his domestic ties. Although the Creature claims that these deaths "work at [Victor's] destruction," they actually provide him with the freedom and independence he initially lacked (Shelley 98). The loss of his domestic circle eliminates Victor's restrictions and by the end of the novel, he is free to pursue the Creature into the Arctic.

In their quest to define themselves in relationship to each other, Victor and his Creature create divisions between human and inhuman, maker and made, that they cannot overcome as they push each other to an inevitable end. According to Halberstam, *Frankenstein* disrupts "the surface-depth relationship between the body and the mind...the entagl[ing] of self and other within monstrosity and the parasitic relationship between the two. The one is always buried in the other" (129-30). Divided selves inevitably destroy each

other in a fight for dominance, but, where one cannot exist without the other, the struggle always leads to the annihilation of both. Having pursued Victor to his death in the Arctic, his Creature says “I shall collect my funeral pier, and consume to ashes this miserable frame” (Shelley 155). Miller says suicide is the necessary end when one self destroys the other; “it is a dualistic act...and may indeed be duality’s best proof” (328). An individual could not pursue the destruction of itself as fervently as of another, unless that other is self-contained as in Victor and his Creature.

As the era progressed, the shared body of Jekyll and Hyde replaced the shared consciousness of Victor and his Creature. Published in 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* presents a more direct reflection of a divided self. Where Victor creates his Creature without realizing he is burying his desires inside of it, Jekyll admits to releasing Hyde as an effort to externalize his more base desires. He saw Hyde as “a solution of the bonds of obligation” to social conventions (50). However, as Jekyll spends more time being Hyde, he realizes that he enjoys these indulgences. When it becomes clear that Jekyll can no longer contain Hyde and has to choose between the separate parts of himself, he laments the loss of “those appetites which [he] had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper” as Hyde (Stevenson 55).

In Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published shortly after *Jekyll and Hyde* in 1890, Dorian’s second self is completely removed from his

body and physically concealable in a way that Hyde and Victor's Creature were not, reflecting the readers' desire to see evil as something other than a portion of human nature. However, Wilde's character argues, even more forcefully than Stevenson's, that "the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it. Resist it and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful" (19-20). Not only does Dorian champion giving in to temptation, but he also blames societal constraints (in the form of law) for creating monstrosity. However, Dorian's debauched deeds are concealed by his painting and thus completely outside of himself. He is never forced to own them or suffer their consequences. Like Jekyll and Victor before him, Dorian's attempt to destroy the evidence of his second self ultimately destroys him too as the two are inextricable.

Although the doubles of Stevenson and Wilde reflect the same sense of danger as Shelley's, the characters in the later works begin to acknowledge the need to recognize the legitimacy of their true desires. By the end of the century, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897, reflects the realization that repressed desires are seductive. If his vampires reflect the darker underside of a repressively moralistic age, then the drawing in of Lucy and even Mina, the most virtuous character, into their fold mirror the Victorian's desire to embrace these hidden parts of themselves. While Victor literally forces the Creature out of himself, Jekyll must transform into Hyde, and

Dorian's portrait conceals his monstrosity, Dracula's duality is simultaneous. He moves about the novel as a single character, rather than two separate consciousnesses, reflecting the internal duality of man but also giving more freedom to desires that had previously been denied. Dracula blends in. He is both entirely one of us and separate from us at the same time. He is adaptable. He can be at home in his Transylvanian castle and on the streets of London. His ability to adapt to any place or time contributes to the novel's increasing popularity throughout the last century. The relative wholeness Stoker bestows on Dracula implies that we are all divided in our natures, capable of both good and evil, which is what makes stories of duality so compelling, even over a century later, under different social circumstances and through different mediums. Its persistence also indicates its cultural significance.

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon asserts that "neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context – a time and place, a society and a culture...adaptations can and do have different functions in different cultures at different times (xviii). In this way, the creation of such Neo-Victorian adaptations as Grahme-Smith's novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* in 2009 and its corresponding film adaptation in 2016 along with Showtime's television series *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016) is undoubtedly connected to the social conditions surrounding their conception. According to Hutcheon, the pleasure of an adaptation is

gleaned from its ability to provide the comfort of recognizable characters and themes with an element of surprise in terms of plot (4). Contemporary adaptations are to be judged on persistence rather than fidelity to the original (vxvi). She analyzes the definition of *adaptation* in biological terms and notes that, in this case, these adaptations are considered successful if replication *and* change occur (xxvi). She says “biology does not evaluate the merit of organisms relative to their ancestors – for all have equal biological validity” and so too cultural adaptations should be measured only against themselves and considered for their own social value (xxviii). True adaptations are not meant to mirror, thus any similarity retains its own cultural significance. The persistence of duality and monstrosity, identity, and self-acceptance as motifs in Neo-Victorian adaptations is necessarily indicative of their meaningfulness among contemporary audiences.

Chapter One:

Pride & Prejudice & (Re)Production

Originally published in 1817, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* misses the traditional definition of Victorian literature that ranges from roughly 1830 and ends with Queen Victoria's death in 1901; however, modern critics define these boundaries more loosely stating that "in current critical usage, the so-called *Victorian* referents of twentieth-century rewritings range from Jane Austen...and [to] as far as Virginia Woolf" (Kirchknoph 55). Josh Rahn of *The Literature Network* argues that "a literary period more closely resembles a rope that is frayed at both ends" where characteristics, like the threads of a rope, overlap one another rather than being self-contained realms of their own (1). *Pride and Prejudice* contains many characteristics of Victorian literature including social change or upheaval, the human struggle to thrive during a period of rapid transition, conflicts caused by strict codes of propriety and personal conduct, and the ultimate triumph of right over wrong.

Neo-Victorianism is identified as modern adaptations of works that originated in nineteenth century Britain, placing Austen's *Pride & Prejudice* squarely within this realm of this study. Although *Pride and Prejudice* does not contain a fully-fledged version of a divided self, as in the works that populate the later part of the period, Darcy and Elizabeth represent parts of a self that only find peace and understanding when joined together as a

whole. There is also significant evidence of the strict sense of decorum and societal constraints that restrict and frustrate the characters.

The novel opens on a note of expectation about “truth[s] universally acknowledged,” setting the stage for the conflict that plagues the text whose characters constantly struggle between their own desires and societal expectations (Austen 3). Mrs. Bennet laments that such a trivial act as visiting a new neighbor is “impossible” due to societal restraints, especially for women (Austen 4). Although it is Mrs. Bennet who wants to meet the new inhabitants of Netherfield, formality insists that it be Mr. Bennet who forms the initial relationship. Another element of social repression can be seen throughout the text as the characters suffer from their inability to express their true feelings. Mr. Darcy’s famous profession of love is indicative of this conflict: “In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed” (Austen 125). In a similar struggle to avoid undesirable feelings, many of the characters express a lack of self-knowledge; even Elizabeth, the bold, out-spoken heroine, admits, “I never knew myself” (Austen 137).

This internal conflict is what makes *Pride and Prejudice* so appealing to contemporary audiences and as source material for Neo-Victorian adaptations. In his article, “What is Neo-Victorian Studies,” Mark Llewellyn says that the Victorian ideas, as displayed in *Pride and Prejudice*, “can give us a clearer understanding of the origins of our present problems, showing how our tangles...took root in the first place” (164). Boyd mimics this

sentiment in her study of contemporary teens saying, “You’d actually be surprised how little things change. I’m guessing a lot of the drama is still the same, it’s just the format is a little different” (1). The idea that cultural circumstances are similar yet different is what Hutcheon says breeds adaptation.

Hutcheon further argues that the act of adaptation in itself is Victorian. “The Victorians,” Hutcheon says, “had a habit of adapting just about everything...we postmoderns have clearly inherited this same habit” (Bowler 2). In their article, “Adapting the Nineteenth Century,” Alexia Bowler and Jessica Cox go on to argue that “our sustained engagement with the past signals our continued attempts to make sense of the contemporary moment” (3). Adaptations allow us to grapple with current conditions while the characters grapple with similar issues, particularly in terms of identity. They say that

while adaptation(s) can be thought of as inhabited by literary and cultural ‘ghost,’ this echoing of voices and ideas performs an intertextual weaving with the present movement and exhibits a simultaneous recognition of the departure from that past, negotiating our (post)modern identities. (3)

Adaptations of nineteenth century texts like Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* by contemporary authors like Seth Grahame-Smith emphasize the connection between the social conditions of nineteenth century society and our own by

drawing them out in a new text; by rewriting an older text, as Grahame-Smith does in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, it becomes clear that the issues in the source text remain unresolved.

In an article for *Spirituality in Higher Education*, Dr. Christine Paintner discusses the mind's process of integration through which we combine our inner most need to "make space" for ourselves with the "constrained and narrowed...ideas and contexts in which we live" to craft our own meaning (3-4). This process of integration is exactly how Grahame-Smith crafted *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. The novel is a hybrid – partly Austen's original text carefully spliced together with a new, zombie element to create a completely new space that acknowledges, if not amplifies, the conflicts of the original. The text itself is much like a zombie – neither living nor dead -- a strange liminal thing. In addition to the constraints of gender and propriety expressed in Austen's original, Grahame-Smith's characters face the struggles of the sorry-stricken and the strange plague, both of which serve to underscore the idea of duality in the text. Not only are the characters stifled by the constraints of social decorum, they are forced to face humanity in its most abject state.

Pride and Prejudice is both the earliest text in this study and the only one without a monstrous element, which makes the addition of Grahame-Smith's zombies all the more significant. Does the way zombies are seamlessly woven into the text suggest the potential for monstrosity in the

original or a contemporary need for visible, physical monstrosity? Hutcheon's theory holds that "adaptation is repetition, but without replication...according to its dictionary meaning, 'to adapt' is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable'," which indicates that both the original conflicts of the source text and the monstrous additions are "suitable" in and for contemporary culture (7). As Houghton argues that the literature of a period reflects the society that produced it, the addition of monstrosity reflects a contemporary social need; however, we inherit the culture of our forebears. In this case, it remains unclear whether the monstrosity was a latent element in the source text, or a necessary addition to the adaptation; regardless, for Hutcheon, the distinction is insignificant. She says that what's important is that "neither the product nor the process of adaptation exists in a vacuum: they all have a context – a time a place, a society, and a culture...adaptations can and do have different functions in different cultures at different times (XVIII). In this sense, the addition of monstrosity is relevant in contemporary culture as any feelings of duality and restriction are reflective of both periods.

Grahame-Smith confronts duality from the opening lines of the text. He replaces Austen's, "It's is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife," with "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains," and continues to provide a monstrous reason for the vacancy of Netherfield Park, saying, "a household of eighteen was

slaughtered and consumed by a horde of the living dead” (Austen 1, Grahame-Smith 7). Where Austen’s opening line gives credence to the argument that Darcy and Elizabeth are two parts of the same whole by stating that a single man *must* be in need of wife, Grahame-Smith opens with an image of a zombie that thinks of nothing but its own want for brains, with disastrous consequences for Netherfield’s previous occupants.

What does this monstrous addition say about contemporary society? To begin to unravel the connections, we must look back at the progression of monstrosity in the Victorian period. Beginning with the appearance of Frankenstein’s Creature in Mary Shelley’s 1818 *Frankenstein*, the restrictions of strict social decorum as evident in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* have taken physical form and reflect a societal need for people to separate themselves from their desires that do not conform to societal conventions. This separation allows the Creature to move freely about the text, unchecked by Victor. Both Victor and his Creature are ultimately destroyed, suggesting that unchecked, our desires are destructive to self and community. However, works from later in the Victorian period reflect a need to acknowledge, however fearfully, that the evil is not only found in the outer world but may also be contained within us. Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde share a physical vessel. One cannot exist without the other, but Jekyll’s inability to accept his baser form leads to their destruction. Wilde’s Dorian Gray fully accepts and embraces his more deviant desires because his

painting is able to conceal them from society, suggesting that we resist our desires only because of how much we value our appearance to others. Stoker's Dracula appears to be a separate, external evil, but a closer look reveals that a vampire is really just a person who has given into the darkness, sometimes without any choice as with the transformations of Lucy and Mina. The true evil isn't outside of the individual, but rather inside, waiting to be released. The vampire state allows one's natural darkness to emerge and overtake them. Grahame-Smith's zombies function in much the same way. Anyone may be a carrier of the strange plague or resurrected as a zombie. While, at first glance, the conflict appears to be between human and zombie, on a deeper level the audience realizes that underneath the trappings of social conformity, everyone potentially has a zombie waiting to be set free.

As early as 1984, Donna Haraway proposed the cyborg, defined as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid," as the new social reality in her "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1967). As organisms that by definition are constructed of multiple parts, good and bad, dead and alive, human and machine, cyborgs are constructions that challenge the binaries that had previously been used to construct identity in the Western tradition. Being multiplicitous by nature, cyborgs are unable to use these dualisms to identify themselves and are forced to construct a new kind of consciousness, which in turn provides the possibility of moving past the boundaries we have created between self and societal expectations. Accepting that they are made of new pairings that

make differences ambiguous at best, cyborgs recognize and seek connection rather than completion. Haraway argues that the cyborg's acceptance of its constituent parts allows for the creation of a peaceful, if patch-worked, whole that can alleviate the internal struggles reflected in nineteenth century literature. However, Grahame-Smith's integration of zombies into his 2009 text suggests that Haraway's cybernetic dream of self-acceptance has yet to be realized. When Darcy reveals Wickham's deceptions, Elizabeth struggles to reconcile what she knows of Wickham with Darcy's description. She says "It was almost impossible to believe a man of Wickham's countenance capable of such cruelty. It was impossible not to feel that there was gross duplicity on one side or the other" (Grahame-Smith 163). Elizabeth trusts neither Darcy, nor Wickham, nor herself, which indicates the persistence of duality in the text.

Not only are the internal conflicts of the nineteenth century alive and well as they are revived by the invocation of *Pride and Prejudice*, but the appearance of zombies as a critical plot element indicates that there's still an overt cultural fear of what lurks just below the surface of ourselves. This fear is amplified by the use of social media. Boyd's study discusses the "deceptive" potential of mediated identity construction (36). She notes that "much [can] be gained from the process of self-reflection that was enabled when people had to act out or work through their identity in order to make themselves [physically] present": whereas, online people can portray themselves as they

want to be and take on fictitious identities in an effort to figure out who they really are; it is impossible to know if people are portraying themselves accurately through social media, which creates latent social anxieties (37). The use of social media can be particularly damaging to the still-forming identities of teens; 75 percent of who report using social networking sites, according to the Pew Research Center (Lenhart 2). Boyd states that

As teens struggle to make sense of different social contexts and present themselves appropriately, one thing becomes clear: the internet has not evolved into an idyllic zone in which people are free from the limitations of the embodied world. Teens are struggling to make sense of who they are and how they fit into society in an environment in which contexts are networked and collapsed, audiences are invisible, and anything they say or do can easily be taken out of context. They are grappling with battles that adults face, but they are doing so while under constant surveillance and without a firm grasp of who they are.

In short, they're navigating one heck of a cultural labyrinth. (53)

In this contemporary space of multiplicity and intertextuality, we are faced with “identities [that] have no bodies” and, conversely, bodies that have no identity (Boyd 37). Haraway’s cyborgs certainly represent a different type of identity outside of the unified physical body; whereas, Grahame-Smith’s zombies are physical bodies devoid of identity.

Boyd stresses that a young adult's desire to connect and the issues that spring from it are not new, only amplified by the use of social media sites. One of the most significant struggles revolves around the individual's need for privacy, which is particularly problematic in the realm of networked publics where "interactions are often public by default, private through effort" (Boyd 12). Many teens find open sharing as a segue into social freedom; however, the feeling of exposure can lead users to what Boyd calls "performative sharing" (75). She describes teens who choose to share just enough information to keep inquiring peers at bay or who share imagery that conveys a sexuality other than their own to avoid confrontation on sensitive issues (74-75). The problem, she says, is that "performative sharing may or may not be healthy...issues emerge when teens start to deceive in order to keep the truth private" (75). This description alarmingly mimics Houghton's description of "Victorian hypocrisy," indicating that over a century later, we still haven't found a way to accept the human individual on its own terms.

Elizabeth and Darcy struggle to connect in both Austen's original and Grahame-Smith's adaptation because of the public faces propriety or honor demands they present. Austen's Darcy tells Elizabeth of his struggles "in vain" to deny his feelings for her, in part because of her family's inferior class and Grahame-Smith's Elizabeth struggles against "the warrior code[s]" demands to avenge Darcy's affront to her honor" (Austen 125; Grahame-

Smith 13"). In both cases, Darcy and Elizabeth are forced to present an appearance of dislike or indifference, when unity is what each truly desires.

The cyborg, which Haraway suggests as the solution to the divided-self, is, at its core, about the acceptance of difference, the integration of multiplicity, and constructive (sometimes reconstructive) self-knowledge. The cyborg is about transgressing the boundaries of repression by embracing multiplicity. Rather than self-denial, the cyborg represents merger beyond separation, a truly symbiotic fusion of all one's constituent parts. In her 2013 essay "The Digital Cyborg Assemblage," Deborah Lupton writes that they promote a "hyper awareness of the body and its weaknesses and frailties as well as its strengths and capabilities" (11). By knowing all of its parts and understanding how they work together, the cyborg represents a more unified whole than the divided selves of nineteenth century fiction. Lupton says "we see in the figure of the digital cyborg assemblage...an urge towards a single unified body that is configured and innately understood by data and self-knowledge" (10). The problem, however, is that "there are seams in the cyborg, or disjunctions, or incontinuities, where flesh and machine rub up against each other [and] fail to work successfully" (Lupton 11). Overcoming these *seams* requires diligent self-knowledge and self-care. Lupton notes that "some find the responsibility of self-monitoring and self-care overwhelming and would rather relinquish control (11). For identity construction, this means allowing ourselves to be defined by the devaluing dualisms of the

Western tradition rather than committing to do the work necessary to achieve true acceptance of our own multiplicity. When individuals resign themselves to the limitations placed on them by society's labels, they create divisions within their selves, struggling to reconcile seemingly opposing binaries. Grahame-Smith's Elizabeth struggles with the distinction between warrior and woman when Haraway would argue, why not both?

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies amplifies the binary divisions by introducing the warrior code of honor on top of already straining societal restrictions. Early on, Elizabeth notes that "the warrior code demanded she avenge her honor" (Grahame-Smith 13). The fact that she is entitled to avenge her own honor rather relying on a male to do so for her reflects a shift in gender roles since Austen's original publication. While Elizabeth is not restricted from defending her honor because of her gender, she feels obligated to do so because of the warrior's code of honor. Thus, the obligation of the warrior code can feel just as restricting as strict societal regulations for behavior when it conflicts with one's personal desires. When confronted with a zombie infant, Elizabeth, normally described as "a warrior first, and a woman second," is torn between her duty to dispatch dreadfuls and her instinctual compassion:

Elizabeth again raised her weapon and aimed. The female dreadful was now more than halfway across the road. She trained her sights on the elder's head: her finger caressing the

trigger. She would put it down, reload, and dispense of them both. All she had to do was squeeze. And yet...she did not. There was a strange force at work. A feeling she faintly recalled from her earliest days...It was a curious feeling; something akin to shame, but without the dishonor of defeat – a shame that demanded no vengeance. “Could there be honor in mercy?” she wondered. It contradicted everything she had been taught, every warrior instinct she possessed. Why then could she not fire? Hopelessly bemused, Elizabeth lowered her musket, and the zombies continued into the woods until they were seen no more. (Grahame-Smith 92)

This excerpt exposes Elizabeth’s internal conflict. Her desire to show mercy here conflicts with her training but reflects a gendered desire to protect the infant zombie. When presented with the choice between woman and warrior, Elizabeth struggles. Gratefully, with no one around to witness her kindness other than her sisters, she isn’t forced to choose. Significantly, it also shows that Elizabeth is willing to defy societal expectations when they don’t match with her individual values. Elizabeth’s ability to identify and value her desires above what society demands, true of Austen’s Elizabeth as well, is what enables her to navigate the text without suffering a monstrous break, suggesting that the compromise of one’s true self is the beginning of monstrosity.

Similarly, Elizabeth's friend Charlotte compromises herself by nurturing the affections of Mr. Collins to secure a stable marriage where there is no true love. On one of her visits to Longbourn to secure her marriage to Collins, Charlotte encounters an overturned carriage containing a trapped zombie. She is bitten and infected with the strange plague (Grahame-Smith 99). In her endeavor to secure a marriage proposal from a man she doesn't truly love, Charlotte compromises her values and is stricken with the beginnings of a monstrous transformation. Charlotte is far from the text's only duplicitous character. In fact, her actions cause no harm to anyone other than herself and her desire for self-preservation is sympathetic.

However, Caroline Bingley is regarded by both texts as deceitful and hurtful in her efforts at self-promotion. Austen's Elizabeth describes Caroline Bingley as having "a strong appearance of duplicity" and Grahame-Smith's finds her having "little in the way of combat training" leaving her sadly lacking (Austen 99; Grahame-Smith 12). Elizabeth further denounces Caroline's selfish nature saying, "The more I see of the world, the more am I dissatisfied with it; and every zombie confirms my belief that God has abandoned us as punishment for the evils of people such as Miss Bingley" (Grahame-Smith 103). While Charlotte's suppression of her true desires only damages her, Elizabeth suggests that Caroline – and those like her who harm others by deceit – have brought down the scourge upon all of humanity.

Worse still than Caroline Bingley is George Wickham, the text's most dubious character. Both Austen's original and Grahame-Smith's adaptation present a Wickham who is deceitful, abusing the reputation of Mr. Darcy and the good will of others to make himself appear better than he is. Elizabeth learns the truth of his nature from Darcy, but neglects to share it with her family out of a sense of propriety. Consequently, Lydia Bennet runs away with Wickham under the assumption that they are to be married, but Wickham refuses to do so outright which threatens to ruin her reputation. In both texts, Darcy makes arrangements with Wickham to ensure the marriage; however, Grahame-Smith's adaptation is far more damning to Wickham. As "punishment for a lifetime of vice and betrayal," Darcy "render[s] him lame...to ensure that he would never lay another hand in anger nor leave another bastard behind" (260). This addition suggests a more modern need to see Wickham suffer for his duplicity, but it does not rewrite him to be less duplicitous, suggesting that people haven't stopped struggling with duality, just that there's a stronger desire to see consequences suffered for those whose duality is extreme or has caused harm to others.

Burr Steers' 2016 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* further delves into the consequences of duality. This film version not only includes the complicated societal expectations of Austen's original and the added struggle of Grahame-Smith's zombie dualisms, but includes deception and duplicity on an individual, personal level. George Wickham, an arguable

villain in any version, possesses an even more dubious nature in Steers' film, which places him as responsible for many atrocities including the death of the elder Mr. Darcy, the fall of Mrs. Beecham's Home for Orphans, the zombie attack on Netherfield Park, as well as aiding the zombie advances on London. His final scene in the film reveals him to have been infected by the plague throughout the tale's entirety, but having kept it concealed. Grahame-Smith's addition of zombies forces audiences to acknowledge that all humans have the potential for darkness within them, but Steers' film reminds us that there are individuals who are aware of and hide their depravity in order to walk freely among us. Boyd talks about the modern freedom of self-presentation, especially in the realm of social media, which enables this type of deception, as we are able to choose "what we share in order to make a good impression" (48).

Before fully embracing his descent into darkness, Steers' Wickham offers a solution to the zombie infestation. He takes Elizabeth to St. Lazarus Church where individuals infected with the plague have learned to control its progression by consuming pig's brains and innards. While this pseudo-cure is repulsive to uninfected humans, it allows those infected to appease their desire for brains and maintain control of their mental faculties. Like Haraway's cyborg, Steers' adaptation presents a solution to duality through acceptance of one's darkest desires. While brain consumption is not a desirable attribute, it allows the infected to halt their degradation before

becoming zombies who are unable to control their impulses. When Wickham later presents this solution to Lady Catherine saying, “These new zombies can be reasoned with. With the proper funding I believe we can cultivate trust and even good will with this new iteration of the undead, who seem to possess an inherent power over the lower ranks of their kind” (Steers). Lady Catherine and Mr. Darcy snub Wickham’s solution and the battle for London commences in the following days. During this battle, Wickham deceives the congregants of St. Lazarus by secretly feeding them human brains, which transforms them in to a formidably sized zombie horde. With this chain of events, Steers’ film suggests that a lack of tolerance for the dualistic nature of humanity can hasten its downfall.

The persistence of *Pride and Prejudice* in all of its adapted forms reflects a cultural need for its contents. Bowler and Cox argue that “‘adaptation’ in its broadest sense, [is] a phenomenon that extends to and permeates multiple arenas of contemporary life” (1). Steers’ film not only suggests a contemporary social connection to the conflicts in Austen’s original text, but brings those conflicts to a new audience of film viewers as well. Bowler and Cox say that adaptive works “question the present moment in relation to the past and acknowledge a kind of ‘crises in closure’ inherent in a world, which is arguably on the verge of epistemological transition” (3). Just as our inability to bring closure to nineteenth century texts is indicative of similar socio-cultural conditions, so too the adaptations of these texts in

contemporary media indicate a contemporary desire to find resolution to the issues they represent.

Chapter Two:

A Penny for Your Thoughts?

If Grahame-Smith's addition of zombies to Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* rocked the proverbial Victorian boat, John Logan's *Penny Dreadful* is the maelstrom that bashed the genre against the rocks. An hour-long Showtime series that ran from 2014-2016, *Penny Dreadful* combined beloved Victorian characters and themes with the modern day obsession with monstrosity, drawing its characters and plot devices from nineteenth century novels and the dime stories from which it draws its title. In his 2014 review of *Penny Dreadful* for *The Guardian*, Luke Holland says that "there isn't a character from the show...who isn't a stock type...but like the short, trashy shots of gothic Victorian fiction from which the show takes its name, that is sort of the point. Originality isn't exactly on the agenda" (1). The characters may not be original, but what was done with them was entirely new. This newness is what Llewellyn claims marks a neo-Victorian adaptation. "The neo-Victorian" he says, "is about new approaches to the Victorian period rather than an attempt to indulge in escapism masked as a historical narrative" (169). Pulled from a variety of literary and cultural sources, *Penny Dreadful's* characters, extracted from their own stories and contexts, are dropped into a new plotline where they interact with and impact each other. In the introduction to her book *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders quotes Gerard Genette saying, "One who really loves texts must wish from

time to time to love (at least) two together ” (vii). *Penny Dreadful* is a veritable smorgasbord of Victorian and neo-Victorian archetypes from notable film and print sources set free. For Hutcheon, this conglomeration of characters is typical of contemporary adaptations which often draw sources from more than one specific text (21).

Penny Dreadful revels in its identity as an adaptation, fully embracing its own innate multiplicity. Contrary to Holland’s complaint about *Penny Dreadful*’s use of stock characters, Hutcheon would argue that doing something new with old material is what a good adaptation does. She says that “the novelty is in what one *does with* the other text” (20). Where adaptations fail, she argues, is “in terms of a lack of creativity and skill to make the text one’s own” rather than in a sense of infidelity to the source text (Hutcheon 21). Successful adaptations, in Hutcheon’s terms, create both pleasure and frustration from the audience’s familiarity with the source text (21). By drawing on the cultural knowledge of popular Victorian characters, *Penny Dreadful* attracts a wide range of viewers, but it keeps them by doing something completely new (Hutcheon 20).

The character mashup is made more complex by their dual natures. From werewolves to transvestites, each is something other than they appear to be. The first season centers on a vampiric threat straight out of Stoker’s *Dracula*. Sir Malcom Murray, father of Mina Murray (Harker), the main character in Stoker’s source text, appears as one of the series’ main

characters. In this new story, Mina has been taken by vampires and Malcom begins to form a rescue party as the series opens. At first, his party is very small, including only Vanessa Ives, situated as a childhood friend to Mina from Stoker's *Dracula*, and his manservant Sembene. Early on, the dual nature of these characters is apparent. Malcom, an African explorer by trade, struggles with the consequences of being an absentee father. Sembene, an African-tribesman with inexplicable ties to Malcom, concedes his own desires to Malcom's at all times, similar to Renfield in Stoker's original. Vanessa, who harbors a complicated relationship with Malcom, hears voices and is often possessed and controlled by outside forces. Dr. Victor Frankenstein and Ethan Chandler are added to the group, each plagued by their own demons. Frankenstein's Creature, created in the same manner as Mary Shelley's novel, haunts Victor unbeknownst to the others, demanding that he have a companion.

Even the minor characters bring duality to the series. Malcom finds himself the love interest of Evelyn Poole, the leader of a coven of witches. The group frequently seeks the aid of Ferdinand Lyle, an expert on ancient history and language who turns out to be working for Pool's coven, though at the end of the second season he cements his allegiance to Murray's group. In addition, the series' third season introduces Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Shelley's Justine. Rather than succumbing to the murderous hands of Shelley's Creature, Justine is saved from a gruesome fate by Brona-turned-

Lily, another split character, and raised up to be a murderess in her own right. *Penny Dreadful's* Dr. Jekyll is also a bit different than his literary counterpart as he is presented during the part of his life before the release of Mr. Hyde; however, it's clear to the viewer that he is moving in that direction. In his last appearance, Jekyll tells Victor of the death of his father and the inheritance of the family's title. Consequently, Victor politely addresses him as "Lord Hyde" ("The Blessed Dark").

In addition to the revised storylines and literary characters given modified origins, all of the series' major characters have their origins in dualistic, nineteenth century fiction. These figures, created under the pressure of strict Victorian codes of propriety, were popular, in part, because they reflected the results of perpetual self-denial in their sometimes monstrous duality. The show draws on these feelings of duality that figure prominently in Victorian society, spawning the reflection of the divided self in the literature from which it draws its characters. They display the way that the construction of an outside persona that masks true inward identity creates an internal conflict with potentially uncontrollable consequences. These characters appeal to millennial audiences as they struggle with a similar conflict due to the integration of social networking in their lives. The constant connectivity of the digital age has allowed users to easily construct different online personas, which most prefer to their true selves, mimicking

the duality caused by Victorian repression and reviving interest in the fiction that explores the phenomenon of the divided self.

Whether or not marketing of *Penny Dreadful* was intentionally feeding on the identity struggles of the millennial generation, its marketing was intentionally geared towards them. In the preface to the second edition of Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, she reports that "fan culture has taken imaginative (and economic) possession of the fate of its favorite stories. Social networking has altered forever the communication landscape" (xix). An interview with Showtime's Vice President of Digital Marketing, Marcelo Guerra, reveals that network's marketing plans capitalized on the use of social media to reach and interact with the show's fan base, and he explicitly identifies millennials as the show's target audience. Guerra cites the outpouring of fans on digital and social media as the main evidence for the success of the show's first season. He also cites the target audience of the first season as fans of the horror genre, classic literature, and period dramas, while the marketing of season two targeted an audience that was engaged with social media platforms, noting no less than seven different social media sites that were used to promote the show (Vine, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat) several of which include interactive or sharable content. Several of the apps require active participation rather than passive observance. For example, the Twitter campaign promotes an

interactive tarot card reading. What Guerra describes is an active engagement of the millennial audience via social networking (Edelsburg).

Guerra claims the show's fan base to be one of the most engaged fan communities the network has seen. As such, the network was able to bridge the gap between seasons using social media. Guerra says that Facebook and Twitter house the most active fan bases, suggesting that these are the more popular manifestations of social media at the moment. The Pew Research Center notes this trend as well in its 2016 Social Media Report, which indicates that "nearly eight-in-ten online Americans (79%) now use Facebook...that means 68% of all U.S. adults are Facebook users (Duggan 3). Guerra also notes a group of ultra-fans that refer to themselves as "The Dreadfuls" are continuously engaged, indicating a sort of group social identity connecting viewers of the show. The show's Facebook page boasts over 600,000 followers with recent post having 10,000-20,000 likes and hundreds of comments. This marketing plan directly identifies millennials, those who actively utilize social media, as the intended consumers of *Penny Dreadful*. These consumers have been affected by the constraints placed on identity construction by social networking and reflect the psyche of the millennial generation who are drawn to *Penny Dreadful* because they connect to its characters who reflect their struggle to contain the full truth of their identities. Hutcheon argues that "the new media engage us directly – in an

individualized, indeed personalized manner” which readily appeals to audiences who feel isolated and eager to interact (xxi).

From the first episode, it’s clear to the viewer that the characters have secrets. They are dishonest both with themselves and each other. The series opens with the gruesome murder of a young mother and her child by a violent, unseen force, providing the viewers with the same sense of shock and horror as the cheap, nineteenth century penny dreadfuls for which it is named. Following the opening credits, we are introduced to Ethan, also referred to as Mr. Chandler, and later revealed to be Ethan Talbot, who is performing as a sharp-shooter in a Wild West show. Bedecked in a wig and stage makeup, Ethan is clearly a showman who is capable of manipulating his identity. This adaptability equates to what Boyd refers to as “the deceptive potential of mediated identity work” that is commonplace among socially networked teens (36). In a 2017 blog post for the Crisis Prevention Institute, Sue Scheff describes the dangers of “catfishing”, the act of creating a fake persona online in order to lure another user into a desired response, saying

It is shocking the extent some teens will go – creating fake online personas and often emotionally harming someone else, in order to seek revenge...there are many reasons someone could be an online fakester. Because they have a secret grudge against you. Or a crush on you, but don’t think they like you back. Or

they are just bored and trying to provoke a reaction. Some teens are creating fake profiles to hide their online lives from their parents...while others create them to seek extra attention.” (1).

Like Ethan, contemporary social media users are able to “[take] on fictitious identities” in order to suit a specific social situation or purpose (37).

In the audience, making uncomfortable eye contact with Ethan is Vanessa, who is equally mysterious and intentionally secretive. She entices Ethan into accepting some “night work” via a pointed assessment of his character. She easily identifies him as “a man more complicated than he wants to appear” which absolutely holds true as his past is revealed over the course of the series’ three season run (“Night Work”). Vanessa herself is as enigmatic as her job offer, revealing very little about herself aside from her keen sense of perception. When Ethan arrives at the address she provides, he finds Vanessa with a deck of tarot cards. She asks him if he believes in “a demimonde” which she describes as “a half world between what we know and what we fear [where] some unfortunate souls are cursed to live” (“Night Work”). Their conversation reveals that both believe themselves to be cursed, but they keep their secrets hidden – as any good Victorian is wont to do. Vanessa reminds him that “perhaps we are all cursed,” a sentiment that’s clearly as culturally relevant for contemporary viewers as it is for the characters in the series.

The pair joins Malcom to infiltrate a vampire nest in hopes of rescuing his daughter, Mina. Their task leads them to Victor for a study of a vampiric corpse and Ferdinand Lyle, an Egyptologist who is enlisted to translate hieroglyphs found on the body. Malcom enlists Victor because he is “unafraid to pull back the skin and look beneath,” a skill not often appreciated in Victorian fiction. At the close of the episode, Victor returns home to reveal his secret lab where he gives life to a dead body that we are led to believe is the Creature of Shelley’s novel (“Night Work”). Victor cares for the Creature he calls Proteus until his “firstborn” appears to murder his sibling (“Séance”). This is the Creature of Shelley’s tale that Victor made and abandoned but rather than rejecting his work in its entirety, he continues to perfect it, as is evident in Proteus’ appearance. The following episode, “Resurrection,” is dedicated almost entirely to the Creature’s backstory, in much the same way as Shelley’s frame-narrative, culminated in his demand for a mate (“Séance”). The Creature threatens Victor and his friends if he does not comply and continues to plague Victor throughout the season. In his plea, he says “we are the Janus mask,” alluding to the Roman god with two faces and bringing another layer of duality to the series (“Resurrection”). The Creature haunts Victor in much the same way that Victorian fiction seems an ever-present ghost in contemporary culture. Llewellyn argues that the Victorian moment is still with us – in our municipal spaces, our collective identities, our parliamentary, educational, and social systems,

not to mention our TV schedules and attitude to the rest of the world – is self-evident. To a large extent, the Victorians *are* the very fabric of the spaces we now inhabit...we are the new Victorians. (180)

Their issues are our issues. Modern society cannot escape its Victorian roots anymore than Victor can escape the watchful eye of his first born Creature.

With the introduction of Ethan's love interest, Brona Crofts – a good-hearted prostitute suffering from consumption and Dorian Gray, the titular character from Oscar Wilde's only novel, the main cast is complete until the addition of Dr. Jekyll in season three. This hodge-podge of characters is exactly what Llewelyn refers to as the neo-Victorian method of "re-thinking and revisioning the past" (170). "Neo-Victorianism," he says,

blurs the distinctions between criticism and creativity with each becoming a reflection on self and other, producing a sense of... "critical f(r)iction"...the importance of the palimpsest lies not in its writing of new texts over old ones, but in the simultaneous existence of both narratives on the same page, occupying the same space, and speaking in odd, obscure, and different ways to one another...as the neo-Victorian text writes back to something in the nineteenth century, it does so in a manner that often aims to refer and revitalize the importance of that earlier text to the here and now. (170-171)

By placing all of these characters on the same playing field, Logan has created the new space Llewellyn refers to in *Penny Dreadful*. Viewers cannot help but bring their previous literary or cultural knowledge to the series, but something new happens as these characters who had previously remained separate because of time or text begin to interact with each other.

This new interaction is similar to the way social networks have changed social interactions. According to the Pew Research Center, by 2010 80-90% of millennials were online with 73% of teens using social networking sites daily (Lenhart 2). These integrated online communities connect people in ways never previously imagined, bringing people together on a truly global scale which creates connections, relationships, and conflicts that were not possible before. *Penny Dreadful's* characters are struggling to create their own identity in much the same way Boyd describes socially networked teens who are “struggling to make sense of who they are and how they fit into society in an environment in which context are networked and collapsed [and] audiences are invisible” (53). Frustrated, Ethan asks in the first episode “Who the fuck are you people?” (“Night Work”). The equally frustrating truth is they don’t know. In these new, collapsed contexts, the characters are navigating “one heck of a cultural labyrinth” along with the millennials watching them (Boyd 53).

Boyd’s study explores the idea that the creation of a virtual presence creates a division between the user’s body and their identity. In order to

portray themselves online, a user has to “[type] themselves into being... [forming] identities [that] have no bodies” (37). This struggle to create ourselves on our own terms is reminiscent of Haraway’s cyborg theory. All of *Penny Dreadful*’s main characters struggle to define themselves outside of society’s dualisms – like vampires or witches who are never truly one thing or the other, or in the context of borrowed bodies like Frankenstein’s Creatures whose identities are formed within a new body, or within a body that is not always under the individual’s control like Vanessa who is frequently possessed or Ethan who succumbs to his werewolf transformations. These characters struggle between their innate desires to appear composed, as Dorian says “we all want to paint ourselves better than we are,” when they know that there are “monsters inside us” (“Memento Mori”; “Little Scorpion”). Millennials face this same decision when deciding how to portray themselves on social media.

Like millennials carefully constructing their virtual identities, as the series progresses, the secrets borne by the characters become more complicated, interlinked, and difficult to conceal, as do their struggles to construct an identity. Each deals with their duality in a different way, but all reflect Haraway’s sentiment that acceptance is the key to a unified self. Conversely, as suggested by Grahame-Smith’s *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, the rejection or compromise of self leads to monstrosity. For an individual to resign their self to an identity that is constrained by society’s

rigid binaries means concealing everything that lies in between those extremes, creating internal divisions as humanity's innate multiplicity is denied. In a conversation with Jekyll, Victor says, "the beast will out," meaning there is no way for one to perpetually hide their inner nature ("Good and Evil Braided Be"). To this, Jekyll retorts, "And which is true? Which is the real man? The beast or the angel?" ("Good and Evil Braided Be"). This particular struggle challenges all of the characters and viewers as well. Victor assures Jekyll that "we are both...good and evil braided be," but Jekyll reminds him that, even so

We can't seem to be that way...in the end, we must be that thing the world demands of us. We must take the lust and the avarice and the ambition and bury them. All of the alien and ugly things, all the things we really are. ("Good and Evil Braided Be")

In a world where our identities are "on" all the time because of social media, Jekyll's frustrations hit disturbingly close to home. Kohlke argues that millennials are attracted to neo-Victorian characters because

the impenetrable Victorian figure throws the gaze back on ourselves; the figure could even wear our own face for all we know – ourselves in Victorian drag-or we could project any face of our own desiring upon the obscured space, investing the apparition with a character of our own devising. (13)

Contemporary viewers see themselves both as Jekyll, struggling to put on a proper public face, and as Victor, trying to accept seemingly contradictory parts of himself. This conflict is familiar and feels personal.

As the series' main character, Vanessa struggles more than most with her duality and self-acceptance. From the first episode, her inner turmoil is made clear to the audience as we see her praying fervently while being plagued with visions of inverted crosses and spider infestations ("Night Work"). In the next installment, she attends a party at Lyle's house where a good-natured séance is held; getting more than they bargained for, the attendants are shocked as what was supposed to be a party gag results in Vanessa's possession by spirits that taunt and torment the revelers, especially Malcolm, whom they accuse of causing his own son's death ("Séance"). As the series unfolds, it's revealed that this is neither Vanessa's first nor her last possession. She struggles more than most with humanity's widespread struggle to control one's own identity. No explanation is given for why Vanessa is so receptive to these possessions apart from an innate sensitivity to them - in short, it just is the way she is. However, having been raised as a Catholic under its strict moral codes, society has taught her that this way of being was not acceptable and she continuously rejects this side of herself as wicked or evil.

Vanessa's self-denial plagues her. Throughout the show's three seasons, she suffers several psychological breaks before she learns to accept

herself. Lyle's séance is the catalyst for the first break revealed to the audience. Possessed by the demon, Vanessa leaves the party to seek a sexual encounter with an unnamed man she meets in the street ("Séance"). Shortly after, a sexual encounter with Dorian triggers a full-blown possession that almost takes her life ("Possession"). Vanessa survives through the care and support of her friends, suggesting that acceptance can provide solace for a divided self. She also emerges from this state with information that leads the group to locate Mina, which indicates that even in its danger Vanessa's monstrous state has benefits.

As the series continues, Vanessa reveals that this mental break is not the first in her history. Her very first sexual encounter led to a break that placed her in a mental institution for several months ("A Blade of Grass"). All of Vanessa's possessions are preceded by sexual activity, reinforcing the strict sense of Victorian propriety connected to sexuality, especially for females. Kohlke explains that, "in Freudian terms...the compulsion to repeat the past that has not, as yet, been adequately processed and integrated into consciousness," indicates that culturally, we are still dealing with this sort of double standard (9). This is one of the ways that contemporary audiences project themselves onto the Victorian. Thusly, Vanessa's ultimate solution to her divided self speaks to current viewers as cautionary advice.

When Vanessa describes the period following her confinement, she tells the story of the Cut-wife of Ballantrae Moor ("The Nightcomers"). A

dualistic character herself, the Cut-wife (whose actual name is Joan Clayton) is a witch who lives isolated on the moor that Vanessa seeks out for help controlling her powers. The Cut-wife helps Vanessa hone her fledgling powers and learn to control them. She also warns Vanessa that because of the extent of her powers, evil (primarily in the form of Dracula or the Devil) will never stop pursuing her ("The Nightcomers"). The Devil fails in his attempt to possess Vanessa in the second season, again partly due to the help of Vanessa's friends ("And They Were Enemies"). However, Dracula succeeds in his wooing of Vanessa in the third and final season under the assumed identity of Dr. Alexander Sweet ("Predators Far and Near").

It is his acceptance of her duality that finally convinces Vanessa to give in to him. He says, "I don't want to make you good, to make you normal. I don't want you to be anything but who you truly are... You have tried so long to be what everyone else wants you to be... Why not be who you are instead?" ("Ebb Tide"). When asked if she will accept him, Vanessa replies, "I accept myself" ("Ebb Tide"). Her self-acceptance leads to apocalyptic consequences - a noxious fog settles over the city killing thousands every day and plunging it into darkness and allowing the night creatures to rule. While Vanessa found peace in her Haraway-like self-acceptance, the world couldn't stand it. Ultimately, she asks Ethan to end her suffering by killing her, which suggests that there is still no room in society, contemporary or Victorian, for

the true acceptance of humanity's duality, especially for females ("The Blessed Dark").

Vanessa's situation is not far removed from a contemporary one described by Boyd. In this situation, Boyd describes a teenage girl who, like Vanessa, is struggling with her sexuality. Identifying as queer in a community where it's not accepted, the internet provides her with resources to help her access LGBT-oriented hotlines. Boyd says, "she relished the support and validation these strangers gave her" as she didn't receive it from her conservative family (52). However, she was also faced with the constant fear that her activity online would lead to her coming out before she was ready. She found it "extremely difficult" to maintain discretion in an interconnected world (52). This kind of perpetual connectedness has been linked to the deaths of countless teens whose sexuality or other secrets are exposed online. In an article about the 2015 death of an Australian teen, the *corner's* report stated that "easy access to the internet...meant that she was exposed to potentially upsetting communications 24 hours a day; and she was able to return to, and re-read, the upsetting messages at a later time and therefore appears to have continued to ruminate about them" (McNab 1). As Vanessa suffered from the perpetual torment of her demons, contemporary teens and social media users are potentially exposed to the torment of others constantly. In some cases, like Vanessa, the constant barrage of social media drives users to the same escape Vanessa sought – death.

Penny Dreadful's Ethan also considers ending his life because of his duality. As early as the third episode, Ethan asks Dorian, "Ever wish you could be somebody else?" ("Resurrection"). Ashamed of the werewolf within him, Ethan hides his secret from the rest of the group and even from the audience until the end of the first season. Viewers are aware of a creature committing violent murders throughout the city but until Ethan is confronted by his father's men in The Mariner's Inn, he never transforms on screen ("Grand Guignol"). Feeling deeply guilty about the deaths he's caused, Ethan turns himself into Scotland Yard in hopes of a swift execution ("And They Were Enemies"). Like Vanessa, Ethan argues that "The monsters inside us are our [most] unrestrained self" but he struggles to accept his dual nature ("Little Scorpion"). It's Vanessa who encourages him to forgive himself saying, "Whatever you have done, whoever you have made yourself, I'm here to accept you" ("Above the Vaulted Sky"). Vanessa's willingness to accept both her own duality and Ethan's is reminiscent of the integration of multiplicity called for by Haraway. For true synthesis, one must not only accept duality as intrinsic but also intimately know and care for all their parts and the *seams* where they fit together. Vanessa's acceptance of Ethan helps him to accept himself. In some cases, social media can provide similar support, as with the queer teen Boyd interviewed who found comfort in online support groups; however, Boyd cautions that "the internet has not evolved into an idyllic zone in which people are free from the limitations of the embodied

world" (53). Just as Victorians were pressured by the strict social codes of the nineteenth century, so are millennials even more restrained by the ever-watchful eye of social media.

Ethan's lover-turned-bride-of-Frankenstein Brona, later called Lily, struggles throughout the series because of her inability to conform to society's expectations, especially as a woman. Introduced in the first episode, Brona tells Ethan that her name means "sadness", which is what her life has been thus far ("Night Work"). Brona and Ethan begin a fledgling romance that develops throughout the first season although her work as a prostitute and her battle with consumption often spark conflicts. Her would-be-death at the end of the season is complicated by Victor, who takes her body to make a bride for his Creature ("Grand Guignol"). Reborn as Lily in the first episode of the second season, she struggles to make peace with her past ("Fresh Hell").

In their article "Neo-Victorianism and Feminism," Tara MacDonald and Joyce Goggin argue that one of the ways in which these two critical categories are linked is in their act of "giving historical non-subjects a future by restoring their traumatic pasts to cultural memory" (1-2). Lily is given the future Brona was denied by Victorian society which ignored her plight, leading to her death. With her new immortality, Lily becomes consumed with the thought of enacting revenge upon the men who degraded her in life ("No Beast So Fierce"). Her plans are cut short by Victor, who believes he can cure her. His idea of a solution would be to take the memories of Brona and leave

only Lily, a more docile, passive, and feminine ideal Victorian woman. Like MacDonald and Goggin, who argue that

both neo-Victorianism and third-wave feminism...analyse the
 “constructive relationships between women’s pasts and their
 presents”...these movements insist on acknowledging the
 influence of the past, because it may lead to redefining
 “established customs and politics’ in the present” (4)

Hutcheon considers the relationship of past and present in terms of technology saying, “we may well ‘make sense of novelty through the lens of history,’ defining ‘new technologies in terms of older, more familiar ones,” but that process can also be reversed” meaning that we use adaptations to make sense of the past because the past helps us understand the present (xxii). The struggles of Brona, and consequently all women of the nineteenth century, register with contemporary female viewers because they are part of our cultural history. In her plea to Victor to leave her memories intact, Lily says “there are some wounds that never heal. There are scars that make us who we are but without them we don’t exist” (“Perpetual Night”). *Penny Dreadful*’s portrayal of Lily’s struggle with her duality as a woman and an individual reflects the contemporary social need to find balance on a personal level.

Because *Penny Dreadful* successfully combines notable characters from Victorian literature in an entirely new storyline, it exemplifies both what

Hutcheon and Sanders would call a significant adaptation. According to Sanders,

it is the very endurance and survival of the source text that enables the ongoing process of juxtaposed readings that are crucial to the cultural operations of adaptation, and the ongoing experiences of pleasure for the reader or spectator in tracing the intertextual relationships. It is this inherent sense of play, produced in part by the activation of our informed sense of similarity and difference between the texts being invoked, and the connected interplay of expectation and surprise, that for me lies at the heart of the experience of adaptation and appropriation. (25)

By combining characters with whom the audience is already familiar together into a new, merged storyline, *Penny Dreadful* creates the sense of comfort and surprise both Sanders and Hutcheon describe. In terms of Neo-Victorianism, which is defined by Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss as “an academic endeavor that looks into the processes and politics of adaptation, which shape our contemporary perspectives on the past,” *Penny Dreadful* uses a contemporary medium to explicate long-standing cultural issues in a fictional though historic setting which amplifies the similarities between Victorian and modern socio-cultural conditions. The emphasis on the dual nature of the show’s characters clearly underscores the frustrations of

contemporary viewers who feel defined and confined by their virtual identities, and, like the “monsters” of *Penny Dreadful*, seek to find reprieve from “the monsters inside” (“Little Scorpion”).

Conclusion:

The Beast Will Out

The reemergence of Victorian-inspired cultural stories indicates a twenty-first century socio-cultural need for works that reflect Victorian themes. Neo-Victorian serials draw on nineteenth century texts, using the familiar storylines, to expose and explore contemporary social conditions. Prominent neo-Victorian critics including Marie-Luise Kholke and Mark Llewellyn, among others, repeatedly identify Victorian social conditions as a “harbinger of our own trauma culture,” citing political conflicts, social ills like crime and sexual exploitation, violent civil unrest, culture clashes, and gender inequality as some of the many ways that “we are the new Victorians” (Kholke 7; Llewellyn 180). Neo-Victorian adaptations address many of the same issues as nineteenth century texts, especially in terms of identity, self-control, and monstrosity, which leads to back to the question raised by Shelley’s *Frankenstein* – who’s really the monster? The real answer is that there was never a choice; man is monster and vice versa. There was only ever one individual struggling with their capacity for darkness and, as seen in a number of texts, in seeking to deny it, made it more monstrous. Looking back, we call this Victorian repression although the tendency to display one’s “best face” is still prevalent and amplified by contemporary social networking.

Constant connectivity enables users in terms of repression. In Bert Garssen's "Repression: Finding Our Way in a Maze of Concepts," he says that "findings indicated that repressors are often unaware, or at least not fully aware of their emotional avoidance...[they] genuinely perceive themselves as being low in anxiety and are primarily self-deceivers" (474). This means that many individuals who would be identified as repressors do not see themselves as such which, compounded with Garssen's findings that repressors showed a "tendency to present themselves deliberately in a socially desirable light," makes it impossible to estimate how many people utilize social media in such a way. According to the Pew Research Center's latest polls, 65% of adults (not just those online, but 65% of all adults) and 90% (up from just 12% in 2005) of young adults use social media, indicating that the majority of the population has assumed a virtual identity but, as Garssen's research points out, it's impossible to know how many have portrayed themselves accurately (Perrin 1, 4).

The way social networking has permeated society allows users find themselves constantly connected and always "on" – meaning that social interactions are altered and amplified by the availability of communication. In *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*, Boyd says "what's novel for teens is not the technology but the public life that it enables. Teens are desperate to have access to and make sense of public life" (13). While teens may be restricted from certain physical public spaces because of their

age, social networking allows them constant connection to digital spaces where they can interact with each other and the wider world. As millennials, the first generation to come of age during the digital revolution, have entered adulthood over the last two decades, there has been a sharp rise in the use and proliferation of online social networks. While Boyd argues that “by and large, the kids are all right,” research shows that the constant barrage of information via social media can be damaging for some (xi).

The Pew Research Center’s report on “Social Media and the Cost of Caring” reports that “social media use can increase users’ awareness of stressful events in others’ lives which leads to higher stress” (Hampton 1). With over 90% of individuals 18 or older utilizing social media on a daily basis, the majority of the human population is experiencing more stress, especially during times of crisis, because of social media. The report acknowledges that the fears about the impact of technology are not new, citing previous concerns about trains and industrial machinery, watches and clocks, telephones, radios and televisions as developments that “put people on edge” or “heightened people’s status anxieties” (2). These fears have been amplified by digital technologies, including the “fear that these technologies take over people’s lives, creating time pressures that put people at risk for the negative physical and psychological health effects that can result from stress” (Hampton 2). The sentiment that concerns about the impact of technology are the same, but different, are similar to those Boyd expresses in

the introduction to her book: “You’d actually be surprised how little things change. I’m guessing a lot of the drama is still the same, it’s just the format is a little different... spaces may change, but the organizing principles aren’t different” (1-5). The fears and concerns of the use or over use of new technologies are not new, but it’s the way digital technologies allow for constant awareness that makes their impact more significant. While individuals may not be feeling stress because of moral pressures and social restrictions like Victorians, we are exposed to amplified stress on a daily basis due to the constant connectivity of social media and digital communication devices.

Keith Hampton, the lead writer for the Pew Research Center’s report, argues that social media creates new social challenges and stressors:

There are more possibilities for interruptions and distractions. It is easier now to track what friends, frenemies, and foes are doing and to monitor raises and falls in status on a near-constant basis. There is more social pressure to disclose personal information. These technologies are said to take over people’s lives, creating time and social pressures that put people at risk for the negative physical and psychological health effects that can result from stress [which]...might come from maintaining a large network of Facebook friends, feeling jealous of their well-documented and well-appointed lives, the demands of replying

to text messages, the addictive allure of photos of fantastic crafts on Pinterest, having to keep up with status updates on Twitter, and the “fear of missing out” on activities in the lives of friends and family. (10)

These pressures leave millennials with the same feelings of being constantly looked at that Victorians experienced because of the strict codes of social decorum practiced in the nineteenth century. Although repression can be viewed as a vital coping mechanism that allows individuals to contain harmful or inappropriate urges in order to function in society, according to David Stevenson, “it can also cause great anguish” (1). In his article, “Repression,” he says

...conflicting urges or painful memories thus repressed have the potential to cause great anxiety, though the individual will not understand what causes it. As the repressed items teem and surge beneath the conscious surface, they sap vital psychic energy and constantly force the individual to maintain lines of defense mechanisms against his own unconscious. But as the urges boil up, the individual eventually will find release, through some external displacement, displaced emotion, or other mechanism. This release, coming as it does from uncontrollable and often unfathomable depths, can cause unpredictable, sometimes unimaginable reactions: The wife who has repressed

her anger at her husband for fifteen years suddenly lights him and his bed on fire; the frustrated worker smashes equipment while on the job one afternoon. The repression causes anxiety, discomfort, even neurosis; the cathartic release causes massive emotional and often physical damage. (1)

In other words, the beast will out. Part of the reason millennials are still struggling with identity issues and self-acceptance is because we've inherited the habit of repression from our Victorian forebears. This habit causes the monstrous breaks and divided selves portrayed in nineteenth century texts and their contemporary neo-Victorian counterparts.

The same feelings of isolation and societal constraint that bred the divided selves of Victorian literature fuel interest in contemporary re-works like *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* and *Penny Dreadful*. In her article, "But it's only a novel, Dorian: Neo-Victorian Fiction and the Process of Re-Vision," Louise Yates defines neo-Victorian fiction as "a loose, baggy genre, whose desire to engage with the Victorian by 're-thinking and rewriting Victorian myths and stories' may give neo-Victorian texts a shared identity" (186). Since Haraway's dream of a fully-integrated, cybernetic future has yet to be realized, audiences are looking to tales of divided selves for answers to society's identity crises; however, these tales are no longer just found in novels. While novelizations and serial publications were popular in the nineteenth century, modern consumers can find these stories in print – like

Seth Grahame-Smith's novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*; in film, like Burr Steers' 2016 film adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*; on television, which is perhaps the most similar to the original serial format, like Showtime's *Penny Dreadful*; or even online via social media driven interactions. In terms of adaptation, Hutcheon argues that "ideally, each medium makes its own *unique contribution* to the unfolding story. As such it is more likely to target different audience through different media: not everyone wants to watch the movie or play the game" (xxiii). Accessibility is a new demand of the modern, digital era.

Near continuous connectivity gives fan culture much more access to and control over the stories that they identify with. Hutcheon says "YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have made it easy to adapt digital content, for that content is not only accessible and repeatable, but also infinitely modifiable" (xxv). Fans are able to adapt and disseminate stories on their own, which necessarily opens up new areas of adaptation theory. Significantly, this shift has all but squelched issues of fidelity. Where adaptations may have previously been judged on their adherence to the original or source text, it is now more important to look at their popularity, persistence, diversity, and extent of dissemination (Hutcheon xxvi). With accuracy and fidelity no longer a concern, persistence and audience become the larger critical questions.

As neo-Victorian adaptations are re-workings of nineteenth century texts, persistence is obvious; writers and film adaptors are working with texts

that are roughly 200 years old. Often, the adaptation of centuries old stories would include modernization, but that's not so with any of this study's subjects. Audiences are open to updated plot lines but are expressly interested in the Victorian setting as is, indicating its appeal to contemporary society. Grahame-Smith's adaptation of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is so invested in its nineteenth century source that it credits Austen in the by-line. With Grahame-Smith's new text spliced in-line with Austen's original, the adapted portion of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* reads similarly to the original, just with the zombies. In her review for *The Guardian*, Stephanie Merritt comically summarizes the struggles of artfully revising an over-revised text.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a brand as successful and limited as the Jane Austen industry must be in want of diversification. (It is a further truth that anyone writing about Austen must begin with a variant of that sentence.)...While the public appetite for Austen remains unsated, she herself remains stubbornly unable to produce any more in the series. For an enterprising publisher, therefore, there was really only one solution: give Austen's characters a new lease of life by splicing them with another, equally popular genre. (1)

Merritt's word choice is poignant as "unsated" appetites, productions after death, and new leases of life are exactly what Grahame-Smith's zombies

bring to Austen's text. The rest of the characters and settings remain mostly unchanged and yet, the book immediately became a *New York Times* bestseller. As Merritt indicates in her review, audiences aren't only interested in literary-horror mash-ups; they're still interested in nineteenth century literature because they still feel a connection to it. The additional layer of duality brought to the text by Grahame-Smith's zombies only draws out the monstrosity latent in the original text's identity struggles.

Steers' 2016 film adaptation was less well received. Andrew Barker's review for *Varsity* calls it "tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt substantial audiences" (1). With his assertion that the film is "moderately entertaining...but awkward and unsatisfying," Barker attributes the film's poor reception to a loss of interest in the mash-up genre, but that's hard to accept when *Penny Dreadful's* finale, which aired the same year, garnered over 600,000 viewers (1-2; *Penny*). Perhaps the shifts Steers made in the plot were less favorable among audiences. Grahame-Smith's threat lay strictly with the mindless sorry stricken where Steers introduced the concept of a partially transformed hybrid leading a manipulated zombie horde, suggesting that the flaw lay with unaccepting humans rather than an evil, external threat. Haraway would accept Steers' revision, as her cyborg theory is based in the idea that the answer to humanity's identity ills lies in acceptance of individual duality.

Penny Dreadful embraces this idea by choosing to end the series with the resolution of Vanessa's identity struggles. Vanessa, who struggles from the opening of the first episode to make peace with her dualistic nature, dies at her own request during the show's finale. After struggling for years to find peace between her faith and her inner nature, Vanessa desperately asks Ethan to "let it end" ("The Blessed Dark"). The cancellation of the series wasn't announced until just days before the finale aired. Frustrated fans responded in say-it-ain't-so fashion, but Showtime and creator John Logan refused to budge. Logan said "I created *Penny Dreadful* to tell the story of a woman grappling with her faith and the demons insider her... Vanessa Ives is the heart of the series. From the beginning, I imagined her story would unfold...ending with Vanessa finally – and triumphantly – finding peace" (Porter 2). Perhaps Vanessa's call to "let it end" is about more than her own life. Perhaps it is also a call to end the identity struggles imposed on contemporary society by our Victorian forefathers. Perhaps it is a call for self-acceptance similar to Haraway's call for a cyborg world where "people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (1972). The struggle, she says, "is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-head monsters" (Haraway 1972). Single vision breeds the kind of harsh

dualities that created the divided selves of nineteenth century fiction and fuels contemporary neo-Victorian adaptation. Fueled by the same feelings of duality that figure prominently in Victorian society, neo-Victorian adaptations also reflect the same sort of the divided self as the literature from which it draws its characters: *Pride and Prejudice*, *Frankenstein*, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Dracula*, and other works of nineteenth century fiction. These characters display the way that the construction of an outside persona that masks true inward identity creates an internal conflict with uncontrollable consequences. Millennial audiences are drawn to these adaptations as they struggle with similar identity conflicts due to the integration of social networking in their lives. The constant connectivity of the digital age has allowed users to easily construct different online personas, which most prefer to their true selves, mimicking the duality caused by Victorian repression and reviving interest in the fiction that explores the phenomenon of the divided-self. However, at this point, like Haraway's cyborg and *Penny Dreadful*'s Vanessa, the genre itself seems to be pleading, "let it end" ("The Blessed Dark").

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