

## **Introduction to Adapting the Nineteenth Century: Revisiting, Revising and Rewriting the Past**

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This collection of essays came out of a three-day interdisciplinary conference, 'Adapting the Nineteenth Century: Revisiting, Revising and Rewriting the Past', held at the University of Wales, Lampeter, in August 2008. The conference's resonance with the work being done by the *Neo-Victorian Studies* e-journal made the latter the obvious site to critically reflect on the event, not by producing a published conference proceedings, but rather by asking contributors to develop their presented papers in the light of the wide-ranging discussions at Lampeter on the multiple ways the nineteenth century is being recycled and deployed in present-day cultural discourses. In turning the spotlight on issues of the continuing fascination of the nineteenth century for contemporary readers, writers and academics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the conference's dual focus on the ideas of adaptation and the connections/discontinuities between the past and the present were key themes. In considering adaptation as it manifested itself in literature, media and culture more generally, rather than exclusively focusing on cross-media adaptations, the conference wished to acknowledge the notion of 'adaptation' in its broadest sense, as a phenomenon that extends to and permeates multiple arenas of contemporary life.<sup>1</sup> Thus the conference reflected on the intertextual and metatextual dialogues that exist between ostensibly distinct areas of society and cultural production, which continue to act as a process for the renewal of creative endeavours and generate new thinking about our relationship with the past, present and future.

Central to the Lampeter conference theme, then, and thus to this collection of articles, was the historical process of adaptation itself. For all our (post)modern penchant for re-staging and adapting Shakespeare's plays, for example, the practices of adaptation can readily be seen in Shakespeare's own (and other earlier writers') appropriations and recyclings of myths, legends, and histories. Indeed, commenting on our fascination with adaptation today, Linda Hutcheon observes that our habits are not

exclusive to our own era, but share a continuity and commonality of traditions with the Victorians:

The Victorians had a habit of adapting just about everything – and in just about every possible direction; the stories of poems, novels, plays, operas, paintings, songs, dances, and *tableaux vivants* were consistently being adapted from one medium to another and then back again. We postmoderns have clearly inherited this same habit, but we have even more new critical materials at our disposal – not only film, television, radio, and the various electronic media, of course, but also theme parks, historical enactments, and virtual reality experiments. (Hutcheon 2006: xi)

What does seem relatively new in our adaptive practices, however, is the active theorising and engagement with the process, its usefulness as a means of interrogating and critiquing our own society and of facilitating a new understanding of our relationship with and perception of a cultural past in such close proximity with our own. Alongside the proliferation of academic studies in neo-Victorian fiction, university courses on adaptation have been ensconced in the academic curricula for a number of years. Similarly, publications on adaptation by well-established academics, including Linda Hutcheon's seminal text *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), Julie Sanders *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) and notable collections such as Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan's *Literature on Screen* (2007), as well as the scholarly journal *Adaptation*, attest to the discipline's burgeoning position within the academic field of enquiry, as well as its more populist appeal to a wider audience.<sup>2</sup>

As Sanders and others have noted, the influence of contemporary theory, as well as populist debates, are of vital importance in both our perception and re-conceptualisation of earlier texts and social history, as well as in their final outcomes: the creative production of new literary and cultural forms. Thus many acts of adaptation involve some element of critique, transformation, revision, or destabilisation of its antecedent(s) and/or the ideas and ideologies of the past represented therein:

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Texts feed off each other and create other texts, and other critical studies; literature creates other literature. Part of the sheer pleasure of the reading experience must be the tension between the familiar and the new, and the recognition both of similarity and difference, between ourselves and between texts. The pleasure exists, and persists, then, in the act of reading in, around, and on (and on). (Sanders 2006: 13-14)

The repetitive, often solipsistic, pleasures of reading “on (and on)” and the continued adaptations of earlier periods may indeed produce new, or broader, perceptions of the past. In particular, neo-Victorian adaptations have challenged Victorian constructions of empire, gender and sexuality, while the tendency of postmodern reworking challenges ideas about textual hierarchy, legitimacy and authority. But more than this, our sustained engagement with the past signals our continued attempts to make sense of the contemporary moment. Thus questions must also be raised on the subject of the kinds of perspectives our current interrogation, or utilisation, of the past arouses vis-à-vis the present and future. While adaptation(s) can be thought of as inhabited by literary and cultural ‘ghosts’, this echoing of voices and ideas performs an intertextual weaving with the present moment and exhibits a simultaneous recognition of and departure from that past, allowing us the space in which to grapple with the renewed crises we face in negotiating our (post)modern identities. Articles in this collection, such as Theresa Jamieson’s essay on re-writings of Hjalmar Söderberg’s *Doctor Glas* (1905) and issues raised by the primacy of scientific discourses in the twenty-first century, Adele Jones’ Kristevan framework for examining female sexual trauma in Michèle Roberts’ *In the Red Kitchen* (1990), Nadine Muller’s research on Sarah Waters and generational feminism(s), and Katherine Byrne’s discussion of contemporary representations of gender in primetime television adaptations of the Victorian novel, attest to this concern with negotiations between past and present identities (personal, social and cultural). As such, their work questions the present moment in relation to the past and acknowledges a kind of ‘crises in closure’ inherent in a world, which is arguably on the verge of epistemological transition.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the appeal of a genre such as neo-Victorian literature, and neo-Victorian cultural artefacts more generally, extends beyond a nostalgic yearning for a previous age and past aesthetic forms. Instead, the attraction

roots itself in self-conscious engagement with the processes of adaptation and appropriation themselves. The intertextual networks and resonances, perceived within and between texts, offer a dialogue between works, as well as the potential for renewed or revised perspectives on the earlier texts and the cultural moments of their original production. In simplified terms, the very act of reading a text necessarily involves a re-reading and potential re-interpretation. As such, the reader's participation in producing the work cannot be underestimated. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that, as Sanders states, "adaptations and appropriations are impacted upon by movements in, and readings produced by, the theoretical and intellectual arena as much as by their so-called sources" (Sanders 2006: 13).

The Lampeter conference boasted papers on the heritage industry, textual and graphic adaptations of canonical Victorian literature, the music hall, and theories of adaptation, feminism and neo-Victorianism. It also addressed the prevalent tropes of metafiction, memory, trauma, and haunting found in contemporary neo-Victorian fiction and film. Similarly, many papers addressed today's broader culture, which has not escaped the trappings of a more commercial Victoriana. While a few of the papers were concerned with adaptations of early nineteenth-century texts – in particular, by Jane Austen and the Romantic writers – the majority of the papers specifically addressed neo-Victorian adaptations of later nineteenth-century works, suggesting that it is the latter period that exerts an especial fascination for contemporary readers, viewers, and consumers. Although the prevalence of Austen adaptations suggests a popular interest in the pre-Victorian period, this interest is focused predominantly on the works of a single author. In contrast, the interest in the Victorian period encompasses a far broader literary and historical spectrum, and the Victorians are frequently constructed as our immediate ancestors whose achievements remain evident in the modern world, not only in the form of art, literature, and architecture, but also political structures, social organisations, and legal frameworks.

This collection of articles is a result of the broad nature of the conference, which embraced the notion that, as a relatively young field of academic investigation, neo-Victorian studies is as yet to be fully mapped out as an academic discipline (Kohlke 2008: 1-18). This special issue, it is hoped, reflects some of the main directions the new discipline is taking, as the process of crystallisation continues apace, mirroring the ongoing trend

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for the appropriation and adaptation of Victorian literature and culture. While still in its infancy, in recent years, scholarly interest in neo-Victorianism has begun to increase. The establishment of this journal in 2008 is testament to this, as are recent significant publications such as Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham's edited collection, *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Possessing the Past* (2009) and Cora Kaplan's *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions Criticisms* (2007).

Christian Gutleben, in his study *Nostalgic Postmodernism* (2001), poses two questions, which he sees as central to the neo-Victorian project:

[D]oes the contemporary novel set out to rectify certain historical wrongs, to fight against specific prejudice and to subvert ideological and aesthetic commonplaces? Or does it take over a set of themes, of characters and of novelistic devices either because they appear as tokens of an unsurpassed art or because they perpetuate the immense success of the Golden Age of the British novel? (Gutleben 2001: 7)

Some of the proliferation of adaptations of Victorian literature and history can indeed be viewed as such attempts to "rectify certain historical wrongs". Sarah Waters' trio of neo-Victorian novels, for example, re-introduces the lesbian into the landscape of the nineteenth century – a figure almost entirely absent from Victorian fiction. Under Waters' pen, the neo-Victorian offers a version of the past in which women's roles are centralised rather than marginalised, and in which there is a specific focus on lesbian experience, in contrast to the effacing of the figure of the lesbian in Victorian literature and culture, supporting Gutleben's assertion that "the fascination with Victorianism seems inevitably to come with a temptation to denounce the injustice towards some of its ill-used or forgotten representatives such as women, the lower classes or homosexuals" (Gutleben 2001: 10). Kohlke has similarly suggested that "the neo-Victorian [...] repeatedly raise[s] important questions of social justice and may yet prove instrumental in interrogating, perhaps even changing, current attitudes and influencing historical consciousness in the future" (Kohlke 2008: 10). This special collection supports Gutleben's and Kohlke's assertions regarding the importance of subversion, homage, and the role of social

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commentary in the neo-Victorian project, as well as highlighting a number of other key issues, such as gender criticism's engagement with the nineteenth-century inheritance, the problematic commodification of nostalgia, and the implication of projecting notions of present-day 'trauma culture' backwards in time. The interdisciplinary and expansive nature of the conference means that the focus of this collection is necessarily broad, while resisting any simplistic generalisations about the neo-Victorian as a discipline. Nevertheless, together, the articles highlight some of the recurrent concerns of neo-Victorian writers and critics.

The emergence and development of neo-Victorian studies as an academic discipline can be seen as a direct response to the prevalence of neo-Victorian work in popular culture. However, adaptations of Victorian history and literature are hardly new. Indeed, film adaptations of Victorian fiction are nearly as old as cinema itself, while literary re-workings of classic Victorian texts can be found throughout twentieth-century literature.<sup>4</sup> The historical romance novel has a long history of employing Victorian settings, while the more literary neo-Victorian novel garnered increasing respectability as early as the 1960s with the publication of Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969).<sup>5</sup> Neo-Victorian fiction is now becoming a genre of historical fiction in its own right, and already includes several clearly identifiable sub-genres – the neo-realist, neo-sensation and neo-gothic novel, for instance – while participating in other long-established genres, including romance, children's fiction, and science-fiction. The influence of the Victorian can also be seen in works that are not specifically located in the Victorian period, but which adopt some of the conventions of the typical Victorian novel, as witnessed, for example, by the hugely successful *Harry Potter* franchise. J.K. Rowling's novels borrow a number of tropes from nineteenth-century fiction à la Dickens and the Brontës, most obviously the story of the persecuted orphan child, struggling against adversity before reaching maturity and securing happiness, which echoes the Victorian *Bildungsroman*, and evokes *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Jane Eyre* as some of Harry's literary ancestors.

Cinema and television have similarly mined the stock of Victorian literature with an enthusiasm that shows no signs of abating. As Robert Giddings et. al. state, the nineteenth century is a "major warehouse of historical commodities and evidence" (cited in Cartmell and Whelehan

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2007: 12) and the list of adaptations of Victorian canonical works is extensive – no introduction here could do them justice. Recent successes in television include adaptations of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (BBC, 2007, considered in this collection by Byrne's article), Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise to Candleford* trilogy (BBC 2008-present), and Dickens' *Little Dorrit* (BBC, 2008). These are supplemented by popular adaptations of neo-Victorian literature, such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* (BBC, 2006) and *Affinity* (ITV, 2008), as well as forays into the private lives of eminent Victorians such as the Pre-Raphaelite painters in *Desperate Romantics* (BBC, 2009). While television's preference generally seems to privilege the adaptation of Victorian serialised fiction and the realist novel – which clearly suits both the original publishing format of the source texts and their concerns with everyday life – cinema's devotion to the more sensational, gothic and fantastic fictions of the nineteenth century reflects the medium's power to harness spectacle and the more eccentric imaginings of the period's literature. *The Others* (Alejandro Amenábar 2001), *The Time Machine* (Simon Wells 2002), *War of the Worlds* (Steven Spielberg 2005), and *Sweeney Todd* (Tim Burton 2007)<sup>6</sup> are only a few examples.

The flood of neo-Victorian film over the last decade attests to its perpetual popularity. Recent and forthcoming cinema releases include new adaptations of specific single or even multiple Victorian texts, such as *Dorian Gray* (Oliver Parker 2009), *Sherlock Holmes* (Guy Ritchie 2009) and *Wuthering Heights* (Andrea Arnold 2010),<sup>7</sup> but also stretch their cinematic lens to the re-writing of key figures and concerns of the period in general. *From Hell* (The Hughes Brothers 2001) – discussed by Pietrzak-Franger in this issue – adapts Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's 1999 graphic novel, which in turn re-imagines the Jack the Ripper case. *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman* (Stephen Norrington 2003) adapts Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill's 1999 graphic novel, which appropriates a whole range of Victorian literary characters, including Jules Verne's Captain Nemo, H. Rider Haggard's Alan Quatermain, and Bram Stoker's Mina Harker, and resurrects them as a powerful band of superheroes. *Van Helsing* (Stephen Sommers 2004) similarly appropriates a range of characters including the figure of Stoker's vampire hunter and other nineteenth-century gothic characters, such as Victor Frankenstein and his creature, and Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, as well as appropriating figures from other films such as *The Wolfman* (George Waggner 1941). These strategies

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of blending and blurring of the boundaries between discrete works of fiction, along with their hyperreal and hyper-stylised visual forms, bear the stamp of twentieth and twenty-first century film and popular culture's attraction to and adaptation of action and comic book heroes. Moreover, these films also partake in the practices of interpolation, intertextuality and hybridisation that typifies postmodernism, gesturing towards the 'mash-up' practices heralded by the advent of new media.<sup>8</sup> Such miscegenatory strategies offer a more subtly nuanced textual landscape than that of the 'single-source' adaptation, especially regarding notions of textual fidelity, authenticity and originality: 'single-source' adaptations generally focus on plundering the 'source' text for a single, monolithic and 'undeniable truth' – often erroneously and occasionally to its detriment. Conversely, the polyphonic text generates a radically innovative and arguably 'original' work for consumption, while simultaneously generating a multiplicity of new and illuminating perspectives on its antecedents.

Beyond the more fantastic adaptations of Victorian literature and its fictional or mythical characters, films such as *The Young Victoria* (Jean-Marc Vallée 2009) adapt the biographical elements of the lives of public figures.<sup>9</sup> In Vallée's film the history and veiled private life of the young queen is re-worked for public consumption. In the particularly female struggle between public responsibilities and the private realm of love, marriage, and family, the cinematic *Bildungsroman* of Queen Victoria's journey into society straddles the boundaries between fact and fictionalised romanticising, not only of Victoria's life but also of the period in general. While participating in the nostalgia and pleasures of period drama, Vallée's film does more than encourage a dialogue between women's position in society then and now. In light of Stephen Frear's 2006 film *The Queen*, which deals with the issues surrounding our own royal family and the disastrous public affairs of current members of the House of Windsor, Vallée's film also creates a link between our problematic interest in public figures and the concept of 'the Public', which arguably emerged in the nineteenth century with the rise of the news media.<sup>10</sup> Other highly successful films such as *The Illusionist* (Neil Burger 2006) and *The Prestige* (Christopher Nolan 2006) – both dealt with in Heilmann's article in this issue – are based on neo-Victorian texts but also *engage* with the period's wider cultural contexts. Not only do they uncover the delights of prevalent entertainments of the time, including the theatre with its illusionists, the

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music hall, the pleasure gardens, and parlour entertainments such as the séance, they also enter into debate over popular theories of mesmerism, hypnotism, and spiritualism, at a time when the interest in the occult has witnessed a strong resurgence, not least in popular mainstream television series, including *Medium* (2005-present), *Ghost Whisperer* (2005-present), *Most Haunted* (Living TV, 2002-), and *A Haunting* (2005-present).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, as Heilmann highlights, both *The Illusionist's* and *The Prestige's* commentary on the nature of spectacle suggests links between the roles of, on the one hand, the Victorian magician and neo-Victorian writer/producer, and, on the other, the cinema's capability for illusion, as the desires for the 'real' (not least the 'real' Victorian experience) conflict with the simultaneously (and palpably) constructed nature of the 'text'.

A number of the following articles highlight neo-Victorian studies' affinities with the area of gender criticism. Byrne's article on the recent television adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* discusses costume dramas in relation to the production's acknowledgement of the generally ignored, mature female audience. Byrne suggests that *Cranford* offers a feminist-inspired redress in primetime television's usual favouritism towards the youthful romantic period drama. While privileging the perspectives of the mature spinster, the series does retain a few romantic sub-plots. However, with its community of and solidarity between women, and its focus on the male body as a site of illness, Byrne argues, the series becomes a model of gynocentric writing. In contrast, Muller's article on Sarah Waters' *Fingersmith* (2002) explores neo-Victorian fiction's reflection of current debates surrounding developments in feminism and its changing strategic aims and objectives. Her article, which specifically addresses the idea of generational feminism within a framework of matrilineal relationships in the novel, bears comparison with Jones' work on *In the Red Kitchen*. The latter reworks Victorian discourses on femininity and female sexuality in the context of gendered trauma, proposing a continuum of women's oppression through time and women's resistance thereto, which links second- and third-wave feminisms. While Jones' article focuses on the perceived importance of connections between women via sexual (traumatic) narratives and histories, Muller's article investigates the dilemmas of continuity versus desired separation from matrilineal narratives and earlier feminist histories. Hence Waters' novel, Muller suggests, also provides a metaphor for the *discontinuities* between competing forms of

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feminism. As the articles in this collection demonstrate, the work being done on gender and feminism in neo-Victorian studies shows a diversity of thought with a common connection: the power to narrate one's own stories – and re-evaluate, redress and re-write those of the past – is deemed essential to constructing a more liberated present and future.

The collection is also indicative of a particular concern, within the discipline of neo-Victorian studies, with adaptations of *fin de siècle* literature and culture. Jamieson examines recent literary adaptations of Söderberg's post *fin de siècle* novel, *Doctor Glas*. Juxtaposing Will Self's reworking of Oscar Wilde's seminal novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) in *Dorian: An Imitation* (2002) with Sarah Waters' re-imagining of the lesbian in *Tipping the Velvet* (1999), Louisa Yates considers the concept of 're-visionary fiction'. Drawing on adaptation theory, Yates pinpoints a similar emphasis on issues of sexuality, morality and class – key socio-cultural concerns for both the late Victorian and our own contemporary era.<sup>12</sup> Pietrzak-Franger explores Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*, a graphic adaptation of the Whitechapel murders, again explicitly linked with sexual transgression. Her reading counter-poses the continued recycling of the Ripper myth with the central enigma of the murderer's identity, in order to illustrate the impossibility of arriving at a univocal truth. Accordingly, her article gestures towards broader questions of re-contextualisation: despite endless adaptations and appropriations, the past remains ultimately elusive. Thus the Victorian world serves as a mirror in which our own experiences, though necessarily distorted, are nevertheless reflected. It is, then, unsurprising that late Victorian literature borne out of *fin de siècle* tensions and anxieties should provide fruitful source material for contemporary authors and screenwriters. As Jamieson's essay suggests, a text such as *Doctor Glas*, with its focus on medical ethics, is ripe for adaptation in today's world: it articulates the anxieties of modern readers about genetics, nanotechnology, and bioethics through late Victorian concerns regarding evolution, vivisection, and euthanasia and their implications for the limits and uniqueness of the 'human'.

Yet the displacement of contemporary anxieties into a Victorian setting can simultaneously serve to dilute their impact, to contain them, to render them 'safe'. This hints at the significance of neo-Victorian productions as a form of escapism, as well as suggesting the importance of nostalgia – for both an imagined past and Victorian literary forms. For

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example, the appropriation of epistolary and diary form as in Sarah Waters' *Affinity* (1999), discussed in Brindle's article, recalls works such as Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860) and Stoker's *Dracula*. Conversely, while many neo-Victorian narratives engage with aspects of postmodernism, as the articles by Gutleben and Yates suggest, the nostalgia for the Victorian novel evident in neo-Victorian fiction might also be seen to represent a desire for *pre-modernist* literature. Whatever form an adaptation may take, adapters must frequently negotiate between the demands of different readers/viewers, some familiar and others unfamiliar with the evoked intertexts and contexts. This enables the creator to engage in playful devices that highlight the potential problems inherent in the adaptation process, as Heilmann discusses in the opening article to this issue, highlighting the self-consciously performative nature of neo-Victorian film and fiction.

The engagement with nostalgic sentiment is further problematised by another key trend in the neo-Victorian project, underlined in particular by Gutleben's and Jones' articles: the working through of historical traumas, or the portrayal of the nineteenth century as inherently traumatic, both on individual and societal levels:

[T]he period is configured as a temporal convergence of multiple historical traumas [...] These include both the pervasive traumas of social ills, such as disease, crime, and sexual exploitation, and the more spectacular traumas of violent civil unrest, international conflicts, and trade wars that punctuated the nineteenth century. (Kohlke, 2008: 7)

These traumas, Kohlke suggests, have clear parallels with present-day culture. They hint not only at the dark underbelly of Victorian respectability, but continuing social injustices in our own time. The prevalence of the trauma trope in neo-Victorian works, like the persistent reworking of *fin de siècle* narratives, thus suggests the possibility of an implicit dialogue with contemporary concerns and anxieties, such as child sexual abuse and its deliberate concealment by authority figures. The latter issue, as addressed in Jones' contribution, for instance, resonates hauntingly with the recent admission by the Catholic Church in Ireland of a decade-long cover-up of endemic abuse at Church orphanages and schools and the shielding of paedophile priests.<sup>13</sup>

The essays collected here cannot provide an exhaustive overview of the current state of the discipline of neo-Victorian studies, nor do they attempt to. Some key trends, which have become prevalent in the field, such as its engagement with postcolonial studies, its potential for comparison with other genres such as science fiction (which flourished in the nineteenth century, and remains both popularly and critically important today) are not reflected here. The essays do, however, offer an insight into some of the current discourses – including Neo-Victorianism’s engagement with gender and feminist studies, the significance of nostalgia, the prevalence of trauma narratives, and adapters’ attraction to the late Victorian period. The articles are diverse in their approach and scope but deal predominantly with specific adaptations of Victorian texts and historical moments. Nevertheless, they both contribute to and participate in some of the broader discussions currently taking place within the field and suggest possible future directions, emphasising the extent to which ‘the Victorian’ continues to preoccupy adapters, audiences, and scholars.

### Notes

1. Adaptation, as a process, can be seen as part of the literary and cultural practices of postmodernity: of intertextuality, hybridity, repetition and alterity, parody and pastiche – “all texts invoke and rework other texts in a rich and ever-evolving cultural mosaic” (Sanders 2006:17). Rather than mere nostalgia, the *subversive* power of adaptation should be stressed as a dominating factor in their appeal – the disruption of concepts such as primacy, ‘authority’ and the ‘original’, as well as the twin accusations of ‘homage’/‘plagiarism’, offer a destabilisation of power relations. Adaptation, then, is a polyphonic practice involving “both memory and change, persistence and variation” (Hutcheon 2006:173). Thus part of the pleasure and efficacy of adaptation lies in its ability to offer versions of the past, while simultaneously participating in the present – akin to the function of genres such as science fiction, which extrapolate/adapt contemporary concerns, projecting them forwards, in the service of philosophical speculation.
2. Other notable contributions are Kamilla Elliott’s *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (2003), Thomas Leitch’s *Adaptation and its Discontents* (2007) and Alessandra Raengo and Robert Stam’s edited collection *A Companion to Literature and Film* (2004).

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3. The current destabilisation of gender and sex (comparable to the debates about gender and sexuality at the *fin de siècle*) is only one facet of changing 'knowledge' about ourselves, our social structures and cultural attitudes. In a similar fashion, we are currently in the midst of a technological (virtual) revolution which further calls into question notions of identity (suggesting another parallel with the nineteenth century's Industrial Revolution). The ensuing fracturing of identity, theorised in the mid-to-late twentieth century, is thus ever more relevant and in fact renews itself as the twenty-first century and its doctrine of globalisation gather pace, and notions of plurality, multiplicity and diversity dominate.
  4. While most early cinematic endeavours were *actualités*, attempts at narrative cinema soon followed, establishing cinema as a viable story-telling medium: George Méliès' film *Le Voyage dans La Lune* (1902), loosely based on Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) and H.G. Well's *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), is an apposite example of this. Similarly, literary classics by Charles Dickens and Bram Stoker have a long history in cinematic adaptation. Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837), *The Christmas Carol* (1843), and *Great Expectations* (1861) especially have become standard cinematic fare, the novels first securing their current reputations through David Lean's adaptations (1948 and 1946 respectively), while Dickens' ghost story was adapted as early as 1901 in R.W. Paul's *Scrooge, or, Marley's Ghost*, and most recently by Disney in 2009. *Dracula* (1897) too has proven a perennial favourite amongst adapters of Victorian fiction. Beyond the spoofs, parodies and gore-fests of low-budget studio films such as the Hammer Horror series, earlier adaptations of the novel, including F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), have entered the cinematic canon and are films by which all other 'Draculas' are measured and intertextually referenced.
  5. Christian Gutleben suggests that Rhys' novel heralded the beginning of the neo-Victorian literary movement (Gutleben 2001: 5).
  6. The myth was recently the focus of a one-day symposium "'Swing Your Razor Wide...': Sweeney Todd and Other (Neo)Victorian Criminalities' held at the University of Lincoln in 2008, and of a subsequent special issue of *Neo-Victorian Studies* in Winter 2008/2009.
  7. Arnold has reportedly stated that the only novel she would want to adapt was *Wuthering Heights* (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/jan/20/andrea-arnold-wuthering-heights>). Her decision to adapt is a new departure for the British auteur who usually works with her own material, which locates itself

in the contemporary urban environment. However, her strong female protagonists, her interest in class divides, and her attraction to dark, revenge-filled dramas, makes hers an apposite choice – especially in terms of the commentary she may offer on contemporary attitudes towards Victorian texts and their relevance to current debates on issues of family drama, domestic abuse and gender-relations. Other forthcoming adaptations include not *one* but *three* cinematic outings of *Jekyll and Hyde*, one of which is to be directed by Abel Ferrara and features Forest Whitaker and ‘50 Cent’ sharing the role of the ‘dually-challenged’ leading man. While using two actors to play one character raises obvious implications for the portrayal of the divided nature of the self, in casting ‘50 Cent’ and Whitaker the potential for intertextual resonance is abundant. While the former’s association with the darker elements of Rap culture makes him a logical choice for the troubled Mr Hyde, the latter’s persona, as a respected actor, identifies him as a possible Dr Jekyll. In addition, the casting of two black actors suggests that issues of race will be at the forefront of the forthcoming adaptation.

8. Part of everyday popular culture, the ‘mash-up’ is commonly thought of in terms of the digital world and is the ability to take data/software from one source and use it elsewhere, for example in another program, website, or application. At its heart, the ‘mash-up’ is the combination of multiple sources, whose principles of adaptability and hybridity allow the construction of a new form/creation. While sometimes thought of as a merely derivative form, it can be seen to have transformative and subversive potential. In revising/modifying ‘original’ content, it generates new creative endeavours. In literary terms, ‘mash-up’ can be compared to the ‘cut-up’ practices of William S. Burroughs, while in linguistic practices employs ‘blending’ as an equivalent principle. Other examples in literature include the recent *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Seth Grahame-Smith 1999). Music ‘mash-ups’ include the now-banned DJ Danger Mouse recording, *The Grey Album* (2004), created from the fusion of The Beatles’ *The White Album* (1968) and Jay-Z’s *Black Album* (2003). Classic examples of video ‘mash-ups’ are ‘Read my Lips: Duet with Bush and Blair’, ‘George Bush and Tony Blair – Gay Bar’ and ‘Osama – “It Wasn’t Me”!’ Viewed from this perspective, the concept embraces notions found in new media’s collectivism and participation in postmodern practices vis-à-vis cultural production. In the same way that film is an ideal cultural medium for this practice, adaptation is the ideal genre – predicated as they both are on collective input, hybridity, and the blurring of heretofore-perceived discrete boundaries.

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9. *Creation* (Jon Amiel 2009) similarly deals with an important nineteenth century figure, Charles Darwin, framing the narrative in terms of ‘Darwin-the-man’ and, using the metatextual language found in postmodernism, temporal and biographical issues – in the form of the personal family trauma and the struggle between issues of religion and science (still topical today), personalising the emergence of his provocative theories on evolution. This tendency towards the ‘accessibility’ of the ‘private’ pervades contemporary popular culture in the form of celebrity confession or ‘kiss-and-tell’ stories.
  10. Similarly, today’s modern ‘celebrity culture’ thrives on the notion of the ‘private-made-public’ and is supported by media such as tabloid newspapers, TV magazine programmes, publications such as *Heat*, *Hello* and *OK! Magazine*, as well as reality series like *Celebrity Big Brother* (2001-present). In the introduction to their edited collection *Remaking Queen Victoria* (1997), Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich acknowledge that the largely absent figure of Queen Victoria in the political and cultural histories of Britain in the twentieth century has given way to a ‘Public’ interest in the more personal aspects of her life. As such, the fascination with the enigmatic Victoria, for the contemporary reader/viewer, is bound to pose problems in conceptualising Victoria and her power, which is partly due to her sex – apparent in the dichotomy that exists between her status as matriarch and sovereign. As Munich suggests, Victoria’s duality creates a “‘gap in representability’” (cited in Homans and Munich 1997: 4), which is “‘usefully’” filled by a “‘proliferation of Victorias’” (Homans and Munich 1997: 4). Similarly, in light of the discourse of ‘the Public’ and the democratising nature of the media, the appropriation and commodification of Victoria can be seen as part of the phenomenon and discourses of democratisation and notional ‘accessibility’, which burgeoned in the nineteenth century and have flowered since.
  11. The renewed interest in the supernatural at the end of the millennium mirrors that of its prominence in the late Victorian period and is arguably attributable to similar transitional anxieties; among a plethora of examples, the technological (seen in the Internet and digital revolution) and social/cultural changes (for instance the break-up of ‘family’, questions over sexuality and gender) over the last century seem to have grown exponentially, initiating a sense of epistemological and evolutionary change. Ours is a period in flux, unsure of its position between the old and the new – an aspect which genres such as science fiction literature and film and adaptation have long understood, and in which genres such as neo-Victorianism are beginning to participate.

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12. In spite of assertions that we live in a 'classless society', it remains to be seen whether the debate on class has reached its end. Indeed, the common use of terms and concepts such as 'celebrity class', 'the technocratic elite', and even colloquialisms such as 'chavs' and 'hoodies' would indicate a continued focus on 'class' identities.
  13. The recent film adaptation of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 2009, also hints at hidden traumas such as child abuse. In the final moments of the film, a flashback reveals the origins of Dorian's troubled relationship with his grandfather. Beaten and locked in the attic in which he, as an adult, hides his decaying painting, the narrative comes full circle. It not only suggests the hidden traumas behind the façade of youth and beauty, but also raises questions over the concept of 'respectability' in both periods.

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