Double Lives: Neo-Victorian Girlhood in the Fiction of Libba Bray and Nancy Springer

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Abstract:
This essay explores how the trope of the double life in Libba Bray's and Nancy Springer's neo-Victorian fiction for girls illustrates adolescent literature's struggle with what Kate Mitchell identifies as a key issue in neo-Victorian fiction: "how to package the Victorian past for the tastes and demands of contemporary readers" (Mitchell 2010: 3). Bray and Springer portray Victorian girls who lead duplicitous lives. Bray's protagonist Gemma Doyle appears to be an ordinary schoolgirl but is actually a powerful young woman with access to a fantastical world; Springer's Enola Holmes, the metafictional teenaged sister of Sherlock Holmes, disguises herself to solve mysteries while maintaining the appearance of propriety. Through tracing these protagonists' performance of Victorian girlhood as a double life, I examine how Bray's and Springer's novels participate in postmodern discourses on girlhood that frame the girl as a psychologically complex individual whose socially produced subjectivity can be both transcended and fragmented.

Keywords: adolescent fiction, Libba Bray, Gemma Doyle, girlhood, girl power, Enola Holmes, *Reviving Ophelia*, Nancy Springer.

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One of the concerns of neo-Victorian studies involves understanding how the past interfaces with the present in contemporary fiction about the nineteenth century, and determining what kind of commentary this interfacing offers on each period. To use Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn's words, neo-Victorianism seeks to determine "the function of the past in contemporary culture and literature, and the various ways in which the present is negotiated through a range of (re)interpretations of the nineteenth century" (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010: 3). In the process of doing so, however, it is important to resist examining neo-Victorian fiction merely as a manifestation of contemporary culture's fascination with nineteenth-century narratives, identities, and artefacts. In her essay 'Putting the "Neo" Back into Neo-Victorian: The Neo-Victorian Novel as

Postmodern Revisionist Fiction', Samantha J. Carroll argues against understanding neo-Victorian fiction simply as "'a different way into the Victorians'", finding that "such a contention necessarily robs the neo-Victorian novel of its status as an independent – and contemporary – literary artefact" (Carroll 2010: 179).[1] Carroll claims instead that "neo-Victorian fiction's representation of the Victorian past is also the lens through which a variety of *present* concerns are examined" (Carroll 2010: 180). Taking these views into consideration, this article seeks to analyse how two series of neo-Victorian adolescent fiction attend to issues found within contemporary youth culture – specifically, girl culture – through recreating the world of the nineteenth century for their readers.

Within the last ten years, authors Libba Bray and Nancy Springer have both found success with neo-Victorian fiction that re-imagines and reconstructs Victorian girlhood for twenty-first-century adolescent readers. Bray's Gemma Doyle trilogy (2003-2007) intertwines romance with fantasy, drama, and adventure against the backdrop of *fin de siècle* Victorian England as it follows the adventures of its heroine Gemma, an aristocratic schoolgirl who simultaneously navigates the elite circles of London society and a magical alternate world called the realms. Springer's mystery series (2006-2010) appropriates and revises the iconic figure of Sherlock Holmes in order to follow the detective exploits of his much younger (and, Springer often suggests, much smarter) sister, Enola. While each series engages different genres, both feature intrepid adolescent heroines, and both centre on the trope of the Victorian girl's double life. On the surface, each series' heroine lives a life that conforms to the traditional social mores of Victorian England, which in many ways limit girls' independence. Beneath this veneer of respectability and conformity, however, is a completely different life, one filled with courage, autonomy, and action, which reflects more accurately the values and desires of the fictional Victorian heroine – and, presumably, those of the real, twenty-first-century girl readers who follow her adventures. This essay examines the implications of Bray's and Springer's novels' construction of late-Victorian girlhood for its contemporary readers as, more than anything, a careful performance, a matter of maintaining a façade to hide one's true self from others. Through portraying girls who perform Victorian girlhood in this way, I argue, these novels participate in postmodern discourses on girlhood in order to address

issues and develop themes that are pertinent to twenty-first-century girl readers.

Generally speaking, the tensions between public and private identities and imperatives of 'keeping up appearances' as they are presented in these novels have long been considered defining features of the Victorian period. The separation of domestic space from the public sphere of work and the veneration of the Victorian home as "a private retreat within which a personal life [could] be enjoyed in peace and security" contributed to the sense that individuals, especially members of the middle and upper classes, maintained multiple identities and roles which they performed in a variety of contexts, including interactions with immediate and extended family members at home (both upstairs in private rooms and downstairs in communal spaces), friends and acquaintances in social settings, and strangers in public (Hepworth 2006: 17). In *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, Peter Bailey posits that respectability itself, a quality typically viewed as the very bedrock of middle-class Victorian social order, was often a matter of performance rather than true embodiment or internalisation of a particular system of values: "respectability was practiced in a more limited and situational sense than that of a lived ideal or permanent code of values", Bailey notes, since "respectability was assumed as a role (or cluster of roles) as much as it was espoused as an ideology" (Bailey 1998: 32).

Certainly Bray's and Springer's depictions of respectability as a role that their characters play indicates a similar understanding of the period and its culture. For Victorian girls in particular, participation in the performance of respectability and various public and private identities was further complicated by the impact of the New Woman's movement and late-century shifts in women's and girl's socio-political roles.[2] In *The Awkward Age in Women's Popular Fiction, 1850-1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood*, Sarah Bilston suggests that late-Victorian girls were at least developing a heightened critical consciousness regarding their positions in society, if not actually engineering double lives for themselves in order to pursue new possibilities and their own interests while appearing to follow conservative Victorian conventions; Bilston notes that "British New Women novels of the 1890s often centred on a heroine's awakening to the consciousness of her own capabilities, and on the ways in which society inhibited the exploration of those capabilities", and that "[g]irls' literature of

the later nineteenth century was characterised by its engagement with the new possibilities becoming available to women" (Bilston 2004: 190). As Sally Mitchell argues, this fiction was often more progressive than the lived realities of the girl readers who consumed it, but nevertheless it presented a new "cultural reality" with which Victorian girls engaged (Mitchell 1995: 3).[3] In this way, it is reasonable for the double lives of Bray's and Springer's neo-Victorian heroines to be understood as reiterations of the late-Victorian girl's budding interest in and ability to perform new roles in her society.

However, if one attends to what Carroll calls "putting the 'neo' back into neo-Victorian" fiction when analysing these novels, it becomes clear that their representations of the Victorian girl are also informed by contemporary constructions of girlhood that shape dominant understandings of girls and their experiences today. In the process of representing the girl's as a double life, these novels participate in postmodern discourses on girlhood that frame the girl as a psychologically complicated individual whose socially produced subjectivity is available both for transcendence and for fragmentation. My discussion here will focus on two particular discursive representations of girlhood, both of which rose out of cultural movements and critical analyses centred on girls in the 1990s and continue to circulate today. The first is a version of girlhood that derives from the sociocultural matrix of girl power, and the second is a critical interpretation of girlhood created by Mary Pipher's seminal work *Reviving Ophelia*.

Developed initially as a slogan by the Riot Grrrls to encourage girls' control over their own identities and modes of production and consumption, the concept of girl power has evolved into a multivalent rhetoric that "encompasses a host of cultural phenomena for young women" that vary widely in agenda and outcome for girls, sometimes in contradictory ways (Gonick 2008: 310).[4] While the Riot Grrrls and various other groups have mobilised the girl power ethos to focus on endowing girls with sociocultural and political agency, other movements and commercial industries that identify with and appropriate girl power as a founding principle have often been understood as less concerned with effecting socio-political change and more successful in "the commodification and *containment* of feminism – the triumph of 'image power' over 'political power'" (Munford 2004: 149). Cultural trends that engage the ethos of girl power but seem to complicate or even contradict its original political significance – such as the Girlie

movement, which is invested in reclaiming and celebrating artefacts of femininity generally associated by second-wave feminism with patriarchy and sexism, or commercialised and sexualised media role models such as the Spice Girls – draw attention to the ambiguities and inadequacies involved in using the term 'girl power' as a reference to a cohesive cultural identity for girls. However, for the purposes of my analysis, I will focus on girl power as it is used to refer to a discursive representation of girlhood that has been in circulation since the 1990s and that emphasises girls' agency and their freedom to determine and deploy their identities. Shauna Pomerantz explains that this version of girl power figures girls as

> powerful social actors, unhampered by structural forces and the historical oppression of women within patriarchal culture […]. Through girl power, girls may understand themselves as powerful "bitches" with social clout, wild exhibitionists with unlimited sexual power, overachieving perfectionists who are exceptional at everything they attempt to do, butt-kicking babes who embody masculine strength while still remaining feminine, and unconventional rebels who resist dominant expectations of femininity through alternative lifestyles. (Pomerantz 2008: 159-160)

Pomerantz's description of girl power reflects the ways in which the concept is often mobilised as a discourse that grants girls a multiplicity of options for performing femininity in a manner that feels empowering and liberating. Anita Harris notes that, even in the hands of product advertisers, this version of girl power often continues to "position young women as creators of their own identities and life chances" and to "emphasise the positive opportunities for young women to invent themselves; to become, in Ulrich Beck's words, 'choice biographers'" (Harris 2004: 167).[5]

The second discourse on girlhood that I employ here frames girlhood quite differently, as a position of endangerment rather than one of power. This model is sometimes referred to as Reviving Ophelia, or even simply Ophelia, after the title of Pipher's 1994 study, through which this discourse was first widely disseminated (see Gonick 2006 and Pomerantz 2008: 59). In her work, Pipher, a psychologist and academic whose analysis was informed by years of professional interaction with girls, describes girlhood

as a period of crisis. Citing a variety of sociocultural pressures and toxic situations that prey particularly upon the late-twentieth-century girl, as well as the resulting list of psychoses that include eating disorders, self-mutilation, substance abuse, anxiety, and depression or suicidal tendencies, Pipher describes girls' experience of adolescence as an ordeal that the lucky ones only barely survive:

> [A]ll girls feel pain and confusion. None can easily master the painful and complicated problems of this time. All are aware of the suffering of friends, of the pressure to be beautiful and of the dangers of being female. All are pressured to sacrifice their wholeness in order to be loved. Like Ophelia, all are in danger of drowning. (Pipher 1994: 73)

In this discourse, girls wrestle with psychological stress but feel powerless to stop it and effectively take control of their personal identities. Marnina Gonick interprets the Reviving Ophelia discourse as especially centred on fragmentation of one's selfhood: "due to pressure from U.S. culture, adolescent girls are coerced into putting aside their 'authentic selves', splitting what was, in their younger days, a healthy and united individual, into true and false selves" (Gonick 2006: 12). The Reviving Ophelia discourse in many ways stands in stark contrast to girl power rhetoric by generally figuring girls as victims rather than agents; Pipher's work suggests that girls do not have the psychological fortitude or sense of social agency necessary to forge and preserve their own identities independently. Despite their differences, however, both representations of girlhood continue to prove compelling as discourses on the contemporary girl's identity development, retaining their cultural currency into the twenty-first century. As such, both models can be traced throughout Bray's and Springer's novels.

In Bray's Gemma Doyle trilogy, Gemma occasionally chafes ineffectually against the circumscriptions of her late-nineteenth-century society, but the double life she enjoys also clearly exhibits various characteristics found in girl power. Perhaps the more convoluted of the two series discussed here, Bray's novels take as their premise the existence of a magical spirit world called the realms, which has been guarded and

maintained for generations by a secret society of women, the Order. Gemma is the daughter of a wealthy family who has been sent to finishing school to prepare for her debut into London's high society, only to discover through a series of visions and a secret diary that she is next in line to control and protect the power of the realms. The series juxtaposes the events of Gemma's adventures in the fantastical world of the realms, where she battles magical creatures and exerts her authority as the Chosen One, and her experiences in the real world, where she negotiates school life, familial responsibilities, and romance. As Bray divides Gemma's time and energy between these two worlds, she effectively divides her character into two separate girls: one who is seemingly rendered powerless by her society's codes of conduct for girls, and one whose choices make her the most powerful person in the world. This new, power-filled role calls for a new identity; in the realms, Gemma is identified by titles reflecting her authority, such as "Lady Hope" and "Most High" (Bray 2005: 297, 178), and the magic of this world offers limitless freedom to her and the friends she brings in with her. Gemma describes entering the realms as "step[ping] into our own private paradise, where we are the mistresses of our own lives" (Bray 2003: 284). The singularity of this place is not lost on Gemma, who spends much of her time as a girl in the real world bending to the patriarchal hegemony of her time. For her, the appeal of the realms is derived largely from its existence as "a world […] where women rule" (Bray 2005: 158); essentially, it is the land of girl power. Because of the power that Gemma finds within herself to access the magic of the realms and rule there, she and her friends Felicity and Ann have the ability to recreate themselves into great beauties or sinewy huntresses. They model for readers especially the personas included in girl power rhetoric of the "wild exhibitionist" and the "butt-kicking babe" (Pomerantz 2008: 159-160). All is not play, however. When they are not cavorting in the realms, unabashedly using magic to transform themselves and their surroundings to suit their wildest dreams, the girls are battling evil creatures who would steal and abuse the magic of the realms. In order to save the realms from chaos, they make an arduous journey to the Temple, where the magic is held, and perform the rites necessary to protect and bind it. In the realms, Gemma and her friends are by turns silly and deadly serious, but they are no longer simply schoolgirls. Rather, they are warriors, priestesses, and queens.

Even within Gemma's frustrations with the limitations that the real world places upon her, moreover, the novels still engage aspects of girl power. Contrasted sharply with their experiences in the realms, the lives of Gemma and her friends in the real world come to be characterised as false and hollow, occupied primarily with maintaining a façade of pleasantness and decorum before all other priorities. The lessons that the girls learn in their finishing school contribute much to this feeling; their superficial courses in French, dancing, music, and art are meant to polish their appearances as young ladies and make them pleasing to others, but not to challenge them or mould any deeper qualities of their characters. When her family visits her school for Assembly Day, Gemma suggests that this empty girl is actually the product desired by her society, as she notices that "No one asks how I am or what I am doing. They could not care less. We're all looking glasses, we girls, existing only to reflect their images back to them as they'd like to be seen" (Bray 2003: 304-305). Gemma's difficulty in performing as an ideal "looking glass" for others disappoints her family and often makes her feel like a failure, but it also reinforces for Gemma and her friends that the real world in which they live is nothing but someone else's "predetermined little game" that they are forced to play (Bray 2003: 134). According to Bray, Gemma's Victorian society is so invested in the façade, the reputation, that the real world itself is grounded more in illusion than reality; Gemma finds herself counselled by her brother and her grandmother, for example, to hide at all costs from the public that her mother was murdered in India and that her father has developed an addiction to laudanum. Gemma condemns her society by identifying it as fake: "That's what living in their world is – a big lie. An illusion where everyone looks the other way and pretends that nothing unpleasant exists at all, no goblins of the dark, no ghosts of the soul" (Bray 2003: 29). Through exercising her critical ability to determine what is true and what is false, Gemma becomes free to reject her society for its shallowness.

In doing so, she performs a variation of girl power that involves the notion of 'authentic Selfhood'. In *Girl Power*, Dawn Currie and her co-authors explain that

> when employed by girls performing alternative or resistant identities, a discourse of authentic Selfhood enable[s] them to reject the performance of girlhood in ways that disempowers

> them […. A] discourse of 'authentic Selfhood' signalled possible awareness on the part of girls about femininity as a socially constructed – hence malleable – identity. It thus promise[s] to open up girlhood to the kind of critical introspective that we associate with feminist subjectivity. (Currie et al. 2009: 172)

As a critical subject who has discovered her authentic Self in the realms, Gemma is able to detach herself from the performance of femininity that she is obligated to give in the real world. Although she cannot openly refuse to participate in this performance, recognising it as false and empty helps her preserve her freedom to choose to identify with a version of girlhood that empowers her.

Yet in order to protect her authentic Self and the Selves of her friends from all of those who live in the reality of Victorian England, Gemma must hide this part of her character. When Gemma's grandmother asks her "what sort of girl" her friend Felicity is, Gemma must edit her knowledge of her friend's true identity as a paragon of girl power:

> *She kisses Gypsies in the woods and once locked me in the chapel after asking me to steal the communion wine. By the light of a pale moon, I saw her kill a deer and climb from a ravine naked and splattered with blood. She is also, strangely, one of my best friends. Do not ask me to explain why.* (Bray 2005: 138, original emphasis)

What Gemma says to her grandmother about Felicity, however, is simply that she is "'[s]pirited'" (Bray 2005: 138). That this lying is construed as absolutely necessary to keep peace and a sense of normalcy in the family only further emphasises how dependent upon pretence this Victorian society is, and how much more real and true Gemma's identity and experiences in the realms are.

Gemma struggles with the same impulse to hide her true character when she develops an attachment to Simon Middleton, a charming and eligible young man; she agonises over "deceiving Simon, letting him think [her] this uncomplicated English schoolgirl" when the truth about her power and her role in ruling the realms would horrify him (Bray 2005: 478).

Ultimately, Gemma ends her relationship with Simon, and, after she is victorious in her efforts to restore the balance of the magic in the realms, she is able to assert a modicum of freedom in her life by travelling abroad alone to attend university in New York and by planning to work for her own living. It is a sign of her growing maturity and confidence in her strong, authentic self as well as a sign of the changing times that, by the end of the trilogy, Gemma can marshal the power and autonomy she has acquired through her experiences in the realms to forge her own path in the human world by choosing higher education and independent living over the aristocratic marriage her family expects.

Through portraying the Victorian girl's daily duty as an oppressive obligation to keep up appearances, and through incorporating an alternate, empowering world into the protagonists' lives, Bray's series makes the shift not only from realism to fantasy but also from Victorian to neo-Victorian. It is not surprising that Gemma and her friends would resent social obligations that they perceive to be hollow and restrictive, but their ability to see so easily and so clearly through their society's machinations, and their attitudes of sullen condescension toward the 'uncomplicated' roles that they are supposed to play, suggest a perspective that reflects the ideas – however simplistic and stereotypical they may be – that contemporary girl readers may be presumed to have about this older and more socially restrictive period. Equally significant is the fact that the power and autonomy that add to Gemma's heroic stature stem from her experience in the fantastical world of the realms, "where women rule", rather than from her experiences in the realistic Victorian world (Bray 2005: 158). Bray's creation of the realms gives the novels new opportunities not only for developing Gemma's character but also for commenting on the perceived limitations of the nineteenth century's patriarchal culture for offering girls meaningful identities. In both of these aspects of the series, we can see Bray's novels confronting "what it means to fashion the past for consumption in the present" as they engage girl power through providing an alternate reality from that which was most readily available to girls during the Victorian period (Mitchell 2010: 3).

Nancy Springer's Enola Holmes series, both metafictional and intertextual, interacts more directly with Victorian fiction by revising Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous stories of Sherlock Holmes. Like Gemma Doyle, Enola Holmes leads a double life throughout Springer's six-novel

series. Instead of magic, however, Enola's role-play is grounded in the trends and norms of Victorian clothing and fashions. The fourteen-year-old sister of Sherlock Holmes, Enola is a headstrong, independent girl who has been raised by her widowed mother on a remote estate far from her elder brothers, where she has been allowed to move about freely and do as she pleases. Enola's unconventional independence is figured from the very beginning through her clothing; when readers meet her at the opening of the first novel, she wears a "shirt and knickerbockers, comfortable clothing that previously belonged to [her] older brothers" (Springer 2006: 8). This marks her as a tomboy even before she clarifies for readers that, were she dressed properly for the period, she would be wearing "any kind of skirt long enough to conceal my ankles" (Springer 2006: 16). Abandoned on her birthday by her free-spirited mother, who runs away to live with Gypsies, Enola finds herself with nothing but a secret stash of money left by her mother to sustain her. When she is faced with the prospect of being sent by her brother Mycroft to a finishing school much like the one attended by Gemma Doyle, Enola, too, decides to take her money and run away from home. From the very beginning of the series, then, Enola is framed as a specimen of one of the feminine ideals that can be found in girl power; in Pomerantz's previously cited terms, she is portrayed as one of the "powerful social actors, unhampered by structural forces and the historical oppression of women within patriarchal culture" and simultaneously one of the "unconventional rebels who resist dominant expectations of femininity through alternative lifestyles" (Pomerantz 2008: 159-160).

However, her tender age and her relation to a famous detective put Eonla at a disadvantage when it comes to living on her own in Victorian England. The oddity of a genteel girl alone in public would attract attention at once, so Enola must rely on a variety of costumes that allow her to blend in with those around her and thus move around freely. Like the original Sherlock Holmes, Enola proves to be a master of disguise, and with each costume she dons, she takes advantage of an implicit Victorian cultural code that allows her to hide her youth and rebellious nature behind a cloak of respectability. The corset and bustle, for example, that Enola so bitterly loathes because they restrict breathing and make walking difficult, become an ingenious form of hidden baggage when she removes the stuffing from them and replaces it with her money and underclothes. As she does so, Enola relishes subverting the frivolous and restrictive nature of Victorian

women's fashion into a vehicle for her defiance and deception; she continues to wear her corset throughout the novels, stowing various necessities in it and thinking of it as a kind of improvised body armour. In other instances, Enola dresses in widow's weeds in order to take advantage of the heavy veil that hides her face from passers-by, or she dons the cheap-yet-respectable clothes of a working-class office girl, "very much like thousands of other young women typists and bookkeepers surviving in London" (Springer 2006: 211), in order to grant herself the liberty to walk the streets of the city. She even dresses up as a nun in order to minister to the poor of London's East End, who call her 'Sister' and never dream that their saviour is a fourteen-year-old girl. Through these disguises, Enola reveals an understanding of girlhood that frames "femininity as an identity that must be brought into existence through what one 'does' to be a girl" or woman (Currie et al. 2009: 11), echoing Judith Butler's theories of gender as performative rather than essential.[6] Because she is aware of the ways in which all forms of femininity are bound up in some degree of performance, Enola is able to manipulate numerous versions of femininity that fall within a socially acceptable range in order to maintain her freedom. In doing this, she reveals not only remarkable cleverness and an admirable desire for independence but also her extraordinary perceptiveness regarding the gender and social class dynamics that organise her society.

Enola's most effective, long-term disguise is as Ivy Meshle, the working-class assistant to Dr Leslie T. Ragostin, a Scientific Perditorian (seeker of lost things). When Enola decides that she wants to become a detective like her brother Sherlock, she creates the fictitious Dr Ragostin to use as a front, which gives her the ability to operate a consulting agency on her own without any taint of disreputability. In this move, Enola relies not only on her disguise as a twenty-something assistant but also on her society's unquestioning acceptance of the practices of respectable men:

> A scientist must of course be a man, and an important one, quite busy at the University or the British Museum; undoubtedly this is why no one in the well-to-do neighborhood has yet seen the great Dr Leslie T. Ragostin. But every day his secretary comes and goes, putting things in his new office, tending to his affairs. (Springer 2006: 211)

Through operating under the auspices of the phantom Dr Ragostin and couching herself in the primitive respectability of the late-Victorian professional girl, Enola is able to move about both freely and virtually unnoticeably.

While Enola's disguises change all the time, in each of them she plays the role of an individual who conforms to the rules of her society. Yet the true Enola describes herself as "*Ever defiant* [….] *Ever to go on being – what I am*. A rebel, a dreamer" (Springer 2008a: 13, original emphasis). Ultimately, Enola not only relies on her double life out of necessity but also celebrates it as a special achievement specific, in many ways, to women – particularly in its crucial relationship with the intricacies of women's fashion. At the end of the first novel, Enola smugly asserts that

> while Sherlock Holmes dismissed the 'fair sex' as irrational and insignificant, I knew of matters his 'logical' mind could never grasp. I knew an entire world of communications belonging to women, secret codes of hat brims and rebellion, handkerchiefs and subterfuge, feather fans and covert defiance, sealing-wax and messages in the positioning of a postage stamp, calling cards and a cloak of ladylike conspiracy in which I could wrap myself. (Springer 2006: 208-209)

As she has done earlier with her corset, Enola here reshapes the frivolous accoutrements of the Victorian lady into vital tools for subversion of authority and survival. Furthermore, in doing so, she implicates not only herself but also all Victorian members of "the 'fair sex'" in this subversive and duplicitous behaviour, implying that feminine fashions of the period and their double meanings are utilised by women everywhere, forming a "conspiracy" of which Enola is learning to become a part. Like Bray's Gemma Doyle, however, Enola's strength of character ultimately ensures that she does not have to live forever in "a cloak of ladylike conspiracy" (Springer 2006: 209); by the end of the series, Enola reconciles with her brothers Mycroft and Sherlock, who cannot help admitting that her competence and ingenuity have earned her the right to "be whatever [she] like[s]" (Springer 2010: 166). Because of her successful use of disguise and

intrepid navigation of a double life, Enola is ultimately able to retire her aliases and live life completely as herself again.

In the same way that the fantastical element of Bray's novels contributes to their neo-Victorian characteristics, the metafictional nature of the Enola Holmes books is one quality that distinguishes them as neo- rather than simply historical fiction with a Victorian setting. Springer's mystery series is clearly born of a desire to requisition and revise the literary tradition of Sherlock Holmes in order to allow contemporary adolescent girls to engage with it more easily.[7] For the benefit of her twenty-first-century audience, Springer adapts the original Holmes's gifts to an adolescent girl who is keenly aware of the sociocultural systems that keep her from using her talents openly; essentially, what Enola hides through her disguises is that she is virtually a carbon copy of Sherlock Holmes. That her society is so consistently willing to accept her disguises at face value rather than recognise the truth about this brilliant girl itself stands as a condemnation of the sexism of the period as both irrational and obtuse. Through this situation, as well as through the unique relationship that Enola has with her disguises due to her gender, Springer's novels offer simultaneously a representation of the Victorian period and a contemporary model of girl power.

Through Enola's duplicity as she navigates the social norms and cultural codes of Victorian England, then, Springer's novels, like Bray's, deploy a contemporary figuration of girlhood as empowered, proactive, and critically conscious. However, this is not the only postmodern discourse on girlhood that the novels engage. Through secondary girl characters who also lead double lives, both Bray's and Springer's series mobilise another well-known construction of girlhood that has been in circulation since the mid-1990s. Like the novels' heroines, secondary girl characters in Bray's and Springer's novels also lead double lives as members of Victorian society, but instead of reflecting a celebration of postmodern girl power, these girls' experiences tend to bear out the concerns of the Reviving Ophelia discourse regarding the psychological damage that sociocultural pressures on girls can cause.

In Bray's novels, features of the contemporary at-risk girl can be found in every member of Gemma's cohort at Spence Academy, from Felicity, who has been sexually abused by her father, to Ann, who cuts herself out of a "need to feel something"; Felicity even describes herself and

the other girls as "all damaged" (Bray 2003: 177, 314). However, it is through the figure of Gemma's friend Pippa that the Reviving Ophelia discourse is most effectively engaged. A spirited young woman with romantic ideals, Pippa is also a great beauty and the daughter of a wealthy merchant with an unfortunate gambling problem; as such, she is expected by her parents to squelch her desires for true love and marry for money in order to improve her family's financial stability. In addition to this pressure, Pippa's life is complicated by her epilepsy, a malady that must be hidden from the public since it would render her 'defective' in the eyes of potential suitors. Pippa's sense of personal identity, then, is characterised by a tension between her true self, for which she desperately wants to be known and unconditionally loved, and the pretence that she must maintain in order to please the world around her. At her mother's insistence, Pippa is obliged to hide her distaste for unappealing suitors and instead "fawn over" them; her friends laugh when she describes feigning a dainty appetite before gentlemen, knowing as they do "that Pippa is a secret glutton" (Bray 2003: 165, 168). Like Gemma, Pippa feels frustration with this façade, which she voices in particular through complaints about her mother: "All she seems to do is drive me mad with her criticism […] 'Pippa, we must keep up appearances at all times.' 'Pippa, what you think of yourself isn't nearly as important as what others say of you'" (Bray 2003: 148). And, like Gemma, Pippa finds within the realms the freedom to be herself, chiefly through fulfilling her own wish for romance and true, unconditional love. With the magic of the realms, she conjures a handsome, chivalrous young knight who immediately pledges his undying love for her, hangs upon her every word, and vows never to leave her side.

Yet Pippa is also clearly much more "vulnerable, voiceless, and fragile" – to use Gonick's summary of the girls described in Pipher's study – than Gemma is (Gonick 2006: 2). Like the girls identified by the Reviving Ophelia discourse, Pippa struggles with finding the freedom and strength to express herself, even among her friends: Gemma acknowledges that "I've always been so irritated when Pippa opens her mouth, I haven't stopped to think that she may babble because she's afraid she won't be heard" (Bray 2003: 284). The seizures that plague Pippa stand as a mark of the frailty of her spirit as well as the weakness of her body, as do the visions that Gemma has of Pippa drowning, much like Shakespeare's Ophelia herself, in the "watery grave" of the river in the realms (Bray 2003: 387). By the end of the

first novel, it becomes clear that Pippa cannot be saved, even by Gemma. Because she cannot handle the pressures to conform that her society places upon her, because she cannot find a way, as Gemma does, to sustain a double life in order to find fulfilment, Pippa's story ends in tragedy: to avoid being forced by her parents into marriage with a man old enough to be her father, she commits suicide by crossing the river in the realms in order to sever her soul from her body and remain there forever. As Pippa confesses her plans to Gemma, she admits to Gemma that she's "'not a fighter. Not like you'" (Bray 2003: 395); her words eerily echo Pipher's statement that "No girls escape the hurricane [of adolescence…]. The resisters and fighters survive" (Pipher 1994: 281). Because Gemma, Felicity, and Ann can still visit Pippa's soul in the realms, her death does not initially seem catastrophic. However, by remaining in the realms rather than passing on to the afterlife as all departed souls are meant to do, Pippa literally becomes a monster; by the final novel in the trilogy, she has aligned herself with the evil spirits of the realms, believing the lies that they tell her about the power and fulfilment that they can give her, and she is no longer recognisable as her former self. Through weakness, confusion, desperation, and fear, Pippa is lost to the storm and strife of her own girlhood. In this way, Bray's novels express sympathy for the plight of the postmodern adolescent girl for whom youth is a dangerous and difficult ordeal to survive. By revealing its girl characters' struggles and particularly through tracing Pippa's tragic end, the series acknowledges the perils of being a girl and the possibilities of identity fragmentation, not only during the Victorian period, but during the twenty-first century as well.

Springer's novels engage the contemporary discourse of the endangered girl through placing a secondary character in literal, physical danger. Unlike Gemma, Springer's Enola has no intimate friends; the closest she comes to one is Lady Cecily Alistair, an aristocratic girl whom Enola rescues from kidnapping not once but twice over the course of the series. Although they have little direct interaction, Enola comes to regard Lady Cecily as a kindred spirit and potential friend, largely because Lady Cecily, too, lives a double life. Like Enola, Lady Cecily hides behind a lady-like façade her true self, a "high-minded, artistic, free-spirited girl" who has a passion for social justice and who puts a face to the suffering of London's poor and downtrodden through her compelling charcoal drawings, which she conceals from the world" (Springer 2008b: 71). Unlike Enola, however,

Lady Cecily's double life does not reveal an ability to manipulate socially constructed female identities; rather, the novels frame her duplicity as a psychosis. Lady Cecily's double life is rooted in her laterality. Born with a proclivity for using her left hand, Lady Cecily was forced as a child to become right-handed instead as part of her training in socially acceptable behaviours and polite accomplishments; her left-handedness is symbolic of the intelligent, analytical, and socially undesirable traits that she has been compelled to extinguish. Her experiences have resulted in an apparent division of her consciousness into two separate identities, one left-handed and the other right-handed. Enola discovers this secret when, investigating Lady Cecily's first disappearance, she finds evidence of both identities and surmises that "the rigours of a right-handed upbringing had forced Cecily to become two different selves, the docile public daughter versus the brilliant, rebellious, reform-minded left-handed lady" (Springer 2008b: 107). Essentially, the trauma Lady Cecily has experienced has resulted in a mental snap of sorts. Enola goes so far as to compare Lady Cecily's situation to the one recounted in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) in order to articulate the extent of Lady Cecily's psychological damage, marvelling, "Could it be that Lady Cecily was a dual personality?" (Springer 2007: 151). Lady Cecily clearly exhibits the psychological state that Pipher describes when she claims that "[g]irls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions" during the turbulent years of adolescence when various desires for approval from friends and family war with one another, as well as with desires to find personal fulfilment (Pipher 1994: 20).

As a psychiatric oddity with her divided consciousness, Lady Cecily is figured as simultaneously strong- and weak-minded. Her resilience and determination are evidenced by her refusal to allow her training to completely stamp out her true identity; through her secret diaries (written in a backwards handwriting that can be read only through using a mirror) and her secret paintings, Lady Cecily's left-handed life flourishes. But the fragmentation of her psyche also makes her vulnerable to the pressures and manipulations of others. Her first kidnapper, the shop owner's son-cum-Socialist fanatic Alexander Finch, takes advantage of Cecily's weakened mental state by mesmerising her and then compelling her to run away from home to become his assistant as he preaches revolution to workers on the streets of London's East End. In order to free Lady Cecily from Finch's

mind control, Enola must access her left-handed personality, which, unlike the right-handed personality, is strong enough to resist Finch's coercions; only then does Lady Cecily have the mental faculties to recognise Finch as a scoundrel and reject him. Lady Cecily's fragmented consciousness gets her into trouble again in the fourth instalment of the series, this time when she is held captive by her overbearing aunts, who have planned, along with Lady Cecily's boorish father, to marry her against her will to her milksop cousin Bramwell Merganser. Although no mind control is used during her second kidnapping, is it again due to Cecily's weak-willed, right-handed personality that she can be shanghaied into marriage. When Enola speaks to her brother Sherlock about the case, she cannot believe that it would be possible for Cecily's family's plan to succeed, arguing that "While they can force her to the altar, surely they cannot, at the moment of truth, compel her actually to say 'I do'" (Springer 2008b: 107). Sherlock notes, though, that "Lady Cecily has shown herself to be susceptible to the strong will of another. She can be dominated [….] indeed [she] shows herself to be a vessel of rather unsteady course" (Springer 2008b: 107). Like so many other girls described in the Reviving Ophelia discourse, Lady Cecily is subject to the chaos of her own mind. Unlike Pippa's, however, her story's ending is a happy one: Lady Cecily is, once again, rescued by Enola and, by the close of the novel, seems to be settled on the road to recovery. Indeed, by the very end of the series, Enola finds herself eager to make a real friend of Lady Cecily and wonders whether "she might even consent to be a lady scholar along with me" (Springer 2010: 165).

It is significant that Enola and Lady Cecily, like Gemma and Pippa, feel such kinship with one another, and that they are responding to virtually the same cultural pressures and social conventions in healthy versus unhealthy ways. Through simultaneously engaging two contrasting discursive representations of girlhood, one associated with girl power and the other with the Reviving Ophelia discourse, both Springer's and Bray's novels seek to leverage their Victorian cultural contexts to present messages for contemporary girl readers regarding the stakes of adolescent identity development. In other words, viewed through the lens of contemporary popular psychology, they offer girl readers cautionary tales of identity fragmentation alongside empowering models for identity formation, which together can help girls more carefully and critically navigate the process of determining personal and political identities within their own cultural

context. Through their participation in the rhetoric of girl power, Bray and Springer both create neo-Victorian heroines whose resistance to hegemonic Victorian values seems designed to make them ideal role models for twenty-first-century adolescent female readers. Gemma and Enola each question authority, see through illusions, and struggle fiercely to take control of their lives – all behaviours that we often value and encourage in young women today. Similarly, in presenting secondary characters whose surrender to oppressive aspects of Victorian culture reflects characteristics of girlhood presented in the Reviving Ophelia discourse, Bray's and Springer's novels turn a sympathetic eye to problems that are considered common among girls today while also firmly discouraging these girls' behaviour as weak and self-destructive. In these novels' engagement with postmodern discourses on girlhood, then, we see adolescent literature's struggle with what Kate Mitchell identifies as a key issue in neo-Victorian fiction: "how to package the Victorian past for the tastes and demands of contemporary readers, how to make 'retro' accessible and, for that matter, commercially successful" (Mitchell 2010: 3). Through analysing the two variations on the trope of the adolescent girl's double life in these novels, we can see the ways in which the texts retrofit the Victorian period in order to help its inhabitants make choices with which contemporary audiences can identify.

Overall, my goal in this article is not so much to reject the possibility that the representations of girlhood found in these novels are rooted in the Victorian period, but rather to acknowledge the ways in which they clearly employ a postmodern critical lens in their portrayals of the Victorian girl. Certainly the representations of the empowered girl and the endangered girl as they are traced in these two series played a less significant role in late-Victorian understandings of girlhood than they have in the past twenty years, in large part because the concepts of girls as consumers, social actors, and psychological subjectivities that underpin these discourses had only begun to develop at the *fin de siècle*. If, as Gonick writes, the "sense of an unchanging and unchangeable self is […] problematized by postmodernism, which disrupts the possibility of an authentic self by noting the sociohistorical contingency of subjectivity" (Gonick 2006: 12), then perhaps there is ultimately simply one reason why these novels feature girl characters with double lives. Perhaps it is because, as neo-Victorian fictions representing Victorian girl subjectivities for the consumption of twenty-first-century girls, these novels have no choice but to present a fragmented,

multifaceted self – one that can be placed in both periods. Furthermore, it may seem odd for these texts to simultaneously engage two such seemingly conflicting discourses on girlhood, but Gonick's analysis of the intersections of these two discourses can offer insight into the ways that they can work together in a single text: both discourses

> encourage young women to work on themselves, through the dual campaigns of the Do-It-Yourself self-invention and 'girls can do anything' rhetoric of 'Girl Power,' as well as the self-help books and programs that are available to remedy girls in crisis. (Gonick 2006: 18)

Thus, through their portrayals of both girls who are strong and girls who are weak, Bray's and Springer's novels are able to address more fully the psychological and sociocultural concerns that their postmodern readers face.

Notes

1. Carroll's reference to neo-Victorian fiction as "a different way into the Victorian" borrows the words of Mark Llewellyn, who states in his seminal essay 'What Is Neo-Victorian Studies?' that "What the neo-Victorian represents, then, is a different way into the Victorians – for students and faculty alike. This is not contemporary literature as a substitute for the nineteenth century but as a mediator into the experience of reading the 'real' thing; after all, neo-Victorian texts are, in the main, processes of writing that act out the results of reading the Victorians and their literary productions" (Llewellyn 2008: 168).
2. For more on late-Victorian girl culture and how it was influenced by the New Woman movement, see Mitchell 1995.
3. Sally Mitchell notes that, while late-Victorian girl culture and its fiction "suggested new ways of being, new modes of behavior, and new attitudes that were not yet acceptable for adult women", it is also important to acknowledge that "the dream/ideal of girlhood in its archetypal form perhaps never did exist, or existed only for a very few girls" (Mitchell 1995: 3).
4. Riot Grrrl refers to a female counterculture that developed in the 1990s through the formation of punk bands, the publication of independent zines and

other DIY projects, and the proliferation of anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist messages. For more, see Gonick 2008.

5. Harris here quotes Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (Beck 1992: 135).
6. For further discussion of how Butler's theories relate to contemporary girlhood and girls' identity formation, see Currie et al. 2009 and Driscoll 2002.
7. Springer's are not the first modern mystery novels for female readers to play with the literary tradition of Sherlock Holmes; Laurie R. King's Mary Russell series, which began with the 1994 publication of *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* and currently includes twelve novels, also features a young heroine with an intellect for detection who meets and develops a relationship with Holmes. King's novels, however, set from 1915 through the 1920s, do not engage Victorian culture with the directness that Springer's novels do.

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