On (Neo-Victorian) Re-Visions and Foldings: Review of Rachel Carroll (ed.), *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities*

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This timely book addresses key issues in one of the most prevalent interdisciplinary fields in contemporary culture: adaptation. Carroll's edited book covers a wide-ranging selection of adaptations of classic and contemporary literary texts by well-known British and American writers, including Victorian representatives, but also discusses film adaptations, video games, and celebrity and children's cultures. The inclusion of such a diversity of print and media adaptations has both advantages and disadvantages: on the one hand, it offers a more comprehensive and democratic view of revisions and recyclings of a prior text, at times departing from the classic literary-cinematic relationship; but on the other, this all-encompassing perspective calls for a more profound examination of the theoretical underpinnings of the notion of 'adaptation' than the one provided by the editor in Chapter 1 ('Introduction: Textual Infidelities'). Admittedly, the introduction sets out the main premise of this collection, namely that "[a] film or television adaptation of a prior cultural text […] is inevitably an *interpretation* of that text: to this extent, every adaptation is an instance of textual *in*fidelity" (p. 2, original emphasis). In fact, fidelity, being one of the contested notions of adaptation studies, confers the main focus of attention and structuring principle that governs the first section (chapters 2 to 5), as each of the four sections revolves around "key critical paradigms for adaptation studies – fidelity, intertextuality, historicity and

authorship" (p. 2). Though in the past, fidelity was always the main subject of enquiry in adaptation studies, to the extent that, as Linda Hutcheon argues, "'fidelity criticism,' as it came to be known, was the critical orthodoxy in adaptation studies […,] [t]oday that dominance has been challenged from a variety of perspectives" (Hutcheon 2006: 6-7). The four essays grouped under the heading 'Remaking Fidelity' challenge received notions of fidelity to source texts as far as adaptation is concerned.

Chapter 2, Frances Babbage's 'Heavy Bodies, Fragile Texts: Stage Adaptation and the Problem of Presence', proves true to Julie Sanders' statement that "[a]nother genre that is engaged in self-conscious adaptation on a regular basis is the stage and film musical" (Sanders 2006: 23). Babbage's essay mainly concerns itself with Punchdrunk Theatre's *The Masque of the Red Death*, put on stage at Battersea Arts Centre in 2007-8, an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's gothic tales, which raises questions about stage adaptations of narrative texts, and about the diverse audience responses to well-known source texts like those of Poe's tales of terror. In analysing three stage adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) alongside her own subjective response to Punchdrunk Theatre's "dramatic intervention and interpretation" of Poe (adaptation as a term is disregarded by the company itself), she proposes that "participatory site-specific performance […] is a form that might provocatively 'adapt' texts and textuality in ways that delicately circumvent the excess of presence that too often overburdens adaptations for the stage" (pp. 16, 20). This essay underlines a key issue, not only pertinent to adaptation studies, but also to memory studies and, more generally, to contemporary (neo-Victorian) criticism: the question of presence.

In 'Reflections on the Surface: Remaking the Postmodern with van Sant's *Psycho*', Catherine Constable again addresses the problematic nature of fidelity in relation to the titular 1998 film. In this particular case the use of the term 'fidelity' in the promotion of the adaptation works against the contemporary reinterpretation and remake of the classic Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, released in 1960, since the adaptation 'faithfully' follows the classic *Psycho* even in the integrity of the texts, but is deprived of brilliance or emotional intensity. In other words, the contemporary reprise of *Psycho 60* turns out to be a perfect Baudrillarian instance of superficiality. A similar concern with superficiality is seen in Dana Shiller's seminal 1997 essay on the uses of the past in neo-Victorian fiction, where she comments on

Frederic Jameson's attack on postmodern historicity, as he finds "an ever-widening gap between the actual lived past and its representation" (Shiller 1997: 538). Constable counter-argues that, although van Sant's version of the classic sacrifices depths and secrets, it simultaneously creates new symbolism "through its deployment of bright pastel colours, performance style and road-movie references" in such a way that "*Psycho 98* displays the way in which playing with the surface creates the possibility of new meanings", thus shedding new light on the prior Hitchcock text (p. 32). Arguably, her insight could be adapted to self-conscious games with surfaces (i.e. stereotypical motifs, styles, and objects) in many neo-Victorian adaptations, where depthlessness can assume a metafictional and/or self-critiquing function about the production of historical meaning and simulacra.

The following chapter, entitled 'Affecting Fidelity: Adaptation, Fidelity and Affect in Todd Haynes's *Far from Heaven*', by the editor of the volume, further expands theories about fidelity and the rapidly emerging field of adaptation studies, much of which could have been easily incorporated into the introduction. Nonetheless, the theoretical and critical considerations fit perfectly well in her analysis of *Far from Heaven* as a free reinterpretation of Douglas Sirk's film *All That Heaven Allows* (1955). Indeed, for an adaptation of a 1950s movie, Carroll's discussion reveals inadvertent convergences with neo-Victorian concerns. There are several relevant issues at stake here: the role of cultural memory, the contested notion of fidelity, and the question of affect and feeling. In Carroll's view, Haynes's film follows "the woman's picture", a recognisable Hollywood genre that puts the emphasis on emotion and viewer identification. The affective component, characteristic of the Sirkian melodrama, is 'faithfully' adapted in Haynes's remake, "employed as embodying and expressing the tensions arising out of gendered, sexual and racial inequalities" (p. 42). Such gender politics and their 'updating', together with presenting historically marginalised (particularly women's) perspectives and blatant, even sensationalist appeals to viewer sensibilities, of course, also crucially inform neo-Victorian revisions in text and film. Finally, Carroll concludes her essay by suggesting the relevance of Patricia White's concept of 'retrospectatorship' to critically engage with the aforementioned issues. This productive term lends itself to new readings of past cinematic experiences, drawing attention to what was decisive, "formative and meaningful" (p. 43),

thus turning a passive spectator into a potentially subversive consumer. Again this term would appear to have mileage for future analyses of neo-Victorian adaptations and the exploration of neo-Victorian text and reader relationships.

The last chapter of Part I, 'The Folding Text: *Doctor Who*, Adaptation and Fan Fiction', by Christopher Marlow, taps into fan culture in examining the remakes of *Doctor Who* (from 2005 onwards) and the ways in which these have been adapted to suit contemporary needs. Marlow lucidly uses the Derridean term 'folding' to refer to the process of a text folding in upon itself, "in other words, specific narrative traits or sequences are adapted from one medium to another" (p. 47). Therefore, the BBC sci-fi *Doctor Who* (2005-) is an adaptation that quotes, assumes, problematises and destabilises story versions that appeared in the media between 1989 and 2003, e.g. on websites such as http://fanfiction.es/. Fan fiction testifies to the popularity of adaptation in contemporary culture, and plays an important part in the revival of this long-running drama, as online fan fiction writers provide adapted material for the series that folds itself back, in a non-linear mode, into the new *Doctor Who*. This chapter moves away from questions of fidelity, as this adaptation's prior text originates in other adaptations, that is to say, in the folding in of itself with the result of numerous iterations, which in turn destabilises the distinctions between authors and audiences. A similar tendency can be discerned in neo-Victorianism, with some novels adapting, transforming and recycling not only the Victorian text, but also contemporary adaptations, as when both Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) are folded back into D. M. Thomas's *Charlotte* (2000). Finally, Marlow's essay addresses how "the reader's participation in producing the work cannot be underestimated" (Bowler and Cox 2009/2010: 4). Neo-Victorian foldings, of course, encounter the added risk of younger generations of readers being more likely to have first-hand experience of previous adaptations of nineteenth-century source texts than of the source texts themselves, so that readers' "participation in produc[tion]" becomes different in kind.

Part II of the collection, entitled 'After-images', encompasses essays which tackle intertextuality as one of the main critical paradigms that has sustained adaptation studies. Pete Falconer, in "*3:10* Again: A Remade Western and the Problem of Authenticity", explores the implications of historical contexts. The films under examination are the two versions of the

Western *3:10 to Yuma* (Delmer Daves, 1957, and James Mangold, 2007), taking into account that the 1957 film is another adaptation of a story published in 1953. It remains clear that the Western works within certain generic conventions, and that these must be adapted to a contemporary audience. Interestingly, neo-Victorianism has also tackled the revision of the Wild West in novels like Tom Holland's *The Bone Hunter* (2001) or Barry Sonnenfeld's steampunk film *Wild Wild West* (1999), thus recreating the American rather than British nineteenth century. Pete Falconer undertakes an in-depth study of "three key iconographic elements: hats, horses and guns" (p. 62), present in the 1957 source film, but treated differently in the remake. The adapted version shows more and explains more, Falconer argues, as it has to take into account the dissipation of detailed historical knowledge about the nineteenth century among twenty-first-century audiences. Ultimately Falconer concludes that the infilling of the generic and socio-cultural context of the period recreated, as much as that of the moment of adaptation, suggests that "[p]erhaps all genre movies are adaptations" (p. 70).

In 'Child's Play: Participation in Urban Space in Weegee's, Dassin's, and Debord's Versions of *Naked City*', Joe Kember delves into another interesting aspect of adaptive practices: the transformation of the rhythms of the city into a text. This chapter examines the interplay of diverse texts about New York City, entitled *Naked City*, produced between the 1940s and 1950s, that aimed at translating the urban experience. In a highly original essay, Kember draws on Henri Lefebvre's 'rhythmanalysis' to consider the multiple rhythms of the city in an organised way. For example, Debord and Jorn's map, *The Naked City*, supposedly receives the name after Dassin's film, and has to be interpreted in the light of the Situationist International during the 1950s and 1960s, because this map blends a critical detachment (towards the city) and active participation (in the multiplicity of voices and rhythms). The figure of the 'walker' provides this combined attitude, neither inside nor outside, only achieved by adopting a marginal position, which characterises the experiential wanders of the walker around the metropolis, clearly perceived in the 99 episodes of the *Naked City* television series (p. 82). Kember's focus reflects the increasing importance of spatial studies in contemporary criticism, though the stroller might have been analysed alongside the nineteenth-century *flâneur* and its female counterpart, the *flâneuse*. Streetwalkers and urban strollers populate

the neo-Victorian streets in novels like Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), Sarah Waters's *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), and Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002). In addition, new critical spatial terms i.e. Marc Auge's "non-place" (Auge 1995: 86) could have provided a more nuanced reading into the aforementioned adaptations.

Chapter Eight, 'Charlotte's Website: Media Transformation and the Intertextual Web of Children's Culture' by Cathlena Martin, offers a case of "transmedia intertextuality and transmedia storytelling" in the multiple versions of E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* (1952), children's stories and video games included. Drawing on Jay David Bolter and Richard Brusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, a study of "our culture's current fascination with both transparent and hypermediated technologies of representation" (Bolter and Brusin 1999: 270), Martin argues that children's literature, and more precisely *Charlotte's Web*, proves a fruitful area for explorations into crisscrossing media representation. Not only was this 1952 novel adapted to animated film in 1973 and to a live action film in 2006, but also to other digital media such as the video game based on the 2006 film version. What matters here is the blurring of boundaries between the 'high' art of the print text and the 'low' cultural product of the video game, since children have become consumers of digital stories in recent years. One relevant aspect of the video game, as opposed to the print version of the story, is the disappearance of all references to death, a key issue in the novel, thus "presenting a sanitized version of *Charlotte's Web*" (p. 92), and also debunking the general notion that video games promote violence and death. In this particular aspect, the digital adaptation remains *un*faithful to the printed text, and in so doing, it comments on the (dis)appearance of violence in children's transmedia storytelling – a phenomenon curiously at odds with neo-Victorian young adult fiction such as Philip Pullman's Sally Lockhart series (1985-1994) or Linda Newbery's *Set in Stone* (2006).

The next essay, '"Stop Writing or Write Like a Rat": Becoming Animal in Animated Literary Adaptations' by Paul Wells, links up with the previous one in that it scrutinises animated films mainly targeted at children. The interface between animal and human is explored in three animated literary adaptations: Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), P. L. Travers's *Mary Poppins* series (1934, 1935), and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). Paul Wells employs the terminology utilised by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari of "becoming animal" (qtd. p. 101), to look into

similarities and differences between humans and animals in these adaptations. "Becoming animal" is a notion that stresses "the process of creativity, effectively defining the artist engaging with, or depicting, the animal as subject to a transcendent empathy" (p. 101).[1] The anthropomorphic representation of animals in these adaptations (and other animated films) usually empowers the human being who comes into close contact with the animal world, as happens in *Mary Poppins*. It might have been worth mentioning, however, that the human-animal connection in children's literature can be traced back to Victorian literature, as in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). The novel's in-between space, where animals and humans interact, resembles *Mary Poppins*'s transitional nature, placed between the Victorian and the Edwardian eras.

Part III, which comprises some essays directly addressing the prevalence of the Victorian age in contemporary adaptations, is of most immediate relevance to neo-Victorian scholars. While no contributor actually uses the term neo-Victorian – though Heather Emmens (chapter 12) employs "retro-Victorian novel" to refer to Sarah Waters' *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) – most of the adapted versions tackled in these essays could be referred to as neo-Victorian. Chapter 10, 'Historicizing the Classic Novel Adaptation: *Bleak House* (2005) and British Television Contexts', by Iris Kleinecke-Bates, engages with one of the most often-cited examples of neo-Victorian adaptation: the 2005 BBC adaptation of Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-53), scripted by Andrew Davies (who incidentally also scripted and directed the BBC adaptation of Sarah Waters's *Tipping the Velvet* discussed by Heather Emmens in a later chapter) and televised in December 2005 in 15 half-hour episodes. It seems that "*Bleak House* has undoubtedly influenced the subsequent direction of the genre" of costume drama (Louttit 2009: 36). Davies' adaptation engages with a contentious issue in neo-Victorianism, namely "the period's visual representation" (p. 117), since this is more often than not associated with indulgence and nostalgia. However, this adaptation, according to Kleinecke-Bates, attempts to present the Victorian period as complex, more diverse, and less overwhelmingly stylised. Finally, Kleinecke-Bates argues that the fascination with adapting the Victorian age shows signs of abating: "Currently, representations of the Victorian period seem to be slightly less popular" (p. 119). Yet in contradiction of her (premature) assessment, 2007 saw the adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, scripted by Heidi Thomas and widely

acclaimed by critics and the public alike (see Louttit 2009: 34; Byrne 2009/2010: 43). Neo-Victorian film adaptations continue to enjoy widespread popularity, as also evidenced by the most recent Sherlock Holmes film adaptation (Guy Ritchie, 2009).

In 'Embodying Englishness: Representations of Whiteness, Class and Empire in *The Secret Garden*', Karen Wells focuses on the 1993 adaptation, directed by Agnieszka Holland, of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (serialised 1910, publ. in novel form 1911), looking into representations of the child in relation to class and race within the well-known genre of 'heritage films', closely related to the deployment of national nostalgia for a Britain at the height of her colonial power. Wells views this adaptation's effected changes from the printed text to the film as "hav[ing] the effect of heightening the representation of whiteness in the film, and diminishing or erasing the novel's critique of class inequalities and its implicit critique of imperialism" (p. 125). Following the work of Richard Dyer on whiteness, Wells associates excessive whiteness and death, but notes that whiteness in the adaptation is usually connected with life, health and innocence. As far as class is concerned, the book and the film depict the protagonist Mary's relationship to Indian and English servants differently, and this is further explored in how questions of race and the empire are represented in the two mediums. Wells concludes that the film does not address colonialism at all, but rather privileges the psychological interplay between the characters. It is interesting to note, then, that the typical neo-Victorian stress on re-visiting past (class and racial) inequities may risk producing the contrary to intended effect and end up cancelling out any outright criticism of the imperial project.

Heather Emmens's 'Taming the Velvet: Lesbian Identity in Cultural Adaptations of *Tipping the Velvet*' examines Andrew Davies' BBC serial adaptation of Sarah Waters's neo-Victorian *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), as well as two lesser-known 'adaptations' of a different sort: "a semi-pornographic spread in *The Sun* newspaper, and a television parody by British comedy duo Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders" (p. 135). Emmens contends that by casting Rachael Stirling in the role of Nancy Astley, the film adaptation provides a disjunction between Stirling's unconvincing masculine look and her femininity; in her words, "[i]t is this specific representation of lesbian characters as feminine women that I call *femme-inization*" (p. 136, original emphasis), thus making lesbian characters the

object of heterosexual male desire. Interestingly, Emmens remarks that *The Sun* released its own adaptation of the serial in October 2002, a five-part Page 3 series that was entitled 'Victorian Secrets' (p. 137), clearly alluding to 'Victoria's Secret', the American lingerie brand. It remains clear that the captions and the phrases included in this serial are meant for male voyeuristic consumption; hence, the pseudo-lesbian imagery is only used to arouse male viewers' desire. Lesbian eroticism, domesticated as it is in Davies's adaptation, is replaced with male heterosexual desire in the tabloid (as well as in the broadsheet comments). The third adaptation discussed "appeared during *French and Saunders's* 'Celebrity Christmas Puddings' special on BBC One" (p. 142). The satirical impulse behind the grotesque scenes subverts and disrupts the male hetero-normativity perceived in both Davies's adaptation and the tabloid's semi-pornographic serial. Emmens concludes by suggesting that this parody satisfactorily portrays a positive representation of lesbian desire, in contrast to the stereotypical depiction of diluted lesbian identity in mainstream media.[2]

Chapter 13, entitled '"Who's the Daddy?": The Aesthetics and Politics of Representation in Alfonso Cuarón's Adaptation of P. D. James's *Children of Men*' by Terryl Bacon and Govinda Dickman, deals with the 2006 adaptation of James's titular dystopic novel in which the main focus is on sterility and the threat of extinction of the human species. According to Bacon and Dickman, Cuarón's adaptation strengthens stereotypical representations of class, gender and race. They argue that the adaptation of James's novel's themes, images and symbolism shows a tendency toward "*spectacularization*" (p. 153), that is to say, the appearance of an action movie within the conventions of "*megarealism*, epitomised by Cuarón's deployment of the cinematic code, *ThereCam*" (p. 154). According to Bacon and Dickman, the film displaces the ominous presence of extinction and death from white men to the racial and gendered other.

Part IV, 'Afterlives', is concerned with the biopic, given the renewed central position recently acquired by the author in contemporary culture. Rebecca D'Monté's 'Origin and Ownership: Stage, Film and Television Adaptations of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*' tackles the afterlife of du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1937-38) in stage, film and television adaptations. Whereas du Maurier herself adapted the novel for the stage, with little success, in 1940, Alfred Hitchcock took the responsibility of adapting the novel for the big screen. After spawning numerous sequels and 'prequels' as

far as the printed text is concerned, the novel was also adapted for television in 1979 and 1997. It cannot be forgotten that du Maurier's novel is itself a kind of adaptation, of which the main source text is Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). Therefore, this chapter is of special relevance to neo-Victorianism, which has recently witnessed the re-emergence of the 'Female Gothic' in novels such as Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1999), Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* (2002), and John Harwood's *The Ghost Writer* (2004). The stage adaptation has paled before Hitchcock's film version, which blends gothic elements and the 1940s woman's picture, as D' Monté argues (p. 166). In Hitchcock's adaptation, she identifies a shift from the female situated, voyeuristic perspective, perceptible in the novel, towards the male gaze: "[Joan] Fontaine's character is diminished through her assumption of a deeply traditional female role" (p. 168). Finally, in the two TV productions the heroine is a much stronger character than usual, who has benefited from the second-wave feminist achievements, not only as regards *Rebecca*, but also in relation to feminist revisions of *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca*'s own re-worked prior text. More specifically, the 1997 version, as do so many neo-Victorian texts, displays a more tolerant attitude towards sex, "with Maxim and his wife able to forge a union based on equality and desire" (p. 171).

Chapter 15, 'The Post-feminist Biopic: Re-telling the Past in *Iris*, *The Hours* and *Sylvia*', by Josephine Dolan, Suzy Gordon and Estella Tincknell, examines three films about three women writers – Iris Murdoch, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath – from the point of view of "the articulation of a familiar and decidedly pre-feminist discourse: that of the profound connection between women's writing and mental and emotional instability" (p. 174). Hence, implicitly, these texts look back on the legacy of nineteenth-century, gendered medical discourse, what Elaine Showalter famously termed 'the female malady' in her study of the same title. These three films – *Iris* (UK/US, 2001, dir. Richard Eyre), *The Hours* (US, 2002, dir. Stephen Daldry) and *Sylvia* (UK, 2003, Christine Jeffs) – engage with questions of authorship, public history, women's writing and the biopic genre. *Iris* centres on the author's physical and mental decline, but the cultural reception of her novels, for example, is glossed over, whereas John Bayley is depicted in a heroic mode, as a nurturing and comforting figure. *The Hours* aligns with postmodernist narrative techniques and

> mobilizes a complex literary intertextual web that includes [Michael] Cunningham's novel, Virginia Woolf herself, her diaries and letters, her biographies and biographers, *Mrs Dalloway* and its characters, and all the critical legacies that adhere to the reputations of Woolf and Cunningham. (p. 179)

In the light of the above quotation, the chapter (and the whole collection) would clearly have benefited from the wider application of the Derridean term 'folding' explored by Marlow in chapter 5, thereby strengthening the volume's theoretical backbone. Also, while feminism, post-feminism and masculinity are explored in the different time-frames and plotlines of the film, more might have been made of the way that Woolf's work itself often sought to explore the transformation, as well as insidious persistence, of nineteenth-century gender roles in the Modernist period. *Sylvia*, in turn, portrays Ted Hughes as a tragic hero who supports the creativity of Plath, always associated with motifs of madness and emotional turmoil. The three novels, to a greater or lesser degree, seem to displace the importance of these women writers' lives onto the male, who thrives at the expense of female creativity, problematically depicted as self-destructive and guilt-inducing.

In 'For the Love of Jane: Austen, Adaptation and Celebrity', Brenda R. Weber deals with adaptations of the life, literary and historical contexts of one of the most famous literary figures of the (albeit pre-Victorian) nineteenth century. Not only have television and film adaptations of Austen's novels reached wide popularity, but books inspired by her life and other Austen-related material have been consumed with frenzy by Austen fans. Weber traces the complexities resulting from scarce documents related to the writer's life, which has motivated speculations of all sorts. What remains clear, in her view, is the sorophilia Austen had with her sister, Cassandra. The 2008 production *Miss Austen Regrets* (co-produced between the BBC in London and WGBH in Boston) provides a particular scene between the sisters which accounts for the intimate bond between them: "their niece Fanny – and through her the at-home viewer – observes without the sisters' awareness, a sick and dying Jane [who] shares the screen with a concerned and sympathetic Cassandra" (p. 194). Their mutual declaration of love in this adaptation might support the idea of Jane Austen's personal experience to explain the in-depth treatment of love-

related matters in her novels, but Weber's analysis of Austen-mania seems to tone down the subversive and/or feminist potential underpinning many of the re-workings and re-visions.

Part IV (and the collection) ends with chapter 17, entitled '*Glamorama*, Cinematic Narrative and Contemporary Fiction' by Ruth Helyer. Fittingly, Bret Easton Ellis' cinematic novel *Glamorama* (1999) dissolves any boundaries between reality and illusion, source and adaptation, appearance and reality, in a sense superseding received notions and critical paradigms like originality, fidelity and intertextuality. This is a comedy about celebrity culture, which "illustrates the impact which cinematic culture has on both human experiences of reality and the construction of fictions about these realities" (p. 198). As such, it is overpopulated with camera operators, make-up technicians, and all sorts of people related to the film industry. Moreover, cinematic techniques pervade this novel as, for example, when one character dies, she is "tended not by an ambulance, whose paramedics may have tried to help her from the inside, but by a film crew, only interested in capturing the surface" (p. 203). In this novel the characters are mere 'copies', endlessly performing and acting out their identities, in what Ruth Helyer calls "[t]he prioritization of surface" (p. 204), which can be likened to Constable's earlier emphasis on *Psycho* as an instance of Baudrillarian superficiality.

I began my review by referring to this volume as 'timely'. Indeed, this collection has been published at a time when several studies on adaptation engage in current debates over the position of this cross-disciplinary field of enquiry within academia. 2009, for instance, saw the launch of a new journal, *Adaptation* (Oxford Journals), as well as Alexia L. Bowler and Jessica Cox's guest edited special issue of *Neo-Victorian Studies* on "Adapting the Nineteenth Century: Revisiting, Revising and Rewriting the Past" (2:2, Winter 2009/2010), which explores how the term (and process of) adaptation provides ample space for creative and artistic revisions of a particular historical period. Carroll's edited volume might be usefully read alongside both of these. All in all, *Adaptation in Contemporary Culture: Textual Infidelities* provides useful points of entry into the subject of adaptation, and it is highly recommended to those who wish to consider a range of different examples of transformations, recyclings and re-imaginings in contemporary culture, not just neo-Victorian ones. Nonetheless, the volume's concerns may also help inform

debates amongst neo-Victorianists, and undoubtedly the collection will be used for future reference by both specialists (in neo-Victorianism and adaptation studies), and the wider public.

Notes

1. At this point, neo-Victorianists might call to mind Jack Walser's encounter with the apes of Colonel Kearney's travelling circus in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984).
2. In October 2009 Amanda Whittington adapted Waters's novel for the stage, with the play hosted by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama at The Bridwell Theatre, London. It was directed by Katharine Rogers, and the designer was Tom Rogers, as publicised in the Guildhall School Events brochure (2009: 8). It seems only natural that a novel in which the music hall and the theatrical metaphor play such an important part should have attracted the interest of the playwright Whittington.

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