POWERFUL MIRRORS: NEO-VICTORIAN DOUBLING IN THE NOVELS OF LIBBA BRAY, CASSANDRA CLARE, AND KADY CROSS

Lisa Graham

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Approved by
Advisory Committee

Mark Boren
Katherine Montwieler

Katie Peel
Chair

Accepted by
Dean, Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

* A Great and Terrible Beauty*, *Clockwork Angel*, and *The Girl in the Steel Corset* offer adaptations of the Victorian novel. Through Lacan’s mirror image and Freud’s unheimlich theories, I will analyze how elements of the double—in the objects each novel’s heroine uses, in the representations of the self, and in the double worlds of each character—point to power. In each neo-Victorian novel, instances of the double suggest that Bray’s, Clare’s, and Cross’ contemporary heroines have redefined what it means to be a young Victorian lady. Instead of being traditionally read as weak and powerless, these double characteristics show instances of strength and power. In chapter one, I address how the double functions of objects provide the heroines with obvious and hidden strength. In chapter two, I consider the double self of these neo-Victorian heroines in order to suggest that their hidden selves reveal a secret, unknown power. Finally, in chapter three, I analyze the double worlds that each heroine travels between in order to understand how their private spheres give them strength and power in their public ones. Overall, I analyze each element of the double found in these neo-Victorian novels in order to suggest that Victorian texts may also be analyzed in a similar way in order to find a hidden power that many nineteenth-century heroines held.
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the adventure.
INTRODUCTION

Barnes and Noble, a nationwide bookstore, has lined its shelves with a recent genre title: Teen Paranormal Romance. The genre of Teen Paranormal Romance encompasses a number of sub-genres from the vampire romance to steampunk. Throughout my thesis, I will analyze a different sub-genre: contemporary neo-Victorian literature\(^1\). I will look at three notable contemporary neo-Victorian Young Adult novels, each the first in their series: Libba Bray’s *A Great and Terrible Beauty* (2003); Cassandra Clare’s *Clockwork Angel* (2010); and Kady Cross’ *The Girl in the Steel Corset* (2011). Each of these novels offers contemporary readers a postmodern fantastical adaptation of Victorian culture and its public and private spheres, Victorian fashions and functions, as well as anxieties of a double self that mimic the Victorian fears of the turn of the century and its effects.

Bray’s novel follows a young Victorian teen, Gemma Doyle, on her journey from India to London after her mother’s death. At the Spence Academy, the mansion of a boarding and finishing school that Gemma is sent to after her mother’s suicide, Gemma finds out that she is part of a secret group of women who have the power to access the Realms, a mystical world where Gemma and her friends have power and must fight evil forces that threaten to reveal themselves to Gemma’s “public” world. These Realms double as a private sphere for Gemma and her friends and a place where they can go to access power. Tessa Gray, the orphan heroine of *Clockwork Angel*, is a changeling who is forced to realize her powers of transformation; she is able to take the shape of anyone she desires, thus becoming their doppelganger. In her new home, the hidden demonic underground of Victorian London, Tessa must fight to get away from

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\(^1\) I have chosen to use the term contemporary neo-Victorian literature because reimaginings and revisions of Victorian texts and themes have been written since the 1960s. The texts that I will focus on throughout my thesis are from the twenty-first century and I want to distinguish them from texts written more than fifty years ago. For an interesting discussion of the various terms of Victorian revisions, see Andrea Kirchknopf’s “(Re)workings of Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Definitions, Terminology, Contexts.”
the magistrate, a man who wants to marry her and use her for his own purposes. The fatherless Finley Jayne of Cross’ novel, is pushed into the world as a governess and realizes her strength, strength that seems unnatural to her when it takes over her body as if she were someone else, when she fends off the sexual advances of her employer’s son and later the steampunk machines controlled by the novel’s villain.

Throughout my thesis, I will suggest that each neo-Victorian novel foregrounds specific elements of the double because they are doubles of Victorian texts, and their doubling mirrors the doubling that occurs within the Victorian texts upon which the neo-Victorian are based. Through the analysis of the double functions of objects, lives, and selves, I will express how the neo-Victorian novel acts as both a protector of the Victorian novel and a way to bring to light a possibly unseen feminist perspective that has always existed in Victorian novels: that heroines have their own power and they use this agency to protect their own identification with that power. To better understand the functions of neo-Victorian literature, it is worthwhile to approach the genre through a psychoanalytic lens. Freud’s theories of “The Uncanny” and Lacan’s “mirror phase” both point to interesting possibilities: the double functions of objects, the double self, and the double life in neo-Victorian literature suggest that neo-Victorian novels reveal discourses of power that were always already in existence in Victorian literature, but remained hidden.

In Freud’s account of “the uncanny,” he notes a double meaning of “unheimlich,” which translates to uncanny in English. The uncanny can be defined as “that which is familiar and congenial” and “that which is concealed and kept out of sight” (Freud 28). Freud suggests that

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2 Bray’s, Cross’, and Clare’s novels make reference, specifically and thematically, to Carmilla (1872), Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), Jane Eyre (1847), Lady Audley’s Secret (1861), The Woman in White (1859), and Confessions of an English Opium-Eater (1821).
what is uncanny is something familiar that has been repressed. After establishing a definition of *uncanny*, Freud then suggests that there are multiple instances of uncanny feelings. He explains that supernatural elements, questions of whether or not objects are alive, doubles and doppelgangers, and all seeing eyes produce uncanny feelings in many individuals. For example, Freud writes that “a particularly favorable condition for awakening uncanny sensations is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not” (Freud 37). Freud uses his analysis of the uncanny to suggest a larger connection: anxieties produced by the familiar yet unknown feelings that subjects call uncanny stem from the revelation of hidden secrets which have been “estranged only by the process of repression” (Freud 47). Neo-Victorian literature attempts to elicit uncanny feelings within the characters themselves and the readership through themes similar to those in Freud’s analysis.

One such theme is that of the double that reoccurs throughout Bray’s, Clare’s, and Cross’ fiction. The neo-Victorian novel is a double in and of itself; it is a mirrored reflection of the Victorian. According to Lacan’s theories of the mirror phase, “the child identifies with its mirror image which it perceives as a stable and fixed whole, but it experiences itself as fragmented, partial and changeable” (McCallum 88). If the neo-Victorian novel is the child text looking into the mirror, it sees its Victorian counterpart as whole; the Victorian is the Ideal I. The neo-Victorian text, then, is a double of the Victorian “other.” Lacan theorizes that an individual’s identity is created by their relationship to the other, and the other is only one half of a whole. The child text that looks into the mirror and sees its other needs that other to complete itself; the neo-Victorian novel not only idealizes the Victorian, but requires it for a full sense of self. Further, as McCallum states, “the position of the other is analogous to that of the author, in that the other ‘authors’ the subject” (McCallum 72). In this sense, the Victorian other is the author of the neo-
Victorian novel, and vice-versa, because, by analyzing the neo-Victorian, readers are given the opportunity to revisit the Victorian and reconsider the original. Finally, McCallum interprets Lacan’s theories and further explains that the double “is a substitute or proxy, which also constructs selfhood as a form of absence, and thus threatens to take the place and efface the self” (McCallum 81). The neo-Victorian novel as a double, then, stands to redefine how readers interpret and understand Victorian literature.

If psychoanalytic theory suggests that the other is an idealized image of the self that is necessary for the self to feel complete, then the neo-Victorian novel is necessary for the Victorian novel to be complete, and vice versa. Post-modern interpretations of neo-Victorian literature already explain how neo-Victorian texts would not exist without the Victorian “other”: Neo-Victorian fictions are “those works which are consciously set in the Victorian period… or which desire to re-write the historical narrative of that period by representing marginalised voices, new histories of sexuality, post-colonial viewpoints and other generally ‘different’ versions of the Victorian” (Llewellyn 165). A psychoanalytic interpretation, however, suggests that the Victorian text would not exist without its neo-Victorian double. Of course, had authors never re-interpreted the Victorian, had the genre of neo-Victorian never been written, Victorian literature would still exist. What this doubling might actually suggest, then, is that with the revisions of Victorian literature, and by viewing these revisions through post-modern and psychoanalytic lenses, readers may better recognize certain themes that exist more clearly in neo-Victorian literature, but have actually always existed in Victorian literature and may have been overlooked.

The example of this that I will focus on throughout my thesis is that of protection and power. Double themes exist in *A Great and Terrible Beauty*, *Clockwork Angel*, and *The Girl in
the Steel Corset in the form of the double space or landscape, where the heroine must navigate both the world of traditional Victorian society as well as a hidden world where she and a select few are considered privileged enough to be invited in. The double also exists through themes of materiality in which Victorian fashions are enhanced to offer the neo-Victorian heroine added security, as well as doppelgangers of the self that provide power and protection to the heroine in need. Each double function—of space, materiality, and self—exists to protect the neo-Victorian heroine. When analyzing the double throughout each text, it becomes clear that the protection and agency does not come solely from a source outside the heroine, but rather from something long connected to her. For instance, Gemma’s power in the Realms is given to her through the teachings of her mother; Tessa’s protection of her body comes from her own ability to shape shift and from a necklace that once belonged to her mother; and Finley’s strength and control come from an internal nature that was sparked by the scientific discoveries of her father.
THE DOUBLE OBJECT

In *Clockwork Angel*, Tessa Gray, a girl with the ability to change her identity through shape shifting, is represented as both an object and a double self. Readers first get a glimpse of Tessa through Clare’s description of her reflection in the mirror: “her reflection made her wince. There was the pale oval of her face dominated by hollow gray eyes—a shadowed face without color in its cheeks or hope in its expression” (Clare 16). Tessa is gray. She is colorless; she is a mold waiting to be formed. Tessa’s initial characterization does not set her up as a whole form, a human with an identity, but rather a face. She is, initially, nothing but an object waiting for an identity. Even the pronouns with which Clare describes Tessa attempt to characterize her as less than human. Tessa is not a she; instead, she is an it. Her reflection, in Lacanian terms, is that of a fragmented body, a mirror image that causes the subject, in this case Tessa, to recognize that she is not whole.

Clare’s heroine is forced to realize her hidden power—the ability to change into the shape of anyone by accessing a hidden spirit that lives inside an object once belonging to the subject. Tessa’s captors, the Dark Sisters who lured Tessa from New York to London, reinforce her characterization as an object with a hidden, double function:

> They’d told her to imagine herself as clay, being shaped and molded on the potter’s wheel, her form amorphous and changeable. They’d told her to reach down into the objects they’d given her, to imagine them as living things, and to draw out the spirit that animated them. (Clare 20)

As an unformed being, Tessa has the ability to take any physical identity. In her study on Lacan, desire, and subjectivity in children’s fiction, Karen Coats explains that “identity in psychoanalytic parlance refers to the more public, social presentation of the self—the part over
which we have the most control” (Coats 5). Tessa, however, is unable, at this point in her life, to control her identity, to perform the desired ideal of self-presentation (Coats 5). Her malleable form, a form that becomes apparent to her when she looks in the mirror, represents an image of a double. According to Robyn McCallum, who traces identity in adolescent fiction, the double “is frequently used in narrative to explore the idea that personal identity is shaped by a dialogic relation with an other and that subjectivity is multiple and fragmented” (Coats 75). Tessa’s body, as an object that is changeable and as a doppelganger to her “true self,” is shaped by other objects, and other people, dead or alive, when she transforms. Neo-Victorian literature takes a similar shape. It represents a fragmented and changeable form of an original.

At times, Tessa questions whether or not her identity is indeed her own. She thinks to herself, “What if one of the times I Changed [sic], when I turned back into myself, I didn’t do it quite right? What if this isn’t even my true face?” (Clare 65). In his account of the mirror stage, Lacan notes that part of this stage is the realization and recognition of an other that is reflected in the mirror. In Tessa’s mirror, the other is the shape she takes when bending her body to the demands of the Dark Sisters, and eventually to those of her own desires. Regardless of how much Tessa appears to dislike her ability and her multiple forms, her double self is necessary for her own identity. According to McCallum, “the idea of a unique, singular and essential self is an assumption which underlies a person’s own sense of, or more specifically desire for, a single and stable personal identity within, and in relation, to the world and to others” (McCallum 68). Without her ability, an ability that leaves her questioning who she is, Tessa would view her identity as fragmented. While this view would be accurate, because her identity is fragmented, it would also be problematic for Tessa because she requires, as psychoanalytic theory suggests, an
identity that appears to be whole. Ironically, her powers which leave her feeling broken and chipped are also what allows her to maintain a holistic identity.

Tessa’s body is not the only object that is used to shape her identity. Tessa’s identity is formed, literally and figuratively, by the objects she touches. The first glimpse readers get of Tessa’s power to change is when she is handed a young girl’s bow. Tessa draws upon the life inside each object in order to transform her body into the object’s previous owner: “She opened her mind and let the darkness come down, let the connection that bound her to the hair ribbon and the spirit inside it—the ghostly echo of the person who had once owned it—unravel like a golden thread leading through the shadows” (Clare 21). The language Clare uses to describe her shape shifting reflects the double elements at work. The term “echo” represents a repetition, a doubling. This doubling, Tessa literally becoming the young girl who once wore this bow, is caused by a connection to the past that pulls her through a world of shadows, according to Freud, a world of doubles. In order to change, she requires an object with a “spirit” that animates it. This spirit connects Tessa to something old, which was once familiar to the object and will soon be familiar to Tessa, but the connection is also foreign to her because she experiences someone else’s life: Tessa “opened her mind and let the darkness come down, let the connection that bound her to the hair ribbon and the spirit inside it—the ghostly echo of the person who had once owned it—unravel like a golden thread leading through the shadows” (Clare 21). In his essay on the uncanny, Freud expands upon E. Jentsch’s theory that uncanny feelings arise due to many factors including the doubt as to “whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate” (Freud 31). The hair bow that Tessa uses is animated with the spirit of a little girl. It connects her to a

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3 Freud suggests that experiences of the uncanny occur less often in fiction because readers suspend their disbelief. He explains that many instances of the uncanny in reality are not uncanny in fiction because when readers pick up a book, they submit themselves to the author’s reality of infinite possibilities. Readers will generally only experience
previous time and a person who is no longer alive. Tessa becomes an echo, a double, of that time and person: a young, poor working girl who was murdered by a demon.

As Tessa transforms, readers see the dual nature of the objects she uses. Not only do these objects symbolize femininity and materialism, as they are objects that appear to enhance a girl’s beauty, but they also act as a type of spirit guide that allows Tessa to become a doppelganger, a double of the previous owner. Her transformations, however, are not trivial; they provide her with a necessary protection. The young girl’s bow allows her to change into a smaller child. After the Dark Sisters deem her ready to be presented to The Magister, a man who wants to marry Tessa because of her ability, they tie her to a bed so that she will not escape before the wedding ceremony. Tessa, who could “Change into someone a second time, without touching something that had belonged to them” (Clare 33-34), reshaped her body and slipped the girl’s smaller hands through the ropes on the bed. Tessa’s lack of power while she is tied to the bed represents the perceived submission of a woman not only throughout marriage but during the consummation of that union. Doubling herself protects Tessa from anyone who might do her harm because it lets her escape her captors. Through the double, Clare gives her heroine the freedom to choose her sexual fate, to decide whether she will submit to her forced future husband or not. Tessa is empowered as she breaks free from the bonds of an arranged marriage and the prospect of losing her virginity. *Clockwork Angel* gives agency to its heroine through the theme of the double. Many of these neo-Victorian novels do the same, suggesting that an added element to these Victorian reworkings is feminine power.

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uncanny sensations if the author does not prepare them for uncanny possibilities, like the doubling of shape shifting. In Clare’s novel, then, the uncanny is only a feeling that Tessa can experience. Any uncanny feelings experienced by readers would happen upon Tessa’s first changing, and after that the audience would be prepared for the double. This idea can be connected to the neo-Victorian text on another level. It suggests that readers are familiar with hidden Victorian discourses of power and need only be reminded of these once before they become clear. It may even suggest that once readers experience the neo-Victorian, they can re-experience the Victorian and will notice what appears to be repressed: power and agency.
After escaping the confines of The Dark House, Tessa is brought to The Institute, a home for Shadowhunters who protect humans from mythical Downworlders. There she must prove that she is a Downworlder and not just a human desperately seeking charity. After the group quizzes Tessa on exactly what her ability is, Tessa borrows another Shadowhunter’s, Jessamine’s, ring and becomes her double:

Jessamine was gazing at her in abject horror, like someone who has seen a vision of their own ghost. For a moment Tessa felt a stab of guilt. It lasted only a moment, though. Slowly Jessamine lowered her hand from her mouth, her face still very pale. “Goodness, my nose is enormous,” she exclaimed. “Why didn’t anyone tell me?” (Clare 74)

Until Tessa can prove that she is a part of their world, she is an outcast. Jessamine’s joke, upon seeing her own double, suggests that she accepts Tessa and her own ability. Here, because of Tessa, Jessamine experiences Lacan’s mirror phase. She sees herself holistically and fragmented as she observes Tessa as a whole while simultaneously recognizing what she perceives as an imperfection in her body. Tessa has protected herself socially not only by identifying with the Shadowhunters but also by showing that Jessamine can identify with her, with a girl who is fragmented too. Further, in exchange for offering a glimpse of what she can do, and by literally becoming one of the Shadowhunters, however temporarily, Tessa gains the protection of The Institute and those who dwell inside it.

Her final shape shifting performance occurs when the Shadowhunters attempt to use Tessa to infiltrate The Pandemonium Club, a group of Downworlders who practice dark, illegal

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If The Institute offers a protection for Tessa, who is running from the sexual bonds of marriage, then this suggests that The Institute stands as an advocate for marriage as more than just an agreement between two men. For example, in Bray’s novel, Pippa is forced into an arranged marriage in order to settle her father’s gambling debts. The Institute might even reverse the idea that marriage is a man’s bargain. Interestingly, Jessamine notes that Charlotte Branwell, leader of The London Institute, only married Henry Branwell in order for power, that she could not be in charge without a male counterpart. Including the fact that Tessa later characterizes Charlotte as powerful, yet completely in love with her husband, The Institute might represent a reversal of traditional marriage agreements and a more postmodern view of marriage as a union of love.
magic in secret. Tessa is asked to take the shape of Camille. Instead of a girl’s bow or a delicate ring, Tessa pulls Camille’s spirit out through a ruby necklace. Before Tessa changes into Camille on the night of the club gathering, she tries out her new skin with a practice round. As Tessa changes and experiences the hollow, dead feeling of what it is like to be a Vampire, the real Camille explains, ‘You will have to practice a bit, moving and holding yourself, if you wish to convince de Quincey that you are me…I would never lump in a chair like that.’ She tilted her head to the side. ‘Still, overall, an impressive showing. Someone trained you well’ (Clare 187). Tessa shape shifts a third time to protect herself and Camille. She wears Camille’s disguise in order to protect herself from The Magister, but she also must perform Camille. This performance will ensure that Camille, who is betraying her long term vampire friend, de Quincey, is protected against any one realizing that she is the traitor amongst the club. Here, the double functions in another way, not simply giving the heroine power, but additionally keeping both the original, Camille, and the double, Tessa, protected.

Tessa does not have a double of herself, and yet she changes into doubles of other women. Interestingly, this change suggests a progression of feminine growth and acceptance into the society of Downworlders (non-human creatures). Clare’s neo-Victorian heroine makes herself a double of others, temporarily assuming their identities. This malleability, in general, allows Tessa to move in and, more importantly, out of social institutions, such as marriage and sexual submission. In this sense, the neo-Victorian novel and its doubling can be used to re-interpret the Victorian novel in order to re-consider the traditional readings of fictional Victorian women that render them powerless.

It is also important to note that every object which allows Tessa to change into its original owner is a representation of femininity and materialism. In Clockwork Angel, the bow, ring, and
necklace exhibit a dual function. They are all items that women can adorn themselves with for beauty’s sake, and they can also be used to help Tessa “change,” revising yet protecting her identity. Tessa, however, is not the only neo-Victorian heroine who uses objects to protect herself.

The function of these objects as protective devices reveals what one scholar might suggest is more characteristic of Victorian materiality. Most see Victorian fashions as oppressive and restrictive, and in many cases they certainly were. Modern studies have shown that “a tight corset does indeed push the ribs significantly in and up, altering the position of internal organs” (Steele 69), and that “people who wear corsets do get out of breath easily” (Steele 70). This physical constraint is even recognized by the young women of A Great and Terrible Beauty as Gemma often makes reference to her physical limitations while wearing a corset. She notes that she does not trust her friend Felicity “farther than [she] can run fullsteam in a corset,” mimicking the phrase “I don’t trust her farther than I can throw her.” Further, this physical limitation forces a woman to be constantly dependent. For example, Gemma requires assistance when dressing herself because she cannot tighten the corset strings by herself. Thus, in one sense, the corset is physically restrictive and oppressive. Similar to Camille’s posture, the corset is a sign of Victorian status and class that reflects the stereotype of the controlled tension.

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5 The neo-Victorian novel functions in the same way for practicality’s sake. While these Victorian rewritings ultimately function as tools for reassessment of the Victorian originals, neo-Victorian novels also exist to preserve, i.e. protect, their Victorian counterparts. Mark Llewellyn suggests 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 168). Llewellyn suggests that by teaching the neo-Victorian novel, a novel that students may more easily relate to, educators will inspire students to read Victorian texts as well.

6 In her article, “In Which Parasols Prove Useful”: Neo-Victorian Rewriting of Victorian Materiality,” Amy Montz suggests that neo-Victorian fashions in literature have been rewritten to incorporate both beauty and use into an object (Montz 106-7). She notes that these once oppressive fashions have been redesigned to help their owners “explore possibilities for agency and self-assertion” because neo-Victorian novels have uncovered a function of materiality that has always existed in Victorian fashion and that offers power and protection to their heroines (Montz 107).
women were supposed to maintain, often viewed as uptight. The corset and many other Victorian fashions have an underlying function, however, that most do not recognize as existing when corsets were at the top of the fashion chain: protection. In this sense, the neo-Victorian novel has illuminated a function of fashion that empowers women and gives them control.

In *The Girl in the Steel Corset*, Finley Jayne’s corset defines her as a warrior. In Cross’ neo-Victorian novel, what is generally considered an oppressive garment is Finley’s armor:

A steel corset—thin, shiny bands with embossed flowers and leaves, held together with tiny hinges to allow ease of movement. Little gears and other decorative pieces of steel were soldered over some of the larger gaps between bands. The garment looked like an industrial metal flower garden. (Cross 265).

Unlike the characterization of Gemma’s corset in Bray’s novel, Finley’s undergarment is not restrictive. It is surprisingly “snug but allowed her to bend and move as well or better than regular underclothes” and it is “light and comfortable” (Cross 266). Finley’s confident double self often places her in situations that could compromise her safety, and the ability to maneuver her body easily and without restriction, an ability only provided by her steel corset, is necessary for her own protection.

In addition to enhancing her mobility, Finley’s corset protects her from others. Interestingly, the corset as a fashion has an “undeniably sexual nature” (Summers 64). Simultaneously, Victorian fashions were often used to protect women from sexual advances while suggesting that a woman could be sexually attractive to a man (Steele 35, Montz 105). For example, shawls wrapped around the shoulders could be used to cover what might have been seen as a sexually appealing image created by a corset (Montz 105). Finley’s corset protects her from both physical harm and sexual advances. Emily, the genius scientist who invented Finley’s
corset, describes the piece as “small enough that bullets and most blades won’t be able to get through, and if someone hits you the bounder’s going to break a knuckle or two” (Cross 265). Bullets and blades act as both physical threats and representations of phallic objects that are equally threatening to a woman. Toward the end of *The Girl in the Steel Corset*, Finley finds herself fighting Queen Victoria’s automaton doppelganger, a device created by the novel’s antagonist: Garibaldi. The automaton Victoria has guns for hands and fires “a hail of bullets” at Finley (Cross 453). After Victoria’s weapons are disarmed, the machine continues to beat Finley with its “useless gun arms”: “The headless Victoria whirled, striking her across the back and the ribs with enough force to send her into the wall hard and she crashed to the floor, but she was on her feet again as soon as she caught her breath” (Cross 454). Cross’ descriptions make it unclear whether or not Finley’s corset was hit with and deflected the bullets from Victoria’s gun; however, readers can interpret that it is Finley’s corset that protects her from the heavy hits of Victoria’s metal arms, simply leaving her short of breath for a few moments. These metal threats do not seem to stand a chance against Finley’s impenetrable corset. Additionally, Finley wears her corset when she is invited by Jack Dandy, London’s notorious bad boy, to Pick-a-Dilly Circus. Jack and Finley share some flirtatious banter that suggests Jack is attracted to Finley, and vice versa. Jack states, “P’rhaps I wanted to see if your will was any stronger than mine. I invited and you came. I think you like me, Treasure” (Cross 278). As Finley is assessed by Jack Dandy, she is also assessed by others who watch as her life is threatened by another automaton. Cross writes, “Those who hadn’t fled in panic had watched the entire altercation, and now they drew closer, closing in like curious cats, eager for a peek at the girl who had just destroyed a machine literally with her bare hands” (Cross 280). Cross’ language seems to take on a semi-sexual tone, which mirrors the conversation with Jack. The audience gazes upon Finley; they are “eager for a
peek.” What they finally see is “the bodice of Finley’s costume was torn, revealing what appeared to be a metal corset beneath” (Cross 280). At this point in the text, Finley’s corset both sexualizes her, as the newspaper headlines read “Automaton’s Reign of Terror Brought to Efficient End by Mysterious Girl in a Steel Corset!” and “Duke of Greythorne Whisks Extraordinary Damsel Out of Arms of Notorious Dandy” (Cross 285), and protects her from Jack Dandy’s attempts to seduce her as it acts as her armor. Thus, she is not only protected from the literal blades of her enemies, but also from the advances and sexual attempts of others. Finley’s corset serves a double function as a representation of Victorian materiality and of the physical protection it affords. This doubling not only empowers women with the opportunity to entrance others through the power of the gaze, but it also gives the heroine the ability to cut off that gaze and protect herself from any unwanted attention. Here, the neo-Victorian novel offers readers the option of revisiting Victorian materiality with the mindset that a woman wearing a corset used a traditionally oppressive object to empower herself.

The corset is not only a material object, but also a sign of agency. In The Girl in the Steel Corset, Cross re-writes Victorian fashions in order to encompass both functions of the object: to sexualize and protect. Women in neo-Victorian novels are given the agency not only to sexualize themselves through performance—by wearing something that is seen as overtly sexual like a corset—but also to protect themselves from the physical advances of other individuals, particularly men.

Finley’s corset is not the only gleaming piece of metallic beauty that offers protection to the neo-Victorian heroine. Returning to A Great and Terrible Beauty, readers find that Gemma Doyle has a necklace, passed down from her mother after death that protects her and is considered a sort of talisman. Gemma’s necklace was given to her moments before her mother
died. At the Spence Academy, Gemma quizzes her teacher about the crescent moon and eye symbol on her necklace, hoping to gain more information about its origins: ‘Why would someone have given my mother the crescent eye?’ Miss Moore ponders this. ‘I suppose someone must have thought she needed protection’ (Bray 131). According to Miss Moore, the symbol offers the wearer some amount of safety, and it is no coincidence that Gemma’s mother died after she took the necklace off and gave it to her daughter. Gemma’s necklace, while intricate and beautiful, has a second function. It is a guard that protects Gemma as she enters the realms and confronts Circe, Bray’s antagonist.

Tessa Gray, Clare’s heroine in *Clockwork Angel*, also has a necklace that offers a more literal form of protection. Tessa’s necklace, a tiny clockwork angel that once belonged to her mother, is literally her guardian angel who comes to her aid when she becomes incapable of fending off automaton predators:

> The chain around her neck was vibrating and twitching. She managed to look down, her vision, blurred, and saw to her amazement that the little metal angel had emerged from beneath the collar of her dress; it soared upward, lifting the chain over her head. Its eyes seemed to glow as it flew upward. For the first time its metallic wings were spread, and Tessa saw that each wing was edged with something simmering and razor-sharp. (Clare 405)

Tessa’s necklace, what was once a pretty ornament and reminder of her mother, is now a device that defends her. Tessa views this object as such an integral part of herself—she is often seen clutching the clockwork angel whenever she feels nervous or alone—and it could be argued that the clockwork angel is a projection of her internal self. In this sense, the clockwork angel acts as a strength and guardian that Tessa may not even know she holds within her. While contemporary readers view Victorian materiality as suffocating, analyzing the double functions of fashion as portrayed by neo-Victorian texts suggests the possibility that these fashions were actually
liberating, providing power to the female wearer.\footnote{In my thesis, I wish to suggest that after analyzing the double in neo-Victorian novels to find a hidden power given to Victorian heroines, readers should reconsider Victorian texts themselves in order to search for the same power. One text to consider is Jane Eyre. In Bray’s novel, Gemma makes reference to gendered Victorian dress when she sees that her art teacher has a pocket watch and notes that she has “never seen a woman carry a man’s watch before, and it only deepens the mystery that is Miss Moore” (Bray 132). At the end of Jane Eyre, the location of Bronte’s novel that gives Jane power over Mr. Rochester because of the loss of his sight, Mr. Rochester notices the chain of Jane’s pocket watch. This seemingly insignificant detail, after analyzing neo-Victorian materiality, can actually be viewed as a fashion that gives Victorian heroines power.}

In addition to the corset and necklace, the parasol is another fashionable object that projects a disguise of feminism while offering the owner security and added defense. Similar to Tessa’s clockwork necklace, which is razor-sharp, Jessamine owns a parasol that, on the outside, looks unaltered, however, its edges are lined with a razor-sharp fabric. The parasol has been altered in Clare’s neo-Victorian novel to fit the needs of a heroine who walks around unaccompanied and needs a weapon. This idea mimics the double function of the corset. The parasol acts as a type of barrier between a woman’s delicate skin and the sun as well as a woman’s body and any unwanted onlookers. While the parasol has always been a weapon of sorts to combat undesired looks, its function as a weapon is even more explicit in Clockwork Angel because Jessamine uses it to fend off the advances of a goblin: “with a flick of Jessamine’s wrist, the parasol burst open like a flower…She struck at the goblin again, and now Tessa could see that the edges of Jessamine’s parasol gleamed an odd white, and were as sharp as razors…She slashed at him again with the parasol, and again” (Clare 138-39). Despite the fact that Jessamine never wanted to use her parasol other than to shade her fair complexion from the sun, she ultimately needs this double function to protect herself because she walks through London without any other chaperone capable of defending her. As the parasol’s hidden function protects Jessamine, it also offers her an unusual independence.

The association between the double function of corsets and their ability to provide protection and agency, the association between the doubled necklace and its previous owner, and
the association between a parasol that offers protection of two kinds recalls Freud’s theories of repression. If the theme of the double suggests that a double object is a repression of something, then readers must ask what was it that was being repressed? Contemporary readers tend to think that female agency and independence were repressed by these signs of suppression, but Freud also argues that what is repressed is actually always present, always “worn.” Assuming that what is repressed does exist, then, readers must look for agency within what is shown. The neo-Victorian novel suggests that those articles of suppression may also have been articles of expression as well. This is a way to bring to light what has once been repressed and that, which is seen through a psychoanalytic reading of double functions of objects, is that the Victorian novel has always had heroines who have agency and power.
Curiously, Cross plays with a similar idea that expresses the central argument of my thesis: the neo-Victorian novel stands as a double for the Victorian. Finley’s primal self that takes over and leaves her without memories of a few hours of her life in each instance parallels Robert Luis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). Dr. Jekyll, a scientist who experiments with the good and evil sides of himself is Cross’ inspiration for Finley’s father, Thomas Sheppard. Not only does Cross write that “Thomas Sheppard had been conducting experiments with his father on the dark vs. pure side of human nature” (Cross 212), but she also uses Stevenson’s novel as inspiration for her own in which one of her secondary characters is the inspiration for Stevenson’s novel: “I can’t imagine how she feels knowing her father was the inspiration for Jekyll and Hyde….Sheppard was careless. There was gossip. Of course he provoked Stevenson’s interest” (Cross 210). Finley Jayne has a repressed shadow self that frightens and empowers her. This self was passed down from her father’s experiments: “She was the way she was because her father had been experimenting on himself when he impregnated her mother” (Cross 204). It is the source of her anxiety throughout Kady Cross’ *The Girl in the Steel Corset*. Finley’s uncanny feelings toward her shadow self suggest that she has repressed this seemingly unnatural self until it becomes necessary for her to use it. Her double self is powerful, commanding, and masculine while the other side of Finley, the side that she considers her “true nature,” is weak, small, and anxious. Despite her repressions, she realizes that in order for her to protect herself, physically and mentally, she must unite her two halves.

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8 Interestingly, Stevenson also contemplated gendered characteristics with Dr. Jekyll, who is characterized as a kind and soft man, while Mr. Hyde is described as a strong snarling savage. The fact that both Finley and Dr. Jekyll have a repressed inner self that is more evil in nature than the self they portray, or attempt to portray, might further suggest a reconsideration of Victorian themes of publicity. Cross’ novel acknowledges the façade of the Victorian...
Finley describes her conflicting selves as two different sides of her personality. When Finley’s darker personality surfaces, Cross writes that Finley “wasn’t under anybody’s control. Not even her own. She could feel it fracturing as something deep inside fought to get out” (Cross 108). Throughout her life, Finley has subconsciously repressed one side of her dual nature and it has left her fractured. Post-Freudian analysis on the double in adolescent literature has shown that in order for a subject to relate to the world and others within it, a person requires a sense of self that is complete and whole (McCallum). The double represents a separation of that whole. A doppelganger or, in Finley’s case a split personality, suggests that the subject is not complete. Finley, because she requires a holistic sense of self, needs to maintain both aspects of her personality, whether or not she can control one, in order for her to have an identity. Her “fractured” internal feelings represent her identity—both whole and split at the same time.

Finley’s fractured self is further described as something primal: “she looked almost wild…There had been something untamed in her features, something fierce” (Cross 114). As Finley protects her virtue from her boss, Lord Felix, her darker nature takes over and speaks to him. Cross writes, “The voice was hers but deeper and throatier than she’d ever heard it before. It was a dangerous voice” (Cross 109). A deeper voice implies more masculine qualities, and, paired with the strength of her primal instincts, it characterizes Finley as simultaneously having and losing power. She loses the power to control one side of her, the side she deems natural, and, at the same time, she gains the power and control that her darker nature offers. As the dark side takes over, she loses her ability to control what society tells her is her natural, feminine public life and suggests that within every fictional Victorian character who puts on airs there exists an ugly, hidden side.

9 This characterization, while perpetuating gendered stereotypes, is characteristic of the Victorian novel. For example, in Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Jekyll is characterized as feminine with soft features, and Mr. Hyde as having qualities of a savage. One way Stevenson juxtaposes Jekyll and Hyde is through the difference in voice. In the same way Finley’s voice changes as her darker nature takes over, Jekyll’s voice is also recognized as having changed when he transforms into Mr. Hyde.
personality—passive, soft-spoken, and delicate—and she begins to act in a way that is considered inappropriate for a young Victorian woman. For example, her darker nature takes her walking through London alone in the middle of the night. At the same time, however, Finley is empowered with “urges to act in a way that was far from civilized, far beyond what she as a young woman should be capable of” (Cross 112). In his essay on why individuals experience uncanny sensations, Freud explains that “each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to that animistic stage in primitive men” and that “everything which now strikes us as ‘uncanny’ fulfills the condition of stirring those vestiges of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression” (Freud 46). Finley’s strange feelings toward her dual nature, as well as the primal darker nature itself, suggest that what she once had the ability to hide within her and has now been brought to light is a less civilized identity, a connection to an instinct. The neo-Victorian novel brings to light the repressions, however present, of the Victorian. The heroine’s desire for power, agency, and independence exists in both texts, but is shown more clearly in these post-modern revisions. If the neo-Victorian is said to bring out the instinctual/primal qualities, power and independence, then this interpretation as it relates to Freud and the uncanny double suggests that Bray’s, Clare’s, and Cross’ neo-Victorian novels integrate a feminist perspective into their redesigns by implying that power and qualities traditionally seen as masculine are inherent to women.

Before Finley understands why she has a repressed dark nature and that she can control it, the darkness within her forces its way out as an uncivilized instinct in order to protect her. Cross writes, “The warm rush of familiar power brought a slight smile to her battered lips. She gave up all attempts to keep it reined in. It was the only way she’d survive this night with her virtue and bones still intact” (109). As Finley feels her darker nature take over, a nature that she has decided
not to repress or deny anymore, she recognizes that this is not the first time she felt that “power” from her other half. This powerful instinct is a form of protection. She has already been physically abused by Lord Felix, and her darker nature surfaces to protect her body from further damage. As Finley gives in to her primal double, she ensures her safety and feels powerful.\(^\text{10}\)

Accepting the madness of her double self is something that, for Finley’s identity to remain intact and whole, she must do. Because Cross’ heroine recognizes the power and protection that she has, even if she only recognizes its effect of “leaving her an observer in her own skin” (Cross 138) and cannot yet acknowledge that this power is truly her own, she is able to view this madness as a positive component of her identity. It protects Finley and keeps “her from becoming a victim” (Cross 155). This knowledge entices her, so when Griffin offers her the challenge of controlling “the wildness that overtakes” her (Cross 158), Finley cannot help but feel the desire to own that power.

The acceptance and merging of her two selves into a whole unit physically manifests itself. While looking in the mirror, seeing her double, fragmented self, Finley notices “a streak of black in her hair” (Cross 226). This physical representation is directly linked with Finley’s ability to control what she once stifled. Her new look appears once she decides to trust Griffin’s opinion that it was not only “possible for Finley to control her darker side,” but that “uniting the two sides of her nature was the only option” (Cross 213). As she works harder to control herself,

\(^{10}\) Double selves and doppelgangers are common themes of many Victorian novels, for example, Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860). Often, they play with questions of madness and sanity. In *The Girl in the Steel Corset*, however, Cross addresses questions of madness that are attached to confusion of having a double, primal self by suggesting that madness is natural and not insanity. Finley questions her sanity, and even though she appears to perpetuate stereotypical Victorian perspectives of madness—that it is unnatural and evil—Cross undermines this viewpoint and associates madness with power and comfort: “And yet…when she was in the midst of madness, it didn’t feel like madness at all. It felt right, like that awful part of her was as natural as breathing.” (Cross 138). Finley’s double self, whether it is madness or not, is necessary and natural. It is not a flaw of her identity but an integral part of who she is. It exists not only to change her, to allow her to feel power and gain strength, but also to protect who she is already.
the once small strip of black hair lengthens, suggesting that her once repressed shadow self has almost completely surfaced:

The black in her hair had gotten longer, more present. Finley couldn’t ignore or deny it any longer, just as there was no denying what caused it. It started when she began working with Griffin on controlling her other half—when the two halves of her personality began trying to merge into one. Last night she had managed to retain some semblance of control, and her shadow had become an even larger part of her rather than something she tried to keep at bay. (Cross 360-61)

Finley’s dark streak of hair in her blonde locks visually represents this “shadow” self. In order for her identity to become whole, she must accept both sides of herself. The double side that once took over, simultaneously stealing power from Finley while empowering her, has become an element that she can learn to control. This dark nature is no longer a force that empowers the unwilling or hesitant Finley, but is a tool that she has learned to use to protect herself and the power she now holds. This concept can be applied to the relationship between the neo-Victorian and the Victorian novels. If power is a hidden theme that is frequently overlooked in many Victorian novels, then the neo-Victorian exists not only as a counterpart to the Victorian text, offering a reinterpretation that gives heroines agency, but also as a suggestion to reconsider the Victorian original in order to find this agency. With both readings of the Victorian novel—as having heroines who are oppressed and as having heroines who are not—the Victorian text holds more weight, in a sense, becomes whole.

Gemma Doyle and her friends at Spence Academy also represent a doubling of the self. In public, the girls are proper, traditional, young Victorian women living in a society that tells them they must be the angel of the house. As Gemma travels from her home in India to

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11 This is a reference to Coventry Patmore’s poem, “The Angel in the House,” in which women are characterized as sweet, innocent, and warm. Patmore’s poem can be considered the definition of Victorian femininity.
London, she questions the definition of a “proper lady.” Tom, Gemma’s brother, offers a stereotypical answer that characterizes who a woman should be in public society: “A man wants a woman who will make life easy for him. She should be attractive, well groomed, knowledgeable in music, painting and running a house, but above all, she should keep his name above scandal and never call attention to herself” (Bray 27). In Bray’s novel, Spence Academy acts as more than the location where Gemma and her friends learn of the magical power of the realms. It is not simply a setting for a story of power and magic. Spence Academy is the place that will give these girls the ability to enter into polite society with knowledge of French, the arts, and music. However oppressive this view of women is, Gemma must identify as a “proper lady” in order to be accepted.

The other side of Gemma’s self is the powerful woman who can do anything and be anyone she wants. Gemma finds this alternative identity in the private sphere of the Realms where the spirit of her mother teaches her how to use the magic to her advantage: “In this realm, what you wish can be yours. You only have to know what you want” (Bray 273). Gemma’s friends embrace this power and become who they cannot be in their public spheres back at Spence: Ann, an orphan on a scholarship, uses the magic of the Realms to be beautiful; Pippa, forced to marry an older man so her father’s debts will be paid, uses the power to call forth a knight in shining armor; and Felicity, powerless without her father’s money at Spence, is taught strength and power from a beautiful huntress within the Realms (Bray 274-77). In their secret sphere, these young women identify as the creators of their own destiny rather than the followers of a destiny that has already been set forth before them.

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12 And, like Finley’s desire for her hidden self to unite with her public self, Gemma desires to make her own decisions, and she wishes to be trusted with the power of the realms.
Like Finley, Gemma and her friends merge their double selves when they bring the magic out of the private sphere of the Realms into the public sphere of the society of Spence. According to Gemma’s brother, ladies are supposed to be attractive and well groomed. Pippa uses the magic to maintain this requirement. Her dress has a “large grass stain on the hem,” and with a thought, “she closes her eyes and in seconds the stain is gone” (Bray 321). Even though the girls are no longer in the Realms, the magic empowers them in the public sphere. By merging both the public and private selves, the oppressed and the empowered selves, Pippa is able to maintain the requirements of society and be in control of her actions and her life.

Similarly, Gemma uses the secret power of the Realms to uphold the requirement that, according to the Spence Academy, she should be knowledgeable in the French language. At the start of Gemma’s lessons at Spence, readers find out that Gemma has had very little practice with French, and she is in danger of being forced to take French class with the younger girls. After bringing the magic out of the Realms, Gemma tests her powers with the language: “When I open my mouth, we are all astonished. I’m speaking French like a Parisian, and I find I know a great deal about the Seine” (Bray 324). The magic of the Realms provides Gemma with the power to successfully and quickly conform to finishing school requirements without spending years studying French.

Finally, Ann uses the Realms magical powers in the public sphere in order to impress her peers and gain what she desperately wants: acceptance. As a shy Ann opens her mouth to sing in front of her classmates, Gemma describes her voice as “a bird leaving the nest, soaring high and free” (Bray 325). Ann’s singing is beautiful, and it fits another requirement of Gemma’s brother’s description of a proper lady. Despite conforming to this standard, the merging of her two selves gives Ann power because she has made the choice to conform rather than being
forced. The description of Ann’s singing mirrors the control and independence that this unifying act allows. As both of Ann’s identities come together, her beauty in the private sphere and her shyness in the public sphere, she is given freedom; she is able to leave the nest.

If readers revisit Victorian texts and look for instances of power in double functions of objects and double identities, they may also find hidden control within double desires. Gemma, Pippa, and Ann want to be accepted by society and conform to the rules of their gender, but they also want to be independent and have the ability to make their own decisions. The desire to fit in with society may, on the surface, be read as an oppressive want that perpetuates Victorian stereotypes, but, upon taking a closer look, this desire may actually be viewed as a form of empowerment because it gives the heroine a choice.

The girls, however, do not only use their powers to adhere to the requirements of Spence and society. Because they have merged both sides of their dual identities, they are fully empowered to revise the future that others have forged for them. Once the girls have mastered the minute details of who society thinks they should be—by conquering beauty, French, and music—they are even more empowered to create a path that is separate from traditional requirements. Before all of her magic wears off, Gemma runs into Brigid, Spence’s housekeeper. Whether it is due to a streak of luck given to her by the magic of the Realms or sheer coincidence, once both of her identities have merged, Gemma is finally given an answer she has been searching for: “Circe is Sarah Rees-Toome” (348). Circe, the evil force within the Realms who is trying to control all of its magic, is the same woman who was once a student at the Spence Academy, who Gemma and her friends have been reading about in a diary. Once Gemma gains this knowledge, she decides to take control of her future. Bray writes, “Circe, Sarah Rees-Toome, was once a Spence girl, class of 1871. A girl in a photograph that has been removed but
still exists somewhere. Finding that photograph is no longer a matter of curiosity. It is a necessity, my only means of finding her before she finds me” (Bray 348). It is not until Gemma allows herself to remove the magic from the Realms, thus merging both of her identities into one, that she is able to decide her fate, to make a point to actively pursue the knowledge of her past, of her mother’s past, rather than passively sit by, either becoming a product of Spence or a double of her mother, dead and indefinitely stuck in the Realms.

Pippa too, upon uniting her empowered secret self with the passive lady created by public society and life at Spence, is then able to control her own fate. Her parents have arranged a marriage between herself and Mr. Bumble, a wealthy man who has offered to pay her father’s debts. What he does not know, because it would make Pippa undesirable for marriage, is that she suffers from epilepsy. Gemma observes as Pippa explains her “affliction” to her future husband: “Pippa brings her handkerchief to her mouth as if overcome. I could swear she’s worked up real tears. She’s very good and I must say that I am quite impressed” (Bray 330). Pippa’s new-found strength allows her to pretend that she is so worried about the reputation of Mr. Bumble that she must tell him the truth about her. In reality, she does not want to marry this man and is taking her future into her own hands. Without the strength that she received from the Realms, Pippa would be unable to control her fate outside of the Realms.

Cross’ and Bray’s double spaces offer agency to their heroines. These private spheres give Finley and Gemma the ability to access their own power until they are ready and able to merge their private powerful selves with the public young ladies that society requires them to be. With the uniting of this double self, the girls are able to turn their desires into decisions. As a double space, the neo-Victorian novel offers the same agency to Victorian heroines. It is a place where women can be written in a post-modern light, taking into consideration feminist theories.
When readers reinterpret Victorian texts through a post-modern lens, thus uniting the double spaces, nineteenth-century heroines are found to have agency in their public sphere: the Victorian text.
THE DOUBLE LIFE

In “Double Lives: Neo-Victorian Girlhood in the Fiction of Libba Bray and Nancy Springer,” Sonya Sawyer Fritz suggests that adolescent neo-Victorian novels reconstruct the definitions of Victorian girlhood; that “beneath this veneer of respectability and conformity” in the fictional public Victorian lives of Gemma Doyle there “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” (Fritz 39). Throughout this article, Fritz posits that adolescent neo-Victorian novels not only provide current young readers, particularly females, with characters who they can relate to through concepts of identity and power\(^\text{13}\), but these texts also reflect a more realistic version of Victorian women, their desires, and their agency.

While Fritz writes about the idea of a double life for the neo-Victorian heroines she analyzes, she reads neo-Victorian novels exclusively in a postmodern light. Psychoanalysis reveals a tangential reading, a reading similar to, yet branching away from, postmodernism. Neo-Victorian heroines are half of a whole. As contemporary texts, neo-Victorian novels certainly reflect the desires of contemporary readers, and Fritz offers a convincing argument that the fictional neo-heroine is more representative of her Victorian counterpart; however, Fritz leaves out a crucial element in the heroine’s double life. In Bray’s novel, *A Great and Terrible Beauty*, Gemma does not seek out this double life; it finds her through her mother’s connection with the Realms. While Gemma must learn to navigate her private and public lives, and as Fritz suggests, Gemma offers “a careful performance” and maintains “a façade to hide one’s true self from others” (Fritz 39), she also must first come to terms with her “true,” past, repressed self. Gemma’s hidden and secret life, her double life, is a repression of something feminine, maternal,

\(^{13}\) And this idea is what Mark Llewellyn is hoping will translate into a desire to read and reread Victorian novels once young readers experience the neo-Victorian.
and protective. Double lives in Bray’s neo-Victorian novel seek to reveal the repressed other, the Victorian text.

Hidden space is a theme common to *A Great and Terrible Beauty*, not only within the self, but also throughout the landscape of the narrative. Curious about her new home at the Spence Academy, Gemma asks the headmistress about an off limits wing in the school:

“Where do those doors lead?” I ask, pointing to the darkened wing on the opposite side of the landing where two heavy doors stand sentry, secured by a large lock. It’s the kind of lock needed to keep people out. Or hold something in.

Mrs. Nightwing’s brows furrow, her lips go tight. “That is the East Wing. It was destroyed in a fire years ago. We don’t use it anymore so we’ve closed it off. Saves on heating. Come along.”

She swings past me. I start after her, then glance back my eyes falling to the bottom of those locked doors, where there’s a one-inch crack of light. It may be the lateness of the day and the long journey, or the fact that I’m growing accustomed to seeing things, but I could swear that I see a shadow move along the floor behind the doors.

*No. Begone.*

I refuse to let the past find me here. (Bray 45)

Freud concludes section two of “The Uncanny” with the suggestion that uncanny feelings are a person’s response to repressed instincts, desires, and situations. Gemma must shake an odd feeling that she gets on her first tour of Spence, an uncanny feeling that there are shadows lurking behind the doors. She notes a double function of these guardian, “sentry” doors that help to foreshadow and enlighten readers’ interpretations of Bray’s novel. In one instance, these doors are keeping something hidden and secret, locked away because it is not meant to be let out.

Gemma’s ability to enter the spirit world, a power initially unknown to herself that connects her to her mother and other women from the past, is also locked away until she is brave enough to explore it. These protective doors also serve the function of keeping the girls of Spence from entering this mysterious section of the school. Similarly, Gemma must reckon with the Rakshana, a powerful, yet secret group of men who wish to keep that spirit world hidden from
any of the women of The Order, a reincarnation of a once powerful group of women. As their teacher explained, the original Order was “a powerful group of sorceresses who’d been around since the dawn of time. Supposedly they had access to a mystical world beyond this one, a place of many realms where they could work their magic” (Bray 129). The double function of the doors and the uncanny feeling that Gemma gets when she sees them reflect the double life that Gemma, herself, must lead—not simply that of her public and private spheres, but also of her present and of her past.

This door also represents an option and symbolizes a choice Gemma must make. If Gemma’s past is hiding, waiting, or being kept under lock and key behind that door, Gemma can either open it or let it be. Curiously, the only way for Gemma to access her double life, the life inside the Realms, is through opening and walking through a door of light. The Realms exist as a spiritual place where souls who have not crossed over can be found. They are the source of Gemma’s magic and the place where she goes to seek knowledge from her mother about who she truly is. Bray’s description of Spence Academy mirrors the option that Gemma has. The first time Bray’s heroine makes the conscious effort to enter the Realms she vocalizes her choice: “I choose this” (Bray 251). Spence’s “sentry” doors represent a double for Gemma’s door of light. What lies in secret behind the forbidden wing of the Academy is a twin of what lies behind the “glorious outline of a door of light” that Gemma and her friends walk through in order to enter the Realms (Bray 251).

When Bray writes, “I refuse to let the past find me here,” she suggests two things. First, Gemma is repressing what happened to her mother in India—shadow creatures lurking in the

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14 Again, Gemma is given freedom to make a choice once she desires to enter the Realms.
15 Interestingly, India can also act as a double space for Gemma as it is a colony of England during the Victorian period. In India, Gemma’s mother has power. Not only is she characterized as being Gemma’s father’s equal, she
marketplace waiting to murder her mother, or waiting for her mother to take her own life. She will not allow those images and questions into her mind. Bray also suggests, however, that it is the past which is seeking out Gemma; in order to be found, something must be looking. These shadows, which Freud suggests are doubles in and of themselves, are Gemma’s past through her connection to her mother. As a daughter with the ability to access the realms, Gemma must fight the battles that her mother could not win. Her arrival at Spence is a result of her mother’s death, which Gemma witnessed in a vision. Before stabbing herself with a dagger, Gemma’s mother faced “something coiled, waiting in the shadows at the back of the shop” as it hissed at and taunted her: “Come to us, pretty one. We’ve been waiting” (Bray 15). This snake-like shadow figure was the cause of Mrs. Doyle’s death. It represents the past of Gemma’s mother that she had to face, and now it is the past that seeks out Gemma. The shadows that Gemma attempts to remove from her mind, those movements under the guardian doors, are repressions of her mother’s past and her own past that she will be forced to face. These repressions will come to light.

Bray provides even more evidence to support the theme of the double throughout her novel. It’s not simply Gemma’s past that is repressed, yet attempting to force itself into cognition. Behind those guardian doors lies a moving shadow. According to Otto Rank, the shadow is a common motif that corresponds with concepts of the “human soul,” a “spiritual yet real being,” and a representation of both the “living and the dead person” (Rank 71). Rank suggests that the shadow is the first concept of the double and connects back to man’s primitive

also takes her life into her own hands, literally, when she decides to commit suicide instead of being murdered by Circe. India, as a double, reinforces the agency found in the double, which forces readers to reconsider the agency of the original.
being. Gemma’s strongest connection with death is through the realms where she is able to talk with her mother.\(^{16}\)

Gemma is met with more strange feelings toward Spence’s landscape as she makes way to her first night at prayers. Bray writes, “A low mist has come up. It settles over the grounds, giving the whole place an eerie quality. Up ahead, the girls’ blue capes flutter in the night air before the thickening fog swallows everything but the echoes of their voices” (Bray 49). Eerie feelings signal a repression. The girls of Spence become nothing but disembodied voices in the fog, sounds that echo in Gemma’s ears. Figuratively, the term “echo” means “A repetition or close imitation, chiefly of things that can be compared to speech, voice, or sound (e.g. a writer's thoughts or style), but occas. with wider meaning; an enfeebled reproduction; an effect that continues after its cause has ceased” (OED Online). Again, the double theme crops up in Bray’s novel. Here, it suggests something maternal. The language of shadows and echoes that Bray uses to describe Gemma’s experiences suggests that Gemma is the double, a reproduction, of her mother, and it is her mother’s past (as well as Gemma’s “self” in relation to the reproduction of her mother) that has been repressed and must be brought to light.\(^{17}\)

The double, the past, and the animalistic, primitive repressions are even given a birthplace, a point of origin. In a vision, Gemma is led to a cave where she finds not only primitive cave drawings but also the diary of Mary Dowd, a former member of The Order. Escaping the monotony of finishing school, Gemma and her peers, Ann, Pippa, and Felicity,

\(^{16}\) This repression is not only one of Gemma’s past, but also a repression of the Victorian novel itself. In *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Jane Eyre*, physically and figuratively hidden women set destructive fires that kill and injure, respectively.

\(^{17}\) This maternal quality is made even more interesting due to the relationship between India and England. If Gemma is a double of her mother, and India a double of England, then this might suggest that as Gemma travels to London, she is bringing the power of the double to the original space. This concept is reinforced later in my thesis when I discuss Gemma and her friends bringing back the power of the Realms to the public, Victorian sphere.
sneak off to these caves in search of some excitement. Bray writes, “We sneak out just past midnight, weaving through the woods by lantern light till we’re deep inside the dark womb of the caves” (Bray 138). Here, Bray gives these caves a maternal quality. The girls experiment with the unknown inside this womblike cavern. They toast to their secrets with stolen whiskey, test the bonds of sisterhood through a few innocent kisses, and confide in each other by sharing their hidden sexual desires and fears. Pippa suggests that they should have a “proper name,” and upon Gemma’s suggestion, the girls echo their new name: “The Order, reborn” (Bray 142-43). The caves provide an origin for their double selves. By naming themselves The Order, Gemma and her friends become doubles of a past repression. They are, as the group suggests, “reborn.” Interestingly, however, the formation of the reborn order is not the first instance in which the girls have entered the caves. Miss Moore, their art teacher, led them to this maternal location on an art excursion. Bray describes the exterior of the caves with feminine likeness: “The caves are in front of us, tucked beneath a ledge overgrown with vines” (Bray 124). Not only are these caverns described as being womb-like but the exterior resembles the naked female body.

Gemma notes that “generations of rain have smoothed the stone to such a high sheen in some places that I catch a fractured glimpse of myself of its uneven surface—an eye, a mouth, another eye, a composite of ill-fitting pieces” (Bray 124-25). Again, the double and its repression are revealed through Bray’s subtle descriptions. “Generations of rain” not only implies the age of the cave, but it also hints at the connection between Gemma and her mother and the reborn Order’s connection with the past. Further, the cave acts a type of mirror in which fragments of a body are evinced, and presents Gemma in a phase of life that Lacan terms the mirror stage. Lacan explains that the mirror stage is an “identification,” a “transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image” (Lacan 503). This transformation has a double effect. In
one sense, the person looking into the mirror sees a complete image, an “ideal I.” At the same time, the mirror image suggests, through the reflection of a double, an other, that the person looking into the mirror is only one half of a whole. Robyn McCallum, author of *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction*, provides a suitable explanation of Lacan’s *mirror stage*: “In Lacan’s account of the mirror phase, the child identifies with its mirror image which it perceives as a stable and fixed whole, but it experiences itself as fragmented, partial and changeable” (McCallum 88). When Gemma looks into the reflective rock of the cave walls, she sees herself as a double and experiences this fragmentation in “fractured glimpses” of her body parts.

Hidden spaces and double lives are themes also common to Cassandra Clare’s *Clockwork Angel*. Upon arriving to London, Tessa Gray learns about an underground world of which most mundanes, a term used by Downworlders to refer to humans with no extraordinary abilities and no connection to the magical world, are completely unaware. While there exists a double life and a double space within the world of Clare’s novel, within this hidden space, there also exists a double space. The Dark House is a space of repression, a manipulative force that exists to force Tessa to conform to a very specific standard. Its Downworlder double, ironically called The Institute, is a location of freedom for Tessa. The Institute is a place of knowledge and a place where Tessa is empowered.

The Dark House, Tessa’s first London home, represents an oppressive society that forces her to mold herself into a pre-specified shape. Clare characterizes The Dark Sisters as manipulative women who perpetuate oppression onto other women. When Tessa first steps off the boat onto European soil, she expects to be greeted by her brother, Nate. Instead, she meets

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18 Mundanes are unaware of the Downworlder society which keeps them safe from demonic forces. Tessa is forced to face her knowledge of the Downworlders once the Dark Sisters inform her of her own ability, a power that, until she came to London, she never knew she had or could possibly have had.
Mrs. Dark and Mrs. Black who manipulate Tessa into trusting them by providing a note from her brother: “They were, his note said, his landladies as well as trusted friends, and they had his highest recommendation. That decided her. The letter was certainly from Nate” (Clare 10). The Dark Sisters use Tessa’s brother, the last remaining connection to her family, to coax her into their home where they keep her prisoner. As she is forced to realize that she has extraordinary powers, the ability to change into anyone simply by touching an object that once belonged to them, Tessa is further manipulated by these women through her brother. Clare writes, “They had told her that, the Dark Sisters, had told her that they had Nate, and if she didn’t do what they said, he would die. They showed her his ring, the one that had been her father’s—stained with blood now—to prove it” (Clare 20). Nate’s letter and ring are used by the sisters to force Tessa into a life that she has no control over, one that she does not want to live. The Dark Sisters represent a manipulative force common to Victorian literature where women repress their own strength and power by oppressing other women, forcing them into a structure of society that is dominated by what was seen as the proper place for women.

Despite the fact that, in this space, authority is only gained through manipulation, The Dark House is further characterized as an oppressive force preserving an even more oppressive hegemony because the Dark Sisters are teachers with authority. Once the Dark Sisters threatened Tessa with the safety of her brother, she submitted to their wishes: “After that she had done everything they’d asked. Had drunk the potions they’d given her, done the hours of agonizing exercises, forced herself to think the way they wanted her to” (Clare 20). Tessa has officially been broken by the Dark Sisters. Whatever individuality and strength she had when she came to London has been taken from her. She has even adopted their way of thinking. To force Tessa to continually submit to their authority as teachers, they reinforce her actions of behaving and
thinking the way they want her to by manipulative kindness. When she does what the Dark
Sisters force her to do, change into another human being, they praise her with novels: “Somehow
the Dark Sisters had realized that reading and novels were Tessa’s passion” (Clare 21). They
keep Tessa cut off from the rest of the world and give her novels of women who both are
constrained by and defy definitions of womanhood, such as Little Women. Even though Tessa’s
teachers are manipulative women who force Tessa into a predetermined role, cutting off all of
her agency and power, the success of their teaching is later reinforced by a Downworlder outside
of the Dark House: “overall, an impressive showing. Someone trained you well” (Clare 187).
The language Clare uses with this reinforcement of the Dark Sisters’ skills, however, situates
Tessa not as a student of her own craft and ability, but rather as the captive that she was. Tessa is
not taught; she is “trained” like an animal. This characterizes her life inside the Dark House as
one of obedience and submission because she must relinquish all control, be broken down to
nothing, and rebuilt into whoever the Dark Sisters want her to be.

The Dark Sisters are not without an agenda, and it is their agenda that further supports the
argument that the Dark House is an oppressive space. Victorian conventions suggest that a lady,
particularly a middle to upper class woman, should make it her goal to be a woman who a man
would want to marry. The Dark Sisters force Tessa to realize her ability because it is a condition
of her marriage to the Magister. Once Tessa is able to easily and frequently change her
appearance, Mrs. Dark tells her sister, “She’s as ready as she’ll ever be. It’s time for our Theresa
to meet her master” (Clare 25). The Dark Sisters are caught up in the hegemony they circulate.
They oppress Tessa because they are oppressed themselves. Mrs. Dark and Mrs. Black believe
that The Magister is Tessa’s master because he will be her husband. They consider the marriage
an “honor” to a “very great man” (Clare 27). No matter how broken Tessa is, no matter how
much she “wanted to stop struggling, to lie there limply until the Magister came to take her away” (Clare 33), she recognized not the oppressive voice of the Dark Sisters telling her she must choose the life that many women before her have chosen, but the voice of her Aunt Harriet telling her that “when you find the man you wish to marry, Tessa, remember this: You will know what kind of man he is not by the things he says, but by the things he does” (Clare 33). These opposing viewpoints reinforce the negative space of the Dark House and further situate the Dark Sisters as a force that has fallen to the command of a skewed society.

Like the double voice inside Tessa’s head, the one of her aunt reminding her of who she can be, Tessa also finds a double space that gives her freedom and agency. Home to the Shadowhunters, the police-like figures of the Downworlders, The Institute is a safe haven for Tessa that nourishes her gift and reminds her that she is in control of her body and her life. Mrs. Branwell, head of The Institute, tells Tessa, ‘If you demand to get away, as you put it, after we have talked, I will let you go’ (Clare 55). Unlike at the Dark House, Tessa is no prisoner held captive within The Institute’s walls. She is not only given the freedom to move about this space as she pleases, but also the ability to decide when and how, if at all, she wishes to use her ability: ‘If,’ Charlotte said, ‘you do not wish to use your power, then no, we will not force you to. Though I do believe you yourself might benefit from learning how it might be controlled and used’ (Clare 63). Instead of Tessa’s gift being a tool and Tessa an object to be trained, in Tessa’s new home, her gift is a form of her own power, and she is characterized as a student with the ability to “learn” how to use it. The Institute is a double, opposite space compared with the Dark House.
Tessa is given further power within this space when she is invited into the Sanctuary. Tessa has chosen to use her ability to help her new friends. The Sanctuary, a place where the Shadowhunters meet with those who cannot enter into The Institute, is “difficult to enter or exit the room without possessing either a stele or the key” (Clare 174). The fact that Tessa is invited into this sacred space suggests that she is privileged. She watches the power that Charlotte holds as she enters the Sanctuary: “She drew an iron key from a pocket of her dress, and slid it into the lock of the door. The head of the key was in the shape of an angel with outspread wings; the wings gleamed out once, briefly, as Charlotte turned the key, and the door swung open” (Clare 175). Tessa witnesses Charlotte’s power. Unlike the Dark Sisters, who are controlled by a male dominated society in which the Magister is the ultimate master, Charlotte Branwell holds the power. Not only is she the head of the London Institute, but she possesses a physical symbol of power in the shape of a key. Charlotte sliding the key into the lock of the door is a phallic representation of her power. She holds the key, literally and figuratively. As Tessa witnesses this power, she simultaneously is invited into the Sanctuary. With this act she is both given a place of refuge and given power because she is asked to enter into a hidden, sacred space.

Not only is Tessa now privy to the private spaces of the Institute as a physical space, she is also given access to the Shadowhunter’s Codex, a book that details the history of Shadowhunters and Downworlders. Tessa reads the codex with a sense of identity: “books were symbols of truth and meaning … this one acknowledged that she existed and that there were others like her in the world” (Clare 98). The Institute is a space that nurtures Tessa’s thirst for knowledge, a thirst that she gains from her very first ancestor, Eve. In this space, Tessa is able to

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19 This choice reinforces Tessa’s power. When she was forced to change into murder victims inside the Dark House, she feared her ability and only used it when it was required of her. In the nurturing environment of The Institute, Tessa has learned how to control when and how she uses her identity as a changeling, thus empowering her. She is not afraid of who she is. Rather, she embraces her true nature.
access whatever amount of knowledge she seeks, thus empowering her and giving her the ability to learn and understand who she is and what type of world she is living in. The Institute represents the opposite of the Dark House, the opposite of repression.

Similarly, Finley Jayne must navigate a double life of both her public life as a governess and the private sphere of her life as an automaton-fighting, Hyde-ish heroine. Finley’s double self is not accepted in both of her lives. As a governess, Finley finds a hard time remaining employed because her darker nature takes over. Characterizing Finley as an outsider to the upper class is how Cross begins her novel. Readers meet Finley as she is thrown from a house by the housekeeper: “You’re the very spawn of Satan and I’ll not have you darken this door ever again” (Cross 9). Against her will, Finley is exiled from the upper class because of her double self. Later, she finds a job working as a maid in the manor of Felix August-Raynes. As the notorious playboy approaches her one night, threatening her virtue, Finley’s dark side takes over to protect her. After fighting the master of the house, Finley consciously removes herself from his employment and forces herself, once again, into the role of an outsider. Within the walls of her own home, Finley is also characterized as an outsider because of who she is. She confronts her mother one afternoon in her London home: “They seated themselves almost as if preparing for battle—The Burkes on one sofa, Griffin and his aunt on the other. This left Finley to sit by herself in a high-backed chair. How appropriate that she be odd man out, as that was actually how she felt” (Cross 202-03). Finley’s control and strength that is awakened when the repressed side of herself breaks through, both elements of her personality that give her power even before she learns to control them, are outcasts not only in the world of Lords and Ladies, but also within the society that she has always known. Either Finley must remain powerless and not allow her
stronger self to show, or she will be forced to remain an outsider until she can find another sphere to house her.

Luckily, Finley does find a home for her demonic nature: Greythorne House. As Finley attempts to merge the two halves of herself, her darker nature must also be accepted by those around her. The first sign of Finley’s acceptance by the residents of Greythorne House comes when she is given fighting lessons. Despite her apprehensions, Finley decides that “She didn’t know how to properly fight, and given her predilection for finding trouble, defending herself would be a very good thing for a young woman to know” (Cross 293). Finley’s acceptance characterizes her as not only having power, but needing power. It is possible that Cross’ characterization of Finley’s acceptance actually undermines her descriptions of Finley as a woman who is able to unite the dual sides of her nature and become an empowered woman.

Finley decides that a young woman should know how to fight which suggests that young women are often approached by men who wish to abuse their seemingly delicate nature, like Lord Felix at the start of Cross’ novel. While this gives women independence (and here I am reminded of Jessamine and her parasol which suggested that she was able to walk about the public sphere of London without a chaperone or male guide), it also characterizes them as being inferior, weak, and requiring a lesson or two in how to defend themselves. Further, the location of Finley’s sparring lessons is in the ballroom. This suggests one of two things. First, it implies that women inside of the ballroom are no longer beauties to be led through a dance with wealthy, controlling men. It also implies, in a less flattering way, that Finley is still a product of society and she must

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20 Interestingly, Finley is taken in by Griffin King, a very wealthy Lord who lives in the prominent area of Mayfair. Griffin is the first to accept Finley for who she is, including her powerful double self, when the other residents of his home believe she is dangerous and should be removed from the grounds. Thus, despite Finley’s role as an outcast among the upper class, she is invited into their inner circle as a final representation of her two lives merging and existing harmoniously. Similarly, Finley is also accepted in a place that she describes as “the groin” of London: “a great unwashed area that only showed itself under the cover of darkness, and for the most salacious of entertainments” (Cross 171).
spend her time within the spheres that were traditionally set aside for women. In this sense, Finley is only empowered within the home. This power, however, successfully merges both the public and private spheres of her life. She is able to bring forth her demonic side while existing within the circle of high society.
CONCLUSION

On one level, Freud’s unheimlich works to show the associated, repressed thing that is mirrored in a specific double. Gemma, Tessa, and Finley encounter doubles of themselves and the lives they lead. The neo-Victorian novel uses these specific doubles on a practical level to mimic the doubles that exist throughout Victorian novels, thus picking up on similar patterns within the narrative.

On a more general level, however, Freud’s unheimlich signals a hidden system at work. Not only are neo-Victorian novels accessing similar themes to represent the Victorian, but they are also using these themes to reinterpret Victorian agency and power for young women. In every instance of the double, the heroine is characterized as powerful, as having the ability to make choices either to accept or reject, or in some cases both, Victorian conventions. The neo-Victorian novel also offers readers with a decision to re-read and re-interpret Victorian novels in order to uncover the female agency that always already exists. Further, the double may stand as a marker in Victorian literature signaling to readers a location of power for women and reminding readers not to overlook this power. The neo-Victorian novel suggests that the objects and lives of women which seem to be most repressed should ultimately be questioned in order to uncover a hidden interpretation.

The neo-Victorian novel, then, a double of the Victorian, indicates not simply nostalgia for Victorian themes and aesthetics, nor solely a re-writing to give Victorian heroines a power that they never had, but rather it indicates an ever present agency that women in Victorian novels had. By analyzing double functions, double spaces, and double selves, I have come to recognize that factors which are traditionally and contemporarily viewed as oppressive, such as Victorian fashions, and society’s educational and physical requirements for young ladies are actually
expressive of the hidden power that a heroine has. In addition to this analysis, my thesis serves as an offer to readers to revisit Victorian novels, particularly those littered with themes of the double in order to reconsider the traditional reading that removes power from fictional Victorian women.


