

2023

"Killers who Preach": Horror and the "Victorian" Culture Text in the Modern American Musical

Amy Erickson
amyerickson314@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allgraduate-thesesdissertations>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#), and the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Erickson, Amy, "Killers who Preach": Horror and the "Victorian" Culture Text in the Modern American Musical" (2023). *Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations*. 7317.
<https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allgraduate-thesesdissertations/7317>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research & Artistry at Huskie Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Huskie Commons. For more information, please contact jschumacher@niu.edu.

ABSTRACT

“KILLERS WHO PREACH”: HORROR AND THE “VICTORIAN” CULTURE TEXT IN THE MODERN AMERICAN MUSICAL

Amy Erickson, Ph.D.
Department of English
Northern Illinois University, 2023
David Gorman, Director

This dissertation examines American Broadway musicals adapted from Victorian horror and mystery novels, investigating the ways in which the musical adaptations represent and critique modern American social problems and traditional American values and ideology. Specifically, it analyzes Stephen Sondheim’s 1979 musical *Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, a Musical Thriller*, adapted from the anonymously published Victorian penny serial *The String of Pearls*; Rupert Holmes’s 1985 musical *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, adapted from Charles Dickens’s unfinished 1870 novel of the same name; Frank Wildhorn’s 1997 musical *Jekyll & Hyde*, adapted from Robert Louis Stephenson’s 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; and Frank Wildhorn’s 2004 musical *Dracula*, adapted from Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel of the same title. This discussion finds that modern American audiences construct a notional version of the Victorian period against which they compare their own societies, traditions, and popular cultures.

Furthermore, as horror is a convenient and effective genre through which to explore collective anxieties about precarious and shifting social conditions, these musicals reflect the preoccupations of a tumultuous American culture, despite featuring Victorian characters and settings onstage.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DE KALB, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2023

“KILLERS WHO PREACH”: HORROR AND THE “VICTORIAN” CULTURE TEXT IN
THE MODERN AMERICAN MUSICAL

BY
AMY ERICKSON
©2023 Amy Erickson

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Doctoral Director:
David Gorman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the English faculty at Northern Illinois University for the instruction, guidance, and training that has made this dissertation possible. I especially wish to thank Dr. David Gorman, my primary dissertation advisor, for his continued enthusiasm and patience, as well as Dr. Brian May and Dr. Lara Crowley for their feedback and support. Thanks also to Dr. Scott Balcerzak for his early assistance and to Dr. Tim Crowley for being the first to express interest in and support for my project.

Special and eternal thanks go to Joey Crundwell, the writing partner, hype man, commiserator, and Cane's co-enthusiast I have needed so much during the composition of this dissertation. Katie Healey has my everlasting gratitude also, for her chaotic support and love. The continued friendship of them both has made all the difference.

Thanks to Joy Gerbode for near weekly discussions about literature and everything else as well as constant support and infectious excitement, and for taking me to see so many shows since I was little. Thanks also to David Gerbode and Bethany Schulz. My love of books started with these three.

I am also in the debt of Bailey O'Neil for her deep friendship and to Jenna Riem for being my grad school buddy since our AU days. Thanks to the best book club ever!

Finally, thanks forever to my rotten soldier Russell Erickson for unwavering faith, constant consolation, and fervent support in every way. Thanks for celebrating every milestone with me and making this all worth it.

DEDICATION

For all the hopeless *Buffy* nerds who came to the joys of Victorian literature by watching
vampires sing and dance (myself included).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Musicals	5
Cultural Exchange	12
Critical Framework and Methodology	14
Literature Review	19
Chapter Overview	23
II. <i>DROOD</i> AND THE VICTORIAN CULTURE-TEXT	27
Victorian England in Various Re-Imagings	30
<i>Sweeney Todd</i>	36
<i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>	39
Dracula, Adaptation, and the Culture-Text	41
Case Study: <i>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</i>	47
III. GENDER, QUEERNESS, AND MARRIAGE PLOTS	59
Love and Romance on Broadway	60
Queering and Un-Queering Victorian Horror	71
Case Study: <i>Dracula, the Musical</i>	79
IV. SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN THE VICTORIAN HORROR MUSICAL	88

Chapter	Page
Victorian Literature as Social Critique	89
American Horror as Social Critique	94
The Victorian Horror Musical as Social Critique	99
Case Study: <i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>	110
V. CONCLUSION	118
WORKS CITED	125

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to understand the popularity and impacts of American Broadway musicals that adapt Victorian horror stories. These horror stories are a part of the American cultural consciousness in other iterations, but the Broadway shows bring a unique—and uniquely *American*—perspective to their interpretation of famous British villains and monsters. Broadly, the central question of this study is this: how do these Broadway musicals construct an American version of Victorian England and Victorian characters while appealing directly to the social problems and shared cultural experiences of a primarily American audience, and what does that construction reveal about the Americans who make and consume these works? By examining four popular Broadway musicals that premiered between 1979 and 2004, this dissertation will attempt to answer this question. The four musicals relevant to this study are *Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street: A Musical Thriller*, adapted from the Victorian penny blood *The String of Pearls*; *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, adapted from Charles Dickens's unfinished novel of the same name; *Jekyll & Hyde*, adapted from Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; and *Dracula, the Musical*, adapted from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

In many ways, this study treads new critical ground, as no scholarly work has yet attended to American horror musicals adapted from Victorian novels. American horror musicals in general, of which there are many, regardless of their origins, have been widely ignored in critical scholarship. And despite the fact that a great many American musicals adapt Victorian works, only one full-length study, Sharon Aronofsky Weltman's *Victorians on Broadway*, has yet

explored these adaptations. In fact, while Broadway adaptation is frequently mentioned in musical theater studies due to the frequency with which musicals are adapted from other media, few critics spend much time on this incredibly common trend. Adaptation studies scholars also rarely discuss musical theater, and there is no musical theater studies equivalent of adaptation studies. The result is a general acknowledgment of Broadway's debts to stories from other sources, but with surprisingly little critical discussion or analysis.

That so little critical attention has thus far been paid to this phenomenon of what I call the "Victorian" horror musical is perhaps curious, but two related facts contribute to the critical gap. First, this study is necessarily interdisciplinary. To attend meaningfully to what these musicals do and say, it is important to consult scholarship from several disparate critical fields, ones which typically do not overlap or dialogue with one another. Film studies and adaptation studies are bosom friends, but musical theater studies rarely parleys with monster studies or even film studies generally. I do not suggest that there is no conversation among these various fields; Linda Hutcheon's work on opera and operetta, for example, often appears in adaptation studies journals, but is at the very least adjacent to musical theater studies. But such overlap and collaboration is rare, perhaps far rarer than it should be. The second fact that results in the critical neglect of the horror musical is that musical theater studies is still a new and emerging field. One of the earliest works in the field, Geoffrey Block's *Enchanted Evenings*, was not published until 1997, despite attending to the earliest Broadway musicals in the 1920s and '30s. Film studies and video game studies have seen similar gaps, whereby emerging genres of art, considered "low brow" are not deemed worthy of critical attention—until they are. This seems to be shifting in recent years as the barriers between "high" and "low" art dissolve. This, along with the fact that

musical theater studies is itself interdisciplinary, drawing scholars from English and music departments alike, bodes well for the future of such scholarship. But for now, musical theater generally and the horror musical specifically remain woefully neglected in critical conversations about the art that contributes to and reflects American culture.

Broadway musicals are widely understood to comprise a distinctly American genre of art. Despite their now-frequent exportation to foreign markets and the ostensibly comparable West End in London, the modern stage musical developed from operetta, vaudeville, minstrel shows, musical comedy, and burlesque into an essentially American artform. The so-called Golden Age of Broadway¹ gave way in the 1970s to the era of counterculture, rapid and radical social change, and widespread disillusion in the American dream. Broadway musicals began to reflect these changing attitudes with such critical and experimental shows as Stephen Sondheim's *Company* (1970) and Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* (1981).²

All eras of Broadway musicals include shows that adapt Victorian stories. Immediately following the Victorian period, scholars and artists alike widely distanced themselves and their work from their immediate predecessors; Modernist works and the critical writing surrounding them often disparage or oppose the preoccupations of Victorian art and artists. The emergence of the Broadway integrated musical³ coincides with a renewed interest in and sympathy with

¹ The Golden Age began with Rodgers & Hammerstein's 1943 classic *Oklahoma* and roughly ended with *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964).

² Musicals of this era are often referred to as "concept musicals," being typically organized around a central abstract (and frequently political) theme, rather than a linear narrative.

³ The integrated musical diverges from previous Broadway offerings in that every musical number now serves to advance the plot of the play, rather than simply punctuating the show with variety in entertainment. Integration has long been the standard for the Broadway musical, though experimental shows sometimes deviate from this norm.

Victorian ideals and works, among both modern artists and scholars. Sharon Aronofsky Weltman reports

Occurring at the same time as the foundational rejection of Victorian authors by the Moderns was American theater's assertion of its independence from British and European dominance in the 1920s to 1940s, a time when musicals were in general self-consciously American in theme, music, and setting. But just as the Modernists rebuffed the Victorians, the subsequent generation snubbed the Modernists' anti-Victorian stance. (25)

As attitudes toward the Victorians shifted, Victorian stories began to re-enter (American) pop culture; for example, some of the earliest non-silent films were adaptations of nineteenth-century horror stories, including *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Throughout the mid and late twentieth century, this general reexamination of Victorian works coalesced with the establishment of a uniquely American canon into an almost fetishistic interest among American audiences in specifically British stories, settings, and culture. This Anglophilia was especially visible at the height of *Masterpiece Theater* and *BBC America*, both of which produced dozens of adaptations of Victorian (and other) British literature throughout the '70s, '80s, and '90s which were enormously popular with audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. As the twentieth century drew to a close, this trend continued with the BBC's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, J.K. Rowling's runaway *Harry Potter* series, and an explosion of vampire fiction in American publishing and in Hollywood.⁴

This renewed interest in Victorian stories is more than just necromancy; it's an acknowledgement of the many ways in which Victorian mythos and storytelling have lastingly influenced modern Western culture, from highbrow to low and from British to American works.

⁴ Adaptations of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the source of so many modern vampire narratives today, are quite literally countless. *Dracula* has been revived on page, stage, and screen in so many various iterations that his reach is impossible to trace, and he has inspired the creation of a great many new vampires with different lore systems and agendas. See Chapter 2 for more details.

In general, the choices that make an adaptation different from its source reveal far more about the adapting culture and artists than it does about those of the original. These four Broadway musicals reveal not only the deep debt of American musical theater to Victorian stories, but the social atmosphere, shared fears and concerns, and collective preoccupations of late-twentieth-century Americans. Weltman points out, “It is a critical commonplace to demonstrate that a film adaptation reflects the aesthetic and social concerns of its own time, no matter when its source text was written” (2). I seek to demonstrate not only that the same is true of Broadway musicals generally, but that the preoccupations of Victorian horror stories have proven a particularly effective vehicle for such reflection in American popular culture.

I. The Musicals

None of the four Broadway musicals central to this study were adapted directly and solely from the Victorian page to the American musical stage; rather, all four stories have had a long path from page to stage to screen and back again. All four stories have had a foothold in popular culture and have inspired other works, other stories, and other artists throughout the decades since their original publication in the nineteenth century.

In the fall of 1846, Edward Lloyd’s penny newspaper, *The People’s Periodical and Family Library* began publishing chapters of *The String of Pearls; A Romance*, a serial penny blood about a murderous barber, a meat pie shop, and a sinister mystery.⁵ The novel was written

⁵ The “penny bloods” were the cheap periodical predecessor to better known penny dreadfuls. According to Robert Mack, the bloods were popular in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, aimed at a wide audience, and focused on “tales of the murderous exploits of outlaws, highwaymen, and thieves” (Introduction to *Sweeney Todd* ix). By contrast, the penny dreadfuls were a reaction against this form, thought vulgar and inappropriate by many during the century. The dreadfuls specifically targeted young boys and tended to feature more morally admirable characters and narratives.

anonymously,⁶ which perhaps added to its popularity and mystique. The story follows Sweeney Todd, a barber who habitually murders his clients for their money and jewels; Mrs. Lovett, Todd's accomplice, who bakes the flesh of Todd's murdered clients into her meat pies; and Johanna Oakley, a young woman whose sailor fiancé has gone missing. Although Sweeney Todd is the novel's central character, he is not at all sympathetic or morally redeemable; his inevitable comeuppance is treated as a victory for the other characters, including the traumatized citizens of London.

Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street: A Musical Thriller premiered at the Uris Theater on March 1, 1979. With a book by Hugh Wheeler and music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim,⁷ *Sweeney Todd* quickly became a hit with New York audiences. It's been revived on Broadway three times, and it has also been produced and revived in the West End.

Of the four musicals this study will examine, *Sweeney Todd* differs the most from its Victorian source. The musical follows a vengeful barber, Sweeney Todd, who seeks to murder Judge Turpin and Beadle Bamford for their mistreatment of Todd and his wife and child. He teams up with the widowed proprietor of a failing meat pie shop, Mrs. Lovett, who assists him in reopening his tonsorial parlor and disposing of the bodies of his many murder victims. Mrs. Lovett uses the corpses for meat in pies that the shop begins to sell with great success. Meanwhile, Todd's daughter Johanna is the ward of Judge Turpin, who intends to marry her. She

⁶ Lloyd's periodical commonly featured blatantly plagiarized stories, often Dickensian imitations. Over the centuries, some of Lloyd's regular contributors, including James Malcolm Rymer and Thomas Peckett Prest, have been credited with penning *The String of Pearls*, as has Lloyd himself; however, no definitive evidence has yet answered this mystery (Mack).

⁷ In musical theater, the "book" refers to the spoken parts of the play that are not sung. The "libretto" comprises the spoken dialogue as well as sung lyrics, but not the sheet music.

plans to escape with Todd's friend, Anthony, a sailor, but things go awry and she narrowly escapes being mistaken by Todd and murdered herself. Todd does mistake his wife Lucy for a meddling beggar woman, and he kills her. When he discovers his mistake, he murders Mrs. Lovett and submits himself to death.

The story of Sweeney Todd has been adapted to the stage numerous times, starting in the spring of 1847 before the final chapters of *The String of Pearls* had even been published. George Dibdin Pitt, a prolific London playwright,⁸ produced his stage version of the story with, obviously, a rather different ending, and he is sometimes therefore mistaken as the original novel's author.⁹ This stage version has been revised and revived over the succeeding decades in the U.K., influenced by a number of films in the 1920s and '30s.¹⁰ It was a newly revised version of this play, reworked by British actor Christopher Bond, that Stephen Sondheim saw in Staffordshire in 1973 and that inspired the hugely popular musical. The original cast of *Sweeney Todd* included Len Cariou, Angela Lansbury, and Edmund Lyndeck. This production's original run won a total of eight Tony Awards, including Best Musical, Best Book, and Best Original Score. The musical's success has led to three revivals on Broadway (most recently in 2023 with Josh Groban in the title role), four West End runs, in addition to several national tours in both the

⁸ Pitt wrote at least 250 plays over the course of his career. Playwrights and actors of the time were not compensated particularly well, so to make enough money, many crafted a staggering body of work. In just 1845, for example, Pitt wrote seventeen melodramas and a pantomime for the Britannia theater, in addition to several plays at other theaters around the city (Booth, Mack).

⁹ Pitt's play, alternatively titled *The Fiend of Fleet Street*, was first performed on March 1, 1847. It was popular, but was not meant for "respectable citizens," as none would be expected to patronize the Britannia and the other theaters in its district (Mack 206).

¹⁰ A now-lost 1926 silent film starring G.A. Baughan, a 1928 silent film starring Moore Marriott, and a 1936 film featuring Tod Slaughter all preceded Bond's stage version (Workman & Howarth).

U.S. and the U.K., and a 2008 film starring Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, and Alan Rickman and directed by Tim Burton.

Charles Dickens's final—and unfinished—novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* concerns a young man who goes missing under mysterious circumstances, leaving his opium addict uncle, his former fiancée, and a small cathedral town of colorful characters wondering what happened. Since the novel remained only half-finished at the time of Dickens's death, readers since its serial publication in 1870 have also wondered. These circumstances led Rupert Holmes to write the music, lyrics, and book for his 1985 Broadway musical of the same name (though it is typically styled as simply *Drood*).¹¹ In the musical, the characters from Dickens's novel play out the events leading up to Edwin Drood's disappearance as though they are the subject of a Victorian dance hall production. The actors play fictional English actors who are then supposed to be portraying the Dickensian characters; after the intermission, the action of the musical stops and the actors tally votes from the audience to determine the show's ending. Though the songs are mostly standard with minor adjustments for the sake of the actors, the musical has four hundred distinct possible outcomes (Weltman 151).

Though *Drood* never reached the viral popularity of *Sweeney Todd*, it has been beloved by theatergoers since its original Broadway run, which starred Betty Buckley as Alice Nutting/Edwin Drood, Patti Cohenour as Deirdre Peregrine/Rosa Bud, and Howard McGillin as Clive Paget/John Jasper. The musical was revived on Broadway in 2012 after a 1988 U.S.

¹¹ The writer/composer for *Drood* is notable for two reasons: first, it is unusual for one individual to write the music, lyrics, and book for a single show, and second, that despite his success in musical theater he remains most famous for his 1979 pop hit "Escape," also known as the "Pina Colada Song."

national tour and three West End productions. *Drood*'s original production won five Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

Along with *Frankenstein*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Dracula*, Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is among the most commonly adapted pieces of British literature. It is no surprise, then, that in 1997 Frank Wildhorn and Leslie Bricusse's musical theater adaptation reached the Broadway stage. In the musical, Henry Jekyll struggles to produce an experimental serum that might cure the mental illness from which his father suffers, but the unsympathetic hospital board thwarts his efforts. After visiting a burlesque ahead of his wedding, he is inspired to complete the serum and inject it into his own veins, awakening his cruel and violent alter ego, Mr. Hyde, who wreaks havoc in Jekyll's life and in London at large. The hospital board members turn up murdered, and Lucy, the burlesque performer, is also killed. It is not until Hyde makes a surprise appearance at Jekyll and Emma's wedding that Jekyll ends Hyde's reign of terror once and for all by committing suicide.

Jekyll & Hyde opened originally in 1990 at a small theater in Texas before embarking on a national tour and finally to Broadway in 1997 after initial success. Though derided critically, the show became a kind of cult classic for theatergoers during its Broadway run,¹² helped on by a casting gimmick when *Baywatch*'s David Hasselhoff replaced Sebastian Bach as Henry Jekyll/Hyde in October of 2000 until the show closed the following year. Hasselhoff's performance was professionally recorded,¹³ and it is this version that is available on DVD for

¹² Steve Cuden, a co-lyricist on several of the musical's numbers, claims that devoted fans of the musical call themselves "Jekkies." He points out that in addition to its American success, *Jekyll & Hyde* has been translated into over twenty languages and has toured the U.S. four times.

¹³ Professional, Broadway-sanctioned recordings are relatively rare, due in part to the difficulty of negotiating union contracts. Audio albums that feature a musical's complete song list recorded by an original Broadway cast are far more common.

twenty-first century Broadway fans to view. Hasselhoff's performance was not reviewed well, but his star power helped to extend the Broadway run and solidify Frank Wildhorn's commercial success as a Broadway composer. The show returned to Broadway in 2013, and though it has not had a West End production, it has gone on to perform well in foreign markets, including Seoul and Berlin.

Bram Stoker's famous character Count Dracula has been adapted to the stage, the big and small screens, and even to video games and other kinds of new media, in addition to contributing to a broader cultural reinterpretation of vampire stories. Frank Wildhorn, Don Black, and Christopher Hampton's 2004 Broadway musical sees Dracula return to the stage in a show that emphasizes these adaptations' common themes of unrequited love and sacrifice. The musical begins just as Stoker's novel does: Jonathan Harker arrives at Dracula's castle in Transylvania to help the latter prepare to purchase real estate in London, but he quickly discovers that there is something sinister and supernatural going on. Meanwhile, Jonathan's fiancée, Mina, helps her friend Lucy choose a husband from among several suitors. Mina is called away to nurse an injured Jonathan, and Lucy marries Arthur just as Mina marries Jonathan thousands of miles away. Dracula, after arriving on English soil, begins to terrorize both Lucy and Mina, changing Lucy into a vampire herself and drawing Mina into a tempting almost-love affair. Dr. Van Helsing, a surprise vampire expert, arrives to assist with dispatching Dracula, who ends his own life to protect Mina from himself.

Dracula, the Musical opened on Broadway on August 9, 2004 after a world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego and after a round of revisions. Like Wildhorn's previous Broadway offering, *Dracula* was not treated well by critics, and though a devoted public enjoyed

the show, its Broadway run was relatively short.¹⁴ Of the four shows relevant to this study, this is the least widely-known; it is the only one of the musicals not to have a professional recording or a published libretto. Still, its cult popularity ensures that bootleg recordings can be found on YouTube and other video sharing websites, and the music from the show (including a 2005 concept album recording) is easy to find on music streaming services.

Frank Wildhorn himself is worth mentioning, as he has been involved in several musical adaptations of Victorian stories, including two of the four relevant to this study, as well as adaptations of many other works.¹⁵ Wildhorn has not often impressed Broadway critics. Robin Pogrebin wrote in a 1999 interview with Wildhorn that critics had called the composer's work "contemptible, shoddy, appalling" and that he had been "battered by critics more savagely than any other composer in recent history" (1). When *Dracula* premiered on Broadway, Ben Brantley called it not "simply bad, which is an authentic state of being that is kind of fun if you're in the right mood . . . it is bad and boring" (1). Imagining what the authors of Wildhorn's Victorian source material might think of his adaptations, Charlie Suisman wrote, "In the public domain, no one can hear you scream" (4). Still, this critical reception has not seemed to temper Wildhorn's productivity; Pogrebin calls him "Broadway's Critic-Proof Composer" and reports that "this is (still) his moment." One of musical theater's quirks is the common disparity between the critical and popular responses to a show; despite critical derision, Wildhorn's repeated popularity with audiences suggests that there is a ready American market for adapted Broadway musicals.

¹⁴ The Broadway production ran until January 2, 2005 and closed after 157 performances. Though Broadway runs vary wildly, the average is somewhere in the 300-600 range. The record is held by *Phantom of the Opera* with over 13,000 performances.

¹⁵ In addition to *Jekyll & Hyde* and *Dracula*, Wildhorn has created musicals adapted from *Carmen*, *The Scarlet Pimpernell*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and the Japanese anime television series *Death Note*. His work has found great success overseas, especially in South Korea.

II. Cultural Exchange

Britain and the United States have maintained a close relationship over the centuries, artistically as well as politically; the exchange of artwork and stories between the U.K. and the U.S. has influenced countless artists, writers, and works, including Broadway musicals. Broadway musicals developed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, heavily influenced by their European forbears, including Italian operetta, French and Italian opera, and the Victorian stage. In the United States, the nineteenth century saw popular theater transition from vaudeville to burlesque to minstrel shows to musical comedy. By roughly “the third decade of the twentieth century,” Raymond Knapp reports, the Broadway musical had evolved “into the semblance of an original, integrated work intended for a specifically American audience, involving both naturalistic spoken drama and some combination of singing and dancing” (15).

The development of American musical theater is related closely to the Victorian novel, just as American film is.¹⁶ Many popular Victorian novels were published serially in weekly periodicals that were accessible to the increasingly literate middle class. And many popular Victorian novels were adapted into stage plays very shortly after their publications. At the time of these novels’ publication, as well as their exportation to the United States, American musical theater was in its infancy. Some of these stage versions made their way to American stages, and other English-produced plays were also popular in the U.S., including and especially light opera in the style of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879),

¹⁶ Particularly, horror film is tied and indebted to Victorian novels, since the first horror movies in Hollywood came right on the heels of the Victorian period and, despite a widespread distaste for all things Victorian among Modernist thinkers and artists at the time, they drew repeatedly from Victorian horror stories.

and *The Mikado* (1885).¹⁷ One popular genre of American theatrical show during the nineteenth century was called the “variety show,” a comedy performance with various elements of music and dance, skit, and slapstick. This type of show developed and changed, emphasizing the musical elements more and more until, in the early twentieth century, the musical comedy became standard. In 1927, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II’s *Show Boat* kicked off a century of American musical theater, and Rodgers’s and Hammerstein’s 1943 musical *Oklahoma*, typically considered the first fully integrated musical, set the standard for Broadway for decades to come. Although Broadway musical theater is a fundamentally American genre, its relationship with the U.K. and with European drama and storytelling is crucial to its history.

Another genre with a great deal in common with both the Victorian sensation novel and American musical theater is the horror film; the Hollywood horror industry is closely tied to Broadway. Even Broadway musicals that do not themselves belong to the horror genre, as these four do, share some similarities with horror films and their commercial processes. Both Broadway musicals and horror movies are extraordinarily popular with American audiences. Horror cannot claim to be a fundamentally American genre, of course, given its debts to French, Italian, German, and Japanese works, but the majority of English-language horror films continue to be produced in the U.S. by American filmmakers, and American audiences still make up the majority of their viewership. There would seem to be considerable overlap in the audiences for both horror films and Broadway musicals, given the frequency with which horror movies and

¹⁷ See Chapter Two of Knapp’s *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* for more on the European/British influence on American musical theater.

black comedies are adapted to the musical theater stage, including *Carrie* (1988), *American Psycho* (2016), *Beetlejuice* (2019), and *Heathers* (Off-Broadway 2014).

Another commonality between musical theater and horror is the very common rift between the popular and critical reception of a work. Critics are very often harsh on musical theater offerings, especially, it seems, those that audiences love. Andrew Lloyd Webber's work, as well as Frank Wildhorn's, exemplifies this apparent divide. Horror films have long experienced the same, though modern critics seem, by and large, to have warmed to the classic slashers in more recent years. Early reviews, however, for films such as *Friday the 13th* and *The Hills Have Eyes*, were not generous.¹⁸

These distinct genres would seem to have little in common, but in this discussion of late-twentieth century American musicals, their points of intersection are obvious. Generally, their developmental paths have overlapped and entwined over the centuries, and in their modern forms they share themes, motifs, and even audiences. Specifically, Broadway did not resurrect near-dead stories from the late Victorian period – the stories have lived on in pop culture on both sides of the Atlantic.

III. Critical Framework and Methodology

Because of the considerable overlap among Victorian horror, American musical theater, adaptation, and American horror, this is a necessarily interdisciplinary study. There is little to no established critical framework for discussing transmedial, transatlantic, and transtemporal adaptation, so I must consult the work of scholars in various critical fields to piece together a

¹⁸ See Chapter Four.

methodology suitable for my purposes here. At the heart of this dissertation is musical theater studies, informed by adaptation studies and Victorian studies. But though an understanding of Victorian culture and ideas is very important to understanding the works I will be examining, this study is ultimately about the American Broadway adaptations, their American creators, and their American audiences, as well as, of course, the American culture they all share.

In order to discuss the methodology and critical framework this study will employ, some general definitions are necessary.

The Victorian period is understood by scholars to range somewhere between 1830 and 1914.¹⁹ For my purposes, I consider “Victorian” to refer to British works and people during the reign of Queen Victoria, from 1837 until 1901. The earliest of the four Victorian source works I will examine is *The String of Pearls*, published serially from the autumn of 1846 until the spring of 1847, and the latest is *Dracula*, published in 1897.

Though the origins of Broadway are undeniably American, modern musical theater is a global industry, and it is therefore more difficult to determine a musical’s “Americanness” than it once was. For the purposes of this study, an American musical is one whose original stage production was on Broadway, rather than the London West End.²⁰ The cast need not be wholly American, but the writers and composers of these four American shows are American. For

¹⁹ Richard Altick mentions a debate among historians as to whether the Victorian period begins with Victoria’s ascension to the British throne, or with the passing of the 1832 Reform Bill. Ultimately, Altick argues that the distinction “matters little, because the 1830s were, in any case, a decade of transition” (People and Ideas 2). Similarly, though Victoria’s reign ended with her death in 1901, some scholars extend the Victorian age to end with the start of the first World War.

²⁰ Sometimes musicals premiere elsewhere than Broadway; throughout the United States, there are several prestigious theaters where musicals destined for Broadway often premiere. Some shows open off-Broadway before moving to the larger Manhattan theaters, and some lucky shows premiere in relative obscurity before their Broadway run. Broadway-produced shows also often perform “tryouts” in Boston or Philadelphia ahead of their Broadway premiere. Regardless of this caveat, I focus here primarily on original Broadway productions.

example, I omit in my study *Oliver!* because, while it has been very popular in the United States, enjoying a successful Broadway run and several national tours, its original production was in the West End, not Broadway, and its composer, Lionel Bart, was English, rather than American. Similarly, *Les Misérables* was originally produced on the Paris stage before its translation into English and subsequent global popularity. Of course, neither of these shows qualify for a study on musicals adapted from *horror* stories, anyway; and the Victor Hugo novel on which *Les Mis* is based, while written and published in the nineteenth century, was originally written in French. Still, by this same definition of “American,” this study omits *The Phantom of the Opera*, which adapts a 1910 horror novel set in the 1880s (though, again, originally French), due to the show’s inherent Britishness; the composer, Andrew Lloyd Webber, is British, and the show opened first in the West End. *The Woman in White*, too, will not feature in this study because, though adapted from a Victorian thriller novel, the original production was British rather than American.

Horror is somewhat more challenging to define. Victorian horror is especially elusive, since it tends to be less explicit and far more couched not only in allegory but in Christian imagery and ideology than modern American horror tends to be.²¹ The Victorian works relevant here might better be called “sensation fiction” or “penny dreadfuls,” but their American counterparts lean into the horror elements and resemble more closely what “horror” has come to mean for American audiences. Still, because comedy is such a crucial element of most Broadway musicals, the kind of horror that musical theater audiences enjoy is markedly different, and perhaps less “horrifying,” than what a modern cinephile might see. What I consider to be a “horror musical” for the purposes of this study is a show whose content includes themes like

²¹ The possession subgenre features many notable exceptions to this distinction.

murder, revenge, monsters, or death. The musicals I examine here are evenly split between the traditional drama categories of “comedy” and “tragedy,” but all four include gallows humor, macabre imagery or motifs, and characters who must struggle under threat of pain and death.

This study is ultimately a musical theater studies project. The relatively new field of musical theater studies is therefore crucial to my purposes, and I employ much of the methodology of musical theater studies here. However, musical theater studies sometimes overlaps with musicology and music theory, which is not a part of this dissertation. This is not unusual, as musical theater scholars often come from literature backgrounds as opposed to musicology backgrounds, and a few are even specifically invested in adaptation studies. While not all of the works with which I am concerned are available as a written text, I will treat all four of the musicals as literary artifacts. *Sweeney Todd* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* are both available as published librettos, and *Sweeney Todd*'s Broadway run was also recorded professionally and is available to view on DVD. *Jekyll & Hyde* is also available on DVD. The music from all four shows is available readily on various music streaming platforms as well as on disc, and in some cases sheet music and lyrics are available online. *Dracula* is not available as a libretto or as a DVD recording of the performance, but the original Broadway production has been recorded by audience members and uploaded to video sharing sites, making it accessible for study.

This study is primarily interested in musical theater as it represents a uniquely American genre of art, appealing to American audiences with American expectations, norms, and preoccupations. While all of these musicals have been produced in the U.K. and in other parts of the world, my interest is primarily in their production for and reception by American audiences; I

therefore privilege their Broadway productions (with some comparative attention to their original productions, if elsewhere).

While this is not predominantly a Victorian study, work that illustrates Victorian cultural norms and prevalent ideologies, especially as they might differ extremely or resemble closely those of modern America, are particularly illuminating. A foundational understanding of Victorian people and their ways of thinking and living will help me to identify the extent to which modern American musical theater accurately represents Victorian England and the ways in which that representation reflects the cultural preoccupations of the musicals' own time.

While my main focus is on the cultural impact of the Broadway musicals, my goal is to demonstrate that impact by way of examining the choices made in the adaptation from Victorian novel to American musical, and therefore adaptations studies is a crucial part of this project. I will consult some general film studies scholars when relevant, but my primary interest is in adaptation in particular. In this study, I will take an analytical approach to examining the adapted musicals, rather than an evaluative one.²² Although I will occasionally make reference to critical or popular reviews of the musicals or to the commercial success and popularity of a show, I will make no comment on the quality or value of any of the works I discuss. Adaptation is both a product and a process, and it is important to look at both elements. But for practical purposes, and within the convention of literary study generally and musical theater studies more specifically, the product is the more convenient and privileged in this case.

²² I follow in the footsteps of Thomas Leitch here, whose preference for an analytical basis opposes a great many scholars in adaptation studies. Leitch reports that both methods “can flourish among sizable cohorts, [but] the question . . . is how to get them to talk to each other in common terms” (8).

Adaptation studies as a field is increasingly invested in new media, intertextuality, and adaptations that do not fit into the standard novel-to-film adaptation process, but very little scholarship has taken up Broadway adaptations from a similar framework. With this study, I aim to contribute to the small but growing body of work that addresses this gap.

My interest in the genre of these stories lies in the horror genre's penchant for exploring fear and anxiety, not only on an individual level but on a more broadly social one. Horror stories from any period tap into social unrest and collective discomfort with social conditions and change. In the Victorian period, the kinds of social conditions and cultural shifts readers and audiences were wary of were different from those that modern Americans worry about, but for both of these groups, horror stories were a way to explore and express such anxiety.

IV. Literature Review

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of this study, the scholars on whom I rely here come from various academic disciplines and present various critical perspectives. This range in my research has contributed to a rich background context from which to build an analysis of the American musicals, taking into consideration many aspects of their production, development, histories, and even potential futures.

Very few scholarly works directly address musical theater adaptation at all, much less adaptation across centuries and across cultures; the few that do have this focus do not specifically attend to one subgenre of musical. Sharon Aronofsky Weltman's *Victorians on Broadway: Literature, Adaptation, and the Modern American Musical* explores the relative frequency with which post-Golden Age musicals, specifically, were adapted from Victorian

works. Though Weltman discusses originally British musicals in addition to originally American ones, she explores the appeal that Victorian settings, characters, and plots have for modern musical theater audiences, and especially for Americans. Her examination of Broadway adaptations leads to a fresh perspective on the original source works, rather than insights into modern American culture. Jeanne McGowan Sheehan's 2008 dissertation titled *From Books to Broadway: The Musicalization of Literature* also examines Broadway adaptations, but without a particular focus on Victorian—or even British—source works. Rather, Sheehan takes an evaluative approach to understand why some adapted musicals have been more positively received than others. Her discussion highly prizes what she refers to as “serious literary musicals,” and she concludes with hope that as the young audiences who favor such “escapist” shows as *Legally Blonde* or *All Shook Up* age, the popular Broadway offerings will also “mature” (240).

Because this project is more interested in the immediate cultural impact of the Broadway musicals than that of the Victorian novels, an emphasis on adaptation is necessary. To some extent, the principles of film studies in general are useful, but adaptation is the primary interest of this study. André Bazin was among the earliest scholars to treat film adaptations seriously in their own right, pushing back against arguments that adaptations could never be as valuable or serious as the literary works that inspired them or as the original auteur films that competed with them. Timothy Corrigan playfully refers to this position as “radical and heretical” (30). Today, adaptation studies is its own field, led by such scholars as Corrigan, Dudley Andrews, Renata Kobetts Miller, James Naremore, and Thomas Leitch. Leitch edited *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, a volume that contains many essays on various themes in adaptation studies,

including Linda and Michael Hutcheon's "Adaptation and Opera." Hutcheon and Hutcheon point out that musical adaptations have problems similar to those of film adaptations, such as the fact that audiences who know the original story will experience the adaptation differently from audiences who do not. But they also explain some of the unique challenges that librettists have when adapting their work to the musical (or in their specific case, the opera) stage. Practical issues abound, such as compressing long monologues into song lyrics. They also point out,

The 'profaning' music written for an opera is never 'absolute' music; as 'texted' music, it always has an extra-musical dimension because it is written to give voice, literally, to a dramatic text in words. Thus there is both a vocal line and its orchestral music, and the relationship between the two can be one of doubling, supporting, or even ironizing or contradicting. (312)

Because this study does not focus on musicology or music theory, I will not attempt to parse this relationship. Other musical theater studies scholars with greater expertise in these areas routinely grapple with the impact on the written text of a musical by its orchestral support. Still, Hutcheon and Hutcheon's work helps make clear the unique aspects of the adaptation process when adapting works to the musical stage as opposed to the silver screen.

Crucial to understanding the differences between how a Victorian audience would have responded to the novels relevant to this study and how American audiences respond to the musicals is some groundwork in Victorian studies. Richard Altick's work exploring Victorian ideologies and sociopolitical movements has been particularly helpful in laying this groundwork,²³ and Judith Flanders's socio-historical exploration of Victorian city and domestic life has been likewise useful. Finally, the work of Robin Gilmour and Walter E. Houghton, as

²³ Including *Victorian People and Ideas: A Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature*, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, and *Victorian Studies in Scarlet: Murders and Manners in the Age of Victoria*.

well as the contemporary work of Victorian thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, Sarah Stickney Ellis, and Charles Darwin, have set the stage, so to speak, for my analysis of Victorian-sourced musicals.

Musical theater studies is a growing scholarly field, not fully established until the late '90s and early aughts. Still, scholars mostly in either literature or music departments have been interested in musical theater for many decades. Early offerings in the field have focused on the culture of Broadway and the surrounding Manhattan theater district. Geoffrey Block's *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim* is one such work. As musical theater became more widely accessible,²⁴ the scholarship around it began to shift, too. Over the course of the twentieth century, as Broadway musicals underwent tonal and focal changes corresponding to broader social movements, the centrality of the genre to American culture became more and more clear, despite critical neglect until recently. Raymond Knapp's work examines the ways in which the development of musical theater contributed to the formation of a specifically American national identity, and vice-versa. Stacy Wolf's work continues along these lines, exploring the representation of gender, queerness, and romance in the Broadway musicals especially of the last several decades. Wolf, along with Knapp and Mitchell Morris, edited *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical*. Similarly, *The Cambridge Companion to the American Musical*, edited by William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird, provides important context for this study.

²⁴ Though ticket sales on Broadway continue to climb in price, more and more small and local theaters across the nation are licensing shows, many very popular musicals are recorded and available via streaming services, and some are even being adapted to film, meaning that one needn't necessarily travel to the Big Apple to participate in this musical theater culture.

Adaptation studies itself is not necessarily interested in transatlantic cultural exchange, but there is some scholarly work that is. Matt Hill, Michele Hilmes, and Roberta Pearson's *Transatlantic Television Drama: Industries, Programs, and Fans* discusses the explosive popularity of such (originally) British TV programs as *Masterpiece Theater* and *BBC America*. They find Anglophilia alive and well among American audiences especially throughout the mid- to late twentieth century, with television adaptations of British classics such as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Little Dorrit* making massive profits for the BBC on both sides of the Atlantic. In another vein, Rachel Vorona Cote explores the extent to which Victorian patriarchal cultures of oppression continue to impact even modern Americans, including those who make up the audiences of both *BBC America* and *Sweeney Todd* on Broadway.

V. Chapter Overview

The following three chapters will each discuss all four of the relevant musicals, each focusing especially on one of the four as a kind of case study. Chapter Two will closely discuss *Drood*, Chapter Three will examine *Dracula*, and Chapter Four will engage *Jekyll & Hyde*. While each chapter will spend some time with *Sweeney Todd*, it will not receive a special focus in this study.²⁵

Chapter Two of this study will begin to examine the American-constructed "Victorian" settings and Victorian stories as an American "culture-text." In this chapter, I'll discuss the ubiquity of certain Victorian horror figures and narratives in American popular culture and how that ubiquity has led to uniquely American retellings in the musicals. Finally, I'll closely examine

²⁵ For a closer examination of Sondheim's musical with this framework, see my MA thesis.

the musical *Drood* with this in mind, working through the musical's revision of Dickens's final, unfinished novel and the ways in which its American writers and audiences have constructed an American "culture-text" of Dickens, specifically, and Victorian stories and settings more broadly. This Victorian culture-text arises partially from an American recognition of kinship with their Victorian forebears, observable in the way Victorian stories are so often convenient and compelling vehicles for critiquing American social problems, which I will explore later.

Chapter Three will discuss the Broadway musicals' treatment of romantic plots and subplots in their adaptations. I will demonstrate a pattern of American refocus on heterosexual romance in other adaptations of British works. Though Broadway can be understood as a mostly queer-friendly culture, the long tradition of American musical theater has also been to center heterosexual romances and marriage plots primarily, only occasionally centering the experiences of queer people. The modern American understanding of Victorian culture as sexually repressed and extremely heteronormative, accurate or not, colludes with this broad American tradition in the adaptations discussed here. In her scholarly work, Sharon Marcus discusses the relationships between and among women in the Victorian era, also examining the ways in which modern readers and audiences think of these relationships. Meanwhile, Stacy Wolf's work explores platonic, romantic, and sexual relationships between women in musical theater. Building on the work of Marcus and Wolf, I will examine how the American genre of Broadway musicals follows a general trend of Victorian adaptation in reorienting homosocial relationships to reify traditional American heteronormative and nuclear family values.

Chapter Four will consider the musicals' representation of American social problems within ostensibly Victorian settings, demonstrating that although the musicals purport to show

uniquely British issues and uniquely Victorian characters, they are really much more about the Americans involved in their production and reception. As much as Americans commonly think of all things “Victorian” as responding directly to social injustice, inequality, and social upheaval, such an imagining is heavily influenced by Americans’ own cultural surroundings. These musicals’ representation of Victorian social problems offers an access point through which American audiences can consider their own social milieu and the needs of their neighbors. The horror genre in general is often good at this, often pushing boundaries and reflecting society’s most pressing collective anxieties; Victorian horror and modern American have this in common, and these musicals prove no exception. Ultimately, the “Victorian” horror musical reveals an American preoccupation with ethics and morality, even and especially relating to the actions of individuals and their impacts on the most vulnerable members of society.

Chapter Five will conclude the study, considering what further research may be warranted and how this study’s findings might inform future projects.

Broadway musicals, like other kinds of dramatic works, are often called “living works” because they are preformed live by actors right in front of their audiences and because they continue to undergo revision, minor and major, with every new adaptation, production, and even performance. These changes are not always easy to trace, just as the shifts in popular culture trends, political concerns, and public opinion on myriad topics are challenging to follow closely. Such a popular and prolific genre of American art like Broadway reflects these kinds of changes, and the works produced there have much to tell us about the cultural moment of our ancestors, our peers, and potentially our descendants. Broadway stories that have their origins in Victorian

horror are especially telling, since they have accumulated so many layers of meaning in the many years since their initial appearance on the page. By examining these adaptations, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which the “Victorian” horror musical challenges and embodies aspects of American culture.

Chapter II

DROOD AND THE VICTORIAN CULTURE-TEXT

In Raymond Knapp's book *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, he points out what is, on the surface, obvious: "American musicals play to American audiences." This is undeniably (though not exclusively) true, but what this means is the subject of much discussion, in Knapp's work as well as many other studies of American musical theater. Knapp goes on to point out that "if Americans see representatives of other lands and cultures on the musical stage, they will see them in relation to some sense of who *they* are as Americans" (104). It seems, then, that the characters and settings of *Sweeney Todd*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Dracula*, and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* should read onstage as foreign and forcefully other than their American audiences and their homeland. But in the case of these adapted musicals, the Victorian people and places represented on the Broadway stage are constructed both by and for American audiences, not just those immediate to the shows, but also to consumers of such reimagined media in the intervening century.

To understand the impact of these reconstructions of Victorianism, I will explore two related key questions. First, how "Victorian" are these musicals? "Real" Victorianism is an inaccessible relic of the past, and any modern and especially American construction of that time and place must rely on assumptions and cultural ideas that come from the people who lived between then and now. Second, how does the cultural setting of both the source works and the adaptive works inform the plot, structure, and themes of the musicals? The stories we tell about our predecessors both influence and reveal how we think about ourselves. Just as speculative

fiction, including horror, reveals far more about the fears, anxieties, and expectations of the people writing those works than about any future reality, the “Victorianness” of these musicals reveals far more about the creators and audiences of the American musicals than about those of the original Victorian stories. The settings, characters, and plots of these musicals are really only “Victorian” in the sense that modern Americans think of them as such. The stories resonate so much with modern American audiences because the social issues they raise, the social expectations they uphold or subvert, and the collective cultural fears they explore are all familiar to us, even when those stories do draw more or less directly from the original Victorian novels.

The long and complicated history of Americans adapting and reimagining Victorian England leads to the pseudo-Victorian settings, characters, and conflicts of the four musicals this study discusses. *Sweeney Todd*, *Dracula*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, and especially *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* construct a version of Victorian England that is familiar and engaging specifically to their twentieth-century American audience. They both rely upon and contribute to the “culture-text,” a nebulous, culturally constructed collective understanding, first described by Paul Davis, of the original Victorian stories and of the general American notion of Victorian people and culture.

Critics in adaptation studies, Victorian studies, and musical theater studies have periodically examined Victorian works that find their way to modern American audiences in various media. Often such examples serve a larger point about adaptation, generally, or about key differences between American and British audiences. Matt Hills, Michele Hilmes, and Roberta Pearson discuss these disparate markets and their varying voracity for British period drama. Renata Kobetts Miller discusses some of the earliest Victorian adaptations that brought nineteenth-century literature to the stage for its contemporary audiences, as well as the ways in

which that dramatic tradition has impacted modern adaptations of the same stories. Robert Stam discusses adaptation across centuries more broadly, pointing out that because of the decades or centuries between versions, “adaptations become ideological barometers that register the shifts in the social/discursive atmosphere. But these shifts in social/discursive atmosphere are never univocal; rather, they are polyvocal and dissensual” (247). Knapp, tracing the development of American musical theater through its nineteenth-century origins, attends to some such voices. Sharon Aronofsky Weltman’s *Victorians on Broadway* is the only full-length study that examines Victorian-sourced musicals, though her focus is neither on distinctly American musicals, nor on horror musicals. Her critical focus is to explore the ways in which modern Broadway adaptations might shed light on the Victorian works and cultural contexts, rather than the other way around.

Some scholars focusing on specific works and authors from the regency and Victorian periods have discussed modern adaptations of those works, often examining the ways in which the popular understanding or imagination of such authors has shifted into a kind of cultural mythos. Claudia L. Johnson traces the “afterlives” of the works of Jane Austen, especially attending to the phenomenon she calls “Janeism,” a “self-consciously idolatrous enthusiasm for ‘Jane’ Austen and every primary, secondary, tertiary (and so forth) detail relative to her” (6). John Carey similarly discusses the legacy of Charles Dickens, also noting the revised popular notion of Dickens and his writing. David Rogers and Roger Luckhurst, in their introductions to modern editions of *Dracula* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, respectively, discuss the expectations of new audiences and how the stories have transformed across time, space, and medium.¹ And of course, Paul Davis focuses on the many adaptations of *A Christmas*

¹ This is presumably also true of countless other scholars who introduce editions of such “classic” stories.

Carol; he coins the phrase “culture-text” to denote the popular collective version of the story that has entered the oral tradition, having “inverted the usual folk process” (3).

But almost no critical attention has been paid to the horror musical, broadly, or to the Victorian-sourced horror musical, specifically. The four musicals relevant to this study posit a compelling and potentially representative version of this American reconstruction of Victorian England that is common to, or at least collectively created from, modern Victorian adaptations across media and genres. Horror has always been a convenient genre through which to explore the boundaries of popular culture, the collective values and anxieties of society in various cultural moments, and the consequences of problems like inequality and injustice.² Such questions were at least as important to Victorian people as they are to modern Americans, making this dialogue between the two periods and places a rich and potentially revealing one. This chapter will begin to parse that relationship and to understand how it has resulted in an American “culture-text” of Victorian England and its inhabitants.

I. Victorian England in Various Re-Imaginings

The revitalized mainstream interest in Regency and Victorian England often leads Americans to revise and romanticize the past, constructing fictional versions of nineteenth-century Britain as a very specific and somewhat less than historically accurate setting. From original period fiction like *Bridgerton* or *Downton Abbey*³ to adaptations of classic works of literature, both British and American takes on “heritage fiction” construct their settings according

² Anne Stiles and Judith Flanders discuss this aspect of horror in Victorian literature, while Roger Luckhurst, Carol Clover, and Milly Williamson observe it in modern horror. More on this in Chapter 4.

³ A story set in the early twentieth century, but no less subject to this American interest in British period fiction.

to a set of expectations that come, not so much from a thick description informed by many primary sources, but from a handful of “canonical” “Victorian” works. Jane Austen and the many adaptations and retellings of her work is one source. Though Austen lived, wrote, and died before Victoria ascended the British throne, modern readers typically understand her work as contemporary with the Brontës, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens, since she was, as Mary Favret argues, “created as a cultural icon in the Victorian age” (66). And like many other “cultural icons” of the nineteenth century, Austen’s hold on readers and adapters is, according to Claudia L. Johnson, the result of “a historical process unfolding through many vicissitudes and carrying different cultural meanings over time” (13). Austen’s work has introduced many modern readers to unfamiliar concepts from the Regency and Victorian periods, such as estate entailment and dowries. But while the myriad adaptations for film and television make Austen’s work more accessible to more people, they can also contribute to an erroneous, romanticized notion of nineteenth-century life in England. Austen’s heroines are all solidly middle class (if not upper-middle), and while socially conscious and critical of social institutions that bound women of all classes (especially for the time), the stories rarely if ever depict the realities of daily life for, for example, the Bennets’ servants or the enslaved people who make Sir Thomas Bertram his fortune in Antigua. Especially when relying on clean pastoral settings and slightly anachronistic costumes, film adaptations of Austen’s novels are not particularly reliable depictions of the Victorian—or even pre-Victorian—everyday.

In many ways, this contemporary reimagining of the nineteenth century is done through Charles Dickens and his lastingly popular works. As Sharon Aronofsky Weltman posits, although Dickens’s work has been especially suited to adaptation over the centuries, this is especially true

on Broadway, where “*Victorian equals Dickensian*” (16). But even more generally, there is a tendency, both critical and popular, to imagine Dickens as a social critic and only a social critic, a view that, as John Carey points out, fails to recollect that Dickens is “essentially a comic writer” (7). Indeed, to consider Dickens an enlightened master of social critique, felling unjust systems and institutions with his mighty pen, is to ignore the evidence that Dickens was, while perhaps socially progressive given the time in which he lived, not wholly invested in social justice in fiction or in life.⁴ Still, whether or not the actual man lived up to the collective rewriting of him, Dickens has become synonymous—in both academic and popular readings of his works—with social critique. When modern readers, especially American readers, think of Victorian cities, they invariably conjure up a foggy, sepia-toned image of dirty, down-trodden urchins prowling the narrow and filthy streets of London begging for charity or picking pockets (in contrast to the Austenian image of the countryside). And that imagery, and the criticism of Victorian governments and social institutions that it implies (whatever Dickens’s original intention), belongs, if not to the real Charles Dickens, then at least to that cultural reconstruction “Charles Dickens.”

Programs like BBC America and PBS Masterpiece have long been very popular in the United States, as have been their counterparts in the UK. Several attempts to adapt classic American works for these programs met with mixed success, but adaptations of “classic” British works were often very popular. More recently, original period fiction set in and around the Victorian period has been enormously popular with audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015) was one breakthrough success for Masterpiece, and the 2020

⁴ Nor was he an especially admirable person: Carey offers some examples. See p. 8.

Netflix adaptation of Julia Quinn's *Bridgerton* novels was an overnight sensation.⁵ Both of these series, like the many adaptations of the Brontë's' work, Dickens's work, Austen's work, and the work of other famous Victorian fiction writers, depicts nineteenth-century life as a specific and often highly stylized environment. These settings entrance or fascinate viewers from England and the U.S. alike, but for potentially different reasons.

The stories of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Dracula*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Edwin Drood* have, to somewhat varying degrees, been a consistent part of the broader popular imagination for a very long time. It was not the creators of these Broadway musicals who first adapted the Victorian horror stories for wider audiences, of course. That process began, in some cases, even before the novels were entirely published, and it has continued in many forms and in many media since then, ultimately influencing not only the eventual musicals, but also, as with Austen and Dickens, the popular conception of Victorian people and settings.

This cycle of influence began very early on with the Victorian playwrights who adapted serially published literary works even before their publication runs had concluded, a relatively common practice. Several theatrical adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* made their way to the Victorian stage, more or less contemporarily with the original novel's circulation in the 1880s.⁶ *Dracula*, too, owes much of its renown to the theater. Bram Stoker worked at the Lyceum theater with the famous Henry Irving during the time Stoker was writing *Dracula*, and the novelist adapted his own script for a stage reading there in 1897 (Rogers vii).

⁵ See Hills, Hilmes, & Pearson for more on British period drama, heritage fiction, and transatlantic TV adaptation.

⁶ In August of 1888, Richard Mansfield's stage production opened at the Lyceum, just in time for the city to be swept up in the Jack the Ripper murders, leading to persistent comparisons between Mr. Hyde and the unidentified Victorian serial killer (Weltman 191).

Dracula's first appearance on Broadway was in John L. Balderston's 1927 adaptation of Hamilton Dean's stage play, starring Bela Lugosi (and later adapted into Tod Browning's 1931 film, also starring Lugosi). The play enjoyed a UK tour and a Broadway revival as late as 1977. George Dibdin-Pitt, a prolific adapter of popular fiction—especially so-called penny dreadfuls—for the Victorian stage, produced an adaptation of *The String of Pearls* (upon which the American musical *Sweeney Todd* is based) that premiered prior to the publication of the novel's final chapters. As a result, not only did Dibdin-Pitt's version shift characters, motivations, and thematic emphasis, his ending was completely different from the novel's. All of these horror stories received different treatment onstage (and in some cases, *several* different treatments) than in print simply because of differences in the medium and in the personality and writing prowess of the creators. But Dibdin-Pitt's play had a profound impact on the afterlife of *The String of Pearls* and its now-famous characters. Like several other Victorian adapted melodramas (but certainly not all of them), Dibdin-Pitt's *The String of Pearls; or, The Fiend of Fleet Street* survived beyond its original performance run through the end of the Victorian period and well into the twenty-first century. It was Dibdin-Pitt's stage play that Christopher Bond adapted in 1968 into the play that would inspire Sondheim's musical. Up until this point, the story of Sweeney Todd, though so widely known to average English citizens that its fictionality was in some dispute, was virtually unknown across the pond.

Sometimes inspired by their contemporary playwrights and sometimes working directly from the source novels, many filmmakers have also had their hand in creating the popular concept of Victorian villains and horror stories. The earliest Hollywood horror classics, including *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Mummy* (1932) as well as *Dracula* (1931), have sparked countless

adaptations, reboots, retellings, and innovations on these recognizably nineteenth-century horror tales and helped to situate them solidly on American soil. All four of the stories relevant to this study have been adapted for the silver screen multiple times, even as early as 1908 (in the case of the first film version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*). But the stories that reached a larger audience through these early film adaptations were not at all notable for their “Victorianness.” After all, despite the inclination of modernist writers and artists to distance themselves from their Victorian predecessors, the two periods overlapped a great deal, and the Victorian setting of *Dracula*, for instance, would not have seemed especially foreign to its 1930s audience. This is, of course, true to varying degrees, as *Dracula* has been adapted into more than 250 films (Rogers vi), some of which certainly do attempt a reconstruction of the Victorian similar to what the musicals do.

To some extent, other Broadway musicals have contributed to the popular notion of the Victorian, including *Carousel* (1945), *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), and, most notably, *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986). Though none of these shows is set in England, they all draw from Victorian-era works, and they all construct their settings as anachronistic but nonetheless recognizably “Victorian.” *Phantom of the Opera* is based on a French book by Gaston Lereaux, and it features mostly French characters. However, while a handful of the characters in the show speak with an accent,⁷ the show is entirely in English, as are the plays-within-the-play that the opera house company puts on for their ostensibly French audiences. I belabor this because *Phantom* is a prime example of a story with no apparent connection to Victorian England that has managed to become apparently English (by way of its creators, cast, and crew) and Victorian (by way of the popular understanding of its setting). In this way and others, *Phantom* has been very

⁷ This varies production by production and actor by actor.

influential on later Victorian-sourced Broadway musicals and on the way modern Broadway audiences think about Victorian-sourced shows.

Sweeney Todd

As much as *Sweeney Todd* owes its Victorianness to Stephen Sondheim's adaptation of an old penny dreadful story, Harold Prince, one of Sondheim's frequent collaborators and the director of *Sweeney Todd*'s original Broadway production, is responsible for the now-iconic two-story iron set. Sondheim's initial vision for the show was a far more intimate set, but when the musical's scheduled opening was moved to the Uris Theater,⁸ a large and imposing theater seating 1,900, far more grandiose than any of its neighbors, the new venue required an altered approach. This approach emphasized the urban setting of the story, something that Sondheim reports Prince was keen to do from the beginning ("Larger than Life" 11). The set design, commonly reused and re-invoked in subsequent productions across the nation and even the world, features an iron scaffolding (or at least, it *looks* like iron) that spans the width of the stage and provides an additional level of blockable space. Famously, during the second act of the show, part of the second level houses Todd's tonsorial parlor, where he uses a sliding chair mechanism to send his victims, throats slashed, down to the basement bakehouse of Mrs. Lovett's pie shop.

Prince's iron scaffolding set spotlights the impact of the industrial revolution and the resultant anxieties of Victorian people living during an unprecedented shift in the way that manufacturing, labor, and commerce functioned and affected daily life. The original novel also underscores the anxiety of an industrializing city, which points to parallels not only in the reality

⁸ Later renamed the Gershwin Theater, the Uris was and remains the largest of the Broadway theaters.

of Victorian life and the modern notion of the Victorians, but also between Victorian people and spaces and modern ones. But the imagery of the novel is in many ways quite different from that of the musical set. *The String of Pearls* features a bit more focus on petty crime, less forceful emphasis on the overall theme of systemic injustice and oppression, and somewhat more uncritical vilification of the poor and disabled. Still, the novel manages, as a whole, to point towards the “Dickensian” social critique that Sondheim’s musical reproduces and elaborates.

This critique in the musical happens most explicitly through its emphasis on filth. After the title number, which employs the entire company and serves (alongside its numerous reprises) as a kind of frame and interlude for the action of the story, the musical’s main action commences with “No Place Like London.” This is a tone-setting duet featuring Sweeney Todd and Anthony Hope, the idealistic young sailor whose ship rescues Todd from the Pacific Ocean near the Australian penal colony from which he escapes, all prior to the events depicted in the show. Anthony expresses awe as he takes in the sights of London, remarking that though he’s seen amazing sights all over the world, “from the Dardanelles to the mountains of Peru” (29), none of these places compares to London. Todd interrupts, offering a different view. He calls the largest and most industrialized city of the age “a hole in the world like a great, black pit,” insisting that London is “filled with people who are filled with shit, and the vermin of the world inhabit it” (33). Given historical context and the dark lighting and color palette typically featured onstage, Todd could be remarking purely on the literally unhygienic conditions of the city. But Todd’s bitterness, his ensuing revenge plot, and the continued emphasis on injustice, oppression, and social inequity bely such a superficial reading.

Mrs. Lovett's meat pie shop serves as something of a microcosm for the filthy city at large. During her introductory number, "The Worst Pies in London," she scurries about her shop bringing food and drink to Todd, squishing bug after bug and dusting dirt and flour off of her clothes, the table, and the pie she offers to her rare new customer. The song explicitly bemoans the high price of meat and the financial struggle Mrs. Lovett is experiencing with her shop, all while revealing that filthy conditions perpetuate her cycle of poverty. Weltman points out the social—and not just literal—resonance of this filth, suggesting that "Mrs. Lovett's scheme of meat pies only realizes and reverses the figurative cannibalism rampant in the capitalist social structure's mode of allowing the rich to feed off the poor" (131). Drawn from the novel to some extent, but expanding far beyond what it emphasizes, Sondheim's musical's preoccupation with filth presents Victorian London as even grimmer and more corrupt than Dickens's biting report often depicted the city. It would be easy to say that, from his modern perspective, Sondheim was making assumptions about Victorians based on erroneous or exaggerated rumors regarding their cleanliness and hygiene habits. But the reality is not only that Victorian London *was* notoriously dirty—dangerously so—but also that 1970s New York City was similarly filthy, both literally and figuratively. Aleksei Grinenko reports that "the 1970s was a period of urban blight for New York City, characterized by a serious slump in the city's economy and a surge in its crime rate" (236). Lucius Riccio, Joseph Miller, and Ann Litke, tracing the history of city management and its effects on the streets of NYC, describe the city as "substantially dirtier" than it had been prior to the mid '70s (84), and they join Grinenko in pointing out the fact that certain areas of the city were more susceptible to both material filth and criminal activity than others. These problems contributed to a general sense of abandonment by the city's government and abuse by New York

law enforcement. Sondheim's depiction of Victorian London relies at least as much, therefore, on his own experiences of his home city as it does on the culturally understood American notion of Victorianness.

Jekyll and Hyde

Especially compared with Prince's ambitious and now recognizable set design for *Sweeney Todd*, *Jekyll and Hyde's* set is relatively bare. Visually, the set reveals little that situates the story in any particular locale. To some degree, the costumes, likely inspired heavily by such Broadway Victorian sensations as *Sweeney Todd* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, make up for this, as the characters onstage are clearly—even at first glance—not modern Americans. But it is mostly in the musical's plot, drawn from so recognizable a story, that marks it as "Victorian." And although Stevenson's novella was published toward the end of the century, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* remains a story that reminds modern readers of centuries past, despite its lastingly resonant thematic emphasis.

One recurring theme that marks the musical adaptation as strikingly "Victorian" is its faithful underscoring of a very Victorian idea: that private and public spaces and functions should ideally be kept as separate as possible. Judith Flanders reports, "The Victorians found it useful to separate their world into a public sphere, of work and trade, and a private sphere, of home life and domesticity," though she is quick to point out the myriad instances in which this demarcation dissolved (*Inside* 5). Richard Altick, meanwhile, traces much social change over the course of the nineteenth century – change that nonetheless happened very slowly and left the upper classes more or less in control despite improvements in conditions and power for the

working class and the poor. *Sweeney Todd*'s iron scaffolding is onstage for much of the performance, showing that the demarcation between "upscale" or "wealthy" parts of the city and "lower class" or even subterranean areas is not as clear as it may seem. But the sets of *Jekyll and Hyde* rarely blend. Different kinds of spaces have different functions, and the music performed in each space even seems uniquely suited for the space's respective function. For example, the first act's romantic duet between Jekyll and Emma, "Take Me As I Am," is performed outside their engagement party. It is a private moment, and thus it takes place away from other people. The rest of the party is visible in the background behind Jekyll and Emma as they embrace and declare their unconditional love, but this only serves to further emphasize the difference between the public sphere of the engagement party and the very private moment Jekyll and Emma share. Later, Jekyll visits a dance hall and brothel with his friend as part of a kind of bachelor party, and here he sees Lucy for the first time, performing "Evil and Good," an ostentatious song more suited to the megamusicals that clearly inspire the show. The number is an un-subtle commentary on the duality of humans, a theme that runs throughout both the novel and the musical.⁹ In the brothel, a space where private, sexually suggestive acts are performed publicly onstage, Jekyll is inspired to complete his formula intended to separate the "good" and "evil" parts of his human nature. Jekyll's formula quickly backfires, of course, and sparks the central conflict of the musical, which serves to critique the notion that separating the private from the public is truly necessary, beneficial, or even possible. And it is in the musical's unflinching and occasionally heavy-handed social critique that it most aligns with the modern understanding of "Victorian"

⁹ The Broadway run replaced a different number, "Bring on the Men," with this song.

literature as socially conscious and critical of, even while complicit with, corrupt and unjust institutions.

II. Dracula, Adaptation, and the Culture-Text

One facet of this rift between the reality of Victorian England and the American reimagination thereof is what Paul Davis calls the phenomenon of the “culture-text,” a term he uses to describe the “process of reformation” by which “each period re-creates the story in response to its own cultural needs,” contributing to a notional and constantly evolving version of the “text” that does not exist in any one version, but rather as a shared cultural ideal (13). Davis uses this concept to discuss the afterlives of Dickens’s beloved *A Christmas Carol*, which “has been adapted, revised, condensed, retold, reoriginated and modernized more than any other work of English literature” (4). He traces several adaptations of the *Carol*, noting the fluctuating trends in emphasis over the years, each depending on the prevalent social and cultural issues of the time. In dissecting this process, by which the *Carol*’s “meaning is created anew by each generation of readers,” he draws a distinction between the literal written word of *A Christmas Carol* and the notional, collective “culture-text,” which he simply calls the Carol. Renata Kobetts Miller points out that the Victorian stage plays that were adapted directly from their contemporary novels, such as *Dracula*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and *The String of Pearls*, were “the first step toward abstracting from the original novel” the culture-text of each story (58). Weltman unhesitatingly considers works like *Frankenstein* and, yes, *Dracula* subject to this phenomenon.

Just like the stories behind *Sweeney Todd* and *Jekyll & Hyde*, the infamous Count Dracula and his sordid tale have a long and varied history of adaptation over the last century and a half. David Rogers suggests that “with the possible exception of Mary Shelley’s monster in *Frankenstein* and the Devil himself, Stoker’s neck-biting, blood-sucking, ubiquitous Count has probably been the most widely popularized anti-hero in the whole of Western culture” (vi). From the start, both British and American writers and audiences have been obsessed by *Dracula*, and although the story was originally written by an Irish writer and circulated to British and Irish readers, Americans have since taken the Dracula story and run away with it. Arguably the most famous versions of Dracula were portrayed by Hollywood greats in popular horror movies. Bela Lugosi, having played Dracula in a silent film in 1931 (and in its preceding stage play), is still widely remembered as the monstrous vampire, even among young modern movie-goers. Some *Dracula* film adaptations have clear, direct origins: they explicitly adapt Stoker’s original novel or one of the better-known stage versions. But others, especially versions developed later in the twentieth century, combine not only elements from the original novel and elements from the intervening adaptations, but also new ones. To trace the exact adaptation history of any modern *Dracula* offering would be almost futile, since so many potential influences exist in the popular imagination. This phenomenon makes *Dracula* an example of what Davis calls the “culture-text,” a conceptual and mutable version of Dracula and the story surrounding him, known generally to most consumers of English-language media (and many non-English-speakers, too!), but not originating, or existing at all, in any one adaptation. Rather, the culture-text is an amalgamation, subject to adjustment as the result of any especially forceful new entry in the *Dracula* subgenre, of many of the versions of Dracula’s story that have delighted and frightened

audiences of all media over the century-plus since the publication of Stoker’s novel. These versions all converge to catapult Dracula into the oral tradition, such that one need not have read Stoker’s novel or seen *any* adaptation thereof to nonetheless be familiar with the Count and some basic elements of his story, however dissimilar this culture-text might be from the original Victorian novel.

The character Dracula is so deeply embedded in the horror genre and American pop culture in general that he—or a version of him, however heavily reimagined—occasionally appears in other stories. For example, the 2012 animated film *Hotel Transylvania* (and its sequels)¹⁰ features Dracula as a main character, but rather than following a plot at all similar to Stoker’s novel or even attempting to revise Dracula’s origin, this movie gives Dracula (voiced by Adam Sandler) a suburban dad makeover and drops the character into a goofy family comedy. Dracula also appears in one single episode of Joss Whedon’s 1997-2003 television series based on the film of the same name, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Ultimately, this version of the character is just as doomed as the original, as he is no exception to Buffy’s stake. But from his appearance to his amplified and extended powers, *Buffy*’s Dracula is markedly different from the other vampires in the show. Even more self-aware in its presentation of a “Dracula” character is *Supernatural*, whose season 4 episode titled “Monster Movie” features a shapeshifter who embodies the character Dracula from the 1931 film adaptation, killing his victims in the familiar way and obsessing over one woman, whom he calls “Mina.” And Dracula has also made his way into video games. Notably, the *Castlevania* franchise follows a family of vampire hunters and takes place mostly inside Dracula’s castle, where the hunters seek to destroy Dracula himself.

¹⁰ *Hotel Transylvania 2* (2015), *Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation* (2018), and *Hotel Transylvania: Transformania* (2022) follow this same version of the Dracula character in the twenty-first century.

The game series is originally Japanese—demonstrating the reach of the Dracula culture-text—and has been adapted for comic books as well as an (American) animated television series.

While Bram Stoker did not invent vampires, his novel did spark not only a long string of direct adaptations of the Dracula story, but also a crowded subgenre of vampire stories that do not feature Dracula himself. These stories often draw heavily from *Dracula*, but just as often, they draw from the Dracula culture-text, to which they also contribute. Some evidence of this is the fact that the vampires in these stories are typically bound by somewhat different “rules” from those governing the Dracula of Stoker’s novel or even most adaptations thereof. For example, vampire fiction frequently claims that vampires are burned by the sunlight or otherwise physically incapable of withstanding daylight (an adjustment of Dracula’s sunrise/sunset limitation).¹¹ Others allege that vampirism is a virus or the result of another transmissible (and, significantly, observable) pathogen or even parasite, rather than a supernatural curse,¹² or conversely, that vampires are born the way they are rather than altered or undead humans.¹³ Some vampire fiction leans into the original novel’s religious themes, presenting vampires as a perverse blending of demon and human.¹⁴ There is so much vampire lore in popular culture, even just that which originates in the United States, that it can be challenging to sift through all the mythology and determine what is original to Stoker and his predecessors and what is of more recent invention. These inventions probably come about sometimes from a desire for originality on the part of a writer, but broadly they are a response to other monster fiction in the popular

¹¹ American examples include *Twilight*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *True Blood*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

¹² American examples include *The Strain*, *Daybreakers*, *Underworld*, and *Twilight*.

¹³ Consider Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*, or the American TV adaptation of *Castlevania*.

¹⁴ Such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Midnight Mass*.

consciousness, to trends in this and other branches of genre fiction, which arise as a result of shifts in broader cultural thinking and anxiety. All of these works and their contributions to American vampire lore coalesce to create a uniquely American culture-text of Dracula, his story, and his legacy.

Just as American popular culture imagines and reconstructs Victorian settings and characters, pop culture reconstructs specific Victorian stories and recasts them in ways that reflect the interests and concerns of their immediate audiences. This process is not just a function of adaptation, nor is it even entirely intentional. Though individuals and teams tasked with retelling these stories make conscious choices that contribute to the culture-text of stories like Dracula's and, more broadly, settings like Victorian England, such nebulous culture-texts are the result of decades of both intentional and incidental shifts and changes in collective understanding and imagination of these stories. They come about not only from the creative choices by innovative adapters, but more significantly from the reformation that Davis says organically occurs as each new period responds to the unique cultural needs of its audiences. Other factors, including commercial ones as some versions of these reconstructed stories and settings receive more effective marketing and embed more firmly into pop culture through internet memes and other reproductions, also contribute.

This phenomenon, by which popular culture modifies the collective cultural image of a particular author, character, or even period of history, is not unique to these four Victorian stories, to the horror genre, or to the nineteenth century. Ancient stories and myths persist in popular culture and transform over centuries of retelling and adaptation.¹⁵ Many of

¹⁵ Other cultural processes like Christian colonialism and translation have profound effects on the culture-text of such myths.

Shakespeare's works have transformed into their own culture-texts,¹⁶ as have popular works and characters such as *Don Quixote*,¹⁷ *Robinson Crusoe*,¹⁸ *Alice in Wonderland*,¹⁹ and Sherlock Holmes.²⁰ It is perhaps human nature to reinvent and revise popular stories; it is certainly an easily observable process even now. But in the specific ways in which stories, writers, and characters are remodeled over the decades and centuries may lie clues to their longevity, to their relatability, and to the many different things they may have to say.

That so many Victorian characters and stories have become culture-texts of the kind Davis describes means that modern audiences, including and perhaps especially American ones, have a great deal in our "oral tradition" to pull from when constructing an imagined Victorian setting. Filmmakers, novelists, playwrights, set designers, costumers, and many other creators all draw from these culture-texts, intentionally or not, when they adapt Victorian works or innovate on originally Victorian stories like *Dracula*'s. The result in the American popular imagination is

¹⁶ Consider, for example, the myriad versions of *Romeo & Juliet*, which has been produced for countless stages and has also been made into many movies, including modern retellings. Regardless of whether they have actually read or seen the play, the majority of Americans could most likely identify basic plot points and characters. The culture-text of *Romeo & Juliet* has even found its way into modern stories with seemingly little to do with Shakespeare's beloved play, such as *The Lion King II: Simba's Pride* (1998) and the video game series *The Sims*.

¹⁷ A successful Broadway musical by Dale Wasserman titled *The Man of La Mancha* adapts Cervantes's famous story. Versions of a *Don Quixote* "culture-text" find their way into works ranging from Charlotte Lennox's 1752 novel *The Female Quixote* to a downloadable expansion to the 2015 video game *The Witcher 3*.

¹⁸ American students are probably far less likely now to read Daniel Defoe's 1719 novel than they once were, but elements of the story are nonetheless familiar, finding new footholds in the twenty-first century by way of film and stage adaptations, oblique retellings such as *Swiss Family Robinson*, and the resulting culture-text.

¹⁹ Multiple Disney adaptations, separate British and American musicals and other stage productions, as well as countless representations in other media, have all contributed to the *Alice* culture-text.

²⁰ Sherlock Holmes mysteries persist in the continued development of the mystery genre, as well as subgenres such as "cozies." Other genre fiction such as *Star Trek* has also parleyed with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original character, resulting in a culture-text rather than widespread direct familiarity with the original work.

our construction of the Victorian period itself, a culture-text of Victorian places, Victorian people, and the things Victorians cared about.

III. Case Study: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

A combination of this reimagination of Victorian/Dickensian England and the emergence of a culture-text from well-known works is visible in many Broadway adaptations of nineteenth-century works, including Rupert Holmes's 1985 musical *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, commonly known simply as *Drood*.²¹ Charles Dickens, while never represented directly onstage, haunts the musical performance like a specter; he is mentioned frequently by the show's narrator (the Chairman) as he navigates for the audience the convoluted events of the author's final—unfinished—novel. Additionally, the setting presents a version of Victorian England at once familiar and pleasantly novel to modern American theatergoers.²²

In addition to the plot and the characters, even the very performance of *Drood* is steeped in its mediated Victorian setting. Just like Dickens's original novel, the action of the musical's story takes place during the 1860s or '70s in a small English cathedral town not far from London. But in an instance of what Weltman calls "meta-theatricality," every aspect of the performance of *Drood* pulls the audience into the show's constructed Victorian England. The entire performance venue,²³ including the front of house, mimics a Victorian music hall, where nineteenth-century audiences would congregate to enjoy variety shows and other musical treats. This sort of

²¹ For clarity, I will hereafter refer to Dickens's original 1870 novel as *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, while following the Broadway trend in referring to Rupert Holmes's musical as *Drood*.

²² While the action of Dickens's novel takes place mostly outside London, the fictional setting of the play in *Drood* is explicitly "just slightly west of Leicester square" (5).

²³ Originally the Delacorte in Central Park, and later the Imperial Theater on Broadway.

entertainment was generally quite accessible, and though a music hall was not a likely venue for one of the early stage adaptations of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* that actually were performed for immediate Victorian audiences, the evocation of this essentially Victorian entertainment venue serves the construction of *Drood*'s setting. Even the audience of the musical is drawn into the pseudo-Victorianness of the show.

Another layer of *Drood*'s meta-theatricality is its cast and the characters they portray. Each of Dickens's original characters is represented onstage by a fictional actor, whose personality, characteristics, motivations, and goals are entirely invented by Rupert Holmes and not at all rooted in Dickens's novel or any of his other works. These Victorian characters, who have far more in common with their Dickensian counterparts than the real actors portraying them both, demonstrate perhaps more clearly than anything else the twentieth-century American understanding of Victorian people. Later productions of *Drood* could conceivably dispense with this additional meta-theatrical layer, but the Broadway run, the cast recording, and the published libretto all retain this unusual innovation, making the musical fairly well-known for its self-conscious and rather tongue-in-cheek approach.

Of course, it is not unheard of to present characters who themselves play characters within the diegesis of a musical. *Cabaret*, *Show Boat*, and *A Chorus Line* all feature fictional performers as the chief characters, and recently, some famous and hugely popular movie musicals, such as *Moulin Rouge* (2001), *High School Musical* (2006), and *A Star is Born* (2018, remade/adapted from previous versions) have implemented elements of this concept. But while the backstage musical is an established subgenre on Broadway and elsewhere, *Drood*'s inclusion in that subgenre is uncertain. As is typical for backstage musicals, the musical numbers in *Drood*

do not always serve to advance the plot, and some of the music is diegetically performed by the fictional actors in the show, rather than by the characters of the story. Most of the songs, however, are performed from the perspective of Dickens's characters, from the play-within-the-play, and these numbers advance the original narrative rather than the new framing narrative. This is unusual for a backstage musical. For example, while the performers in *A Chorus Line*, who are auditioning for an unnamed dance musical, do perform several dance combinations and one musical number ("One") ostensibly from the fictional show-within-the-show, that number is still ultimately about the central conflict between Zach and Cassie. The rest of the musical's songs reveal the individual and collective traumas, dreams, and fears of the auditioning characters, and nothing at all about the fictional show for which they are auditioning. The same is true of the more widely-known movie musical franchise *High School Musical*. Backstage musicals commonly focus on the fictional performers rather than the fictional performance, so much so that the show and characters of the play-within-the-play aren't often even named. *Drood* is different, though, in that it features a much more even split between the familiar characters of Dickens's novel and Holmes's invented Victorian actors. Betty Buckley on Broadway played two named characters at once, both Edwin Drood *and* the fictional actor, Alice Nutting, who played him. *Drood's* approach is highly unusual, and the oddity calls further attention to the musical's setting and structure, which serve to emphasize not just American interests as they contrast with Victorian ones, but the relationship American audiences have to Victorian stories and to the Victorian culture-text.

Whether *Drood* is a straightforward backstage musical or not, its meta-theatricality highlights performativity and duality, two concepts that align with the modern understanding of

Victorian people and culture. Right from the outset, the show splits its investment between the characters and narrative of Dickens's 1870 novel and the fictional Victorian actors who bring the story to life onstage. One of the most defining features of Victorian culture was the notion that private and public spaces and functions must be as separate as possible, and the Victorians attempted to separate all business into "a public sphere, of work and trade, and a private sphere, of home life and domesticity" (Flanders 5). But this duality is not an invention on the part of a modern playwright simply drawing on a collective understanding of Victorian concerns; duality and mirrored characters and events are embedded in the plot of Dickens's original novel.

The story is set in a quiet cathedral town, one with relatively little in common with the hustle and bustle of London, Dickens's usual setting. But true to form, Dickens does not leave London out of the story entirely (and it is perhaps likely that the remaining chapters would have shifted the action to the city); juxtaposed sometimes starkly against the quiet, close-knit (if secretive) community of Cloisterham is loud, sprawling London (which is foggy and therefore as mysterious, dangerous, and secretive as Cloisterham). Dickens's narrator describes Cloisterham itself as "a drowsy city, . . . whose inhabitants seem to suppose, with an inconsistency more strange than rare, that all its changes lie behind it, and that there are no more to come" (23). When Rosa, the novel's most morally unspoiled character, comes to London, she dislikes the "gritty state of things" there, feeling, contrary to the sense of Cloisterham's change being in the past, that in London there is an air of "waiting for something that never came" (253).

Dickens's characters reflect the Victorian idea of separation between public and private by engaging in clandestine activities and conducting secret business, frequently under cover of darkness. John Jasper, especially, "hides wicked passions behind a respectable ecclesiastical

career,” as Paroissen puts it. Jasper has a public life as a widely respected and even-tempered choirmaster, but in his private life, he is given over to lechery and vice, pursuing Rosa to the point of chasing her from the Nuns’ House and frequently travelling to London to visit the opium den. And Jasper is hardly the only character with a dark secret, though precious few of those secrets are revealed in Dickens’s published pages. Durdles, Mr. Crisparkle, and Dick Datchery all have chapters dedicated to them in which they wander the dark streets (or mausoleum tunnels) of Cloisterham with some undisclosed destination or agenda. The first half of the novel sets up a great many of these moonlit mysteries, providing a sinister contrast to the humdrum of the cathedral town in daylight, and with the latter half of the novel unfinished and unpublished, readers will never know the full extent of the duality these characters represent.

Some characters present direct opposites of each other, too, furthering the story’s emphasis on duality. Edwin Drood himself represents a potential alternative version of Neville, had the latter been doted on in childhood and given every social and economic advantage—and if he were white, of course. Rosa and Helena are similar mirrors of one another, both women trapped in situations that force them to make excuses and avoid the violent outbursts of the men in their lives. But Jasper’s attraction to Rosa makes her an object of greater scrutiny, and her upbringing affords her far less agency and assertiveness than Helena. The two become friends, rather than the adversaries Edwin and Neville make of each other. And Neville and Helena Landless are not only mirrors of each other, but literal twin siblings, who themselves embody the Victorian separation of public work life with private domesticity, despite Neville’s frequent transgression of public respectability. Where Mr. Crisparkle fails to move Neville to repentance for his violent sentiments, his sister’s promise that “there is no treachery” in her heart inspires

Neville's apology (108). Helena's influence seems to be the only thing keeping Neville from behaving in socially inappropriate ways, since his instinct seems to be rebellion and violence and hers forbearance and diplomacy. That these traits are divided along gender lines fits not only with the Victorian preference for separate spheres, but with the contemporary idea that women are obligated to, as Victorian conduct manual writer Sarah Stickney Ellis insists, attend to the "minor morals of domestic life" and assist men in maintaining these morals in the face of economic pressures (54).

During the Victorian period, the focus on separate spheres for public and private affairs was in many ways a reaction to a rapidly changing sociopolitical landscape. Holmes's musical reveals a similar anxiety of American artists and audiences in the 1980s. The fictional Victorian actors featured in *Drood*, as well as their Dickensian counterparts, would have been entrenched in social unrest for most or all of their lifetime. The Victorian period saw several labor reform bills come through Parliament, as well as the incredibly rapid growth of what was at the time the world's largest city, leading to new problems whose immediate solutions were not always effective or viable. Consequent fear of and preoccupation with social ills captivated Victorian people, especially those unable to afford the necessities that insulated the upper classes from risk of disease, exploitation, petty crime, hunger, poverty, and more. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is invested in exploring some of these issues, especially injustice perpetuated by undue power held in the hands of the Church and its adherents, just as so many of Dickens's works can be read—especially with a modern lens—as socially conscious.

Drood's multivalent emphasis on duality and performativity, and by extension its bizarre take on the backstage subgenre, reveals the adaptation's fraught relationship with both its textual

origin and that original Victorian setting. Since Dickens's work is so often seen as social commentary, *Drood's* relative lack of focus on social inequity in the play's nineteenth-century backdrop is curious. But despite the show's deep investment in constructing a pseudo-Victorian atmosphere for both its characters and its audience, its central conflicts—such as they are—resonate more strongly with its actual modern American theatergoers than with its hypothetical Victorian ones. During the 1960s and 1970s, the United States saw a great deal of social unrest, large-scale protest, and historic activist movements, including the civil rights movement, first-wave feminism, anti-war protests, and the counterculture. Alongside all of this social protest was rising urbanization and industrialization as cities grew and corporate ideology and privatization spread. As art imitates life, the key thematic interests of American musical theater began to shift, reflecting the growing disillusionment with the so-called American dream. As Knapp puts it, “There was a . . . revisionist spirit at work on Broadway that sought to expose the realities behind American mythologies” (154).

Elements of the performance add yet another layer to *Drood's* embedded duality, creating a kind of “trinality” instead. The fact that the musical features so many different characters, with half of those characters “playing” the Dickensian characters of the central narrative, problematizes any straightforward analysis of the musical's plot. One aspect of that complication is the gender-bending in the show and its casting. The title character of the musical is “played” by a woman, who herself is also played by a real woman. The character is not gender-bent: Holmes's version of Edwin Drood himself is a man, just as Dickens's original version of Edwin Drood is. But the casting is gender-bent, as Edwin is portrayed by a mezzo-soprano rather than a tenor or baritenor, as might be expected for such a character. This flipped casting reflects the

modern view of Victorian masculinity as rather flamboyant and effeminate, especially when compared to the rugged American masculinity valued at least since the 1960s. But the gender-bending happens at the internal layer of casting, meaning that the fictional Victorian actor, Alice Nutting, is also a woman, and the audience—which itself plays a kind of “role” in the performance as an ostensibly Victorian audience at the Music Hall Royale—is meant to be in on whatever joke or comment the musical is making with this choice.

Nutting’s motivation within the musical’s “performance” is to gain recognition and notoriety for her performance. She expresses frustration with the way the Chairman refers to and introduces her, and she eventually resigns and walks offstage in a huff (to return later in the final reveal, but the exit is still significant). In Holmes’s musical, women are more central and have more agency than their Dickensian originals do. Princess Puffer, Jasper’s purveyor of opium, has several solo numbers and features as a key character, far more important than Dickens’s version. She is revealed to be Rosa’s long-lost nanny, sharpening the story’s emphasis on women supporting one another (however clumsily the musical handles it). This focus on women and their agency seems apt considering the political climate in which the musical premiered. When *Drood* first appeared on Broadway in 1985, the Equal Rights Amendment had recently failed to achieve national ratification for what seemed and would prove to be the final time. The show was conceived, produced, and performed in the midst of the second-wave feminist movement, and the show’s oblique references to the predominance and privilege of men in show business respond to the ongoing concerns of feminists in the early 1980s.

Drood’s near-fetishization of Victorian culture and settings complicates traditional moves to distance an adaptive work from its original source. Adapting a Victorian horror novel without

modernizing its setting necessarily distances the audience from the potential terror the story will engender. On one hand, the musical's setting, casting, marketing, and conception immediately and irresistibly encircle the audience with the (pseudo) Victorian. The result is a sense of novelty. The audience can comfortably pretend to be nineteenth-century theatergoers, free from many of the prevailing social concerns of the day. The setting, not only of the musical itself but also of its very performance, highlights the differences between the day-to-day life of the show's modern viewers and the Victorian people they pretend to be. But in another way—and as we will see with somewhat more nuance in the case of the other musicals relevant to this study—the thematic focus of *Drood* serves only to reveal cultural resonance from the nineteenth century that is still palpable today (or at the very least, was still palpable in the late twentieth century).

Ultimately, the layer that the fictional Victorian actors in *Drood* add to the musical highlights the frustration of Dickens's modern readers, as well as all of the readers of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* that came before Rupert Holmes and his contemporaries. Since Dickens's death, readers of his final novel have agonized over the unresolved titular mystery and speculated over the novelist's planned ending. As early as 1871, the Dickensian adapter Augustin Daly sought answers from Dickens's son and two of his illustrators, whose knowledge was limited and dubious (Paroissen xviii).²⁴ Theories abound, but barring some truly remarkable discoveries, we will never really know how the novel would have ended and the mystery of Edwin Drood resolved. Still, this sort of frustration can be very motivating for creative fans. The very existence of fanfiction, so often prolifically composed prior to a series' conclusion (as was the case for such modern pop culture sensations as *Harry Potter* and *Twilight*), attests to how

²⁴ Signs do point mostly toward Jasper's guilt in Edwin Drood's disappearance, despite what the musical does with Jasper.

intensely an unsolved mystery can spark the imagination. Such was evidently the case for Rupert Holmes, whose entire concept for *Drood* revolves around the novel's abrupt and unsatisfying cessation.

While most adaptations separate the narratives they adapt from the original writer of those narratives, *Drood* takes another, not unprecedented, route, continuously and self-consciously referring directly to Dickens, his untimely death, and his maddeningly unfinished final work. After the show's opening number, the Chairman contextualizes the performance thus: "Our own Mr. Charles Dickens was full halfway through the creation of The Greatest Mystery Novel of Our Time, when he committed the one ungenerous deed of his noble career: He Died, leaving behind not the slightest hint as to the outcome he intended for his bizarre and uncompleted puzzle." In this way the musical establishes the double mystery: not only that of Edwin Drood's disappearance but also of the originally intended conclusion to the story. The audience is immediately connected to the Victorian author by way of the musical's constructed setting and atmosphere, as well as through these direct references.

Even more telling, though, is the structure of the musical's second act. As the Chairman promises, "When together we reach that point in our story beyond which Charles Dickens wrote No More, I shall be asking you to Vote upon key questions regarding the outcome of our plot. Our company will then make its most earnest effort to meet this supreme challenge: to contrive An Ending in Accordance with Your Specifications" (6). Following the intermission, the cast or crew do indeed move among the audience administering a poll, which allows the viewers to vote on a number of factors in the narrative's conclusion. The audience votes to determine not only the identity of Edwin Drood's killer, but also the two characters who, inevitably, will end up

together and complete the marriage plot of the show; they also vote on the question of the identity of the elusive Dick Datchery.²⁵ After voting, the cast performs the final few numbers, enacting the variations necessary to reflect the results of the audience polls. The published libretto of the musical reads like a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure book, with instructions like “go to page 112” and “play continues on page 126.” To minimize the challenge to the cast, most of the music shares the same tune and most of the same lyrics, with minor changes depending on who is performing and with whom.

This unusual structure speaks not only to the collective desire to know the unknowable, but also to the way storytelling in general and musical theater particularly allows for a collaborative and community-based response to uncertainty. The frustration modern readers and theatergoers feel over the unresolved conclusion of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* ultimately reflects the frustration that modern Americans sometimes feel over the inaccessibility of the authentic past, of authentic Victorian culture. As problematic as a desire to rebuild an unmediated Victorian setting might be, nostalgic movements in popular culture—from vintage fashion to heritage fiction to the even more recent Hipster movement—indicate that this desire exists deeply in many people. The past in its pure and true form is forever lost to us. As much as we can rely on the Victorians’ own self-awareness in declaring the “spirit of the age” (as John Stuart Mill famously put it), modern Americans can do only so much to recollect this aspect of the nostalgic past, so distant as it is in space and time.

²⁵ The “cast” votes on the fate of Edwin Drood, always and “without exception” voting him dead and occasioning Nutting’s indignant exit (88).

Through adaptations like *Drood*, American creators construct Victorian settings to tell stories about Victorian people, but more often than not, those stories are really about ourselves. Decades of fascination with the Victorian period and adaptations of Victorian stories has resulted in an American culture-text not only of Victorian stories and characters, but of Victorian culture more generally. This constructed Victorianism shows itself in all kinds of period fiction and horror stories, regardless of their sources, and it also informs the way Americans think of their own time and social contexts. Perhaps most significantly, the Victorian culture-text and its manifestations in American art reveals an anxiety about the relationship and differences between Victorian culture and American culture, including the way each responds to cataclysmic social change, threats to traditional value systems, and injustices that affect the most vulnerable members of society. These horror musicals express and contribute to the Victorian culture-text in their exploration of American anxieties and preoccupations, including, as we shall see in the next chapter, American attitudes toward family structures, gender, and queerness.

Chapter III

GENDER, QUEERNESS, AND MARRIAGE PLOTS

Despite some exceptions, the tradition of the Broadway musical is romance, marriage plots, and love stories. Victorian novels, even horror novels, also often included romantic plotlines, and it is common for modern Americans to think of Victorian stories as even more consistently romantic than they really were, thanks in large part to BBC and *Masterpiece* adaptations of such classics as *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Wuthering Heights*. It is unsurprising, then, that the Broadway adaptations of *Sweeney Todd*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula* all emphasize romance to a far greater extent than the original novels. Further, the musical versions all play with gender and queerness in a way that in a few ways drastically changes the thematic resonance of the original stories, but which mostly reinforces traditional American family values, despite Broadway's general willingness to experiment and push at such boundaries.

To investigate this re-orientation and re-emphasis of (hetero)romantic plotlines in the musicals, I will explore two key questions in this chapter. First, to what extent does the Americanization, broadly, and Broadway musicalization, more specifically, involve shifting, adding, and emphasizing heterosexual romances and marriages in the musicals? Second, how do the presence, absence, addition, and removal of queer or homosocial relationships impact the heterosexual marriage plots of the American musical adaptations? These Broadway adaptations, like almost all Broadway musicals, must involve some element of romance, even when the love story cannot be fulfilled or is not a part of the central conflict. The heterosexual romance subplots in these American musical adaptations use the Victorian culture-text to invest the

adaptations in essential American cultural and family values: freedom and liberty, unity, bravery, and patriarchy.

I. Love and Romance on Broadway

In the 1950s, when American television and film was being soundly established, heterosexual romance plots were constructed not only as good, right, and desirable, but as patriotic and American (See Wolf; Knapp; and Hills, Hilmes, & Pearson). As Stacy Wolf points out, “on television, in movies, and in print advertising, the heterosexual couple was the norm, and virtually all female characters were coupled with men” (29). She lists several examples of popular television shows from this decade, especially those that focus on heterosexual marriage and the daily life of the nuclear family, such as *Leave It to Beaver* and *The Donna Reed Show*. And it was not just television. Four of the Best Picture winners of the 1950s were romances: *An American in Paris* (1951), *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *Marty* (1955), and *Gigi* (1958). By the 1960s, it was not just romance but also musical romance that was capturing the American imagination, with *West Side Story*, *My Fair Lady*, and *The Sound of Music* winning Best Picture in 1961, 1964, and 1965, respectively, alongside non-musical films like *The Apartment* (1960) and *Tom Jones* (1963). While the 1970s began to see some more cynical depictions of romantic couples, with such dramas as *Annie Hall* (1977) and *Kramer vs Kramer* (1979), heterosexual love stories have remained a staple of American pop culture – after all, 1997’s *Titanic* won eleven Academy Awards and remains the third highest grossing film of all time.

Americans are certainly not alone in this predilection for romance plots in their fiction, but the integrated stage musical, typically understood as a quintessentially American genre of art,

has long been deeply invested in heterosexual romance and marriage plots. Since at least the earliest integrated musicals, which most closely resemble what the genre has become today, Broadway musicals have consistently – if not universally – hinged on heterosexual romance and marriage plots, not only to entertain audiences and meet their expectations, but to uphold traditional American family and social values. Wolf points out that on Broadway as well as in film and television, “heterosexual romance was the norm. The few representations of gays and lesbians in mainstream culture showed them as sick or as predators. . . . Fear of communists blurred with fear of homosexuals, and both were viewed as a threat to national security” (29). From *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Guys and Dolls* (1950), and *The Sound of Music* (1959) all the way up to *Once* (2012) and *Hadestown* (2016), Broadway repeatedly tells love stories. And although those love stories have changed in tone and direction in recent years, the investment not only in romance generally but in specifically heterosexual romance as an essential feature of American culture and, indeed, American patriotism, remains so embedded on Broadway that, as Wolf notes, “few commentators even note it as a convention rather than a fact or a requirement” (8).

Although musical theater is often queer-coded and ostensibly a very queer-friendly industry, the prevalence of heterosexual romances and the relative lack of queer love stories has continued on Broadway since its earliest days. Many of Broadway’s most famous and successful composers, directors, actors, and dancers have been (sometimes openly) gay, such as Stephen Sondheim, Leonard Bernstein, Howard Ashman, Harvey Fierstein, and many others. The AIDS crisis of the late 1980s, which affected queer people and people of color disproportionately, swept through Broadway and led to some lasting changes on the musical theater stage, including several shows that explore the lasting effects of AIDS on poor and queer communities. But

despite the workforce behind Broadway including so many queer individuals both onstage and off, the musicals themselves very rarely venture to tell queer love stories. Even where heterosexual romance cannot prevail, homosexual romance cannot take its place: Broadway romantic tragedies are far more numerous than queer stories. Even Broadway musicals that do feature queer romance stories are often framed as a peek into LGBTQ subcultures from the perspective of a heterosexual protagonist.¹ Though Broadway has changed somewhat since the late 1980s onward, heterosexual couples and romance plots are still dominant.

This heteronormative feature of Broadway mimics the broader culture in popular American media, of course; while the last several years have seen a distinct uptick in queer popular film and television, mainstream American TV did not feature a kiss between two people of the same sex until the 1990s,² and Disney, one of America's most formative and influential behemoth media companies, has yet to center a queer romance plot in any of their films or television series.³ While Broadway is demonstrably more invested in romance than the broader American culture, its heteronormativity is not at all anomalous.

Not absolutely every Broadway show is primarily a romance, but this near-absolute dominance of heterosexual romance plots on Broadway means that nearly every Broadway show does *include* romance at the least. Very recent Broadway offerings have begun to trend somewhat

¹ *Rent* (1996), *Kinky Boots* (2012), and *A Chorus Line* (1975) are all examples of massively popular Broadway shows with queer characters and storylines focused through cisgender and heterosexual protagonists, playwrights, or composers. *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (1998) and *La Cage Aux Folles* (1983) are exceptions to this apparent rule.

² Many sources credit a 1995 episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* with this milestone.

³ A handful of recent Disney properties have included queer characters. Le Fou in the 2017 live action remake of *Beauty and the Beast* is implied to harbor romantic feelings for Gaston, and two minor female characters share a kiss at the end of *Star Wars Episode 9: The Rise of Skywalker*. A handful of Disney Plus series also include queer characters. All of these queer characters, however, have been met with intense backlash from conservative reviewers, groups, and pundits online.

away from romance, with shows like *Book of Mormon* and *Come from Away*, and even as early as the 1970s when audiences began to feel disillusioned with the golden-age optimism (See Knapp), certain artists, such as Stephen Sondheim, have explored other themes.⁴ And, of course, tragedy does exist on Broadway. Early tragedies, while uncommon, were not entirely unheard of. *West Side Story* has held up over decades as one of Broadway's darlings, due in part to the 1961 film adaptation starring Natalie Wood.⁵ But while *West Side Story*'s plot does not conclude with a happily-ever-after, the tragedy relies wholly on the romance between Tony and Maria. The tragic death in *Rent* is also mediated by several romances, and even the farther-reaching tragedy in *Les Misérables* is expressed as much through lamentations of lost or impossible romance as it is through other loss. Even musicals that are not strictly romances *or* tragedies typically include a heterosexual romance at least as a subplot, even if only to add musical texture to the duets in the show. *Legally Blonde*, *The Lion King*, *The Producers*, *A Chorus Line*, *Elf*, *Something Rotten*, and *Urinetown* are all popular examples of this phenomenon.

It is not at all uncommon, then, for Broadway adaptations to insert or emphasize romance and marriage plots between heterosexual couples; in fact, this addition can serve as a way of Americanizing stories with other origins. The Broadway fixation on romance leads to romance even in stories where it does not fit well. George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* does not lead Eliza Doolittle and Henry Higgins into a romance, but the 1956 musical *My Fair Lady* by Alan Jay Lerner does. In the musical as well as the play, Higgins is demanding and demeaning toward

⁴ Nonromantic outliers like *Chicago* and *Oliver!* do exist, but even the works of Sondheim do not manage entirely to escape romance, as we will see.

⁵ *West Side Story* is still hugely popular with American audiences. The stage musical has been revived on Broadway five times since its initial production, and a remake of the film version, directed by Steven Spielberg, was released in 2021.

Eliza, and Shaw, the original playwright, felt very strongly that Eliza could never marry Higgins. The musical itself is not entirely certain of their union – the marriage plot is left unfulfilled, though implied, at the end of the show. But, as Wolf notes, “The very fact that Lerner can imagine a happy, romantic ending for Eliza and Higgins affirms the influence of musical theatre’s conventions . . . That audiences believe that they see Higgins and Eliza in love underlines the power of conventions and more specifically the conventional heterosexual romance narrative that orders and ends the story of many 1950s musicals” (26). And while these conventions were surely more rigid in the 1950s, they are very far from abandoned in more recent Broadway offerings.

The Broadway musicals relevant to this study are also not straightforward romances. *Dracula*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Jekyll & Hyde* are ostensibly Broadway tragedies: all three title characters die at the end, despite the fact that the narrative and musical structure encourages the audience to sympathize with them, and even perhaps to root for them to a limited extent. *Drood* is a mystery that in many ways defies categorization within Broadway subgenres, but its central emphasis is certainly not romance. And yet, all four of these shows feature romance heavily, much more so than their original nineteenth-century counterparts.

Drood is a somewhat curious example of this phenomenon, similar to *My Fair Lady* in that the marriage plot seems ill-fitting with the main preoccupation of the story and its characters. In the novel, several overlapping romantic pairings converge within the texture of the titular mystery. Edwin and Rosa are initially poised as the lovers, but both Jasper and Neville express romantic interest in Rosa. Edwin seems interested in Helena, brief though their acquaintance is before his disappearance. Though they are betrothed, Edwin and Rosa see each

other more as siblings than lovers, and they amicably dissolve their engagement. But once Neville begins to show romantic interest in Rosa, Edwin's jealousy leads the two men into conflict, complicating the mystery of Edwin's disappearance. The musical maintains this dynamic: Edwin and Rosa call off their engagement, musing in the song "Perfect Strangers" that if they hadn't been raised with the expectation of their eventual marriage, the union might be less distasteful to them both. And Neville begins to feel an interest in Rosa upon meeting her, which bothers Edwin. One slight change from the novel is that Rosa spends time with Jasper onstage before the audience ever sees her with Edwin, which reveals the musical's interest in Jasper's villainy over Edwin's relationship with Rosa. During a music lesson, Rosa rehearses a passionate love ballad while Jasper lecherously watches her become more and more uncomfortable with the song and its effect on him.

In the novel, none of these potential romances can come to fruition, of course; none of the relationships explored onstage is an invention on the part of the musical adaptation, but the outcome is necessarily new. Despite romance often feeling like an afterthought throughout the show, the musical ends with a marriage. This appears to occur for no other reason than, as the Chairman tells the audience near the end of the show, "Surely we are also entitled to a Happy Ending? We all have need in our lives for Love . . . Romance . . . or, at this hour of the night, any reasonable facsimile thereof" (127). Like the identity of Dick Datchery and the murderer of Edwin Drood, the audience votes on who the happy couple will be. The only possible pairings are heterosexual, between the remaining characters who haven't been revealed as a murderer or themselves murdered. The options are Rosa, Helena, or Princess Puffer with Mayor Sapsea, Neville, Bazzard, Mr. Crisparkle, Durdles, or Jasper. The narrative sense of the pairings matters

not at all – just the will of the audience. Although audiences are presumably more likely to choose couples that have at least spent some time together onstage or have the slightest reason to marry, each pairing is potentially equally possible; the script includes different lyrics for the marriage number depending on who is singing together. A particularly sadistic audience might even wed Rosa to Jasper in the end, even after he confesses his intent to murder Edwin and Rosa spends the entire duration of the play fearful of his intentions toward her. But, as Wolf says of *My Fair Lady*, the fact that audiences can imagine these two so ill-suited characters together speaks convincingly to the chokehold that heteronormative romance has on Broadway, even when it does not make sense in the context of a story.

Even in a musical like *Drood* where a marriage plot seems out of place and unnecessary, and the final couple wholly wrong for one another, Broadway quite often insists on heterosexual romance. As the Chairman suggests, it may be simply escapism, a salve for frayed nerves to conclude a harrowing murder mystery. But at its core it may serve to fulfill an expectation of a genre and that genre's broader culture. Where a heterosexual romance makes sense narratively, though, far more satisfying thematic messaging is possible.

Although *Sweeney Todd* is a melodrama first and a tragedy second, it also benefits from the insertion, reordering, and emphasis of romance plots. The original novel of 1846-47, *The String of Pearls*, featured a romance between Johanna and Mark Ingestrie, a sailor presumed lost at sea but who later exposes the horrible secret of Mrs. Lovett's meat pie shop. The two have very few moments together on the page, but Johanna becomes involved with the mystery of the titular string of pearls because she suspects Todd of murdering Mark or his friend. While a number of other characters express interest in Johanna (and one chapter includes a subplot

featuring a spurned woman in Fogg's asylum), no other romances develop throughout the novel. The musical, however, while maintaining a version of this original romance between Johanna and a sailor, also adds new heterosexual romances, which serve to move the plot forward, deepen the conflicts, and enrich the characters of the show, all while serving the generally American and specifically Broadway sensibilities.

Following in Christopher Bond's footsteps,⁶ the musical keeps Johanna as the story's main female ingenue and focuses the story's primary romance on her.⁷ Her romantic interest, though altered, also remains. On Broadway, it is Anthony Hope, the very sailor who rescues Johanna's estranged father, Sweeney Todd, who captures her heart and sings the various love duets with her. When Anthony first sees her, he sings, "I feel you, / Johanna, / And one day, / I'll steal you" (50). A reprise of this number during Act II juxtaposes Anthony's romantic claim on Johanna with Todd's paternal one. Given the reciprocal nature of Johanna and Anthony's relationship, and Todd's instability and violence, it is clear which claim the narrative favors. Anthony's first introduction to Johanna is overhearing her sing "Green Finch and Linnet Bird" to herself. In this song, Johanna laments her loneliness and idleness. She rhetorically asks her pet birds how they find the strength to sing even though they are locked in a cage:

My cage has many rooms,
 Damask and dark.
 Nothing there sings,
 Not even my lark.
 Larks never will, you know,
 When they're captive,

⁶ Christopher Bond is the English actor and playwright who adapted George Dibdin Pitt's 1847 stage play about the demon barber into a straight play in 1970. Stephen Sondheim saw Bond's version and decided to adapt it for the Broadway stage.

⁷ Ingenue characters on Broadway are often the object of romantic and/or sexual desire by men. They are typically played by young actors with bright soprano registers, as is the case for Johanna, first played on Broadway by Sarah Rice.

Teach me to be more adaptive.

“If I cannot fly,” the song concludes, “let me sing” (45). The romance between Johanna and Anthony, which begins even during this number with Anthony’s obvious raptures, exists to free her, both literally from Judge Turpin’s custody, and figuratively from the idleness and loneliness she expresses here. A later duet between the two lovers further emphasizes this. In “Married on Sunday,” Johanna and Anthony hurriedly plan to run away together so that Johanna will not have to marry Judge Turpin. The number recalls melodies and lines from their previous duet, “Look at Me” and from “Green Finch and Linnet Bird,” but it concludes much more hopefully, and with Johanna finally claiming some of the agency she has heretofore been wishing for.

As impossible as it would be to consider the relationship between Judge Turpin and Johanna a romance (it more closely recalls the predatory behavior of Rev Mr. Lupin in the original novel), the judge’s obsession is an example of a slightly different but inextricably related theme that runs through *Sweeney Todd*. Christopher Bond suggests that “we care about the characters in *Sweeney* because they care so passionately about each other, and on a good night we plunge headlong to triumph and disaster with them” (6). He suggests that the musical might alternatively be titled *Aspects of Love*, because of this pervasive and irresistible theme of various expressions of romance, passion, and obsession. The judge’s interest in Johanna can more easily be read as love of himself and an inflated sense of his deserts, but there is a sexual element to his desire for Johanna that contributes to the layered texture of heterosexual romance in the show.⁸

⁸ One number often omitted from productions of *Sweeney Todd*, including the original Broadway production, is “Mea Culpa,” a solo by the judge, who stands partially nude outside Johanna’s door and whips himself as he laments his lust for her.

Posited more centrally as a potential romantic couple in Sondheim's musical are Sweeney Todd himself and Mrs. Lovett. In the Victorian novel, Todd and Mrs. Lovett are grudging colleagues. Todd kills her in this original version, too, though far less violently than in the musical – he poisons the brandy she regularly drinks to cope with the stress of feeding human flesh to her unwitting patrons. But in the musical, Todd and Lovett are far closer. At the beginning of the show, it is Mrs. Lovett who gives Todd news of his wife and daughter's fates, and the audience clearly sees that the two were acquainted before Todd's transportation. Their partnership is enthusiastic on both their parts, as evidenced by what is perhaps the show's most energetic number, "A Little Priest." The act I finale, "A Little Priest" has Mrs. Lovett and Sweeney Todd punning together about the various professions of people they intend to murder, cook, and serve to the imagined future patrons of the pie shop, after finally deciding what to do with Pirelli's corpse. Before this point, Mrs. Lovett has expressed affection for Todd. "Always had a fondness for you, I did," she sings to Todd, who insensibly examines his old razors and imagines the deeds he will commit with them. Beginning with "A Little Priest," Todd begins to return her affection, at least in words, though his behavior belies a sincere romantic attachment on his side. "Mrs. Lovett," Todd sings,

what a charming notion,
Eminently practical and yet
Appropriate as always.
Mrs. Lovett
How I've lived without you
All these years I'll never know! (104)

In "By the Sea" during the second act, Mrs. Lovett expresses to Todd (whose attention is again elsewhere) her desire to marry him and move away to a cozy house somewhere alone, away, presumably, from the constant preoccupation of Todd's revenge plot. And finally, just before

Todd tosses her into the industrial oven in the pie shop's bakehouse, Mrs. Lovett confesses that she's lied to Todd about his wife Lucy's death: "Yes, I lied 'cos I love you! . . . I'd be twice the wife she was! / I love you!" (198).

But perhaps the most significant innovation of the modern musical is Todd's love for his wife, Lucy. The novel's Sweeney Todd is described as almost inhuman, and he seems incapable of love, or indeed of any emotion or motivation apart from greed. But here, his main motivation is a reunion with his daughter and, when he learns his wife is dead, revenge for her fate. He first explains his story in "A Barber and his Wife," in which he sings to Mrs. Lovett that Lucy was "his reason and his life." Mrs. Lovett finishes the song by reporting that after Judge Turpin harassed and raped Lucy, she took poison to kill herself before the events of the musical begin. Todd's love for Lucy, and his sense of wrongful loss, is his main motivator in the musical. Though he is not forthcoming with details about his escape from the penal colony, his eagerness to return to his vulnerable family, along with his righteous outrage, leads him to his freedom and onto Anthony's ship. And his every action after that serves his obsession with vengeance and his grief over Lucy's loss.

In *Sweeney Todd*, then, heterosexual romance serves and affirms the quintessentially American value of freedom and liberty. For Johanna and Anthony, their romance represents freedom from Judge Turpin's captivity, both in his home and in Fogg's asylum, and from his oppressive rule as a judge (an authority with which he threatens Anthony repeatedly). For Mrs. Lovett, her love for Todd and her dreams of a future with him represent freedom from the financial woe she's suffered, as well as freedom from Todd's obsessive revenge scheme. Her affection is not reciprocated, however, and it cannot bring her the liberty she desires. And for

Todd himself, love represents freedom in numerous ways. His love for Lucy is what literally frees him from prison, and his single-minded pursuit of revenge for her frees him from any semblance of or adherence to moral dictates in “Epiphany.” When he discovers that Lucy has been alive all the time, he is finally free from the demands of his plot, but he cannot have any satisfaction from this liberty. Only Anthony and Johanna have any chance of true freedom by the end of the story. Though they are haunted by their experiences, they are now truly at liberty to leave London and begin their lives together without any fear of Judge Turpin or Sweeney Todd following them. In this way, *Sweeney Todd* adheres to the Broadway maxim that heterosexual romance promotes American values. On the surface, a horror musical like *Sweeney Todd*, not only tragic but adapted from a British story, would seem to have little investment in American culture and family values. But in the end it is only mutual, heterosexual love that can offer any path to liberty in *Sweeney Todd*, and this reaffirms traditional American adherence to the nuclear family, despite what Raymond Knapp points out as the “violent underside of the American dream” often exposed by 1970s musicals (165).

II. Queering and Un-Queering Victorian Horror

As reliant on heterosexual romance as Broadway musicals are, homosocial relationships among men and especially among women can complicate the dominant romance plots in varying ways. This complex dynamic especially affects the works relevant to this study, since they are adapted from nineteenth-century novels, which very often feature homosocial communities. Victorian courtship was, of course, very different from the modern American notion of courtship, dating, and marriage, and therefore it is not at all uncommon for Victorian characters to spend a

majority of their time with only other characters of the same sex, as is the case in works like *Middlemarch*, *North and South*, and *Bleak House*. Because of this, the encounters between opposite-sex characters are doubly charged romantically and sexually. But in some cases, such homosocial relationships can disrupt the heterosexual romance plots by drawing the hero(ine)'s affection away from the object of their romantic love or by limiting the primary couple's time, on the page or stage, together.

Sharon Marcus, however, argues that in nineteenth-century novels, homosocial relationships between women actually support their respective heterosexual romances. Citing George Eliot's *Middlemarch* as an example, Marcus points out that "almost every Victorian novel that ends in marriage has first supplied its heroine with an intimate female friend" (76). What appears to work in Victorian novels, however, does not necessarily work similarly on Broadway. Stacy Wolf discusses the fairly common female duet in Broadway musicals and argues that rather than serving to support heterosexual romance, these duets "disrupt the apparent seamlessness" of the typical Broadway heterosexual romance structure, focusing mainly on *Wicked* as a key example (26). When the Victorian novel and the Broadway musical are unconnected genres, these two very different interpretations are in no conflict with one another. But for Broadway musicals adapted from Victorian novels, the impact of homosocial relationships on heterosexual romance becomes problematized.

While Broadway shows about female friendship certainly exist and have even been very popular,⁹ heterosexual romance tends to develop in these shows independently from the

⁹ Such titles as *Mame* (1966), *Dreamgirls* (1981), *Wicked* (2003), and *The Color Purple* (2005) are obvious examples, but even overtly romantic shows like *Grease* (1971) fit this description.

homosocial friendships and, sometimes, against very specific social backgrounds (the significance of a friendship between two men would be different in the context of a military conflict, for example). One key difference between these two genres is that while not every Victorian novel (especially among horror novels) involves a heterosexual romance, nearly every Broadway musical does. The heterosexual romance serves on Broadway as a marker of American culture, of American patriotism. Due to the differences between modern American courtship and Victorian courtship, twentieth-century American culture can view Victorian homosocial relationships through a distinctly homophobic lens, which is perhaps one reason that Victorian works were less common source material for Broadway musicals prior to the 1970s.¹⁰ Many Broadway shows get away with featuring homosocial relationships that do obviously support the central heterosexual romance, as Marcus argues is true of Victorian novels. But these American adaptations of Victorian stories are very careful with homosocial relationships and communities. On Broadway, the self-conscious and anxious overdependence on heterosexual romance restricts the potential for closeness between women and between men so common in the nineteenth century and renders homosocial relationships almost taboo, but certainly queer, in these adaptations.

The Jekyll and Hyde story is a prime example of this “un-queering” in American adaptations and especially on Broadway. In this show, the heterosexual romantic pairings serve to eliminate any potential for homosexual desire and to punish all deviations from traditional American family and sexual values. Stevenson’s original novella contains almost exclusively male characters; a couple of maids and the little girl Mr. Hyde knocks over in the street are the

¹⁰ Sharon Aronofsky Weltman traces this adaptation history.

only exceptions. All of these male characters are members of a close circle of professional and personal comrades. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has been adapted countless times in many different media, and from the very earliest stage adaptations, even during Stevenson's lifetime, female characters have been added to the story, changing the texture of the relationships in various ways. Nearly every subsequent adaptation of the story adds at least a love interest for Dr. Jekyll, if not for other characters as well, and somewhat shifts the narrative into an often ill-fated love story. In the introduction to a 2008 edition of the novella, Roger Luckhurst notes, "The most significant thing about the posthumous history of *Jekyll and Hyde* in its myriad adaptations is that nearly every one, from 1887 onwards, invents central women characters absent from the original. Jekyll is commonly engaged to be married, in that transitional state of manhood" (xxviii), as is true of the Broadway adaptation. The novella is short, of course, and an adaptation may feel more satisfying to audiences if it involves more stakes or broader impact, but at least in some adaptations, there is more behind the choice to retool *Jekyll and Hyde* into a heterosexual romance, tragic though it often (but not always!) must be.

Many scholars have noted the potentially queer undertones of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, some arguing that Jekyll's "pleasures," which he intends to curb with his formula, refer to homosexual desire and activity (see Luckhurst, Miller, Showalter). Luckhurst suggests that while the addition of a heterosexual romance "places the tale more easily within melodramatic structures of stage and film," it is also potentially "an attempt to heterosexualize the novel—to do the work of filling out the unnerving gaps and silences of the book with an acceptable, even rather mundane, array of sins" (xxviii). Renata Miller adds that these modern

adaptations “portray a secure heterosexual patriarchy” and, as a result, *Jekyll and Hyde* “develops into a culture-text about a personality split between upstanding virtue and selfish hedonism,” rather than about homosexual panic (67). Adding a female romantic interest for Dr. Jekyll (and sometimes a separate one for Mr. Hyde) serves forcefully to negate any potential homosexual romance and shift focus even from the close male friendships so central to the Victorian novella. It also implicates the female in the perversion and violence of the story. If women, who have been traditionally considered more morally pure than men (see Altick, Cote, Flanders), are partially to blame for the moral downfall of respectable men, then the overall message of human duality is more universal. It is not “man” who is “not truly one, but truly two,” but humans of all genders.

The many stage and film adaptations of Stevenson’s novella have made such adjustments to varying degrees and for various reasons, and the Broadway adaptation is not only no exception, but it makes even more changes to gender and related subplots than most prior adaptations. In Frank Wildhorn and Leslie Bricusse’s *Jekyll & Hyde*, an early number reveals Dr. Henry Jekyll to be engaged to Emma Carew (the daughter of Sir Danvers Carew, the Chairman of the Board of Governors for the hospital at which Jekyll’s ailing father is a patient).¹¹ Emma, voiced by a soprano,¹² is obviously deeply and sincerely in love with Jekyll, who returns her affection ardently. In fact, while Jekyll does interact with other men throughout the show, most of these interactions are professional – he discusses his work and his frustration with several

¹¹ This character does appear in Stevenson’s original novella, but only as a murdered victim of Mr. Hyde’s horrible violence. His murder is described by the narrator Utterson only by way of a maid’s account.

¹² Sopranos most often voice the ingenue or female protagonist, while the “comic sidekick, or bitch,” according to Wolf, is voiced by a mezzo (“Gender and Sexuality” 211). This distinction can also fall along the virgin/harlot line.

colleagues. The only moment of leisure we see Jekyll share with another man is that in which Utterson takes Jekyll to a seedy burlesque hall, The Red Rat, for a kind of bachelor party. Even this platonic interaction between two men occurs only to facilitate a heterosexual union.

At The Red Rat, Jekyll meets Lucy, a captivating sex worker who performs a provocative number onstage. After this encounter with Lucy, Jekyll finally develops the courage to complete his formula and test it on himself, facilitating his first transformation into the monstrous Mr. Hyde. The fact that his meeting Lucy is instrumental in this transformation and therefore in the rest of the show's plot and conflict implies that a woman, one whose behavior deviates from expectations of moral and sexual purity, is responsible for the violence and upheaval that follows. Because Lucy and Jekyll's initial interest in her represent a departure from the expected union of the narrative (not just heterosexual but reproductive, nuclear – reifying traditional American family values), she ultimately cannot survive the story. Hyde becomes obsessed with her, uses Jekyll's interest in her against him, and in the end, rapes and kills her.

A common trope of the horror genre, especially as it has developed in the United States during the twentieth century, is that of the "Final Girl."¹³ The "Final Girl" is a young woman whose moral purity and upstanding behavior in the face of a monster typically construed as pure evil ultimately protects her; she is so named because of her ability to escape the fate of her fallen comrades – fallen both morally and literally. She survives because she embodies traditionally prescribed feminine traits. This idea builds on the much older trope of pure women overcoming

¹³ This term was coined by Carol J. Clover in 1993. Several horror parody films have explored this trope, including *The Final Girls*, *Tucker and Dale vs Evil*, and *The Cabin in the Woods*.

hardship through their feminine virtue.¹⁴ Such stories were varyingly popular in the centuries since the early modern period, but found new footholds in the Victorian age; Sharon Marcus reports that between the 1830s and 1880s, “the previous era’s concerns about female sexual voracity shifted to a view of women as either inherently domestic, maternal, and self-restrained, or susceptible to training in how to be so. Marriage and family underwent corresponding changes” (6). In film, The Final Girl trope was most famously developed in such modern horror offerings as Wes Craven’s *The Last House on the Left* (1972), Bob Clark’s *Black Christmas* (1974), Jon Carpenter’s *Halloween* (1978), Ridley Scott’s *Alien* (1979), and Sean Cunningham’s *Friday the 13th* (1980). Nor is the “Final Girl” trope a relic that was abandoned after the 1980s; not only do more recent horror films still feature this trope, but all five of these hugely popular films have either been remade in the twenty-first century or have twenty-first century sequels (or both).

In *Jekyll & Hyde*, Emma shares some traits with a “Final Girl.” She is steadfastly supportive of Jekyll’s every move, and her behavior at all times maintains the poise and propriety expected of a potential wife. Though productions obviously vary, Emma is always voiced by a soprano, and her costumes keep her scrupulously covered. Lucy, on the other hand, is not only a sex worker, but her costumes typically show a lot of skin, and though Hyde does assault and kill her, she expresses reciprocal sexual interest in him. Her deviation from socially acceptable sexuality puts her, and not Emma, in danger from Hyde, who, in the tradition of such male villains, punishes men for their attempts to maintain decorum and moral purity and women for their abandonment of the same.

¹⁴ John Milton’s *Comus* (1634) and Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) are just two examples of this literary precursor to the horror genre’s Final Girl.

The emphasis of the original novella shifts considerably when the story is adapted for the Broadway stage. In the novella, Jekyll is punished for his indeterminate “pleasures,” which could refer to gambling as easily as they might refer to homosexual activity or masturbation, and for his own hubristic attempt to separate his dual nature. In the musical, Jekyll is punished just as much for his deviation from the traditional heterosexual marriage plot. Elaine Showalter argues that Stevenson’s novella is “most persuasively . . . a fable of fin de siècle homosexual panic, the discovery and resistance of the homosexual self” (69). But by giving Hyde a heterosexual romantic interest, the Broadway adaptation works to erase even the slightest implication of homosexuality, instead placing the blame on Lucy not only for her own fate but for all of Hyde’s crimes. The musical’s thematic emphasis on duality is still central, but the undercurrent of gender and socio-sexual dynamics is both new and significant.

It is worth noting that the commercial pressures of Broadway play a role in this aggressive moral policing that seems to occur in the adaptation of the novella to the musical theater stage. The very first production of *Jekyll & Hyde* was not on Broadway, but at the Alley Theatre in Houston, Texas. This pre-Broadway version featured as Lucy’s introductory song a show-stopping number called “Bring on the Men,” which Sharon Aronofsky Weltman describes as “the musical’s most interesting moment of gender doubling and inversion.” As Lucy performs, rather provocatively herself, “her male escorts remove their tuxes and reveal themselves as women. Likewise, for the finale, the harem dancers rip off their veils and reveal they are women. Throughout the song, men dance with men, women dance with women, while other men and women frolic raunchily” (201). When the show later premiered on Broadway the number was replaced with “Evil and Good.” Although this song is still somewhat risqué, signaling Lucy’s

moral distance from Emma to the audience, this number underlines the theme of duality drawn more directly from the original source text. Although the show cannot altogether escape the queerness that off-Broadway is willing to explore, the much grander and more elite production does away with its most explicit expressions.

III. Case Study: *Dracula, the Musical*

Frank Wildhorn's 2001 musical *Dracula* utilizes and emphasizes heterosexual romance plots in now-familiar ways. Heterosexual romance plots help to endear Victorian stories to American Broadway audiences, as the American genre is so inextricably dependent on these marriage plots. Like *My Fair Lady*, the Broadway adaptation of *Dracula* emphasizes heterosexual romance even in contexts where it may not fit well. The show also disallows homosocial relationships except in limited forms and specific contexts that serve the completion of the heterosexual marriage plot. And in the tradition of American adaptations of both *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula*, as well as in the Broadway tradition more broadly, the musical inserts and emphasizes heterosexual romance to erase or obscure potential homosexual relationships, or to discourage the interpretation of sexually charged moments as homosexual in nature. While unlike *Jekyll & Hyde* or *Sweeney Todd*, *Dracula* does not add new characters, it does shift romantic pairings and emphasize heterosexual romance as the motivator of all the characters' desires and actions, still serving the Americanization and Broadway-musicalization of the Victorian story.

Several heterosexual romantic couples from the novel appear in the musical, albeit often with greater emphasis. Mina's romance with Jonathan, established prior to the story's opening

both on the page and on the musical theater stage, remains the most stable of the romantic pairings. Dracula's predation on Mina challenges their relationship, just as it does in the novel, though with very different implications. Similarly, Lucy's romantic entanglement from the novel is preserved onstage, as well. Several of the principal male characters are in love with her, and after a brief period of indecision, she chooses Arthur. In the musical, however, Lucy and Arthur marry prior to her death, as they do not in Stoker's novel. They do so at the same time and during the same number as Mina and Jonathan also marry, far away in Budapest. The musical also adds one particularly impactful heterosexual romance, one which drives most of the plot. From his first encounter with Mina via Jonathan's description, Dracula is enthralled by her, and upon meeting her quickly falls in love and wrestles for the rest of the show with these powerful feelings. Ultimately, Dracula abandons his pursuit of Mina and begs her to kill him upon realizing the danger his love poses to her in myriad ways.

The musical is not the first adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to give the titular monster a love interest, nor to posit Mina as that potential partner. Much of the musical version draws obvious inspiration from Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 film adaptation starring Gary Oldman, Keanu Reeves, and Winona Ryder.¹⁵ In Coppola's film, Dracula is literally Vlad the Impaler.¹⁶ Mina is his reincarnated lover, who died under tragic circumstances centuries before the opening of the film's story, positioning Dracula as a tragic hero and Mina as his soul mate. The musical, however, takes a very different approach. Dracula's interest in Mina more closely

¹⁵ The film was wildly successful: it grossed \$215 million and won three Academy Awards.

¹⁶ David Rogers suggests that Vlad the Impaler's "notorious reputation for staking his enemies to death provided Stoker with a . . . model for his Count" (x).

resembles his predatory pursuit in the original novel, except that it is ostensibly motivated by love rather than obsession and spite. This version of the romance between Dracula and Mina is perhaps less satisfying or believable than Coppola's version, however. Dracula falls in love with Mina immediately, almost before ever seeing her, and she returns his ardor just as quickly, despite the brevity of their first conversation and the fact that on their first meeting, Dracula has attacked Mina's friend. Their onstage chemistry is limited, too, because regardless of the fit between the actors playing the characters in any given production, Mina and Dracula spend so little time together onstage. The two do not even sing a duet together, though they each sing a few numbers that directly address the other (Dracula sings "Loving You Keeps Me Alive" and "The Longer I Live" to Mina, and Mina sings "The Heart is Slow to Learn" and "If I Could Fly" to Dracula).¹⁷

Some parts of the romance plot structure in *Dracula* seem different from the typical marriage plot structure in Broadway musicals, while other aspects thereof radically shift expectations. According to Wolf, most Broadway shows open by establishing "two clearly delineated homosocial communities," one of men and the other of women, for both practical and thematic reasons. "The actual scenes, songs, and dances," she says, "focus on the heterosexual couple's lack of compatibility and on their better fit within their respective homosocial spheres" (32). *Dracula* opens with Jonathan travelling to Dracula's castle, and though upon arriving he is given every courtesy and treated like an old friend, the focus of the dialog and the musical numbers is more on Jonathan's trepidation and Dracula's anticipation than on their potential

¹⁷ In later versions of the show, Mina also sings a number called "Please Don't Make Me Love You," which echoes the conflicted feelings expressed in her other songs. Depending on the production's staging, these numbers may function more like monologues since, for example, Mina is not necessarily onstage during "Loving You Keeps Me Alive."

fraternity. Later, Jonathan becomes close with Jack, Arthur, Quincy, and Van Helsing as they all team up to defeat Dracula, but the group shares no dialog or musical numbers not wholly focused on hunting Dracula. On the other hand, Mina and Jonathan are together at the beginning of the musical, and no serious obstacles to their impending union are immediately evident. Early in the first act they sing the duet “Over Whitby Bay,” in which they reminisce about their courtship and anticipate their upcoming wedding, separated though they are for the moment, with Jonathan in Transylvania on business and Mina back in England. They are introduced together as a couple rather than as two individuals involved in separate communities or social spheres. Though later events do challenge their compatibility and the likelihood of their ending up living “happily ever after,” the beginning of the story suggests none of the typical issues between romantic interests usually seen in Broadway shows.

The entanglements among Lucy and her suitors is closer to the typical Broadway romance structure than the courtship between Mina and Jonathan, though Lucy has little in common with Broadway romantic leads, and more in common with a side character like Ado Annie.¹⁸ Mina and Lucy share a gender-based and almost sisterly bond, set somewhat in opposition to the masculine bond formed by Lucy’s suitors, Jack, Arthur, and Quincy. Lucy agonizes over the choice she must make among them while Mina listens and offers what advice she can during a number sung primarily by Lucy, but involving Mina and the suitors as well and serving to introduce Jack, Quincy, and Arthur. In “How Do You Choose,” Lucy describes the three men who have proposed to her, listing their various attractive traits and ultimately choosing

¹⁸ Ado Annie is a character from Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma* (1943), typically regarded as the earliest integrated musical. The character’s defining trait is her difficulty settling on a single romantic partner and making responsible romantic and sexual choices.

Arthur, despite describing him as “boring” and “not exciting, wise, or tall.” Mina’s function during this number is to listen and encourage, ultimately enabling Lucy’s heterosexual romance plot more or less as Marcus describes.

But it is the romance between Dracula and Mina that most closely follows the structure that Wolf describes as most typical for Broadway romance plots (though their respective communities at the start of the show fall as much [or more] along good/evil or living/undead lines as gender ones). Wolf says that the songs performed by and about the focal heterosexual couple will emphasize the couple’s lack of compatibility and the problems with their potential relationship. Though Dracula and Mina never sing a formal duet together, they do both sing about each other very frequently, and they both lament the obstacles to fulfilling their desire for each other.

Dracula’s songs for and about Mina depict his love for her as an uncontrollable force outside himself. This is typical of contemporary vampire romance: bloodlust, prey drive, and love all act as ungovernable forces which the vampire lover must strive to govern.¹⁹ The ungovernable thirst for blood parallels the more relatable sexual drive; the vampire lover poses a potential harm not only to their paramour’s physical safety, but also to their moral wellbeing and immortal soul, by threatening both their virtue and their humanity. While not an exclusively American subgenre, this kind of story is very popular with American audiences, partially because it aligns with traditional American family values by insisting on mastery of the self and of animalistic biological impulses in order to facilitate productive heterosexual marriage and enable

¹⁹ Examples in popular fiction include *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Twilight*. This subgenre of paranormal romance and urban fantasy has exploded in popularity especially in the early twenty-first century, riding the coattails of renewed interest in vampire fiction, generally. See Milly Williamson’s *The Lure of the Vampire*, chapter two.

the nuclear family. In Dracula's song, "Loving You Keeps Me Alive," Dracula sings to Mina about his desire for her, imploring her to leave Jonathan and choose him instead. "The first time I set eyes on you," he sings, "I knew I'd never be the same. I never knew I'd get such pleasure whispering your name." His love in this song has little to do with Mina herself or any of her traits, but rather expresses his own needs – each expression of his love is about his own inability to govern himself and to overcome his desire.

Mina sings two songs in which she expresses conflicted feelings about Jonathan and Dracula. In "The Heart is Slow to Learn," she muses about this doubt, wondering why she cannot make herself despise Dracula, even though she is already married to Jonathan and Lucy is already dead at Dracula's hand. She sings, "Why do we risk all we have? Why give into the lure that calls . . . and captures us however hard we fight?" After the song, Dracula appears and tries to convince Mina to come with him. Later, in "If I Could Fly," she begins to give in to her attraction to Dracula. Here she returns to her doubt and her inner conflict, wondering if it is too late and if she even has a choice anymore: "I am trapped and fighting to break free. What have you done to me? I wish I had wings. No, that's not true; if I had wings, how could I help flying straight to you?"

This is the major conflict between these two potential lovers. In Stoker's novel, Mina and Dracula are not in love. Rather, Dracula pursues Mina as a vendetta against Van Helsing and Jonathan and the rest of the men who attempt to thwart his plans in London. Mina represents moral purity, and she matters greatly to these men; therefore, Dracula wishes to corrupt her in vengeance. Here, however, Dracula's desire for Mina wars with his wish to leave her pure; he does not want to force her into the darkness with him. In both versions, Mina is drawn to Dracula

by a hypnotic force she cannot control. But in the musical, it is unclear how much of her love for Dracula and conflict over him is occasioned by sincere affection and how much by his hypnosis.²⁰ As we have seen in *Sweeney Todd*, on Broadway only sincere love that upholds traditional American values can lead to marriage. Dracula and Mina's romance must end in tragedy, then, because their union is corrupted by compulsion, at least partly, and because it cannot result in the formation of a nuclear family.

At this point, Mina is in fact already married to Jonathan, despite expressing misgivings early on, mostly raised by her encounters with Dracula and resolved only insofar as his death removes him from her consideration. Her songs with and about Jonathan almost invert the typical structure that Wolf says is conventional on Broadway. Early in Act I, the two share a duet reminiscing about their earliest days together, and at this point they are perfectly assured of their compatibility and their mutual ardor. Later, in "A Perfect Life," Mina imagines her future life with Jonathan before their wedding. She feels torn and trepidatious (curiously, she compares a life with Jonathan to endless night, rather than life with Dracula). The conflicts for Mina and Jonathan are not ideological differences, miscommunication, or grudges from past slights, as is typical on the Broadway stage, but rather a supernatural interloper and the insertion of a second, competing romance plot for Mina.

The focus on heterosexual romance in the *Dracula* musical serves, just as in *Jekyll & Hyde*, to obscure any potential homoerotic undertones from the original novel. To some degree, the musical's pacing is what obfuscates the development of homosocial – and potentially

²⁰ In a song included in the original concept album but omitted from the Broadway production, "Please Don't Make Me Love You," Mina implores Dracula to free her from her love for him. Here, too, the extent to which Dracula's compulsion of Mina is metaphorical is unclear.

homoerotic – relationships between men in the show. Especially since the musical is so crowded with songs, the development of Act I is rushed somewhat. To get to Dracula’s arrival in London and his first encounter with Mina, Jonathan’s stay in Transylvania with the Count, including the genial acquaintance Jonathan and Dracula develop and Jonathan’s slow realization of Dracula’s monstrosity at the beginning of Stoker’s novel, is quickly glossed over in the musical. In Act II, the potential for homoerotic interaction among men is even greater, since one of only two female characters is dead (and the other already married). Jack, Quincy, and Arthur (and even Jonathan and Van Helsing) spend a fair amount of time together onstage in various combinations, but their friendships are not developed very deeply, as the musical numbers are focused far more on Mina’s conflicted relationship with Dracula. The militaristic march quality of “Deep in the Darkest Night” (one of just two numbers the group performs all together) depicts the various men as brothers-in-arms, rather than bosom friends, leaving little room for their developing close relationships based on their mutual love of Lucy. In fact, Lucy’s deterioration and rebirth as a vampire is so quick, and Lucy so monstrous after the end, that it is almost difficult to believe that they are in love with her at all, let alone with each other.

Act I ends not with a love ballad or an energetic dance number or a belted finale of female self-assertion,²¹ but with Dracula’s corruption of Lucy. She has died, and in “Life after Life,” Dracula summons her to rise from her grave. He sings exultantly of his plan to populate all of London with the undead, and while he does not specifically target women in general or even Mina specifically, he does sing, “Those who are without sin taste the sweetest of all.” Victorian

²¹ Wolf coins this phrase to describe a common genre of Broadway song, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century (*Changed for Good* 4).

women, and Stoker's Mina in particular, represent moral purity and distance from sin. Men are reliant on women to uphold morality and be the stewards of pure thought and action in the home.²² Though much has changed since then, these expectations of purity are not so distant as to be unfamiliar to Broadway audience (see Cote). Dracula's relationship with Lucy is about reproduction, but not in a way that traditional American family values dictate; it is a perversion of the nuclear family and of heterosexual marriage plots. In this way, Dracula functions onstage as a monster particularly worthy of the American horror genre.

²² Richard Altick, Judith Flanders, and countless other social historians and literary scholars have discussed the separate Victorian spheres of gender influence at length. Victorian thinkers and writers such as Sarah Stickney Ellis and Caroline Norton wrote at the time about the social and domestic duties of women. More on this in Chapter Four.

Chapter IV

SOCIAL CRITIQUE IN THE VICTORIAN HORROR MUSICAL

That the Broadway musicals relevant to this study offer at least some social critique goes almost without saying, whether that critique is pointed and intentional or vague and incidental. But the fact that the musicals are adapted from Victorian horror stories that themselves have complex histories of adaptation in the decades between their original publication and their Broadway musicalization makes the critique somewhat more challenging to parse; both the targets and the effects of such social critique are less obvious and call for closer examination. Both these musicals and their nineteenth-century literary origins take pains to illuminate and engage with social issues familiar to their respective audiences, further situating each within a distinct cultural moment.

To examine the musicals' treatment of social problems in their respective times and places, this chapter will ask two questions. First, what social problems (and *whose*) are the musicals representing and exploring, and how? Second, how does this representation and critique of social issues inform the Victorian-ness or American-ness of the musicals? These stories all center on critique of their relative cultural and political environments, and while the original Victorian works do this as much as their modern American counterparts, the Broadway musical adaptations are invested in critiquing their own society rather than passing judgment upon their Victorian forebears. They do this by using the Victorian social issues as a sort of stand-in, since it is more comfortable to criticize a cultural (or temporal) "them" than to look inward at "us."

These musicals' offering of social critique varies, but they all point not only to systemic and institutional injustices, but also to the ways in which the ethical failings of individuals and small communities can contribute to, exacerbate, and represent such injustices. While none of these shows necessarily posits a specific moral "message" or "takeaway," they do each tell a cautionary tale of what might happen to societies when institutions, individuals, or both fail to behave in a moral way and seek to preserve and protect the interests of the most vulnerable members of that society. Self-interest, greed, power-seeking, base or primal instinct, and the mindless preservation of the status quo are all potentially dangerous not just to the individuals most affected, but to societies and civilizations as a whole. Much art with social critique at its center upholds this basic tenet, but the ways in which these musicals explore these topics and represent these social problems is informed specifically by the failings and successes of their Victorian ancestors.

I. Victorian Literature as Social Critique

The Victorian era was notable for being a time of considerable social and cultural change in Britain, from industrial revolution to changing social class structures to improving conditions for women, and much more. Nineteenth-century English readers were used to encountering commentary and critique about this ongoing and persistent social upheaval in all genres, including in penny horror novels like the ones that inspired the Broadway musicals relevant to this study. Richard Altick points out that

the chief preoccupation of the major novelists, as it was a leading one of other prose writers, was the structure, internal movement, and moral atmosphere of contemporary society. The novelists . . . were especially concerned with the anxieties, envy, insecurity,

snobbery, and kindred psychological malaises that stemmed from the ambiguities of rank and wealth in a time of social flux. (17)

Countless other scholars, including Anne Stiles, Robin Gilmour, Rachel Vorona Cote, Sharon Marcus, and Elaine Showalter, have also noted this consistent engagement between Victorian fiction and the predominant social issues of the era. Adaptation studies scholars confirm this idea, as well, persistently examining the ways in which new social contexts necessarily result in new or reorganized emphasis on familiar stories. Paul Davis, in tracing the development of the “culture-text” from Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, points out that “each period re-creates the story in response to its own cultural needs,” (13), while Timothy Corrigan builds on Andre Bazin’s more general comments regarding adaptation: “Adaptations should be considered as extended and multiple variations on core myths, stories, or compact ‘digests’ that accumulate meanings through the history of their numerous social and material incarnations” (30). Clearly, Victorian fiction writers were by no means alone in responding to their cultural milieu in their work.

As discussed in Chapter Two, modern readers, and especially modern Americans, are apt to conflate all things *Victorian* with all things *Dickensian*; Sharon Aronofsky Weltman notes that one way modern playwrights brought these stories convincingly to their American audiences is by relying on this association: they “make it seem more Victorian for us by making it seem more Dickensian” (109). And because Charles Dickens and his work have such a reputation for biting social critique, Victorian writing is typically associated with social critique, whether or not that association is deserved. John Carey notes that “institutions and organizations and the structure of government upon which civilized society depends provoked [Dickens] to scornful merriment” (8), resulting in his trademark blend of commentary and comedy, one that modern Americans

view as quintessentially Victorian. Even when an adapted work is not by Dickens, the close association between Charles Dickens and Victorian fiction writ large means that the modern popular (American) understanding of Victorian people and culture is inextricably tied up with our understanding of Dickens, flawed though this understanding undoubtedly is. Many of Dickens's novels do involve social critique, though they do this to varying degrees and with varying effects. Dickens was a prolific writer, and not all of his work is equally well-remembered. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, for example, though it is an object of interest for scholars and serious Dickens fans due to its being unfinished, has certainly been less widely read and adapted than *Bleak House* or *Great Expectations* or, especially, *A Christmas Carol*, whose social critique is rather explicit and even didactic.¹

Like most of Dickens's work, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* does engage with the social ills of its time, though its investment in social critique likely does not live up to the popular notion of "Dickens as social commentary." One major target of Dickens's biting wit in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is the church. The novel emphasizes the disparity between trust in the church and the moral shortcomings of the clergy, especially in the character of the lecherous choirmaster, John Jasper. He is described as a "dark man," in complexion, perhaps, as well as in personality, with a "sombre manner" (14); and he is "troubled with some stray sort of ambition, aspiration, restlessness, dissatisfaction, what shall we call it?" (20). Dickens also pokes fun at lawyers and solicitors, as he does throughout his other works, and traditional structures of

¹ *Bleak House* has been adapted to stage or screen at least ten times since 1876, while *Great Expectations* has seen dozens of adaptations since the silent film era, including multiple stage productions, films, television serials, and even a one-woman show starring Eddie Izzard. *A Christmas Carol*, according to Paul Davis, has been adapted "more than any other work of English literature" (4). The *Carol* has its own disambiguation page on Wikipedia to distinguish among its many iterations, and the website also features a separate page on adaptations of Dickens's best-known work. The page lists at least twenty-one adaptations for various media in the last three years alone.

political and religious power also find themselves the butt of the novelist's jokes here. His comedic and largely ineffectual characters, including Mr. Grewgious, Mr. Bazzard, and Mr. Sapsea, are some examples. Dickens also begins to explore the perceived difference in morality between small country towns and big industrial hubs like London. Cloisterham is no pillar of moral perfection, though London seems to fare little better. Dickens's depiction here of the Victorian City is rather unfavorable: "Through deserts of gritty streets, where many people crowded at the corners of courts and byways to get some air, and where many other people walked with a miserably monotonous noise of shuffling feet on hot paving-stones, and where all the people and all their surroundings were so gritty and so shabby" (222). Others of Dickens novels fit the mythical culture text of "Charles Dickens" better. Although he was not quite the champion for social justice and equity that modern American readers often assume him to be, he was known for satirical humor and biting commentary, living as he did in an era with so much to critique.

But Dickens was by no means the only Victorian writer engaging persistently with social issues. Other well-known fiction writers, such as Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, wrote stories that featured pointed commentary and even sometimes explicit moral messaging. These popular writers commonly explored themes such as marriage, the domestic sphere, and women's position in society; the working class and the aristocracy; crime, justice, ethics, and charity; and others. In addition to fiction writers and poets, many popular prosists also tackled the issues of the day, often in public periodicals that were widely consumed. Sarah Stickney Ellis wrote conduct manuals urging middle-class women take seriously their obligation to preserve the "moral character" of which their husbands were wont to lose sight out in the

capitalist world of the Victorian economy (55). Fiction writer and poet Caroline Norton famously drew on her own harrowing experiences of divorce and a custody battle to advocate for women in her writing. Henry Mayhew wrote about labor conditions and poverty in London, William Morris and John Ruskin both wrote about the Victorian work ethic and predominant beliefs about labor and the working classes, and one of political thinker John Stuart Mill's famous works is titled *The Spirit of the Age*. There was much to react to during the nineteenth century, and though Victorian writers are by no means alone in their vested interest in their own time and culture, they were consistently preoccupied by the social issues they faced.

All of these writers (not to mention artists, musicians, politicians, etc.) reacting to and participating in the rapid social and cultural upheaval going on throughout the nineteenth century contribute to the modern American assumption that most Victorian cultural artifacts have the goal of social critique. Though this is not universally true, there is a great deal of social scrutiny and commentary to be found in works of all genres from nineteenth-century England, and such critique also finds its way into the adaptations of those works.

II. American Horror as Social Critique

Victorian horror and its precursors, like Victorian literature generally, very frequently involved social commentary. Ann Radcliffe's novels *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1796), for example, have much to say about women's morality, family structures, and xenophobia. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) explores the nature/nurture question that was, as Anne Stiles points out, increasingly important to nineteenth-century thinkers (and would become even more important with the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* [1859]).

Wilkie Collins, Sheridan Le Fanu, and Henry James are more examples of horror writers responding to social problems that contributed to collective fears and anxieties of the Victorian age. The penny serial novels throughout the century saw a shift in focus around 1850 (Mack 139). Prior to this, the serials, called “penny bloods,” focused on villains and highwaymen. After the middle of the century, though, the serial novels shifted emphasis to the detectives and police who hunted and apprehended such criminals; the moniker for the novels shifted, too, to the more widely recognized “penny dreadfuls.”² Both kinds of serial novels often featured gruesome crimes and frightening circumstances, ranging in their degree of realism and frequently inspired either by other literature or by real events.

Modern Hollywood horror films also often use common social problems as the basis for their plots. Classic slasher flicks such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* impose their own kind of social critique, oft discussed amongst scholars and horror fans alike.³ More recent horror offerings take social commentary and engage in even more pointed criticism of social institutions and ideologies. For example, the director Jordan Peele’s recent films *Get Out*, *Us*, and *Nope* explore the impacts of white supremacy especially on suburban “post-racial” communities. Ari Aster’s *Midsommar* similarly tackles white supremacy in its depiction of a Scandinavian cult and its racially motivated murders, as well as the indoctrination of an emotionally vulnerable white woman. Horror as a genre varies greatly in terms of emphasis, approach, and quality, but it has

² Penny dreadfuls, and penny bloods before them, were a precursor to dime novels and American comic books, the characters and plotlines of which are often similar (Mack 139).

³ Carol J. Clover, for example, famously explored gendered experiences and interpretation of modern slasher films in her 1993 book *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*.

always been one medium through which artists explore collective fears and social preoccupations, as well as the ramifications of social problems.

Zombie movies, in particular, represent a significant portion of American horror films, and they present some specific and targeted social commentary. Though the idea of the zombie comes from the Caribbean, with origins in the North Atlantic slave trade, zombie movies can be understood as American in origin.⁴ The subgenre took off in Hollywood with George A. Romero and John Russo's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), which spawned eleven sequels and several remakes over the following decades. In the 1990s and 2000s, zombie media entered a sort of renaissance of popularity with such prolific titles as *The Walking Dead*,⁵ *Warm Bodies*,⁶ and even *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.⁷ The zombie subgenre has seen books; including Mira Grant's *Feed*, Max Brooks's *World War Z*, and Lora Powell's *First 30 Days*; films, such as *Zombieland*, *The Dead Don't Die*, *Contracted*, and *Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island*; video games, including several entries of the *Resident Evil* franchise, *The Last of Us*,⁸ *Dead Island*, and *Overcooked 2*; and television series, such as *iZombie*, *Black Summer*, *All of Us are Dead*, *Game of Thrones*, and certain episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Supernatural*, and even non-horror shows like

⁴ The first zombie film was an independent American movie called *White Zombie*, adapted loosely from William Seabrook's reporting on Caribbean folklore. See Roger Luckhurst's *Zombies* for more on the history of zombie stories.

⁵ *The Walking Dead* began as a comic book series by Robert Kirkman, published from 2003 to 2019. The comics were adapted into the AMC television series starring Andrew Lincoln and Norman Reedus, which ran from 2010 to 2022. There is also an adapted video game series and two spinoff television series.

⁶ A 2010 novel by Isaac Marion, adapted into a 2013 film, directed by Jonathan Levine.

⁷ Itself a parody adaptation of Jane Austen's best-known novel, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* is a 2009 novel written by Seth Grahame-Smith. The novel was adapted for the screen in 2014 and directed by Burr Steers.

⁸ The 2013 video game, developed by Naughty Dog and remastered in 2022, has also been adapted into a 2013 comic book, a 2014 live show, a 2023 HBO television series starring Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey, and a 2023 tabletop game.

Bob's Burgers, over the last few decades, and American audiences do not yet seem tired of these stories. Film buff message boards such as Nerd Much and The Vore herald the release of numerous new zombie offerings within the next few years, running the range between high budget and low, serious speculative drama and goofy horror comedy.

What almost all of these zombie stories have in common is a convenient medium for social commentary. Since in their almost every iteration zombies mindlessly consume human flesh, they make a neat allegory for modern western consumerism. Zombies are stripped of all capacity for rational thought and all emotion, feeling only hunger and the insurmountable impulse to satisfy it. They pursue their object with single-minded determination and with no regard to danger or consequences. Roger Luckhurst defines the zombie as “speechless, gormless, without memory of prior life or attachments, sinking into an indifferent mass and growing exponentially. They are a contagion, driven by an empty but insatiable hunger to devour the last of the living” (*Zombies* 7). He goes on to point out the history of zombie stories as un-subtle allegory for consumerism and other modern social conundrums, noting the irony of the massively profitable pocket of the Hollywood industry such stories have become.

Zombie stories often also reveal increasing environmental anxiety and the related anxiety about death and dying. On one hand, zombie stories parley with the unique problems that come with rapidly growing urban spaces. Luckhurst explains that zombies are “the pressing problem of the modern world’s sheer number of people, the population explosion, bodies crammed into super-cities and suburban sprawls, demanding satiation beyond any plan for sustainable living” (*Zombies* 11). Much like Victorian London, twentieth-century American cities have had to grapple with more people and less land to live on. The question of what to do with the dead

among such a large population is just as worrying, especially for modern cities, populated by people who better understand the environmental ramifications of burial and its alternatives. Similarly, zombie stories sometimes overlap with ghost stories and other tales of supernatural and undead monsters. These stories share in common their engagement with a collective anxiety of the unknowable: what happens to us after we are dead? To what extent do our bodies represent us as human beings, and what are the potential ramifications of forsaking or desecrating those bodies?

Like zombie movies, Broadway musicals are an essentially American form of media, and they, too, commonly engage with relevant social issues. That horror films and Broadway musicals have this in common is not surprising, considering the many ways in which the two different genres overlap and intersect. Both Broadway musicals and horror films are popular genres that are typically considered “low art,” “middlebrow” at best, and usually excluded from conversations about “serious” literary and cultural contributions. Only six horror films have ever been nominated for the Academy Award for Best picture,⁹ though they are more frequently considered for acting, screenplay, and effects awards. There is also often a considerable disparity between critical responses and popular responses to offerings in both genres. For example, although critics have come to look more fondly on the slasher classics of the late 1970s and 1980s in recent years, such films were not treated well by critics at the time of their release.

Friday the 13th, for example, despite being a box-office hit that spawned over ten sequels and

⁹ These are *The Exorcist* (1973), *Jaws* (1975), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Black Swan* (2010), and *Get Out* (2017). While some of these films won their awards for Best Screenplay, Best Actor/Actress, Best Director, or Best Original Score, *The Silence of the Lambs* is the only Best Picture winner from the horror genre.

numerous remakes, spin-offs, and tributes, received mostly scathing responses from critics; Ron Pennington called the film “a sick and sickening low budget feature,” while Lou Cedrone derided it as “a shamelessly bad film” (qtd. in Coffel). Similarly, even some of the most commercially successful Broadway musicals are derided by critics. For example, while *The Phantom of the Opera* has received many negative reviews and is not considered by the critical consensus to be a “good” musical, it is still the longest running Broadway show, having remained at the Majestic Theater since its opening in 1988 until April of 2023 and having inspired a very successful 2004 film adaptation starring Gerard Butler, Emmy Rossum, and Patrick Wilson. Webber’s works, including *Cats* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, have generally received such mixed feedback.¹⁰

Megamusicals, like the work of Webber, Stephen Schwarz, and Claude-Michel Schönberg, first gained popularity in the 1980s and have heavily influenced Broadway ever since.¹¹ The increasing commercialization of Broadway shows since the “Golden Age”¹² has culminated in an explosion of ostentatious set and lighting design, more electronic orchestration, energetic and complicated choreography, staggeringly high production budgets, and of course, even more British influence. Megamusicals came, at first, mainly from British playwrights and

¹⁰ Such has been the fate of many of the British and European megamusicals; Amanda Eubanks Winkler suggests that part of this is due to an American animosity toward foreign Broadway offerings, especially in the mid-80s (272).

¹¹ Prece and Everett define the megamusical, also called a “through-composed popular opera” or a “popera,” as “sung-through musicals where set design, choreography, and special effects are at least as important as the music” (250). This subgenre includes such Webber shows as *Phantom*, *Cats*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, as well as Schwarz’s *Wicked* and Schönberg’s *Les Misérables*.

¹² The first period of intense growth for modern Broadway, beginning roughly with 1943’s *Oklahoma* and ending with 1964’s *Fiddler on the Roof*. The Golden Age musicals were followed by the concept musicals of the 1960s and ‘70s, and later the megamusicals of the ‘80s and ‘90s (Knapp, Morris, & Wolf’s *Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*).

composers, and for this reason as well as their more commercial or “mainstream” sensibilities, are sometimes not received well by audiences and especially by Broadway critics. They do, however, very often feature social critique as a central project of the story: Paul Prece and William A. Everett note that megamusical “stories merge aspects of human suffering and redemption with matters of social consciousness” (250).

III. The Victorian Horror Musical as Social Critique

The four musicals relevant to this study are no exception to the rule; just like a great many other Broadway musicals, they all involve some degree of social critique, with varying depth and to varying effect.

Drood does not include very much in the way of social critique, but what it does involve is different from that of the original novel in significant ways. The musical does represent drug use and poverty (including ways in which they are connected) through the character of Princess Puffer and her opium den in London. The opium den serves as a stand-in for other similar crimes associated with poverty; as the musical describes, “Here the universal tongue of Opium is spoken, with its subdialects of prostitution, burglary, violence for profit, and murder” (27). In the musical, Princess Puffer is an archetypal character of the kind that commonly shows up in constructed “Victorian” settings, especially on Broadway.¹³ She is not a morally depraved character, but someone who has fallen on hard times as a result of ill use by a man and turned to her occupation out of necessity and lack of choice; she shares her story with Rosa in the song “The Garden Path to Hell.” Conversely, John Jasper, the choirmaster, is an ostensibly respectable

¹³ Other similar characters include the Beggar Woman from *Sweeney Todd* and Fantine from *Les Misérables*.

character whose clandestine visits to Puffer's opium den signal his duplicitousness. *Drood* premiered during the Reagan administration, at which point the opiate crisis in the United States was ramping up and the infamously unsuccessful "War on Drugs" began in earnest.¹⁴ Distrust of those in poverty was rampant, and the representation in the musical works to represent that distrust, mostly undermining it by showing that it is the powerful, and not the poor, who cannot be trusted.

Both the novel and the musical include instances of racism, mostly that faced by Neville and Helena Landless. The novel participates somewhat in this racist treatment by continually implying that Neville's aggression is due to his race and that Helena has achieved a greater degree of moral purity by overcoming this genetic flaw in herself. Neville himself reveals a "deadly and bitter hatred" within himself and claims it is due to his relationship to "an inferior race" (64). Mr. Crisparkle acts as a mentor to Neville, attempting to curb this tendency toward anger and violence; he appeals to Helena to assist him with her superior influence. "You and your brother," he says to her, "came into this world with the same dispositions, and you passed your younger days together surrounded by the same adverse circumstances. What you have overcome in yourself, can you not overcome in him?" (108). The musical pokes fun at the racist treatment in the novel by pointing out the vagueness of the sibling's ancestry: Helena says at one point, "I only wish I could express my gratitude without this strange, somewhat geographically

¹⁴ Judge Whitman Knapp and historian Renee Scherlen acknowledge that while policy to reduce drug use in the United States dates from the early 1970s, Reagan's administration popularized the "drug war" phraseology and metaphor. Though subsequent Presidents and lawmakers also sought to solve the drug crisis by influencing the drug market and harshly punishing drug possession, Scherlen reports that over forty years of policy, "the drug war has not had a profound impact on drug use," adding that US citizens are no longer confident in the success of US drug policy (68).

untraceable accent!” (66). The social critique here is minimal at best, but the musical is passing some minor judgment on the way the Landlesses are portrayed in the novel.

Like the novel, the musical’s main social critique is targeted toward duplicitous and predatory individuals, especially those who hold a position of social, political, or religious authority. The lecherous and dishonest John Jasper is the most obvious target of this critique. Jasper’s nefarious double life points to other examples of hidden lifestyles and other instances of the presumed separation of public and private spheres. Jasper is a respectable church choirmaster publicly, considered a pillar of the Cloisterham community. But secretly he is a lecherous and violent opium addict, in both versions of the story. David Paroissien points out that Jasper “hides wicked passions behind a respectable ecclesiastical career. He lusts after his nephew’s fiancée, and plots to remove Edwin by making plans for the disposal of his body, while also throwing suspicion for foul play on another party” (xxiv). This is just as true in the musical as it is in the novel. The musical does not allow Jasper to be finally responsible for Edwin’s murder, but it does insist that he has *attempted* the murder of Edwin Drood, no matter what the audience decides.

In the end, *Drood* takes pains to leave its audience with an explicit moral, as well as practical, message, far more than the other musicals relevant to this study. The song “Off to the Races” at the end of the musical has the company directly addressing the audience, hoping to impart that first impressions can often lead one astray:

Don’t fall back on your assumptions,
 Hasty presumptions might do you in.
 Mind the track. Like a nag running blind,
 Try lagging behind:
 You’ll find you’ll win. (82)

In addition to warning their audience to judge slowly, the company also blurs the ostensible dichotomy of right and wrong by noting, “In saving sinners, there’s a chance you’ll sin sometime! / In saving criminals, one might commit a crime!” (117)

While *Drood*’s explores the relationships between poverty and crime, the social critique in *Dracula* focuses mainly on the struggle between nature and morality, while exploring some concern over new ways of knowing in an age when scientific understanding and discovery were rapidly advancing (both in the late Victorian period, in the case of the musical’s setting, and the end of the millennium, in the case of its production). In “Fresh Blood” Dracula sings about his desire to go to London because at his home in Transylvania, “the people all fear me, their defenses are strong. They refuse to come near me. I need pastures new.” London, by contrast, may be full of monsters like Dracula, but it is significantly *not* full of wise, ancient superstition. In the modern age, we have lost our wariness of the dark. The musical premiered just after the Y2K crisis, when the Internet and increasing reliance on computers and machinery were changing day-to-day life at least as much as the industrial revolution changed life during Stoker’s time. More and more essential questions were answered by scientific advances, more and more jobs were overtaken by automation, and more and more information could be easily accessed by anyone with a Web connection. The mysteries of the metaphysical were far from most audience’s minds, which would of course make 2004 America far more susceptible to a supernatural monster’s attack than ever before, just as Dracula says is the case in 1890s London.

Vampire fiction in general often explores consumption and the binary between base desire and higher moral or brain function. Quoting such scholars as Mark McGurl, Anne Stiles notes that “genre fiction about monsters such as zombies and vampires continues to be an

important means by which people grapple with the fallout of scientific determinism” (81).

Tracing the origins of the modern understanding of vampire lore, she explains of Stoker’s novel,

Dracula’s swath of destruction parallels the progress of nineteenth-century science, particularly the transformation of physiological psychology from a discourse of the soul into a discourse of the brain. Like late-Victorian cerebral localizationalists who argued that brain function was entirely determined by material factors (electrical stimulation, nutrition, etc.), Dracula threatens to transform his victims into human automata lacking souls or free will. (51)

Several more modern vampire stories posit their “good” vampires as two separate beings: the residual human versus the possessing demon.¹⁵ Although these more modern stories are far less overtly religious (specifically Christian) than their nineteenth-century forebears, the monster still consistently represents the prevalence of base biological drives, as well as the loss or perversion of the soul. This soulless pursuit of instinctual gratification is posited as inherently evil and inhuman particularly because it is harmful and undesirable to individuals as well as society at large.

Rather than reworking the social critique of the original novel, *Dracula the Musical* relies on an established genre of vampire fiction and its social critique, which by the time of the musical’s conception had changed considerably from that of its early iterations. In the musical, Dracula is at war with himself, much like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*’s Angel or Anne Rice’s Louis or many other twentieth and twenty-first century vampires. Dracula is caught between his primal nature, which desires blood, unquestioning service, and sexual gratification, and his residual humanity, which empathizes with the turmoil through which his ardor puts Mina and sincerely desires her happiness. In the end, unlike in the novel, Dracula’s moral humanity wins out, and his love for Mina drives him to destroy himself. Although he does act as the antagonist of the

¹⁵ Vampires in media such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and *Twilight* are presented thusly.

musical, he is ultimately its hero as well; his humanity prevails over the autonomic or demonic part of him, and he himself solves the problem of his bloodlust and rage for everyone. In this way, the musical presents its somewhat vague moral: that an individual acting selfishly, in service of primal or base needs rather than in service of the soul or, better, the souls of others, poses great risk to social communities.

The layers of social commentary present in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* have been remarked on at some length by numerous scholars and musical theater professionals, including the creators of the musical: Christopher Bond, Hal Prince, and Sondheim himself. Jim Lovensheimer argues that in the musical, Sondheim "give[s] voice to the disenfranchised and desperate" (213). Robert L. Mack, while tracing the various iterations of Sweeney Todd and his misdeeds over the century and a half since his original appearance on the Victorian page, says that "at its most comprehensive, Sweeney Todd's is a story that makes use of some of the darkest myths of human culture to comment on everything from the exploitative nature of capitalist enterprise, to the arguably more essential and seductive powers and appetites of love, sex and desire" (53). The "most comprehensive" version of Sweeney Todd's story is, by broad consensus, Sondheim's musical. On the other hand, the original serial novel, in its imitation of Dickens,¹⁶ does include some social critique, as well as some less deft cultural references. But like so many post-Golden Age Broadway adaptations of literature, Sondheim's musical transforms the story

¹⁶ The penny periodical that published *The String of Pearls*, Edward Lloyd's *People's Periodical and Family Newspaper*, was infamous for publishing blatantly plagiarized versions of Dickens's popular works. Though *The String of Pearls* was published anonymously, most scholars agree that it was penned by one of the periodical's frequent contributors, which is to say one of Dickens's imitators, and heavily inspired by elements of Dickens's work, especially *Martin Chuzzlewit*. For more on this topic, see Mack's *Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd* (pp. 142-54).

into something not only more familiar to modern American audiences but also more overtly critical of its society and cultural moment.

The primary theme of *The String of Pearls*, the original 1847 serial novel that introduced the character of Sweeney Todd, is a condemnation of avarice in all its forms. Consumerism, rising capitalism, disparity between socioeconomic classes, and personal greed form an appropriate network of themes for the story of the demon barber. The novel's Sweeney Todd embodies greed:

There can be no doubt but that the love of money was the predominant feeling in Sweeney Todd's intellectual organization and that, by the amount it would bring him, or the amount it would deprive him of, he measured everything. With such a man, then, no question of morality or ordinary feeling could arise, and there can be no doubt but that he would quite willingly have sacrificed the whole human race, if, by doing so, he could have achieved any of the objects of his ambition. (141)

This extreme self-interested avarice is his defining characteristic, and it leads him to behave cruelly and disdainfully as well as violently. Sweeney Todd himself is not the only character whose self-interest is condemned in the novel. Mrs. Lovett's meat pie shop is frequented mostly by young attorneys whose reputation in the nineteenth century was not very positive, if Dickens's depictions in such works as *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations* are to be trusted. That they would enthusiastically (if unknowingly) consume the flesh of their fellow humans so long as the price is right exaggerates this reputation, but is not out of alignment with previous depictions in fiction. Mack points out, too, that Todd's "ingenious chair can be seen as a parodic representation of the entire procedure of mass production and its efficiency—a mechanical device that allows him swiftly to deliver the products that will allow Lovett to make her pies in batches of hundreds" (64). However captivating this process is, there is no way to read the representation of capitalist industry in a positive light; if the novel represents mass production in

this manner, it unequivocally condemns it. Mack goes on to say, “Todd himself stands as a representation of the force of all that is dangerous, dehumanizing and ultimately deadly in the new Londons of the world; Mrs Lovett stands as the (at best) morally ambivalent representation of a profit-driven society that caters to the basest of human appetites, and in the end winds up consuming itself” (94).

The church is the object of another pointed critique in the novel. St. Dunstan’s church is the novel’s most significant landmark, featuring almost as another imposing character. The church and its bells represent not just the public of London, but more specifically the authority of the clergy. Sweeney Todd hides the corpses of his victims underneath the church and uses its tunnels to transport human flesh to the basement bakehouse of Mrs. Lovett’s shop. Something evil, then, lurks literally beneath the surface of St. Dunstan’s church, belying both the church’s own reputation for upstanding purity and its ability to curtail such evil. And finally, Mr. Rev. Lupin, who calls upon Johanna, features as a lecherous and leering predator who uses his position as a clergyman to mask his vices, much like *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*’s John Jasper.

Sondheim’s musical *Sweeney Todd* takes a different approach to its social critique, but it is by no means less invested in commenting on the social issues of its day. At the beginning of the show, Anthony and Todd sing “No Place Like London,” in which Todd describes the city as “a hole in the world / Like a great black pit.” He continues,

Its morals aren’t worth
 What a pig could spit
 And it goes by the name of London.
 At the top of the hole
 Sit the privileged few,
 Making mock of the vermin
 In the lower zoo,
 Turning beauty into filth and greed. (32)

Later, Todd repeatedly sings in “Ephiphany” that “we all deserve to die” (101), either as punishment for our own sins or to be freed from enduring the sins of others. His opinion of humanity in general is so low that he has no scruple in murdering for profit and for catharsis, simply because he can get away with it, much like his literary counterpart. But the musical is slow to counter Todd’s view of his fellow Londoners and condemn his murders. Most of the characters, from Mrs. Lovett to Pirelli to Fogg to Beadle Bamford, embody the same kind of self-interested greed that the novel’s Sweeney Todd does. Anthony and Johanna, and perhaps young Toby, are the only truly redeemable characters, ones whose actions do not seek personal gain at the expense of other people; by and large, the musical’s cast of characters presents a dismal perspective, not only on industrialized societies but even on human nature.

The musical’s most specific critique targets the criminal justice system and hierarchical structures of authority therein. Though in the nineteenth century the Church was a part of these structures, it was far less so in 1970s New York, and so in bringing the story to a modern American audience, Sondheim and Wheeler recast Todd’s primary antagonists not as clergy but as a judge and his beadle. Judge Turpin represents corruption and lechery within the criminal justice system, just as the novel’s Rev. Lupin represents the same within the Church of England. Even in moments that perhaps seem overtly to be critiquing consumerism rather than class stratification and corrupt authority structures, the musical has much to say about people like Judge Turpin and the systems that empower them. In the Act I closing number, “A Little Priest,” in which Todd and Mrs. Lovett sing about the various kinds of people they will cook up in their pies, Todd sings, “the history of the world, my love / Is those below serving those up above . . . How gratifying for once to know / That those above will serve those down below” (108). Not

only is Todd's society (and, more importantly, the modern society of Sondheim and the musical's immediate audience) individualistic, but it is also extremely inequitable. Todd and Lovett represent, at least during the first act, the "have-nots" of London, who must resort to violent means to scrape by, while those like Judge Turpin have not only money but a great deal of power with which to threaten and exploit the less fortunate. Their macabre (and comedic, of course) solution to this problem is to restore a semblance of balance by accepting any "customers," whether they are, as Mrs. Lovett puts it, "high born [or] low." In doing this, the duo plan to "not discriminate great from small," but instead vow to "serve anyone— / —meaning anyone— / And to anyone / At all" (112).

And like *Drood*, a key theme of *Sweeney Todd* is duality and hidden identities and motives. A subterranean motif runs throughout the entire show. In the opening number, Sweeney Todd rises from beneath the stage to make his entrance from the grave. Later, he uses his barber's chair mechanism to slide his victims into the basement bakehouse, which connects to the sewers through which he and Mrs. Lovett must pursue Toby. It is from these secret tunnels that Toby emerges finally to murder Todd himself. Lucy, inadvertently disguised as the Beggar Woman, can sense that the smoke rising into the sky from Mrs. Lovett's bakehouse heralds something sinister behind the shop's façade and beneath its floors. Other characters are also living double lives. Benjamin Barker reinvents himself as the vengeful Sweeney Todd just as his former assistant Danny becomes the flamboyant Italian barber Adolfo Pirelli. Both characters change their identities to gain access to clientele and to escape the scrutiny of the state, represented here by Judge Turpin and Beadle Bamford, who themselves present respectable public personas to conceal cruelty, avarice, and licentiousness.

While all of the social problems that the musical points to, from social inequity to rising capitalism and industry to corrupt authority, were rampant in Victorian London, the musical's critique targets not the original novel's place and time, but its own. 1970s New York City suffered a similar degree of social inequity and corruption, and the musical paints a familiar picture for its Manhattan audience, all while ostensibly depicting 1850s London. Aleksei Grinenko points out that "the 1970s was a period of urban blight for New York City, characterized by a serious slump in the city's economy and a surge in its crime rate" (236). This period of distress saw an increase in the gap between the wealthy upper class and the laboring poor, with accordant increases in material filth, garbage accumulation, and similar problems that disproportionately affected the poorer communities of the city. New York was by no means the only municipality in the United States suffering this kind of worsening inequity, crime, economic distress, and sanitation problems. But the city was famous for these problems, so much so that fifty years later it has not yet outlived the reputation the 1970s gave it. For the immediate audience of Sondheim's musical, the state of New York City outside the doors of the Uris Theater made the Victorian city depicted onstage feel that much closer to home.

American horror forms a broad umbrella for many subgenres, ranging from the Hollywood slasher film to the Broadway musical thriller. What these works have in common, in addition to a mixed commercial reception and the copious use of red corn syrup, is an investment in exploring and exposing the social problems in U.S. society and the collective fears and anxiety that such problems inspire. By positing larger-than-life villains, these works really expose the parts of American society that leave us vulnerable to all kinds of evils, not just the supernatural ones that lurk in the darkness, but the ones that hide in plain sight and affect us all every day.

IV. Case Study: Jekyll & Hyde

Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* criticizes the field of medical science at the end of the century and targets the hypocrisy and lack of objectivity in the kinds of case studies that were often published for a general audience (Stiles 29). Many scholars argue that the novella also represents what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and others call the widespread "homosexual panic" of the time, showing Jekyll's friends concerned for not only his physical well-being but for his moral well-being too, since he has started up an unknown relationship with Hyde. Elaine Showalter calls the novel "a case study of male hysteria . . . a fable of fin de siècle homosexual panic, the discovery and resistance of the homosexual self" (69). Grace Moore alternatively suggests that Jekyll's ambiguous "pleasures" might be habitual masturbation; plenty of literature circulated at the time blames masturbation for all kinds of social and personal ills. Moore points out, "Self-pollution must . . . have been an omnipresent anxiety in the Victorian consciousness. It is safe to assume that virtually everyone would have indulged in the habit at one time or another, so that the slightest hint of any of the diverse illnesses that could be linked to onanism must have sparked multitudinous anxieties" (149). Still, Roger Luckhurst suggests in his introduction to the Oxford edition of the novella that "these readings impose a modern obsession with sexuality as the hidden truth of every self and every text" (xxviii). The musical, then, may reasonably represent such anxieties to its modern audience, even if the novella does not.

Generally, the novella questions the validity and feasibility of the nineteenth-century's famous preference for compartmentalizing domestic and public life—and accompanying

concepts such as parenthood, marriage, morality, and business, profit, and socialization—into separate spheres of influence (Flanders). In *Strange Case*, Jekyll discovers “that man is not truly one, but truly two” (52), and that separating the two parts of his personality has a destabilizing effect that ultimately proves fatal. The problem with humanity, then, is not the coexistence of conscience and instinct, but in the attempt to separate conscience and morality from desire and instinct, which, as Jekyll learns, must exist together to provide equilibrium. The incomplete Mr. Hyde is described in the novella as giving “an impression of deformity” (16) and having “something abnormal and misbegotten in [his] very essence” (48). But Jekyll, far from achieving perfect spiritual and moral wellness by separating the evil parts of himself, confesses, “I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both” (53). Whatever his ambiguous immoral “pleasures” might have been, Jekyll’s true undoing proves to be the untethering of the two equally essential, if seemingly oppositional, facets of his self.

This metaphor essentially aligns with the collapse of these separate spheres. Especially by the end of the century, Victorians themselves were aware that the separate spheres model was not genuinely viable, especially not for those outside the upper classes. Rachel Verona Cote points out that “systemic oppression relies on the careful partitioning of social space,” meaning that this artificial adherence to the doctrine of separate spheres does more to keep marginalized groups at the margins than it does to enable and empower a functioning society (3). Judith Flanders reports that the division between spheres extended beyond the broad categories of public and private: “Every room, every piece of furniture, every object, in theory, had its own function, which it alone could perform” (*Inside* 31). But of course, the financial and spatial

reality of life in a crowded city made such separation nearly impossible in practice, and the ideal slowly dissipated. Even the modern preference for “open concept” floor plans in newly constructed homes speaks to the impracticality and antiquity of attempting to entirely separate these spheres.

Frank Wildhorn, Leslie Bricusse, and Steve Cuden’s musical *Jekyll & Hyde* repackages some of the novella’s original social commentary for late twentieth-century Americans. Rather than individual morality, the musical version of the story has a great deal to say about social structures, corruption, and inequity, especially along class and gender lines. Following in the footsteps of *Drood* and *Sweeney Todd*, this adaptation brings a certain “Dickensian” critical lens to its construction of Victorian London that provides a familiar and comfortable perspective from which to deliver its critique of 1990s America.

The musical opens with Jekyll kneeling by his sick father’s bedside, unable to help him with any approved treatments. Although Jekyll sings that his father is “lost in the darkness” where “silence surrounds [him],” he makes a vow to continue to find a way to help him:

Please try to hear me;
 I’ll keep you near me
 Till night passes by.
 I will find the answer.
 I’ll never desert you –
 I promise you this –
 Till the day that I die.

Jekyll appeals to the hospital board to be allowed to undertake experiments to develop new treatments, especially for mentally ill patients with genetic conditions like his father. The board refuses, cruelly, and laughs at Jekyll’s pain and his plan. This is the radicalizing moment for Jekyll; his experiments are not motivated by a desire to ease his conscience over a sullied past,

but to try to help his father and other patients with similar ailments. The board members are the initial antagonists of the story, and they represent the kind of cold bureaucracy that governs institutions such as healthcare, especially in the United States.

This rift between Jekyll and the board happens along class lines, too. The hospital board is made up of upper-class folk and aristocrats, while Dr. Jekyll is a middle-class professional. Hyde's obsession with Lucy, relative lack of interest in Emma, and willingness to enact violence against the members of the hospital board reinforce Jekyll's precarious middle-class status. Compared with Lucy, of course, Jekyll is quite wealthy and comfortable, enjoying the respect of his peers and even some of his social superiors; he is set to marry Emma, the daughter of Sir Danvers Carew, a match that will enable him a certain amount of upward mobility. But he does not have the social power to effect meaningful change in the ways acceptable to the upper-class bureaucrats in charge of the hospital, despite his connections. The violence and wrath of Jekyll's "alter-ego" expresses some of this class-related frustration, though it is simultaneously treated as arising from the kind of inherent evil that Jekyll believes afflicts his dying father. This Victorian setting can seem more affected by questions of social class than 1990s New York, yet even in the modern United States, physicians who wish to do good are at the mercy of hospital administrators, investors, and executives, not to mention insurance companies. The classist elitism of the newly industrialized late nineteenth-century, then, blends into a more recognizable American capitalism here.

This critique extends to the institutions that oppress and divide people on the basis of gender and patriarchy, as well. Jekyll's impending marriage is mostly a plot device to lead him into the burlesque bar where Lucy is performing and thus inspire him to begin his fateful

experiments posthaste. But Jekyll's relationships with the two central women in the story are telling. The characters in the show are largely divided into homosocial circles. As in Stevenson's novella, Jekyll's friends are mostly men, though he does interact with a larger and more varied group of people at his and Emma's engagement party. His bachelor party leads him into the burlesque, where the women on stage are commingling with the men in the audience—and where, depending on the production, some of the performers onstage are men (sometimes dressed as women, sometimes not). In this space, the strict homosocial circles break down, signaling not only the supposed immorality of the burlesque and the activities that happen therein, but also the beginning of Jekyll's experiments. The performance in the burlesque can reaffirm the “gay panic” of both the 1880s and the 1980s,¹⁷ but in the Broadway production, Lucy's song reinforces the divide between good and evil, and more interestingly to Jekyll, the tantalizing gray space where they comeingle. In “Good ‘n’ Evil,” Lucy sings, “Good is evil and therefore all evil is good / How do you tell evil from good?” Her song inspires Jekyll to recognize that following the rules, particularly those laid down by corrupt or cruelly selfish governments, is not necessarily “good,” while taking his intended experiments and his father's healthcare into his own hands without the hospital board's approval is not necessarily “evil.”

Much like the novella, one of the musical's key themes is the breakdown of dichotomies such as good and evil, morality and desire, and even male and female. These dichotomies show up in both Victorian and modern American society in social institutions that seek to oppress, including political and religious structures. The musical takes pains to illuminate the

¹⁷ See Chapter 3's discussion of gender in *Jekyll & Hyde*, particularly regarding this scene's original number, “Bring on the Men.”

consequences of such compliance with oppressive institutions and on the insistence of separate social spheres, whether those spheres are separated based on gender or class.

An early number, “Façade,” addresses these consequences directly, pointing to the ways in which people on all levels of class and political hierarchies must adopt a public persona in order to hide personal or moral shortcomings and get ahead. “There’s a face that we wear in the cold light of day,” the company sings during this number. “It’s society’s mask, it’s society’s way.” Specific examples, such as “teachers who lie” and “preachers who kill” are called out, and the conclusion is that “Man is not one but two, he is evil and good, and he walks the fine line we’d all cross if we could.” According to this song, people are basically motivated by selfishness – and the context of the first act of the musical suggests that this selfishness is necessary as the poor, disabled, and otherwise underprivileged are left unsupported by the social institutions, like healthcare, purportedly designed to help them. The company singing “Façade” sees no way out of this cycle: “It’s a nightmare we can never discard.”

Indeed, for Jekyll, the attempt to resist or subvert these oppressive structures is futile. His experiment goes horribly wrong and ends up contributing even more to the harm done by oppressive patriarchy and violence against the poor. Hyde stalks, assaults, and eventually kills Lucy partly out of spite for Jekyll and his altruistic interest in her, and partly, it seems, simply because he cannot help enacting this kind of violence. Jekyll is obviously well-meaning in his attempt to improve conditions for the mentally ill, and he is justified in his intention to circumvent the bureaucracy of the hospital board to do so. But the events of the musical suggest that the potential for violence, harm, oppression, and exploitation exists even in the most learned, gentle, and well-meaning person; society is simply not set up to allow for kindness, altruism, and

care. Even Jekyll's climactic effort to quell Hyde for good fails. In "Confrontation," Hyde insists that "they'll never be able to separate Jekyll from Hyde" because the two personalities are not truly separate, but necessarily interdependent.

The musical does not end happily. Jekyll and Emma are set to finally marry and to put all the trauma of their experiences behind them. But Hyde makes one final appearance at their wedding, whereupon Jekyll kills himself to save Emma once and for all. Hyde represents the kind of evil that all humans are capable of, and even driven to, but the musical is clear that this evil is not necessarily inherent, but created and exacerbated out of necessity in response to systemic oppression and inequity. All members of society, but especially the poor and otherwise disadvantaged and those who, like Jekyll, advocate for them, are victims of this inequity, and in the musical's paradigm, there is no path to a happy ending.

It almost goes without saying that both the American musicals discussed in this study and the original Victorian works that inspired them respond to aspects of their respective cultural environments. Each follows an established history of social critique in their respective genres, especially in the horror stories of both centuries. And for this reason, they have all been important to their immediate audiences and to readers and audiences that have come after. They vary in subtlety, but their social critique has remained relevant even as massive changes in social structures and collective anxieties have shifted the priorities of people living in their times and places.

All four of these musicals explore the ramifications of individuals or social structures (or both) failing or neglecting to protect and serve vulnerable members of society. To varying

degrees, each of the musicals uses “Dickensian” Victorian settings to present a cultural backdrop that appears to modern American audiences to be particularly inequitable, though in reality such a backdrop resembles the audience’s immediate environment at least as much as it does the reality of Victorian cities. These constructions allow Americans to explore the social problems that are familiar to their own time, ultimately positing a basic and quintessentially American solution: unity, rather than separation and stratification.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Sweeney Todd, Drood, Jekyll & Hyde, and Dracula all exemplify the way American storytellers and audiences think of Victorian settings, imagine Victorian people, and understand Victorian culture. Over the course of the last century or so, Americans have developed a kind of Victorian culture-text, informed by countless American and British adaptations of Victorian works, new editions and retellings of Victorian literature, British heritage fiction and new period fiction set during the nineteenth century, and other elements of what might be considered an oral tradition of storytelling. These four “Victorian” horror musicals demonstrate the ways in which modern American creators and audiences see their own cultural interests in relation to Victorian ones, or at least to what the American-constructed culture-text of the Victorian era posits as Victorian cultural interests. In the musicals, as in other American constructions of the Victorian, social communities are divided along socioeconomic lines as well as gendered ones, heterosexual romance and traditional family values are privileged and posited as both desirable and right, the poor and otherwise vulnerable are at the mercy of corrupt social institutions and structures of power, and such power must be challenged, even and especially if there is no fruitful resistance possible. These elements of the “Victorian” present Broadway audiences with an uncomfortably familiar social landscape; what such an audience might take away from the musicals relates far more to that audience’s own social community than it does to an inaccessible past.

These musicals reveal a vested interest in preserving quintessentially American values, which include freedom and liberty, family and romance, and equality (of opportunity if not of circumstance). The social stratification constructed in the Victorian settings of the musicals would seem to be at odds with such values, but the musicals show in many ways how similar the social problems of Victorian London were to those of modern New York City. Ultimately, this comparison leads to social critique that emphasizes the responsibility of individuals to act with the interest of whole social communities, as well as the futility of such action in the face of oppressive social institutions.

This study has focused narrowly on four modern horror musicals adapted from Victorian novels, but I believe the framework I have applied here may also be helpful in asking the same questions of other musicals, as well as, potentially, works in other American genres. My research and analysis demonstrate a consistent American interest in Victorian horror stories, as well as the cultural concerns of an inequitable society that relates to Victorian people. If what I have found in these musicals is representative, then these same preoccupations, anxieties, and interests will be observable in other popular culture artifacts, especially on Broadway; more research is needed.

Musical theater studies is a new field of academic research, but musical theater has been a dynamic and vibrant part of American popular culture for close to a century. The culture of Broadway is changing more and more quickly, and recent decades have seen the premiere of experimental and provocative shows, not just off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway, where such works are more easily accepted, but even in the larger and more prestigious theaters in New York. These changes reflect broader developments in American culture, and increasingly, in

global culture. Social progress is slow, and its representation on Broadway is in tension with traditional values and institutions, but musical theater as an American genre is one avenue in which American artists and audiences explore such questions of their past, present, and future culture.

Despite the emergence of musical theater studies, some facets of this Broadway culture remain neglected in scholarship. The horror musical is one such facet. This genre has grown in popularity since its earliest offerings in the 1970s, especially with American audiences, who have seen some of their favorite Hollywood horror films adapted to the stage in recent decades. And yet, little if any critical scholarship is devoted to examining or discussing this specific trend on Broadway. The horror genre in general is relatively neglected in critical conversations about American culture, despite the fact that the earliest Hollywood films were extremely influential horror movies. Horror stories not only thrill audiences with morbidly fascinating tales of the strange and terrifying; they deeply explore the things their audiences most fear, the anxieties that come about from prevalent social problems and the unique challenges of each distinct time and place. Critics in monster studies are quick to point to such anxieties and parse such representations in horror films, but musical theater studies has yet to apply this same framework to the Broadway stage. I have attempted here to begin filling what is still, in my mind, a massive gap in scholarship.

Another genre of Broadway that has received surprisingly little critical attention, of course, is the adapted musical. Despite the incredible frequency with which new works on Broadway are adapted from other media, adaptation studies, typically focused on film, has not attended to such works, and there is no corresponding field of musical theater studies devoted to

adaptation. Just as Linda and Michael Hutcheon argue, I believe musical theater adaptations present a set of unique challenges to creators, challenges which result in revealing creative decisions in new productions. As musical theater studies develops, it is my hope that more scholars follow the precedent set by such film scholars as André Bazin in treating adapted Broadway musicals as special kinds of shows worth close examination and analysis.

The four musicals I have discussed here represent a wider trend of horror on Broadway; since the 1970s, more and more horror shows have found their way to the musical theater stage, including *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Carrie*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Dance of the Vampires*, *American Psycho*, *Death Note*, *The Addams Family*, and *Beetlejuice*. All of the shows in this growing Broadway subgenre are in dialogue with trends in Hollywood horror films, as well as, in some cases, horror from foreign markets as well. As I have argued, horror films so frequently reveal the collective anxieties relevant to particular social atmospheres; horror musicals share this trait, despite the critical neglect such works have received. And, of course, so many of these horror musicals are adaptations of horror novels or films, from Victorian sources as well as more modern ones.

Adaptation is common on Broadway, so much so that Sondheim's biographer Meryl Seacrest describes Sondheim's early days of mentorship under Oscar Hammerstein II, who suggested he musicalize plays and short stories or novels before attempting an original musical work (72). Some such adaptations have received a great deal of critical attention, but often musical theater studies, having so much new ground to cover, neglects to parse the relationship between an adapted musical and its source material. My analysis here demonstrates that, as film adaptation studies has shown, adaptations of Broadway musicals reveal deeply held beliefs,

social concerns, and other interests of the modern Americans who make such musicals. Though I have focused only on “Victorian” horror musicals, I am certain similar insights can be gleaned from other adaptations on Broadway.

I am not the first to note the frequency with which Broadway musicals adapt Victorian works in particular. Sharon Aronofsky Weltman discusses this in her book *Victorians on Broadway*, demonstrating some ways in which attention to the modern musicals reveals new insights into the original Victorian works. I have focused on doing the opposite here, instead investigating the ways in which these adaptations reveal crucial aspects of modern American culture. Weltman’s book examines on *Sweeney Todd*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, and *Drood*, just as I have, and I propose that my framework may also be usefully applied to the other Victorian-sourced works she discusses, including *The King and I*, *Oliver!*, *Goblin Market*, and *Jane Eyre*. More American musicals also come either directly or indirectly from Victorian works; these include *The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Woman in White*, and *Sunday in the Park with George*, as well as works adapted from somewhat earlier British works like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Frankenstein*. All of these adapted musicals, even those that are not strictly American in origin, contribute to the more general Victorian culture-text and therefore reveal much not only about the American understanding of Victorian people and ideas, but also about American’s own interests.

I have focused here only on American musicals, works whose composers or playwrights were American and which premiered originally on Broadway as opposed to the West End or elsewhere. But especially in recent years, as musical theater has become increasingly a global industry, the distinction between an American musical and a British musical, especially, has begun to dissolve. The analysis I have applied here may therefore be just as revealing if applied

to a discussion of *Oliver!* or *The Woman in White*. A comparative analysis, contrasting the anxieties embedded in a British musical like *The Woman in White* with those of *Sweeney Todd*, for example, would potentially be very interesting. Further, attending to changes in the construction of Victorian settings on Broadway over time and across nations may also be fruitful; I have done little comparative analysis here, but it seems a warranted development on this research.

Though Broadway is still the primary locale for musical theater culture, not all musicals premiere onstage. Increasingly, new musicals are written for the screen or even other kinds of media. The colossally popular *A Very Potter Musical*, written by Darren Criss and A.J. Holmes for a theater company founded after their graduation from the University of Michigan, was originally performed onstage at the university, but the recording was posted to YouTube, sparking more than a decade of animation parodies and online imitations in various media. Such a phenomenon, clearly inspired by Broadway culture but using the tools of the social Internet to reach different audiences, surely warrants critical attention. Somewhat more traditionally, movie musicals like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *The Greatest Showman*, which are frequently adapted for the stage after enjoying immense popularity and sometimes achieving cult status, also continue the mixed traditions of both Broadway and Hollywood, deserving the attention of critics in several various fields.

Finally, these four “Victorian” horror musicals also deserve the attention of critics with expertise in music theory to parse the relationship between the music and the text of the shows. I have little doubt that such analysis would reveal further the ways in which American musical theater constructs Victorian stories and presents horror as a mirror for the most worrisome social

problems of a particular culture. Some scholars in musical theater studies have done some of this work with these musicals, as well as others; I believe such an analysis in dialogue with mine would be especially fruitful. The integration of not only literature studies, adaptation studies, monster studies, and Victorian studies, but also music theory, musicology, and theater studies to explore the layers of meaning in musicals like these is an exciting prospect considering the compelling research that comes from each one of these fields individually. Applying them all collaboratively to an examination of the “Victorian” horror musical seems to me the logical next step for this project.

WORKS CITED

- Altick, Richard. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*. Chicago UP, 1957.
- . *Victorian People and Ideas: A Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature*. Norton, 1973.
- . *Victorian Studies in Scarlet: Murders and Manners in the Age of Victoria*. Norton, 1970.
- Anonymous. *The String of Pearls (1846-47). Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, edited by Robert L. Mack. Oxford UP, 2007.
- Bazin, André. "Adaptation, or The Cinema as Digest." In *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader*, edited by Timothy Corrigan. Routledge, 2012, pp. 57-64.
- Block, Geoffrey. *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim*. Oxford UP, 1997.
- Bond, Christopher. Introduction. In *Sweeney Todd*, 1991, pp. 1-17.
- Booth, Michael R. *Theater in the Victorian Age*. Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Brantley, Ben. "The Bat Awakens, Stretches, Yawns." In *The New York Times*, 20 Aug. 2004, pp. 1-24.
- Carey, John. *The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens's Imagination*. Faber & Faber, 1973.
- Clover, Carol J. *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. BFI, 1993.
- Coffel, Chris. "What Critics Said about The Original 'Friday the 13th.'" *Filmschoolrejects.com*, 13 Mar. 2020. <https://filmschoolrejects.com/friday-the-13th-original-critics/>
- Corrigan, Timothy. "Foundations of Adaptation Study." In *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, 2017, pp. 23-35.
- Cote, Rachel Vorona. *Too Much: How Victorian Constraints Still Bind Women Today*. Grand Central, 2020.
- Cuden, Steve. *Beating Broadway: How to Create Stories for Musicals that Get Standing Ovarions*. CreateSpace, 2013.

- Davis, Paul. "The Carol as Culture-Text." In *The Life and Times of Ebenezer Scroodge*, by Davis. Yale UP, 1990, pp. 3-15.
- Dickens, Charles. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Edited by David Paroissien, Penguin, 2002.
- Dracula: The Musical*. Music by Frank Wildhorn. Lyrics and book by Don Black and Christopher Hampton. Directed by Des McAnuff. Starring Tom Hewitt and Melissa Errico. Opened at Belasco Theater, New York City, August 19, 2004. 157 performances. Original production at La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego, 2001.
- "Dracula the Musical Full Show Video." *YouTube*, uploaded by Harry Kervin, 19 July, 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUuW4-JIWyw&t=6778s.
- Ellis, Sarah Stickney. "The Women of England, Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits" (1839). In *Victorian Prose, an Anthology*, edited by Rosemary J. Mundhenk and LuAnn McCracken Fletcher, Columbia UP, 1999, pp. 53-57.
- Evans, Jonathan. "U.S. Adults Are More Religious than Western Europeans." Pew Research Center, 5 Sept. 2018.
- Favret, Mary A. "Being True to Jane Austen." In *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, edited by John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff. U of Minnesota P, 2000, pp. 64-82.
- Flanders, Judith. *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England*. Norton, 2006.
- . *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime*. St. Martins, 2013.
- Gilmour, Robin. *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890*. Longman, 1993.
- Grinenko, Aleksei. "Is That Just Disgusting?: Mapping the Social Geographies of Filth and Madness in *Sweeney Todd*." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 68, no. 2, May 2016, pp. 231-48.
- Hills, Matt, and Michele Hilmes and Roberta Pearson, editors. *Transatlantic Television Drama: Industries, Programs, and Fans*. Oxford UP, 2019.
- Holmes, Rupert. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood: A New Musical*. Nelson Doubleday, 1986.
- Houghton, Walter E. *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*. Yale UP, 1957.
- Hutcheon, Linda, and Michael Hutcheon. "Adaptation and Opera." In *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, 2017, pp. 305-23.

- Jekyll & Hyde: The Musical*. Music by Frank Wildhorn. Lyrics by Leslie Bricusse, Frank Wildhorn, and Steve Cuden. Book by Leslie Bricusse. Directed by Robin Philips. Starring Robert Cuccioli, Linda Eder, and Christine Noll. Opened at Plymouth Theater, New York City, April 28, 1997. 1,543 performances. Original production at Alley Theatre, Houston, 1990.
- Johnson, Claudia L. *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures*. U of Chicago P, 2012.
- Knapp, Raymond. *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*. Princeton UP, 2005.
- Knapp, Raymond, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, editors. *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical*. Oxford UP, 2011.
- Knapp, Whitman. "The War on Drugs." In *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, vol. 29, no. 5, Apr. 2017, pp. 186-89.
- Laird, Paul R., and William A. Everett, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to the American Musical*. Cambridge UP, 2008.
- Leitch, Thomas, editor. *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*. Oxford UP, 2020.
- Luckhurst, Roger. Introduction. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Tales*, Oxford UP, 2008, pp. vii-xxxii.
- . *Zombies: A Cultural History*. Reaktion, 2016.
- Lovensheimer, Jim. "Stephen Sondheim and the Musical of the Outsider." In *The Cambridge Companion to the American Musical*, Cambridge UP, 2008, pp. 205-19.
- Mack, Robert L. *The Wonderful and Surprising History of Sweeney Todd: The Life and Times of an Urban Legend*. Continuum, 2007.
- Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton UP, 2007.
- Miller, Renata Kobetts. "Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Adaptations of Novels: The Paradox of Ephemerality." In *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, 2020, pp. 53-70.
- Moore, Grace. "Something to Hyde: The 'Strange Preference' of Henry Jekyll." In *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation*, edited by Andrew Maunder and Grace Moore. Ashgate, 2004, pp. 145-61.
- Paroissien, David. "Introduction." In *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Penguin, 2002, pp. xiii-xlii.

- Pogrebin, Robin. "Broadway's Critic-Proof Composer Says This Is (Still) His Moment." In *The New York Times*, 6 Oct. 1999, pp. 1-4.
- Prece, Paul, and William A. Everett. "The Megamusical: The Creation, Internationalisation and Impact of a Genre." In *The Cambridge Companion to the American Musical*. Cambridge UP, 2008, pp. 250-69.
- Riccio, Lucius J., Joseph Miller, and Ann Litke. "Polishing the Big Apple: How Management Science Has Helped Make New York Streets Cleaner." In *Interfaces*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 83-88.
- Rogers, David. Introduction. In *Dracula*, Wordsworth, 2000, pp. v-xix.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Columbia UP, 1985.
- Scherlen, Renee. "The Never-Ending Drug War: Obstacles to Drug War Policy Termination." In *Political Science and Politics*, vol. 45, no. 1, Jan. 2012, pp. 67-73.
- Secrest, Meryle. *Stephen Sondheim: A Life*. Vintage, 2011.
- Sheehan, Jeanne McGowan. *From Books to Broadway: The Musicalization of Literature*. 2008. Northern Illinois University, PhD Dissertation.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Dr. Jekyll's Closet." In *The Haunted Mind: The Supernatural in Victorian Literature*, edited by Elton E. Smith and Robert Haas. Scarecrow, 1999, pp. 67-88.
- Sondheim, Stephen, and Hugh Wheeler. *Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber of Fleet Street: A Musical Thriller*. Applause, 1991.
- Sondheim, Stephen. "Larger than Life: Reflections on Melodrama and *Sweeney Todd*." In *New York Literary Forum*, vol. 7, Jan. 1980, pp. 3-14.
- Stam, Robert. "Revisionist Adaptation: Transtextuality, Cross-Cultural Dialogism, and Performative Infidelities." In *The Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies*, 2020, pp. 240-50.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Tales* (1886). Edited by Roger Luckhurst, Oxford UP, 2008.
- Stiles, Anne. *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge UP, 2012.
- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula* (1897). Edited by David Rogers, Wordsworth, 2000.

Suisman, Charlie. "Cue the Pop Ballad, Warn the Critics: Immune to Savage Reviews and Box-Office Losses, Frank Wildhorn Does It Again with *Dracula*." In *The New York Times*, 15 Aug. 2004, pp. 4-27.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Book by Hugh Wheeler. Directed by Harold Prince. Starring Angela Lansbury and Len Cariou. Opened at the Uris Theater, New York City, March 1, 1979. 557 performances.

Weltman, Sharon Aronofsky. *Victorians on Broadway: Literature, Adaptation, and the Modern American Musical*. U of Virginia P, 2020.

Williamson, Milly. "Vampire Transformations: Gothic Melodrama, Sympathy and the Self." In *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy*, by Williamson, Wallflower, 2005, pp. 29-50.

Winkler, Amanda Eubanks. "Politics and the Reception of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*." In *Cambridge Opera Journal*, vol. 26, no. 3, Nov. 2014, pp. 271-87.

Wolf, Stacy. *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*. Oxford UP, 2010.

---. "Gender and Sexuality." In *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, 2011, pp. 210-24.

Workman, Christopher, and Troy Howarth. *Tome of Terror: Horror Films of the Silent Era*. Midnight Marquee P, 2016.