

WITH SHINING EYES: WATCHING AND BEING WATCHED IN SARAH WATERS'S *TIPPING THE VELVET*¹

The aim of this paper is to explore the dynamics of looking and being looked at in Sarah Waters's *Tipping the Velvet*. The analysis is theoretically framed by feminist film theory and the concept of the male gaze. According to Laura Mulvey, classic narrative cinema reflects social views on sexual difference and reaffirms the active male/passive female binary. The novel raises the issue of what happens with the gaze when the protagonists are non-heteronormative, a question further made complex by the theme of cross-dressing, which destabilizes visual gender coding and makes it unreliable. The female narrator is infatuated with a male impersonator only to become one herself, and the visual interaction that spurs their sexual relationship on does not fit neatly into Mulvey's analysis, as both the bearer of the gaze and its object are female, a woman coded as masculine. The male gaze is further deconstructed as the main female character becomes a prostitute, passing for male and working with male clients. Finally, the novel questions the controlling aspect of the gaze implicit in Mulvey's essay, as the gaze is reimagined as a potential source of power to be desired and invited.

Keywords: neo-Victorian, lesbian, scopophilia, gaze.

look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at.
John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (1972)

The analysis presented in this paper, focusing on the dynamics of looking and being looked at in Sarah Waters's debut novel *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), is informed primarily by feminist film theory. One of its seminal texts, Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), has set the ground for the exploration of the visual coding of male and female characters on film. Mulvey's analysis has been highly influential and has surpassed the limits of film theory, and its findings have been used to analyse other artistic and cultural forms, including literary works. According to Mulvey, one of the principal pleasures afforded by the cinema is that of scopophilia, erotic pleasure derived from looking at others. The cinema,

¹ Viktorija Krombholc, viktorija.krombholc@gmail.com

she argues, satisfies “a primordial wish for pleasurable looking” (1999: 836) and expresses a fascination with the human form. The cinematic engagement with the human form follows strictly gendered codes, as it reproduces the social constructions of sexual difference in terms of the active male/passive female binary. The female figure is there only to be displayed as an erotic spectacle, connoting *to-be-looked-at-ness*, while the “determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey, 1999: 837).

Mulvey argues that the female object of the gaze on film serves a double purpose: she is the object of erotic pleasure both for the male characters in the film and for the spectator in the auditorium (1999: 838). The female character herself is not an active participant in the narrative, but there merely to propel the male protagonist into action – either to punish her or to rescue her. The male figure, on the other hand, holds the power to control the events of the narrative and is therefore not an erotic object, but a point of identification for the spectator, his more perfect “screen surrogate” that provides a satisfying illusion of power as well as a way of indirectly possessing the female figure on the screen.

In line with her claim that mainstream cinema reproduces socially accepted, i.e. heteronormative, interpretations of sexual difference, Mulvey’s analysis, rather understandably, reads the gaze in heterosexual terms. The erotic pleasure derived from watching a female object is ascribed to male characters and to the spectator position which is also defined as male, or, as she explains in a later text, masculinized, regardless of the actual sex of the spectator, in a show of spectatorial transvestism (Mulvey, 1981). As such, the application of her analysis to non-normative sexual import reveals significant omissions, although it has to be said that this is at least partly dictated by her focus on mainstream Hollywood cinema. There have been, as a result, attempts to theorize the scopic positions which are absent from her analysis. These include the “female gaze” (discussed by critics such as Richard Dyer and Mary Anne Doane), dealing primarily with heterosexual female spectatorship and male objectification, and the “lesbian gaze” (as exemplified by the debate between Jackie Stacey and Teresa de Lauretis), dealing primarily with lesbian film that does not necessarily include male impersonation. None of these can provide a fully satisfactory framework for analysing the dynamics of the gaze in the context of cross-dressing.

In Mulvey’s analysis, both male and female spectator are said to identify with the gaze of the male protagonist, cast at the erotic spectacle of the woman on the screen. In Stacey’s analysis, the female spectator is said to identify with the female figure on the screen on the basis of similarity, with potentially sexual implications (as cited in Evans & Gamman, 2005). What position, then, could be occupied by a spectator casting their gaze on the masculine figure of Marlene Dietrich, bisexual and with a penchant for wearing trousers? The interpretation of the gaze in that case will heavily depend on the particular constellation of the spectator’s sex and their sexuality. The famous scene in *Morocco* (1930, dir. Josef von Sternberg), where Dietrich’s character performs as a cabaret singer in a tuxedo, a top hat and

a bow tie, in which she kisses a female member of the audience, yet is romantically involved with a male protagonist, surely requires a more nuanced approach to the interpretation of the (male?) gaze than, for instance, Marilyn Monroe's exhibitionist femininity. It would seem that the aforementioned theoretical frameworks fall short in accounting for this particular example.

The goal of the analysis presented here is to explore how the gaze works in a non-heteronormative literary context further complicated by the theme of cross-dressing and masquerade. This means that the female protagonists may be the bearer of the gaze cast at other female figures, coded as feminine *or* masculine, or that they may be gazed at as male, by both male and female characters. Furthermore, unlike the passive submission to (or unawareness of) the gaze turned upon the female figure in Mulvey's analysis, the gaze in Waters's novel is constructed as potentially enjoyable and actively sought. In this way, it not only deconstructs the active male/passive female binary, but also questions the very existence of such a binary. As Evans and Gamman note, before establishing what "male gaze" and "woman as object" refer to, we need to establish what exactly is meant by "male" and "woman" (Evans & Gamman, 2005: 38).

Scopophilic pleasure in *Tipping the Velvet* is essential to its narrative development and to its protagonist's sexual awakening. Described as an ordinary girl living an uneventful life, Nancy begins her transformation with a visit to the theatre, where she catches her first glimpse not only of Kitty Butler, a male impersonator she comes to idolize, but also of her secret desires and her future calling. Very early on, Nancy establishes herself as the one who does the looking, and the theatre as the site of scopophilic pleasure: "girls like me were made to sit in the gallery, dark and anonymous, and watch [the girls on the stage]" (Waters, 2012: 8). At the same time, the performers are not the only ones exposed to the eyes of others: "You sit in a box, and make sure the audience gets a good look at you" (Waters, 2012: 16). The two seats Nancy likes best are in the front row of the gallery, because from there she can look not only at the performers, but also at the spatial arrangement of the theatre as well as the other members of the audience, whose faces she marvels to see, and is glad "to know [her] own to be like theirs". She imagines them to resemble "that of a demon at some hellish revue" (Waters, 2012: 9). In this way, the fourth wall is broken even before the performance begins, and the distance between the stage and the audience is replaced by approximation and identification. Furthermore, the opportunity for watching afforded by the theatre is not simply a source of pleasure, sexual or other, but a way of establishing or confirming one's identity. Nancy is aware of herself as a spectator, and finds assurance in the fact that her face is like those of other spectators, a fact established by looking and being looked at, which echoes Kaja Silverman's assertion that "[to] 'be' is in effect to 'be seen'" (Silverman, 1996: 133).

Nancy's falling in love with Kitty is sparked by voyeuristic pleasure afforded by Kitty's performance. She falls in love primarily with the act and Kitty's onstage persona. She revisits the performance almost compulsively, to "gaze at Miss Butler

to [her] heart's content" (Waters, 2012: 15). The dynamics of looking that shape Kitty's performance subvert the classical opposition of male gaze and its female object as outlined by Mulvey. Kitty performs as a woman in men's clothing, subjecting herself to the gaze of the audience and Nancy's gaze in particular: "Like me, my neighbours all sat up, and gazed at her with shining eyes" (Waters, 2012: 13). However, the typically passive role assigned to the object of the gaze is absent; instead, Kitty turns her own gaze back to the audience in search of a pretty girl to give a flower to, a gallantry Nancy very much wishes to be the object of: "All at once, however, she raised her eyes and gazed at us over her knuckles (...). Very swiftly she stepped once again to the front of the stage, and gazed into the stalls for the prettiest girl" (Waters, 2012: 14).

The pleasure of watching Kitty is a private matter for Nancy and is disrupted by the presence of others. After several solitary visits to the theatre, Nancy goes to see the show with her family, and the experience is markedly different: "I could hardly bear for them to look upon her at all; worse still, I thought I couldn't endure to have them look upon *me*, as I watched her" (Waters, 2012: 23). One reason for this is her fear that her family might notice the "secret flame" of her infatuation. Another, however, is that the visual spectacle of Kitty's performance seems to be diminished when shared with other spectators: "I felt horribly far from Miss Butler that night. (...) I felt as though I was watching her through a pane of glass..." (Waters, 2012: 23). In addition, instead of occupying her usual place in the box, Nancy is sitting with her family in the gallery, so when Kitty finally casts her gaze towards the box, the opportunity to be its object is lost to Nancy and the concomitant pleasure is delayed: "If I had only been in my box tonight, I would have had her eyes upon me!" (Waters, 2012: 24)

When visual rapport is finally established during a subsequent visit, Nancy receives a rose, Kitty's token of affection for a chosen girl in the audience. The contact is described in terms of romantic courtship: "every time her gaze swept the crowded hall it seemed to brush my own, and dally with it a little longer than it should"; "[s]he held my flustered gaze with her own more certain one, and made me a little bow" (Waters, 2012: 26). The performance is followed by a meeting in Kitty's dressing room. As Kitty turns to a mirror to remove her makeup and holds Nancy's gaze in the glass, Nancy finds it "somehow easier to talk to her reflection than to her face" (Waters, 2012: 32), which might be read as a manifestation of the uncertainty she feels regarding her newly discovered passion. However, female contact via the looking glass, as Barbara Creed has suggested, is used as a conventional signal of female homosexual desire in visual art, dating back to the notion put forth by turn-of-the-century medical writing that there is a connection between female narcissism, sexually expressed as auto-eroticism, and lesbianism (1999: 120-121). As Creed notes, conventional depictions of the lesbian narcissist portray her as feminine, and her position with regards to the male gaze is an ambiguous one, as she invites the gaze of the male spectator only to keep him at a tantalising distance. On the other hand, as Annamarie Jagose has noted, the

mirror can be a functional model of the lesbian gaze because it expresses the reciprocity and isomorphism implied by a lesbian couple (1994: 61). In placing a male impersonator in the position of the lesbian narcissist, Waters both reproduces these artistic conventions (Nancy will eventually become Kitty's mirror image once she joins the act), and subverts them (they are not fashioned to provoke male sexual interest, but female). The mirror imagery also reflects a wider neo-Victorian concern with mirrors, reflections, doubles and inverted images, the issues of original and copy, authenticity and performance, which tie in with the issues raised by the gender bending effected by the novel's protagonists.

The fact that Kitty averts her eyes from Nancy immediately after their first sexual encounter foreshadows Kitty's inability to come to terms with her homosexual desire and her decision to reject it in favour of a socially sanctioned position of Walter Bliss's wife. Similarly, in an earlier scene, after Nancy becomes Kitty's dresser, she watches the performance from the wing of the theatre for the first time. After Kitty returns from the stage, she seizes Nancy's arm but seems unseeing, and Nancy finds herself "jealous of the crowd that was her lover" (Waters, 2012: 37). Kitty's betrayal of Nancy will follow the same trajectory, as she will cast her aside for the sake of her theatrical success. The success will, however, prove fickle and ironically dependent on the very quality she strives to suppress, as confirmed by her act with Walter. Even though Nancy perceives herself as Kitty's echo, her shadow, her foil, their double act sets them up more or less as equals, whereas the act with Walter has Kitty dress as a child, reflecting the imbalance of their marriage, and of the heterosexual norm. In their relationship, Walter is the principal figure of authority, deciding on the course of Kitty's career. For all his seeming kindness, he is, after all, the one who controls the finances as the agent to Kitty and Nancy.

In becoming Kitty's partner, Nancy shares with her a secret language of glances and touches, which remains invisible to the audience. This echoes Karen Hollinger's analysis of what she terms "ambiguous lesbian film" (2012: 128), in which the interaction between two (typically feminine) female protagonists is coded in such a way that it produces in the spectator a kind of uncertainty, a ghosting effect that is associated with literary representations of lesbians as well. According to Hollinger, the subtlety with which lesbian desire is represented in this particular genre is readable enough to the lesbian viewer, yet remains invisible, and therefore non-threatening, to the heterosexual viewer. The scene in which secret language used by Kitty and Nancy is finally decoded and exposed marks the decline of their relationship, as the burden of visibility and public judgment proves more than Kitty is willing to accept. Their secret is brought to light by an outraged (and drunken) male spectator, confirming Creed's assertion that the sight of the lesbian double is threatening in its suggestion of complete male exclusion (1999: 122).

After Kitty's relationship with Walter is discovered, as well as their plan to exclude Nancy from the act, Kitty's desire for secrecy is explained as the desire

to hide from the eyes of the public: “We’re not a couple of scullery-maids, to do as we please and have no one notice it. We are known; we are looked at—” (Waters, 2012: 170). Her reaction is in sharp contrast with Florence’s outrage at Nancy’s suggestion that they might hide their relationship from Florence’s older brother, who is unaccepting of his sister’s homosexuality. Kitty’s comment about scullery-maids sounds misguided, however, considering the story of Zena, Diana’s maid, who is sent to the reformatory after being accused of kissing another servant. Nevertheless, the idea that different classes are allowed different levels of sexual licence is one Waters will again deal with in her second novel, *Affinity*. She seems to suggest that the degree of invisibility afforded the working class provides greater freedom to explore non-normative sexualities.

Visual proximity to Kitty provided by their joint performance is not the only reason the stage holds such an attraction for Nancy. She finds pleasure in being the object of the audience’s gaze, but it also seems to leave her uneasy, as she can never be certain how she is perceived by others and whether her sexuality is readable to them:

What astonished and thrilled me now was the thought that girls might look at me at all – the thought that in every darkened hall there might be one or two female hearts that beat exclusively for me, one or two pairs of eyes that lingered, perhaps immodestly, over my face and figure and suit. Did they know why they looked? Did they know what they looked for? Above all, when they saw me stride across the stage in trousers, singing of girls whose eyes I had sent winking, whose hearts I had broken, *what did they see?* Did they see that – something – that I saw in them? (Waters, 2012: 129)

The theatre is not the only site for visual enjoyment. The city of London is constructed both as an object of Nancy’s gaze and a gallery where people in the streets, Nancy included, are observed by others. When Walter decides Kitty’s impersonations need to be perfected, he instructs her and Nancy to “go about the city and *study the men!*” (...) ‘*Scrutinise ‘em!*’ (Waters, 2012: 83). So they do, and gazing at men in the street makes them acquainted with the city itself (“we seemed to learn the ways and manners of the whole unruly city”), but also seems to add to their intimacy (“we strolled and gazed and grew ever more sisterly and content”, Waters, 2012: 86). After all, their first kiss is shared not in the theatre, but on the bank of the Thames.

After her relationship with Kitty comes to an end, Nancy walks the streets of London again, this time as a single girl, and finds she is vulnerable to unwanted male attention, made manifest by the stares that she receives: “I was a solitary girl, in a city that favoured sweethearts and gentlemen; a girl in a city where girls walked only to be gazed at” (Waters, 2012: 191). In this case, being looked at spells sexual danger and this is the principal reason she decides to walk the city in men’s clothing. She tries out her costume expecting to be immediately exposed, but finds that “the glances did not settle on [her]: they only slithered past [her], to the girls

behind” (Waters, 2012: 194). The costume enables her “to walk freely about [London] at last – to walk as a boy, as a handsome boy in a well-sewn suit, whom the people stared after only to envy, never to mock” (Waters, 2012: 195).

Upon her arrival, London is revealed to Nancy as “the greatest Temple of Variety” (Waters, 2012: 66). Later on, in her renting days, she learns that not all of London’s variety is “visible to the casual eye”, and that certain “pieces of the city (...) kept themselves hidden” (Waters, 2012: 200). She discovers a complex visual communication system used to connect these pieces together when she is approached by her renting customers, who cast “deliberate” glances her way. Being the object of these men’s visual interest is different:

I had first donned trousers to avoid men’s eyes; to feel myself the object of *these* men’ gazes, however, these men who thought I was like them, *like that* – well, that was not to be pestered; it was to be, in some queer way, *revenged*. (Waters, 2012: 201).

During Nancy’s renting days, her exposure to the eyes of others is thus constructed as a source of power rather than a threat, but it seems to be made possible only by means of the gender inversion her masquerade effects. The power itself is not enough, however, as Nancy is longing for someone who could witness the success of her impersonations: “My one regret was that, though I was daily giving such marvellous performances, they had no audience. (...) I would long for just one eye – just one! – to be fixed upon our couplings” (Waters, 2012: 206). Her street impersonations are associated with her music-hall career, so that she thinks of the streets and passages as a stage. In fact, in comparison to her new environment, the actual stage she once performed on strikes her as unreal. The theatres become spots for cruising customers, yet they remain sites of watching and being watched, a stage for a different sort of performance.

“Walking and watching, indeed are that world’s keynotes: you walk, and let yourself be looked at; you watch, until you find a face or a figure that you fancy” (Waters, 2012: 201).

As pointed out by Griselda Pollock, there is a connection between walking and watching, embodied in the figure of the flâneur. According to Pollock, the changes to the city in the nineteenth century resulted in its zoning and stratification, with the city centre becoming the primary site for display, while labour processes lost some of their visibility (2003: 93). For Pollock, the change is embodied in the figure of the flâneur, who walks freely around the city “consuming the sights through a controlling but rarely acknowledged gaze, directed as much at other people as at the goods for sale” (2003: 94). As a renter, Nancy is a kind of inverted flâneur figure (a mirror image of it?), in that she is offering the goods rather than inspecting them. In line with Pollock’s assertion that the flâneur is a masculine figure, Nancy discovers a freedom to walk and to watch previously not afforded to her in her female incarnation. What is more, as Nancy watches and is watched

in turn by the interested gentlemen, the people and the goods Pollock refers to are conflated into one and the same sight.

Contrary to Mulvey's understanding of the gaze as male, the truly controlling, objectifying gaze that will strip Nancy of her independence is that of a woman. On the night of her encounter with Diana Lethaby, Diana's presence is made manifest through Nancy's awareness of being observed. Once in Diana's carriage, Nancy learns that she has been the object of her interest for a while, and she finds the thought both unsettling and arousing:

It made me horribly uneasy to think she really had been observing me, all those times... And yet, was it not just such an audience that I had longed for? (...) The idea that she had watched me went direct to the fork of my drawers and made me wet. (Waters, 2012: 237)

Once in Diana's villa, the two climb a flight of stairs together, in a symbolic enactment of sexual intercourse in Freudian terms. To underscore the sexual nature of the ascent, the stairs are likened to "the interior whorls of a shell" (Waters, 2012: 238), echoing Waters's use of pearls as a sexual signifier (O'Callaghan, 2012). The end of Nancy's stay at Diana's will be marked by an inverted image of this scene, in another instance of mirroring. After Diana and the party walk in on her and Zena having sex, they will all descend the stairs together "in a great jagged spiral, like a tableau of the damned heading for hell" (Waters, 2012: 325).

As Diana's "boy", Nancy spends her days looking at herself in the many mirrors in the house and being looked at by Diana, her housekeeper and her guests. The mirrors feed into Nancy's narcissism, which enables Diana to style her as she pleases and use her as a vehicle for her own sexual gratification: "[Diana] had been watching me as I gazed at myself – I had been too taken with my own good looks to notice her" (Waters, 2012: 270). At Diana's club Nancy attracts the gaze of all the women in the room, who look on and study "all [her] movements, all [her] parts" (Waters, 2012: 275). She revels in their attention and seems to invite the gaze directed towards her. Styled to Diana's liking and displayed for the pleasure of her guests, Nancy comes close to the erotic spectacle as outlined in Mulvey's analysis. However, the spectacle she poses is coded as male, not only by virtue of the men's clothing she dons, but also by the bulge in her trousers, a rolled up glove, which she gladly shows off. Mulvey argues that the woman's "visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation" (Mulvey, 1999: 837). Perhaps this is why Nancy's stay in Diana's house, which forms the climax of visual import in the novel, is described as timeless, symbolically represented by the wristwatch that shows the wrong time and is therefore merely decorative, another addition to Nancy's stylization: "I had been wearing it as a kind of bracelet, only" (Waters, 2012: 285).

In her analysis of Hitchcock's oeuvre, Mulvey points out that the male figures casting the gaze are ones of authority, either institutional (e.g. a policeman) or

financial. Similarly, Nancy's objectification is greatest at the hands of the well-off, well-respected Diana. A philanthropist and a supporter of the Suffrage, Diana is exposed as sadistic, but also hypocritical (what Mulvey calls "true perversion barely concealed under a shallow mask of ideological correctness", 1999: 841), as she rescues Zena the maid from the reformatory only because she is tickled by the scandal of how she got there. Nancy's purpose at Diana's is to provide erotic stimulation, both in visual and physical terms. She is displayed and admired as if she were a piece of art, a walking statue, to which she is explicitly likened. Maria, one of Diana's companions, calls her a splendid "find", as if she were talking about "a statue or a clock" (Waters, 2012: 277). For Diana's birthday, Nancy gives her a statue of a Greek youth as a gift, but also attends the party dressed as the same character, aligning herself with the statue, merging with it, becoming part of the gift.

The climax of sexually charged gazing is acted out at Diana's birthday party. Another opportunity for Nancy to be displayed, the party has a distinctly Oriental ring to it, with one of the guests dressed as a Turkish pasha, and the house decorated with a Turkish rug. The women discuss the physiognomies of Eastern nations and even have an idea of inspecting Zena for an enlarged clitoris, in a move to reiterate the actual exhibition of Saartje Baartman, "the Hottentot Venus", in the nineteenth century. The sex scene with Nancy and Zena, after they are banished from the party, replicates the arrangement before a mirror from earlier scenes, where one woman is being watched looking at herself in the mirror. Their unsanctioned use of Diana's dildo is unpardonable because it emasculates Diana, castrates her as it were, robs her of the phallic power she wields over them ("That prick is mine. These little sluts have stolen it!", Waters, 2012: 323). One of the guests sees the scene as an opportunity for pornographic stimulation ("Can't we see them fuck again?" Waters, 2012: 322), and another invites the rest of the party to watch as Nancy and Zena are thrown out. Even though Mulvey notes that the theatre and the cinema are different in the way they treat visual content, the dominant theatrical theme of the novel is complemented by the cinematic technique Waters applies: explicit details and fragmented body parts she zooms in on echo camera close-ups of Dietrich's legs in Sternberg's films: "I saw what [Diana] must see – the open trunk, the tangle of limbs upon the bed, the pumping, leather-strapped arse" (Waters, 2012: 322).

The final stage of Nancy's *Bildung* is played out with Florence the socialist. When Florence and Nancy first meet, Florence thinks her a male voyeur and is relieved when she later finds that she was observed by a woman. Her sense of relief is doubly misleading, both as it is later discovered that Florence is homosexual herself and because Nancy *does* derive pleasure both from watching Florence *and* being thought a voyeur. But for that initial visual exchange, however, Nancy's life with Florence is much less markedly visual. Initially, Nancy finds Florence rather plain and looking at her provides little scopophilic pleasure. In the scene where she finds Florence dishevelled and asleep and is aroused by the sight of her,

Florence is unable to return the gaze, and Nancy satisfies herself with merely looking and then leaving the room.

The gaze Florence turns to Nancy is not sexual, but compassionate. Led to believe that Nancy has lost a baby, Florence seems infinitely touched by the sight of her holding Cyril, Florence's protégé: "when I looked at Florence again I saw that her eyes were upon me, and her expression (...) was strange and almost sad, but also desperately tender" (Waters, 2012: 372). There seem to be no mirrors in Florence's house; instead, the focus of visual interest is on photographs: the one of Eleanor Marx, a gift from Lilian, Florence's former sweetheart who passed away, and later on the one of Nancy and Kitty at the music-hall. The purpose of the photographs is not pornographic, but sentimental, and Nancy's jealousy of Lilian is not sexual, but emotional: "I would have traded [all the pleasures of Diana's house], at that moment, for the chance to have been in Lilian's place at that dull lecture, and had Florence's hazel eyes upon me, fascinated!" (Waters, 2012: 399) Even though Lilian attracts Florence's attention immediately ("I saw her at once, and couldn't take my eyes from her. She was so very – *interesting* looking", Waters, 2012: 393), her fascination is ultimately provoked by a clever question Lilian asks, not by her *interesting* appearance, and their relationship remains non-sexual. Nancy gazes at the photograph of Eleanor Marx "until the face began to swim before [her] eyes" (Waters, 2012: 401), imagining Lilian in Marx's features. Her fascination with the photo reveals both her need to access Lilian visually, in order to grasp the source of Florence's fascination with her, and the fact that Lilian remains forever visually inaccessible. The ending of the novel, at the Workers' Rally, reads as a visual catalogue of Nancy's lovers, as all the women from her past reappear and afford her another look at them. After having a chance to survey them once more, Nancy declares her love for Florence, and kisses her, "careless of whether anybody watched or not" (Waters, 2012: 472).

With its focus on masquerade and the performance of gender, *Tipping the Velvet* deconstructs the heteronormative male/female binary, which in turn influences the scopic dynamics between its gender-bending characters. The characters' cross-dressing destabilizes the usual dynamics of looking, as the gaze is mostly cast by female characters onto other female characters, who may bear markers of femininity and masculinity alike. The male gaze, in turn, is cast on a female passing for male. In this way, the narrative problematizes the gaze as exclusively male, and its object as exclusively female. Following Mulvey's argument that the spectator in the cinema identifies with the male bearer of the gaze on film, the reader can be said to identify with the characters who cast the gaze, and the effects of such identification may be said to parallel the pleasure the spectator feels when watching the erotic spectacle on the screen. This could mean that the novel's focus on the visual is there for the sake of titillation. Alternatively, the erotic content might be intended to provoke awareness of the voyeurism implied in the reader's position, a point which neo-Victorian fiction seems to draw attention to over and over again.

Viktorija Krombholz

SA SJAJEM U OČIMA: POSMATRAČ I POSMATRANI U *USNAMA OD SOMOTA*
SARE VOTERS

REZIME

Rad se usredsređuje na kompleksnu prirodu pogleda u kontekstu lezbejskih veza u kojima je prisutan element rodno markiranog prerusavanja i složene vizuelne dinamike romana *Usne od somota* Sare Voters. Teorijski okvir analize zasnovan je na feminističkim teorijama filma, ponajviše na analizi muškog pogleda koju je Lora Malvi provela u studiji “Vizuelni užitek i filmski narativ” (1975). Analiza Lore Malvi, kako su docniji istraživači ukazali, ne uspeva da objasni posmatračke pozicije koje nisu heteronormativne, te ostaje u granicama heteroseksualne binarne podele na muško i žensko. Vizuelna dinamika *Usana od somota* intenzivnije se usložnjava usled destabilizacije poimanja roda koja proishodi iz teme rodno markiranog prerusavanja i glumljenja muškarca. Vlasnik pogleda nije više, ni isključivo ni primarno, samo muškarac; štaviše, najagresivnije posmatranje dolazi od strane žena koje svoju pažnju usredsređuju na seksualno ambivalentnu figuru – ženu u muškoj odeći. Pozicije aktivnog i pasivnog koje Lora Malvi koristi u analizi takođe su dekonstruisane: budući muška prostitutka, glavna protagonistkinja je zaštićena od objektivističkog muškog pogleda i pretnje seksualnim nasiljem koja je upućena ženama. Umesto toga, pozicija žene kao posmatranog objekta određena je kao pozicija moći a vizuelna pažnja se više priziva nego što se izbegava. Rad takođe istražuje prostorne dimenzije posmatranja, identifikujući pozorište i ulice Londona kao mesta označena markiranim vizuelnim uticajem. Figura tzv. flanera (flâneur) dobija novu dimenziju u liku prostitutke koja je prerusena u muškarca, i koja krstari ulicama grada dok posmatra i dok je posmatraju.

Ključne reči: neoviktorijanski, lezbejsko, skopofilija, pogled.

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