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UDC: 316.722(410)"19"
821.111.09"18"
DOI: 10.19090/gff.v48i3.2384
Original research paper

NOSTALGIA AND PERVERSION IN NEO-VICTORIAN NARRATIVES

While the link between nostalgia and neo-Victorian interest in the nineteenth century has been much discussed and largely acknowledged in neo-Victorian scholarship, the precise nature of this association, its ideological implications, and, most of all, critical interpretations of individual instances of these nostalgic revisitations remain multifaceted, complex, and often contentious. Readings of neo-Victorian texts as cultural memory artefacts or instances of Svetlana Boym's reflective nostalgia are certainly valid, yet these approaches do not account for a specific brand of neo-Victorian narratives which Marie-Louise Kohlke describes as "reading for defilement": a clear insistence on imagining the Victorian age as a den of depravity, rife with shocking obscenities and even more shocking crime, as the Victorian past is posited as a fetishised playground for deviance and voyeurism, often relying on Gothic tropes. This fascination with imagined Victorian filth is particularly interesting when considered in light of the global sway towards conservative politics. The neo-Victorian setting has also been approached through the theoretical lens of John Urry's "tourist gaze", as an environment offering "out-of-the-ordinary" experiences for nostalgic consumption. This paper will therefore seek to contribute to this ongoing critical debate by exploring the various facets of nostalgia in this subset of neo-Victorian narratives.

Keywords: neo-Victorian, nostalgia, perversion, sexsation, pornography, Gothic, tourist gaze

When it comes to neo-Victorian narratives, nostalgia is a key reference point. In one of the early readings of neo-Victorian fiction, Christian Gutleben approaches such narratives as expressions of postmodern nostalgic *Zeitgeist*: "By resuscitating the voices and principles of Victorian fiction, the contemporary novel not only displays its own nostalgia, it also makes clear, through its continuing success, the nostalgia of its readership." (2001: 46) Writing from a postmodernist perspective, Gutleben aligns such literary nostalgia with a conservative and regressive stance, as an instance of aesthetic pastiche devoid of parodic subversion. However, the exact nature of nostalgia when it comes to neo-Victorian texts is less than obvious and can take various forms, where ideological subversiveness does not always translate into

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a rejection of Victorian narrative or aesthetic conventions. Whatever the reason and motivation behind the fictional return to the nineteenth century, the implications of engaging with the past are far from straightforward. Whether these narratives indulge in aesthetic or stylistic recreation of period atmosphere, whether they seek to reposition the narrative perspective in favour of marginalised groups and historical blind spots or write back to mainstream culture, canonical works and normative systems, or whether they try to create a salacious version of the past for present enjoyment, the relationship with the past is never innocently neutral or simply concerned with aesthetics. Even in instances where the engagement with the past has the goal of recreating the style of a certain period without mounting any kind of critique, this is never done in an ideological vacuum, and is always associated with a specific position with regard to certain political or social concerns. Even those narratives that simply seek to offer an imitation of the past, without questioning it at all, also implicitly endorse a specific political or ideological stance – a desire for a simpler time with its attendant distribution of gender, race or class privilege, a call for a return of a more traditional family structure, an emphasis on a specific brand of work ethics, "a mourning . . . for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values" (Boym, 2001: 8). While the past may be increasingly configured as a series of visual styles made available for consumption, its aesthetic reproduction also entails a set of signifiers that signal specific cultural, political and ideological meanings.

One possible framework for approaching the attitudes towards the past expressed in neo-Victorian narratives can be found in the writing of Svetlana Boym. Boym describes nostalgia as "a romance with one's own fantasy" (2001: xiii), and the quote captures the dynamics inherent in neo-Victorian approaches to nostalgia – the projection of contemporary perspectives, concepts, needs and desires onto the past, creating a version of the past that expresses contemporary anxieties, desires and tensions and thus caters to presents needs. The nature of these needs can be wildly different – it can be a fictional return to a more conservative time, a journey back to correct injustices, omissions and erasures, or a trip to the past as a playground to satisfy unlicensed fantasies and desires that have to be projected and displaced somewhere else, for whichever reason. Notably, Boym's book was published in 2001, at the cusp of the new postmillennial age and in the heyday of neo-Victorian revisitations. Even though Boym is concerned with a different cultural context (her exploration is focused mainly on postcommunist societies), it is suggestive of a broader cultural interest in the complex relationship between the past and the present. The turn of the millennium brought to light the many similarities between

contemporary anxieties and Victorian concerns – changing views on gender identity and gender roles, rapid scientific breakthroughs and the revolution in the digital industries, neo-colonial interventions and the troubled relationship with the global East. The impact of those developments can be discerned in the striking backlash they provoked, as well as the rightward political and ideological turn that has swept across the world in the recent years, relying, in many instances, on highly romanticised visions of the past that promise straightforward answers to the ills of the present, which are reframed as a consequence of greater civil freedoms. Boym's writing thus offers a way of framing these cultural narratives as reactions to or reflections of specific political and ideological agendas. Whichever it is, the fictional return to the past satisfies a present need or urge; even in the case of those narratives that seek to provide a corrective to the Victorian omissions or occlusions and articulate marginal perspectives, by narrativising women's experiences, portraying working-class lives, or representing racial and sexual minorities, the motive is rooted in a markedly contemporary awareness of the importance of these issues, in and for the present context. In this respect, the return to the past is not simply motivated by the need to rectify past oppressions, but is also driven by the need to strengthen and uphold present-day liberalism by providing minority experience with historical depth and a genealogy. This need can be seen as a reflection of the inclusivity and nuance of contemporary culture, but it also speaks of a deep-rooted anxiety that the hard-won battles for civil rights need to be solidified and reinforced. The fact that this anxiety is more than justified is repeatedly confirmed across the globe: the recent historic overturning of Roe v Wade in the United States is perhaps the most devastating example, but by no means an isolated one.

Boym's writing distinguishes between restorative and reflective nostalgia, and it is along those lines that some of the key typologies of fictional recreations of the nineteenth century have been drawn as well. For Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, novels which are simply set in the nineteenth century are not neo-Victorian, since they lack critical engagement, and they can be said to align with Boym's restorative nostalgia, which "does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition" (2001: xviii). While retaining the broad ideological framework of patriarchal, racial and class-based hierarchies, these narratives offer a more palatable, accessible, *less boring* version of the great Victorian novel. As Daisy Goodwin writes for *The New York Times*, "reading *Belgravia* [by Julian Fellowes] is rather like visiting a modern re-creation of a Victorian house – every cornice molding is perfect – but it's a Victorian house with 21st-century plumbing and Wi-Fi. It's for anyone who has tried to read a 19th-century novel and become bored, say, with the

demanding philosophizing in *Middlemarch* or the social misery of *Oliver Twist*." (Goodwin, "Missing 'Downton Abbey'?", *The New York Times*). While Goodwin's observation echoes Boym's characterisation of restorative nostalgia as an attempt at "a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" (2001: xviii), it also highlights the selectiveness inherent to this process of reconstruction, where only certain aspects of the past are recreated, those seen as desirable or convenient. Goodwin's examples are practical, but they reveal the underlying fact that the return to the nineteenth century is rarely simply aesthetically motivated – rather, it is a nostalgic transposition to a lost home tailored to the needs of those who seek to resurrect it, reflective of their vested interests or privileges, and suggestive of a specific ideological framework. On the other hand, for Heilmann and Llewellyn, neo-Victorian writing approaches the past with the intention of challenging its values and beliefs, by highlighting perspectives that were previously marginalised, or fully erased, often operating on the periphery in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, nation. As such, it finds its counterpart in Boym's reflective nostalgia, which goes against monolithic historical narratives and has the capacity to "present an ethical and creative challenge" (2001: xviii), favours individual histories, and is "ironic, inconclusive and fragmentary" (2001: 50). In Boym's words, "restorative nostalgia protects the absolute truth, while reflective nostalgia calls it into doubt" (2001: xviii), which can be read alongside Heilmann and Llewellyn's definition of neo-Victorian narratives as texts that are "in some respect . . . *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (2010: 4). These readings can, in part, be seen as an explanation for the fact that so much of neo-Victorian writing tends to be sexually provocative, as it seeks to act as a liberating project, a corrective narrative that will reinscribe sexual and gender difference or female sexual pleasure into a social and historical context which simply did not allow space for them.

The very idea that the Victorians knew about certain sexual practices, let alone enjoyed them, is very much at odds with our perception of the period. In our contemporary vocabulary, to be Victorian is to be prudish, sexually both repressed and ignorant, morally both strict and hypocritical. For this reason, the inclusion of sexual content into a Victorian setting creates an impression of liberating the Victorian text from its own repressive mores. In the words of Laura Helen Marks, the act of "porning, of inserting sex into a well-known narrative deemed to coy to include the dirty bits, asserts a critical intervention by highlighting the perceived gaps and silences in the original text" (2018: 44). Such interventions inevitably add a narrative layer of erotic provocation as well, since they play into pornographic conventions of

staging and violating "private, secret, and forbidden sexualities as a way of generating erotic excitement" (Marks 2018: 25), making the Victorian era "a primary tender spot for modern pornography" (33). The truth is that, contrary to the popular perception of the Victorians, the Victorian age witnessed an ex(xx)plosion of pornographic material, enabled by new technologies, the development of print culture and visual technologies, which were "no sooner invented than they were put to work representing carnal lust", transforming sexually explicit content that existed prior to the nineteenth century into "'pornography' proper" (Marks, 2018: 39), and mirroring the "exorbitant amount of sexually explicit material available today" (Hernández, & Romero Ruiz, 2017: 4). In her landmark study of the pornographic reinterpretations of the Victorian age, Marks contends that "[t]he existence of a vast body of nineteenth-century pornography conflicts with our understanding of the repressed Victorian, generating a dual vision of the Victorians as both perverse and repressed" (2018: 59). However, in many cases neo-Victorian narratives are not simply racy and titillating, but truly transgressive, thematising issues that still remain taboo, such as incest or paedophilia. This is, in fact, extremely common; in an interview with the BBC about his TV series, *Taboo*, Tom Hardy notes that "[i]t's not a period drama until someone gets naked and covers themselves in blood" (Holden, 2017). Hardy's production itself hardly shies away from provocation – the protagonist is engaged in an incestuous relationship with his half-sister, rips out the throat of one of his enemies with his teeth, disembowels another. The extent to which neo-Victorian narratives revel in portraying deviance, degradation and debauchery suggests that the intention is not simply to reconstruct the era (along with the attendant ideological implications), or deconstruct it in order to show what is missing from the original cultural narratives and thus provide their more authentic versions. In many instances, the portrayal of violence, crime or other kinds of deviance in neo-Victorian narratives is so markedly excessive and transgressive that it translates to goreporn, while portrayals of sexuality routinely include sadomasochism, incestuous relationships, sexualisation of children, necrophilia, and other extreme transgressions. Sexually explicit content is also routinely present in narratives whose critical drive is limited or ambiguous, blurring the line between liberation and (s)exploitation, between representing difference and outright voyeurism. In this sense, neo-Victorianism expresses two conflicting drives – to challenge problematic aspects of the past, but also to take pleasure precisely in those aspects.

For these reasons, the complex relationship between nostalgia and transgressive visions of the past has been at the centre of neo-Victorian scholarship, most notably in the writing of Marie-Louise Kohlke. Kohlke has proven to be a

seminal scholarly voice in exploring these tensions, through her critical figurations of the links between nostalgia and trauma, and her explorations of the tendency to imagine the past as a site of degradation and violence. In her analysis of the subgenre of the neo-Victorian trauma novel, Kohlke identifies the "spectre of 'perverse nostalgia', a sort of retrospective yearning not for imagined certainties of the past but for the past's crises of violent extremity" (2009: 27). While neo-Victorian narratives of violence can offer a degree of reassurance to the readers "that they live in more civilised times and societies, where such outrages would not be tolerated and likely to occur" (27), they also frequently reveal uncomfortable parallels and convergences with the past. In addition, their frequency inevitably leads to ethical questions about the contemporary thirst for violent, transgressive or degrading content; as noted by Gutleben, "the emphasis on the ill-treatment of women, homosexuals or the lower classes is not at all shocking or seditious *today*; on the contrary, it is precisely what the general public wants to read" (2001: 11). This demand is particularly prominent when it comes to narratives of sexuality, as they go beyond simply reinscribing normative sexual desire into a past perceived as sexually repressed and unenlightened, such as those that can be found in A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1991), or reconstructing alternative sexual histories of the period that focus on non-normative sexualities, seen in the writing of Sarah Waters. Waters's work itself suggests a version of neo-Victorian sexuality that is far from vanilla, not simply by virtue of portraying lesbian relationships, but by playing with images of BDSM, prostitution or orgies, among other things. In *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), the protagonist Nan King goes to the streets as a cross-dressing rent "boy", gets involved with a rich woman who introduces her to her leather strap-on, and her gentlest act of lovemaking, with her final lover Florence, includes fisting "up to the wrist" (2012: 428). In *Affinity* (1999), the séance is a ruse for sexually charged encounters, and the figure of the medium portrayed using images of bondage and submission – tied to a chair and wearing a choker, chanting the mantra "*May I be used*" (2008: 261). In *Fingersmith* (2002), one of the female protagonists is exposed to her uncle's pornographic library, containing every imaginable obscenity, at the age of thirteen, which makes her "as worldly as the grossest rakes of fiction" (2003: 203). In neo-Victorian narratives, the reader therefore discovers a version of the past that is not only far from sexually inexperienced or demure, but also sexually transgressive even by today's standards. This has the effect of disturbing both the impression of distance from the past and the possibilities for identification with it, as the Victorians are recast as engaging in activities that may be perceived as contemporary and thus familiar, but their highly

transgressive nature reinstates a sense of difference, both from more conventional contemporary practices, but also from our established perceptions of the Victorians.

Marie-Louise Kohlke has variously termed this obsession of neo-Victorian narratives with sexual excess as "neo-Victorian sexsation" (2008), "reading for defilement" (2008: 55), "literary striptease" (53), the "wet dream of the Victorian age" (68), and, perhaps most tellingly, New Orientalism (67). In Kohlke's words, "the neo-Victorian novel exoticises, eroticises, and seeks to penetrate the tantalising hidden recesses of the nineteenth century by staging a retrospective imperialism" (62). While for the Victorians the Orient represented a kind of event horizon of illicit desire, a dark, exotic place that is both irresistibly alluring and decidedly inferior, that needs to be both sexually conquered and salvaged from primitivism, where in fact it acted as a stage for the projection of the repressed, the Victorian age, ironically, has now come to serve the same function for our age, with temporal, rather than spatial displacement of desire. Similarly, Boym speaks of "the nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space" (2001: xv). Kohlke further argues that

> [i]n one sense, we extract politically incorrect pleasure from what has become inadmissible or ethically unimaginable as a focus of desire in our own time. We thus enjoy neo-Victorian fiction at least in part to feel debased or outraged, to revel in degradation, *reading for defilement*. By projecting illicit and unmentionable desires onto the past, we conveniently reassert our own supposedly enlightened stance towards sexuality and social progress.
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> In another sense, however, the twenty/twenty-first century proliferation of sex clubs and prostitution, increases in global sex tourism, sex trade, and sexual slavery, the exponential rise in sexually transmitted diseases, violent internet and child porn, and paedophilia more generally could be read as an uncanny doubling and intensification of prevalent Victorian social problems, indicating a return of the repressed rather than "progress." (2008: 55)

For a while at least, the direction of social norms and acceptance with regard to women's rights, sexual variance, or racial issues may have seemed clearly set forward, fuelling a belief that the future can only hold greater freedoms, ever growing equality and more widespread acceptance of difference, a belief which has been painfully refuted by the recent conservative turn in global politics, exposing such beliefs as devastatingly misguided. It has to be said, however, that such convictions are in essence very Victorian in nature, mirroring Victorian belief in linear social progress. In this sense, neo-Victorian narratives of sexsation capture these ambivalences and fluctuations, and reveal tensions that belie contemporary culture.

Neo-Victorian engagement with perversion is further evident in its favouring of the Gothic, a genre which is itself implicated with various forms of transgression, sexual transgression in particular; as David Jones reminds us, "[s]ex and the threat of sexual violence are integral to Gothic writing" (2014: 2). Much like neo-Victorian sexuality, Gothic sexuality is "a sexuality intersected with transgressions and taboos", treated with deep ambivalence, "both demanded and forbidden" (Zigarovich 2020: 388). Gothic engagement with the theme of sexuality is itself both a vehicle for confronting anxieties and tensions about sexuality (see Botting 1995), and a way of expressing forbidden urges and wicked desires, functioning as a dark mirror to social norms. In the Gothic, sexuality is configured as both monstrous and seductive, and the figure of the vampire is a perfect illustration, an embodiment of "voluptuous and violent sexuality" (Botting 1995: 97), but also "a shadow of Victorian masculinity, a monstrous figure of male desire that distinguishes what men are becoming from what they should become" (Botting 1995: 97). In addition, much like revivals of past styles and aesthetics, the Gothic has become a pervasive presence in contemporary culture, spreading beyond the bounds of an ex-centric literary genre and infiltrating all aspects of cultural production, including fashion, tourism, even food industry (the work of Heston Blumenthal is a case in point). This explosion of the Gothic in contemporary culture comes with a risk of dilution and commodification, as the stylistic appropriation by mainstream culture transforms a once transgressive genre into its more palatable and popular "candygothic" (Botting 2001: 134), or the romantic "happy Gothic" (Spooner 2017) manifestations, more appropriate and accessible for mass consumption. As with historical revivals in literature and culture, the Gothic in its contemporary transmutations thus proves to be highly malleable and fluid, readily lending itself to various forms of appropriation.

When paired with sexually provocative content, Gothic elements may serve to create a sense of denaturalisation and dislocation, where illicit desires are free to be explored under the guise of fantasy – in this respect, it serves the same function as the historical setting itself. Marks argues that neo-Victorian pornography "relies on a particular 'Victorianness' in generating eroticism – a Gothic Victorianness that is monstrous, violent, repressive, and perverse, steeped in class divisions and preoccupied with gender, sexuality, and race" (2018: 30). Marks identifies a "symbiotic relationship" between pornography and the Victorian Gothic, one which captures the "deliciousness of repressed Victoriana, the perversions of slavery and empire, and the tantalizingly subversive (and often quite sexy) monsters of the Gothic – monsters that materialize from these nineteenth-century repressions, perversions and horrors" (2018: 43-44). However, the links between the Gothic and the neo-Victorian go beyond their explorations of transgressive sexualities. Key neo-Victorian tropes, such spectrality and haunting, are

Gothic in nature, leading Kohlke and Gutleben to state that "neo-Victorianism is by nature quintessentially Gothic: resurrecting the ghost(s) of the past, searching out its dark secrets and shameful mysteries, insisting obsessively on the lurid details of Victorian life, reliving the period's nightmares and traumas", and to suggest that "there exists a generic and ontological kinship between Gothic and the neo-Victorian phenomenon" (2012: 4). Kohlke and Gutleben also argue that the convergence of neo-Victorianism and the Gothic may be seen as an attempt to bring the Gothic back to its cultural origins in order to counter this domesticating process and reimagine it as foreign, disturbing, Other (2012: 2, 4). The implications of this are manifold and complex – the spread of the Gothic and its assimilation into mass culture can be read as a reflection of a greater degree of tolerance (but also a greater appetite) for difference, yet this blurs and conceals practical and lived realities that may suggest otherwise. In this respect, the intersections of neo-Victorianism and the Gothic bring to the fore the peculiar fact that mainstream culture is finally catching up with the fights for civil liberties from the previous decades, so that female perspectives, queer sexualities or non-white characters have become more openly visible and more readily represented, while the actual social context and lived experience of these social groups has either stagnated or taken a turn for the worse. Mere greater visibility may not necessarily translate to any meaningful shift in power relations, and neo-Victorian discourses of perversity and desire may help to illuminate these underlying tensions. One particularly sobering example of these conflicting drives can be found in Marks's explorations of neo-Victorian pornography. Marks cites an interview with Pandora/Blake, a neo-Victorian pornographer behind the website *Dreams of Spanking*, where Blake shares fan responses to a scene offering the fantasy of a white headmistress punishing a Black schoolgirl. A number of fans on Blake's website suggested that it would be "hot" if the Black woman were to be cast as a slave (Marks 2018: 50). One may wonder what makes the horrors of slavery not only acceptable but "hot", the pornographic narrative itself or the historical remove created by the Victorian setting, but the example indicates that neo-Victorian insistence on defilement and degradation is not always motivated by the need for reassurance that past atrocities belong firmly in a bygone era. Instead, it may create opportunities to recreate them or vicariously relive them in the historical narrative setting, made acceptable by the very virtue of its historicity.

Finally, John Urry's theoretical framework of the tourist gaze, which draws on the idea of tourism as essentially a performance of place and culture for tourist consumption, is both useful and interesting when read against the portrayals of transgressive sexuality in neo-Victorian fiction. Urry's notion of the tourist gaze points to the highly stylised nature of tourist content, as a carefully curated and highly fetishised collection of images and experiences compiled as something to be consumed. Of course,

Urry is writing well before Instagram, but his speculations are confirmed in the notion of "Instagrammable" locations as the epitome of visual consumption. Like the reader of neo-Victorian fiction, the tourist is after what is supposedly an "authentic" experience, and is sold a simulacrum of it. The implications of Urry's findings for neo-Victorian writing are to be found in the ethical issues surrounding such stylised versions of the past. In attempting to speak for the lost voices of the Victorian age, who is neo-Victorianism really speaking for, and is it ever anyone else but itself? Tellingly, Kohlke notes that as readers of neo-Victorian fiction, "we become time-travelling tourists in often exoticised landscapes of violence" (2009: 27). In this respect, neo-Victorian perversion can be read as one such consumable experience, taking the reader on a tour of the Victorian age which is carefully constructed to heighten the exoticism and the thrill it provides, where the dislocation created by the temporal displacement of the narrative hints at loosened inhibitions and a different set of criteria for judging what is acceptable. What happens in neo-Victorian fiction, stays in neo-Victorian fiction, and the neo-Victorian text thus provides an outlet for unbridled fantasies in the manner of a particularly wild summer holiday. Such appropriations also highlight the ultimate fluidity of cultural and historical space, as Kohlke herself indicates in her discussion of neo-Victorian spaces of transgression, through the example of the Attendant Café in London's Fitzrovia (2017). Set in a refurbished Victorian public toilet, the café illustrates the precise nature of neo-Victorian experience that we seek out. In Kohlke's words, "safety is not what we want in neo-Victorianism"; instead, we seek it in order to "get close to the foul" (2017). However, the foul in question is only ever a fabricated, sanitised version of filth – filth, but safely bleached and still hygienic, something we approach and consume from a very controlled and safe position. In neo-Victorian narratives, perversions and transgressions are wrapped safely in the domain of historical fiction, both fetishised and sanitised for safe consumption, often couched in the added layer of Gothic horror, always ready to be disowned as "just fiction", set in a version of society different and distant from our own. It is also important to note that even in texts that seek to critically challenge the past by approaching it from contemporary perspectives, existing nuance and depth may be lost on the reader or the audience, in which case what remains is titillation alone. This can act as a powerful reminder that nostalgia is very much a personal experience, and the way the past will be engaged with ultimately depends on highly individual sensibilities that are impossible to anticipate.

Viktorija Krombholc

NOSTALGIJA I PERVERZIJA U NEOVIKTORIJANSKOJ PROZI

Rezime

Apstrakt: Veza između nostalgije i neoviktorijanskog povratka u devetnaesti vek u središtu je brojnih neoviktorijanskih istraživanja. No, tačna priroda ove veze, njene ideološke implikacije, te kritička čitanja pojedinačnih primera nostalgičnog povratka u prošlost i dalje ostaju predmet sporenja, zahvaljujući svojoj kompleksnosti i slojevitosti. Tumačenja neoviktorijanskih tekstova kao izraza različitih kultura sećanja ili primera refleksivne nostalgije iz definicije Svetlane Bojm (Boym) svakako su opravdana i imaju svoju vrednost, ali ovi pristupi ne uspevaju da objasne naročit skup neoviktorijanskih tekstova koji su okrenuti prikazima eksplicitnog sadržaja, transgresivne seksualnosti i perverznih užitaka. Ovi tekstovi pružaju čitaocu ono što Mari-Luiz Kolke (Kohlke) naziva "čitanjem radi uniženja", budući da dosledno prikazuju viktorijanski period kao raspusno leglo poroka koje grca u razvratu i kriminalu, nudeći fetišiziranu, često nadasve gotsku verziju prošlosti u kojoj se mogu zadovoljiti najmračnije fantazije i izopačene želje, čak i one koje su u savremenom društvu zabranjene. Kako pokazuje Lora Helen Marks (Marks) u svojoj studiji o neoviktorijanskoj pornografiji, viktorijanski period je naročito je pogodan za pornografsku reinterpretaciju usled toga što se doživljava kao seksualno restriktivan, ali potajno perverzan. S obzirom na to da neoviktorijanski tekstovi povratkom u prošlost rasvetljavaju tenzije unutar savremenog društva, naročito je zanimljivo ovu fascinaciju viktorijanskim bludom i težnju da se prošlost konstruiše kao raskalašna i skaredna posmatrati u svetlu globalnog zaokreta ka konzervativnim politikama i stavovima. Konačno, neoviktorijanska proza može se čitati koristeći pojam "turističkog pogleda" Džona Arija (Urry); iz te perspektive, neoviktorijanski tekst konstruiše istorijski ambijent kao nešto što nudi jedinstven, vanredan kulturni doživljaj, pretvarajući ga u proizvod koji se nostalgično konzumira, a čije su odlike podređene željama i predstavama uživaoca sadržaja. Oslanjajući se na navedene kritičke pristupe, rad teži da doprinese čitanjima neoviktorijanske proze tako što se bavi različitim aspektima veze između nostalgije i perverzije u neoviktorijanskom kontekstu.

Ključne reči: neoviktorijanska književnost, nostalgija, perverzija, seksacija, pornografija, gotski žanr, turistički pogled

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