Making it Right?

Writing the Other in Postcolonial Neo-Victorianism

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Summary

This thesis examines the representation of 'otherness' in postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction. It analyses a selection of novels that not only engage critically with the Victorian past but specifically with the legacy of Victorian Britain's empire. By looking at the ways in which neo-Victorian novels depict the (de)construction of their characters' identities, this thesis investigates whether these representations are able to provide insight in present-day constructions of who is seen as being at home in British or Western European society and who is defined as 'other'. Otherness, these novels show, is not limited to a binary of the Western 'self' and the stereotyped, non-Western 'other'. Rather, many of the novels' characters are made to discover the other(ness) within themselves. The introductory chapter considers neo-Victorianism's postmodern background and the way it relates to postcolonial theories of race and sexuality. Chapter One focuses on two novels: Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* (2005) and Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage* (2007). Both novels are set in Britain and engage with the figure of the other coming (too) close to home. The chapter employs a potentially multidirectional 'looking relation' to study how postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction constructs the other against which the British characters define their own identities. Moving away from Britain, Chapter Two looks at the notion of the journey, specifically sea voyages between metropole and colony. Using Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights* (2004) and Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (2002), this chapter studies how the liminal experience of travel can function as an othering device. Chapter Three, finally, examines how Daniel Mason's *The Piano Tuner* (2002) and David Rocklin's *The Luminist* (2011) describe British society in the colonies. Away from the imperial mother country, making stable distinctions between self and other becomes increasingly difficult for the novels' characters. Ultimately, this thesis questions whether postcolonial neo-Victorianism maintains a binary between the Western self and a stereotyped figure of the other, or if it can play a role in changing readers' views of those people seen as 'other' in Western society.

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"as good neo-Victorians, we still firmly believe that we have a purpose, a mission in the world"

Hugh Tinker, "Race & Neo-Victorianism" (1972)

Introduction: "As if it were the most ordinary thing imaginable…"

> Look in front of you. The whole world is here, this afternoon, now. In those cases, being thrown down, coffee and silks and spices, wool and diamonds, all docketed and ticked, all as if it were the most ordinary thing imaginable that the great world should pass through London, like a great haystack passing through the eye of a single needle. Import and export; sending England out to the world, taking the world into England. Cotton, silk, spice, coffee, gold, silver […] if you could stop this day now, at this moment, and spend as long as you liked examining every bale, every load, every sack of goods you can see, finding out what everything was worth, who sent it, who is about to buy it, by God, you would begin to understand the world. You would begin to understand what the world dreams of.
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> (Philip Hensher, *The Mulberry Empire*, 2002)[1]

Alexander Burnes, the protagonist of Philip Hensher's neo-Victorian novel *The Mulberry Empire* (2002), has a purpose in his wish to understand "what the world dreams of". "To come down here – I feel rather like a novelist must in a crowded room in an inn. To feel that if all the unspeaking secrets contained in [those cases] were opened up – then, I should be master of the world, and know everything".[2] Burnes' quest for knowledge is also a quest for power, the power that England is assumed to have over the world. Nevertheless, Hensher's novel centres on the defeat of the British in nineteenth-century Afghanistan and ends with Burnes being beaten to death by a crowd in Kabul. In the novel, a sense of tension is perceptible between the emphasised power of England and its actual defeat and the death of Burnes, who functions as a symbol of imperial power. This stress is symbolic of the connections neo-Victorian literature creates between reader, novel and remembered history.

When immersing themselves in any form of fiction, readers will have to engage with what Samuel Taylor Coleridge has named the "willing suspension of disbelief".[3] This

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[1] Philip Hensher, *The Mulberry Empire* (London: Fourth Estate, 2012 [2002]), pp. 90-91.
[2] Hensher, *Mulberry Empire*, p. 89.
[3] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973 [1817]), p. 6.

process is intriguing for the reader of historical fiction, especially when it concerns texts that aim to 'fill the gaps' of history: on the one hand, historical novels cannot be considered 'true' history but on the other, there are many examples where the narratives appear authentic, or at least possible. Neo-Victorianism, then, plays on this 'suspension of historical knowledge', aiming for readers to become immersed in the Victorian period only to remind them constantly of this knowledge and their own ahistorical position as readers of historical fiction. This temporal doubling, both as a form of play and as a means to disrupt the linearity of history, is one of the ways in which neo-Victorianism shows its connection to postmodernism. This is especially true for novels wholly set in the Victorian period but it is also applicable to neo-Victorian novels that play around with multiple temporalities or that have a contemporary setting.

An interesting addition to the colonial theme of *The Mulberry Empire* is that Burnes himself is from Scotland and, throughout the novel, stresses his Scottish heritage whenever he is assumed to be English. Nevertheless, he emphasises the power of England as an imperial trading country in a way that makes him part of its success. The passage quoted above showcases the different types of tension that postcolonial neo-Victorianism incorporates. It is a white, British – or Scottish – man who is the wielder of the gaze, financially secure enough that he does not have to work at a time when all the described goods are being loaded and unloaded. Although he expresses a sense of wonder at the fact that all these objects pass through London, there is simultaneously a kind of smug satisfaction in his analysis.

The focus on *England* as a capitalist country which arranges for all these products to be transported shows how its position is superior to that of the countries that have the skill to produce the goods but not to trade them in a global market. The casual reference to God implies a man who is more concerned with relying on his own skills

than following a religious creed. His yearning to "understand what the world dreams of" is a repetition of his earlier wish to be master of the world.[4] Postcolonial neo-Victorianism makes visible the pressures on the British Empire in the Victorian period, as exemplified in the fragment from *The Mulberry Empire*. By emphasising the centrality of England, for Britain and for the British Empire as a whole, the novel also refers to the stress constantly exerted on that empire, from within its borders as well as from outside. Britain's success as a colonial nation depended on multiple factors and postcolonial neo-Victorianism is able to highlight these pressure points by focusing on the neglected stories, on those ventures that may not have been successful.

This introduction provides a theoretical entry into the development of the neo-Victorian genre and into the trope of sexual and racial otherness that is the topic of this thesis. It consists of four sections: first, I look at neo-Victorianism's grounding in postmodern theory and how this relates to the genre's subversion of different norms, both fictional and actual. As the novels discussed in this thesis are all twenty-first-century texts, they not only provide a view on the Victorian era and the years in which they were written and published, but also interact with earlier texts of the genre. Next, moving from the neo-Victorian genre in general to its postcolonial connections, I highlight several theories and key concepts for the analysis of racial and sexual stereotyping. After this, I examine what points have already been raised in relation to postcolonial neo-Victorianism and how existing theories have not been able to provide a satisfactory answer when it comes to neo-Victorian novels' apprehension in dealing with racial and sexual stereotyping as it relates to contemporary culture and society. I end by outlining the approach this thesis takes to examine neo-Victorianism's role in sustaining or problematising stereotypes of race and sexuality as they are represented in fiction.

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[4] Hensher, *Mulberry Empire*, p. 91.

Neo-Victorian novels may write about the Victorian era but it is important to remember that the texts are generally written long after the end of that period. As such, neo-Victorian novels reflect the concerns of their period of writing more directly than they do those of the Victorian era, an assumption that is not new or unique to neo-Victorianism. In his book *In Defence of History* (1997), Richard J. Evans claims that historians cannot escape being rooted in the present when telling the story of the past, so that "[a]ll history was thus written, consciously or unconsciously, from the perspective of the present".[5] Mark Llewellyn refers to Evans in an article on neo-Victorianism, arguing that fiction shares this characteristic with history. Fiction returns to the past "in a necessarily different and more playful manner than the factual", but like history-writing, its foundation is located in the present.[6]

That neo-Victorianism's roots are in the present does not necessarily mean that neo-Victorian texts mirror all current concerns. To give just one example, the rising fear of terrorism, especially since the attacks of September 11, 2001, is rarely paralleled to Victorian-era wars or campaigns. In this sense, a sense of nostalgia or escapism remains part of the neo-Victorian genre. While neo-Victorianism is thus a creation of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, its selective approach as to what aspects of the Victorian era to give attention to implies that authors of neo-Victorian fiction, while happy to challenge certain aspects of the Victorian period, are wary of broaching others. In part this may relate to the assumption that we look back at the Victorians so as to be able to emphasise our own supposed enlightenment when it concerns Victorian stereotypes of sexuality.[7] As the 'war against terror' is an ongoing and highly

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[5] Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 2000 [1997]), pp. 30-31.
[6] Mark Llewellyn, "Neo-Victorianism: On the Ethics and Aesthetics of Appropriation", *Literature, Interpretation, Theory* 20 (2009), 27-44 (p. 33).
[7] See for example Marie-Luise Kohlke's argument in "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel: Orientalising the Nineteenth Century in Contemporary Fiction", in *Negotiating Sexual Idioms: Image, Text, Performance*, ed. by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Luisa Orza (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 53-77 (p. 56).

acute concern, we cannot portray the twenty-first century in a positive light in comparison to the Victorian age and its wars in the Middle East. This may be a reason why authors are avoiding such parallels, even when writing about nineteenth-century periods of unrest in the region of the Middle East.[8]

In this thesis, I focus on recent – by which I mean twenty-first century – neo-Victorian novels. These texts' contemporaneity may imply that they can provide insight into what matters contemporary society struggles with at present and this thesis seeks to question to what extent this is the case. Within the genre of the neo-Victorian novel, my focus lies on postcolonial neo-Victorianism. Despite the fact that neo-Victorian novels with a (post)colonial theme have become more numerous over the years, they still comprise only a small part of a rapidly growing genre. While neo-Victorian fiction critically engages with both Victorian and contemporary sites of tension, especially with regard to science and sexuality, it seems strange that the Victorian colonial past remains an underrepresented topic. Many of the better-known neo-Victorian novels are written by authors from white, Western nations such as the United Kingdom and the U.S. – with authors from, for example, Australia or New Zealand occupying a liminal position. Because of their position, authors may be wary of touching upon questions of race and ethnicity. Such questions do occur in another genre that displays some parallels with neo-Victorianism, that of the neo-slave narrative. In neo-slave narratives, "contemporary novels [...] assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of the ante-bellum slave narrative".[9] A study of the interconnections between (postcolonial) neo-Victorianism and modern texts engaging with slavery and its contemporary traces may provide new insights to

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[8] A novel dealing with conflict in Afghanistan, to take one location, is Hensher's *The Mulberry Empire*.

[9] Ashraf H.A. Rushdy, *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 3.

both genres. In this research project, however, the focus extends to questions of otherness more generally.

In the nineteenth century, a large number of influential scientific discoveries and developments took place. Many of these were connected or applied to what were often seen as the social problems of race and sexuality. The different categories of science, race and sexuality cannot be seen as separate, as discourses on race and sexuality in the Victorian period were strongly grounded in science. Along with other factors, Victorian science used ideas of race and sexuality to aid the construction of semi-coherent – though unstable – stereotypes of the figure of the 'other'. The interconnections between these aspects and their changing meanings from the Victorian period to the twenty-first century are of key importance in my analysis of postcolonial neo-Victorianism. The word 'race' is a highly loaded term, implying references to racism and discrimination. Nevertheless, among others because of its prominence in Victorian scientific and other discourses, I use it throughout this thesis. More than, for example, the word ethnicity would, my use of race aims to show the tension between race as an artificial and constructed category based on observable physical (and in the Victorian era, 'scientific') characteristics on the one hand and, on the other, the fact that it still influences the social structures in many societies, Western as well as non-Western, today. Race as a category marker may point to a highly unproductive way of describing identity in the twenty-first century while race as a biological category is generally accepted to be an artificial construction. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored how race as a lived experience influences the ways in which people construct their own identity and engage with society.

In the Victorian period, a dichotomy was created between the loosely defined locations that were imagined as the 'Orient' and the 'Occident', as also described in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), a highly significant text for my research. While not

all postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction can be called 'oriental', Said's claim that the Orient represents "the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" can be expanded to describe the relationship between Victorian Britain and its colonies more generally, as well as that between their fictional reconstruction in neo-Victorianism and this reconstruction's relation to the present experience of postcolonialism.[10] One of the questions raised in my analysis of postcolonial neo-Victorianism is whether the genre's wariness in dealing with interconnected issues of race and sexuality indicates a sense of uneasiness about the continuing presence of racial and sexual stereotypes of non-Western others in today's society.

The fact that neo-Victorianism attempts to recreate the Victorian period but simultaneously acknowledges – and makes the reader aware of – the impossibility of this project connects neo-Victorian literature to postmodern historical fiction. Dana Shiller, for example, one of the early theorists attempting to describe what she saw as an emerging new category of the historical novel, defined neo-Victorian fiction as "those novels that adopt a postmodern approach to history and that are set at least partly in the nineteenth century".[11] Since the publication of Shiller's article in 1997, the number of novels that critically 'write back' to the Victorian period has soared. This is also reflected in academic writing on neo-Victorianism. However, the definition of what neo-Victorianism actually is and does is still contested. Some critics see the neo-Victorian novel as a subgenre of the historical novel, defining it as fictions which have their story partly or wholly set in the nineteenth century.[12] Others refer not only to the

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[10] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003 [1978]), p. 1.
[11] Dana Shiller, "The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel", *Studies in the Novel*, 29.4 (1997), 538-560 (p. 558 note 1).
[12] Shiller is one of these. Kate Mitchell also emphasises neo-Victorian fiction's connection to historical fiction more generally. While she does not explicitly exclude texts with a modern

time period a novel discusses but also point out similarities in form, narration or focalisation, comparing works to particular nineteenth-century authors or texts.[13] The debates have not only focused on the genre's different characteristics but on its very terminology. While certain critics still favour alternatives like 'post-Victorian' (Kirchknopf) or 'retro-Victorian' (Shuttleworth), the term 'neo-Victorian' has become the most commonly used one.[14]

In the introduction to an essay-collection on neo-historical fiction, Elodie Rousselot argues for neo-Victorianism to be included under the heading of 'neo-historical' fiction, a genre "characterised by its similar creative and critical engagement with the cultural mores of the period it revisits", regardless of the historical period it returns to. In addition, Rousselot continues, "the genre is also defined by its participation in, and response to, contemporary culture's continuing fascination with history".[15] While Rousselot, just like many neo-Victorian critics, argues that neo-historical fiction is "very much aimed at answering the needs and preoccupations of the present", she also points to the risks of presenting cultural otherness "as a form of 'spectacle', to be

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setting from the neo-Victorian genre, the novels she discusses in her book *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Victorian Afterimages* are all set in the Victorian period (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

[13] Samantha Matthews does so in "Remembering the Victorians" (in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], pp. 273-291). So does Peter Widdowson, though his focus in the article "'Writing Back': Contemporary Re-Visionary Fiction" extends beyond neo-Victorianism to other modes or genres that rewrite earlier texts (*Textual Practice* 20.3 [2006]: 491-507).

[14] Andrea Kirchknopf provides a more extensive discussion on terminology in the first chapter of *Rewriting the Victorians: Modes of Literary Engagement with the 19th Century* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2013). While Kirchknopf continues to favour 'post-Victorian', she also recognises that 'neo-Victorian' has become the most used term. In the article "From Retro- to Neo-Victorian Fiction and Beyond" (2014), Sally Shuttleworth discusses her own use of 'retro-Victorian' in an earlier (1998) article. Although she adopts the commonly accepted 'neo-Victorian', she still distinguishes between "the 'retro-Victorian' novels of the early 1990s" and "the looser arena of what is now commonly termed neo-Victorian fiction" (in *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations*, ed. by Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss [New York: Routledge, 2014], pp. 179-192 [p. 182]).

[15] Elodie Rousselot, "Introduction: Exoticising the Past in Contemporary Neo-Historical Fiction", in *Exoticizing the Past in Contemporary Neo-Historical Fiction*, ed. by Elodie Rousselot (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 1-16 (pp. 2-3).

observed and enjoyed at a distance, and without accountability".[16] Such "spectacularisation" of the past as well as the 'culturally other', can serve to conceal "the power dynamics at play between the viewer and the viewed, while simultaneously reinforcing the position of assumed superiority of the former".[17] These power dynamics, and the role vision and sight play in constructing or maintaining them, are discussed extensively in this thesis.

The development of neo-Victorianism as a more or less independent genre can be split in three phases. Most critics position the beginning of the neo-Victorian genre in the 1960s, but earlier examples most certainly exist. The second phase consists of texts published between the 1970s and early 1990s. From the late 1990s, a third phase manifests itself and this still continues at present, though some changes are visible between the novels from around the turn of the millennium and those from the past few years.[18] In this thesis, I analyse a number of recent neo-Victorian novels that show an engagement with postcolonialism and with the role of race and sexuality. I focus on representations of racial and sexual stereotyping and the inevitable interconnections between these two types of thought and behaviour. Before moving to the relation between neo-Victorianism and postcolonial theory, however, I first turn to the connections that have been drawn between neo-Victorianism and postmodernism.

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[16] Ibid., p. 5; p. 8.

[17] Ibid., p. 8.

[18] This is also related to the increasing presence of references to the Victorian era across genres. Neo-Victorian texts – not all of them engaging with the era in a critical way throughout, but still doing so at points – can be found in, for example, 'chick lit' (Jennifer Vandever, *The Brontë Project* [2005]), murder mysteries (Lynn Shepherd's *Tom All-Alone's* [2012], *A Treacherous Likeness* [2013] and *The Pierced Heart* [2014]), young adult fiction (Wendy Wallace's *The Painted Bridge* [2012] and *The Sacred River* [2013]; Jane Eagland's *Wildthorn* [2009] and *Whisper My Name* [2010]) and young adult fantasy fiction (Frances Hardinge's *The Lie Tree* [2015]; Ransom Riggs' *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* trilogy [2011; 2014; 2015]).

Neo-Victorianism's Postmodern Roots

Shiller described neo-Victorianism in 1997 as grounded in postmodernism by arguing that neo-Victorian novels "take a revisionist approach to the past" and aim "to achieve recursively postmodern historical imaginations while maintaining a sense of a referent".[19] Samantha J. Carroll, too, stresses the link between neo-Victorianism and postmodernism, a relation she fears is becoming lost as the genre's Victorian connections are stressed over its contemporary ones.[20] Andrea Kirchknopf even goes so far as to continue to advocate the usage of 'post-Victorian' instead of neo-Victorian, as post-Victorian "incites a more explicit association with postmodernist discourses, and viewed from that context, similarly to the terms *postcolonial* or *postnational*, it expresses a purpose of reviewing rather than replicating earlier accounts and routines".[21] The term neo-Victorian, according to Kirchknopf, "has repeatedly proved too broad and thus unsatisfactory, either in terms of its political versus generic connotations, or due to its incorporation of other, non-reflexive historical fiction than the body of novels scrutinized by critics".[22]

It can be questioned whether an expanding genre like the neo-Victorian should be tightly connected to a postmodernism that may be on its way out, at least according to critics like Alan Kirby or Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker. Kirby instead favours the term 'digimodernism', which he suggested after announcing the 'death of postmodernism' in 2006, whereas Vermeulen and Van den Akker prefer 'metamodernism' and Jeffrey T. Nealon, among others, argues for 'post-

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[19] Shiller, "Redemptive Past", pp. 540; p.541.
[20] Samantha J. Carroll, "Putting the 'Neo' Back into Neo-Victorian: The Neo-Victorian Novel as Postmodern Revisionist Fiction", *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 3.2 (2010), 172-205 <www.neovictorianstudies.com> [accessed 9 February 2016], pp. 172-73.
[21] Andrea Kirchknopf, *Rewriting the Victorians*, p. 31.
[22] Ibid., p. 30.

postmodernism'.[23] The assertion that the reference to postmodernism provides "a more accurate delimitation of the body of novels in question", as Kirchknopf claims, also seems doubtful, considering postmodernism's own openness as a concept.[24] The neo-Victorian corpus is steadily growing, as more existing novels are identified and labelled as neo-Victorian and increasing numbers of novels are published that critically look back to the Victorian period. In contradistinction to what critics contend about postmodernism, neo-Victorianism is thus on an upward trajectory rather than in decline. This would be a clear reason not to link its current developments to postmodernism, which seems to remain a twentieth-century category rather than one extending to the twenty-first century. However, it is important to acknowledge that neo-Victorianism has its roots in postmodern theory.

Postmodernism as a discipline is, by its very nature, hard to define. In the preface to *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), Linda Hutcheon claims that "the postmodern is, if it is anything, a problematizing force in our culture today: it raises questions about (or renders problematic) the common-sensical and the 'natural'. But it never offers answers that are anything but provisional and contextually determined (and limited)".[25] She continues by stating that "postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges".[26] In trying to define postmodernism, Hutcheon argues, one must necessarily state what it is not.[27] This fits in with the key point of postmodernism

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[23] Alan Kirby, "The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond", *Philosophy Now*, 58 (2006), 34-37 <philosophynow.org/issues/58> [accessed 9 February 2016]; Timotheus Vermeulen, and Robin van den Akker, "Notes on Metamodernism", *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 2 (2010), n.p. <www.aestheticsandculture.net> [accessed 9 February 2016]; Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).
[24] Kirchknopf, *Rewriting the Victorians*, p. 31.
[25] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. xi.
[26] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 3.
[27] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1989]), p. 1.

according to Jean-François Lyotard, namely that postmodernism can be simplified to a distrust of the 'grand narratives' of history and society.[28] These grand narratives not only include the institutional narratives of which Michel Foucault is so wary but also the common-sensical narratives of society and the individuals it consists of. Both are part of a culture's ideologies. Brian McHale argues in *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) against the obsession with the term postmodernism itself: "the presence of the prefix *post* in literary nomenclature [...] merely signals the inevitable *historicity* of all literary phenomena. Every literary-historical moment is *post* some other moment".[29] The relevance lies in the relation between a particular movement and its descendants, what McHale calls "historical *consequentiality*".[30] This interaction between a period and its (re)constructed progeny is also what is studied in neo-Victorianism.

It is important to realise that these definitions all stem from the early to middle period of postmodernism's development, the texts written between two and three decades ago. Whereas these authors still define postmodernism as a new and developing movement, at present its prominence is declining, or at the very least it is engaged in a radical theoretical overhaul. This necessarily influences the way in which postmodernism is understood: rather than providing a provisional outline, we are now able to look back upon several decades of postmodern culture and its critical developments. While postmodernism has remained a discipline that is hard to define, it is important to keep in mind this temporal distance and to stress that postmodernism is no longer a new category. Conversely, while critical-historical novels about the Victorian period go back to the mid-twentieth century or even before, the categorisation of these texts as 'neo-Victorian' is a relatively recent phenomenon.

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[28] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
[29] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 5.
[30] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction,* p. 5.

Postmodern culture, according to Hutcheon, "has a contradictory relationship to what we usually label our dominant, liberal humanist culture" as it "contests it from within its own assumptions".[31] In her perspective, the postmodern always has a political dimension, even though it is questionable whether the potential of political subversion actually achieves something. This question is also relevant to neo-Victorianism: though it often intends to challenge gender and racial stereotypes, it is constantly at risk of reaffirming those same stereotypes.[32] When Hutcheon defines postmodern historical fiction, what she calls 'historiographic metafiction', she refers specifically to writings on past events but also to stories in the broader sense:

> In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it literature, history, or theory – that has usually been the major function of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historio*graphic meta*fiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past.[33]

A key term for postmodernism and neo-Victorianism both is 'subversion'. As Hutcheon states in *Poetics of Postmodernism*, "[h]istoriographic metafiction's somewhat different strategy [from more radical genres like American surfiction] subverts, but only through irony, not through rejection".[34] The novels "challenge the humanist assumption of a unified self and an integrated consciousness by both installing coherent subjectivity and subverting it".[35] Neo-Victorian literature, furthermore, subverts Victorian fictional norms, as Robin Gilmour also argues in his article "Using the Victorians" (2000). Taking John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) as an example, Gilmour claims that such a text "parodies the form of the Victorian novel as it was used by

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[31] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 6.
[32] See for example Karen Sturgeon-Dodsworth's article exploring neo-Victorianism's (lack of) challenge to stereotypes of femininity: "'Whatever it is that you desire, halve it': The Compromising of Contemporary Femininities in Neo-Victorian Fictions", in *Twenty-First Century Feminism: Forming and Performing Femininity*, ed. by Claire Nally and Angela Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 164-183.
[33] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 5.
[34] Ibid., p. xii.
[35] Ibid.

Thackeray and George Eliot [...] but uses the narratorial possibilities of the form to introduce a degree of explicit philosophizing which was then (1969) felt to be no longer available to a modern novelist".[36] Whether neo-Victorianism also succeeds in subverting contemporary norms remains to be seen.

The early 2000s saw a large number of critical works focusing on the newly identified phenomenon of postmodern historical fiction 'writing back' to the Victorian period. Although not all authors immediately picked up the term neo-Victorianism, many critics noticed a focus on the Victorian period. Gilmour opens his article "Using the Victorians" by stating that it is striking how much use "novelists have made of the Victorian period and its products" in late-twentieth century fiction.[37] Gilmour specifies this claim, arguing that he means "something more self-conscious than the straightforward historical novel with a period setting; rather, the kind of work which is inward with the period and the conventions of its literature, and draws on the meanings which these have come to have for us today".[38] Dianne F. Sadoff and John Kucich, too, stress the connections between neo-Victorian rewritings and postmodernism, arguing that their edited collection "takes up but does not complete the challenge to define the fantasies of postmodern emergence that have privileged the nineteenth century as the essence of the past".[39] Alice Jenkins and Juliet John open their collection from the same year by writing that "[t]o reread Victorian fiction in the midst of postmodernist scepticism about fiction (or, perhaps more accurately, about anything that claims to be other than fiction) is a paradoxical and contradictory

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[36] Robin Gilmour, "Using the Victorians: The Victorian Age in Contemporary Fiction", in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), pp. 189-200 (p. 190).

[37] Gilmour, "Using the Victorians", p. 189.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Dianne F. Sadoff and John Kucich, "Introduction: Histories of the Present", in *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by John Kucich and Dianne F. Sadoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. ix-xxx (p. xxviii).

exercise".[40] Although Jenkins and John's collection is mostly concerned with Victorian texts, their statement is equally relevant for neo-Victorianism, a genre that can be seen as rereading Victorian fiction by rewriting it.

In *Nostalgic Postmodernism* (2001), Christian Gutleben builds on the question of neo-Victorian writing's subversiveness. He argues that many neo-Victorian novels lose their subversive potential precisely because of marketing decisions aspiring to make them adhere to contemporary public and popular perceptions. Conforming to popular culture and trying to subvert it from within is a strategy that, according to Gutleben, does not work: "By softening the subversiveness" – by which he means formal and textual experimentality – "of its immediate forebears, the neo-Victorian novel puts into practice a form of fiction more accessible to a British readership".[41] This is linked to the paradox inherent to novels like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* that Hutcheon points out. As she states, the novels are "at once popular best-sellers and objects of intense academic study".[42]

Hutcheon sees a gap between élite and popular art that is bridged by certain well-known postmodern historical novels. Texts like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980) "parodically use and abuse the conventions of both popular and élite literature, and do so in such a way that they can actually *use* the invasive culture industry to challenge its own commodification processes from within".[43] Whereas for literature, 'postmodern' is often seen as analogous to 'academic' and 'elite' and in contradistinction to 'popular' or 'mainstream' fiction, this opposition is no longer true for historiographic metafiction, which "clearly acknowledges that it is

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[40] Alice Jenkins and Juliet John, "Introduction", in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, ed. by Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 1-12 (p. 1).
[41] Christian Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism: The Victorian Tradition and the Contemporary British Novel* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), p. 161.
[42] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 20.
[43] Ibid.

a complex institutional and discursive network of élite, official, mass, popular cultures that postmodernism operates in".[44] Hutcheon's assumption that the postmodern can be popular has been proved right by the popularity of neo-Victorian novels like those by A. S. Byatt and, more recently, Amitav Ghosh.

Gutleben refers to formal characteristics when writing that "what proves subversive in relation to the realistic codes of the Victorian tradition appears in a very different light in the context of the 1980s and 1990s".[45] He claims that these decades correspond to "the advent of the politically correct", where political correctness "consists in defending all kinds of minorities: the victims of social, sexual, racial or ethnic discriminations, the physically or mentally handicapped, the outcasts of society, and the scapegoats of history".[46] Gutleben is right to point out the attendant risks of these strategies, stating that "one of the pernicious effects of political correctness is that by putting in the center what was marginal, by changing the specific into the norm, this ideological movement tends to trivialize or erase the very differences on which the identity groups are built".[47] However, his final reference to different identities neglects the fact that these are always constructed through each other so that they cannot – and should not – be separated.

Most twenty-first-century neo-Victorian texts do not show the kind of formal experimentality that Hutcheon and other postmodern theorists describe. However, through their intertextuality, which connects them to Victorian fiction and to other neo-Victorian novels both, they still stress an awareness of their own status as textual artefacts. In choosing a realist approach, authors of these later neo-Victorian novels address their readers in a different manner. Through their realist narratives about

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[44] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 21.
[45] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, p. 155.
[46] Ibid., p. 167.
[47] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, p. 168 note 31.

topics that are rarely made explicit in Victorian fiction, these neo-Victorian novels, in a different manner than more traditionally experimental postmodern historical novels, also make their readers question the 'grand narratives' of history.[48]

Unlike Hutcheon, Gutleben refuses to recognise the possibility that neo-Victorian novels can at once be popular *and* subversive, arguing instead that neo-Victorianism sells out on postmodernism by pandering to popular taste. However, following Samantha J. Carroll's critique of Gutleben, the popularity of neo-Victorian fiction can also be seen as a measure of success for the postmodern, so that "the successful infiltration of postmodernism's devices of subversion, irony, parody, narrative scepticism, and meta-fictional self-consciousness in the mainstream become a measure of postmodernism's success rather than its failure".[49] Gutleben does admit that neo-Victorianism clearly transgresses the conventions of nineteenth-century fiction, only, as he would like to emphasise, it is "less radical, less subversive and less innovative than modernism and early postmodernism".[50] He even states that it is precisely the compromise embodied by neo-Victorian fiction, of being "neither extremely conservative nor radically avant-garde, both innovative and in continuity with tradition" that makes it fit in with British contemporary postmodernism, as he sees the postmodernism of the twenty-first century as having become less radical.[51] Later in this chapter, the relation between postmodern subversiveness and neo-Victorian fiction will be discussed further.

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[48] Robert Edric's *The Book of the Heathen* (2000), for example, tells the story of a small community of Westerners living in the African wilderness (the novel displays parallels with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* [1899]), questioning who is more 'savage', the 'uncivilised' African tribes or the so-called civilised Western men. Jem Poster's *Rifling Paradise* (2006) is set in New South Wales, Australia, but raises similar questions. While these texts mirror Victorian concerns, they are significantly more explicit in their treatment of topics that were only implicitly present in Victorian fiction. On the surface, such texts may appear to confirm the 'grand narratives' of the Victorian era and potentially our own. However, in fact their writing aims to make the reader question the assumptions provided in the stories.

[49] Carroll, "Putting the 'Neo' Back into Neo-Victorian", p. 190.

[50] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, p. 161.

[51] Ibid.

Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, in what has become the most commonly used source for defining neo-Victorianism, also acknowledge neo-Victorianism's debt to postmodernism. In their 2010 book *Neo-Victorianism*, they define the neo-Victorian genre as one that concerns texts – in the broadest sense of the word – that in some respect must be *"self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians"*.[52] The emphasis on self-consciousness is necessary, so they claim, for "just as not all narratives published between 1837 and 1901 are Victorian, so all fictions post-1901 that happen to have a Victorian setting or rewrite a Victorian text or a Victorian character do not have to be neo-Victorian".[53] One aspect of neo-Victorianism is the intention to rewrite the Victorian age to interrogate its stories and histories, so as to provide a different view on the era. However, present-day authors have also found ways to use the Victorian period and its lingering presence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to write about their own time and its engagement with the past. On the surface, neo-Victorian novels provide a subverted version of the remembered Victorian past. At the same time, authors of the neo-Victorian use the Victorian period and its history to explore ways to subvert contemporary norms, turning memories of the Victorian period into a tool to comment on the present.

Discussing the increasing number of novels that refer back to the Victorians and their popularity, Heilmann and Llewellyn wonder what, exactly, it is that we "want the twenty-first century novel to be and to do".[54] Perhaps, they suggest, the search for endings that is described in so many neo-Victorian novels indicates "that we have not been able to bring the Victorian narrative to a conclusion yet".[55] This last question is

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[52] Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 4 (emphasis in original).
[53] Ibid., p. 6.
[54] Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*, p. 27.
[55] Ibid.

one that I address in my discussion of Britain's colonial past. Although British expansionist politics started much earlier than the nineteenth century and that century did not see the end of them either, the later nineteenth century especially was a period in which Britain's position as a world empire played a significant role in the way in which it presented itself, both to its own citizens and to others. Even more significant in the neo-Victorian context, the British Empire comprises an important part of how Victorian Britain is represented today, as a historical entity. What Heilmann and Llewellyn describe as the possibilities for subversion that nineteenth-century fiction already "contained within itself" are often made more explicit in neo-Victorian fiction.[56] One example is the reference to implied colonial elements in Victorian novels and how these return in neo-Victorianism.[57] The lack of conclusion in postcolonial neo-Victorianism indicates immediate relevance of the genre in light of contemporary debates on the results of the colonial period, among others today's multicultural society.

When moving from the earlier critical work on neo-Victorianism to its later incarnations, a change is visible in the way academics deal with both the term and the genre. The early texts aim at the understanding of neo-Victorianism as a newly identified development. At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, a shift is visible from works about neo-Victorianism to works that accept neo-Victorianism as an existing phenomenon. From the late 2000s into the 2010s, numerous critical texts on neo-Victorian novels appear, with edited collections like Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham's *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (2009) and Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben's ongoing neo-Victorian series with Brill

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[56] Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*, p. 4.
[57] See for example the attention received by Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*' Magwitch's Australian life, or the different ways in which authors themselves are 'made colonial', such as in Mardi McConnochie's *Coldwater* (2001), which puts the Brontë sisters on an Australian penal island headed by their father.

(formerly Rodopi), as well as numerous monographs, such as Kate Mitchell's *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (2010), John Glendening's *Science and Religion in Neo-Victorian Novels* (2013) and Helen Davies' *Neo-Victorian Freakery* (2015). Not only is there an increasing number of titles in the specialist sub-field of neo-Victorianism, but the term has also moved beyond its limited context of postmodern Victoriana. This can be seen in the works of critics like Mariadele Boccardi, whose *The Contemporary British Novel: Representation, Nation, Empire* (2009) engages extensively with neo-Victorian criticism, and Alan Robinson's *Narrating the Past: Historiography, Memory and the Contemporary Novel* (2010), which includes a chapter on "present pasts in neo-Victorian fiction". The fact that neo-Victorianism as a term and a form of critical engagement is applied more generally provides a clear indication of its increasing significance.

The developmental shift that neo-Victorianism has experienced in criticism, from being categorised as a type of postmodern historical fiction to a separate genre, is reflected in the primary texts analysed in critical scholarship. Texts that initially received the label neo-Victorianism were often those with strong links to postmodern theory, such as Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), now regularly taken (with Fowles) as the start of the neo-Victorian genre, was not always seen as a postmodern neo-Victorian text. Tatjana Jukić, for example, does consider *Wide Sargasso Sea* "the first great intertextual dialogue with the Victorians" but sees it as a modernist text rather than a postmodern one.[58] While I agree with Jukić that there is a great difference in the way Rhys and Fowles rework Victorian literature and culture, her statement that Rhys "only borrows a particular literary text, one

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[58] Tatjana Jukić, "From Worlds to Words and the Other Way Around: The Victorian Inheritance in the Postmodern British Novel", in *Theme Parks, Rainforests and Sprouting Wastelands: European Essays on Theory and Performance in Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. by Richard Todd and Luisa Flora (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 77-87 (p. 78).

isolated artifact" seems to cut short the implications of Rhys' rewriting. The same goes for the statement that "[c]oncern with the past, with history, is but a small dot, barely noticeable even in Rhys's registration of the appropriate historical backdrop".[59] Apart from the fact that it would be very hard to see a canonical text as 'an isolated artefact', Jukić's assertion that Rhys reduces the Victorian era to "a suitable background for a text that deals with essentially a-historic human passions and desires" ignores the specific circumstances and political choices of this particular rewriting.[60]

Even though *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are often cited as the pioneering texts of the neo-Victorian genre, they are certainly not the first novels commenting on the Victorian period and its literature. Tracy Hargreaves, whose article "'We Other Victorians': Literary Victorian Afterlives" (2008) puns on the title of Steven Marcus' critical classic *The Other Victorians* (1966), discusses the existence of comments on and returns to the Victorian period from the start of the twentieth century. In spite of what Hargreaves calls "Bloomsbury's Oedipal murder" of the Victorians, the early years of the twentieth century already saw a nostalgic looking back upon the nineteenth century.[61] The continuing interest in all things Victorian, she affirms, not only provides a contemporary view on the nineteenth century but also on the present, "illuminating and troubling our assumptions about periodicity, literary fashions, and modes of conceptual thought".[62] However, Hargreaves sees a continuation from the Victorian period to the present: "perhaps there is no 'Victorian' afterlife but rather a long life which shows little sign of expiry".[63] Hargreaves is right to point out a continued presence of the Victorian period, as it has been used,

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[59] Jukić, "Victorian Inheritance" p. 78.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Tracy Hargreaves, "'We Other Victorians': Literary Victorian Afterlives", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 13.2 (2008), 278-286 (p. 278).
[62] Hargreaves, "We Other Victorians', p. 285.
[63] Ibid, p. 286.

remembered and adapted throughout the twentieth century. However, only during the second half of the century the metafictional use of the period increased significantly.[64]

Following Rhys' and Fowles' novels, a number of neo-Victorian texts were published between the 1970s and early 1990s. This group, which includes J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), David Lodge's *Nice Work* (1988), Charles Palliser's *The Quincunx* (1989), A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) and *Angels and Insects* (1992) and Graham Swift's *Ever After* (1992), can be seen as the next development in the neo-Victorian genre. These texts already approach the Victorian era in a different manner, relating not only to the nineteenth century, but also to its 1960s reconstructions. They are followed by a third cluster of books which emerged in the late 1990s. Key authors of this emerging set are Sarah Waters and Michel Faber. Their work has helped to create a separation between the study of postmodernism at large and the specific attention that is given to the contemporary interaction with the Victorian era. Sarah Waters' first three novels *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), *Affinity* (1999) and *Fingersmith* (2002) engage with the lack of explicit traces of non-normative sexual identities that the period has left in the present. Michel Faber, explicitly engages with sexuality and the stereotypical image of the Victorians as prudish in his novel *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002) and the story collection *The Apple* (2006) that developed from it.

Even though the works that, based on critical literature, provide the basis of neo-Victorian fiction – its canonical texts, so to say – share some common themes or forms,

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[64] Examples of texts published before the 1960s that would fit in the neo-Victorian genre are Michael Sadleir's *Fanny by Gaslight* (1940), Marghanita Laski's novella *The Victorian Chaise-Longue* (1953) and the children's novel *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) by Philippa Pearce. Modernist author Virginia Woolf wrote a fictional biography of a dog, *Flush* (1933), and her theatrical satire of the world of her aunt, the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, *Freshwater* (performed 1923, rev. 1935; first published 1976). While especially *Flush* displays some of the archetypical characteristics of modernist writing, especially in its use of stream of consciousness writing, both texts also display the critical irony towards the Victorians that we see in so many neo-Victorian texts. One can even argue that self-conscious rewritings of the Victorian era already happened during the period itself, for example in H.G. Wells' "A Story of the Days to Come" (1897).

these are very broad and offer few grounds as to the inclusion or exclusion of specific texts. Features shared by most, if not all, of the novels are a concern with (inter)textuality, references to sexuality and, often, some kind of reference to the academic world. Some novels play with the use of different documents to facilitate their narratives, using a hidden will and lost inheritance in *The Quincunx* and a diary in *Affinity* and *Ever After*. Works like *Fingersmith* and *The Crimson Petal* reference topics like non-normative sexuality, prostitution and pornography.

Novels' academic context can be depicted within the narrative, for example in Lodge's version of the campus novel in the form of *Nice Work*, or in *Possession* through its research-obsessed participants. In more recent neo-Victorian novels, authors often explicitly share their research with the reader: Tracy Chevalier, for example, provides a list of 'further reading' about fossils and the Victorian female palaeontologist Mary Anning at the end of *Remarkable Creatures* (2009) and Barbara Ewing lists the books to which her narrative is indebted in the acknowledgements of her novel *The Petticoat Men* (2014). Intriguingly, when the academic world features in these texts, it is often described as a bulwark of venerable white men; patriarchal patterns of behaviour, job appointments and course content are satirised, often accompanied by the protagonists' resistance to such patriarchal paradigms. The fight against patriarchy fits in with postmodernism disputing the grand narratives of history, which are often told from the viewpoint of male authority figures.

The fact that so many critics refer to the same texts as foundational for neo-Victorian fiction implies that these texts are considered part of the neo-Victorian canon. Critics build upon the works of other scholars and – understandably – do not feel the need constantly to reinvent a new point of origin for neo-Victorianism. It also implies that different critics recognise these texts as having a meaning beyond their surface one, seeing them as self-consciously or self-reflexively engaging with the

Victorian era and its literature. For novels to be part of a canon, whether it is a Victorian or neo-Victorian canon, implies that they have become imbued with a certain authority. This is relevant when considering which Victorian authors and texts are actually revisited by writers of neo-Victorian fiction. Neo-Victorian novels engaging with Charles Dickens and his works, for example, far outnumber the amount of attention that any other Victorian writer has received in the genre and neo-Victorian novels – and authors – are frequently labelled 'Dickensian'.

Samantha Matthews, in "Remembering the Victorians" (2010), refers to neo-Victorian novels as texts that perform a "revisionary rewriting of a canonical text".[65] Peter Widdowson makes an equally significant point in arguing that the source texts or pre-texts must still be potent in the present, so that a text that is written back to is usually a canonical text.[66] The fact that a certain source text is now considered to be canonical is not just meaningful when reflecting upon its Victorian time of publication but also in relation to the present that has made this text into a canonical text. Also, neo-Victorianism's intention of subverting both actual and fictional norms is more effective when the texts or characters it returns to still retain a certain authority.

In this thesis, I focus on neo-Victorian novels published in the twenty-first century. These texts do not usually engage in the formal textual experiments visible in the texts from the 1960s to 1990s and, in fact, can often be considered traditional in the ways in which they tell their story. More strongly than novels from the earlier years, twenty-first-century neo-Victorian texts can be compared to the realist novels of the nineteenth century, albeit with descriptions of sexual acts in a way that would not have been considered suitable for public consumption in that period as well as a different approach to sexual and racial identity. While these twenty-first-century novels take a

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[65] Matthews, "Remembering the Victorians", p. 288.
[66] Peter Widdowson, "Contemporary Re-Visionary Fiction", p. 501.

different approach than those of the twentieth century, there are still many similarities: the use of various textual sources, for example, that occurs so frequently in the novels of the 1980s and 1990s, is a motif that regularly returns in the novels from the late 1990s onwards, as is the habit of writing back to specific Victorian texts or genres.[67] In their lack of formal experimenting, twenty-first-century neo-Victorian novels can be seen to shift away from some of the characteristics of early postmodernism.

Twenty-first-century neo-Victorian fiction shows its dependence upon (academic) research and upon its neo-Victorian predecessors in its minute attention to detail and a very clear awareness of its own position not just as fiction, but specifically as neo-Victorian fiction. As the number of neo-Victorian novels increases, readers are more likely to be familiar with other examples of neo-Victorian writing. This may lead to their having certain expectations of the novels. In the first place, they envisage reading a text that can be placed in relation to well-known Victorian novels. As Llewellyn describes it, many readers of neo-Victorian fiction turn to the novels out of a desire to have "Victorian length, plot, and character but without the 'difficulties' of Victorian language and circumlocution concerning issues of the body and sexuality".[68] Llewellyn refers to the introduction of Michel Faber's story-collection *The Apple: New Crimson Petal Stories* (2006), in which Faber quotes some reader responses to the open ending of *The Crimson Petal and the White*. From the responses it is clear that the novel did not fulfil readers' expectations with regard to what a neo-Victorian (or, as they may suppose, a 'pretend-Victorian') novel should be like.[69]

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[67] Sensation fiction remains a highly popular genre for neo-Victorian novels to turn to, as texts like D.J. Taylor's *Kept* (2006) and *Derby Day* (2011) show. See also the concluding chapter of Elizabeth Steere's *The Female Servant and Sensation Fiction* (2013), in which she analyses twenty-first-century sensation fiction.

[68] Mark Llewellyn, "Ethics and Aesthetics", p. 33.

[69] Llewellyn, "Ethics and Aesthetics", p. 32.

With the increasing number of well-known neo-Victorian novels, their stories are now not only compared to Victorian novels, but also to other modern-day rewritings of the period. As Heilmann and Llewellyn write, "in an age of adaptation what comes into play is not only the dialogue between new text and old but also the intertexts and interplays between different adaptations in their own right".[70] Their statement is valid for textual adaptations as well as other modes, such as those for television and cinema, as comics and in other art forms.[71]

The suppositions that some readers will have with regard to (neo-)Victorian 'intertexts' and 'interplays' are especially relevant for the twenty-first-century texts that this thesis focuses on, as they are able to make use of the neo-Victorian fiction published in the twentieth century. A text like Julian Rathbone's *The Mutiny* (2007), for example, can not only draw on historical accounts of the Indian mutiny but also on J.G. Farrell's fictional account of the 1857 mutiny in *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973). However, not all newer neo-Victorian texts place themselves explicitly in relation to the neo-Victorianism of earlier years. This connection – or lack of it – between twenty-first-century novels and their predecessors is one of the concerns my research considers. It plays a part in answering the question of how these texts, with their emphasis on realism and story-telling over formal experimentation, relate to earlier novels of the genre. Whereas the first neo-Victorian novels are most clearly connected to theories of postmodernism, later novels expand their critical contexts. This is most visible when it concerns novels' engagement with (non-)normative constructions of gender and sexuality. Despite the genre's grounding in Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the

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[70] Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*, p. 212.

[71] That neo-Victorianism is not only concerned with books and costume drama television series could be seen at the *Victoriana: The Art of Revival* exhibition at the Guildhall Art Gallery in London (September-December 2013), which included reinterpretations of Victorian hair art, of Staffordshire ceramic figures and an original Victorian statue from the Guildhall collection surrounded by hundreds of dead insects. Some images can be found in the accompanying publication *Victoriana: A Miscellany*, ed. by Sonia Solicari (London: Guildhall Art Gallery, 2013).

links between neo-Victorianism and postcolonial theory have received less consideration, indicating that this is still a site of tension. With this work on racial and sexual stereotyping I look at the way empire is used in neo-Victorianism to talk about both sexual and racial identity.

Postcolonial Neo-Victorianism: Racial, Sexual and Temporal Otherness

In "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985), postcolonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes: "It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored".[72] Although Spivak's text is from the mid-1980s, her statement only seems to have gained in significance when considering increasing engagement between contemporary fiction and the Victorian age. Spivak's statement about the representational role of Victorian fiction now has an extra dimension when thinking of the rising popularity of rewritings of the Victorian era. Where nineteenth-century authors may be forgiven for a lack of self-consciousness when writing about empire – after all, it was part of their everyday society – the same is not possible for writers of the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries, nor is it for readers of this period. Many authors of neo-Victorian literature have recognised this and have made use of the tension between present and past that is created by looking back on the British Empire of the nineteenth century. However, an even larger number of neo-Victorian authors

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[72] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism", *Critical Inquiry*, 12.1 (1985), 243-261 (p. 243). Note that Spivak uses 'British literature' in combination with 'England' rather than 'Britain'. In Chapter One of this thesis, I discuss the question of British versus English identity in more detail.

do not refer to Britain's colonial history at all. Nevertheless, I argue that, like Victorian writing, neo-Victorian literature cannot escape the influence of empire.

In "Preface for a Post-Postcolonial Criticism" (2003), Erin O'Connor refers to the opening of Spivak's "Three Women's Texts" and its influence on the connection between literature and postcolonial theory. O'Connor writes that, over the years, "it has become the self-imposed task of the postcolonial critic – by and large not a specialist in nineteenth-century literature or history – to describe the British novel's more worldly dimensions, to place it in a context that properly illuminates imperialism's determining influence on its ideology and its form".[73] In this process, O'Connor argues, Victorian novels in particular have become significant to postcolonial theorists, as they provide "a historical origin for a recognizably modern mode of imperialist thinking".[74] The use of the word 'historical' is significant, as it seems to ignore the fact that these novels may be a product of their time, but are also fictional constructions. O'Connor coins the portmanteau word 'Victorientalism', what she calls "the mining of a distant, exotic, threatening but fascinating literature to produce and establish a singularly self-serving body of knowledge elsewhere, a body of knowledge that ultimately has more to tell us about the needs of its producers than about its ostensible subject matter".[75] Although neo-Victorianism can be seen as Victorientalist in that it constructs the Victorian era as its exotic other, it also subverts the idea of a stable and easily identifiable Victorian period.

The claims O'Connor makes in her article have not been uncontested. Patrick Brantlinger validly accuses her of doing the exact same thing O'Connor claims Spivak is doing in taking just the one text and having it stand in for postcolonial criticism's

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[73] Erin O'Connor, "Preface for a Post-Postcolonial Criticism", *Victorian Studies*, 45.2 (2003), 217-246 (p. 219).
[74] O'Connor, "Preface for a Post-Postcolonial Criticism", p. 219.
[75] Ibid., p. 227.

treatment of Victorian literature as a whole.[76] Another critic, Deirdre David, writes that O'Connor's reassessment of postcolonial criticism "gets lost in a quite extraordinary fantasy of Victorianists and feminist critics held in some kind of mesmerizing thrall to Spivak's power".[77] Nevertheless, O'Connor's statement (or perhaps complaint) about the centrality of the Victorian novel for postcolonial theory is significant. Victorian colonialism can only be studied through the traces it has left and the novel is one such cultural trace.

In the third volume of *Time and Narrative* (1985), Paul Ricoeur discusses the multiple temporalities implied in the word 'trace': "On the one hand, the trace is visible here and now, as a vestige, a mark. On the other hand, there is a trace (or track) because 'earlier' a human being or animal passed this way. Something did something".[78] As Ricoeur sees it, the trace is both historical and present. He emphasises the necessity of present experience to give meaning to the trace: "Someone may say that the past survives by leaving a trace, and we become its heirs so that we can reenact past thoughts". At the same time, however, "a trace only becomes a trace of the past at the moment when its character of pastness is abolished by the atemporal act of rethinking the event in its internal thought".[79] The emphasis this passage puts on the trace as being something constructed or reconstructed in the present seems especially applicable to the genre of neo-Victorianism, which depends not just on the traces left by the Victorians themselves but also on our present-day reconstructions of them. By making the Victorians part of the present through contemporary rewritings and reconstructions, neo-Victorianism itself becomes a kind of trace. For postcolonial neo-

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[76] Patrick Brantlinger, "Let's Post-Post-Post 'Victorientalism': A Response to Erin O'Connor", *Victorian Studies*, 46.1 (2003), 97-105 (p.97)

[77] Deirdre David, "She Who Must Be Obeyed: A Response to Erin O'Connor", *Victorian Studies*, 46.1 (2003), 106-110 (p. 106).

[78] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* Volume 3, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1985]), p. 119.

[79] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* 3, p. 146.

Victorian texts, the relation to the present is even more significant as their reconstructions of Victorian colonial locations mediate the questionable boundaries between Western pride and the guilt experienced when thinking about colonialism's material and immaterial cost.

Thinking of Spivak's statement on the function of literature as part of a nation's (or other group's) cultural representation raises some questions on the function of neo-Victorian literature. As a contemporary genre, following Spivak, it offers a representation of our present-day culture. However, when neo-Victorian fiction discusses Victorian colonialism, a dual relation can be marked: on the one hand, a present-day connection where neo-Victorianism can be seen as an expression of contemporary concerns with regard to the consequences of the West's colonial past and on the other, a link to the Victorian period and its imperial policies. Although neo-Victorianism's engagement with nineteenth-century colonialism can be related to expressions of colonial concerns in the Victorian period, the link to the present is much more acute.

Heilmann and Llewellyn link postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction closely to postcolonial theory in their book by discussing a number of novels that "illustrate postcolonial neo-Victorianism's creative challenge to the critical theory concepts of hybridity and the silence of the subaltern".[80] However, whereas Heilmann and Llewellyn examine these texts and their relation to politics and critical theory generally, in this thesis I look more specifically at the representation of (racial and sexual) 'otherness' in neo-Victorian fiction. Considering the inherent contemporariness of neo-Victorianism, the way in which Victorian stereotypes are used in neo-Victorian fiction gives us insight into present-day social and multicultural constructions as a legacy of empire. By focusing on neo-Victorianism I do not want to

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[80] Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*, p. 69.

argue that the British Empire is the only empire that has left such traces. Nevertheless, because of its size and the fact that it remained in existence until relatively recently, its influence has remained very visible not just in Britain but also in large parts of the rest of the world.

Postcolonial neo-Victorianism can be interpreted in various ways. What is important for this thesis is that my definition is not limited to novels produced in former colonial countries or written by authors with a non-white or non-Western background (two potentially different things). The focus of this project is the content of the narratives. What these texts show is that Britain's colonial history and its present-day consequences is everyone's concern, not just that of people living in former colonies. In this thesis, I concentrate on a select number of neo-Victorian novels, so as to study closely the representation of the British Empire and its peoples in neo-Victorian fiction. As Edward Said attests in *Orientalism*, one of the key works to which this analysis is indebted, the nineteenth century saw the formation of a discourse of orientalism. Although not all texts I consider could be placed in the broad region of the Orient – an imaginary construction at times referring to the Middle East, at others also to the Far East – Said's work provides a frame of reference for the stereotypes that played so essential a role in Victorian culture and fiction and still do for neo-Victorian literature.

The figure of the other as described in *Orientalism* is used as a foil for the creation of a Western self. The pervasiveness of stereotypes of the oriental other indicates that people felt the need to shore up this Western identity. This process of identity-construction, which depends on a self-other binary, continues in neo-Victorian fiction, pointing to a present-day insecurity with regard to people's social, (multi)cultural or 'racial' identity. Said argues that the Orient is where Europe finds its non-Western

other, perhaps its ultimate other.[81] European culture, Said writes, "gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self".[82] For the orientalist, it is the very belief that there is such a thing as 'the Orient' that forms the underlying assumption of his or her work. In some ways, orientalist research can thus be considered self-referential (a tendency it shares with some neo-Victorian novels) in that it seeks meaning in that which forms the very grounds of the meaning-making process.

While Said's work informs much of my research, I am also aware of the critique that has been levelled against him. Homi Bhabha, for example, problematises Said's use of Foucauldian discourse and its relation to power.[83] According to Bhabha, Said claims that orientalism as a discourse is based on a fictive idea of a supposedly stable Orient. However, at certain points Said himself uses both 'the Orient' and orientalism as if they were fixed entities. In an article based on a conference talk, Bhabha explains the notion of "fixity" and its relation to stereotyping. According to Bhabha, "[f]ixitiy, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition".[84] The stereotype is described by Bhabha as fixity's "major discursive strategy", representing "an ambivalent mode of knowledge and power".[85] While Bhabha points out some of the limitations and difficulties of Said's work, it is still immensely valuable in analysing the representation of the colonial other in Victorian and neo-Victorian literature.

Said explicitly refers to the stereotypes that are part of the construction of a discourse of orientalism, many of which are related to sexuality. The Orient, Said

[81] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1.
[82] Ibid., p.3.
[83] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2004 [1994]), p. 103.
[84] Homi Bhahba, "The Other Question", *Screen* 24.6 (1983), 18-36 (p. 18).
[85] Bhabha, "The Other Question", p. 18.

writes, was – and sometimes still is – seen as a place of "not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire [and] deep generative energies".[86] Said makes an interesting link between the British colonies as a whole and the sexualised Orient: "Just as the various colonial possessions […] were useful as places to send wayward sons, superfluous populations of delinquents, poor people, and other undesirables, so the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe".[87] The Orient was thus created not only by the West but also for it, providing a coherent and 'manageable' discourse about the area and its peoples. This again links to Bhabha's article "The Other Question", which also describes how the stereotype as "that particular 'fixated' form of the colonial subject" can *facilitate* certain kinds of colonial relations as it "sets up a discursive form of racial and cultural opposition in terms of which colonial power is exercised".[88]

One of the questions that this research seeks to investigate is the use that is made of these ideas in neo-Victorian fiction and how this use relates to the connection between the present-day Western world and the 'types of others' it creates for itself today. An intriguing element, too, is the position of different twenty-first-century authors and readers: neo-Victorian novels are written and published in what used to be the centre of the empire as well as in its former colonies. Their popularity, too, is not limited to either one or the other region. Another interesting question thus concerns the role of the author's own background or country of origin and the popularity of postcolonial neo-Victorian novels across different regions. Still, the influence of the former British Empire remains visible, as most novels receiving critical acclaim are published in English, and English-language texts are able to reach a significantly more widespread public than texts in other languages. Even authors

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[86] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 188.
[87] Ibid., p. 190.
[88] Bhabha, "The Other Question", p. 31.

whose work displays an awareness of the linguistic issues involved in writing neo-Victorian fiction cannot escape this fact.[89]

An implication of the objectification of the Orient is that it has no independent identity, that all it rests on is its identity *as it has been created by the West*. As Said states: "the Orient ('out there' towards the East) is corrected, even penalized, for lying outside the boundaries of European society, 'our' world; the Orient is thus *Orientalized*".[90] Still, the assumption that, even at present, the various places loosely drawn together under the label 'the Orient' have no independent identity seems both reductive and a kind of neo-imperialism. Said's usage of the words 'corrected' and 'penalised' implies that for the Orient, the fact that it is out there, outside the boundaries of European society, has certain repercussions. This raises the question of what penalising the Orient means in this context and, more importantly, what the consequences of the Orient being penalised are, either for the Orient or the West.

The other term Said uses, the word 'corrected', implies that something wrong can be corrected to make it right again. This leads to the question whether the Orient can be made into something else. For it to be 'right' in this context would mean for it to be part of Europe, for Europe to extend its boundaries to include the Orient. While geographically this certainly does not happen, in some ways one can say that this is precisely what orientalism does. By turning the Orient and its peoples into a coherent discourse that can be grasped and understood, the Orient is made into something that can be recognised in the West. While Said focuses specifically on a binary distinction

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[89] In his 'Ibis trilogy', Indian author Amitav Ghosh overtly plays with the different kind of Englishes available to readers internationally. Nevertheless, even though it attempts not to prioritise one kind of English over another, it remains an English-language text. Minae Mizumura, author of *A True Novel* (2002, trans. 2013), which rewrites Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* in a post-war Japanese setting, also struggles with the role of English in relation to other languages. She describes this more extensively in *The Fall of Language in the Age of English* (2008, trans. 2015).

[90] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 67 (emphasis in original).

between Orient and Occident, his usage of the term 'orientalised' could be replaced by the word 'othered'. The use of 'correct' is also thought-provoking when it comes to neo-Victorian fiction that references the Orient, or Britain's former colonies more generally. What role does neo-Victorianism play in 'making the Orient right'? Does it problematise the description of colonial characters or is it guilty of continuing orientalist stereotyping by exoticising the non-Western other?

The discourse on orientalism that Said sees developing in the nineteenth century is based on the idea of the Orient as it was understood by the French and the British because Americans, Said writes, "will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East".[91] The fact that a relatively simple term like 'orient', stemming from the Latin word for east, came to denote such a significant area as well as the power structures connected to it – after all, the countries that are seen as part of the Orient have to be 'east of something' – once again stresses the care we have to take in using such terms. Unless we do, we are complicit in employing them to colonise and thereby make invisible other countries and cultures. Two notions that are at risk of doing just that are Britain and the British Empire.

Britain generally refers to the island that includes the countries England, Scotland and Wales. However, in many cases a risk exists of conflating England, as the most politically dominant country, with Britain. While I use 'Britain' in my writing, I do so with an awareness of its perils and where appropriate I refer to the separate countries that constitute the whole. Ireland here offers an especially complicated case, even more so now than in the Victorian era. Whereas in the nineteenth century, Ireland formed part of the United Kingdom, now only Northern Ireland is part of the Union, with the Republic of Ireland a separate country. This provides a site of tension for authors of

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[91] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1.

neo-Victorian fiction, who write with an awareness of the historical situation in the Victorian period but also of their own time.

Said's *Orientalism* addresses a broader range of stereotypes than those concerning sexuality. Theories of race also provided a means for the Victorians to distinguish themselves more clearly from their colonial others. As Said notes: "Theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality".[92] Part of this can be related to scientific developments that were taking place in the Victorian period, not the least the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and the social Darwinism that used his work and that of several other notable Victorian scientists to construct theories of human superiority and inferiority.

In the first decades of the Victorian period, the earlier nineteenth-century theories of monogenism and polygenism were still prominently discussed. Whereas monogenism claimed a single point of origin for all humans – even if it was more likely to be a group than one couple, in contradistinction to what biblical monogenism posited – polygenism saw multiple points of origin, arguing that "each race originated at a different time and in a geographically isolated and unique locale".[93] Although polygenistic theories of race remained in existence after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, they became harder to maintain after the publication of Darwin's next book on evolution, *The Descent of Man* (1871), wherein he specifically addressed the issue. This is significant because polygenism provided an excuse for both slavery and colonialism: a distinction between different races made it easier to argue that some were meant to rule and others to be subjected to this rule.

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[92] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 206.
[93] Ricardo B. Brown, *Until Darwin: Science, Human Variety and the Origins of Race* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), p. 6.

Bhabha's notion of hybridity, too, has its background in natural science and biology, where hybrid also means 'cross breed'. The idea of mixed breeding connects to the notion of racial purity and attendant threats of 'polluting' the white or Anglo-Saxon race if people were allowed to intermix freely. One of the questions with which Bhabha opens *The Location of Culture* is: "How are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)?".[94] This sense of liminality can apply to people who are described as having a mixed background or identity, but also in a more general sense, to those in-between places or phases of their lives. A further aspect that is extremely relevant to neo-Victorianism is the function of time. Neo-Victorian fiction, with its double connection to past and present, offers the reader a collection of characters that can also be seen as formed 'in-between', in this case in between the nineteenth and the twenty-first century. Characters in neo-Victorian fiction, or historical texts more generally, thus become hybrid figures, having to perform the balancing act of being considered 'true' to history but also to provide recognisable representations of people's contemporary problems. This is not to ignore characters' potential hybridity in other ways – the "race/class/gender, etc." that Bhabha refers to.[95]

Both Darwin himself and science in the broader sense frequently make an appearance in neo-Victorian novels. As Heilmann argues in "Neo-Victorian Darwin" (2014), having Darwin or a Darwin-like explorer in neo-Victorian fiction provides a link with present-day society's research ethics, tracing their beginnings to nineteenth-century natural and biological sciences. In these novels, "the figure of the neo-Darwinian explorer serves a mirror function, pointing as it does to current debates".[96]

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[94] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ann Heilmann, "Neo-Victorian Darwin: Representations of the Nineteenth-Century Scientist, Naturalist and Explorer in Twenty-First-Century Women's Writing", in *Reflecting on Darwin*,

Elodie Rousselot, however, argues that neo-Victorian fictions about Darwin as a heroic individual may enable readers to avoid making "a more serious examination of contemporary attitudes towards certain scientific figures and ideas".[97] This parallels Heilmann's concerns when it comes to neo-Victorian texts that focus on the relation between science and questions of race, gender and sexuality. As she points out, "the authors interrogate historical conceptualizations of racial and gendered hegemonies and contrast traditionalist-imperialist masculine characters with alternative figures [...] thereby attending to contemporary concerns about gendered approaches to science; yet they do not overturn conventional dichotomies", something that can be considered worrying.[98]

Contemporary negative representations of Victorian science are a relatively recent (re)development. Where the modernists portrayed the Victorians as self-righteous, hypocritical, prudish and stuffy, the latter twentieth century saw the emergence of a more positive approach.[99] At present, critics attempt to mediate the difficult road between respecting the Victorians' positive contributions to science while also recognising Victorian prejudices on the basis of race, class and sexuality and the way in which these continue to be of influence in the twenty-first century. Several neo-Victorian novels describe a scientific journey of discovery, whether fictional or more or less loosely based on an actual historical expedition. In going on such a journey, John Glendening writes in *Science and Religion in Neo-Victorian Novels* (2013), the characters cannot be seen separately from the British Empire: they represent and

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ed. by Eckart Voigts, Barbara Schaff and Monika Pietzrak-Franger (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 91-111 (p. 92).

[97] Elodie Rousselot, "Neo-Victorian Experiments with (Natural) History in Harry Karlinsky's *The Evolution of Inanimate Objects*", in *Exoticizing the Past in Contemporary Neo-Historical Fiction*, ed. by Elodie Rousselot (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 120-137 (p. 121).

[98] Heilmann, "Neo-Victorian Darwin", p. 92.

[99] One author showing a rather different side of four well-known Victorians is Lytton Strachey, whose book *Eminent Victorians* (1918) made fun of some well-known Victorian figures to show that they were not necessarily as great or morally superior as they had hitherto been presented.

export British imperial values.[100] This statement again points to the complicated connections with the Victorian period and the present in which neo-Victorian fiction is embroiled. As neo-Victorian literature is a contemporary genre, the descriptions it provides of nineteenth-century characters and their imperial values cannot be taken as a representation of Victorian values only. One of the things my research aims to draw out is the relationship between contemporary interest in Britain's nineteenth-century imperialism and neo-Victorian fiction's role in representing or managing the consequences of this same imperialism in the present. This includes a concern with postcolonial neo-Victorianism's approach to both race and sexuality and the ways in which these aspects contribute to characters' perception of their own and others' identities.

In the late nineteenth century, the science of the study of sex – sexology – was a topic of much discussion. In *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault quotes four strategies, what he calls "mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex": first, a "hysterization of women's bodies", next a "pedagogization of children's sex", thirdly a "socialization of procreative behavior" and finally a "psychiatrization of perverse pleasure".[101] Although Foucault does not focus on race in his descriptions of the creation of a discourse on sexuality – and in fact is often criticised for neglecting racial elements in the constitution of perverse or medicalised sexualities – the strategies he refers to can be related to developments on race as well as sex.[102] Carolyn Burdett, following this Foucauldian lead, describes how the final decades of the nineteenth century saw the development of a sexual science which not only created increasingly

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[100] John Glendening, *Science and Religion in Neo-Victorian Novels: Eye of the Ichthyosaur* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 85.
[101] Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*: *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, trans. by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1998 [1976]), pp. 103-105.
[102] Ann Laura Stoler provides a thorough analysis of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* in relation to race and colonialism, see *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995).

specific "classificatory systems by which new identities emerged to be [...] scrutinized as the perverse objects of medical knowledge" but also "took the population *en masse* as its object of enquiry – not as a model of normality, but as a great body needing regulation at the point of its most intimate sexual affairs".[103] Linking eugenics to feminism, Burdett argues that sexual science scrutinized both the working-class and middle-class family – especially its women – for a social Darwinian discourse on 'fitness' and 'unfitness' as potentially hereditary characteristics.

It does not seem coincidental that this scientific process of defining what were considered normative sexualities and, more significantly, what was to be seen as deviant, constituted a growing part of medicine and science at the same time that racial classifications became an object of concern. In fact, I would argue that the two are inescapably linked through a concern with racial purity and degeneration. In "The Race of Hysteria", Laura Briggs uses the medical discourse on hysteria as an entry into wider social anxiety about the changing position of women and the relation between sexual and racial concerns. According to Briggs, nervousness, the main form that hysteria was considered to take, was often seen as an illness caused by 'overcivilisation' – something she relates to degeneration. This being the case, "hysterical illness was the provenance almost exclusively of Anglo-American, native-born whites, specifically white women of a certain class".[104] As most symptoms of hysteria were seen to relate to women's reproductive system, hysteria "implicitly participated in a discourse of race and reproduction, one which identified white women of the middle and upper classes as endangering the race through their low fertility" – especially when compared to non-

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[103] Carolyn Burdett, "The Hidden Romance of Sexual Science: Eugenics, the Nation and the Making of Modern Feminism", in *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*, ed. by Lucy Bland and Laura Doan (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp. 44-59 (p. 44; emphasis in original).
[104] Laura Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology", *American Quarterly*, 25.2 (2000), 246-273 (p. 246).

white women and poor people who, according to nineteenth-century sexologists, were much less prone to suffering from nervous diseases.[105] The feminist struggles that several neo-Victorian novels describe, either implicitly by having a female protagonist as speaking subject or explicitly by narrating the lives of women fighting for a more equal society, can thus be seen as framed by a racial discourse.

Late nineteenth-century sexology "reconceptualized these forms of white women's struggle for social and political autonomy from white men as a racial threat. That is, by insisting that white women were becoming sterile and weak while non-white women remained fertile and strong, it encoded white women's transgressive behavior as a danger to the future of 'the race'".[106] Describing the importance of eugenic discourse to feminism, Burdett claims that "eugenics uniquely focused attention on the woman's sexual identity in order to answer the question of what mothering is *for*". By making procreative sexuality a key element in the creation of a modern nation, eugenics "produced maternity in the modern world as a national and racial imperative".[107] While many neo-Victorian novels do focus on sexual relationships, whether marital relations or those 'on the side', children seldom play a significant role. Although portrayals of mixed-race relationships are rare, cross-class relations are more common. Some of the novels analysed in this thesis do reference relationships across racial boundaries, but there is little explicit discussion of such connections. This very lack of attention to a topic intimately related to so many of the notions that neo-Victorianism challenges is in itself significant.

The very empire that 'required' a strong white British people to rule it also provided much of the dangers threatening white masculinity. The "socialization of procreative behaviour" that Foucault mentions is a clear example of this need to keep the race

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[105] Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria", p. 247.
[106] Ibid., p. 250.
[107] Burdett, "The Hidden Romance of Sexual Science", p. 57 (emphasis in original).

strong and pure – within Britain, by limiting the mixing of different classes, and in the colonies, by aiming to avoid the mixing of British and so-called native blood.[108] Fear of degeneration played a role in the context of overcivilisation mentioned by Briggs but was also used to discourage mixed-race unions, as the offspring that resulted from such unions was thought to be located further down the evolutionary scale. Consequently, they would inherit the worst characteristics of both parents and, by extension, of both races.[109] Interestingly, however, of the few neo-Victorian novels that reference mixed-race relationships, even fewer concern themselves explicitly with this perceived danger of racial mixing. The limited number of texts exploring this theme are often set at the very end of the Victorian period or in the early twentieth century.[110] While sexuality plays a significant part in many neo-Victorian novels, procreation clearly receives much less attention.

In "The Afterlife of the Victorian Novel", Anne Humpherys specifically distinguishes between the different uses of a Victorian setting by splitting contemporary novels on the era into 'retro' Victorian and 'aftered' Victorian texts. Whereas the 'retro' texts return to the Victorian period with a nostalgic rather than a critical purpose, 'aftered' novels do so with an eye for "the significant gaps and omissions of the Victorian novel".[111] The gaps to which Humpherys refers concern what she sees as the absence of questions of gender and sexuality, of race and class in the

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[108] Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 105.

[109] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), p. 213.

[110] One example is Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999), although it is more concerned with the mixed-race union itself than any potentially degenerated offspring. In Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* (2005), one of the texts considered in Chapter One, much of the narrative is presented as a consequence of George's mixed background (he has a Scottish mother and an Indian father) but Barnes does not refer to, for example, notions of degeneration. David Rocklin's *The Luminist* (2011), which I discuss in Chapter Three, hints at the 'risks' of racial mixing at the end of the novel but does not make any explicit statements about mixed-race children.

[111] Anne Humpherys, "The Afterlife of the Victorian Novel: Novels about Novels" in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 442-457 (p. 444).

Victorian novel. Indeed, she comments, "one could almost say cynically that the purpose of these novels in terms of the Victorian novel is simply 'to put the sex in'", with a secondary objective of describing "women's experiences and consciousness, and then those of race, ethnicity, and imperialism".[112] However, whether the Victorians require the twenty-first century to put the sex in their era has been questioned from multiple angles. In *The Other Victorians*, for example, Steven Marcus not only looks at the different forms and genres that Victorian pornography could take but also argues that the idea of the Victorians as sexually repressed needed some updating.

In his analysis of Victorian pornography, Marcus shows that oriental stereotypes were not only created and expanded on the basis of political stories, travelogues and artworks. As he finds, oriental men and women make regular appearances in nineteenth-century pornography. While Marcus is more focused on the construction of what he calls a 'pornotopia', a place where, when it comes to sex in all its forms and shapes, everyone is always ready for everything, his analysis of texts like the early nineteenth-century erotic novel *The Lustful Turk* (1828) indicates how common oriental stereotypes were in nineteenth-century pornography.[113] Many stories, *The Lustful Turk* among them, feature sultans or other powerful Eastern moguls. The harem with its focus on femininity forms a key image, both in more mainstream artworks and in pornographic art and writing.

As a space that is not accessible to male travellers, the oriental harem becomes central in Victorian imaginations of the Orient. Although sexualised, male representations changed when Victorian women travelled to oriental countries and described or depicted their experiences of the harem as a space of female friendship, without sexual connotations, the lure of a secret, invisible place full of sensual, exotic

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[112] Humpherys, "The Afterlife of the Victorian Novel", pp. 446-47.
[113] Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009 [1966]), p. 268.

women continued to appeal to the orientalist imagination. Interestingly enough, though, this very common image of the Victorian period does not occur much in neo-Victorian writing.[114] One reason for this is that neo-Victorian novels writing about race and ethnicity seem to be more concerned with the 'threat' of other races coming to Britain. Also, postcolonial neo-Victorian novels far more often write about India and about settler colonies like Australia and New Zealand than they do about the Middle East, Egypt being the only country that features regularly.

Most postcolonial neo-Victorian novels available in English are written by Western authors.[115] Many are from Britain – English authors Philip Hensher, Julian Barnes and Matthew Kneale are just a few examples – though recently an interest in the Victorian period can be seen in other European literatures.[116] Again, the exceptions are former settler colonies in Oceania, home to well-known authors like Kate Grenville, Peter Carey, Richard Flanagan and Gail Jones, who have received both popular and critical acclaim with their books on the complicated relation between Britain and those colonies. While writing back to the British Empire is not only a Western concern, postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction appears to be more prominently present in the West. How much of this is related to the omnipresence of the English language can be questioned, of course. Another reason, though, may be that the traces of the Victorian past are engaged with differently in the West, or that there is a stronger need to return

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[114] A powerful exception to this non-representation of the harem can be found in Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999) who explicitly shows an awareness of orientalist narratives in her novel, informed by her own cultural history.

[115] Two of the few exceptions are Soueif and the Indian Amitav Ghosh, author of the well-known neo-nineteenth-century/early Victorian 'Ibis trilogy' *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011) and *Flood of Fire* (2015), set around the nineteenth-century opium trade between India and China. It is significant that both these non-Western authors strongly engage with British imperialism and its legacies.

[116] Some examples are Carina Burman's Swedish neo-Victorian novel *Babylons Gator: Et Londonmysterum* (2004; translated as *The Streets of Babylon: A London Mystery*), Jean-Pierre Ohl's *Monsieur Dick ou Le Dixième Livre* (2004; translated from French as *Mister Dick or the Tenth Book*) and Iliya Troyanov's German novel *Der Weltensammler* (2006; translated as *The Collector of Worlds* in 2008).

to or work through the legacies of the Victorian era. These legacies include an engagement with the ways in which racial and sexual identity is constructed and represented in neo-Victorian fiction, something that is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Stereotyping 'the Other': Race, Sexuality and Non-Normativity in Neo-Victorian Fiction

In *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (2012), Elizabeth Ho analyses the relation that neo-Victorianism has with the Victorian period and its cultural and material legacies. While neo-Victorian studies, in Ho's words, interrogates "what is gained" by "re-evaluat[ing] or even jettison[ing] the term 'Victorian'", there are blind spots when it comes to what she calls "the colonizing potentials of the same terminology".[117] Thus, when 'Victorian' is conflated with empire, "neo-Victorian studies might be seen as implicated in its own 'Victorian' project to colonize *all* historical fiction set in the nineteenth century, regardless of geographical or cultural differences, for academic and nonacademic consumers".[118] Some authors openly admit to their use of neo-Victorianism in such a broad manner, like Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben in their introduction to *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma* (2010). They state that in their collection, the neo-Victorian novel is used "in a generic sense of literature re-imagining and engaging the nineteenth century in global terms, not necessarily confined to only British or Britain's colonial contexts".[119] In "Mining the Neo-Victorian

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[117] Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (London: Continuum, 2012), p. 10.
[118] Ho, *Memory of Empire,* p. 10 (emphasis in original).
[119] Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, "Introduction: Bearing After-Witness to the Nineteenth Century, in *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth-Century Suffering* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 1-34 (p. 3).

Vein" (2014), Kohlke is even more explicit about the broad applicability of the term neo-Victorianism:

> at this comparatively early stage in the critical project, I advocate employing 'neo-Victorian' (albeit provisionally) as a generic and integrative umbrella term to encompass virtually all historical fiction related to the nineteenth century, irrespective of authors' or characters' nationalities, the plots' geographical settings, the language of composition or, indeed, the extent of narratives' self-consciousness, postmodernism, adaptivity or otherwise.[120]

In a more recent article, Kohlke does state that "there is still much debate about the appropriateness and parameters of the term 'neo-Victorian', carrying as it does connotations of Britishness and hence implicated in a potential cultural neo-imperialism when applied to other geographical, especially non-Anglophone contexts and other nations' historical fictions set in the nineteenth century".[121] While she follows this with the statement that despite these complications, "'neo-Victorianism' has emerged as the favoured term", I am wary of using neo-Victorianism in a way that constitutes a further colonising project by drawing fiction that is not necessarily related to Britain into a narrative of British influence.[122] As such, my research aims to be judicious in its use of 'Victorian' and 'neo-Victorian' so as to be aware of the terms' colonising potential.

Ho focuses on neo-Victorianism as a genre of historical fiction with an agenda that "includes 'writing back' to empire [...] as an act of revision" and simultaneously sees neo-Victorian texts as giving voice "to feelings of regression and return that manifest themselves in often noncontestatory, even celebratory evocations of the nineteenth

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[120] Marie-Luise Kohlke, "Mining the Neo-Victorian Vein: Prospecting for Gold, Buried Treasure and Uncertain Metal", in *Neo-Victorian Literature and Culture: Immersions and Revisitations*, ed. by Nadine Boehm-Schnitker and Susanne Gruss (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 21-37 (p. 27).

[121] Marie-Luise Kohlke, "'Abominable Pictures': Neo-Victorianism and the Tyranny of the Sexual Taboo", in *Transforming Anthony Trollope: Dispossession, Victorianism and Nineteenth-Century Word and Image*, ed. by Simon Grennan and Laurence Grove (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), pp. 151-174 (p. 167, note 1).

[122] Kohlke, "Abominable Pictures", p. 167, note 1.

century".[123] What is interesting here is that Ho engages in her own colonising project by equating the Victorian period with the nineteenth century. Mitchell, on whose work Ho builds, describes this, also using the terminology of colonisation: "'Victorian' [...] is a term that, since Victoria's death, has accumulated multifarious and often contradictory meanings and which often colonises the several decades both before and after her reign".[124] In this thesis, both terms occur but while the nineteenth century covers almost all of the Victorian period, the same is not true the other way around and I remain aware of this distinction.

Ho sees neo-Victorianism as "an expression of such colonial hauntings in which the international reappearance of the nineteenth century works as a kind of traumatic recall", where "the legacy of empire asserts itself as an obstacle toward imagining a viable future".[125] For Ho, the themes and topics of neo-Victorian novels are set by traumatic experiences in the British Empire's past, both for the former colonies and for their metropole. This question of the direction in which neo-Victorian fiction should be read is also raised in Helen Davies' *Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction* (2012). In this book, Davies wonders whether it is neo-Victorian fiction that gives voice to those Victorians who were either unable to speak or who would not be heard in their own time period, or if instead "Victorian precursors ultimately dictate the script of neo-Victorian fiction".[126] Davies' question is connected to the point of agency: who is it that provides the voice behind these writings and who occupies the position of power in this exchange of experiences over time? Many neo-Victorian "re-voicings", as Davies calls them, represent those subjects "who have been

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[123] Ho, *Memory of Empire*, p. 11.
[124] Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory*, p. 40; for Ho's description of her use of Mitchell see Ho, *Memory of Empire*, p. 15.
[125] Ho, *Memory of Empire*, p. 11.
[126] Helen Davies, *Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction: Passionate Puppets* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 6.

largely absent from the traditional master discourse of history, a narrative which privileges patriarchy, heteronormativity, eurocentricity and the 'able-bodied'".[127] Neo-Victorianism takes up the forgotten or ignored characters of history, what Hutcheon describes as the "ex-centric", as an expression of contemporary society's own difficulty in dealing with these people.[128] This difficulty is something that must be overcome in today's increasingly internationalised, multicultural world.

Whereas Ho sees neo-Victorian fiction as a form of 'traumatic recall' and Davies stresses the influence of Victorian voices, Mariadele Boccardi, in *The Contemporary British Historical Novel* (2009), argues that recent historical fiction, like the neo-Victorian novel, projects itself and its narrative backwards onto Victorian novels.[129] She explicitly references ideas of heritage and nostalgia, suggesting that both authors and readers see neo-Victorian fiction as an escape and as a method to return to a past where Britain played a more prominent position on the world stage. Contemporary historical novelists thus find themselves in a kind of double bind. On the one hand, writing in a postmodern (or even post-postmodern) period, they are supposed to concur with postmodernism's scepticism towards larger constructions of unified identity, the nation being one of them. However, at the same time, "the retrospective dwelling on the past that is required of them as historical novelists and that past's uncertain transmission and ideologically bound representation inevitably leads these authors to a reflection on the particular national experience that shapes the present's relationship to the past", an experience that for Britain is referenced through its role as metropole

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[127] Davies, *Gender and Ventriloquism*, p. 3.

[128] Hutcheon uses the term 'ex-centric' to refer to people who are at the same time inside and outside, identified with the centre but never in it. In her view, postmodernism offers the potential for a shift of perspective that respects difference, while it also evades the danger of "essentializ[ing] its ex-centricity or render[ing] itself complicit in the liberal humanist notions of universality (speaking for all ex-centrics) and eternality (forever)". *Poetics*, p. 69.

[129] Mariadele Boccardi, *The Contemporary British Historical Novel: Representation, Nation, Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 13.

of a world empire and the subsequent loss of that empire, at least in Boccardi's view.[130] The consequence of this is that authors return to what should be considered heritage instead of history, what Boccardi describes as "the version of the past popularly available and popularly conceived".[131] That this popular version of the past, also portrayed in television adaptations of Victorian fiction, is often a 'white' version is something that has only recently started to be questioned, a challenge in which especially twenty-first-century neo-Victorian fiction plays a role, as this thesis aims to show. The interconnections between race and sexuality play a significant role when engaging with the ways in which neo-Victorianism looks back upon Victorian Britain's empire.

An influential critic on the interconnection between race and sex is Judith Butler. Butler refuses to split sexuality and gender from the other aspects that add to how people's identities are perceived. What would it mean, she asks in *Bodies That Matter* (1993), "to consider the assumption of sexual positions, the disjunctive ordering of the human as 'masculine' or 'feminine' as taking place not only through a heterosexualizing symbolic with its taboo on homosexuality, but through a complex set of racial injunctions which operate in part through the taboo on miscegenation"?[132] Instead of separating categories of 'race', 'sexuality' and 'sexual difference', Butler claims that "the one cannot be constituted save through the other".[133] Butler argues against psychoanalytic feminists who stress the primacy of sexual difference over other forms of diversity, trying to do away with the invisibility of whiteness as a racial category that is often seen (or not seen) in these theories.[134]

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[130] Boccardi, *Contemporary British Historical Novel*, p. 16.
[131] Ibid., p. 99.
[132] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 2011 [1993]), p. 122.
[133] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 123.
[134] Ibid., p. 135.

Summarising her key concept of 'performativity' in a new preface to the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes: "the performativity of gender revolves around [...] the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effect through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration".[135] Butler claims that because of this socially enforced performativity, "gender is an 'act' [...] that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status".[136] In "Critically Queer" (1993), an article in which Butler responds to some of the uses to which her book *Gender Trouble* had been put, she further describes performativity as something that "*consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice'*".[137] According to Butler, gender is thus not something inherent and fixed but something that has to be constantly recreated and reaffirmed. In doing so, however, what Butler calls the performed sign of gender simultaneously shows its very instability and opens itself up to shifts in the repetition.[138] As it is being reiterated, gender performativity also provides an opportunity to destabilise its representations.

Although many critics draw on categories of gender and sexuality in their analysis of neo-Victorian novels, their connection with the aspect of race remains underrepresented. Butler's notion of gender as a constantly repeated performance links

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[135] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2008 [1990]), p. xv.
[136] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 200.
[137] Judith Butler, "Critically Queer", *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (1993), 17-32 (p. 24, emphasis in original).
[138] Butler, "Critically Queer", p. 26.

to the discussion of neo-Victorianism and reader expectations in the section on 'Neo-Victorianism's Postmodern Roots'. As the number of neo-Victorian novels grows and readers are more likely to be familiar with them, authors will have to choose whether they repeat a familiar portrayal of the Victorian era, or open up the genre to a more diverse repertoire of representations. At present, neo-Victorianism is described as a genre that subverts Victorian fictional norms as well as reader expectations. As the neo-Victorian genre expands, we can ask whether it not only has to subvert Victorian norms but also neo-Victorian ones.

In the section on "Neo-Victorianism's Postmodern Roots" earlier in this chapter, I discussed the potential clash between neo-Victorianism's popularity and its potential for subversion. Critics like Gutleben, Kohlke and Humpherys have difficulty agreeing about the role of explicit references to and descriptions of (non-normative) sexual acts in relation to a text's subversive potential. In an article titled "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel: Orientalising the Nineteenth Century in Contemporary Fiction" (2011), Kohlke uses the term 'sexsation' to refer to what she feels is an obsessive interest in Victorian sexuality. That 'Victorian' is synonymous with sexual repression and restraint is a theory that many historians and literary theorists have tried to dismantle. However, Kohlke writes, this has seemingly led to a move in the opposite direction: "our fascination with Victorian sexuality seems to derive largely from depictions of such anomalous practices as child prostitution and sexual slavery".[139] This attraction to the more dubious side of Victorian sexuality is part of what makes neo-Victorian novels so popular, according to Kohlke.

Kohlke claims that rather than using subversive representations of sexuality to challenge contemporary readers about their own sexual stereotypes and their relation to other expressions of people's identities, neo-Victorian fiction instead "panders to a

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[139] Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel" p. 55.

seemingly insatiable desire for imagined perversity".[140] She continues by arguing that perhaps neo-Victorianism serves as "a cynical mirror of our own time's sexual glut and disillusionment with so-called sexual revolutions".[141] By placing sexuality in a time that, regardless of historians' efforts, is still seen as backwards when it comes to sexual enlightenment, readers can simultaneously indulge in these descriptions of sexual practices and reassert their own assumed superiority and supposed enlightened views. In a more recent article, Kohlke argues how (sexual) repression turns into a requirement for neo-Victorian subversion, as "without repression, it would no longer *be* subversion and lose all its audacious potential to shock, infringe, defile, profane, and scandalise".[142] Sexual novelty in contemporary society has largely been exhausted, or so Kohlke claims, but going back to perverse forms of sexuality in a Victorian context, what she calls "reading for defilement", is intended "to whet jaded appetites with something 'different', even if nauseatingly so".[143]

Both Gutleben and Kohlke argue that neo-Victorian novels, especially more recent ones, either use sexuality as something that sells, or only reference a constructed Victorian 'backwardness' with regard to sexuality to stress our supposed twenty-first-century enlightened views on the subject. While characters in neo-Victorian novels are often far from sexually backwards, the reader is invited to contrast these *neo*-Victorian characters with implicitly referenced stereotypes of Victorian prudishness. Kohlke refers to the interest of the contemporary reader of neo-Victorian fiction in the Victorians' 'secret' sex lives. Coming to 'know' these secrets "in order to censure and pillory, to boo and hiss" can become "an all too convenient means of 'un-knowing' our own world of sex, even of reasserting our own sexual rights and freedoms by neglecting

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[140] Ibid.
[141] Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel", p. 56.
[142] Kohlke, "Abominable Pictures", p. 155.
[143] Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel", p. 56.

those of others".[144] Gutleben writes that "within the frame of a faithful reconstruction of Victorian narrative, any infringement of the codes of decency, and particularly the irruption of sex, will acquire a subversive quality".[145] Referring to the reader's expectations, Gutleben states that the use of explicit sexual language in neo-Victorian novels "outrageously breaks the reading contract" previously established.[146] Whether this is true, though, can be questioned. As neo-Victorian fictions become better-known, readers may no longer relate the texts to Victorian novels, but instead come to expect explicit sexuality as an inherent part of neo-Victorian adaptations.

Gutleben claims that temporal and cultural distance is what makes sex in neo-Victorian novels subversive: "sexual overtness has no disruptive power in itself, it is only the conjunction of sex and crinolines which provides the delicious thrill of scandal".[147] Gutleben finishes his argument by claiming that "the irruption of sex in a Victorian context which at first sight appears subversive can paradoxically erode a novel's power of subversion".[148] Nevertheless, he does offer an opening for neo-Victorian subversive sex, for only if "the exploitation of sex is not accompanied by other radical contravening of Victorian conventions, it seems undeniable that the sexual dimension [...] is at the service of the seduction of the novel's readership".[149] This is more than Kohlke does, as for her, the exhaustion of sexual novelty has only led to more perverse narratives. However, one of Kohlke's final statements in this part of her discussion does emphasise the contemporariness of neo-Victorianism: "If neo-Victorian sexuality is primarily represented as a crisis of anxiety and guilt, it signals such a crisis not merely in the past but, more significantly, in our own time also".[150]

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[144] Ibid., p. 59.
[145] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, pp. 172-73.
[146] Ibid., p. 173.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Gutleben, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, p. 176.
[149] Ibid., pp. 175-76.
[150] Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel", p. 59.

This statement again demonstrates the connection to the present time that critics see in neo-Victorian fiction.

Kohlke and Gutleben see neo-Victorian novels' use of sexuality, especially their descriptions of non-normative, perverse or violent sexuality, as an expression of today's society's tiredness when it comes to sexuality. Readers appear to require the shock-value of perversely detailed descriptions and neo-Victorian fiction seems happy to offer it to them. On the one hand, this enables the reader to feel superior about what appears to be their age of sexual enlightenment. At the same time, however, it may also open up new avenues of engaging with the Victorian past as well as readers' own present. Emily Scott, for example, argues that fictional characters' "dark impulses to seek out the forbidden, the shocking, or the disturbing may prompt the reader to engage in the process of exploring their own psychological terrain and to confront the Other *within* the self".[151] In this way, Scott claims, neo-Victorian narratives are able to decentre binary distinctions between what is inside of the self, and what is outside and other.[152] Engaging with outrageous representations of sexual otherness in a way intended to scandalise may thus lead not only to readers achieving a congratulatory sense of their own society and identity but can also challenge them to confront their own fascination with otherness.

In her article on neo-Victorian 'sexsationalism', Kohlke discusses otherness in a broader context. She presents an intriguing theory about the connection between the Victorian period, the present day and neo-Victorian fiction. Just as the Victorians turned to the East to locate what they saw as the 'other' to their British, rational selves, contemporary society – or at least its authors and readers – make a similar move.

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[151] Emily Scott, "'We were again on the trail of cannibals': Consuming Trauma and Frustrating Exoticism in Robert Edric's *The Book of the Heathen*", in *Exoticizing the Past in Contemporary Neo-Historical Fiction*, ed. by Elodie Rousselot (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 69-83 (pp. 71-72).

[152] Scott, "Consuming Trauma", p. 81.

However, rather than find its 'other' in a geographically different location, present-day readers and writers have recourse to neo-Victorianism by constituting the Victorian as their exotic temporal other. This notion of 'sexsationalism' relates to what O'Connor described as 'Victorientalism': both are readerly (or writerly) constructions that function to exoticise the Victorian era.[153] Kohlke quotes from *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism* (1994) by Bryan S. Turner, who argues that "Otherness has been domesticated [...] Islam is increasingly [...] part of the 'inside' of the Western world".[154] Following upon the fragment Kohlke references, however, Turner states: "Islam functions as a profound cultural challenge to the Western political system, but this challenge is from within".[155] 'Domesticated' here clearly does not imply that the Islamic other is no longer in a relationship of tension with the Western self. As such, I would be hesitant about using the word 'within' to describe its position. Kohlke's assumption that oriental otherness has been replaced by a Victorian other ignores the modern-day role of orientalism in constructing the other within Western society. Nevertheless, her argument is worth pursuing further.

Following Turner's description of Islam as 'inside', Kohlke argues that as the Orient can no longer be placed or found somewhere 'out there', in the further reaches of what used to be the British Empire, writers now "turn to their own culture to discover or, more accurately, *(re)construct* a substitute Other".[156] Rather than looking for a geographically located 'other', these authors, through "a process of self-estrangement via nostalgic displacement and simulation", now turn to the image that has been constructed of the Victorians as imagined others that can take over the position of the

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[153] O'Connor, "Preface", p. 227.
[154] Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 183. Cited in Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel", p. 69.
[155] Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism*, p. 184.
[156] Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel", p. 69 (emphasis in original).

oriental other.[157] Instead of portraying a stereotypical self/other (power) relation between the West and East, the same relationship is now projected upon the relation between a construction of the twenty-first-century enlightened self and the supposedly backward Victorians. Kohlke argues that like "the obscene Victorian texts on which they draw, sexsational neo-Victorian novels become 'portable fantasies of personal empire'".[158] This statement places responsibility on the reader of the texts as much as on its creator, for it is through reading that individuals construct their own fantastic narratives.

Kohlke's argument about the Victorian other replacing an oriental other can be connected to Scott's argument about the other inside the self. Although readers of neo-Victorianism may distance their own enlightened selves from what they see as Victorian society's backwardness, this does mean that they construct a white, Western other rather than one that is racially other. Furthermore, as postcolonial neo-Victorian novels often construct tight links between voyeurism, (sexual) objectification and racial otherness, this also confuses a distinction between the other within and the other without. Many neo-Victorian novels portray the exotic as erotic; difference in this case is construed as something that can make someone attractively other. Much of this can be related to nineteenth-century stereotypes of sexuality and race.

Oriental stereotypes of places like the seraglio and of the inhabitants of 'the Orient' that were so common in the Victorian period are rarely found in neo-Victorian fiction, so perhaps in this sense Kohlke is right in her references to political correctness being responsible for the reduction of orientalist stereotypes. Also, neo-Victorian fiction may, as Kohlke writes, replace "the seraglio with nineteenth century backstreets, brothels and bedrooms".[159] However, this does not mean that either orientalism or the

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[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

Victorian imperial past have ceased to play a role in neo-Victorian fiction. Rather, as I argue in this introductory chapter, neo-Victorianism is not just a looking-back, a return to the Victorians and what they stood for, but constitutes an expression of highly contemporary concerns. The interest in the oriental or colonial other has taken another form and while in some respects it is indeed the Victorian era that is exoticised, this does not mean that there is no exoticism other than period fetishisation. Although the seraglio as a symbol of orientalism is no longer as relevant at present, the portrayal of the difficulties that Western characters have with Eastern culture is. This can be made visible either by directly representing a character's mind and describing his or her feelings and experiences or by a character's distinct non-engagement with foreign cultures.

Considering the arguments of critics like Gutleben and Kohlke, I concur that sex as a theme in literature is not subversive *in itself*. The use of sex may serve as a marketing ploy with the Victorian period providing temporal displacement to make that sex interesting in a way that it can no longer be in an age where sexual novelty has seemingly been exhausted. Nevertheless, sex can be used as a device to explicate certain social and cultural developments, where the relation between Victorian and contemporary ideas about sex can be used to upset constructions of (imagined) histories. It is possible to argue, based on the comparatively limited number of neo-Victorian novels that are concerned with the legacies of postcolonialism and the legacies of racism, that race is replacing sex as a subversive subject. As with sexuality, however, I would state that writing about race is not subversive in itself, it only becomes so when put to certain uses in a narrative. While writing about sexuality requires a context of supposedly repressed Victorians to be able to titillate the reader, racial questions are still subversive in the present, even without the temporal and cultural distance of the Victorian era.

In the section "Postcolonial Neo-Victorianism" above, orientalism was described as a process that turned a diverse collection of people, cultures and countries into a coherent discourse. This discourse used a collection of stereotypes which were continually reaffirmed by people's experiences, whether they were about sexuality or connected to a more general notion of backwardness and degeneracy. The constant reaffirmation of existing ideas and expectations can be related to neo-Victorianism which, like the Orient, is something about which people have strong preconceptions, based on their experience of Victorian fiction as well as the 'discourse' of Victorianism, formed by constructed 'memories' of the Victorian period. This being the case, people often approach the neo-Victorian genre with strong assumptions of what they will – or want to – encounter. However, whereas Said argues that orientalist expectations were not only met but strengthened in encounters with the Orient, the same is not necessarily true for neo-Victorianism.[160] Instead, many neo-Victorian novels try their best to turn the expectations back on the reader and enforce awareness of these expectations by not meeting them.

Neo-Victorianism can use ironical or metafictional devices to shake the reader out of a complacency induced by the expectation of encountering a Victorian story in a comfortably modern package. Whereas neo-Victorian novels from the 1960s to early 1990s mostly use formal and metafictional devices to remind the reader that he or she is reading a neo-Victorian rather than a Victorian novel, recent neo-Victorian novels represent (and question the use of) non-normative sexuality and, in some cases, racial otherness in ways not usually found in Victorian literature. In contradistinction to what Kohlke refers to as "reading for defilement", this thesis aims to show that these novels are more than a 'cheap thrill', that in fact the ease with which they seduce the reader into their story is another way in which they display the very contemporariness

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[160] Said, *Orientalism*, p. 52.

of these rewritings of Victorian sexuality and empire as well as the critical controversies they engage with.[161]

Mirroring Contemporary Society in Postcolonial Neo-Victorianism: A Blurred Reflection

For a genre that has its foundation in, among others, a text with such postcolonial critical ramifications as *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the comparative lack of attention given to questions of race and its connections to class, gender and sexuality seems odd, especially when adding the extra complication of multiple temporalities. A tense critical relation is visible between the Victorian period and the way the age is viewed or remembered in twenty-first-century neo-Victorian fiction. This structure of tension becomes even more complicated when bringing in the triple distance of the Victorian era, its relation to twentieth-century neo-Victorianism and the way we now view both these periods and their connection to contemporary neo-Victorian literature. Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, for example, at present serves not only as a text that looks back on the Victorian period but also as a source for the ideas about the Victorian era that were current in the 1960s.

In Victorian novels, the role of the British Empire seems one that is difficult to ignore, even if not all texts directly express the nineteenth-century concern with empire. However, for contemporary authors, the decision to write about the relation between the Victorian period and its empire is a sign of something different. Whereas the British Empire in Victorian fiction is both hidden and part of "the cultural representation of England to the English", authors of neo-Victorian fiction use empire as a trope to express contemporary concerns – concerns that often are, or at least are

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[161] Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel", p. 56; see also Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*, p. 107.

presented as, a consequence of decisions taken during the existence of Victorian Britain's Empire.[162] The most visible of these is of course today's 'multicultural society', where being from Western Europe and being a person of colour are certainly no longer mutually exclusive. Orientalism as described by Edward Said does not just depict the creation or existence of a discourse on the Orient and its inhabitants, but also shows the construction of a discourse on 'the other'. Even though society now includes the very others it constructed to identify itself against, that does not mean that they have become *the same* as the Western self. Otherness remains an essential factor in the creation of social, cultural and national identities. If the way in which this happens is now distinctly different due to the internet, mass media and a world that (figuratively, at least) becomes smaller all the time, that does not mean that the process in itself has changed.

The nineteenth century's artificial opposition between the Orient and Occident, which, in Bhabha's words, "unleashed the exclusionary imperialist ideologies of self and other", did not end with Victoria's reign.[163] While state imperialism, created with the formation of independent states, mostly ended after the Second World War, neo-imperial power relations, based on former constructions of colony and metropole, remain strongly present. Many of the nineteenth-century sites of political tension and war have again become points of crisis. Curiously, however, little resonance of this is noticeable in neo-Victorianism. Connections between the dubiously nicknamed 'Great Game' that played out between Britain and the Russian Empire over Afghanistan and the wars that flared up in the region after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 are rarely made, for example. That 9/11 itself, as an extremely traumatic experience of loss, is not linked to colonial wars of the Victorian period is understandable, but the fact

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[162] Spivak, "Three Women's Texts", p. 243.
[163] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 29.

that it led to a strengthening of oriental stereotypes, many of which are still based on the Victorian discourse of orientalism, may point to this discourse as a renewed site of tension that authors or publishers of neo-Victorian fiction are hesitant to approach.

Neo-Victorianism is here considered as a genre that constitutes both an expression of and a response to popular culture. The divisions and connections inherent in the power relations between former colonies and imperial centres are still evident and expressed in popular fiction, which signals their prevalence in today's culture. At the same time, the fact that so many things are *not* discussed and remain unwritten – critical approaches to the representation of race in neo-Victorianism often among them – implies that neo-Victorianism is either wary of or deliberately distancing itself from certain topics.

In this thesis, I engage with neo-Victorian fiction's seeming reluctance to approach postcolonial power relations and the traces left on present-day society by nineteenth-century approaches to racial otherness, both in theory and in everyday culture. I analyse a number of twenty-first-century neo-Victorian novels by looking at their representation of sexual and racial stereotyping within three different settings. In Chapter One, I focus on how colonial values and stereotypes are portrayed in neo-Victorian fiction when these are seen to 'invade' the imperial centre. This chapter discusses two neo-Victorian novels: Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* (2005) and Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage* (2007). Both novels are set completely in Britain. However, the texts incorporate characters who come to personify a tension between the idea of Britain as a white nation and the inescapable presence of racial others after several centuries of empire. Although both novels show that these 'others' from within the British Empire are not an unfamiliar sight, they also demonstrate that there is a distinct difference between being aware of their presence as opposed to being made to interact with them. While interaction in some cases increases understanding and

respect, in others it simply emphasises stereotypes, leading to a fear that people from colonies or former colonies will come to occupy positions of power in the imperial centre.

In *Arthur & George*, one of the protagonists has an Indian background, a country that is still a colony at the time of the book's story. *The Journal of Dora Damage*, however, uses the character of a freed slave from America. In the 1860s, America had been independent for almost a century. Nevertheless, I treat both their positions as a consequence of British imperialism and colonialism. In *Dora Damage* especially, the interactions of stereotypes of race and those of sexuality are explicitly highlighted. The focus in this chapter lies on how racial others are *perceived* and the power relations involved in this when looking at the other takes place within Britain. The role of vision in the construction of identity is highly significant in both novels and Chapter One engages in detail with various critical approaches to this topic.

In Chapter Two, I analyse two neo-Victorian novels with a narrative built around the journey between Britain and the colonies, a journey most often taking place by sea. I first study Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights* (2004), followed by a section on Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (2002). I consider the notion of the journey as 'in between', both in a literal sense (in between Britain and its colonies) and in a figurative sense (in between Western, regulated, known society and the colonies, the location of the other against which Europe defined itself). In these texts, a ship and its passengers often develop into a world in miniature, a society that is related to but also distinctly different from the society that people move in either in Britain or in the colonies. Because of close confines and the constraints of travelling, the social norms that are adhered to at home may be temporarily suspended, or at least adapted. Many of the rules intended to govern the behaviour between people of different classes, sexes or races come under pressure or even fail to fulfil their purpose. With their focus on the journey, neo-

Victorian novels in which protagonists move between metropole and colony can appear as one long travel narrative. Through this perpetual journey, colonial destinations are used as markers of stability: on the one side, there is Britain, on the other, there is India, or Australia, or another colonial location. Without a place to arrive in the colonies, a journey that set out from Britain would be lost, adrift and purposeless. This risk of a loss of stability is particularly visible in the first book I discuss in this chapter, Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights* (2004).

Protagonist Lucy Strange, whose name in itself already indicates her displacement in the world, moves from Australia to England to Bombay and back to England, increasingly becoming someone who can be paralleled to today's global citizen. Jones' descriptions of Lucy's experience as a white person who is nevertheless a colonial enables the reader to get a point of view that is both inside and outside at the same time. O'Connor's novel similarly challenges the binary between an easily identifiable inside and outside by focusing on Ireland at the time of the Great Famine. The narrative starts on the titular ship 'Star of the Sea' and through retroversion and the insertion of various (inter)textual fragments, the reader is invited to piece together the different voices and fragments that make up the story.

The third chapter explores two novels that focus on British people living in the colonies. In the first text, Daniel Mason's *The Piano Tuner* (2002), Edgar Drake is requested to travel to Burma (what is now Myanmar) to tune an army Major's grand piano. As he moves further away from Britain, his identification with the imperial centre becomes increasingly unstable. Instability also shapes David Rocklin's novel *The Luminist* (2011), the second novel, in which the life of a colonial family on Ceylon is affected by rising tension on the island and the risk of insurrection by the indigenous population increases. The position of the British is contrasted to that of Eligius, a local

boy who comes to work for them, so as to highlight both similarities and differences between the construction of white, British identities and that of the local people.

This last chapter considers how the British or Western characters in *The Piano Tuner* and *The Luminist* can be seen to replicate British society on foreign soil – often an unsuccessful endeavour. The simulacrum of British society is often exposed by a character choosing to remain outside of this recreated metropolitan world in miniature. Whereas Chapter One considers the perception of racial others in a situation where they form a minority, in these two texts the Western characters have to revise their views radically when violence forces them to confront the fact that in the colonies they are in the minority. By analysing these novels and the way in which they recreate a British society in the colonies, I show how British characters succeed or fail in upholding their Western identities in opposition to those of colonial 'others'. Using cultural memory theory, I argue for the significance of past colonial experiences in today's constructions of Western, or British, identity.

The novels I analyse in this thesis have predominantly been written by white, Western authors from the United Kingdom and United States. Jones, as an Australian writer, is the only one writing from a former Victorian colony.[164] Although the initial selection of the texts for this thesis was made on the basis of the content of the texts, for their stories, it is impossible not to consider the cultural and political implications of my choice of authors as well as my choice of texts. While part of this choice has been dictated by availability – the U.K. and the U.S. produce by far the largest number of English-language neo-Victorian novels – another reason was related to the topic of this

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[164] On the difficulties of writing nineteenth-century Australian history as descendant from white settlers, see also Kate Grenville's neo-historical fiction about Australian settler colonialism and her own positioning in relation to this.

research, the representation of Victorian sexual and racial stereotypes in neo-Victorian fiction.[165]

The stereotypes this thesis considers mostly have their origin in Western Europe and the United States. Choosing (mainly) authors from these regions, therefore, means that the authors can be connected to the Victorian colonisers they write about. Of course, twenty-first-century authors are not 'responsible' for Victorian colonialist practices but when considering the present-day consequences of Britain's colonial past and that of West more generally, it is clear that there is still a social norm that considers white Western people to be the standard from which others deviate in larger or lesser degrees and that they have to live up to. In a world where many still believe that 'white is not a colour' but instead a neutral state, people will often acquire different experiences depending on their own racial or ethnic background.

A second, simpler reason is availability: considering the fact that this thesis focuses on material originally written and published in English, there are fewer texts available from other regions. Although Amitav Ghosh is not the only Indian author of neo-Victorian novels (see for example also Kunal Basu, author of *Racists* [2006] and *The Opium Clerk* [2001]) and there are South-African authors writing in English about the Victorian colonial past (Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* [2000] already invokes Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* [1899] in its title), the number of authors writing English-language neo-Victorian fiction from a former colonial location is very small compared to the amount of neo-Victorian fiction as a whole, or even just postcolonial neo-Victorianism. Any project focusing solely on neo-Victorian texts would thus be limited

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[165] With regard to availability, while there are numerous authors from varied or mixed ethnic backgrounds writing about the experience of being an ethnic minority in the U.K., few of them directly engage with the Victorian past in a way I would include under the label neo-Victorianism, even if they do reference Britain's colonial history. Some examples are authors Bernardine Evaristo, Diana Evans and Caryl Phillips.

topically, by necessity having to follow what approaches are taken by the small selection of texts to consider.

Another concern in relation to the authors whose works I analyse is gender. Because the balance between female and male authors of postcolonial neo-Victorianism is more level than that between white, Western authors and writers from a different background, this consideration was less influenced by necessity. While the story-content of the novels remained the leading category for selection, I provide analyses of the work of both female and male authors.

This thesis concludes by returning to some of the questions raised in this chapter about the role of neo-Victorian fiction in confirming or subverting Western stereotypes about colonial others, stereotypes that may have their roots in the Victorian era but that still play a role today. I connect the focus on racial and sexual stereotyping in neo-Victorian texts to present-day concerns about the consequences of the British colonial era, looking at interconnected representations of sexual and racial otherness and at the temporal otherness that also plays a significant role in neo-Victorianism. I refer to theories of cultural memory to relate the image of Victorian society as represented in neo-Victorian texts, the image that the British are portrayed as having of themselves, to the image or images of the others they are claimed to use to demarcate their Western selves. In analysing these texts, I aim to find out to what extent postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction attempts to 'make the past right'.

Chapter 1: Otherness in the Imperial Centre

> 'George, where do you live?'
> 'The Vicarage, Great Wyrley.'
> 'And where is that?'
> 'Staffordshire, Father.'
> 'And where is that?'
> 'The centre of England.'
> 'And what is England, George?'
> 'England is the beating heart of the Empire, Father.'
>
> (Julian Barnes, *Arthur & George*, 2005)[1]

In the above quotation from Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, George is questioned by his father. What the reader does not know yet this early in the book is that George's father is originally from India. Shapurji Edalji, as the reader later finds out he is called, had moved to Britain from Bombay to study and become a missionary so as to spread the word of God. However, he remained in Britain and married a Scotswoman. The emphasis on England as "the beating heart of the Empire" thus receives an additional layer of meaning as it is said by a half-Scottish, half-Indian boy to his Indian father.

In this chapter I compare two neo-Victorian novels that each portray the presence of people of 'other races' in Britain as the centre of the British Empire. Both Barnes' *Arthur & George* and Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage* (2006) are exclusively set in Britain. Nevertheless, both texts feature characters who come to personify a tension between the idea of Britain as a white nation and the inescapable presence of ethnic or racial others after several centuries of empire. Of key importance to this chapter are processes of looking and perceiving. I discuss the significance of the gaze as it identifies the figure of the other and so constructs a power relationship based on visible (phenotypical) characteristics. This initial visual assessment is then contrasted with cases where the racially 'other' character becomes more intimately

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[1] Julian Barnes, *Arthur & George* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006 [2005]), pp. 18-19. Further references to this title are given in parentheses in the text.

involved with white British characters to outline the relational changes when categorisation and identity-creation of the other no longer relies solely on the visual. I also contrast the perception that characters have of themselves to the way in which they are seen by others. A second approach concerns family dynamics. I examine how the family can symbolise the nation and how a failure of the white, British family, exemplified through disease, disability or so-called miscegenation, is connected to the perceived danger of colonial or racial others infiltrating Britain.

As described in the introduction to this thesis, neo-Victorian fiction frequently engages the stereotypical image of the Victorians as prudish and repressed. As a consequence, it often explicitly discusses sexuality, especially those sexual identities that do not fit within a heteronormative framework. The characters sharing their sexual engagements or identities with the reader are often those who left few traces in the Victorian era: women, foreigners, servants and others who did not play a prominently visible role in society. Neo-Victorian novels providing these 'forgotten' characters of history with a voice raises questions of agency. Their representation in fiction implies the question of whether neo-Victorianism endows these persons, as individuals or as representatives of subaltern groups in history, with an agency they would not have had in the Victorian period. I distinguish between two forms: the portrayal of agency *within* the narrative – what influence has a character on the story and the other characters within it – and the potential influence that the encounter with such fictional characters may have on the reader and by implication, on contemporary culture as a whole.

In Starling's *Dora Damage*, questions of agency are raised in relation to characters outside the normative white, male, heterosexual framework of power. The protagonist of the novel, the titular Dora, is also the narrator of the story. Her voice is heard for most of the text, with the exception of a fictional epilogue wherein Dora's daughter

describes editing her mother's diaries, the texts that constitute the bulk of the novel. As Dora's husband, Peter Damage, becomes incapacitated by arthritis, Dora is forced to take over his work as a bookbinder. In doing so, she increasingly assumes tasks usually only undertaken by men. Nevertheless, she continues to be an object to be looked at rather than a subject herself. This only changes at the point where Dora is pressured into taking on a former slave as apprentice. With this black man, she suddenly *does* look. The novel thus explores an intriguing mix of power structures, connecting femininity and race on different scales of power and influence.

In her book *Looking for the Other* (1997), Ann E. Kaplan defines the distinction between 'look' and 'gaze'. Following Freudian psychoanalysis, Kaplan conceptualises the gaze as active. She writes: "the subject bearing the gaze is not interested in the object per se, but consumed with his (*sic*) own anxieties, which are inevitably intermixed with desire".[2] The gaze, as Kaplan explains it, is thus concerned with a process of crisis within the person gazing upon someone (or something) else instead of an interaction between the gazing subject and the object of that gaze. The look, however, is not static but can be placed in what Kaplan, following Jane Gaines, calls "the looking *relation*".[3] Whereas the gaze traditionally, and even in later feminist psychoanalysis, is placed in a context of white and masculine power, looking instead comes to stand for the possibility of others doing the looking. As Gaines states, discussing race and gender in mainstream cinema offers a chance to consider the question of who possesses the 'right to look', thereby opening up an opportunity of reorganising traditional power structures. She examines, for example, "how some groups have historically had the licence to 'look' openly while other groups have

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[2] Ann E. Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. xviii.

[3] Kaplan, *Looking for the Other,* p. xviii (emphasis in original).

'looked' illicitly".[4] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson also constructs an alternative to the gaze in her book *Staring: How We Look* (2009). She refers to the relation between 'starer' and 'staree' as "staring encounters" or a "staring interchange", highlighting that staring is not a one-way process.[5] While her chapter on "spectacular bodies" deals with what she calls "breaches of the common human scale and shape", much of it also applies to those who stand out based on their 'race'.[6]

Gaines' and Kaplan's shift from a psychoanalytically-oriented gaze to a more widely usable 'look' facilitates the introduction of the concept of race, therefore making the latter more suitable for my work. As neo-Victorianism is often more openly concerned with questions of sexuality than those of race and ethnicity, the masculine focus of the gaze that Kaplan describes would not be productive when analysing a book with a female protagonist and narrator, written by a woman. The goal of giving voice to the 'underprivileged' characters of the nineteenth century means that most neo-Victorian novels are less preoccupied with white, patriarchal figures than with those who do not fit under that heading. However, neglecting to pay attention to the ways of looking that take place in these relations would only continue a standpoint of white superiority. My chapter therefore adopts the distinction between 'gaze' and 'look' and expands it for a use in literature.

Both gazing and looking are concepts from film theory that can be applied to literary analysis. Considering that film critics discuss images and the relations of vision and power between the characters within the film as well as between the film and its audience, for novels this analysis can take place between the different characters in the

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[4] Jane Gaines, "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory", *Screen* 29.4 (1988), 12-27 (pp. 24-25).
[5] Rosemary Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 8; p. 4.
[6] Garland-Thomson, p. 161.

story through the narrative descriptions of the author.[7] So, while film theory analyses the visualisation of the look, in my analysis I apply the concept to the way in which vision and visibility are represented in writing. I consider the kind of language used in the novels to describe various processes of looking and being-looked-at as well as the way in which these looking relations are structured in the novels. The 'visibility of otherness' and the vocabulary used for this discourse of otherness plays a part in the construction of the racial and sexual stereotypes that my work focuses on.

A critic who has worked on conceptions of otherness in a different field than that of film studies is Sara Ahmed. In her book *Strange Encounters* (2000), Ahmed argues that what we designate as an encounter with the figure of the stranger is actually a meeting where "the figure of the 'stranger' is produced, not as that which we fail to recognise, but as that which we have already recognised as 'a stranger'".[8] Thus, in denoting the other as a stranger, we make her or him fit into our own preconceived notions of otherness. These preconceptions about the other can be related to Said's analysis of orientalism and how travellers' assumptions of the Orient and its peoples were not so much affirmed upon encountering foreign cultures as used to entrench more firmly the ideas already in existence about them.

Ahmed describes her use of 'encounter' in more detail, writing that "[a]t one level, we can think about encounters as face-to-face meetings". However, meetings do not have to be face-to-face and in fact, they "do not even presuppose the category of the human person. More generally, a meeting suggests *a coming together of at least two*

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[7] There is also a looking relation between the reader and the physical book but this relation belongs more to the study of the book as an object than to the power relations within the story and their potential influence on the reader that I focus on here. There are also considerations related to a division of power in the actual world, such as the fact that the reader *can* read and has access to the book in some form or other, as well as knowledge of the language it is written in, but these, too, belong to another area of research.

[8] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 3.

elements".[9] The coming together of these elements requires an asymmetrical power relation so as to establish which of the elements is prior to the other, the 'one' who has the right to identify the other *as* other. Although Ahmed focuses mostly on actual encounters, I take her concept of the 'strange encounter' and apply it to narrative descriptions of encounters that are to be found in the novels discussed.

In the 'strange encounters' that Ahmed describes, there is the figure of the one that names the other as a stranger. In both of the novels analysed in this chapter, this process of encountering the stranger takes place but the way in which these encounters play out is described rather differently. Part of this is because of the interaction that is involved. Where Ahmed describes the encounter with the stranger as a case of unequally divided power, the novels describe situations where the figure of the stranger is oblivious to being assessed as other and in fact makes his or her own assessments within the same or other encounters. Also, whereas *Arthur & George* contains a character who stresses his position as less 'other' or 'strange' than he is described by people, *The Journal of Dora Damage* features a character who is very much aware of his own otherness. If we assume, then, that encounters are not always unidirectional, the perceptions of the 'stranger' him or herself also play a role.

The recognition of somebody as 'a stranger' implies that there are certain qualities, characteristics or behaviours that indicate 'strangeness'. By undertaking a reading of the appearance of other people we come across, we differentiate between those who belong and those who do not. As Ahmed argues, strangers are not simply people not known to us; rather, they are those "who are, in their very proximity, *already recognised as not belonging*, as being out of place".[10] This process of recognition is dependent upon social and political interactions that, in Ahmed's words, "*mark some others as stranger*

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[9] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters,* p. 7 (emphasis in original).
[10] Ibid., p. 21 (emphasis in original).

than other others".[11] This is highly relevant for theories of race, for example when considering mixed-race people in the colonies.[12]

Ahmed is not the only critic who identifies different ways in which to recognise others *as* other. Homi Bhabha specifically stresses the notion of visibility, referring both to psychoanalysis and Foucauldian theory. Bhabha suggests that "in order to conceive of the colonial subject as the effect of power that is productive [...] one has to see the *surveillance* of colonial power as functioning in relation to the regime of the *scopic drive*".[13] This Lacanian concept is one of the four 'partial drives' that Lacan identifies (the others are the oral, anal and invocatory drive).[14] For Lacan, as for Freud, the drives can never be satisfied. However, Lacan argues that this is part of their very purpose, that the design of the drive is not to reach a destination but to follow its aim, moving around the object without ever reaching it. The processes of looking and being-looked-at as well as the power structures involved in them play a large role in the analysis of the two novels in this chapter. In both cases, characters are recognised and marked as other through the way they look and how their appearance differs from the local norm.

I have already briefly referred to what can happen if others are *not* recognised *as* others, a situation usually described as 'passing'. As Ahmed states, passing "has been theorised [...] as a form of transgression. Such approaches assume that 'passing' destabilises and traverses the system of knowledge and vision upon which subjectivity

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[11] Ibid., p. 25 (emphasis in original).

[12] Some examples of this in neo-Victorian fiction are Linda Holeman's *The Linnet Bird* (2004) and Fleur Beale's *A Respectable Girl* (2006). M. M. Kaye's older novel *The Far Pavilions* (1978) is more concerned with cultural hybridity than racial mixing as such, but it provides fascinating insights in the protagonist's dual identity.

[13] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Routledge, 2004 [1994]), p. 109 (emphasis in original). Surveillance is also a keyword for Michel Foucault. For its use in *Discipline and Punish* in relation to postcolonial neo-Victorianism, see the analysis of David Rocklin's *The Luminist* (2011) in Chapter Three of this thesis.

[14] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press, 1977 [1973]).

and identity precariously rest".[15] However, I would argue that in many cases, passing is only *seen* as transgressive when it fails. In "Rites of Passing" (2001), Linda Schlossberg argues that passing can have different consequences, causing either comfort or anxiety.[16] Schlossberg refers to vision, stressing the relationship between seeing and knowing: "Because of this seemingly intimate relationship between the visual and the known, passing becomes a highly charged site for anxieties regarding visibility, invisibility, classification, and social demarcation".[17]

The phenomenon of passing is relevant to neo-Victorian fiction in two ways. First, it applies to the characters within the novels. At the same time, passing as a concept can also be applied to neo-Victorianism as a whole, albeit with a slight twist. Many neo-Victorian novels try to pass as something they are not. Usually this refers to passing as Victorian novels, though this may often overlap with their attempts to pass, not as novels but instead as diaries, letters or other forms of writing. Obviously, the consequences of failure here are very different. We can even say that much neo-Victorian fiction purposely aims at this very failure to pass. From the obtrusive 1960s narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* to the explicit descriptions of lesbianism in Waters' novels, many neo-Victorian novels intentionally fail to pass as Victorian, setting up a metafictional game for the reader to recognise their textual and cultural references. Of course, whereas passing in real life is a case of performing another identity, projecting an alternative for oneself, neo-Victorian novels are much more easily 'found out'. However, what Schlossberg claims about passing in real life is also valid for neo-Victorianism: "Passing is not simply about erasure or denial [...] but, rather, about the creation and establishment of an alternative set of narratives". The

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[15] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* p. 125.
[16] Linda Schlossberg, "Rites of Passing", in *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race, and Religion*, ed. by Maria C. Sanchez and Linda Schlossberg (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 1-12 (p. 6).
[17] Schlossberg, "Rites of Passing", p. 1.

need for this created set of alternative and, importantly, plausible narratives suggests that "every subject's history is a work in progress – a set of stories we tell ourselves in order to make sense or coherence out of a frequently confusing and complicated past".[18] Neo-Victorian novels, then, can be seen as aides in making sense not only of the past, but more specifically of the traces it has left in the present.

This chapter employs theories of the 'gaze' and the 'look' and combines them with Schlossberg's approach to passing and Ahmed's research on strange encounters. I focus on descriptions of visibility and vision and use these to analyse how characters are seen as different, how they are, as Ahmed argues, 'recognised' as strangers and how this compares to characters' perceptions of themselves. The recognition of the other occupies a central position in the chapter. I first focus on Barnes' *Arthur & George* before moving on to compare the text with Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage*.

"[I]f you shut your eyes, you'd think him an Englishman": Seeing Otherness in Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* (2005)

Barnes' *Arthur & George* can be called a biofiction, a story based on the lives of actual historical figures but with fictionalised conversations and details. Arthur refers to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whereas George is George Edalji, the eldest son of one of England's first Indian-born Anglican vicars. In *Postmortem Postmodernists* (2009), Laura E. Savu analyses the construction of the author as character in postmodern novels. Authorship, Savu argues, "has now become a powerful mode of engagement with the past".[19] The use of an author-figure within a fictional narrative – in this case Arthur Conan Doyle – allows modern writers to 're-create' "[b]oth the 'creative author'

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[18] Ibid., p. 4.
[19] Laura E. Savu, *Postmortem Postmodernists: The Afterlife of the Author in Recent Narrative* (Madison: Fairley Dickinson University Press, 2009), p. 22.

and the 'created author'" in narratives that "feel old, but read anew [...] destabiliz[ing] the subject's identity, drawing out its tensions, contradictions, and ambiguities, so that he/she appears both familiar and estranged to us, readers".[20] Postmodern novels in general are usually explicitly concerned with textuality and writing and neo-Victorian novels are no exception to this.[21]

While Savu warns her reader to distinguish between the modern author, the historical author and their fictional recreation, she is nevertheless positive about the use of the author-figure in fiction: "Author fictions extend the possibilities of straight biography, enriching it with strategies [...] that are intrinsic to the novel-making process. The rich metaphor, playful quality, and descriptive power of fiction render significance to the authors' lives in more fundamental ways than would mere chronological accuracy or factual fidelity".[22] Others, however, are more hesitant. Mark Llewellyn argues that "[a]ppropriating the dead writers of the nineteenth century as if they were only figments of a shared cultural imagination opens up new possibilities but also new ethical dimensions to the neo-Victorian text. Like the biographer as grave robber, some neo-Victorian fiction is in danger of blurring the distinction between reality and imagination, lives lived and lives created".[23] Marie-Luise Kohlke, too, claims that "[r]egardless of any intended ethical recuperation, biofiction [...] thrives on an inherent sense of simultaneously seductive and transgressive violation grounded in a composite and reciprocal self-Othering. The Othering of the historical subject in the

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[20] Savu, *Postmortem Postmodernists*, p. 29. For the distinction between 'creative' and 'created' author, see H.L. Hix, *Morte d'Author: An Autopsy* (1990).

[21] A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) is perhaps the best-known example here. One can also think of the numerous neo-Victorian novels in which hidden, lost or forgotten letters, manuscripts or wills function as key plot devices (e.g. Charles Palliser, *The Quincunx* [1989]; D.M. Thomas, *Charlotte* [2000]; Elizabeth Kostova, *The Historian* [2005]).

[22] Savu, *Postmortem Postmodernists*, p. 44.

[23] Mark Llewellyn, "Neo-Victorianism: On the Ethics and Aesthetics of Appropriation", *Literature Interpretation Theory* 20 (2009), 27-44 (p. 38).

process of fictional life-writing simultaneously Others the writing/reading self".[24] Both writer and reader become involved in a process of ethical questions as they are made complicit in the historical narrative. The ethical dimension of this argument concerning the appropriation of historical authors is as valid when it concerns other historical characters. When only few traces are left of a person's life, as in the case of George Edalji, there is more room for creative interpretation of those lives without falsifying history. However, one also forces an identity upon a character that may differ significantly from that person's historical lived experience and it is important to realise this.

Barnes' text is mostly focalised by the two titular characters. The book opens with the two characters' youth in the second half of the Victorian period and ends at the time of Arthur's death in 1930. Although the narrative thus moves beyond the reign of Queen Victoria into that of her son Edward VII and grandson George V, its groundings lie in the Victorian period. For this reason and for the strong connection that is drawn in the twentieth and twenty-first century between Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories and the late Victorian period – even though these, too, were published until well into the reign of George V – I analyse the novel as a neo-Victorian text.

Opening with separate sections headed 'Arthur' and 'George', the novel moves to a meeting between the two. George, an English-born man with an Indian father and a Scottish mother, is described in the book's early chapters as a quiet and introspective child, growing up to become a solicitor. In 1903, however, the then twenty-seven-year-old man is arrested on suspicion of being responsible for several cases of animal maiming that occurred in the village where he and his family live, now known as the

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[24] Marie-Luise Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Biofiction and the Special/Spectral Case of Barbara Chase-Riboud's *Hottentot Venus*", *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 18.3 (2013), 4-21 (p. 13) <http://openjournals.library.usyd.edu.au/index.php/AJVS> [accessed 20 July 2016]. For a more extensive application of Kohlke's use of biofiction, see the section on David Rocklin's *The Luminist* in Chapter Three of this thesis.

'Great Wyrley Outrages'. Although evidence is circumstantial at best, George is convicted and sentenced to seven years in prison. Having served three years, however, George is released without further explanation. After becoming famous as author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, the historical Conan Doyle was often asked for help in solving readers' mysterious cases and though he rejected many, he did take up some of them, the most famous of which is the Edalji-case that Barnes' novel focuses on. In the novel, as in history, Conan Doyle sets out to prove George's innocence and while he succeeds in getting George pardoned, no admission of judicial wrongdoing or monetary compensation for his years in prison is offered. The book then ends, not only with Arthur's death but also with George's story of how he had to regain his position in society.

Although we learn early in one of George's sections that his schoolfellows consider him "not a right sort", the reader is left unaware of George's ancestry for the first several sections (10). By initially withholding this information from the reader, Barnes allows – or forces – the reader to create his or her own image of George. Barnes thus sets up readers, especially white readers, who are likely to create George in their own image, only to find themselves proven false in their assumption. In this way, Barnes already makes readers aware of their potential racial blind spots. As Katherine Weese also points out, *Arthur & George* may not be "a post-colonial novel per se" but it can be read as a text that overtly "explores Western epistemologies against the background of British imperialism".[25] Of course, some of Barnes' readers are either aware of the historical background of the biofiction or have an edition with a blurb which, midway through, tells us how we "gradually realise that George is half-Indian and that Arthur

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[25] Katherine Weese, "Detection, Colonialism, Postcolonialism: The Sense of an Ending in Julian Barnes's *Arthur and George*", *Journal of Narrative Theory* 45.2 (2015), 301-329 (p. 330).

becomes the creator of the world's most famous detective".[26] For the reader unaware

of this description, the first explicit reference to George's background as not 'fully

British' comes when the village sergeant questions George about a key found on his

family's doorstep. After the key was sent to the local police station with a note attached,

Sergeant Upton visits the family. Upon finding a sixteen-year-old George without his

parents at home, Upton questions him:

> 'Name?'
> 'You know my name.'
> 'Name, I said.' […]
> 'George'
> 'Yes. Go on.'
> 'Ernest.'
> 'Go on.'
> 'Thompson.'
> 'Go on.'
> 'You know my surname. It's the same as my father's. And my mother's.'
> 'Go on, I say, you uppish little fellow.'
> 'Edalji.'
> 'Ah yes,' says the Sergeant. 'Now I think you'd better spell that out for me.'"
> (28-29)

By drawing out the process of naming, Barnes stresses the importance of such names

in recognising someone as familiar or other. Simultaneously, he continues his

elaborate set-up of not emphasising George's background by encouraging the potential

(mis)recognition of George as British and white. With George's first names all typically

British, it is only his last name that marks him as foreign. The process of drawing out

the concealment of Gearge's background "has the effect of highlighting the racial and

ethnic motivations for the harassment".[27]

Early in the novel, the Edalji family are pestered by the delivery of abusive notes.

While the local police officers refuse to see the notes as anything other than a children's

prank, many have a clear racist message. The Edalji family are not the only ones

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[26] This refers to the blurb of the 2006 edition by Knopf that is used here. Interestingly, the 2006 edition from Vintage London only mentions that "Arthur is to become one of the most famous men of his age, while George remains in hard-working obscurity" and gives no further clues to their identity other than a reference to the 'Great Wyrley Outrages'.

[27] Weese, "Detection. Colonialism, Postcolonialism, p. 309.

receiving the letters, though they are targeted most heavily and, next to dealing with the letters, also get numerous orders delivered and advertisements placed in their name. George's father is encouraged by the fact that they are not the only targets, using that to argue that this "proves it is not merely race prejudice". George, however, more cynical but also more realistic than his father, responds with the question: "is that a good thing, Father? To be hated for more than one reason?" (45). Although George is often portrayed as barely aware that others look at him and judge him based on his foreign, Indian appearance, statements like these show that he is not as naive as he is sometimes made out to be.

George's father Shapurji's response to the notes forms another indication of their racist contents. He starts to talk to George about "how the Parsees have always been much favoured by the British" (49). He compares their situation to the first Indian man elected to be in the London parliament in 1892, arguing that his rise in power was also accompanied by different kinds of abuse. In response to his father's emphasis on his respected Parsee heritage, George feels impelled to answer: "But I am not a Parsee, Father". Instead, George, in his thoughts, describes himself to the reader: "He is English, he is a student of the laws of England, and one day, God willing, he will marry according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England". His father confirms that indeed, George is an Englishman. But, he says, "others may not always entirely agree". Despite his father's explanation, George remains steadfast, repeating: "But I am not a Parsee, Father. That is what you and Mother have always taught me" (46).

The fragment above exemplifies the difficult position of people in Britain who have, or seem to have, a visible connection to the colonies. George's father, as a man who has grown up in India, most clearly bridges two different cultures. However, George's situation is in some ways more complicated. George's father recognises his own foreignness, as someone who was born in another country, another culture and

another social structure. For George himself, however, none of this applies. He was born in Britain, raised according to its laws and religion, and made to feel like that is where he belongs. As he does not consider himself 'other', it is both unexpected and distressing when he is forced to realise that the way in which most people view him does not concur with the way in which he views himself. He seems to see himself as no different from the people of his village – or rather, what differences he notes are not based on race. However, it is precisely for his race, as white British people identify it from the way he looks, that Barnes describes him being othered by many people in his community.

George's example emphasises how much depends on looks and the way in which people are seen. One of the episodes from *Arthur & George* that exemplifies this stress on the visual aspect of identification is when the police are gathering information about George to connect him to a series of animal maimings occurring in the fields around his family's home. The first thing one of the officers responds with is: "Well, sir, he's Indian, isn't he?" George's otherness is considered the foremost part of his identity by others. Only after referencing it, the officer modifies his statement by adding: "Half Indian, that is" (88). George, with an Indian parent, can never be fully of one country. Also, the officers are unwilling to pin down his 'other' half, or the half that in fact is not other, and identify him as 'half British'. The admission that he belongs, even in part, to Britain, must not be stated, for his foreign appearance marks him as other.

When another officer is later asked about his impressions of George, he implicitly stresses the significance of the way George looks with regard to his identification as other: "The odd thing was, listening to his voice – it was an educated voice, a lawyer's voice – I found myself thinking at one point, if you shut your eyes, you'd think him an Englishman" (97). A clear connection is drawn here between race and class. The

sergeant's superior takes his statement and builds on it by asking whether the sergeant thought George sounded as if he felt himself to be superior. Rather than using an English term, however, he wonders whether the sergeant would agree that George sounds as if he "thinks he belongs to a higher caste" (97). The shift in vocabulary, mentioning caste instead of class, indicates that the policeman places George's racial otherness over his supposed 'class arrogance'. Although David Cannadine argues in *Ornamentalism* (2001) that the Indian caste system was paralleled to the hierarchical system of Britain, the superior's statement marks George as other, Indian rather than British, regardless of his place of birth and his education. Cannadine's assumption that "the British Empire was first and foremost a class act, where individual social ordering often took precedence over collective racial othering" may be true in theory, but in Barnes' as well as other neo-Victorian novels, racial and ethnic differentiation is often more significant than class.[28]

When the sergeant refers to George's voice as educated, he almost seems to express surprise that this half Indian, oriental man can sound so much like an Englishman. George, then, constitutes an example that conforms with Bhabha's notion of mimicry. Bhabha describes in *The Location of Culture* how the colonisation of India by the British created a class of Indians who were British in their ideas but who could never truly be so: "almost the same, *but not quite*" (123). In mimicking the white, British presence they formed a cause of unease for the British people through their almost but not quite Britishness. However, where Bhabha's analysis concentrates on the situation within India, where there were few British people, all of them dependent upon these Indian 'mimic men', George and his (half) Indian family live in England, where they

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[28] David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 41-45; p. 10. For an example of characters' (in)ability to cross the racial gap by connecting to one another on a class basis, see the analysis of David Rocklin's *The Luminist* in Chapter Three of this thesis.

are the minority.[29] While for others, George seems to be the ultimate 'mimic man', as Bhabha describes it, the fact that he only sees himself as English complicates the use of Bhabha's theory.

The British in India worked from a self-centric – and thus Western-centric – position, but still they were at times made aware of their vulnerability. One of these situations is the Indian Mutiny or First War of Independence of 1857 and neo-Victorian novels such as M.M. Kaye's *The Shadow of the Moon* (1957, rev. 1979), Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) and Rathbone's *The Mutiny* (2007), portray this sudden, forced realisation of vulnerability. In the case of the Edalji family, they are a minority in an overwhelmingly white country, made even more so by their choice to live in a village instead of one of the bigger, already slightly more internationalised cities. The village of Great Wyrley is portrayed as a conservative place where not everyone is happy with having an Indian vicar. Although some have accepted the family, they are still viewed with some suspicion even after two decades. How George is *seen* through the eyes of others comes to the fore most clearly in two parts of the novel: when George is falsely incarcerated for being considered guilty of maiming at least one animal and later, when the reader views him through the eyes of Arthur.

When Arthur meets George for the first time, he enters the hotel where they have an appointment and pauses. George is easily recognisable to Arthur: "The only brown face is sitting about twelve feet away from him in profile" (227). Rather than approach George directly after recognising him, or if not recognising him per se, at least establishing that there is only one foreign-looking, 'brown' face present, Arthur observes George: "It is perhaps ungentlemanly to observe without permission; but not for nothing was he once the out-patient clerk of Dr. Joseph Bell" (227).[30] Arthur's

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[29] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 125.
[30] Dr. Joseph Bell (1837-1911) was a forensic scientist who promoted the practice of close observation for making a (medical) diagnosis. He is also the person on whom the character of

preliminary inspection "reveals that the man he is about to meet is small and slight, of Oriental origin, with hair parted on the left and cropped close; he wears glasses, and the well-cut, discreet clothing of a provincial solicitor" (227). Although Arthur in this situation would fulfil the position of gazing subject, the fact that he is observing a foreign-looking man complicates an analysis of the gaze, making Gaines' and Kaplan's use of looking relations a more suitable structure of analysis.

What is interesting in Barnes' set-up of Arthur viewing George is the kind of information Arthur prioritises. Especially after the earlier observation of George's being "the only brown face", one would expect an 'ungentlemanly' sort of observation to have a racist element, at least from a contemporary reader's perspective. But while George's 'oriental' features are mentioned, they are not prioritised over the other aspects of his appearance. Arthur continues by remarking that, although George reads a newspaper like most other men sitting in the hotel foyer, "he is not sitting quite as others do: he holds the paper preternaturally close, and also a touch sideways, setting his head at an angle to the page. Dr. Doyle [...] is confident in his diagnosis. Myopia, possibly of quite a high degree. And who knows, perhaps a touch of astigmatism too" (227). Rather than seeing George as an Indian, or half Indian, man, Arthur's first view of George identifies him as a patient. Although in this he differs from the police officers and so many others, whose primary response is that they see a foreign-looking man, it is still a description that objectifies George from a specific person into a general category.

The significance of George's poor vision is stressed again when Arthur, after agreeing to help George try to prove his innocence, wants to base his arguments precisely on George's short-sightedness; after receiving a fellow oculist's results of

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Sherlock Holmes is loosely based. For more information on this, see for example Ely M. Liebow's *Dr. Joe Bell: Model for Sherlock Holmes* (1982).

George's eye tests, Arthur exclaims: "Rock solid! Incontrovertible! [...] in all my years practising as an oculist, I never once remember correcting so high a degree of astigmatic myopia" (260). By using ocular science, Arthur wants to prove that George would have been physically incapable of finding his way to an animal standing in a field in the dark. Both George's prosecutors and Arthur himself rely on scientific approaches to decide on George's role in the animal maimings. During George's trial and at other times, science comes to stand for trustworthiness and objectivity. Arthur's trust in the scientific aspects of analysis are very much a symbol of the time of the narrative and a sign for his doubtful approach to religion (he identifies as a spiritual Christian). The kinds of details that Arthur focuses on are also the things that his fictional creation Sherlock Holmes considers. However, whereas Holmes is almost always able to add up circumstantial evidence in such a way that he finds hard proof, Arthur is unable to do so, making the fictional creation Arthur Conan Doyle come across as similar to one of the earnest but bumbling detectives that Conan Doyle ridiculed in his own fiction.

At the same time as stressing Arthur's connection to the scientific, Barnes also emphasises Arthur's interest in spiritualism. Although science and spiritualism were not necessarily mutually exclusive for people in the Victorian period, by the late nineteenth century even those who wanted to believe in spiritualism had become sceptical as a result of the well-publicised exposure of numerous fraudulent mediums. Organisations such as the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882, created frameworks of reference to investigate paranormal phenomena, aiming to distinguish between fakery and authentic cases.[31] The formation of such associations pointed to the existence of a healthy scepticism towards the paranormal or supernatural together with a wish to believe that there was more to the world than could be experienced in

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[31] Zofia Weaver, "History of the Society for Psychical Research", <http://www.spr.ac.uk/page/history-society-psychical-research-parapsychology> [accessed 25 January 2016].

everyday life. Spiritualism remains a popular topic in neo-Victorian fiction. Séances or meetings such as those described in *Arthur & George* point not only to a Victorian belief in the presence of spirits and other supernatural phenomena but also reference the continued (ghostly) presence of the Victorians in the twentieth and twenty-first century, envisioned in neo-Victorian fiction.[32]

The final section of *Arthur & George* in fact is set just after Arthur's death and centres on a remembrance meeting, attended and even encouraged by Conan Doyle's second wife, where a medium tries to contact Arthur's recently passed-on spirit. The invitation to this spiritualist meeting in memory of Arthur states: "CLAIRVOYANT to attend GREAT MEETING" and while the term 'clairvoyant' here refers to the medium, it also implies that only those with the ability to 'see clearly', as the term can be translated, are invited to attend and potentially participate (353, capitalisation in original). George turns up at this meeting with a mix of scepticism and the wish to believe. Although he initially goes out of interest and a sense of respect for or duty to the memory of Arthur, he too becomes swept up in the crowd of believers when the medium refers to information that could apply to him: "All George's rational conclusions of a moment ago are worthless. His father is about to speak to him. His father, who spent all his life as a priest in the Church of England is about to speak to him through this… improbable woman" (379). However, as George is hesitating whether to stand up and claim the medium's information as applicable to him and his father, the medium comes up with a name. The earlier mentioned 'S', initial of a man who died round the age of seventy-five in 1918 and spent his early years in India, is identified as Stuart rather than Shapurji. On being passed by, "George feels that the

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[32] For a discussion of this, see for example Tatiana Kontou's *Spiritualism and Women's Writing: From the Fin de Siècle to the Neo-Victorian* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) or Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham's edited collection *Haunting and Spectrality in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Possessing the Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

shadow of an angel of death has been cast over him; he is chilled to the bone, sweaty, exhausted, threatened, utterly relieved, and deeply ashamed. And at the same time, part of him is impressed, curious, fearfully wondering…" (380). In being swept along with the crowd of spiritualist believers, George's rationalist approach to the world is depicted as less secure than it is often portrayed in the novel.

Throughout the book, George is used as a caricature when it comes to 'seeing clearly' what goes on around him. His literal myopia comes to stand for his being short-sighted in a more metaphorical way. As Schlossberg writes, "we commonly use a vocabulary of vision to signify cognition, understanding and truth".[33] Something well-written with a clear argument is perceptive and insightful, while the opposite lacks vision and overlooks important points. The fact that George is myopic can thus be interpreted in connection to his metaphorical lack of vision. The emphasis on vision in analysing *Arthur & George* is not wholly new: Peter Childs, in a chapter on *Arthur & George* in his book *Julian Barnes* (2011), also points out Barnes' portrayal of George as unable or unwilling to see clearly what is going on around him, albeit in much less detail. At the same time, in his view, "Arthur sees too much".[34] While I would agree with the statement that Arthur may *want* to see too much, in his own way he is as blind to certain aspects of his life and the society he moves in as George is to his.

After George has started as a solicitor he has to travel to Birmingham by train each day. When he travels back, he sometimes receives comments on his foreign appearance, remarks "about bleach, and his mother forgetting the carbolic, and enquiries about whether he has been down the mine today" (81). All these comments are clearly based on a visual identification of George as 'other'; they mark him as coloured and imply that coloured equals dirty. Although George usually tries to ignore

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[33] Schlossberg, "Rites of Passing", p. 1.
[34] Peter Childs, *Julian Barnes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 155.

those comments, he is sometimes "obliged to remind [the speaker] who he is dealing with. He is not physically brave, but at such times he feels surprisingly calm. He knows the laws of England, and he knows he can count on their support" (81). George is either incapable of realising or, what is more likely based on his later comments, unwilling to realise that he, though born in England, is viewed differently from white British people and that this may influence not just people's personal perceptions of him but also, by extension, their professional ones.

In discussing the connections between visual appearance and a subject's identity construction, Schlossberg states the following: "Theories and practices of identity and subject formation in Western culture are largely structured around a logic of visibility, whether in the service of science (Victorian physiognomy), psychoanalysis (Lacan's mirror stage), or philosophy (Foucault's reading of the Panopticon)".[35] She continues by arguing that "[a]t the most basic level, we are subjects constituted by our visions of ourselves and others", claiming a "seemingly intimate relationship between the visual and the known".[36] Extending Schlossberg's argument, it can thus be said that George's inability to see others clearly also reflects on his ability to view himself. Interestingly, George's glasses are of little importance here. Arthur, observing George, notices that he wears glasses but still has difficulty reading a newspaper (227). George was told when younger that it was unwise to prescribe spectacles to a child.[37] George himself admits that he "only recently acquired spectacles, and did not enquire about their specifications" (228). In fact, he says, he regularly forgets to wear them.

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Care of the eyes, and specifically care of children's eyes, appears to be a subject that was regularly addressed in late Victorian science and medical texts. See for example John Browning's *How to Use Our Eyes and How to Preserve Them by the Aid of Spectacles* (1883), Robert Brudenell Carter's *Eyesight: Good and Bad: A Treatise on the Exercise and Preservation of Vision* (1880) and George C. Harlan's *Eyesight, and How to Care for It* (1904); a more modern overview text is Chris Otter's *The Victorian Eye: A Political History of Light and Vision in Britain, 1800-1910* (2008), which extends the meaning of vision to cover its metaphorical meaning.

While spectacles, as aids to see more clearly, could be linked to George developing a more accurate or realistic view on the world, the fact that he does not really know what they do for him and does not remember to put them on again points to a certain unwillingness to see more clearly and so, metaphorically, to become more perceptive of the world around him. Vision and visibility, how we see and how we are seen, can thus be traced as a central concern throughout the novel. When George uses his meeting with Arthur to argue that he does "not believe that race prejudice has anything to do with [his] case", Arthur remarks: "Perhaps others can see what you cannot", a statement that receives a deeper meaning in this context (232-33).

In the introductory section of this chapter I raised the possibility of a change in assessment, from the visual to other characteristics, after characters became more personally involved with each other. However, as George does not develop close relations with anyone, there is no example of this in the novel. The only person with whom George has this kind of relationship is his sister, but of course she displays the same kind of physical characteristics as he does. After George moves to London upon his release, his sister joins him to keep his house:

> When he first came to London, he had not yet given up hope of getting married; indeed, he used to worry about how his future wife and Maud might get on [...] But then a few years passed, and he realised that Maud's good opinion of his future wife mattered more to him than the other way around [...] And then, of course, there were sexual matters, which often did not lead to harmony. (365)

George's reference to harmony here is followed up by his thinking of the divorce cases he has seen evidence of as a lawyer. Although 'harmony' can thus be connected purely to the relational connections every couple has to navigate, there is also the implication of George's mixed background disabling him from having harmonious sexual relations (and possible progeny) with anyone. Another relation, the one between Arthur and George, remains in many ways a business relationship. While George, on the suggestion of Arthur's wife to be, is invited to their wedding, this is more a strategic

decision, a way to show their support for his attempt to regain a social position, than a decision based on friendship.

A final issue in connection to *Arthur & George* is related to the characters' (lack of) Englishness. I indicated earlier on that the reader is initially left unaware of George's foreign ancestry. In fact, it is Arthur's heritage that is mentioned first: "Irish by ancestry, Scottish by birth, instructed in the faith of Rome by Dutch Jesuits, Arthur *became* English" (25, my emphasis). Arthur's process of becoming an Englishman contrasts with George constantly stressing the fact that he was born and raised as English. Whereas George views himself as English and has difficulty perceiving that others may not, Arthur is very focused on what he considers his mixed background:

> 'You and I George, you and I, we are... unofficial Englishmen.' George is taken aback by this remark. He regards Sir Arthur as a very official Englishman indeed: his name, his manner, his fame [...] if Sir Arthur had not appeared to be part of official England, George would probably not have written to him in the first place. But it seems impolite to question a man's categorization of himself. (234)

Nevertheless, as George again fails to see, his own categorisation of his identity is questioned continuously.

Arthur's identification of himself as an 'unofficial Englishman' points to the uneasy connection between the different parts of Britain, both in relation to each other and to the British Empire as a whole. Krishan Kumar argues in "Nation and Empire" (2000) that the links between England and the other parts of Britain shifted as the British Empire changed and developed. According to Kumar, there exists "an initial and basic tension between nation and empire".[38] Nevertheless, Kumar, though recognising the possible contradiction, describes a type of nationalism that he calls "imperial nationalism" where empires "may be the carriers of a certain kind of national identity that gives to the dominant groups a special sense of themselves and their destiny".[39]

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[38] Krishan Kumar, "Nation and Empire: English and British National Identity in Comparative Perspective", *Theory and Society* 29.5 (2000), 575-608 (p. 578).

[39] Kumar, "Nation and Empire", p. 579.

Rather than stressing their ethnic identity in an empire that is home to multiple ethnic groups, the people forming the largest ethnic group – what Kumar calls the "'state-bearing' peoples or *Staatsvölker*" – stress "the political, cultural, or religious mission to which they have been called".[40] Because of this idea of a calling, another name Kumar gives this kind of imperial nationalism is "missionary nationalism".[41] This can be related to Britain considering itself on a civilising mission by bringing other parts of the world under Western influence, or at least promoting itself as such.

Kumar refers specifically to the development that takes place to turn an English identity into a British one: "Especially after the parliamentary union with Scotland in 1707, sustained efforts were made both by the government and by writers and poets to establish a British identity suitable to the new political entity. The inhabitants of the kingdom were urged to think of themselves as *Britons*, not as English, Welsh or Scots".[42] And although the Irish remained a group that was more difficult to fit into this identity, on the whole, Kumar argues, these efforts were still relatively successful. The recognition of 'Britishness' over 'Englishness' remained in place until the end of the nineteenth century – though cracks already appeared during the nineteenth century.

While industrialisation was something that took place within the context of the British Empire, the civilising mission that went with it, what Rudyard Kipling called the 'white man's burden', depended on what Kumar calls the "particularity of the 'Anglo-Saxon heritage'".[43] To be recognised as a nation of power, a country's peoples needed to define themselves "as a self-sufficient, organic entity with its own principles

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[40] Ibid., pp. 579-80.
[41] Ibid., p. 580.
[42] Ibid., p. 589 (emphasis in original).
[43] Ibid., p. 591; Rudyard Kipling, *Gunga Din and Other Favourite Poems* (New York: Dover, 1990), pp. 118-120.

of development, its own 'soul'".[44] These factors working together seem to explain what Kumar calls the "moment of Englishness" at the end of the nineteenth century.[45] Even though this remained a cultural movement rather than a political one during the first half of the twentieth century, the loss of empire, together with much of Britain's industrial supremacy and its participation in the European Union, has led to "a profound undermining of the United Kingdom".[46] After repressing an English identity for several centuries, the English have in recent decades made steps towards recreating a profoundly English nationalism.[47] Although Kumar does not discuss the other parts of the United Kingdom, similar developments can be seen to take place in Wales and Scotland.[48]

Kumar's distinction between an English and a British national identity and how this was influenced by and related to the British Empire is well-argued. His references to the cultural element of this empire are especially useful. However, it seems intriguing that from the second half of the twentieth century, at a time of supposed English nationalism, so many authors return to the nineteenth century not to ground this specifically English nationalism in the history of this century but instead to concentrate on the Empire as a whole in relation to Britain specifically. The example in *Arthur & George* that demonstrates Arthur's navigation of his 'multiple ethnicities' is an uncommon case in neo-Victorian fiction. The tension between the different parts of Britain is rarely expressed as clearly. More commonly, the focus lies on the distinction

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Kumar, "Nation and Empire", p. 592.
[46] Ibid., p. 593.
[47] The emphasis on Englishness over Britishness was also made visible by the results of the 'Brexit' referendum of 23 June 2016. While the majority of voters in England (and Wales) voted for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, those in Scotland and Northern Ireland overwhelmingly voted to remain.
[48] Think for example of the Welsh devolution referendum of 3 March 2011 or the vote for Scottish independence of 18 September 2014. For Northern Ireland, of course, the situation is even more complicated.

between East and West, British or foreign, white or coloured. The presence of 'more different' others often seems to be used to gloss over any potential internal differences. This has its parallels in politics today, where Islam is used as a scare factor to unite people who share little beyond their fear of otherness.[49]

Andrew Mycock writes about the role of Englishness or Britishness specifically in relation to how these appear in nineteenth-century British historiography. In his study of the writings of nineteenth-century historians, Mycock finds that in the nineteenth century, a rhetoric of race was increasingly being used to distinguish between the different peoples on the British Isles, especially in descriptions of the Irish. Referring to nineteenth-century historians like T.B. Macaulay, W.E.H. Lecky and J. Mackintosh, Mycock states how they often describe the Irish as savage and degenerate. Chapter Two turns to the Irish position in more detail as it discusses Joseph O'Connor's Irish-American fiction *Star of the Sea*. While Kumar recognises that the Irish present a different case, he nevertheless argues for a Britishness that includes the Scots and Welsh in a Britain where "[a]ll groups in the kingdom were invited to share in this achievement and, where relevant, its spoils; to a good extent, all did".[50] Mycock, however, is less certain of this: "the borders of 'internal' and 'external' Anglo-British empires were often blurred, with the result that many key national narratives were located within multinational *and* transnational contexts". The British Empire, as Mycock finds it described by nineteenth-century historians, "was seen as an extension of England and Englishness".[51] In *Arthur & George*, we see both sides of this argument.

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[49] The propaganda for the 'Brexit' referendum and the referendum's result seem to have contributed to broadening the notion of who is considered foreign, with European immigrants to the U.K. being lumped together with both refugees and Muslims in a politics of scaremongering that widens the divide between who supposedly belongs and who does not.
[50] Kumar, "Nation and Empire", p. 590.
[51] Mycock, "A Very English Affair? Defining the Borders of Empire in Nineteenth-Century British Historiography", in *The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the Low Countries*, ed. by Hugh Dunthorne and Michael Wintle (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 45-66 (p. 62, emphasis in original; p. 64).

In Barnes' description of Arthur's lack of a feeling of Englishness, his 'unofficial Englishness', the reader is shown the tension between the different parts of Britain. At the same time, George's stress on his own Englishness, or rather, the natural assumption that he is English, full stop, points to an inclusion of multiple races but also, considering the racial prejudice he suffers, the tension that these race-relations create.

The fact that George as a character does not 'see clearly', literally and figuratively, in *Arthur & George*, symbolises the processes of visual identification and identity construction taking place throughout the novel. George's mixed family and the problems this causes for him – even though he actively refuses to connect his treatment to his racially mixed background – come to stand for the difficult position of Britain as a nation and an empire that contains numerous different ethnicities. The fact that a British presence abroad comes to mean that the presence of non-Western foreigners in Britain is increasing is one of the difficulties attached to the British Empire of the Victorian period. The next section again looks at the presence of racial others within the centre of the British Empire, in this case focusing on a black character.

"[W]e seldom had one up our street": Family, Nationalism and Racial Otherness in Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage* (2007)

In its reading of Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage*, as in the analysis of *Arthur & George*, this thesis concentrates on the 'intrusive' presence of ethnic or racial others within the imperial centre, specifically London. This chapter has so far focused on analysing the visibility of otherness and the question whether people, regardless of whether they are white like Arthur or (partially) racially other like George, are ever able to 'see clearly' the conditions of living and the differences in treatment they may experience. *Arthur & George* navigates between the 'neo' and the 'Victorian' parts of its

genre by treating as normal what Arthur and George, as Victorian (and early twentieth-century) men find typical. However, these include things that twenty-first century readers are unlikely to take in their stride. In this way, Barnes aims to alert the reader to both temporal and philosophical-ethical inconsistencies between the time of the narrative and that of the reader.

The Journal of Dora Damage offers more of an immersion in the Victorian period. Although there are certainly temporal inconsistencies similar to those in *Arthur & George*, they are presented differently. In the analysis of *Dora Damage* I not only look at the visible presence of people of other races in the metropolis, as I do in *Arthur & George*, but also consider the moral consequences this is seen to have for British society as described in the book. The novel's main character, the titular Dora, becomes the centre of what is supposed to be a typical white, middle-class British family, the kind of family that should presumably provide the backbone for a strong, white, Victorian British Empire. Instead, Starling uses breakdown within the family – through disease and disability – and the presence of non-white and non-normative characters to undermine the idea of the family, or at least, of the stereotypical family, as the base for a strong empire.

Starling's *Dora Damage* is based on the fictional diary of protagonist Dora, wife of the bookbinder Peter Damage. When her husband's rheumatism and increasing dependence on opium to ease his pain leave him unable to work, Dora challenges stereotypes of middle-class femininity by taking over his work in the bookbindery so as to keep her small family from starving. Dora initially receives relatively innocent materials to bind. However, when her client discovers his works are bound by a female bookbinder, he starts supplying more sexually explicit texts. The client, Sir Jocelyn Knightley, is a member of *Les Sauvages Nobles*, a gentleman's club loosely modelled on the historical 'Cannibal Club'. The Cannibal Club formed the inner circle of the London

Anthropological Society. Its name probably derives from Sir Richard Burton's interest in the phenomenon of cannibalism. More than the scientifically-oriented Anthropological Society, the Cannibal Club seems to have been a place where explicit and subversive opinions on race, sex, religion and more such topics could be vented.[52] As Dane Kennedy writes, the club's very name signalled its openness to discussions on "subjects deemed deviant by society".[53]

Knightley's *Les Sauvages Nobles*, while appearing to have a semi-scientific foundation, are in fact a group of men connected by their interests in the more extreme forms of pornography and their representation in text and image. The books that *Les Sauvages Nobles* supply Damage's bindery with are printed elsewhere before being brought to the bindery, there to be bound in a manner and material of choice according to the purchaser's wishes. As time progresses, Knightley increasingly engages Dora in what Heilmann and Llewellyn describe as "a complex game of voyeurism and exhibitionism", forcing her to provide bindings for explicitly sexual and racist works for his collection of pornography.[54]

Lord Knightley is not the only character who displaces his pornographic interest in especially non-Western people onto another field of occupation. Whereas in Knightley's case it is science, for his wife, Lady Sylvia, in what seems to be a virtuous counterbalance to her husband's corruption, it is involvement in the 'Ladies' Society for the Assistance of Fugitives from Slavery'. In the British Empire, the slave trade was abolished in 1807 and slavery itself with the Abolition Act of 1833. In the United States, Britain's former overseas empire, however, slavery remained in existence until well into

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[52] Lisa Z. Sigel, *Governing Pleasures: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815-1914* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp. 50-51. Burton's work is even explicitly mentioned in *The Journal of Dora Damage*, p. 103.

[53] Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007 [2005]), p. 168.

[54] Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 132.

the second half of the nineteenth century. In the 1850s and 1860s, many freed or fugitive slaves lived in Britain, especially in the larger cities. Not all of them maintained a steady social or financial position. Lady Knightley's society appears modelled on Victorian women's philanthropic associations, which supported all kinds of less fortunate fellow beings.[55] Starling has Dora describe Lady Knightley's engagement with the society in overly sexual terms: "She told me, with increasing rapidity and shortness of breath, of her initiation into the abolitionist movement as she entered womanhood, when she felt the burden of frivolous society being lifted from her slender shoulders and replaced by a meaningful crusade, which would weigh heavily but not crush her".[56] However, complicating the divide between white, male oppressors and black and/or female victims, Lady Knightley's society is not only aiming to support the development of the ex-slaves they aid but also serves its members' own needs. The sexualised language that Lady Knightley uses to describe her engagement with the association symbolises the sexual interest that the upper-class women of the society have in the black men that they are supposed to help.

With its prominent themes of sexuality, pornography and (fe)male exploitation, *Dora Damage* has received a fair amount of critical attention. While there are references to Dora's role as a working woman and her discovery of her own sexuality, which point to her being a neo-Victorian feminist character breaking with traditional Victorian stereotypes, not all critics agree with the novel's feminist potential. Karen Sturgeon-Dodsworth, for example, claims that Starling's Dora Damage is an example of a female character in neo-Victorian fiction who "enact[s] choices that superficially

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[55] See for example Anne Summers, "A Home from Home: Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century", in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. by Sandra Burman (London: Routledge, 2013 [1979]), pp. 33-63. Simon Morgan discusses Victorian women's possibilities of political engagement in *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Tauris, 2007), among them involvement in anti-slavery societies (pp. 144-150).

[56] Belinda Starling, *The Journal of Dora Damage* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008 [2007]), p. 132. Further references to this title are given in parentheses in the text.

signify agency and yet on closer inspection betoken a return to the strictures of traditional binaries".[57] While at the beginning of the novel, Dora resists the feminine (sexual) passivity she is expected to display in her marriage and takes up roles traditionally belonging to men (such as running the bookbindery), Starling continually emphasises how much of what Dora does is for her daughter Lucinda, stressing the importance of motherhood and a stable family. According to Sturgeon-Dodsworth, canonical neo-Victorian novels from the twentieth century display "a move from normalcy to exception".[58] Novels like *Dora Damage*, conversely, show the opposite trajectory, from otherness to the ordinary. As a consequence, *Dora Damage* and other such texts may "bear the hallmarks of the truly progressive text (revelling as they do in exceptional female figures) but read against twentieth century neo-Victorian antecedents they are still marked by the feeling that the gender politics proclaimed in their expositional phases have been diluted" as the novels' female characters turn to conventional ideas of femininity after all.[59]

In another article on *Dora Damage*, "Sexual F(r)ictions" (2012), Nadine Muller discusses the novel in connection with Sarah Waters' *Fingersmith* (2002). Muller looks at the relationships between women and pornography in connection with contemporary debates about what she, following Lynne Segal, calls the "pornographic marketplace" which now addresses women as "desiring consumers" instead of simply "objects of consumption".[60] Although in their chapter on "Sex and Science", Heilmann

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[57] Karen Sturgeon-Dodsworth, "'Whatever it is that you desire, halve it': The Compromising of Contemporary Femininities in Neo-Victorian Fictions", in *Twenty-First Century Feminism: Forming and Performing Femininity*, ed. by Claire Nally and Angela Smith (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 164-183 (p. 173).
[58] Sturgeon-Dodsworth, "The Compromising of Contemporary Femininities", p. 180.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Nadine Muller, "Sexual F(r)ictions: Pornography in Neo-Victorian Women's Fiction", in *The Female Figure in Contemporary Historical Fiction*, ed. by Katherine Cooper and Emma Short (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 115-133 (p. 115); Lynne Segal, "Only the Literal: The Contradictions of Anti-Pornography Feminism", in *More Dirty Looks: Gender, Pornography and Power*, ed. by Pamela Church Gibson (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), pp. 59-70.

and Llewellyn more explicitly address the racial aspects present in *Dora Damage*, they, too, focus on the sexual objectification of Dora through the work she does for Knightley and other members of *Les Sauvages Nobles*.[61] In this section, I therefore take up a viewpoint that has been mostly neglected so far, namely how the presence of people of other races in the narrative serves to illustrate the tension between the notion of a white Britain and the fact that, in practice, Britain, and specifically its metropolis, no longer is all that white. The descriptions of sexual exploitation can be paralleled to acts of racial exploitation.

Although I use the word 'pornographic' for the work that Dora receives from *Les Sauvages Nobles*, this word is not used much in the novel itself, nor is 'erotica', at least not until the very end. In the final chapter, Dora describes herself as "a bookbinder of erotica", and in the epilogue it is stated she said that no lover is better than an unsatisfactory one, "a view she had come to as a result of her late husband, her soldier lover and a thousand pornographic books" (431; 443). Rather, the material is broadly described in terms of more traditional literary genres: some sexual romances with scant literary merit are described as *galanterie* and a book on "an extraordinary, magical place, called the Clit-oris" as "an adventure story of sorts" (123; 160).

When discussing pornography, it is important to remember that, as Susan Kappeler states, it "is not a given entity in the world, but the construct of particular discourses". Kappeler continues by arguing that pornography "is not a special case of sexuality; it is a form of representation".[62] As I emphasise throughout this chapter, representation is never neutral; it involves certain power dynamics between who has the right to look, to name or to objectify, and who does not. Moreover, pornography, and the power relations involved in it, are not stable. Feona Attwood makes this clear when examining

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[61] Heilmann and Llewellyn, *Neo-Victorianism*, pp. 131-140.
[62] Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), p. 1; p. 2.

"the ways in which 'pornography' functions as a regulatory category that is underpinned by particular social concerns".[63] The 'regulation' taking place is informed by "a power struggle over forms of representation and consumption and between dominant norms and transgression".[64] Pornography, obviously, is not something that retains the same meaning over time. As a neo-Victorian novel, *Dora Damage* applies the term in a way informed by Victorian history as well as twenty-first-century social concerns. Dora herself seems to distinguish between a relatively harmless erotica – the *galanterie* and sexually tinted romances she initially receives – and a more violent pornography, in which the inequality between people from different sexes and different 'races' are emphasised and power relations are abused. The power dynamic involved in the exchange of pornographic manuscripts that creates the entangled relational construction between Dora, Knightley, Din and several other characters parallels that of the pornographic narratives themselves.

Lady Knightley first learns of the existence of Damage's bookbindery when she buys a ladies' notebook from Mr Diprose, the middleman who also supplies Dora with books to bind.[65] Lady Knightley is searching for a place to apprentice a former slave and though she hesitates when she finds out that Damage's bindery is run by a woman, Dora manages to convince her. With the introduction of Din Nelson, Lady Knightley's charge, to Damage's bookbindery on Ivy Street, the novel turns to representations of people of 'other races' in the metropolis. When Din first enters the workshop, Dora is shocked because, as she writes, "I had not quite appreciated, strange though this must

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[63] Feona Attwood, "Pornography and Objectification: Re-Reading 'the Picture That Divided Britain'", *Feminist Media Studies* 4.1 (2004), 7-19 (p. 8).

[64] Attwood, "Pornography and Objectification", p. 9.

[65] The notebook is covered in pretty fabrics, what the reader knows to be parts of dresses from a storage chest Dora inherited when her parents died. The significance of these books being bound in ladies' clothes is discussed by Caterina Novak in "Those Very 'Other' Victorians: Interrogating Neo-Victorian Feminism in *The Journal of Dora Damage*", *Neo-Victorian Studies* 6.2 (2013), 114-136 (p. 119) <www.neovictorianstudies.com> [accessed 20 July 2016].

sound, that the ex-slave, to be stationed at Damage's bindery by Lady Knightley's

Ladies' Society for the Assistance of Fugitives from Slavery, would be black" (173). The

arrival of Din is described in a way that makes Dora's neighbourhood come to stand

for a white, British – or in this case, English – empire into which Din intrudes. As Dora

states: "None of us was unfamiliar with the sight of black people; but we seldom had

one up our street" (178).

In her book *Black London* (1995), Gretchen Gerzina estimates that near Din end of

the eighteenth century there were about fifteen thousand black servants living in

London. Added to that, there were all kinds of temporary inhabitants such as sailors,

artists and those in Britain for education.[66] It is hard to arrive at an accurate deduction

as to what this would have meant for the population in the mid-nineteenth century,

considering the changing legal position of (former) slaves and the fact that London

census records did not record race or ethnicity.[67] However, when adding foreigners

who were not necessarily considered black but were visibly foreign in another way, the

number must have increased with the Victorian Empire's expansion in Eastern

territories. This confirms the notion that while it was unlikely that the entire white

population of London was acquainted with non-Western people on a personal level,

people of different ethnicities walking the city's streets would have been a familiar

sight.

Peter, Dora's husband, approves of there being only white British people on Ivy

Street. Dora describes how he appreciates the "Englishness of [the] territory, said it was

a sign of gentility" (178). Clearly, their street, as a 'territory', comes to stand in for the

city of London as well as for England as a whole. This immediately puts Din in the

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[66] Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life Before Emancipation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 5.
[67] David Fletcher, "The Territorial Foundations of the Early Nineteenth-Century Census in England", *Historical Research* 81.211 (2008), 100-121 (p. 101).

position that Ahmed describes in *Strange Encounters*, of someone being *recognised* as a stranger and therefore being considered out of place. His being dark-skinned eases this process and makes it almost unavoidable: in the eyes of Peter and others like him, Din, as a black man, cannot be properly 'English' and therefore is automatically seen as not belonging. Here, the result of looking and seeing becomes connected to racial identification. The visibility of Din's otherness immediately marks him as being out of place, in certain parts of the metropolis at least.

The whiteness of the Damage's territory is connected to class. When Dora first hears of the financial situation of the bookbindery, she carefully suggests a move: "North towards the river or south towards the factories, it would have been less salubrious, but the drop in our rent would have been substantial. But so too, of course, would have been the drop in our status" (23). Peter refuses to consider a "loss of our home and our station" (24). To continue to feel as part of the white, English-British nation, Peter requires both a certain social standing and a place that provides him with credibility for his position. The socio-geographical location of his family home and business forms a basis for his sense of self and self-worth. And though he talks down to Dora by connecting her, as a woman, to an imagined femininity with limited capabilities, his argument includes the statement that moving to a lower-income neighbourhood would be "un – un – un-*man*ly" (24, emphasis in original). Peter thus needs to protect his station, his place on the social scale as well as that within a British, white street-as-territory and nation to be able to maintain his masculine position in his own eyes, both socially and within the home. This emphasises his obvious insecurity and lack of self-confidence.

In his article on the development of both British and English nationalism, Kumar discusses the "initial and basic tension between nation and empire".[68] England formed

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[68] Kumar, "Nation and Empire", p. 578.

part of two empires in the Victorian period: the island of Great Britain as a land empire next to the overseas empire in the East. Although both empires functioned differently, both "made meaningless the development of a specifically English national identity". This meant, according to Kumar, that "up until about the end of the nineteenth century, 'Britishness' trumped 'Englishness'".[69] While this may have been true politically, it is not represented in the attitude of Peter Damage, who emphasises an English rather than a British identity. Of course, Peter is only one character and a neo-Victorian (rather than Victorian) one at that. Nevertheless, Kumar's analysis of British versus English nationalism can be relevant when connected to neo-Victorianism, in relation to how present-day nationalism, whether English or British, can be connected to the imagined Victorian period that is depicted in neo-Victorian fiction.

Through Peter Damage, the reader gains insight in the fears of a middle-class man as Starling constructs them in her neo-Victorian novel. Through Lord Knightley, Starling sheds light on the position of the aristocracy. Knightley's gentlemen's club *Les Sauvages Nobles* plays a significant part in Starling's portrayal of somewhat stereotypical aristocratic identities. The name of the club can be connected to the romantic literary figure of the noble savage, a type that was 'other' to Western man but in a way that made him unspoilt by the corrupt elements of so-called civilisation. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, this stock figure began to lose its power, helped along by Charles Dickens' essay "The Noble Savage" in *Household Words* (1853), where he claims not to believe in the concept of the noble savage and that any savage is "something highly desirable to be civilised off the face of the earth".[70] Of course, Knightley and his fellows are the supposed antithesis of the noble savage, being actual British nobles. They are more savage than noble, however, as they exploit women,

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[69] Ibid., p. 589.
[70] Charles Dickens, "The Noble Savage" (1853), n.p. <www.gutenberg.org> [accessed 25 January 2016].

children and foreign (colonial) subjects for pornography, making a mockery of the term 'science'.[71] The fact that the name of the gentlemen's club is in French makes it appear more elite; it also highlights connections to the supposedly more loose sexual morals of the French.

Like *Les Sauvages Nobles*, Knightley's own work is given but a thin layer of scientific veneer. When Mr Diprose realises it is Dora rather than Peter who runs the workshop, he wants to avoid giving them any more of Knightley's assignments with the excuse that Knightley's field of specialty is ethnography: "Primitive peoples [...] His mastery in the fields of phrenology, physiognomy, and, ah, the baser urges of mankind, have led him to a far greater understanding of the savage nations than anyone has heretofore achieved" (94-95). At this point, the reader is likely to be aware of the kind of so-called scientific interests Knightley has. Diprose continues talking to Peter: "But, really, must I impress upon you the dire consequences of exposing literature of that ilk to women? [...] It will addle their brains and disturb their constitutions" (95). There is clear irony in the fact that Diprose expresses his low opinion of women and their mental and physical capacities to Peter, while Peter is the one who is physically crippled by disease and becomes mentally addled through his increasing medicinal use of opium.

As both *Arthur & George* and *Dora Damage* show, the 'primitive peoples' that Knightley's work is concerned with can no longer be only found in faraway countries, to be visited by anthropological research trips. Instead, whether by choice or, more often, by force, large numbers had moved away from their original countries to become an increasingly visible presence in the West. Although Dora, Peter and the other inhabitants of Ivy street are aware of the existence of racial others, they prefer to keep their street 'clean', literally and figuratively. The name 'Ivy Street' itself is telling in this

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[71] Dora receives titles such as *Afric-Anus: A Scientific Foray into the Size of the Negro Rectum in Relation to the Penis; followed by an Essay on the Libidinosity of Women of Colour* (213).

context. The plant ivy occurs several chapters earlier in the book when Dora is looking for a fitting pattern with which to ornament a series of sexually explicit romances sent to her by Lord Knightley. Thinking that the characters in the books need all the help they can get, Dora decides on the language of flowers as a cover design: "In the centre of each front cover, I wove a wreath of ivy leaves, as a symbol of wedded love and fidelity". Then, "fern, for shelter from the elements [...] marigold, for the health and vigour the protagonists clearly required [and] euphorbia, to represent persistence, the key value praised therein" (124).[72]

When Lord Knightley himself comes into the shop and sees the covers, he recognises what Dora has done but also reads something else in her design. He "picked up one of the books on the table, and ran his finger over the ivy-leaf wreath. '*Hedera helix*. Not the gentlest of plants. A hostile assailant, with quick, hardy runners; it deprives its host of sunlight, with a resultant loss of vigour, and eventual demise'" (140). In what Marie-Luise Kohlke describes as an anachronistic reference to "a very modern-day critique of imperialism's detrimental effects on its racial others", he finishes by stating: "I should recommend it to the Foreign Office as an emblem for the construction of Her Majesty's Empire" (140).[73] Naming the street after a plant that is described as responsible for the demise of its host leaves the reader to wonder at the influence of the neighbourhood over its inhabitants.

Their street is not the only thing the inhabitants of Ivy Street want to keep clean. When Peter marries Dora, he has no expectations with regard to her 'wifely duties':

> On our wedding night he had led me to the bedroom, where he had prepared a tin bath, and waited outside the door barking instructions at me to scrub myself all over with

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[72] Dora's use of ivy seems to reference Sarah Waters' *Fingersmith*, where, as O'Callaghan points out, "[v]ines and briars are symbols that reoccur in the novel". "'The Grossest Rakes of Fiction': Reassessing Gender, Sex, and Pornography in Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith*", *Critique* 56 (2015), 560-575 (p. 563).

[73] Marie-Luise Kohlke, "De Corporis et Libri Fabrica: Review of Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage*", *Neo-Victorian Studies* 1.1 (2008), 196-202 (p. 198) <www.neovictorianstudies.com> [accessed 20 July 2016}.

> carbolic soap and baking soda. When he was fully satisfied of my cleanliness, we managed the act during which Lucinda was conceived, but as it drew to a close he fretted that I was having a fit and that I, too, like my grandfather, was a convulsive. We did it twice more after her birth, both times again precluded with carbolic and soda […] I remember suggesting a third time, some months later, to which he replied in wonder, 'What do you want to be going and doing that for?' […] It was a wrongful disposition for a respectable wife and mother; I learnt to acquire an appropriate aversion. (24)

Peter's reluctance to engage in marital sex is described as grounded at least partially in his own family background, as he had more brothers and sisters than could be fed and his mother died giving birth to a tenth child. He cannot understand Dora's wish for more children and is unable to take pleasure in the sexual act in itself, fearing for possible consequences.

Sex, in Peter's view, is inherently linked to reproduction and his fear of begetting more children comes to be intertwined with a more general repulsion for the sexual act. Peter's concerns serve to feminise him, as Victorian stereotypes ascribe sexual needs without concern for children to men, while women were supposed to be more reticent sexually and more caring when it came to progeny.[74] The scrubbing he subjects Dora to, or that she has to subject herself to if she wishes to be intimate with her husband, connects sex and the body with being dirty, both literally and figuratively. In stating that the scrubbing of her body in this way may have been responsible for her "subsequent aversion to housework", Dora links an imagined physical dirtiness to the state of her home, the home on which Peter's self-esteem is based (24). Dora's body thus also becomes inherently connected to the home, her body-as-home and the home as female territory. The link between Peter's self-esteem and his home-as-territory is thus complicated through that home's strong tie to Dora and her femininity. Dora's relation to the home points ahead to later parts of the story where it becomes clear

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[74] See for example Henry Maudsley's article "Sex in Mind and in Education", published in *The Fortnightly Review* XV, 1 June 1874, though even at the time this article received critical responses as well, such as that from Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, one of the first women to become a qualified doctor, in the same journal.

that it is Dora rather than Peter who is 'master' of the house. Any authority that Peter has is granted to him by Dora. Thus, when Dora finds an opportunity to exercise her own authority when Peter becomes physically incapable of doing his work, Peter's already small role becomes completely negligible.

The reference to the body as dirty recalls the example from *Arthur & George* where George, on the train home from work, receives remarks "about bleach, and his mother forgetting the carbolic" (81). Both the female body and the coloured body are subject to a discourse of dirtiness. Racial otherness and femininity are similarly visualised as impure. The dirtiness supposedly associated with otherness, however, whether sexual or racial otherness, is not literally visible but created through the way people look and are looked at. If we take what is probably meant as a joke in *Arthur & George* seriously, then George becomes dirty in the look he receives from the other passengers.

Another example occurs when Dora follows Din to find out where he goes when, every Friday afternoon, he leaves the workshop early without permission: Dora dresses in mourning clothes, including a veil, to avoid being recognised. Initially she is able to shadow Din and keep him in sight. Soon, however, she fears she has lost track of him, until she hears a group of women call out "Scrub you gob, Uncle Tom" (272). Although, as in the example from *Arthur & George*, the women are not referring to literal dirt, the implication is that coloured skin represents a stain that should be removed but cannot, a dirty body that cannot become clean. The reference to Uncle Tom suggests that the women not only address Din as a black man but as both a slave and an American, emphasising the fact that Din is viewed as out of place on the London streets. The mourning clothes that Dora wears stress the irony of Dora dressing in black to become unrecognisable while conversely, Din's black skin makes him stand out. When Din enters a house and Dora is left to stand around on the streets in a poor area of London, her black clothes make her much more conspicuous than anything else would.

However, whereas Dora's black clothes can obviously be changed and removed, the same is not true for Din's skin colour.

When Dora gets to know Din better, he starts sharing some of his experiences with her, among others those of his tie to the Ladies' Society. Their mutual connection to the society is through Sylvia, Lady Knightley. Initially, she is portrayed as a stereotype of Victorian upper-class femininity. Her involvement in the Ladies' Society for the Assistance of Fugitives from Slavery, described as it is in almost sexual terms, is presented as a typical rich woman's occupation, one of the distractions with which to fill her day. Although the society of which Lady Knightley is part professes to be occupied with the morally valuable purpose of assisting former slaves, this is not the only thing they do. After having worked in the bookbindery for some time, Din talks to Dora about his involvement with the ladies' organisation. Every now and then, he tells her, the ladies from the society send for him. After arriving, Din describes:

> They take me into this room, ma'am, this red room in her house, an' they put the pelt of a tiger round me, an' a spear in this hand an' a shield in that, an' ask me to stand about like a Zulu warrior. 'Ooh, a Zoo-loo, a Zoo-loo,' they cry, an' wave their arms [...] I'm their dandy Zoo-loo. An' so I stand, an' I wait, an' they look at me, like they seen nothin' like me before, an' treat me for a fool. (209)

By making Din perform his blackness in a fantasy invented by the ladies, they are bringing to life their fears and expectations of black men in a situation where they, as white women, are in control. They objectify him; it is not Din standing there but an African, a Negro, a 'Zoo-loo'. In their looking at Din, dressed up as their fantasy-image of a Zulu warrior, it is not so much Din performing a role but the ladies performing their ideas and fantasies, using Din as a prop more than an actor, objectifying him from a person into a creature of their imagining. In being able to do this, they seem to possess a controlling look, the look of white upper-class women faced with what they fancy a black man to be like. At the same time, it *is* a look rather than a gaze, following the distinction Kaplan makes, for as Din says that they 'treat him for a fool', so he tells

Dora: "They the ones degradin' themselves. They the fools" (209). Din is thus able to turn their activities back on them, exposing the fact that these white ladies play at charity while entertaining themselves by trying to possess what they claim to want to set free.

The kind of performance that the members of the Ladies' Society stage references the Victorian phenomenon of the freak show. Nadja Durbach argues that "the significance attached to anomalous bodies, and thus the lessons they embodied, were never stable". She continues by stating that it is crucial to understand "the specific context that produced certain types of bodies as aberrant and the ways in which their display operated as both an index of, and a strategy to cope with, larger cultural anxieties".[75] For the members of the Ladies' Society for the Assistance of Fugitives from Slavery, Din's black body thus symbolises an anxiety about racial otherness coming into their world. At the same time, they are also intrigued – and titillated – by this unfamiliar representation of masculinity.

The way Din presents himself does not match up with their fears, so to have their anxieties performed and controlled, they require Din to dress up and perform a role of their imagining, simultaneously making him perform a sexually recognisable role. However, whereas Durbach argues that in freak show performances, "[h]umor and horror coexisted [...] for both of these genres served as a means to express and to manage the cultural anxieties that human anomalies literally embodied", with Din's performance in *Dora Damage* it is only the reader who 'looks on' with wry humour.[76] Helen Davies also raises the point of ethics in *Neo-Victorian Freakery*: "I argue that 're-membering' bodies which were marked as abnormal, freakish, or 'other' in the nineteenth century raises crucial ethical questions about the author who reanimates

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[75] Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 3.
[76] Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, p. 4.

such bodies, and the position of the reader who is encouraged to share in the process of textual/corporeal reconstruction".[77] Davies explicitly highlights the sexual connotations of these neo-Victorian reconstructed narratives.[78] Although there are obviously differences between the constructed Victorian characters of the freak and the racial other, there is also much overlap between the two.[79]

In the ladies' pursuit of racial play-acting, the connection between the Ladies' Society and the sexual impulses implied in Lady Knightley's behaviour is made explicit. When at some point Din sees Lady Knightley in the bookbindery, he says to Dora that "she ain't that much of a lady" (331). Curious, Dora presses him to elaborate. "I told you they made me pose with spears, yes? [...] An' do the Zoo-loo warrior thing, yes? [...] Well, that lady likes spears" (331-32). By now well-versed in the vocabulary of pornography, Dora's mind immediately wonders about Din's meaning. He proceeds:

> She had this idea, see, of bein' the white lady captured by savages. She would swoon, and lie down, and pull at her dress [...] an' say to me, 'No, no, no, you must not kill me!' [...] She would get so cross with me [for doing nothing], an' order me, 'You stand there, above me, an' hold that spear so, and point it at me, an' make like you're killin' me!' An' I didn't want to do it. Felt like such a fool. But I did it. 'Oh, no, no, no, the Negro is killin' me! Help! Help!' (332)

By staging Din's blackness and presumed wildness in a controlled setting, the members of the Ladies' Society are able to turn their fear and attraction into a performance to excite them, with obvious racial as well as sexual implications. Their 'show' feeds on the cliché of black men being inescapably attracted to white women, with the attendant threat of these men always being intent on raping the women. However, both the cliché and the imagined threat are made meaningless by Din's refusal to act the part. Although the changing power dynamics made possible by the 'look' that

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[77] Helen Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery: The Cultural Afterlife of the Victorian Freak Show* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 6.

[78] Davies, *Neo-Victorian Freakery*, pp. 8-10.

[79] An obvious example here is Saartjie Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman exhibited in Western Europe in the early nineteenth century. Davies uses her case as an example in the first chapter of *Neo-Victorian Freakery* and Kohlke discusses the ethics of fictional recreations of Baartman's life in "Neo-Victorian Biofiction".

Kaplan describes (as opposed to the unidirectional, possessive and objectifying male gaze) enable Din to expose the ladies in a way similar to their exposition of him, he can only do so in a certain context, here by disclosing it to Dora. In telling Dora not only of what the women make him do but about how he views them, that "they the fools", Din's observation gains in power.

The above example shows the discrepancy between the expectations of and about certain people – in this case, the expectations of the members of the Ladies' Society about black men – and what actually takes place. At the same time, the Ladies' Society and Lady Knightley are ridiculed not only by Din sharing his story with Dora but by the invisible presence of the reader as listener to the story, so that Din not only tells Dora but also makes a wider community of readers part of his audience. The relationship that Din constructs with Dora and with the reader enables him to become a known character. Although he may still not be welcomed on Ivy Street, he is no longer alien to the street. Ahmed's description of the strange encounter, where someone is already *recognised* as a stranger, as someone who is out of place and does not belong, is no longer valid. Instead, Din has become a familiar stranger, if not welcomed then at least tolerated.[80]

The imagined threat that black men supposedly pose to white women's sexuality as well as the fear of miscegenation implied in this threat become more relevant when ethnic or racial others are present in the imperial centre instead of being relegated to the colonies. The power relations implied here are also visible in some of the racist pornography Dora is sent to bind. Din, speaking about those who peruse the books of pornography passing through Damage's bindery, states:

> You have to pity the men [...] Why is it they think they're bein' dangerous lookin' at a black man with a white woman? Why is that more horrorsome than a fifty-year-old man with a ten-year-old child, or a woman with a goat? Cos it's seen to be the wrong way

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[80] The concept of the familiar stranger is discussed by Stanley Milgram in a chapter of that title in his book *The Individual in a Social World: Essays and Experiments* (1977).

round; the wrong balance of power. White over black, man over woman, that's the right way, ain't it? Black man, white woman, though, stirs it all up, causes bother. (365)

Significantly, it is only white people who imagine these so-called inverted unions. While the supposed 'risks' of mixed-race children are implied, they are not expressed explicitly. Although Din refers to the "balance of power" in connection to the pornography Dora receives, his statement is also true for mid-Victorian society in general, as it is described in *Dora Damage*. The fact that Din's character speaks in a neo-Victorian novel implies that similar power dynamics may still play a role in twenty-first-century Western white societies as well.

As Dora becomes used to the presence of Din, they become increasingly intimate, working together as they are in the small space of the bindery. Dora looks at Din's skin, wondering what it is like to "see that colour on one's outstretched hands" (177). Here, sight is also connected to an imagined self-identification. Although we hear some of the experiences that Din shares with Dora, he remains a supporting character, with his words serving to give weight to hers. When, in their growing intimacy, the now widowed Dora becomes sexually involved with Din, she is overwhelmed by the intensity of her emotions: "Two human beings met here today, not just a white woman and a black man. You happen to be black and I happen to be white" (367-68). Din, however, is unable to distance himself from his appearance the way Dora seems to do. In what may be an anachronistic reference to current developments in 'whiteness studies' and the attempt to undo the assumption that 'white is not a colour', he insists: "I *am* a black man, Dora, and it defines me more than your skin will ever define you" (368, emphasis in original). In this, Din differs from Barnes' character George, who either refuses or fails to recognise his own otherness in the eyes of British white people.

Perhaps it is Dora's strength, her moral strength in standing up for her family and her physical strength acquired from her work and from having to carry her ill daughter around, that makes the men in *The Journal of Dora Damage* seem weak by comparison.

This counts for *all* men, not just Dora's increasingly feeble husband and the perverted *Sauvages Nobles* with their supporting cast of Diprose and his assistants. Even Din, a candidate for the archetypal good man in opposition to the rest of the amoral male characters, leaves Dora before the end of the novel, albeit so that he, rather than Dora, becomes the suspect for a murder. Added to that, Din is somewhat handicapped physically by a limp, so like Peter, and like George in *Arthur & George*, Din is made incapable of representing male perfection.

In "(In)Visible Disability in Neo-Victorian Families" (2011), Rosario Arias argues that the "infirmity, deformity and illness in the family metonymically signifies the disabled body of [the] nation".[81] The fact that the members of Damage's extended family all represent some form of deviance, whether physical or moral, shows that they cannot serve as the stereotypical Victorian ideal family-as-nation, the healthy, heterosexual unit that is supposed to form the basis for a strong British Empire. Even Dora herself, though physically healthy and capable, remains literally marked by her past, as Diprose forcibly has the crest of *Les Sauvages Nobles* tattooed on her buttocks (408). Arias' argument that the pathologisation of Dora's family members represents a nation falling apart can be connected to Ansgar Nünning and Jan Rupp's analysis of metaphors of empire in late Victorian literature. They argue that, next to various other examples such as the empire as a tree or a fleet, the metaphor of the empire as a family was the most prevalent one.[82] The fact that the book ends with a description of alternative families links the connection between empire and family to the more modern challenges to the notion of the heterosexual nuclear family. In Barnes' novel, George

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[81] Rosario Arias, "(In)Visible Disability in Neo-Victorian Families", in *Neo-Victorian Families: Gender, Sexual and Cultural Politics*, ed. by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 343-64 (p. 359).

[82] Ansgar Nünning and Jan Rupp, "The Dissemination of Imperialist Values in Late Victorian Literature and Other Media", in *Ethics in Culture: The Dissemination of Values Through Literature and Other Media*, ed. by Astrid Erll, Herbert Grabes and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 255-77 (p. 262).

and Maud, as brother and sister sharing a house, also portray one such alternative family. Rather than reading the failing nuclear family of Peter, Dora and Lucinda as a signifier for an empire that is falling apart, we can parallel the alternative family as a move away from the traditional empire and towards more creative forms of living together in society.

When Peter tells Dora that she is "most fortunate to be married to a modern man" like himself, the irony can immediately be perceived by the reader, since Peter is described as rather old-fashioned (97). His reason for stressing his 'modernity' is the relative freedom Dora has in going out of the house, never mind that all her errands concern things necessary to keep the house running and that Peter, due to his illness, is incapable of doing himself. Peter argues: "Most members of the weaker sex are never permitted to be seen beyond the confines of their houses" (97). However, Dora silently disagrees with him: "he was wrong. A woman's life could never truly lack visibility, no matter how low or high her rank: women who went to the market were exhibits; women who never went to the market were exhibited at balls and parties instead" (97).

There is an obvious connection to class in the way Dora describes women being put on view. Whereas women from the lower and lower middle classes had to work outside of the home or had to do their own shopping rather than have a servant do it, upper-class women were the ones being displayed within the home. Peter's reference to his being a modern man 'allowing' Dora to go out can thus be seen to displace an anxiety about his own class status. He cannot afford not to let Dora move outside of the house so rather than having it symbolise a lack of class and status, he refers to modern masculinity, using it as an excuse. Although Dora's initial reference to women's life not lacking visibility might imply a choice on the part of the women whether and in what way to present themselves, her description of women as exhibits immediately undermines any potential agency. Dora's emphasis on a woman's inescapability of

being seen, of becoming an object to be looked or gazed at, seems more of a twenty-first-century criticism than a nineteenth-century one. Comments like the one Dora makes on women's visibility place the novel in a broader context of criticism on Victorian stereotypes of femininity that can also be found in other neo-Victorian novels.[83] While many neo-Victorian novels indeed provide a more critical framework for gender stereotypes, at the same time they question how controversial these neo-Victorian Victorians are made out to be.[84]

Although society, personified in the novel by the other inhabitants of Ivy Street, could be quite vigilant, within the Damage family itself there is little scrutiny taking place. All characters in Dora's household are either very accepting or, wilfully or not, blind to anything not fitting certain standards. This is a quality that *Dora Damage* shares with Barnes' *Arthur & George*, which also portrays supportive or oblivious families. In *Arthur & George*, Arthur has a strong connection with his mother, marries twice and has children with each woman, while George comes from a family that at least partly shares his experiences of being visibly other and ends up sharing a house with his sister. *The Journal of Dora Damage* portrays the people in the house and bookbindery as a kind of family, encompassing Dora and her daughter, the former slave Din, the apprentice Jack and a young girl serving in the house, Pansy. Even before his death, Peter is not portrayed as part of this union. Although his ill health may be a

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[83] A neo-Victorian novel to think of is Sarah Waters' *Affinity* (1998), where surveillance – both that of others and self-surveillance – plays a large role, especially for the main character Margaret. For theoretical approaches, see for example Lucie Armitt and Sarah Gamble, "The Haunted Geometries of Sarah Waters' *Affinity*", *Textual Practice* 20.1 (2006), 141-159; or Mark Llewellyn, "'Queer? I Should Say It Is Criminal!': Sarah Waters' *Affinity*", *Journal of Gender Studies* 13.3 (2004), 203-214. Another example is Sandi Toksvig's *Valentine Grey* (2012), where protagonist Valentine feels watched as she cross-dresses to adopt her cousin Reggie's identity; and Reggie feels watched because of his feelings for men. Jane Harris' *The Observations* (2006) makes its purpose clear in its title. There are also novels concerning (mistaken) lock-ups in Victorian asylums, like John Harwood's *The Asylum* (2013); these often more or less explicitly reference Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1859-1860).

[84] See Sturgeon-Dodsworth's argument on postfeminism in neo-Victorianism in "The Compromising of Contemporary Femininities in Neo-Victorian Fictions".

reason for this, it is more likely that it is meant to counterpoise Peter's opinions on society and men and women's place within it to the more flexible opinions of all other members of the family-like structure that comes into existence.

The 'family' constructed around the bookbindery is portrayed early on as a non-normative one. Dora's early statement that the apprentice Jack "never seemed interested in girls, never had a sweetheart" can be read as suggestive in a neo-Victorian context (76). And indeed, when near the end of the book Jack does not come to work, it turns out he is in prison for engaging in sexual acts with other men. In another reference to the (in)visibility of otherness, Dora states that only after hearing Jack's story, "I started to see them everywhere, and realised what I had been overlooking. The boys in sailors' uniforms along the Strand. The post-boys in Holywell-street. Mary-Annes, all of them" (311). Dora's reaction is remarkably open-minded; rather than being disgusted, she feels for "[l]ittle Jack [...] and his furtive, secret little life" (311). The fact that a year before, she "might not have struggled so hard to understand" indicates that Dora has been influenced by the pornography she has bound (311). After seeing the range of things people are sexually drawn to, Jack's interest in men is actually not that shocking anymore. While Dora's increasing openness towards such non-normative forms of sexuality is linked to the material she received, it also provides another link to the novel's neo-Victorianism, with Dora potentially a twenty-first-century character as much as a Victorian one.

When Din flees to the Americas and Dora wants to escape the memories of the pornographic books she was required to bind, the family splits and expands. Part of it turns into a marriage of convenience – and companionship – between the barren Pansy and Jack, free after several years in prison, while Dora creates a kind of matriarchal family with her daughter, Knightley's wife and later widow Sylvia and her young son whom Knightley refused to recognise as his. Although these constructions queer the

heterosexual and heteronormative marriage, they also re-establish and strengthen it: Jack and Pansy by using – and needing – their friendship-marriage as a means to maintain a respectable façade for society and Dora and Sylvia by the fact that they have to emphasise their position as widows to be able to share a house and keep their children while still maintaining a respectable social position.

As the members of Dora's extended 'family' slowly find their place at the end of the novel, the same is not true for all characters. Readers learn that Knightley's so-called scientific interest in non-Western peoples is in fact a perverted self-interest when it becomes known that he himself is the product of an Algerian man who violated his French mother. After their child's birth, he forces his wife Sylvia out of their house, claiming she has been unfaithful because their son Nathaniel is too dark-skinned and has a skull that exhibits Negroid features. As it turns out, he himself is what he has accused Sylvia of giving birth to: "Half-caste. Mulatto" (435). "I have built my very career", Knightley states, "on the subjugation of my own race, and time after time I have come to the painful conclusion that we are the inferior species" (435-36). Interestingly, Knightley only refers to his scientific career as an anthropologist and not to the pornographic aspects of *Les Sauvages Nobles* and the often racist imagery that is part of the pornography Dora receives for binding. Knightley's contradictions make Dora wonder how a man so scientifically fascinated with those of 'other races' was simultaneously "more savage than noble in his racial and sexual attitudes" (348). Knightley's reference to the subjugations of his own race implies that he sees himself as racially other more than white or British. In this he can be paralleled to how people view the mixed-race George as other, even if he himself does not.

Based on the examples in *Dora Damage*, it seems that there are two parts to society's surveillance, what I call the 'image' and the 'story', where one is needed to remove the power of the other. Thus, for Jack and Pansy the *image* of heterosexual marriage is

necessary to cover up the *story* of Pansy's sexual contact (rape) outside marriage and the disastrous abortion that followed it, making her barren, and the *story* of Jack's interest in men and his incarceration for engaging in sexual acts with other men. For Dora and Sylvia, however, it is the *story* that both women are widowed that is necessary to cover up a potential *image* of impropriety that two single women living together could represent. Despite Dora's (and Pansy's) acceptance of Jack's preferences, Starling's narrative still shows that "the most viable gender identity [is] the one that fits in with the heterosexual matrix".[85] In *Arthur & George*, we can take 'image' more literally: George's story of being English does not match the visual image he, as a half-Indian man, presents; neither does Arthur's image of a well-to-do white man connect with the position of not-belonging that he claims to occupy.

In the epilogue to *Dora Damage*, Lucinda writes: "It may surprise the reader to discover that [Jack] and Pansy got married, but it made perfect sense to them and us all. Their affection for each other is greater than between most married couples; her barrenness is no obstacle to someone of his proclivities. They offer mutual love, support and comfort" (442). It is intriguing that in a book that offers a critique on stereotypes of femininity, both from the nineteenth century and the twenty-first, the focus of Lucinda's point is on Jack, not on Pansy's needs or wants beyond the loving but platonic relation with him. This implicitly erases Pansy as a sexual being, a woman with possible sexual needs, as if her barrenness makes her inherently unsuitable for a heterosexual marriage. Starling's description of Jack and Pansy's marriage questions to what extent the novel provides a narrative of empowerment for individuals who do not appear to fit into the stereotypical nuclear family. Rather than construct alternative, non-normative identities for Jack and Pansy, they are still made to fit in a heterosexual marriage-structure. Whether we should read this as Starling's voice or as that of the

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[85] Sturgeon-Dodsworth, "The Compromising of Contemporary Femininities", p. 175.

character Lucinda remains the question, but as Starling did not hesitate to add twenty-first-century aspects to other parts of the novel, there would seem to be no reason to avoid doing so here. A similar argument is put forward for the reason for Dora and Sylvia living together, also offering each other – and their children – "mutual love, support and comfort", never remarrying as "[n]either of them quite got over the men they loved but could not have" (442).

The very last sentence of *Dora Damage* is focalised by Lucinda. She describes Dora's death, "at a time when pornography had become no longer the privilege of the wealthy, but [was] available from barrows in every market. And although her eyes were failing, *she knew that she had seen it all*" (445, my emphasis). The statement that Dora has "seen it all" with regard to pornography enables two interpretations. First, that the kind of pornography now widely available differs little from the works she received in the bindery decades earlier – also implying, of course, that there is not much new to pornography in the twenty-first century. It is also worrying, for as much of the pornography that passed through Damage's bindery was racist as well as misogynist, the implication is that this, too, is still the case.

The Journal of Dora Damage represents racial otherness within Britain, specifically the metropolis, by providing the reader with multiple viewpoints: not only that of Dora, of Knightley and *Les Sauvages Nobles*, that of Lady Knightley and her Ladies' Association but also that of minor characters: the boys in the street calling after Din, the other inhabitants of Ivy Street and similar incorporated references. Most directly, Starling gives a voice to Din himself, allowing him to tell not only his own story but enabling him to share his views of other characters as well. In this, she seems to have tried to construct a fair representation of a black character in mid-Victorian London. However, the significance of sexuality, specifically pornography, throughout the novel, and the inclusion of numerous pornographic texts where racial otherness plays a role

in the sexual scenes represented influences the readers' perception of Din and thereby the extent to which he can function as an independent character. A similar difficulty plays a role in the construction of Dora as a feminist protagonist. While Starling tried to use the Victorian period to display how socially advanced her characters are, the analysis in this chapter shows that she has not been completely successful.

Conclusion

As the two texts discussed in this chapter demonstrate, novels are one way through which the juxtaposing ideas of Victorian Britain as a world empire and that same Britain as a white nation are mediated. Both Barnes' *Arthur & George* and Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage* display a tension between what many imagined Victorian characters would have wished to be the case – for Britain to be racially pure and superior to the people of the territories it colonises – and what was actually happening in the Victorian period. Barnes' and Starling's novels navigate this gap between expectations and actuality from a twenty-first-century position. This contemporary perspective of neo-Victorian fiction is important to remember, as it brings with it the inescapable hindsight of historical knowledge that authors and readers possess.

The increased number of non-European foreigners living in Britain during the nineteenth century can be seen as a beginning of contemporary social structures, where multiculturalism is inescapably part of society. By choosing the Victorian period as their setting, authors like Barnes and Starling return to the period that formed much of the basis for this aspect of present-day society. In this way, they are able to show that today's continuing struggles to create a society of equals which incorporates people whose background and heritage are from all over the world is not a new development but rather something that has been going on since the Victorian era or

longer. By focusing on characters who either are themselves (partly) 'racially other' (such as Din and the Edalji family) or characters who become personally involved with them (such as Arthur and Dora), the authors mediate or even negate the racist ideas presented by less prominent characters like the Great Wyrley police officers and the members of *Les Sauvages Nobles*. This policy can then be connected not only to the Victorian period in which the narratives are set but also to the authors' – and the readers' – present, taking the views that Barnes and Starling project upon their Victorian characters and using these as a guide for contemporary relations between people of different ethnicities.

Both novels stress the visibility of otherness but do so in different ways. Whereas in *Arthur & George* processes of looking and perceiving are expressed through Arthur's scientific language, in *Dora Damage* they are more strongly connected to a discourse of sexual and racial objectification. Both novels attempt to answer Gaines' question that I brought up in the introduction, of who has the 'right to look'. In *Arthur & George*, it is left to the reader: Arthur's assistance of George and the glasses George has acquired to correct his vision both indicate that George does have the right to look and to look *back* at those people judging him on sight, even if he chooses not to do so. This may be an indication of his mixed-race status, symbolising an unstable position which is neither one point of vision nor the other.

Interestingly, in *Dora Damage*, both Dora and Din claim their 'right to look', Dora by using the financial independence she has gained from her work for *Les Sauvages Nobles* and Din by refusing the position of objectified other and by ridiculing the members of the Ladies' Society and *Les Sauvages Nobles* to Dora and the reader. What is more, as soon as Lord Knightley admits his racially mixed position to Dora, he loses *his* right to look and disappears from the text, both literally and figuratively. Based on these instances, we can see that when characters' identification as other no longer only

depends on the visual, their position shifts. When Dora becomes familiar enough with Din to share personal experiences, this provides him with the opportunity to expose the members of the Ladies' Society and *Les Sauvages Nobles* by describing the situation to her and thus to the reader. Similarly, when Knightley tells his story and so exposes the fabrication of his 'white identity', he can no longer maintain the authoritative position that he occupied.

Where in *Arthur & George* vision itself is connected to power and so to the assumption that seeing implies knowledge, in *Dora Damage* looking often becomes a voyeuristic process where sexuality is used to express power relations. Through Dora, the reader is made to see both sides of the pornography debate: although she is exploited by the pornographers she has to bind works for, both in the sense that she is forced to continue undertaking work she loathes and by providing them with the additional sexual frisson of knowing their pornography is bound by a woman, their money also offers her a chance for a new life in which she is no longer in anyone's power. It becomes irrelevant that *Les Sauvages Nobles* imagine Dora to be excited by the sexual content of the works she receives when actually she is repulsed, not just by the pornography itself but also by the men who make use of it. Although the men may be rich and influential, her – and Din's – pity and disgust for them turns these men's voyeuristic gaze back on themselves, not just in the eyes of the novel's characters but also in those of the readers.

Unlike *Dora Damage*, *Arthur & George* does not offer a neat ending and a clear sense of closure – in *Dora Damage* facilitated by the death of the protagonist and Lucinda's epilogue. In part this can be related to the different genres that the texts draw upon, for where Barnes remains close to the available historical knowledge about his characters, drawing on modes of biography and history writing as well as those of fiction, Starling's text is more clearly anachronistic, showing connections to

nineteenth-century sensation fiction but also referencing twentieth and twenty-first-century theories of race and gender. A difference is also notable in their use of language: *Dora Damage* engages the reader with a pretend-Victorian voice and vocabulary while *Arthur & George* is more unapologetically modern in its language. Perhaps that makes it easier to notice the hidden anachronisms in *Dora Damage*. Through their overt anchoring in the twenty-first century, the two texts can be seen to express contemporary concerns about the continued presence of a form of racism that is at least partly grounded in a Victorian scientific discourse. Whereas in the Victorian period, science and racism were often connected to 'explain' the position and (lack of) status of coloured people, neither *Dora Damage* nor *Arthur & George* make many explicit references to this kind of science. Rather, in *Dora Damage*, science is a front for the works of pornography that Dora receives – and not a very firm one at that.

In *Arthur & George*, science is given a more positive twist by theoretically enabling George to see more clearly and so potentially to have more power and influence. The fact that George omits to use his glasses and so fails to take a more active role in how he perceives as well as how he is perceived does indicate science's limitations. This again offers a link to the present, for while few people still adhere to nineteenth-century theories of race, the continued existence of racial prejudice indicates that scientific and social developments have not yet enabled people to look beyond appearance. Knightley's confession at the end of *Dora Damage* exemplifies the interconnectedness of race and science. Knightley, passing for white in his everyday life, tells Dora that after all his research, he cannot escape the conclusion that he is part of an inferior species. While the fact that he has been accepted as a member of Britain's upper class and of *Les Sauvages Nobles* indicates that he seems to pass in the eyes of others, he nevertheless fails to convince *himself* of his ability to perform his role

as 'not-other', a process that, following Schlossberg, seems an essential part of passing successfully.

The racial otherness of characters like Din, Knightley, George and his family enables Barnes and Starling to represent more extensive cultural anxieties. The use of their otherness forms another indication of the novels' dual temporalities. As novels (partly) set in the Victorian period, the two texts discussed are able to reference Victorian anxieties about race and racial mixing that coincided with the radical increase in the number of non-European foreigners in Britain during the nineteenth century. This anxiety can then be connected to the threat that was felt towards the traditional – and stereotypical – image of the white, Victorian family. While the collapse of the traditional family structure described in both *Arthur & George* and *Dora Damage* may indeed signify a failure of the nation-as-family, the success of the alternative counter-family structures at the end of both novels – Dora and Sylvia and their children, Jack and Pansy, George and Maud – can be seen to point to the need of finding a different story to establish the development of the nation.

Dora Damage and *Arthur & George* both deal with the subject of the presence of racial others in Victorian Britain as the centre of the British Empire. The recognition Barnes' novel received – it was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize and won several other prizes – indicates that Barnes' narrative of 'seeing' others in a different way is something that touches upon contemporary readers' experiences. Starling's novel also expresses a similar current concern: that we may live in a society that is – among other things – racially and ethnically mixed and multicultural but where there are still distinctions made between people of different backgrounds and that in many contexts, certain skin colours define their owners more than others do. These books, different though they may be, each invite the reader to think about the consequences of

centuries of empire and the stamp it has put not only on former colonies but also on their imperial centre.

In the next chapter, I continue to navigate descriptions of otherness in neo-Victorian fiction but where this chapter focused on the racial or colonial other entering Britain, Chapter Two concentrates on neo-Victorian novels that describe a journey between the imperial centre and its colonies. By looking at the journey itself as a representation of a position 'in-between', both in a literal and a figurative sense, and at the travellers as a social community in miniature, I determine how different influences such as Britain and colonies, home and away, may become mixed up through the in-between status of the journey and what influence this has on the travellers and their community, especially as they are required to define not only their own identities but also those of both European and colonial others.

Chapter 2: Travelling In-Between Metropole and Colonies

> It is something peculiar, Lucy decided, about ocean travel, that one feels one has always done it. On a ship it is impossible to believe you ever had a life on land; the pitch of the deep sea, the state of being buoyed, these begin to feel like the unalterable and persistent state of being.
>
> (Gail Jones, *Sixty Lights*, 2004)[1]

Lucy Strange, the narrator of Gail Jones' novel *Sixty Lights*, grows up in Australia. After her parents die, she and her brother are adopted by their mother's brother who travels from India and brings them to London. When Lucy is sixteen, her uncle asks her to go to India as a potential bride for a close friend to whom he owes money. For the second time in her life, Lucy spends months on board of a ship to travel to a place unknown. During this journey, she becomes involved with an English army captain travelling back to his family in Bombay. Their affair is a temporary one, ending when the journey does. Upon meeting her uncle's friend, Lucy has no intention of marrying him. Nevertheless, she finds that they become, perhaps for that reason, good friends. Even the fact that Lucy has fallen pregnant on the ship does not break their intimate friendship and when she and her four-month-old daughter return to London, she does so under his name, an unofficial wife. The literal journeys that Lucy makes, alone or with others, are expanded upon through the use of symbolism. Lucy's sea travel indicates a time period separate from that of the world that is not the ship. The ship, then, is a place where time runs differently. The journeys serve to mark various states in Lucy's life but are also stages of development in themselves.

In this chapter, I examine two novels that are both occupied with the motif of the journey, especially a journey by ship, in a sense both literal and metaphorical. I focus

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[1] Gail Jones, *Sixty Lights* (London: Vintage, 2005 [2004]), p. 109. Further references to this title are given in parentheses in the text.

on novels that depict a journey from Britain to the colonies or, conversely, from a colonial location to the imperial centre. In analysing these journeys I review descriptions of the journey or journeys themselves and of the experiences of travelling. I also look at the function of these journeys in connection to the narratives as a whole. Questions to be considered are whether travelling is seen to form part of the narrative or is instead constructed as separate from the main story line; how it represents a period of change or, conversely, of stasis; and what the journeys and the experience of travelling come to mean for different characters, both those who take part in the journey and those who do not.

Next to providing an analysis of travelling, this chapter explores how the people taking part in the travels are portrayed. Especially on long sea journeys, a group of travellers often comes to represent a world in miniature, "a microcosmic reflection of British society" which "challenges the identity of that society in its own radical otherness and marginality".[2] This society is related to but also distinctly different from the culture that people move in either in Britain or in the colonies. Because of the close confines and the constraints of travelling, the social norms that are adhered to in Britain or in colonial locations may be temporarily suspended, or at least adapted. This is also the case for rules that would normally govern the behaviour of people of different sexes, class backgrounds or ethnicities. In the novels discussed in this chapter, I investigate how the suspension of such behavioural guidelines relates to the characters, the journey they undertake and to the influence of the colonies as a destination or a place to depart from. I consider the notion of the journey as 'in-between', both in a literal sense (in between Britain and its colonies) and in a figurative

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[2] Maria Beville, "Delimiting the Unspeakable: Gothic Preoccupations in Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*", *Aeternum: The Journal of Contemporary Gothic Studies* 1.1 (2014), 30-41 (p. 39).

sense (in between Western, regulated, supposedly civilised society and the East, home of the racial others that serve as a framework against which British identity is defined).

This chapter on travelling, with its emphasis on the journey between the colony and the central nations of the empire, connects to Chapter One's theme of otherness *within* Britain by investigating how travel itself can function as an 'othering' device. In the previous chapter, I examined Britain as a metropole which habitually sets the norm for the empire it manages. A white, Western Britain incorporated those characteristics seen as normative, or at least, as a standard against which to measure what is normal and what is strange, what is self or other, foreign or familiar. When observing the representation of journeys between colonies and metropole, however, this all changes. Even without the presence or potential threat of foreign elements – people, cultures, habits, etc. – a ship's journey upsets the social structures embedded in settled communities. We can even see the journey itself as a kind of foreign element overturning such established structures.

The chapter starts by analysing the function of travel itself as creating a sense of otherness and a potential instability of identity caused by the loss or lack of clear reference points that serve to distinguish between home and away, familiar and foreign. From there it continues by looking at the travel community and at how their being brought together by circumstance creates a social dynamic that is different from the dynamics either in the metropole or in the colonies. I then examine even more closely the sea journey itself, exploring how the ship comes to stand in for the world as a whole, its passengers for all of known society. Because of the way in which the journey can become a process of change for one, or all, of the travellers, they potentially have to learn to deal with feeling foreign in a community where they used to feel at home or with being seen as foreign by those who did not do so before.

The three structural and thematic paradigms central to my analysis can be traced through the two novels: Jones' *Sixty Lights* and Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (2002). After a short prologue-like flash forward, *Sixty Lights* opens with the death of both parents of the protagonist Lucy Strange, eight years old, and her ten-year-old brother Thomas. It ends, sixty small chapters later, with Lucy's death at twenty-two. In between, we read of the experiences that form Lucy, turning her from a sometimes wilful child into an increasingly confident and determined young woman. The changes in her life are all linked to sea journeys – from Australia, where she was born, to England, from England to India to consider marriage and from India back to England, now an unmarried young mother. Whereas in *Sixty Lights*, the journeys are still framed by the world away from the ship, enabling a clear distinction between the time of travel and the land-bound narratives surrounding it, this is no longer true for O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*. In this novel, land as a solid referent has disappeared as the narrative begins and ends on the ship. Although there are difficulties in calling *Star of the Sea* a neo-*Victorian* novel – the novel describes a journey from Ireland to America and the difficulties of seeing Ireland as part of Britain are explicitly referenced – its strong connections to the early-Victorian past, both through its temporal setting (the narrative takes place in 1847) and through conversations and thoughts by its characters, make it a novel that can provide valuable insights in a discussion of travel in neo-Victorian fiction. Nevertheless, its Irish-American connections deserve attention and it is important to remain aware of the differences between the two novels.

My analysis of *Sixty Lights* and *Star of the Sea* makes use of several critical frameworks. One critic who discusses sea journeys in a context of novels that can broadly be defined as neo-Victorian is Elizabeth Ho. In *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (2012), Ho devotes a chapter to what she calls the 'neo-Victorian-at-

sea'. By this, she refers to what she sees as "the recent emergence of neo-Victorian texts […] that are based on the sea voyage rather than the narratives of foundation and settlement of conventional neo-Victorian texts".[3] The sea, in Ho's view, should be seen as "a metaphorical and real space of globalization", emphasising "the conditions and experience of transnationality".[4] Ho furthermore argues that "the vastness of the sea – the attention to space as well as time – also puts pressure on neo-Victorianism's effectiveness in resisting or critiquing power now, especially more informal or invisible forms of coercion and control divorced from sovereignty or direct political or territorial domination".[5] The neo-Victorian-at-sea, Ho claims, "establishes the ocean, rather than Britain, as the liquid site of empire".[6]

When we look back, the turn to the sea, in which Ho includes a setting of sea, ships and ports as well as the persons connected to it, is not such a new development as she makes out. Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*, for example, is from 1988, and James Clavell's 1966 novel *Tai-Pan*, set just after the first Opium War, has former seamen as protagonists who are now running large sea-trading companies. Although Ho argues that neo-Victorian novels on sea travel can in some ways be seen as non-territorial or un-territorialised, this argument does not hold when the ship itself becomes a country-like or nation-like territory, as happens in *Star of the Sea*.[7] Also, the ship is not always "divorced from sovereignty", for in some cases, the ship is explicitly described as part of the nation it has left behind or is travelling to and thus as subject to that country's rules and laws.[8]

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[3] Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 25.
[4] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire*, p. 171.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire*, p. 174.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire*, p. 171. See my analysis of O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* for more detail on this.

The metaphor of ship as nation or even as world is not undermined by Ho's useful statement that "[o]ne of the greatest strengths of the ship is its ability to undo Englishness – a vehicle that breaks it down and disinters it from its national roots".[9] The ship, travelling between different nations and continents, is simultaneously nationless and a potential nation in and of itself. Although Britain was immensely influential in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a sea power, the very fact of sending out these ships to different parts of the world also meant casting them adrift. No longer attached to the metropole, the ships symbolise a Britain that is also not-Britain. As their distance from the Empire's centre increases, their connection becomes increasingly symbolic instead of literal: while the ships may come to represent Britain more strongly, their direct tie with the country – and the link their passengers have – becomes imaginary rather than actual.

When Ho considers Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2008), she argues that the novel "challenges conventional narratives of migrations from East to West […] by preferring journeys from the East to the East".[10] A comparable argument can be made for Jones' novel *Sixty Lights*, which does not portray a clear travel path between two points at all but instead creates a triangular wandering from Australia to England to India to England. Similarly applicable, not just to *Sixty Lights* but to both novels discussed in this chapter, is Ho's argument that *Sea of Poppies* "features an interwoven array of cultures and composite identities sponsored by the routes and spaces *between* empires" – another argument in favour of including *Star of the Sea*.[11] The novels discussed in this chapter both portray the loss of a referent that once was, or at least appeared to be, stable, stressing that while the sea journey takes part between different nations, the

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[9] Ibid., p. 179.
[10] Ibid., p. 187.
[11] Ibid., p. 184 (emphasis in original).

ship is separate and separated from them, with the sea forming a boundary as well as a means to connect different parts of the world.[12]

Sara Ahmed, whose concept of the stranger I used in Chapter One, also writes on the phenomenon of travelling and the presence or absence of a stable referent in these travels or migrations. In the second part of her book *Strange Encounters* (2000), Ahmed describes how "the transnational movement of bodies, objects and capital" can be said to have brought the figure of the stranger closer to home.[13] Though Ahmed refers to recent history, the Victorian period certainly also saw such a movement. However, while this might seem to imply a stranger once distant who now comes closer, Ahmed argues that "the 'stranger' only becomes a figure through proximity: the stranger's body cannot be reified as the distant body".[14] Rather, she writes that "[o]thers become strangers [...] only through coming *too close to home*, that is, through the proximity of the encounter".[15] This can be seen in Chapter One, for example, when Dora only considers Din's blackness when he arrives in the workshop. While in some cases, neo-Victorian narratives of encounters with those people identified as strangers lead to a withdrawing into the self so as to clarify the boundaries between that which is known as familiar and that which is known as strange, in others they enable a realisation that this binary split can no longer be maintained. This is also what Ahmed considers in her chapter "Home and Away".

Opening her chapter with two questions, "What does it mean to be at home?" and "How does it affect home and being-at-home when one leaves home?", Ahmed next destabilises the concept of 'home' that she uses in these questions.[16] Home, as Ahmed

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[12] Ibid., p. 180.
[13] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 13.
[14] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p. 13.
[15] Ibid., p. 12 (emphasis in original).
[16] Ibid., p. 77.

sees it, is "not a particular place that one simply inhabits".[17] Instead, narratives of leaving home "produce too many homes and hence no Home [...] The movement between homes allows Home to become a fetish".[18] Fetish, here, refers to an object or idea that is believed to have a special significance as a marker of identity. Through the leaving or loss of the actual home – which can be anything from a house to a town to a country or nation, depending on the context – the *idea* of 'home' becomes imbued with more significance as it becomes more unstable or unreal. Rather than being based on experience, it becomes suffused with past memories of home, an unstable and always subjective foundation.[19] Home, in Ahmed's words, is "associated with a being that rests, that is full and present to itself, and that does not over-reach itself through the desire for something other".[20] In this context, when one leaves home or migrates, home is no longer a space one inhabits in the present but instead, representing not only a spatial but also a temporal dislocation, it becomes part of one's past and one's memories.[21] It is important to realise that 'home' is not limited to one place. Just as there is the possibility of living without a home, through nomadism, migration or exile, the potential exists of being-at-home in more than one place.

In his article "Of Other Spaces" (1967), Michel Foucault discusses one interpretation of the home, what he refers to as the "space in which we live".[22] This space, according to Foucault, is one "which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives,

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p. 78.

[19] For an example of this, see Ian Baucom's analysis of the phenomenon of the American Wake, a ritualized ceremony of departure for Famine emigrants. "Found Drowned: The Irish Atlantic", in *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Dianne F. Sadoff and John Kucich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 125-56 (pp. 139-42).

[20] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p. 87.

[21] Ibid., p. 91.

[22] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. by Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene, in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), pp. 13-29 (p. 16).

of our time and our history occurs, the space that torments and consumes us".[23] It is not a homogeneous space; rather, we "live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another", a "heterogeneous space".[24] One way of trying to analyse such heterogeneous spaces is by differentiating between various sets of relations. Examples Foucault mentions are "the set of relations that define the sites of transportation, streets, trains" or the possibility of describing a site "via its network of relations, the closed or semi-closed sites of rest – the house, the bedroom, the bed, et cetera".[25]

Among all these different sites and spaces describable by creating sets of relations, Foucault draws attention to those "that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them".[26] The first of these sites are utopias. In Foucault's words, utopias are "sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society" but that do not exist in reality, so that they are "fundamentally unreal spaces".[27] A second type of site, however, differs from these unreal utopias. As Foucault claims:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted [...] Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.[28]

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[23] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. De Cauter and Dehaene, p. 16.
[24] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986), 22-27 (p. 23). While there are some mistakes in the translation by Miskowiec that are corrected in the translation by De Cauter and Dehaene, which is why I used it above, the attempt of De Cauter and Dehaene to translate as literally as possible at times makes for text that is significantly more awkward to read than Miskowiec's translation.
[25] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. Miskowiec, pp. 23-24.
[26] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. De Cauter and Dehaene, pp. 16-17.
[27] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. Miskowiec, p. 24. All further references to the article are taken from this translation.
[28] Ibid.

The heterotopias that Foucault describes are universal in the sense that "there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias".[29] In their form, however, they are most certainly not universal. Foucault names two broad categories according to which different forms of heterotopias can be organised. First, there are what he calls "crisis heterotopias", a form of heterotopia that occurs in "so-called primitive societies".[30] These refer to "privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis".[31] In our modern, or postmodern, society, such heterotopias of crisis seem to be disappearing. Instead, there have emerged what Foucault calls "heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed".[32] Some examples of heterotopias of deviation he gives are the prison, psychiatric hospitals and rest homes.

Next to the creation of heterotopias being universal, Foucault lists five more principles that together encapsulate what heterotopias are. For my research, three of those principles are most significant. One tenet states that heterotopias "are most often linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men [sic] arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time".[33] This applies to long journeys, like those between colonies and metropole, as for most, if not all, of the Victorian period, such journeys lasted months at a time. Even if clock time is still known while sailing between the place of departure and that of arrival – and considering that ships sailed through multiple time zones – it becomes irrelevant to the passengers of the ship, who instead are made to live by the ship's time. The ship

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", p. 25.
[33] Ibid., p. 26.

becomes a self-contained world that does not connect temporally to either the place of leaving or of arrival.

Another principle of heterotopias is that they "always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place".[34] This limitation on access is also applicable to journeys by ship, as the ship is at different times penetrable and impenetrable by passengers. When embarking or disembarking, people can enter or leave the world of the ship, but this only applies to specific people with permission – usually in the form of a paid ticket. At other times, the ship forms an impenetrable boundary between the people on it and the outside world, the passengers forced to remain on the ship because the only way to leave during the journey is to die, either by falling or jumping overboard or by being given a sea burial after dying on the ship. Nevertheless, the ship may remain penetrable by non-human things, especially the sea itself. The lack of accessibility also connects to the colonies themselves. Though they may be defined as integral parts of the British Empire, they are also isolated and not freely accessible to people in the Empire's centre.

The final element of the heterotopia that Foucault mentions is that heterotopias "have a function in relation to all the space that remains".[35] This is most certainly the case for the journey by ship, which functions through its position of difference in connection to both the sea as its direct point of contact and the lands between which it sails. This, too, links to the British Empire, which is simultaneously separate from and connected to other parts of the world, its borders marking it as one entity representing a unified exterior to the world, though divisions may be prominent within that unit. Foucault recognises the ship as a fitting example of heterotopia, closing his

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", p. 27.

article with the sentence that the ship "is the heterotopia par excellence".[36] Foucault's recognition of the ship's position of difference again stresses it as a nation, or even a world, of its own. As Foucault also writes: "the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea".[37]

The infinity of the sea that Foucault describes is often seen as something to be afraid of in neo-Victorian novels that discuss the sea. In Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*, the magnitude of the sea is precisely what scares the eponymous Oscar. Oscar's limited packing list consists of a sun helmet and a piece of celluloid. By marking the celluloid, Oscar intends to control his phobia as it would enable him to view the sea "one square at a time", creating imaginary boundaries to the endless-seeming sea.[38] In a conversation with Lucinda, Oscar explicitly remarks on "the size of the sea. It was such a large thing, he said".[39] O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* works to negate this by including the reader in a process of elaborately charting their location, both in degrees of latitude and longitude and by the ship's position in relation to other ships. The vastness of the sea, then, serves to emphasise the British metropole as small islands surrounded by an immense expanse of sea.

Britain's comparatively small size in relation to the seas surrounding it is also referred to when the inherent expansionism of Britain's colonial enterprise is pointed out in Philip Hensher's *The Mulberry Empire* (2002), a novel set around the Afghan Wars. Alexander Burnes, the protagonist, discusses Britain's colonial ventures with Mr Stokes, a journalist who is critical of Britain's policies abroad. "What is so wrong", Stokes asks, "with being satisfied with what you have?" Burnes' answer stresses his

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", p. 27.
[38] Peter Carey, *Oscar and Lucinda* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011 [1998]), p. 187.
[39] Carey, *Oscar and Lucinda*, p. 267.

position towards colonialism in such a way as to make him almost into a caricature of the nineteenth-century explorer: "Nothing, sir, unless you have the spirit of a Briton. Do you suppose our little island can contain our native spirit? Of course it cannot".[40] Although the sea journey is not as prominent in *Oscar and Lucinda* or *The Mulberry Empire* as it is in the two novels discussed in this chapter, the fact that the significance of the sea and of sea travel occurs in multiple neo-Victorian novels stresses its general importance.

The last theoretical approach here elaborated is highly relevant to the analysis of journeys between colonies and metropole – and in some cases to travel more broadly. This is the concept of liminality. In the opening of this chapter, I referred to the journey from imperial centre to colony or vice versa as taking place 'in between' these two locations. Again, this is most clearly applicable to journeys by ship. By being in between the place of departure and that of arrival, a journey takes place influenced by the two locations it travels between but under the direct influence of neither. Being not of one nor of the other while underway, such journeys can be said to take place in a liminal space.

Liminality is a concept that was introduced by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in his book *The Rites of Passage* (*Les Rites de Passage*, 1909). Rites of passage, as important points of transition within societies, can be subdivided into three categories: rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation.[41] The period of transition connects to what Van Gennep calls a liminal period. In *Liminality and the Modern* (2014), Bjørn Thomassen stresses the importance of Van Gennep's concept being posited as universal, in the sense that it is applicable to all societies and all ages.[42]

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[40] Philip Hensher, *The Mulberry Empire* (London: Fourth Estate, 2012 [2002]), p. 55.
[41] Arnold van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, trans. by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960 [1909]), p. 11.
[42] Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 3-4.

In Thomassen's words, "cultures and human lives cannot exist without moments of transition, and those brief and important spaces where we live through the in-between".[43] Liminality as he sees it is something that pertains to a certain kind of human experience, with the added layer of meaning that to experience something "means, etymologically, to *go through* something".[44] In the novels that are analysed in this chapter, liminality can be applied to individuals and their personal – and potentially private – experiences as they move through space and time, as well as to the collective experience of the group of travellers, as they represent a society in miniature. This, too, is raised in Thomassen's definition; his interpretation is that liminality not only refers to separate human beings but that it is also "about how larger groups or entire societies undergo change and transition".[45]

The liminality of sea journeys is thematised in several neo-Victorian novels. In *The Mulberry Empire*, for example, one of the main characters describes how, on travelling from Portsmouth to India, the ship is becalmed after several days of good wind. The people who were seasick during the journey – all ladies, in the novel – slowly make their way up, looking "as if they would be pleased for the ship never again to make any motion, up and down, side to side, forwards or backwards, but to stay here in this millpond forever".[46] The lack of movement and absence of any point of reference makes it seem as if the ship is the only part of the world left. What breaks this illusion, however, is the fact that the writing of the novel at this point takes the form of a letter, addressing someone beyond the seemingly closed world of the ship. Nevertheless, the description of the ship as becalmed, in a kind of otherworldly place separate from the rest of the world, is referenced again to describe the narrator's shipboard experience:

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[43] Thomassen, *Liminality*, p. 4
[44] Ibid., p. 5, emphasis original.
[45] Ibid., p. 1.
[46] Hensher, *The Mulberry Empire*, p. 165.

"Even when the winds started up again […] we still felt becalmed, marooned, suspended in time. Our lives, in this nowhere place, are abandoned for a time".[47] The ship being becalmed, whether actual or imagined, can be linked to Foucault's description of heterochronies, the ship being separate in time.

There is another application of liminality and that is in its reference not to the characters and their experiences described in the novel but to the novels themselves. Alluding to several popular authors of fantastic fiction, Sandor Klapcsik lists four major forms of liminality that their novels display: what he names cultural or institutional liminality, generic liminality, narrative liminality and thematic liminality.[48] Although his analysis focuses on fantastic fiction, much of it is also relevant to the neo-Victorian novels I discuss. Cultural or institutional liminality refers to texts that are part of both mainstream and genre fiction. We can relate this to Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* and Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda*, which are both general enough that they were shortlisted for a popular fiction prize like the Man Booker Prize (*Oscar and Lucinda* even won the 1988 prize) but that also belong to the much more specific genre of postcolonial neo-Victorian (bio)fiction.

Neo-Victorian novels' mix of genre specificity and mainstream popularity is connected to the second point, generic liminality. Most neo-Victorian novels cannot be placed clearly in one traditional literary genre but include elements of several: historical fiction, the gothic or sensation novels, biography, detective writing, et cetera. This is the case for *Arthur & George*, which combines a biographical narrative on Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji with the historical law case George was involved in and merges them with a fictionalised context of meetings and conversations created by Barnes. A very different example is Jeffrey Eugenides' *The Marriage Plot* (2011), an

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[47] Ibid., p. 167.
[48] Sandor Klapcsik, *Liminality in Fantastic Fiction: A Poststructuralist Approach* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2012), pp. 19-21.

American campus novel that interweaves history and (meta)fiction as its protagonist undertakes research for a PhD in Victorian fiction, while her life increasingly starts to resemble the failed marriage plot she investigates.

The third form, narrative liminality, is defined as a situation where "the reader oscillates among various perspectives, focal points, styles and intertextual registers".[49] This form is exemplified by O'Connor's travelogue-like *Star of the Sea*, as its narrative draws on the voices and fictional writings of several of its characters. Thematic liminality, finally, "blurs the boundaries of the self and the Other, organic and artificial, human and mechanical, and most of all, between the real world and the fantastic-virtual".[50] This is similar to what many neo-Victorian novels do when they attempt to convince their readers of the authenticity of their imagined Victorian worlds. Neo-Victorian fiction also blurs the boundaries between colonies and metropole, between history and fiction and between present and past.

The four concepts defined here – Ho's neo-Victorian-at-sea, Ahmed's theories on home, Foucault's heterotopia and the concept of liminality – are all highly relevant to the two neo-Victorian novels analysed in this chapter. The next section concentrates on Jones' novel *Sixty Lights* and considers how the protagonist's travels between different parts of the British Empire shape both the narrative and her personal development. Although my focus will be on the role played by the various journeys she undertakes, the section also explores how these are framed by her experiences of trying to settle in one or another of the locations she moves between. Still explicitly present in novels like *Oscar and Lucinda* and *The Mulberry Empire*, this framework becomes increasingly destabilised in *Sixty Lights* and *Star of the Sea*.

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[49] Klapcsik, *Liminality in Fantastic Fiction*, p. 21.
[50] Ibid.

"[H]er life was a tripod": Travel as an Othering Device in Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights* (2004)

Whereas literal journeys in *Sixty Lights* are used as a framing device, the novel also describes journeys of personal development for the protagonist and these take place on land as well as during the sea voyages. The novel opens with a section on Lucy and her brother as children, establishing a grounding for the characters as well as connecting them to earlier generations by describing the journeys of their parents and grandparents. In part two, Lucy grows and develops from an eight-year-old girl to a more mature young woman, first through her experiences in London and then in India. In the third section she returns to London, a young mother. Representing the three phases of childhood, young adulthood and maturity, the book represents Lucy's life journey at high speed, ending with her death while she is still in her early twenties.

Lucy's different points of origin and departure are represented in *Sixty Lights* in three roughly equal sections. Of these, both the second and the third part open with a sea journey. Part two starts with the trip from Australia to London, when Thomas, Lucy and Neville "left in winter, sailed for months, and arrived just in time for a second winter" (81). There is a perfectly logical explanation to this, of course, but the phrasing also refers to the separate and different time of travel. Part three begins by stating: "The day Lucy and her daughter left India a thunderstorm rolled in across the harbour" (167). Connecting the storm to Lucy's experiences in India again demonstrates the changes she has undergone but also implies a symbolic identification between Lucy and the country, as it goes through a process of violent upheaval upon her leaving, similar to the upheaval in her life. The first part of the novel is the only one that does not begin with a travel scene but rather with a flash-forward of Lucy's experience in India, a dream of an experience that returns later in the novel. Rather than indicating a failure

to establish a pattern, this opening provides another link in the argument that the novel in its entirety represents a journey of development.

The protagonist of *Sixty Lights* seems to embody an individual's inability to feel at home anywhere, as symbolised by her name Lucy *Strange*. The name is presented with an international legacy attached: the novel describes how Lucy's grandfather James, an English missionary who moved from China to Australia after his wife's death, "ineluctably felt more Chinese than European" (14). Lucy's last name – the name she shares with her brother, though not with the uncle who adopts them – is emphasised at several key points of the novel. Lucy's first name is of significance, too, deriving as it does from the Latin word 'lux', meaning light. Indeed, Lucy becomes deeply involved with all forms of light when she learns the art of photography. In Chapter Three, photographic developments in the Victorian age and their representation in neo-Victorian fiction are discussed in detail as they relate to David Rocklin's novel *The Luminist* (2011) and its protagonist. Where photography, in *Sixty Lights* as well as in *The Luminist*, is connected to a particular way of seeing, Jones also stresses its link to temporality: "Looking at photographs cracked open time", she opens one of the final chapters. The material images have "captured the act of seeing", providing a condensed temporality that has "the potential or capacity to peek out from the temporal void".[51] Even before Lucy's involvement with photography, though, imagery of light pervades the novel. The name Lucy also connects to lucidity, the ability to think and express oneself clearly. 'Lucid' implies both a literal and a mental clarity, in opposition to periods of confusion or even insanity that may form the boundaries of such lucid moments.

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[51] Norman Saadi Nikro, "Paratactic Stammers: Temporality in the Novels of Gail Jones", *JASAL* 16.1 (2016), 1-16 (p. 14).

After Lucy, Thomas and their uncle Neville arrive in London following their journey from Australia, she "looked out from her high window onto the city that lay before her too vast, too chill and altogether too drear. *Stranger*, she said to herself" (81, emphasis in original). Here, it is Lucy herself who identifies as strange and as not belonging. Her Australian home is reduced to a memory made more unstable by the fact of her parents' death. Simultaneously, she is not yet at home in London, thinking of the way Ahmed describes being at home as being restful and undesiring of anything other.[52] Although Lucy feels herself to be a stranger in her new home-country, she does not directly reference her last name. But while Lucy and Thomas think of their 'strange' name "only with a kind of habitual and vague disparagement", others are more aware of its emblematic meaning (176).

When Thomas gets married, his wife Violet "enjoyed her new name. 'They were all strangers,' she said, 'and yet they were unestranged. They were the strangest family in London and would produce strange, strange children'" (176). When Lucy finds someone she wishes to be with at the end of the novel, a union, however, that she feels cannot take place because she is dying from consumption, he too wishes to be part of the Stranges' strangeness: they "sat together at wooden benches talking of the heat and of India and of the difficulties of being foreign. Jacob Webb expressed a fervent wish also to be foreign, to be *strange*, he said […] He wanted his too-English vision transformed" (214-15, emphasis in original). In the eyes of these other non-strange and non-stranger characters, strangeness and foreignness become valuable and attractive characteristics, in contradistinction to how they are seen in *Arthur & George* or Belinda Starling's *The Journal of Dora Damage*.

Another aspect in which this chapter on travel connects to the previous chapter is the remark Jacob Webb makes with regard to his "too-English vision". Again, a

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[52] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p.87.

reference is made to a way of seeing. In *Arthur & George*, allusions to sight centred on the inability to see clearly either one's own life or the outside circumstances connected to it, problematising the lack of recognition of these blind spots. In *Sixty Lights*, however, Jacob actively wishes to transform his way of seeing, conscious as he is that his view is limited because of his lack of experience of other parts of the world. Jacob is an artist who draws and paints. As such, his vision, though perhaps 'too-English', differs from the everyday. The novel describes him as perceiving the essence of people, what they represent and what they 'truly' are, rather than what they appear to be to the 'normal' eye. Art is presented as an enabling device, for when Jacob looks at Lucy, he feels Lucy's own photographic art has influenced her way of seeing: "Photography has without doubt made her a seer; she is a woman of the future" (230). This connection to other times or to timelessness is also something that recurs throughout the novel, referencing Foucault's heterochronies.

In the opening quotation of this chapter, Lucy refers to ocean travel in a way that represents it as timeless and placeless. Ocean travel feels like "one has always done it" and while on a ship, "it is impossible to believe you ever had a life on land" so that the sea journey comes to feel "like the unalterable and persistent state of being" (109). The connection between the ocean, the ship, the journey and a state of being that is represented here implies the separateness of the journey by ship from the land-bound experience of living in the British metropole or its colonies. While travelling between England and India, Lucy's journey acquires a timeless quality that, on the one hand, makes it appear unreal but on the other hand almost too real, the only reality possible. Nevertheless, this is clearly not the case. The fact that the journeys in *Sixty Lights* are always framed by scenes of departure and arrival indicates the temporariness of this permanent-seeming ocean travel.

I mentioned before how in *Sixty Lights*, the periods on land serve as a framework for the sea journeys. It is during the final journey from Bombay to London that Lucy realises "her life was a tripod. Australia, England and India all held her – upheld her – on a platform of vision, seeking her own focus. These were the zones of her eye, the conditions of her salutary estrangement" (212). The fact that Lucy describes her grounding in these three locations as a tripod with a platform on it indicates her distance – physical, psychological, or both – from all three countries. Nevertheless, she is influenced by all of them, 'estranged' and unable to claim any one location as her home. The distinction that Ahmed highlights, claiming that 'home' and 'away' mark "different ways of being in the world", can be extended to refer to different ways of seeing the world.[53] However, rather than limit itself to a simple dichotomy between these elements of home and away, *Sixty Lights* presents a succession of homes – and of losses of homes – that each influence Lucy's perception of the world. The duality of home and away is thus constantly challenged, repeated and reconstructed through the changing but ever-distant poles between which Lucy moves.

Expanding on Foucault's notion of the ship as a heterotopia, Iain Chambers describes the ability of the ship and the sea to destabilise seemingly solid territories. Chambers states how "the shifting surfaces, islands, continents, currents and depths of the marine world offer a critical interruption" between "the solidity of territorial confines and the seeming immateriality of the atmosphere", constructing a more migratory or nomadic viewpoint.[54] Being cast loose from supposedly stable territory brings other shores closer and with them the potential otherness of their inhabitants: "[t]he distant shore [...] is literally figured and exposed by the body of the feared

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[53] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p. 87.
[54] Iain Chambers, "Heterotopia and the Critical Cut", in *The Globalization of Space: Foucault and Heterotopia*, Ed. by Mariangela Palladino and John Miller (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), pp. 111-126 (p. 118).

foreigner, the despised stranger".[55] This connects to what Ahmed argues in *Strange Encounters*, that the stranger only becomes a stranger through its physical proximity. By leaving what used to be the home, "[u]nderstandings of belonging are exposed to other winds and currents; home is constructed on an altogether more unstable location".[56] Chambers' argument about the instability of the home, the notion that it is a limited and temporary concept rather than a solidly permanent one, applies to Lucy's situation as she travels the corners of the globe.

The first long sea journey that Lucy undertakes is when she travels from Australia to England with her brother and uncle. The time the young Lucy has spent in Australia is marked by its ending: the death of her parents. Her uncle Neville, after being notified, travels from India to get the children. The period after the death of Lucy and Thomas' parents already represents a state of liminality. As Jones writes: "A kind of anaesthetic quality smothered their experience; they were disengaged in each task they performed, and their feelings, such as they were, were delayed and denuded" (19). As they are forced to wait for something to happen, the children, under the care of a local nurse, feel detached from their surroundings – physical, temporal and emotional. Their in-between state of disconnection is symbolised by the children's conviction of there being ghosts in the house, "presences that seemed everywhere to call: *behold me*" (19, emphasis in original). In fact, it is the children themselves who are the ghosts, spirits caught in-between two stages of being, waiting for something to happen. This is made even clearer in the next chapter of the novel.

Because their caretaker was misinformed as to their return date after a short trip, the children arrive to an empty house. Breaking into their own home, they spend several days on their own. While the days are easy to get through, neither Lucy nor

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[55] Chambers, "Heterotopia and the Critical Cut", p. 118.
[56] Ibid.

Thomas "could have said what transformation occurred at night [...] Their hands were gluey and their faces appeared waxen and old" (26). When Lucy wakes one night, "disturbed by a metaphysical shiver that awoke her – to find her brother walking in his sleep, apparently lost and bewildered". He appears to Lucy as a "slender body, a pale human light, moving in slow motion in its otherworldly state, delicate, tentative, almost no longer her brother" (27). Both family relations and personhood, it seems, are in a state of flux. The spectral manner in which Thomas appears also links to the nineteenth-century practice of spiritualism, so that Thomas' sleepwalking can be connected to the death of his parents.

When Thomas and Lucy are invited by their grandfather James and his Chinese wife Fen to visit them after their parents' death, their stay, according to Thomas, was "like a new beginning. They ate new food, and met new people and did wholly new things: *life after death*" (21, emphasis in original). When their grandfather hears that their uncle Neville is about to arrive in Melbourne, Lucy and Thomas have to return to the city. As Jones puts it: "when the time was near the children were moved again. Their new beginning ended" as they boarded the coach "back to the haunted house" (22). The way in which this is described makes the children appear like objects, sent to places without having any personal influence over it. The fact that their new beginning ended before it had properly begun indicates that they are still in the same in-between state of waiting for things to happen to them. Time, in the children's experience, is not a continuous and fluid-like entity but instead runs in fits and starts, broken up so that they have to return to a prior state before being able to begin anew again. Although their situation changes, these changes appear to have a cyclical nature, constructing a repetitive pattern. This repetition is also similarly visible in the multiple sea journeys the novel describes.

The first sea-journey Lucy makes, together with her uncle and brother, is given little space in the narrative. Instead, it is paralleled to the sea journeys her mother Honoria had undertaken. The connection is made explicit by mirroring the image of Lucy and her brother to that of their mother and uncle: "up high at the rusty, red-painted railing, Lucy and Thomas stood hand-in-hand – in biographical reversal and repetition – as Honoria and Neville had once done, approaching their New Beginning" (77). The journey to England becomes the actual "New Beginning" for Thomas and Lucy, a second one after their interrupted new beginning with their grandfather.

Honoria and Neville's first New Beginning was when they travelled with their father from England to Australia. Their mother had died when Honoria was still young. Honoria stayed below for all of the journey because of seasickness. One girl remained in the women's section to take care of her. In later years, Honoria would recall the girl as a "curve around her loneliness". Her presence had "allowed Honoria to believe she had not spent her own life motherless, but had been multiply mothered. A number of women had found and held her, all of them ship-shaped [...] more than anything Honoria knows the murmur of the ocean [...] it is her most loyal, most consistent, familiar". The child and her caretaker "co-exist[ed] in this pathetic affectionate union, in the belly of the wooden ship, rocked and rolled together" (41). Both the ocean and the ship are anthropomorphised in this recollection, the union including not only Nell and Honoria but also the ship and the ocean that surround them. The ship is presented as a mother-like figure, caring for the young woman and the child and keeping them safe in the womb-like space of the vessel's belly. Later, newly married, Honoria and her husband sail to Italy for their honeymoon, a gift from a wealthy friend who "held herself splendidly responsible for the Strange romance" (16). During this journey there is no talk of seasickness. Instead, Honoria and Arthur are "[r]ocked on the ocean [...] in their own marital vehicle. Transported on scalloped waters and surging currents" while

Arthur "listened to the ocean wash against his new wife's voice" (16). The ship thus not only represents a mother-figure, but also a home-like comfort. The ship-as-home is even more significant for Lucy, whose journeys serve to sever her from having a stable home, actual or remembered. In Lucy's case, travelling becomes connected to the sense of 'being-at-home' that Ahmed describes.[57]

Honoria's first journey as a child and her second one as a young, newly married woman are paralleled in Lucy's first two journeys. Although the first journey is undertaken, like Honoria's, with her brother and her uncle as a father-like figure, going from Australia to England rather than the reverse, Honoria's second journey is mirrored by Lucy's journey from England to India in a distorted way, both because of the new route and because of Lucy's different relations with the two men she encounters on this part of her life journey. The similarities between the experiences of the ship and the sea journey as experienced by Lucy and by her mother Honoria emphasise the identification of the ship as mother by linking it to a mother-daughter relationship.

The trope of the 'ship as mother' that is explored in Honoria's story is used more frequently in neo-Victorian novels representing sea journeys, including in O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*, as discussed in the next section. Although in *Star of the Sea*, the sea journey becomes interlinked with death (one of the earliest scenes describes the crew having to deal with the body of a woman who died of starvation immediately after embarkation), *Sixty Lights* seems to ignore the inherent danger involved in sea journeys in the Victorian period. Instead, the ships in the novel come to be connected with life and rebirth, especially through representations of motherhood. Like her mother Honoria, Lucy hears "the rush of water in her ears, with the sense of currents parting around her, and sleep – such sound sleep – as the great, great heaviness of sea

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[57] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p. 79.

water descending. There is a state of grace, she wrote in her notebook, in sleeping surrounded by withheld water" (110). Like her own motherless mother, the orphaned Lucy is instead cradled by the ship and the ocean surrounding it.

When Lucy journeys alone to India to meet her potential husband, an army captain seduces her, a seduction in which she willingly participates. The sea mirrors the relationship, as "the first time they lay together – this she knew for sure – they were rounding the famous Cape of Good Hope and she took the turmoil of the sea as a kind of answering sign. The ship tossed and rolled and it seemed to Lucy that the world was reforming to match her new body" (112). Lucy's sexual development is paralleled to the sea journey that she is on: "Beneath the rough sheets she had discovered something remarkable: she had arrived *into* her own body" (112, emphasis in original). The affair is doomed from the start, however, signified by Lucy waking up to a few passengers catching albatrosses and so calling up Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798) as intertext for the reader. The sailors "cut off the birds' feet, stuffed them with bran to begin a process of drying, then created from these grisly relics small purses and pouches for tobacco" (113). When Lucy is offered one of them, she refuses, thinking of "the birds' eerie squeals and their shocked dying eyes, glazed by betrayal" (113). Whereas for both Honoria and Lucy, the first journey is a journey *to* a new beginning, the second sea journey is in itself a new beginning, signifying a new phase of both personal and physical development. Unlike her mother, however, Lucy's sexual awakening takes place with a man who is not her husband and who immediately parts from her after they arrive in India, where he returns to his wife and children.

In *Sixty Lights*, India is presented, just as Australia was, as a frame to the period of travel but also as a liminal space in itself. Lucy compares the three countries that she is familiar with, the way in which they appear to her sight: "She knew at once that this world had a denser pigmentation: colours were brighter, more strident, and more

adhesive to their objects. After Australia, Lucy had considered England a pale and etiolated nation, full of slightly pinched and death-white faces; but India surely outshone Australia; its palette was that from which others derived" (121). The brightness and difference of India makes it seem almost unreal, thus making it impossible for the country to represent a stable referent in the formation of Lucy's identity. India, like England initially, appears strange to Lucy, though she also realises that in fact she is strange to India:

> There were places Lucy would travel to where her own ignorance astounded her. She entered customs and buildings she knew nothing about. People around her spoke and she understood not a single word. She considered herself a crude cipher of the West, carrying her own culture as impeding knowledge. This territory she had entered was on the whole indifferent to her presence, and might well engulf or erase the speck of empire she accidentally represented. (135)

Where *Arthur & George* and *The Journal of Dora Damage* posit strangeness and foreignness as something that marks people in a negative way, in *Sixty Lights*, being a stranger gives Lucy the opportunity to view the world as new, because it is new to her. Rather than signifying separation, her foreignness allows her to engage with new objects, experiences and people in a more meaningful way, as long as she is able to prevent her Western-ness from impeding such engagement.

Lucy is portrayed as someone who is very aware of her own position as a Western person. Interestingly, although she grew up in Australia, one of Britain's colonies, and when in India she "would have liked to announce that she was Australian, not English" – something she does not do because "she knew that here the distinction was probably meaningless" – England is referred to as the place she *returns* to, where she experiences "her own culture" (135-36; 212). The fact that Lucy's sense of identity oscillates between Australia as her country of birth and England as the place she lives indicates the troubled power relation between the imperial centre and the colony as well as Lucy's own difficulty in constructing a single, coherent identity. In India, a British colony, Lucy identifies as Australian and thus as someone who is also from a colonial,

subordinate location, enabling her to feel affinity for the local people. When she is in London, however, Lucy claims to be 'at home', marking her as part of the dominant power rather than of a subaltern colonial structure. The fact that Lucy describes the distinction between England and Australia as "probably meaningless" in India adds another layer of difficulty, acknowledging that while Australia may have been a colony, its position as white settler nation made it very different from a colony like India. From a nineteenth-century imperial viewpoint, both India and Australia are colonies and therefore lower in status than the British metropole, but because Australia is being populated by mostly white people – the original inhabitants somehow being less visible or present to the public eye – it is seen as closer to the developed West than a country like India would be.

The time Lucy spends in India is presented as both liminal and framing. This duality is emphasised through Lucy's pregnancy. After living with the man her uncle wanted her to meet, Isaac Newton, for several weeks, Lucy discovers that she has fallen pregnant during her sexual encounter at sea with Captain Crowley. Although Lucy and Isaac initially have difficulty getting on, a difficulty exacerbated by the fact that Isaac discovers Lucy's pregnancy via the servants rather than from herself, they eventually strike up a curious kind of intimate friendship. Isaac warns Lucy when they first meet that he is "not really English any more", as though his nationality and background have become lost in his engagement with India and its culture (123). Nor does Lucy adhere to the stereotypes of white femininity: "Isaac suspected Lucy of 'native appetites': she met the world with a distinctly impassioned sensuality" (137). The experiences in various colonial locations that Lucy has taken into herself are here linked to Lucy behaving in a way that would not be accepted if she were part of a settled society instead of engaging in a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Lucy's pregnancy, the consequence of her sexual openness, is compared to a journey she is undertaking:

> her belly [...] was now a sturdy globe, and she had become a kind of global traveller. In her meditation she saw the slow-spinning planet, memorised, as from childhood, according to continents, seas, nations, capital cities; there was corpulent Australia, removed and remote, there were the marine-looking archipelagoes of Southeast Asia [...] there was the planchette of India, and the Arabian Sea, and there, further on, was the proud body-shape of Africa. Upwards [...] lay lumpish Western Europe, studded with important names, the finicky jagged outlines of the United Kingdom [...] The entire continent of America did not figure on this journey; Lucy's globe placed the Arabian Sea at the centre, and regarded itineraries and destinations by the illogical attractions of shapes. (158)

Lucy's map of the world, connected to her pregnant belly, is not the Eurocentric world map that the British Empire wished to emphasise. Rather, it is based on her own travels, its centre located in between the places where she has lived, below the tripod's platform that she imagines herself to be standing on. Not only is America left out as a place she has never been to but also because, if her belly is a world map with the Arabian Sea at its centre, America would not be on it; her belly's round shape, delimited by the rest of her body, stops short of being an actual globe.

The description of Lucy's body as a globe references travel and connects her experiences of pregnancy to her sea journeys and the description of the ship as a mother, with the ship's interior depicted as a womb-like space. In viewing her body in this way, Lucy tries to deal with the changes happening to her: "Her own shape was troubling. Her body quaked and rumbled" (158). Although her pregnant belly is compared to the earth in its 'quaking and rumbling', it also becomes something non-human, or something that makes her non-human: "As her body had grown the pregnancy seemed more and more monumental [...] an alabaster dome held up by the gaping architecture of her slim pelvic bone". Her body is compared to a temple, what Lucy herself calls "[m]y Taj, my belly" (159). Isaac, however, asks her not to call it that, as the Taj Mahal was built as a tomb (160). Isaac's Indian servants do what they can to make Lucy comfortable, but "still she did not humanise", stressing how utterly foreign the changes of pregnancy are to her and how foreign – or, 'strange' to herself – she

becomes because of them (159). In creating new life, Lucy herself appears increasingly non-human. As the birth begins

> Lucy began travelling. She flew again over the familiar shapes of the globe, noting landforms and waterways, naming oceans and mountain ranges and capital cities [...] she felt joyful and illimitable, swinging through space like that, like a woman of the future [...] When the baby was at last delivered, Lucy didn't know where or when she was: as her dome collapsed the span of her planetary vision also collapsed, and she felt as if she had entered a new, redeemed time and a new, close focus. (162-63)

Lucy's reference to entering a new time emphasises her pregnancy as a time of transition, liminal and temporary, ending with the birth of her daughter. Anticipating Jacob Webb's words later in the novel, Lucy is here described as a woman of the future, connecting pregnancy to Foucault's heterochronies but also referencing the discrepancy between the time the story describes and the time in which it is written. As a character in a twenty-first-century neo-Victorian novel, Lucy is indeed a woman of the future.

From the figurative journey of Lucy's pregnancy and the birth of her daughter Ellen, the book moves to their literal journey together to England, back to her brother and uncle. Although she returns as an unmarried woman, a "fallen woman" as she later identifies herself, Isaac offers Lucy his name, so she can return as a seemingly respectable wife with a child (209). As Lucy Newton, she boards the ship that is to bring her and her daughter to England. Again, the sea journey is presented as disconnected from the worldly time of the countries she leaves from and is travelling towards, a strange temporality connected to Lucy's experience of motherhood: "In the peculiar duration of early maternity and with the slow flight of time on a long sea voyage, Lucy thought at length about what had been given to her to see" (170).

Lucy's time in India and the experiences she had there have permanently altered her vision as well as her way of understanding herself and the world. This "small degree of understanding", as Lucy describes it, is what she is able to hold on to "through a night of deathly terror – when the ship pitched fearfully, the timbers groaned, objects

scattered everywhere and dangerously flew" (170-71). Although the ship is described several times as a mother, the danger experienced in its womb does not match the protectiveness generally associated with motherhood. However, it does connect to the process of giving birth. After the storm, peace returns, as it did for Lucy after she gave birth to Ellen. By incorporating her experiences in India and those of her pregnancy and motherhood, Lucy's viewpoint becomes more stable as she recognises that she has been formed by the multiple experiences of her different pasts.

In the novel, the story of the Flying Dutchman is used to link actual travels to the more mythical experience of travel as development of characters and worlds. Lucy remembers her mother telling her a story "about a Dutchman and an Englishwoman. The Dutchman is a balloonist; he sails the world using the sky as his private ocean" (71). Having a private ocean here refers to the fact that travel can be represented in dreams or fantasies, similar to Lucy's experience of giving birth. This is also explicitly referred to, for the Flying Dutchman does not move through the physical world but "travels on his own unanchored dream […] all in the realm of an endlessly imponderable journey" (71). The Dutchman seeks a particular woman, locked away in an Indian palace.

The story in Honoria's version was never the same, though the ending was always unhappy: "The Dutchman missed his target, or found the wrong lover and was doomed to a miserable and mistaken partnership. Or a storm swept the basket to the top of Mount Ararat, and the Dutchman died there, stranded and lovelorn. Or he arrived too late, sliding on his belly through the star-window to discover the woman long dead from loss of hope" (73). These different stories can be seen as Lucy's stories, for although she is not locked away, she is unable to find fulfilment in a romantic relationship: her first lover Crowley abandons her, her pretend-husband Isaac is attracted to his own sex and the mutual love she finds at the end of the novel with

Jacob Webb is doomed by her illness and impending death. Clearly, considering these failures, Lucy's journeys and the search for a stable home to construct her identity on do not fit within a heteronormative framework.

Of course, the story Honoria tells Lucy is not the story of the Flying Dutchman as it is commonly known, something already made clear to the reader by the reference to the stories as "matted fabric [...] Fairy stories. Childhood stories. Invented combinations" (71). As happens in Lucy's own life, her mother's story mixes Western narratives and traditions with those of other cultures. When Lucy tells Captain Crowley of how her mother used to tell "about a Flying Dutchman in India" who "sailed the sky in a gondola suspended by a balloon, checking all the palaces in India for a beautiful princess", he simply laughs at her, neither explaining what is funny nor willing to listen to Lucy's version (115). When she asks Isaac about the Flying Dutchman in India, he tells her about the fable and the opera based on it. Though more kindly, he also rejects her mother's fabricated story.

Lucy thinks about the versions Isaac has told her: "Yet another tale of a sacrificial woman. Of ghosts. Grand passions. Extravagant double-deaths" (132). Clearly, although the story is very different, throughout its retellings the central elements remain similar and recognisable to Lucy. In each case, a ship is used to indicate a different place, space and time: in Richard Wagner's opera the ghost ship of the Flying Dutchman and his crew are doomed to sail the seas forever as ghosts, only able to become part of the physical world once every seven years, hoping to find true love to rescue them. The ghostliness of the Flying Dutchman and the fact that Lucy inherited her own version of the story from her mother can be said to make the story hers, turning her own story into a ghostly, unreal and in-between narrative as well. The insertion of this changed version of the Flying Dutchman story emphasises the instability and adaptability of

narratives. Furthermore, it can be paralleled to Lucy's own story, the unhappy endings prefiguring both of her failed love affairs and her early death.

Although I have described a framework of land-bound narratives, separated by sea journeys, which distinguish the periods Lucy spends in different parts of the world and those she spends travelling, the entire plot symbolises Lucy's journey through life, not just through literal travel but also as she grows up and matures. The fact that she dies at a young age indicates her inability to reach a stable destination upon which to build both her sense of identity and her notion of home. In connection to travelling and the metropole or colonies as points of departure or arrival, it is important to remember that while Lucy may end up referring to England as home, her formative experiences, both good and bad, have taken place in colonial countries. While England as part of the imperial centre can thus be seen as a point of reference from which all else stems, the fact that the novel opens in Australia and represents formative developments there and in India indicates that Britain on its own is unable to develop as a nation; Britain depends at least as much on its colonies as those colonial locations depend on their metropole.

The relation of dependence between Britain and its colonies is complicated in the next text under discussion, O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*, as it portrays the difficult position of Ireland as part of but also separate from the imperial centre. As the journey in *Star of the Sea* takes place between Ireland and America, the dichotomy between metropole and colony is simultaneously expanded and questioned. Unlike the examples mentioned previously, *Star of the Sea* no longer makes use of land, whether British or colonial, to frame the sea journey. For the novels referenced in the introductory section of this chapter, the journey between colony and metropole only formed a small – though often influential – part of the narrative. In Jones' *Sixty Lights*, sea journeys already play a larger role, though only a limited number of passages in the

novel are actually set on the ships that take Lucy from Australia to London and from London to Bombay and back again. In *Star of the Sea*, however, the journey becomes the central drive of the narrative. Although the novel recounts several scenes taking place in the world that is *not* the ship, these are all connected to and framed by the situations *on* the ship.

"The condition of Ireland": Sea Travel in Joseph O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* (2002)

This section first places O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* in its literary – Irish and neo-Victorian – context. Following this contextualisation, I discuss four elements of the novel that illustrate its connection to travelling between colonies and the centre of the Empire. I start by turning my attention to the ship itself and how it occupies a character-like position in the narrative. Next, I look at the structure of the novel, which exemplifies the interpretation of the ship as nation or even world. The stability implied in the representation of the ship as a world in itself can be contrasted with the novel's representation of a constantly changing and unstable temporality. From this, I move to the two final and interconnected topics: that of nineteenth-century Ireland's position in relation to the British Empire and the issue of racism as it is problematised in the novel, both in connection with the Irish people on the ship and within a larger colonial context.

In its opening pages, the novel immediately constructs multiple layers of meaning. The novel's subtitle, not provided on the cover but stated on the title page, is "Farewell to Old Ireland". Naturally, farewell is said upon leaving. The implied 'fare thee well' wish to the country and the mention of Ireland as 'Old Ireland', then, signifies that it is not only a story about leaving Ireland but also about the impossibility of preserving or maintaining Ireland's old ways. Additionally, the book's subtitle references a

tradition of stories and ballads that also returns in the book. By setting up so many points of reference, the novel reveals its various intertextual layers and thereby, as also explained in the Introduction, it overtly displays an awareness of its own textual construction. What is more, it does not limit itself to written text to express the interconnections of the genres and histories it alludes to. On the same title page, three faces are drawn in profile, clearly highlighting visible differences in the shape of the humans' heads and positioning of the chin, nose, eyes and ears. The pictures, originally published in H. Strickland Constable's racist diatribe *Ireland from One or Two Neglected Points of View* (1888), are described as "The Irish-Iberian", "The Anglo-Teutonic" and "The Negro", directly referencing nineteenth-century theories of race and physiognomy. By using historical source material, O'Connor complicates the distinction between fact and fiction in his novel. In this it relates to the biofictional narratives discussed in Chapter One (*Arthur & George*) and Chapter Three (*The Luminist*), which also overtly complicate the role of history and authenticity in fiction.

[*This image has been removed from the digitised edition to ensure compliance with copyright laws*]

Image 2.1 Title page of the novel[58]

By inserting 'authentic' sources, O'Connor makes use of what Gérard Genette calls the work's *paratext*: "a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic

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[58] While O'Connor references an 1899 edition of *Harper's Weekly* as a source for the image, it appears to have been published several years earlier in Constable's *Ireland from One or Two Neglected Points of View* (London: Hatchards, 1888), artist unknown.

or autographic".[59] Such paratextual insertions serve multiple functions. By using a pseudo-scientific image that calls up nineteenth-century theories of race, for example, readers are immediately urged to begin their reading of the novel with multiple expectations and judgments already in place.

After the intertextual opening page, the novel showcases its metafictionality by including a second title page, claiming that the story to follow is the "Prologue from an American Abroad: Notes of London and Ireland in 1847", by G. Grantley Dixon of the *New York Times*. More so, it is "A Limited, Commemorative One-Hundredth Edition. Revised, Unexpurgated and with Many New Inclusions".

[*This image has been removed from the digitised edition to ensure compliance with copyright laws*]

Image 2.2 Second Title Page[60]

Again, the novel points the reader to its intertextuality and its metatextuality, a novel that is another novel – or at least, another narrative. The construction of these title pages full of loaded references also points to Linda Hutcheon's ideas on historiographic metafiction, one of the important theories from which neo-Victorianism developed.[61]

Like Genette, Hutcheon discusses the role of paratextuality, this time specifically in connection to postmodern historical fiction. Hutcheon identifies two main uses of paratextuality in historiographic metafiction: first, she points to a potential textual awkwardness visible in "the postmodern self-conscious use of paratexts to represent

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[59] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997 [1982]), p. 3.

[60] The image displayed is titled "The Embarkation, Waterloo Docks, Liverpool" and was originally published in *The Illustrated London News* as part of an article titled "The Tide of Emigration to the United States and to the British Colonies" (issue 434/435, 6 July 1850, n.p.).

[61] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (Oxford: Routledge, 1988).

historical data within narrative design" as a deliberate act, "a means of directing our attention to the very processes by which we understand and interpret the past through its textual representations – be it in history or in fiction".[62] Referring specifically to footnotes, Hutcheon argues that the second function is "primarily a discursive one", where a "reader's linear reading is disrupted by the presence of a lower text on the same page, and this hermeneutic disruption calls attention to the footnote's own very doubled or dialogic form".[63] All paratextual devices in historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon states, serve to highlight two different purposes of the text: "to remind us of the narrativity (and fictionality) of the primary text and to assert its factuality and historicity". Thus, "[w]hatever the paratextual *form* – footnote, epigraph, title – the *function* is to make space for the intertexts of history within the texts of fiction".[64] In O'Connor's case, the paratextual additions insert both historical material (such as the images from nineteenth-century sources) and construct additional fictional layers in the narrative.

Before *Star of the Sea*'s story has even begun, the novel has created various expectations about its content as well as its form: England, America and Ireland in and around the Great Irish Famine of the late 1840s and early 1850s, a fictional traveller's narrative, portrayed as popular because it is being reprinted for the hundredth time. Whereas Jones' *Sixty Lights* immediately draws the reader into the story, opening with a flash forward-like experience of the protagonist, O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* sets up an extensive context, inviting readers to imagine the story's structure long before they actually get to the first page. The description of the popularity of the novel and the implied interest in the Irish Famine as an intriguing or even exciting period of history rather than years of mass starvation which led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands

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[62] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1989]), p. 80.
[63] Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, p. 81.
[64] Ibid., p. 82; p. 83 (emphasis in original).

of people and the emigration of another million or so, out of an estimated total population of just over eight million people, questions the ethics of reading narratives about the Famine.[65]

The difficulties of reading and writing about the Famine are also discussed by Maria Beville, who analyses *Star of the Sea* in the context of the Gothic. According to Beville, the Gothic is highly concerned with that which is unspeakable. She argues that "the presence of the Gothic in the novel and its insistence upon the uncanny, emphasises the inaccessibility of the past while offering a discursive site for considerations of how history might be written".[66] Beville sees the Irish Famine as "a notable 'limit event': a point of fracture in historical and cultural narrative", difficult to describe because of "the taboo and unspeakability" that surround it.[67] Through *Star of the Sea*'s fragmented storytelling, O'Connor attempts to give voice to the unspeakable event of the Famine by constructing a metafictional narrative of recognition and remembrance.

In an article discussing another Irish neo-Victorian novel, Ann Heilmann identifies a type of trauma tourism connected to the Great Famine, represented in neo-Victorian writing. Heilmann describes trauma tourism as "the visitation of sites connected with suffering not to further empathy and historical understanding, but rather to pursue self-indulgent emotional excitement and gratification".[68] In Heilmann's analysis of Nuala O'Faolain's *My Dream of You* (2001), the protagonist is described as visiting sites which, though not commercially exploited as sites of trauma tourism, are part of the Famine-narrative she is concerned with. In the introduction to *Neo-Victorian Tropes*

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[65] David Lloyd, "The Indigent Sublime: Specters of Irish Hunger", *Representations* 92.1 (2005), 152-185 (p. 153).
[66] Beville, "Delimiting the Unspeakable", p. 31.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ann Heilmann, "Famine, Femininity, Family: Rememory and Reconciliation in Nuala O'Faolain's *My Dream of You*", in *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth-Century Suffering*, ed. by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 285-310 (p. 298).

of Trauma, Kohlke and Gutleben mention the questionable nature of trauma tourism to well-known (historical) sites of conflict and suffering, such as (former) battlefields, concentration or prison camps and other such locations.[69] One of the issues this raises is whether there is a difference between visiting sites that are (internationally) recognised as significant collective memorial places and lesser-known individual sites. Another difference is relevant in connection to O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*, for rather than physically visiting sites connected with the historical trauma of the Great Famine, the fictional readers of Dixon's *An American Abroad* and the actual readers of O'Connor's novel engage with the Famine through narrative.

In the opening section of this chapter, the difficulties of defining O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* as neo-Victorian were briefly raised. Before moving to a closer analysis of the text in connection to travelling in-between Britain and its colonies or, in this case, one of its former colonies, several aspects of the novel that are significant in this context deserve mention. In the text, the ship is described as English territory.[70] As the ship is constructed as part of Britain and therefore belonging to the empire and since the main part of the narrative is set in 1847, the novel certainly fits the category of neo-Victorianism. The intertextual references and metafictional connections further support the novel's conceptualisation within a neo-Victorian framework. However, two aspects problematise the book's identification as neo-Victorian. First, there is the fact that so much of its story and the background it is placed against are connected to the Irish Famine in particular and the Irish question of Home Rule more generally. Although Ireland was officially part of the British Empire during Queen Victoria's

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[69] Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, "Introduction: Bearing After-Witness to the Nineteenth Century", in *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth-Century Suffering*, ed. by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 1-34 (p. 10).

[70] Joseph O'Connor, *Star of the Sea: Farewell to Old Ireland* (London: Vintage, 2003 [2002]), p. 223. Further references to this title are given in parentheses in the text.

reign, its position within that empire was a complicated one and historians are still debating the question whether Ireland should be considered as part of the imperial centre, or had more in common with the British colonies further away. I refer to this debate in more detail later in this chapter. Secondly, the ship's destination being America (New York, specifically) rather than one of the colonies that were part of Britain's empire during the Victorian period complicates the possibility of drawing a clear connection between *Star of the Sea* and the neo-Victorian genre.

The novel opens with a description of the titular 'Star of the Sea', one of the ships of the Silver Star Shipping Line and Company, immediately stressing the important role that the ship plays in the narrative. The ship is described as having "clipper bows, one funnel, three square-rigged masts (rigged for sail), oaken hull (copperfastened), three decks, a poop and topgallant forecastle, side-paddle wheel propulsion, full speed 9 knots. All seaworthy though substantial repairs required" (2). Next to this list of factual information, more details are given:

> The battering of recent crossings had taken their toll of the *Star*, a vessel approaching the end of her service. In her eighty-year span she had borne many cargoes: wheat from Carolina for the hungry Europeans, Afghanistan opium, 'Black powder' explosive, Norwegian timber, sugar from Mississippi, African slaves for the sugar plantations. The highest and the most hideous instincts of man had been equally served by the *Star*'s existence; to walk her decks and touch her boards was to feel in powerful communion with both. (xvii)

While the author does not endow the ship with a personality as such, it *is* strongly represented as a carrier of memories. The preface might state that it is impossible not to get a sense of the ship's past and the purposes it has been used for but the steerage passengers do not – or cannot – experience this as they are too occupied with their own survival. It is only those with the leisure and the knowledge who are able to take in the ship's different roles and its history. The Captain's chapter describing the last day of the voyage opens by stating: "Our intrepid old lady is in poor enough health this night,

and creaking along wearily and sorely through a blasting squall", emphasising the identification of the ship as an ageing female in bad shape (349).

Under certain circumstances, the ship is heard to make a shrieking sound, a "faint but mordant shriek that twisted its way right into you somehow" (119). Nobody on board can say with certainty where the sound comes from: "A spirit, some of the sailors laughed [...] The ghost of a witch-doctor, 'John Conqueroo', who had died of a fever down in the lock-up back in the times when the *Star* was a slaver. A mermaid moaning to entice them to doom. A siren riding the tail winds and waiting to pounce" (119). Or, more rationally, the wind blowing through all the different parts of the ship, a "floating flute", as the Captain's Mate describes it (120). The eerie, inexplicable sound and the various suggestions given add to the representation of the ship as a kind of *lieu de mémoire*. This concept, coined by Pierre Nora in the 1980s, describes how certain sites or objects become invested with meaning so as to make them into 'sites' (*lieux*) of memory. *Lieux de mémoire*, in Nora's description, "have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs".[71] This is not to say that they cannot be material but that, whatever their form, their most fundamental purpose is "to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial".[72] As its history is recalled, for the benefit of the novel's characters but thereby also that of O'Connor's readers, the ship becomes invested with meaning, a site of memory recalling the atrocities of Britain's imperial past – a past that is "mixed, hybrid, mutant, bound intimately with life and death, with time and eternity".[73]

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[71] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations* 26 (1989), 7-24 (p. 23).
[72] Nora, "Between Memory and History", p. 19.
[73] Ibid.

The symbolism of the ship continues in its name. Obviously, the 'star' in the ship's name refers to the name of the company that owns it. However, considering its destination and the explicit but problematic identification of the ship as (part of a) nation, the representation of the ship as star can also be seen to reference the American flag. Nicknamed the 'stars and stripes', each star on the flag represents one of the American states. Although the ship sails under a British flag, its being a star thus also links it to the United States of America.

A further interpretation comes to the fore in translations of O'Connor's novel. Some, such as the Dutch-language one, have adopted for their titles the Latin translation of Star of the Sea – *Stella Maris* – instead of a translation of the title in the local language.[74] In the Catholic tradition, Stella Maris is one of the names given to the Virgin Mary, emphasising her role as protector and guide, especially to those making their living at sea or those who travel by ship.[75] The religious reference in the title contrasts with the loss of religion that many of the novel's characters experience. Naming the ship after one of the appellations of the Virgin Mary also stresses the position of the ship as guide and mother to those who sail on her. The representation of the ship-as-mother through its name connects *Star of the Sea* to the descriptions of motherhood in Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights*. The ship in the novel thus comes to play the role of a character, forged into a religious symbol of hope and guidance – something that stands in stark contrast with the lists of the dead, the passengers who do not survive the trip from Ireland to America.

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[74] Joseph O'Connor, *Stella Maris: Vaarwel Dierbaar Ierland*, trans. by Harm Damsma and Niek Miedema (Ambo|Anthos, 2011 [2002]).

[75] The Virgin Mary's role as protector of seafarers is still evident through the large number of churches and chapels in (formerly) Catholic coastal areas devoted to Mary, with two obvious examples being the Stella Maris Monastery in Haifa, Israel, and the Stella Maris Parish Church in Sliema, on the island of Malta.

The way in which O'Connor describes the Star's history as having become part of the ship – the ship as living memory – parallels it to the lives of its human passengers. At the time of the narrative, the ship is at the end of her life: "Her Captain did not know – perhaps nobody knew – but she [the *Star*] was bound for Dover Docks when this voyage was completed, there to finish out her days as a hulk for convicts" (xvii). The fact that "perhaps nobody knew" points to the omniscience of the author-narrator while her destination as a prison ship connects to her contemporary usage as transport for too many passengers in too small a space and to her past as a slave ship. The ship-as-prison becomes an even more applicable metaphor when, at the end of the journey, the passengers are not allowed to leave in a mix of safety-quarantining and imprisonment because the city is overrun by foreign emigrants. Like a mother unable to protect her children, the ship, while arriving safely at her destination, fails to live up to the protectiveness of its name.

By having the narrative begin and end on the ship, the ship becomes a kind of world in itself, separate and separated from the land-based parts of the world.[76] The ship in this novel, though carrying mainly Irish passengers, leaves from Liverpool. It is a British-English ship – British for its connection to the Empire; English as the Captain explicitly highlights its link to the country: "I said the ship sailed under the law of England and in the eyes of that law was *part of England's territory*" (223, emphasis in original). Although the ship is thus explicitly identified as part of England and the Empire, the very fact that it is separated from its home territory by the miles of sea surrounding it also indicates the insecurity and instability of its position. The

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[76] Although the novel ends with an epilogue by Grantley Dixon, its fictional author, which does not take place on the ship, the epilogue is presented as having been written several years after the main narrative and separated from it by a chapter quoting from a fictional "Miscellany of the Ancient Songs of Ireland" (382). While the novel thus does not strictly end on the ship, the main narrative does and so validates the argument that all parts of the narrative that are *not* set on the ship are related to the world that is the ship.

description of the ship as English instead of British also references the inequality of different parts of Britain itself, with England potentially a colonial power within Britain. That the Captain identifies the ship as English while it most likely sailed under the British flag is another implicit reference to the unequal positions of the different parts of the British Isles.

While Ho argues that the sea can be seen as a "metaphorical and real space of globalization", the emphasis on the ship's Englishness indicates a holding on to national boundaries rather than a recognition of the implied globalisation of the British Empire.[77] Ho's argument that ships in neo-Victorian narratives are able to "undo Englishness" seems invalid in connection to *Star of the Sea*.[78] Rather than enabling internationalism, with the ship as part of a global empire, the Star of the Sea instead strengthens national identification. This connects to what Baucom argues, though his focus is on the Irish passengers rather than the ship itself. According to Baucom, the Irish passengers only became truly Irish in their moment of leaving, when Ireland for the first time becomes "a unitary entity [...] an imaginable and collectivizing phenomenon".[79] As they become Irish, however, they also lose Ireland through their escape – Ireland as a nation "exist[s] only in the landscapes of the past".[80] He continues by stating that not only did the Irish *become* Irish in the moment of leaving their land, they also become what Robert Scally called "a nation afloat".[81] Their journey creates "an extranational Atlantic Ireland", what is often called the 'Green Atlantic' to emphasise its parallels to Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic.[82] Sinéad Moynihan also explicitly

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[77] Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire*, p. 171.
[78] Ibid., p. 179.
[79] Baucom, "Found Drowned", p. 135.
[80] Ibid., p. 136.
[81] Robert James Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine, and Emigration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 220.
[82] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

identifies the connection between the Green and Black Atlantic that O'Connor draws in *Star of the Sea*.[83]

The ship's American destination is simultaneously familiar, as a former part of the British Empire, and different – so different that, the passengers hope, it will offer them opportunities no longer possible in their home country. The appeal of America as a place that was once part of but is now distinct from Britain makes it even more attractive for those Irish passengers who do not want to live under English rule any longer, America constituting an example showing that this is possible and achievable. Thus, it is the significance of America as a *post*-colonial country, in the temporal sense of coming *after* colonisation, that makes it a destination with a similar potential function as the colonial locations discussed so far in this chapter – albeit with different meanings attached.

The steerage passengers described in *Star of the Sea* are mostly Irish, travelling to America in the hope of a better future. The first-class passengers, however, who take up a larger part of the narrative, are a mixed group, linking the story more strongly to Victorian Britain rather than Ireland alone. The ship's passengers are summed up in the first chapter as follows: "We have thirty-seven crew, 402½ ordinary steerage passengers (a child being reckoned in the usual way as one half of one adult passenger) and fifteen in the First-Class quarters or superior staterooms" (3). Among the First-Class passengers, there are an Irish Earl – David Merridith, Lord Kingscourt, a former Anglo-Irish (absentee) landlord – and his family, their servant Mary Duane, an American journalist (the Mr Dixon of the fictional title page), an English Methodist minister who was upgraded and "His Imperial Highness, the potentate Maharajah Ranjitsinji, a princely personage of India" (3). The first class is thus clearly populated

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[83] Sinéad Moynihan, *"Other People's Diasporas": Negotiating Race in Contemporary Irish and Irish American Culture* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), p. 37; p. 42.

by people from more varied backgrounds than steerage is. Nevertheless, all characters are literally in the same boat, journeying between the same places even if their shipboard circumstances differ.

The novel's structure, like its narrative content, points to the significance of the journey. The chapter titles are very descriptive, opening, for example, with a preface titled "The Monster", which introduces one of the ship's Irish steerage passengers who becomes a criminal and murderer. Next to these short, descriptive titles, most chapters also have a longer subtitle, invoking the stereotypical summaries often seen in early Victorian novels' chapter headings (which are often imitated in neo-Victorian novels written as mock-Victorian narratives). The different styles and viewpoints reference Klapcsik's 'narrative liminality', the reader constantly having to shift between "various perspectives, focal points, styles, and intertextual registers".[84] For many of the book's chapters, the subtitle clearly alludes to the journey that they are on, so that chapter one is subtitled "The FIRST of our TWENTY-SIX days at Sea: in which Our Protector records some essential Particulars, and the Circumstances attending our setting-out" and chapter two, "The Victim", has the subtitle "The SECOND evening of the Voyage: in which a certain important Passenger is introduced to the Reader" (1; 5). In providing the reader with paratextual information like this, the book indicates the significance of the journey through its textual structure – it shapes the narrative, literally and figuratively.

The subtitles' counting of days is not the only way in which the novel emphasises the significance of time in relation to the journey. In the opening chapter, the Captain notes down the date, that there are "Twenty-five days at sea remaining" and that the Actual Greenwich Standard Time is 8.17 pm (1). As the ship travels across the longitudinal lines, however, the Captain starts to note down two times; the Actual

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[84] Klapcsik, *Liminality in Fantastic Fiction*, p. 21.

Greenwich Standard Time and the Adjusted Ship Time (see for example pages 33, 79 and 152). This temporal difference between the time of the ship as English territory and British standard time once more emphasises the separation between the ship and the metropole it has departed from. In this it connects to what Foucault has called "heterochronies", the "slices of time" that heterotopias are linked to.[85] The ship's journey, emphasised through the ship's shifting positionality and its precarious temporalities, forces a temporary break in time on the passengers.

One of the passengers asks the Captain whether it is true "that in America at the present moment it was not night-time but afternoon? And on the Pacific Coast of that continent it was now morning-time?" (85). This gives the Captain a chance to explain, not only to the passenger but also to the reader, how this works: "I explained that for every degree of Longitude west we are four minutes earlier than Greenwich, and for each one minute of distance four seconds are gained" (85). The instability of the ship's temporality, the fact that time is constantly changing as the ship moves not only through space but also through time is another indication of the ship's separateness from both its place of departure and its destination. Although other parts of the British Empire, such as India or Australia, are also distant in time from the metropole, they are not subject to the temporal instability that the moving ship experiences. While the Captain attempts to maintain a connection between the ship and the solid lands between which it travels by meticulously charting its location, the fact that the ship can be considered a heterotopia makes his attempts meaningless. Ships and the sea, according to Iain Chambers, function as privileged heterotopian sites, and any attempt to "'fix' and frame" them "according to the requirements of terrestrial and territorial coordinates always goes adrift".[86]

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[85] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", p. 26.
[86] Chambers, "Heterotopia and the Critical Cut", p. 116.

The ship's journey is supposed to take twenty-six days and the counting of the days is emphasised throughout the narrative. This keeping track of the days serves to highlight two things: first, the different temporality of the ship – rather than focusing on the date, time is measured in a manner that is relevant to the journey. Secondly, it stresses the temporariness of the journey (especially considering the fact that not only are the days counted forward but the Captain also counts off the number of days remaining). Throughout the novel, the ship is represented as the focus. The novel as a whole thus signifies a temporary state, seemingly made permanent because of the novel's textual boundaries that present the story with a beginning and end on the ship. While the passengers' stay in the heterotopia that is the ship is temporary, however, the fact that the narrative only considers the ship's journey turns the passengers into what De Cauter and Dehaene describe as *heterotopians*: "(often nomadic) outsiders" who dwell in heterotopia and who are "always ambiguously hosted as representatives of otherness".[87] While most passengers wish to leave the heterotopia of the ship for a more stable and permanent place, the fact that they are not allowed to leave the ship after arrival emphasises their position outside of everyday time and space.

The physical and temporal separation of the ship from any kind of land emphasises the function of the ship-as-world. Although the shipboard narrative is broken up by flashback-like inserts which describe some of the characters' personal histories and their relation to each other, the fact that everything is framed by the experiences on the ship creates the "spatial and temporal dislocation" that Ahmed describes.[88] About half the chapters in the book are headed by a counting of the days of the voyage, while the other half describe some of the characters' stories that led to their journey from

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[87] Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene, "The Space of Play: Towards a General Theory of Heterotopia", in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), pp. 87-102 (p. 96).
[88] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, p. 91.

Ireland to America. Although there are several hundred passengers on the ship, the novel focuses on a few of them whose stories are all interconnected. As the ship is travelling onward, the reader slowly finds out that one of the steerage passengers ("Preface: The Monster") is being pressured to murder a First-Class passenger ("Chapter 2: The Victim").

"The Monster" from the preface, Pius Mulvey, is the second son of "dirt-poor smallholders" (87). He grew up with his older brother Nicholas in a village in the Connemara region of Ireland. When the brothers were still in their teens, their parents died within a year of each other, and the two young men failed to make even a meagre living from their land. The brothers' story can be placed in a larger historical context, serving as one of the numerous available examples of the Irish crisis of the 1840s and 1850s. Although Ireland was supposedly an equal partner in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland after the Act of Union in 1800, in reality this was often far from true.[89] Especially in the Famine years, when the potato crop on which the Irish economy depended failed because of a blight, the "stunted and begrudging relief efforts of the Whig government in London attracted considerable criticism at the time and ever since".[90] Alvin Jackson states that, at least according to some of the radical political groups of the time, England's lack of intervention showed "a heartless expression of London's social, political, and economic interest in Ireland".[91] The Great Famine and its consequences exacerbated the already existing economic disparity between the two nations.

The unequal relationship between England and Ireland references the debate whether Ireland should be seen as part of the empire or instead as one of Britain's

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[89] Kevin Kenny, "Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction", in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. by Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1-25 (p. 8).
[90] Alvin Jackson, "Ireland, the Union and the Empire, 1800-1960", in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. by Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 123-153 (p. 134).
[91] Jackson, "Ireland, the Union and the Empire", p. 134.

colonial conquests, bringing with it the question of how to place *Star of the Sea* in a postcolonial neo-Victorian context. As Kevin Kenny argues, the assertion that Ireland was never a 'proper' colony or, conversely, the assumption that it was in fact "always and self-evidently nothing other than a British colony" are neither of them very useful in a discussion of its position and influence in the British Empire as both "posit some ideal colonial form against which the Irish case can be judged as either adequate or deficient", an ideal that did not exist.[92] Kenny describes Ireland as "an imperial possession of a particular sort", with Irishwomen and men serving "not simply as imperial subjects, but also as players in the Empire at large".[93] Declan Kiberd also references this duality in *Inventing Ireland* (1995), although Kiberd takes the position that Ireland not only was a colony but that in fact its identity as a nation was to a large extent constructed by England as a foil for that nation's English identity.[94]

In his chapter "The Irish in the Empire", Kenny points out that next to "belonging to a colony at the heart of the British Empire, Irish people helped conquer, populate, and govern the colonies overseas".[95] Although in some aspects the Irish were clearly seen as inferior to British people and therefore not full members of the United Kingdom – a position which evokes racial theories in connection to the Irish, as also referenced in the image of facial profiles at the start of this section – in practice they did form a large part of the forces sent to manage Britain's imperial possessions, thereby complicating their role. And while Ireland was not managed in exactly the same way that Britain governed its overseas territories, the "Irish experience provided

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[92] Kenny, "Ireland and the British Empire", p. 2.
[93] Ibid., p. 4.
[94] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p. 1; p. 9. Declan also describes the Irish as "the first modern people to decolonize in the twentieth century" but states that they avoided entering into "a global alliance with other emerging peoples [...] in the drive to Europeanize the emerging Irish state" (p. 5; p. 259).
[95] Kevin Kenny, "The Irish in the Empire", in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. by Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 90-122 (p. 92).

the British [with] important lessons in imperialism that they subsequently implemented in their administration of other colonies" in Africa and the East.[96]

By including historical images representing the Irish crisis as well as those raising the issue of racism in *Star of the Sea*, O'Connor connects the two concerns in his paratexts (both in the imagery and in the written material). Inserts are placed between the different chapters of the novel. Some of them are textual – fragments from letters or quotations about the Irish from nineteenth-century scientific texts – but often these are accompanied by black-and-white drawings of people. Many are clearly politically charged, such as the one showing a skeletal woman and her two children, all dressed in rags, accompanied by a quotation from *The Times* from 1847, stating: "To whatever part of the world the Englishman goes, the condition of Ireland is thrown in his face; by every worthless prig of a philosopher, by every stupid bigot of a priest" (118).

[*This image has been removed from the digitised edition to ensure compliance with copyright laws*]

Image 2.3 The Condition of Ireland[97]

The condition of Ireland that this quotation refers to, its poverty and famine, remains significant on the ship in O'Connor's narrative and is emphasised through the conditions in which the steerage passengers have to travel. The passengers travel to America, hoping to go to a better place with more opportunities to make a living. However, the ship taking them to a better place can be seen as heavily symbolic, for

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[96] Timothy J. White, "Modeling the Origins and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland", *Postcolonial Text* 3.3 (2007), 1-13 (p. 4).

[97] The image displayed is titled "Bridget O'Donnel and Children" and was published in *The Illustrated London News* as part of an article titled "Condition of Ireland: Illustrations of the New Poor-Law" (issue 404, 22 December 1849, n.p.) <http://find.galegroup.com/iln/dispBasic Search.do?prodId=ILN&userGroupName=ucw_itc> [accessed 6 April 2016].

the reader is made to wonder whether the better place is the American continent or something more closely connected to the afterlife. This is also important in relation to the name of the ship and the book, 'Star of the Sea', and its association with the Virgin Mary. In a hymn opening with the words "Alma redemptoris mater", Mary is not only described as "stella maris", but also as "celi porta", which can be translated as 'portal of the sky' or 'gate of heaven'.[98] Her role as protector of seafarers is here linked to that of Mary as a guide for those going to heaven and the afterlife. The double identification of the ship as protector of the living and guide of the dead is significant in connection to the large number of people that do not survive the journey.

The identification of the journey's destination with the afterlife is underscored by the chapters based on the Captain's notes, for each of them opens by listing the names of the people who died. Chapter twenty-six, for example, describing the unlucky "thirteenth or middling day of the voyage", opens with the sentence that the night before, "nine of our brothers and sisters were gathered, and this morning were committed to rest in the deep. Carmody, Coggen, Desmond (x2), Dolan, Murnihan, O'Brien, Rourke and Whelehan" (152). Although they are described as "brothers and sisters", the fact that only last names are given depersonalises them in death. This is even more visible in some of the other chapters. Chapter twenty-eight, for example, describing the fifteenth day of the voyage, simply states that "[s]even passengers died last night and were committed this morning to the mercies of the deep. Their names have been duly struck off the Manifest", the ship's list of passengers (174). Because of the large number of deaths on 'coffin ships' like this, in death the Irish people lose their individuality. The fact that the dead are committed to the sea references the final element of the heterotopias that Foucault identifies, namely that "they have a function

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[98] "Alma redemptoris mater", in *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians*, ed. by John Harper (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 274-275.

in relation to all the space that remains".[99] Taking the ship Star of the Sea as a heterotopia, the literal space that remains around the ship is land and sea. And while neither Ireland, which the passengers were forced to leave, nor America, where they have not yet arrived, seem quite real during the travels, the sea surrounding the ship is made very tangible through its function as a graveyard as much as by enabling the journey by ship.[100]

The dehumanisation of the Irish people on board can be connected to the conceptualisation of the Irish as a separate race, distinct from the English. As described earlier, on the opening page of the book, three drawings portray a distinction between the 'Irish-Iberian type', the 'Anglo-Teutonic type' and the 'Negro type'. Similarities in the shape of the nose, jaw and chin are emphasised between the Irish-Iberian and Negro types, while the Anglo-Teutonic profile is drawn as distinctly different. Immediately, Irish people are depicted as not living up to the standards of whiteness. This relative positioning continues throughout the narrative, with the Irish always considered inferior in comparison. The depiction of the Irish as an inferior race emphasises the interpretation of their lower – colonial – subject position within Britain. The triple image – the stereotypically Roman-like profile of the Anglo-Teutonic face surrounded by those of 'lower races' – evokes a fourth shadow image: that of the non-human ape.

The construction of the Irish as inferior is noted by the American Dixon, the journalist and fictional author and compiler of the narratives in the novel, who questions the Captain, Josias Lockwood, on his treatment of the steerage passengers. The Captain replies that the steerage passengers are treated as well as possible: "I must

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[99] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", trans. Miskowiec, p. 27.
[100] When the Maharajah draws passengers' attention to the presence of sharks after the ship has hit a whale and wounded it, the Captain is extremely irritated at his lack of sensibility, "given the principal use to which the ocean has been put on this voyage" (350).

work within the constraints laid down by my owners" (13). Dixon stresses Lockwood's phrasing, drawing the reader's attention to it: "Your 'owners,' Captain?" (13). The reference to ownership in connection to Dixon's American identity and the ship's history and destination raises the issue of slavery. The Captain hastily adds that he does not refer to owners of his person but of the ship, the Silver Star company. Although Dixon is clearly trying to raise uncomfortable issues, some of the other people agree: "'He has a point, Lockwood,' the Surgeon said. 'Those people down in steerage aren't Africans, after all'". Another passenger, listening in to the discussion, replies (in a way that may be either serious or sarcastic) that the steerage passengers clearly are not Africans, as "Nig-nogs are cleaner" (13).

The usage of the denigrating 'nig-nog' is something that was also described in *The Journal of Dora Damage* in the previous chapter, where some street urchins sing "nigger, nigger, nignog" at Din as he walks the London streets (*Dora Damage* 272). The repetitive sounds, making the word sound almost like a child's prattle, also serve to stress the identification of the black characters as childlike in some of the neo-Victorian novels I discuss. In *Star of the Sea*, Merridith intervenes in the debate, trying to provide a fairer view: "Treat a man like a savage and he'll behave like one [...] Anyone acquainted with Ireland should know that fact. Or Calcutta or Africa or anywhere else" (13). Merridith stresses his view that behaviour is dependent on circumstance rather than that it constitutes some inborn racial quality. However, as a former Irish absentee land-owner, unwilling to invest the time and energy to find out about the situation in his homeland while he lived in England, Merridith can be seen as co-responsible for the situation of the Irish steerage passengers, especially as he recognises several from the former Kingscourt estate.

In one of the inserts between chapters, a description of "Gaelic Mental Characteristics" from Daniel Mackintosh's "Comparative Anthropology" is quoted.

Mackintosh was a Fellow of the Anthropological Society in London who, after first addressing the Society in 1865, published some of his physiognomical findings in *The Anthropological Review* of January 1866 – two decades after the narrative takes place.[101] In his view, Gaelic mental characteristics included being

> *Quick in perception*, but deficient in depth of reasoning power; headstrong and excitable; tendency to oppose; *strong in love and hate* [...] deficient in application to deep study, but possessed of *great concentration in monotonous or purely mechanical occupations*, such as hop-picking, reaping, weaving, etc. (173, emphasis in original)

Next to mental characteristics, Mackintosh also lists physical characteristics in a fragment quoted several chapters later. These include:

> *A bulging forwards of the lower part of the face* [...] chin more or less retreating (in Ireland the chin is often absent); forehead retreating; large mouth and thick lips [...] *skull* narrow and very much *elongated backwards* [...] Especially remarkable for open projecting mouths, with prominent teeth (i.e., prognathous-jawed – the Negro type), their advancing cheek-bones, and depressed noses, etc. (287, emphasis in original)

Such descriptions, this one based on a paper presented to the London Anthropological Society in 1865, came to represent key arguments in the racial differentiation between the English and the Irish (ironically, Mackintosh himself was a Scot).[102]

In *Ireland and Empire* (2000), historian Stephen Howe complicates the phenomenon of racist views about the Irish. Howe references two sides of the debate, stating that on the one hand, a "substantial body of writing has argued that British colonial discourse stereotyped and maligned the Irish in ways directly analogous to those employed against Africans or Indians" and that negative images and stereotypes of Irishness possibly had a significant amount of influence on British political decisions, amongst others at the time of the Famine.[103] Alongside and in conflict with this view there is the approach that the concept of 'racism' is inappropriate for defining

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[101] For the full article, see D. Mackintosh, "Comparative Anthropology of England and Wales", *The Anthropological Review* 12 (1866), 1-21 <https://archive.org/details/jstor-3025057> [accessed 22 July 2016].

[102] Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), pp. 30-31.

[103] Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 49.

Anglo-Irish relations, that instead negative associations should be seen as based on cultural rather than racial differences.[104] As with the debate whether Ireland should be seen as a colony or not, there is no clear answer to this question, but it is nevertheless important to keep these issues in mind when reading a novel like *Star of the Sea*.

As can be seen from the references to race and racism in the novel, O'Connor is clearly aware of the kinds of debates that were held on this topic in the Victorian period. However, in a twenty-first-century move, he also inserts a scene that serves to ridicule both racial and class distinctions. As described earlier, one of the First-Class passengers is the potentate Maharajah Ranjitsinji of India. On the few occasions that this character is mentioned, he usually makes some remark intended to point out dubious or ridiculous situations. Thus, on the second evening of the voyage, following a discussion between Merridith and Dixon, the Maharajah, with "a perplexed frown", asks the Captain about the "pretty young lady who is at present playing the harp" in the First-Class dining saloon: "You shall enlighten me, I know, if I am speaking in error", the Maharajah addresses the Captain, "but isn't she actually . . . the Second Engineer?" (16). The Captain answers uncomfortably that it "didn't seem right to have a man [...] We do like to keep up appearances on the *Star*" (16). Scenes like these serve to stress the lack of clear binaries, be they between men and women, black and white, English and Irish, and so on.

The Maharajah has reason to be well-versed in spotting deceptions like that of the cross-dressing Second Engineer. As Dixon finds out in his research, no such person as the Maharajah Ranjitsinji exists. Instead, the supposed Maharajah and his butler are the half-Irish, half-Portuguese brothers George and Thomas Clarke. After sailing the seas in imperial disguise throughout the 1840s, relieving First-Class passengers of their valuables, the brothers were forced to change 'careers' after being recognised by a

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[104] Howe, *Ireland and Empire,* p. 50.

policeman. Dixon comes across them twenty years after the main narrative takes place, when he is travelling for work in 1866. He finds the two men entertaining the public in a fair's wrestling booth as "Bam-Bam Bombay, the Sultan of the Strangle-hold", the fake-Maharajah's brother now serving "as ringside second and barker" (401). Although the two brothers from Ireland can pass as non-European foreigners because of their darker-skinned Portuguese father, their posing as Indian royalty is just that: a pose, an act, indicating that looks can be deceiving. The Irish-Portuguese brothers are accepted as Indian without further question, their southern European otherness enabling them to identify as non-white, thereby deliberately confusing distinctions based on the binary between a white, European self and a non-white, non-European other. The reference to looks as being potentially deceptive connects this fragment to Barnes' *Arthur & George* and its emphasis on (not) seeing clearly.

O'Connor's *Star of the Sea*, although complicating the British-colonial relation through its Irish-American references, provides a valuable example of how, over a longer journey such as that between metropole and colony, a ship can come to represent a world in miniature that is disconnected from the place of departure as well as that of arrival. Through the separation made possible by travelling, the English ship is simultaneously portrayed as part of the Empire and severed from any connection to what could be called home. The Irish crisis played a role in forcing millions of people to emigrate, making it difficult to maintain a stable identification of what was 'home' and so, in a different way than *Sixty Lights* does, upsetting any potential binary between home and away.

Conclusion

As the analysis of *Sixty Lights* and *Star of the Sea* makes clear, sea journeys are the central motif in the two novels analysed in detail in this chapter. Jones' and O'Connor's novels both use the journey between Britain and the colonies – or, in the case of America, a former colony – to destabilise characters' identities. The journeys serve to complicate identification with one fixed nationality. By questioning the possibility of having a single and stable sense of self, the novels also implicitly question the ability of the British Empire to form a coherent referent for its subjects to base their identities on. This is especially relevant in connection to the Irish background of most of the main characters in *Star of the Sea* and to the Australian origin of *Sixty Lights'* protagonist Lucy. The difficult position of Ireland as part of the imperial centre but also subordinate within Britain is complicated by the characters being forced by necessity to leave their home country. In Lucy's case, the reference to a 'tripod' of countries that are all part of her national and cultural identity shows the difficulty of finding a solid grounding for her identity in any one of the countries. In neo-Victorian novels centred on sea journeys, the ship comes to play a large role in the characters' identity-formation. While the ship's role in this context is most important in *Sixty Lights*, not least because of the strong connection that is drawn between the travel by ship and the portrayal of motherhood, the same is true for the characters in *Star of the Sea*, who are initially only made known to the reader by their position on the eponymous ship.

What Ho identifies as a ship's capacity to undermine a coherent sense of Englishness in the subgenre she calls the 'neo-Victorian-at-Sea' is not as straightforward as she suggests when we look at the two novels analysed in this chapter. Consider, for example, how in *Star of the Sea*, the ship is explicitly described

as English territory. What also plays a role is that in neither of the novels is there all that much Englishness to undo. *Star of the Sea* concentrates on Irish-American connections and though it references the British Empire, most of the characters do not identify as English. We can even state that, with the possible exception of the Star's Captain, the only 'character' in the novel explicitly identified as English is the ship itself. In the case of *Sixty Lights*, it can be argued that the ship *facilitates* Englishness for bringing the Australian Lucy to England, the country she later comes to associate with home. So, although the sea journeys in *Sixty Lights* destabilise any clear distinction between English and non-English because of their multiple and varying destinations, it is less the ship itself than the journey as a whole that fulfils this destabilising function.

The ability of the journey to weaken or even subvert characters' national identities becomes even clearer when we look at how the experience of travel is responsible for creating a feeling of otherness for the characters. Travelling complicates clear binary distinctions between what is familiar and foreign, what is home or away and, fundamentally, between what constitutes the self and what serves to mark out the other. The society formed by the travellers on the ships comes to reflect British society on land. The ship's seemingly rigid class-distinctions are made manifest through passengers' different locations within it. This might seem to reinforce traditional social boundaries, but instead the failure of maintaining the borderlines between the different areas and their passengers – think, for example, of the pretend-Maharajah travelling as a first-class passenger, as well as of the roles of the servants who move between the decks – points to a collapse of these boundaries. This makes it increasingly hard for the passengers to retain a coherent sense of their position in the world that is not the ship.

The spatial and temporal dislocation that is, in Ahmed's view, one of the unavoidable consequences of moving away from home is emphasised by the numerous references to the separate time of the ship. From the sense of being becalmed and thereby suspended in time in *The Mulberry Empire* to the strict time-keeping in *Star of the Sea* that implies a fear of losing track of time and thereby losing a fixed position in relation to the rest of the world, it is clear that the sense of separation between the ship and the world as a whole is almost unavoidable. The novels discussed do differ in the way they represent characters' experience of this separation. Whereas Lucy actively seeks to lose herself in the different temporality of the ship's journey, in *Star of the Sea* the characters' continual references to the time before departure and the expected time of arrival serve as an attempt to resist the temporal separation of ship and world, as does the structure of the narrative and its paratextual information.

Where Ahmed describes the fetishisation of the idea or memory of 'Home' as a consequence of leaving the actual home, the circumstances in both novels complicate this process. The fact that the Irish people are driven out of their country by famine makes it hard to retain an idealised view on their mother country. In *Sixty Lights*, moreover, the initial home that Lucy leaves is not the home that she later looks back to, as she increasingly builds her sense of self around an identification as English rather than Australian.

Some of the aspects of travelling that I looked at in connection to *Sixty Lights* and *Star of the Sea* are applicable to all sea journeys, or perhaps in an even broader context than solely travel by ship. There are several things, however, that specifically stand out in connection to sea journeys. Not only are the travellers forced to live together in a small area with numerous strangers, there is, for steerage passengers at least, such a fundamental lack of privacy that this heavily influences the way in which people interact. The inability to leave can possibly be applied to other forms of travel, but in

no other situation is there the utter impossibility to get away from people, literally to put some distance between oneself and one's fellow travellers. Interestingly, in the case of the first-class passengers described in *Star of the Sea*, who do have some kind of privacy in their personal cabins, it is exactly the potential invasion of this space that becomes an issue. Intrusion in personal spaces become connected to crime, such as theft (in this case by the fake Maharajah and his brother) and possible murder (as with the 'monster' of the narrative, Pius Mulvey, who comes looking for his victim). In *Sixty Lights*, conversely, when Lucy travels in a shared space and has no private cabin, little reference is made to privacy or a lack of it. This distinction can be connected to the (lack of) explicit national identification in the two novels, with O'Connor's text demarcating Irishness from Englishness while Jones' novel portrays Lucy's (inter)national identity as much more fluid.

In the introduction of this chapter, I specifically stressed the significance of travel between *colony* and *metropole*, or vice versa, that is described in both novels. Any longer journey can be seen as liminal in that it takes place in the space in-between the place of departure and that of the destination, the more so when what has to be traversed to get from one to the other is seemingly 'empty space' (obviously, seas are not literally empty spaces but from a human viewpoint they can be seen to lack any sign of human habitation or civilisation). When travelling between metropole and colony, the relative status of each location is important and is linked to the changing experience of home. The ship 'Star of the Sea', on a journey from Britain to America, is explicitly identified as English territory. Were it to sail back from America to Britain, it would still be English. From these two locations, through the ship, England is clearly identified as the home destination and America as foreign or other. The potential nostalgia of leaving home thus becomes part of the shipboard experience.

The distinction between familiarity and otherness is even more marked when the ship's destination or place of departure is one of Britain's non-settler and non-white colonies such as India. Regardless of whether a ship would be travelling to or away from a country like India, Britain would always represent the referent 'home'. Australia, as a settler colony, represents a more complicated case, especially as novels such as *Sixty Lights* and *Oscar and Lucinda* take Australia as a starting point of the journey for at least some of the characters. In *Sixty Lights*, all that is stressed is the separation between the world of the ship and *all* other parts of the world, a clear difference with *Star of the Sea* where position is constantly related to the places of departure and arrival. The binary between ship and world in *Sixty Lights* makes it difficult to link travellers' identities to a self-and-other binary, as it is not clear which side of the equation the passengers are on. Thus, while in some cases sea travel may serve to destabilise identification with either metropole or colony, more commonly the very separateness of the ship makes such identification impossible.

Sixty Lights and *Star of the Sea* both represent the difficulty of maintaining a fixed sense of self on a journey between the British imperial centre and a colonial or similar location. In the third chapter of this thesis, I turn to texts that show how British people attempt to maintain or reinstate a stable identity when living in one of the colonies of the British Empire. Whereas in Chapter One, white British people always represented the majority group, making it easy to see people of other races or ethnicities as deviating from the norm, the novels I discuss in Chapter Three show a tension, either implicitly or explicitly, in establishing a white British community that functions as a replacement-home in countries where white people are very much a minority.

Chapter 3: Recreating Britain Abroad: Art as a Symbol of Civilisation

[*This image has been removed from the digitised edition to ensure compliance with copyright laws*]

Image 3.1 O.G. Rejlander, "Julia Margaret Cameron at Her Piano", 1863[1]

In an album made for her sister Mia Jackson in 1863, Julia Margaret Cameron combined photographs that she herself had made with those of other photographers she knew. In 1975, Graham Ovenden published a reproduction of the album, together with an explanatory essay. As I was looking through the album while thinking about this chapter, my attention was drawn to one of the photographs in particular. The image itself is relatively ordinary: in a picture taken by one of her photographer friends, we see Cameron herself sitting at the piano, her hands on the keys. She does not smile and seems focused on the sheet music in front of her. On the right hand side, the image is framed by a doorway. The plant growing against the wall indicates that the viewer is outside, looking in. Cameron's pictured concentration, her face only visible in profile, eyes focused on the sheets of music, implies a sense of voyeurism, the viewer intruding upon a seemingly private moment. Nevertheless, the fact that the moment has become a photograph in the album shows that the image was not private but already observed and, given the photographic techniques of the day, most likely posed.[2]

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[1] O.G. Rejlander, "Julia Margaret Cameron at Her Piano", in *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*, ed. by Julian Cox and Colin Ford (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), p. 45.

[2] I first came across the image in Ovenden's reproduction of Cameron's album: Graham Ovenden, ed., *A Victorian Album: Julia Margaret Cameron and her Circle* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975). The image here provided, however, was taken from the more recent collection *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs* (2003). Cox and Ford provide a slightly different caption ('Julia Margaret Cameron at *Her* Piano' instead of 'at *the* piano') and ascribe the image definitively to O.G. Rejlander, whereas Ovenden lists Rejlander or Lord Somers as probable photographers.

As a keen amateur photographer, Cameron will undoubtedly have thought about her portrayal in this picture. Piano playing was an accomplishment that middle- and upper-class women were expected to possess in the Victorian period. A piano in the home was a status symbol as well, displaying that one had not only the money to buy it but also the leisure to play it. The fact that Cameron, an artist with images, is portrayed with a musical instrument creates a connection between different art forms. Photography and music become symbols of a specific kind of culture and civilisation, a culture that Britain wants to introduce to the colonial societies it rules.

In this chapter, I analyse two neo-Victorian novels that each use art to explore British colonial society, looking at different artistic expressions and how they contribute to attempts to recreate British social structure abroad. The most prominent Victorian colony – and probably also most often described in neo-Victorian novels – was India. The two novels I discuss in this chapter are both set in colonies that are geographically close to India (at least when compared to their distance from the imperial centre), but which are less prominent in postcolonial cultural memory as it is represented in neo-Victorian fiction. The first novel, Daniel Mason's *The Piano Tuner* (2002), is largely set in what used to be Burma (now Myanmar), centring on a hill station run by an army doctor. The narrative of the second text, David Rocklin's *The Luminist* (2011), takes place on Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and is loosely based on the life of Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879). Both novels use the focus on different kinds of artistic expression – piano playing and photography respectively – to symbolise British notions of civilisation and their promotion in the colonies.

The Piano Tuner can be connected to Chapter Two of this thesis in that it has a sea journey at the beginning of its tale. As such, it does not only portray a location that is different from the British metropolis but includes the process of getting there. This emphasises the fact that travellers have to *leave* Britain in order to go somewhere else

in the British Empire. Whereas Mason's novel opens in England, Rocklin's text begins in South Africa – a seemingly liminal place, considering the fact that most of the story in *The Luminist* is set on Ceylon. Although the narratives start in England and South Africa, their focus clearly is on Burma and Ceylon.

In Chapter One I examined the portrayal of foreign 'others' in the centre of the Empire. In a white, British nation, both *Dora Damage*'s Din and *Arthur & George*'s George Edalji stood out through their physical characteristics, especially their skin colour. In the two novels I focus on in this chapter, however, two protagonists, both white and therefore seen as 'belonging' in Britain, move away from their Western home country to a place where they are part of a minority population. Some of the questions I raise are connected to this fact, such as whether the characters in the novels are aware of their minority status in the colonies and change their behaviour accordingly. Gender also plays a role: while both authors are male, only *The Piano Tuner* has an all-male point of view. *The Luminist* instead shifts between that of the colonial wife Catherine Colebrook and a local boy, Eligius Shourie. I examine how these differences in gendered and racial-cultural representation influence the way in which the characters' positions are revealed to the reader.

The two novels discussed provide us with different perspectives as the travellers approach their surroundings in disparate ways: in the case of *The Piano Tuner*'s protagonist Edgar Drake as the place one visits or, in Rocklin's novel, as the location one temporarily considers home (it is important to see the distinction between the colonial home and the idea of Britain as the ultimate home). Both novels, in different ways, are set in precarious surroundings. In *The Piano Tuner*, the protagonist travels to a hilly wilderness, difficult to reach and far from any other British settlements. In *The Luminist*, Rocklin sets the narrative at a time of crisis as tension rises between the colonials and the native population, ending the novel with an uprising against the

British. Both novels present a turning point in the colonial region they describe. These critical moments in the narratives highlight the concerns that are seen as most important to colonial settlements.

Both texts are concerned with physical objects – a grand piano in *The Piano Tuner*, photographic equipment and the images it produces in *The Luminist* – but also with the immaterial traces that these objects leave on their surroundings. In the third volume of *Time and Narrative* (1985), Paul Ricoeur refers to the idea that "the past survives by leaving a trace, and we become its heirs so that we can reenact past thoughts". In his view, however,

> survival and a heritage are natural processes; historical knowledge begins with the way we come into possession of them. We might even go so far as to say, paradoxically, that a trace only becomes a trace of the past at the moment when its character of pastness is abolished by the atemporal act of rethinking the event in its internal thought.[3]

The emphasis this passage puts on the trace as being something constructed or reconstructed in the present seems especially applicable to the genre of neo-Victorianism, which depends not just on the traces left by the Victorians themselves but also on our present-day reconstructions of them. By making the Victorians part of the present through contemporary rewritings and reimaginations, neo-Victorianism itself becomes a kind of trace. For postcolonial neo-Victorian texts, the relation to the present is even more significant as their reconstructions of Victorian colonial locations oscillate between, on the one hand, Western feelings of pride about the West's current position of power in the world, but on the other a sense of guilt experienced when thinking about the Empire's material and immaterial cost. A difference is visible in postcolonial neo-Victorian novels written by authors from former colonial locations (such as Amitav Ghosh's 'Ibis Trilogy'), who engage with the colonial past from a

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[3] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. III, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1985]), p. 146.

different standpoint. However, with the possible exception of novels by Australian authors, such texts are a minority in postcolonial neo-Victorianism.

In his book *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Location of Identity* (1999), Ian Baucom raises some important points in connection to the experience of Englishness within the British Empire. He states:

> If Englishness, as I will be arguing, has been understood less as a natural condition than as a sort of second nature, as something communicated to the subject by certain auratic, identity-reforming places, as something, therefore, that can be both acquired and lost, could the global reaches of empire contain spaces in which one could be English? Or was the empire truly beyond the boundaries of Englishness, a radically alien outside within which the colonist would inevitably confront the Kurtzean spectacle of himself or herself 'going native'?[4]

The questions raised by Baucom are significant for characters who move to the colonies for several years, or even permanently. For temporary stays, the very status of visitor or tourist would likely 'protect' that person against a loss of Englishness. For long-term sojourns, however, the risk of losing one's national and cultural anchoring could be significant. An example can be found in C.S. Godshalk's *Kalimantaan* (1998), in which the Englishman Gideon Barr founds his own raj on the coast of Borneo. Barr ends up ruling a territory the size of England, but to maintain it he has to mediate between the supposedly civilised conventions of Victorian Britain and the violent rule of local clans which derive their power from taking their enemies' heads. Inevitably, Barr starts to internalise local culture as well as his British culture of origin. Clearly, there are dangers in becoming too attached to a foreign location, as people become unwilling or unable to (re)settle in the British imperial centre.

It is one thing for English emigrants to wish to hold fast to their sense of Englishness but it is quite another question what to do with regard to all the various 'others' that were included in the British Empire. If they, too, could be said to have a claim on

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[4] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 5-6.

Englishness, as "other cultural locales, other local knowledges and local memories [...] enter[ed] the canon [and began] to expand the catalog of Englishness", we can wonder what this implied for both the 'metropolitan' English, the emigrants and this potential group of 'new English'.[5] One possible solution that Baucom refers to that avoided such claims upon and changes of Englishness is the naming of the empire as British: "identifying these as *British* spaces and *British* subjects [...] allow[ed] England to simultaneously avow and disavow its empire".[6] Robert J.C. Young, however, highlights the hypocrisy of this stress on Britain rather than England. Englishness, Young states, "is itself also uncertainly British, a cunning word of apparent political correctness invoked in order to mask the metonymic extension of English dominance over the other kingdoms with which England has constructed illicit acts of union".[7]

Young's argument recalls Chapter Two's discussion of O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* and my analysis of Ireland's position within the Empire. Considering the fact that neo-Victorianism is as much, if not more, concerned with the present as it is with the Victorian past, we can interpret the use of images – both pictorial and textual – of Victorian stereotypes of Irish inferiority in neo-Victorian fiction as implying that there are still at least remnants of these ideas traceable in today's society, perhaps visible in the debates over independence of the different parts of the United Kingdom. Calling inhabitants of the colonies British also blurs the distinction between England's relation with the other (Western) nations in the Union; and between England, or the Union as a whole, and the Empire's faraway colonies.

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[5] Baucom, *Out of Place*, p. 6.
[6] Ibid. (emphasis in original).
[7] Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 3. Although I recognise the significance of Young's statement, I continue to use the terms 'Britain' and 'British' when not explicitly referring to one particular nation within the union. Nevertheless, I do want to highlight once again the unequal power relationships within the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, not only made clear in the elision of all to an overt or covert Englishness but also in social and political treatment and, more significantly, in how this is represented in neo-Victorian fiction.

The choice of place, the location of the narrative, inevitably brings with it multiple other considerations. India's prominence in British cultural memory is reflected in the number of neo-Victorian novels that are either set in India or refer to it in some way.[8] Although postcolonial neo-Victorian novels set in or connected to India seem to be most numerous, other locations also receive attention. As the prominence of the neo-nineteenth-century novel *The Secret River* already indicates, transportation and the situation surrounding penal colonies recurs in several novels. Texts set (partly) in Australia, New Zealand or Tasmania often explicitly highlight relations between European colonists and the Aboriginal inhabitants.[9] These texts critically review the way in which nineteenth-century Europeans constructed a narrative about their settling on unclaimed land and ignored the different customs of the people already living there.[10] Some other recurring locations are Afghanistan and Egypt.[11] It is important to note that the more neo-Victorian novels are published on a certain colonial location and society, the more readers are likely to approach such novels with a preconceived *neo*-Victorian notion of what these places were actually like. This is even more true for places that are already part of a more general historical discourse,

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[8] Two well-known examples are J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) and Julian Rathbone's *The Mutiny* (2007), where the entire story revolves around the Indian mutiny. Other novels, like Elaine di Rollo's *A Proper Education for Girls* (first published as *The Peachgrower's Almanac* in 2008), refer to the 1857 rebellion more fleetingly. More examples of texts set in or relating to India are Fox's *The Goddess and the Thief*, Susan Hill's *Air and Angels* (1991), Linda Holeman's *The Linnet Bird* (2004) and M. M. Kaye's epic novels *The Far Pavilions* (1978) and *Shadow of the Moon* (1979).

[9] See for example Matthew Kneale's *English Passengers* (2000), Mardi McConnochie's *Coldwater* (2001), Fleur Beale's *A Respectable Girl* (2006) and Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* (2008).

[10] Rebecca Weaver-Hightower analyses the representation of settler colonialism in nineteenth-century fiction. She argues that "[c]onstant references to sacrifice and work legitimize land ownership, since settlers have not, this intellectualization goes, taken the land; they have earned it". See "Geopolitics, Landscape, and Guilt in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Literature", in *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Robert T. Tally Jr. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 123-138 (p. 126).

[11] For Afghanistan, see for example Philip Hensher's *The Mulberry Empire* (2002) and Linda Holeman's *The Moonlit Cage* (2006). Some examples of novels set in Egypt are Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999), Kate Pullinger's *The Mistress of Nothing* (2009), Enid Shomer's *The Twelve Rooms of the Nile* (2012) and Wendy Wallace's *The Sacred River* (2013).

such as colonial India. Authors, then, need to make a choice whether to fulfil these expectations or break an already established pattern.

In a 2009 article, Astrid Erll, a well-known scholar in the field of memory studies, analyses the occurrence now called the Indian Mutiny as what Pierre Nora called a *lieu de mémoire*, in this case specifically "a site of memory which has emerged from the history of British colonialism".[12] Erll focuses on media representations in all their various forms, assuming that "it is the 'convergence' of medial representations which turns an event into a *lieu de mémoire*".[13] She distinguishes between two processes of convergence in this trajectory, what she describes as "premediation" and "remediation".[14] Erll describes these processes as follows:

> By using the term 'premediation' I draw attention to the fact that existent media which circulate in a given society provide schemata for new experience and its representation […] By the term 'remediation' I refer to the fact that especially those events which are transformed into *lieux de mémoire* are usually represented again and again, over decades and centuries, in different media. What is known about an event that is turned into a site of memory, therefore, seems to refer not so much to what one might cautiously call the 'actual event', but instead to a canon of existent media constructions, to the narratives, images and myths circulating in a memory culture.[15]

Neo-Victorian novels about the Indian Mutiny – a debatable term in itself, of course, as it focuses on the event through a British colonial lens – thus not only return to the 'actual historical event' that took place in mid-nineteenth-century India but also, perhaps more so, to the medial representations of this event from the one hundred and seventy-odd years since it took place. Not only do the novels draw on those sources, they themselves then also become part of the process, either strengthening or subverting the constructed memories around this event. Erll specifically refers to the "considerable increase of revisionist historical novels dealing with the Indian Mutiny".[16]

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[12] Astrid Erll, "Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures: Premediation, Remediation, and the 'Indian Mutiny'", in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), pp. 109-138 (p. 109).
[13] Erll, "Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures", p. 111.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Erll, "Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures", p. 126.

Next to British authors looking more critically at the events of 1857-58, (diasporic) Indian authors and people from other cultures are doing the same.

Gautam Chakravarty also focuses on the medial representations of the 'Mutiny' but he purposefully limits his corpus to texts published during the period of colonisation. Later novels, Chakravarty argues, "amount to little more than ironic coda or naive nostalgia" and are "vestigial to a project that came to an end in 1947".[17] Erll, however, is more hopeful about such returns, claiming that revisionist historical novels "move away from the imperial adventure and romance model of narrating the 'Indian Mutiny' [...] and open up new ways of remembering the revolt by using new narrative forms of representation (such as unreliability, multiperspectivity, tales within tales etc.)".[18] Although this is certainly true for the more critical neo-Victorian novels like Farrell's and perhaps also Rathbone's, others, like Di Rollo's *A Proper Education for Girls*, only challenge certain stereotypes. Less critical novels like these mostly stay within the 'traditional' form of representing the Indian Mutiny, so that they continue an older tradition of remediation instead of providing ways to adapt the "canon of existent medial constructions".[19]

Erll's concepts of 'premediation' and 'remediation' can be applied to neo-Victorianism more broadly. Her reference to texts writing back not to actual events but to remediations of those events can be linked to the distinction that many critics of neo-Victorianism try to make between 'true' neo-Victorian novels – postmodern, self-consciously aware of their own processes of narrative construction – and historical novels on the Victorian period which lack this critical process. Although I agree that some kind of dividing line between critical and romanticised versions of the Victorian

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[17] Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 5; p.8.
[18] Erll, "Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures", p. 126.
[19] Ibid., p. 111.

past is productive in the discussion of neo-Victorianism, I also argue that texts are often not completely one or the other. A novel like Holeman's *The Linnet Bird* largely provides a romanticised, stereotypical view of Victorian England and India. However, some of the scenes about, for example, prostitution or opium use certainly do provide us with a more critical viewpoint on the habits of the time.

The practices of remediation that Erll describes can be part of an unconscious cultural process, perhaps even a kind of laziness that makes authors unwilling to challenge their own preconceptions or those of their readers. In many other cases, however, they are part of an active, top-down process of creating accepted and acceptable historical narratives. In "Invention, Memory, and Place" (2000), Edward Said refers to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's edited collection *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). Said applies their concept to a colonial setting, describing how false – that is to say, invented – memories of the past were used to create a new kind of identity and identification for ruler and ruled.[20] By inventing traditions, Said writes, collective memory is used selectively by "manipulating certain bits of the national past, suppressing others, elevating still others in an entirely functional way. Thus memory is not necessarily authentic, but rather useful".[21] As cultural memory theorists also do, Said describes memory as being something that – as soon as it is shared in some way – is not individual but interactive, a social construction supported by verbal narratives and imagery. The social construction of memory connects to physical spaces and different countries or nations through the concept of geography. Geography, in Said's view, is not some kind of independent, map-related science. Instead, it can be seen as "a socially constructed and maintained sense of place".[22] Colonies are thus not so much, or at least, not only spaces on the map; they are imagined places connected to the

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[20] Edward Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place", *Critical Inquiry* 26.2 (2000), 175-192 (p. 178).
[21] Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place", p. 179.
[22] Ibid., p. 180.

metropolis and the other parts of the empire by a host of invented memories and traditions.

Aleida Assmann, another cultural memory theorist, references Susan Sontag's description of memory: "What is called collective memory [...] is not a remembering but a stipulating: groups indeed define themselves by agreeing upon what they hold to be important, to which story they accord eminence, which anxieties and values they share".[23] Collective memory, according to this description, is synonymous with ideology. In sharing memories, creating a canon of agreed-upon experiences and putting them in language, memories can be "exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed – and, last but not least, written down, which preserves them and makes them potentially accessible to those who do not live within spatial and temporal reach".[24] This final connection is of course extremely significant when wanting to create some shared sense of identity between people living far apart. What is more, such inscribed memories can have different formats. While some may be in the form of published letters and diaries or pamphlets, novels also play an important role in these written-down constructions of identity.

Although they are fictional, novels may refer to the supposed authenticity of their narrative by using the author's personal experiences as a source for the narrative. An example that intends to convey its 'truthfulness' even as we know that it is fiction is Minae Mizumura's *A True Novel* (2002, trans. 2013). While the novel is an adaptation or reinterpretation of the narrative of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), the fact that it is also 'auto-bio-fictional', containing a character with the name of the author, seemingly links it to actual events from the author's experience. Laura E. Savu describes

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[23] Aleida Assmann, "Re-Framing Memory: Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing the Past", in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. by Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), pp. 35-50 (p. 38).
[24] Assmann, "Re-Framing Memory", p. 36.

such author fictions in *Postmortem Postmodernists* (2009), but her account is more suitable to texts using authors who are deceased.[25] So, while Chapter One's *Arthur & George* has Arthur Conan Doyle as author-turned-character, in this chapter it is biofiction more generally that is relevant in my analysis of *The Luminist*'s protagonist Catherine Colebrook and her relation to the historical figure of Julia Margaret Cameron. The usage of a well-known person from the Victorian age in fiction can have multiple functions. Nevertheless, in some cases one can wonder to what extent the adoption of a familiar name serves a purpose. While using known characters may make certain aspects of the narrative more acute or recognisable, in others it adds little to a story that creates its narrative tension in a different manner.

Both *The Piano Tuner* and *The Luminist* construct a sense of pressure in their narrative by portraying societies in crisis. *The Piano Tuner* is set against an undercurrent of struggle, as the British government depends on Surgeon-Major Anthony Carroll to form alliances with local Shan princes and keep the region quiet and under control. In *The Luminist*, the colonial status of Ceylon is threatened as native inhabitants start rebelling against the British living on the island, calling to mind the Indian Mutiny of 1857. One of the aspects that comes under pressure through the times of crisis described in the novels is the concept of identity. As I stated earlier in this thesis when discussing Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters*, an emphasis on the self often requires the binary of an other to identify oneself against. The two novels that I discuss in this chapter show this need for self-identification but, intriguingly, they do not always, or not only, create a self-other distinction on a racial basis. Class identification or a similarity in approaching moral dilemmas may create bridges between people from different cultural or racial backgrounds. Because both narratives highlight the struggle

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[25] Laura E. Savu, *Postmortem Postmodernists: The Afterlife of the Author in Recent Narrative* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009).

to set up or maintain a British civilisation abroad, we can deduce what factors were considered most important to a British colony – or, instead, which factors are now *believed* to have been important, taking into account that neo-Victorian novels engage with contemporary popular ideas of the Victorians more than their actual historicity.

One aspect that is often used in neo-Victorian novels as a marker of difference is the portrayal of space. In some cases, this can be the distinction between civilised space and wilderness. Such a binary split is often visible in novels which portray settler colonies like Australia and New Zealand; colonies where land is claimed by the colonists from what is presented as an 'empty' wilderness. Of course, this seemingly unclaimed land is often settled in a way not directly recognisable to British colonists thinking in Western terms of ownership. In *The Piano Tuner*, a similar distinction is drawn between the foreign but colonised city-space, which is occupied by a community of Western European colonists – who retain their national habits in the ways of dress, behaviour, food and drink, and so on – and the Burmese hills, where tribal conflicts still predominate and the British have little influence.

In-between these two different spaces of the wild and 'uncivilised' foreign land versus the domesticated colonial regions, there are those inhabited by Westerners who have 'gone native', interacting with the indigenous peoples and not adhering to Western norms of 'civilised' behaviour. This kind of liminal space, either a geographical location or a psychological one, may also include those of mixed heritage who are presented as being in between spaces. In *The Luminist*, a movement in the other direction is made visible through Eligius, who turns from the local village-space to that of colonial society. That such a shift brings with it various dangers and complexities is illustrated by two other characters from *The Luminist*. Swaran, Eligius' father, tries to talk to the colonial administration on their own terms and their own ground but fails to achieve his purpose and is killed. Conversely, Charles Colebrook, one of the colonial

administrators and head of the household that Eligius comes to work for, later tries to cross over to indigenous space attempting to avert an uprising on the island but fails to reach the local populace and as a consequence, the old and already ill man sickens further and also dies.

Literature has long been identified as a field strongly connected to representations of time – one only has to think of generic designations like 'historical fiction' or 'contemporary literature'. The additional emphasis on space, however, is usually seen as something that was not given much credit, at least, not until the second half of the twentieth century.[26] One of the early critics concerned not just with time but with its relation to space is M. M. Bakhtin, who, in 1937, published a long essay on "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" – although it was not translated into English until 1981. In the essay, Bakhtin uses the term 'chronotope' (literally, 'time-space', from the Greek words for time and place) to note "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature".[27] Bakhtin analyses different historical literary genres and identifies them on the basis of what use is made of time and space – for example, the question whether the location of the narrative plays a significant role, is given specific attention and is invested with meaning, as opposed to the story being able to take place anywhere. Similarly, temporality is used to describe whether any kind of development takes place, linking the narrative with the everyday passing of time, or if the story is completely separated from the everyday.

The interconnection of time and space is highly significant for – and highly present in – novels where the narrative is set in a (post)colonial location. Through colonisation, the time-space of the original location was changed. As Michael Rothberg states in the

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[26] Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone, "Introduction", in *Postcolonial Spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Andrew Teverson and Sara Upstone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1-13 (p. 1).

[27] M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 84.

article "Remembering Back", what is colonised is "not just space, but time as well".[28] By physically occupying land, the British colonisers also left a lasting influence on how that land is perceived and remembered.

While the study of space in literature initially received little attention, developing theories of space, place and location were prominent in postcolonial studies almost from the start. Clearly, it is ineffective to argue against imperial constructions of space simply by providing an alternative interpretation and attempting to put that in place of the imperial discourse. This would only repeat the imperial process of assuming authority over the division of space, not just physical space but also the cultures and histories that places are invested with. Instead, Sara Upstone argues, "analysis of colonial discourse has focused upon the inherent flaws in colonial space [...] It has seized upon the mythic nature of order and its fabricated status, the fact that colonial order is not 'natural', but is in fact an overlaying of diverse space that is employed to reinforce colonial authority".[29] The deconstruction of colonial spaces in fiction serves to return to "a more fluid and chaotic space" that is not enforced order.[30] Chaos, for Upstone, represents what is fluid, flexible and diverse, and so opens up possibilities for alternative interpretations and power structures. But while these postcolonial reimaginings can be described with the word 'chaotic', that does not imply they are meaningless. Nevertheless, as Upstone states, "unlike the myth of postcolonial order, they acknowledge their instability and embrace a dynamic mutability".[31] One of the functions of postcolonial narratives, then, is to reclaim space

> for its inherent diversity, and for the possibilities for moving beyond colonial experience that it consequently contains [...] In such *postcolonial spaces*, oppression seemingly becomes marvellously transformed into resistance offering new radical perspectives, new

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[28] Michael Rothberg, "Remembering Back: Cultural Memory, Colonial Legacies, and Postcolonial Studies", in *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Graham Huggan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 359-379 (p. 360).

[29] Sara Upstone, *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 11.

[30] Upstone, *Spatial Politics*, p. 11.

[31] Ibid., p. 12.

sites of imagination and creativity, from which the colonial representation of territory can be excised and, perhaps, overcome.[32]

Postcolonial neo-Victorian fiction has a difficult path to navigate here, especially when the novels, as is the case of the texts in this chapter, have been written by Western authors with no direct relation to the places they write about other than historical interest. Their postcolonial spaces are thus, in fact, imagined spaces.

Literature, Robert T. Tally Jr. argues in his introduction to theories on space, can function as a mapping device, "situating [the reader] in a kind of imaginary space, and providing points of reference by which they can orient themselves and understand the world in which they live" or "in which others have lived, currently live, or will live in times to come".[33] If we compare reading to a kind of imaginary journey, we imply that a writer of fiction is also a cartographer, mapping out a narrative for the reader to travel. What is important to realise, however, is that "narratives – like maps, for that matter – never come before us in some pristine, original form. They are always and already formed by their interpretations or by the interpretative frameworks in which we, as readers, situate them". As readers, Tally continues, "we cannot help but fit narratives or spatial representations into some kind of spatiotemporal context in which they make sense to us, thereby also becoming more or less useful to us, in our own attempts to give meaningful shape to the world in which we live".[34] To expand on this, I would claim that they become *both* more *and* less useful to us; more, as we fit them into a format we can understand and work with, but less as they automatically lose meanings that we are not aware of because of our own positioning.

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[32] Ibid., p. 13 (emphasis in original).

[33] Robert T. Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 2. Tally highlights his use of the word 'orient', reminding us that 'orientation' comes from the word for 'facing east', defining our sense of place in the world in relation to the Holy Land (p. 20).

[34] Robert T. Tally Jr., "Introduction: Mapping Narratives", in *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative*, ed. by Robert T. Tally, pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

Following Tally, we can connect literary analysis to an approach already prominent in certain areas of feminist and postcolonial theory, usually described as the politics of location.[35] Significant in such an approach is the speaker's or reader's positionality: one is never neutrally situated but always within a sociocultural framework. As this is unavoidable, it is important to be explicitly aware of one's own positioning, the location from which one speaks, as well as that from which others speak. For a field like postcolonial neo-Victorian studies, closely linked not only to postcolonial theory but also to connected areas of research like gender studies, it is highly important to be aware of the positioning of critic and writer both. No matter how well-read (and well-intentioned) they are, the question of appropriation of narratives remains.

In this chapter, I use the theories highlighted in this introduction to analyse *The Piano Tuner* and *The Luminist*. In referencing the cultural memory theory described in this section, the analyses that follow look at the way fiction serves to confirm or adapt these memories. By emphasising certain aspects of their narrative and contextual positioning, I illustrate how these two postcolonial neo-Victorian novels provide a view on the construction of British colonial society as it is reimagined in twenty-first-century fiction. I first focus on Mason's *The Piano Tuner*, investigating how an object like the piano that Drake is requested to repair becomes invested with additional layers of meaning in a colonial location under pressure, compared to understandings of the same instrument in a British household at home. I also examine how music is portrayed as both an art and a form of communication that can potentially cross cultures. Following that, I look at the art of photography in *The Luminist* and analyse the power dynamics invested in the use of this Western technique in a colonial environment. As these Western art forms are taken out of their familiar surroundings, the significance

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[35] See Adrienne Rich, "Notes Toward a Politics of Location", in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 29-42.

of place and location is stressed in relation to the meaning-making process performed by the novels.

"That music, like force, can bring peace": Spreading Civilisation in Daniel Mason's *The Piano Tuner* (2002)

Mason's novel *The Piano Tuner* can be divided into three parts. The first, set in London, serves as a basis for comparison for the latter sections, identifying that this is what the (reimagined) British metropolis is like. The second stage, in which the protagonist travels to Burma, functions to highlight the growing distance from the imperial centre, enabling Mason to create some kind of gradation of foreignness in which the protagonist finds himself in surroundings that become increasingly less recognisable. The third stage, which takes up the largest part of the narrative, is what I focus on in this section. It is set in the colonies, first in the city of Mandalay, the last royal capital of Burma and main centre of upper Burma under colonial rule, and after that in the remote army hill station of Mae Lwin.

In the first and especially in the third part, an important role is granted not only to the eponymous piano tuner, Edgar Drake, but also to the pianos he tunes, specifically the 1840 Erard grand piano that is the cause for his journey to Burma. Mae Lwin, the colonial location described in the novel, is not a settled and established area but is under constant pressure from external forces, both natural and human. Because of this tension, it becomes possible for the reader to note which aspects are seen as the most elemental features of British civilisation, characteristics that remain part of the colonial structure even under the stress of adversity. Using *The Piano Tuner*, I analyse what these aspects of the British colonisation are and how they are represented in a binary between barbaric or wilderness space and civilised space. I concentrate on the grand piano that is transported to Burma and becomes a symbol of Western culture in the

colony. The notion of binaries is significant for the novel as a whole, as different locations, objects and people are used to construct various contrasting relations. These dichotomous connections are not stable as people and objects move from one side of a binary to another, for example in the case of the protagonist and the piano he comes to tune.

Although Mason's novel has only one main narrative strand, multiple side narratives develop certain characters and their backgrounds. In the short description of the novel that ensues, the focus lies on the main character and his position in the story but the analysis that follows also makes use of various accounts that tangentially connect to the main narrative. In the novel, piano tuner Edgar Drake, specialised in tuning and repairing grand pianos from the workshop of instrument maker Sebastian Érard, receives a letter from the London War Office in which he is requested to travel to Burma to attend to an 1840 Erard grand piano, brought there at the request of Surgeon-Major Anthony Carroll.[36] Although Carroll's demand for the piano is not a request normally fulfilled by the War Office, in this case they rely on Carroll too much to lose him. Having once gained the support of a group of rebels by reading poetry to their leader, Carroll now wants to use piano music to bring peace to the region. Piano music is seen as a form of communication that may be possible when language cannot be used, as potentially bridging the differences between British and local cultures.

Drake agrees to travel to Burma on behalf of the War Office to tune and repair Carroll's piano. Although he is initially held back at Mandalay because of dangers at Mae Lwin, Carroll sends support to help him reach the hill station, albeit without knowledge or permission from the local British army administration. Drake spends three months at Mae Lwin, becoming increasingly convinced of the validity of Carroll's

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[36] Daniel Mason, *The Piano Tuner* (London: Picador, 2003 [2002]), p. 6. Further references to this title are given in parentheses in the text.

belief that music may help bring about peace between the different people in the region and between them and the British. As the narrative progresses, however, the reliability of certain characters and their stories becomes questionable, especially Carroll's role and motives. When Mae Lwin is about to be attacked, Carroll sends Drake away to sail down the river with the piano, to float it to the nearest British garrison. Instead of being supported, however, Drake is imprisoned on suspicion of aiding Carroll in committing treason to the Crown. Mae Lwin, Drake is told, was attacked and destroyed by the British rather than the native rebels Carroll warned him about. Drake escapes but instead of thinking of his own safety, he stays to untie the piano's raft to let it float away. He then tries to return to Mae Lwin but is shot as a traitor.

From the beginning of the novel, the author sets up binary oppositions between West and East, civilised and uncivilised, British and colonial. When Drake appears at the London War Office to discuss the request for him to travel to Burma, he meets with Colonel Killian, "Director of Operations for the Burma Division of the British army". As Drake sits in the office "by a pair of dark, rattling heating pipes [...] watching the sweep of rain" outside the window, his attention is caught by "a long Bantu lance and a painted shield, which still bore the scars of battle". Colonel Killian, wearing the "scarlet uniform, edged with braid of black mohair" that marks him as a British soldier, becomes associated with the non-human as "the braid reminded [Drake] of a tiger's stripes" (9). The narrative's opening paragraph immediately constructs a binary relation between the familiar, British aspects of the scene – the rattling pipes, heavy rain and army uniform – and the foreign – the Bantu weapons and the tiger stripes. That there are *Bantu* weapons in the office of the Director of Operations for the *Burma* Division implies an elision of foreignness: different parts of the world come to stand in for one another, their identifying category being that they are not British but colonial.

Mixing cultural traces of different locations highlights the potential failure of literature as a mapping device as it is described by Tally, as these artefacts are, from a British point of view, only read as foreign and non-British rather than as aspects of the particular area or culture they come from.[37] Such specific, location and culture-based viewpoints provide important signals for the reader to remain aware that the nineteenth-century characters' imagined world map might differ rather significantly from that of a twenty-first-century reader. In neo-Victorian fiction, multiple issues arise in examples like these: on the one hand readers need to realise the difference between nineteenth-century characters' viewpoints and their own twenty-first-century views. On the other hand, however, as neo-Victorian texts, novels like *The Piano Tuner* are already post-Victorian constructs and therefore not necessarily representative of Victorian characters' views.

When Colonel Killian provides Drake with the background to the written request for a piano tuner, he tells him that "this commission is as much about a man as it is about a piano" (10). In Drake's assignment, an immediate relation is thus drawn between Carroll and the grand piano, a development that can be traced further as the novel progresses. Carroll is not the only one who becomes connected to the piano. Drake, too, is linked to the instrument as Carroll assumes it would not be all that difficult to arrange for a tuner to come to Mae Lwin as, after all, "*[i]t is much easier to deliver a man than a piano*" (20, emphasis in original). This connection is a two-way process, for as much as the men are linked to the piano, so the instrument becomes anthropomorphised as we read more about its supposed role in the colonial process.

After Drake is told about the assignment in Mae Lwin, the reader is provided with a description of his London home. Drake's home is one in a row of identical terraced houses. The similarity of their façades implies an orderliness that is confirmed by the

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[37] Tally, *Spatiality*, p. 2.

presence of Drake's wife Katherine inside the house. Drake is presented as the stereotypical disorganised scientist, "wander[ing] absentmindedly through the house" before "descend[ing] the steep stairs to his basement workshop" (29). The workshop itself is presented as some kind of horror doctor's theatre, "a warren of dusty piano skeletons, tools that hung from the walls and ceilings like joints in a butcher's shop", "dimly lit" and with discarded piano keys that "lined the shelves like rows of dentures" (29). Katherine, meanwhile, "usually stayed at home during the day, to help with the chores, to receive house calls from Edgar's clients, to arrange commissions, and to organize their social life" (29). It is clear that she is set up as an 'angel in the house' figure, content to manage her domestic environment and support her husband's needs. Her contentment in this role contrasts with the unrest and lack of satisfaction that Belinda Starling's protagonist Dora Damage experiences when confined to household tasks, as described in Chapter One.

Drake and Katherine's gendered division of tasks extends to their relation with pianos and piano music. Although Drake is more involved with the instruments through his work as a tuner, he generally refuses to perform and downplays his own skills as a pianist, insisting that his wife is the better player. Through its connection with different aspects of masculinity and femininity, the piano becomes a gendered symbol. In his function as tuner and repairer, Drake represents the practical – and usually implicitly male – approach. What playing he does only serves to support his tuning work. Katherine, conversely, exemplifies the ornamental – and feminine – aspects through her ability to make music 'for music's sake'.

Through the novel's depiction of piano playing as an ornamental skill for girls and women, the piano is connected to femininity. The piano, as a luxury-object, served as an indicator of social status in the Victorian period. As Mary Burgan writes, the piano's "presence or absence in the home could be a sign of social climbing, security of status,

or loss of place".[38] There was a clear distinction between piano playing in the home and the piano in more professional contexts. Where domestic piano playing, for family, friends or small gatherings, was seen as a feminine accomplishment, being a professional pianist implied playing in public and was therefore male territory. Through its role as a symbol of well-bred femininity, the piano in the home thus came to be associated with the moral virtues of that home, maintained by the white, upper middle-class woman. This is very much a Western connection as well.

In an article about piano playing in colonial New Zealand, Kristine Moffat distinguishes between useful and ornamental skills in the British colonies, with piano playing obviously falling in the ornamental category. Moffat's analysis of New Zealand displays parallels with the ways in which piano playing is presented in the Burmese context of *The Piano Tuner*. Moffat states that while there are a large number of references to the "gendered nature of piano performances in the New Zealand parlour" in sources from or on the nineteenth century, "not all New Zealand women embraced the Victorian ideal of the refined, musical gentlewoman with enthusiasm".[39] Moffat also claims that the distinction between female private playing and male public playing was less applicable and that, in fact, "many of the earliest New Zealand concerts featuring solo pianists were given by women".[40] However, even in a setting like this, where boundaries between masculine and feminine approaches to piano playing were less strictly separated, "the realms of manufacture, tuning and the management of music companies" still remained closed for women.[41] Perhaps this connects to the portrayal of Drake's piano tuning as a kind of science, reaffirming the stereotypical

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[38] Mary Burgan, "Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction", *Victorian Studies* 30.1 (1986), 51-76 (p. 51).

[39] Kristine Moffat, "The Piano as Cultural Symbol in Colonial New Zealand", *History Compass* 7.3 (2009), 719-741 (p. 727).

[40] Moffat, "Piano as Cultural Symbol", p. 727.

[41] Ibid.

masculinity of Drake's function as tuner over piano playing as an artistic and feminine accomplishment. Interestingly, for the art of photography that is discussed in connection to *The Luminist* in the next section, it is almost impossible to separate the artistic and scientific sides, as they were much more tightly connected in the early stages of photography's development.

In *The Piano Tuner*, piano playing is initially associated with middle-class femininity. The Erard grand piano that is the goal of Drake's journey is taken out of its traditional homely setting and is instead played in a faraway colonial location. Nevertheless, it remains connected to the metropolis as a symbol of the British home and of the women who make that home. In the context of the story, the piano is presented as a cultural object that stands for a specific social structure, that of the stereotypically ideal Victorian household, in which the angel in the house also figures as the musical angel behind the piano. In fact, this is one of the areas in which Mason, as a twenty-first-century author, copies stereotypes of Victorian gender roles with hardly a critical note. Nevertheless, while the piano is pictured as a quintessentially European instrument, it is important to remember that many of its materials, like the ebony and ivory used for the keys, in fact came from the very colonial locations it was later transported to. Through its continued association with femininity and the home, the piano was potentially seen to exert a civilising influence on its colonial surroundings. However, the fact that the piano is played out of its domestic context also signals the difficulty of upholding white, Western norms and values in places that are so different from the metropolitan home.

At the story's commencement, the piano in Mason's novel represents the 'culture' aspect of a nature/culture dichotomy. But as we read more about the piano requested by Carroll, it can be seen to shift increasingly to the 'nature' side – and so, perhaps, does Drake. Like some of the characters in the novel, the piano is made to 'go native',

for example when Carroll tries to recreate the local Shan melodies he has become familiar with around Mae Lwin on the Western instrument. Nevertheless, it continues to represent the dichotomy between the British home and the foreign surroundings it is placed in. The piano is portrayed as exerting a civilising influence on its surroundings, but as it is played 'out of context', it simultaneously indicates the impossibility of upholding Western norms in a place that is so different from the British imperial home.

As mentioned earlier, Carroll's demand for first a piano and then a piano tuner is not one that would normally go through the War Office. In this case, however, Carroll is such a central figure in the peace negotiations of the region that the Crown cannot afford the risk that he might resign his post. Given Carroll's intention to use piano music to pacify the region, the piano, as both a material and symbolic representation of Western civilisation, is made to serve as a means to spread that civilisation. The introduction of a Western instrument and its music to a foreign colonial setting can be connected to the "imposition of a foreign canon of cultural memory" that Rothberg describes in "Remembering Back".[42] As part of the colonisation of both space and time described in the introduction to this chapter, Carroll uses the piano as object as well as the music it can produce to further his notion of cultural colonisation.

The notion of cultural colonisation returns throughout the novel. Different speakers echo Carroll's ideas: Katherine tells Drake that it "is a lovely idea, to use music to bring about peace" and Carroll himself claims that part of the reason why he demanded a grand piano was to "force the army to acknowledge how much they depend on me, that they know my methods work, that music, like force, can bring peace" (35-36; 289). We can wonder why Carroll specifically requests a piano, as he previously achieved success by reciting a poem and, in another case, by performing "a Shan love ditty",

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[42] Rothberg, "Remembering Back", p. 365.

played by local boys when courting their sweethearts, on his flute to avoid conflict (123).

In a letter to his wife Katherine, Drake explains that while "no one was ever harmed by Bach; songs are not like armies", he has also "come to think that 'bringing music and culture here' is more subtle – there are art and music here already – their own art, their own music". This is not to say that it is necessarily problematic to bring Western art and culture to Burma but that, perhaps, "it should be done with more humility. Indeed, if we *are* to make these people our subjects, must we not present the *best* of European civilization?" (164, emphasis in original). Although using a Western instrument and a symbol of Western culture may not be bad in itself, there is the risk of overwriting local cultures with imported elements from the West, potentially leading to a cultural colonisation that could be as invasive as the spatial colonisation of the British Empire; one that can be said to have had an influence that is at least as long-lasting. Furthermore, Drake's argument poses an implied question whether the 'best of European civilisation' is represented by its art, or by the significance of its colonial conquests.

The coming of civilisation to the colonial region is emphasised via the use of (Western) maps. Maps also trace the significance of place and location in the narrative. Here, a parallel between the British home and the foreign colony is constructed, for Drake's home is on such a small lane "that it had been missed, much to the chagrin of its residents, by London's most recent map" (24). The starting place of Drake's journey thus cannot be found on any map. The same is true for his colonial destination, even if it is for very different reasons. Where Franklin Mews has been overlooked, Drake is told that he "won't find Mae Lwin on any maps" and that he will not be told its location until he actually accepts the commission for reasons of secrecy and security (15). The

"imaginary space" that literature creates, as Tally describes, in which readers can orient themselves and experience the narrative, here is an unmappable space.[43]

To make up for the lack of mapping in relation to his places of departure and his destination, Drake is repeatedly described as studying maps along the way. With his initial contract, there was "a copy of the original letter sent by Colonel Fitzgerald, and a map", along with some information on Burma and its culture sent on Carroll's request (30). Drake "pored over maps" as he prepares for departure, as if to locate *himself* as much as his destination (76). Nearing Calcutta by ship, Drake "knew from the maps that they were only twenty miles south of Cape Negrais that soon they would reach Rangoon" (89). However, he cannot place himself: "Edgar [Drake] tried to picture himself on one of the maps of Mandalay he had studied on the steamship. But he was lost" (134). Drake's inability to locate himself on a map indicates his insecurity about his place in the world. Though we can assume that Drake initially identifies as English or British, he seems cast adrift as soon as he hears about his assignment. While he does not 'go native' through the adoption of, for example, a different language or means of dress, he does take up a different behavioural pattern, which makes him separate from the majority of his countrymen in Burma.

When Drake arrives in Mandalay, a dichotomy is immediately established between those who hold on tightly to their British habits and those who are more appreciative of what the local surroundings have to offer. It is important to distinguish between those who are willing to adapt and those who are presented as going native; in the case of the former, it remains clear to themselves and to their surroundings that their primary allegiance still is to the West, while this is no longer necessarily true for the latter.

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[43] Tally, *Spatiality*, p. 2.

Captain Nash-Burnham, an officer who escorts Drake to a social event at the Commissioner's residence, belongs to the appreciative group, interested in local people and cultures. Talking about the event they are attending, he says that it "should be a bearable afternoon if we survive lunch and the requisite poetry reading. We will be able to play cards once the ladies retire. We are a bit jaundiced with one another, but we manage to get along. Just pretend that you are back in England" (124-25). However, he does advise Drake not to "talk to Mrs Hemmington about anything Burmese. She has some unpleasant views on what she calls the 'Nature of Brown Races', which are embarrassing to many of us" (140). The stereotypical Britishness of the scene, where some bachelors are forced to sit through an event aimed at marketing the skills of the local female population, is marred by the warning with regard to Mrs. Hemmington's views on the 'Nature of the Brown Races', a subject more topical in Burma than it would be in London.

The way in which Mason posits Drake as an observer of this somewhat absurd little British society abroad signifies the novel's self-reflexivity. As Drake is led into the room, for example, he almost cynically thinks to himself that the Captain "was right, I am back in London […] They have even imported the Atmosphere" (141). He tells the Captain that he is "amazed, though, it is all so… *reproduced*" (143, emphasis in original). Drake's reference to a society that is reproduced can be connected to the novel as a whole, which also aims to reproduce the Victorian era from a twenty-first-century viewpoint.[44]

Drake's changing experiences and identification can be connected to the piano. Although it is initially clearly presented as a Western object, the way it is perceived

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[44] Mason's description of some of the absurdities of colonial society evokes E.M. Forster's portrayal of the same in *A Passage to India* (1924), making this fictional Burmese situation parallel the better-known example of colonial India. See also my analysis of the local uprising at the end of *The Luminist* and its parallels to the Indian Mutiny or War of Independence in the next section of this chapter.

alters under the influence of its surroundings. With the documents Drake receives before leaving London, there is a packet of information from Carroll himself, though Drake is instructed not to open it until he actually reaches Mae Lwin (204). The document turns out to be a "Report on the movement of an Erard Piano from Mandalay to Mae Lwin" and Carroll did not want him to read it before he had seen that the piano had arrived safely, despite the risks of the journey (230; 220). It briefly references the "relatively uneventful" shipment from London to Mandalay, stating only that "rumour has it that the piano was removed from its packing crate and played by a sergeant in a regimental band, to the delight of the crew and the passengers", thus stressing the perceived power of the piano to create a positive emotional response in its audience (230).

For the initial stage of its colonial journey from Mandalay to Mae Lwin, Carroll describes, the piano was put on a munitions cart that was pulled by an elephant. For the next part, however, the terrain became more difficult and the piano had to be carried by a team of six men. Carroll states that he "had considered traveling with a larger group, and perhaps an army escort" but "did not want the locals to associate the piano with a military goal" (231). The depiction of the piano as a weapon or the avoidance of such a connection is repeated throughout the novel. Another instance occurs in the description of the journey:

> Wherever we stopped we attracted a group of locals who crowded around the piano and speculated on its use. In the early days of our trek either I or one of the men would explain its function, and we would then be barraged with requests to hear it played. In such a manner, I was cajoled into playing no less than fourteen times in the first three days of our journey. The locals were delighted by the music, yet the constant playing exhausted me [...] On the third day I commanded my men not to tell anyone the true function of the piano. To any inquiring villager, they reported it was a terrible weapon, and subsequently our passage was given a wider berth. (232)

It is interesting that while Carroll focuses on how piano *music* is supposed to facilitate peace treaties, the physical instrument incites speculation about fighting, weaponry and conflict, not only here but also at the end of the novel.

Carroll's continued description of the piano's transportation connects to the portrayal of local power relations. Although a carriage would not have been able to reach Mae Lwin because of the terrain, Carroll's satisfaction about the decision to carry the piano instead "was tempered by the sight of my men struggling beneath the load [...] I truly pitied them and did my best to boost their morale" (233). Carroll's pity indicates a power difference between himself as a white British officer and 'his' native men. This is emphasised even further when Carrol describes how

> despite the discomfort [he] felt at making [his] men labour under such a burden, it was a stunning vision, the six men dripping with sweat and the piano glistening, like those new hand-coloured photographs which are now so in fashion in England and occasionally trickle into the marketplaces here – the white turbans and trousers, the dark brown bodies, the piano black. (233)

Carroll's comment on how uplifting it was to see the natives strain to carry such a significant Western cultural object through the dense forest connects the novel to the notion of the gaze discussed in Chapter One. Carroll's gaze not only objectifies the people he looks at, merging them with the object of the piano in the image he constructs, but also eroticises both the men and the piano through his focus on their physicality. The reference he makes to new photographic techniques connects this imagined picture not only to Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights* and David Rocklin's *The Luminist* but also to the pornographic photographs that Dora Damage receives for binding in Belinda Starling's novel.[45] After one of the six men dies from a venomous snake bite, Carroll is forced to join the "tri-chrome photograph" and help carry the piano (236). As part of the image, Carroll himself no longer stands out as explicitly as the Western leader and observer, separate from the indigenous others. Also, his role as focal character directing the Western gaze temporarily ceases. As the novel's character no longer looks at the image, the reader of the text instead gazes at a reimagined picture without narrative mediation.

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[45] Belinda Starling, *The Journal of Dora Damage* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 204; pp. 212-13.

When Drake sees the piano for the first time after arriving in Mae Lwin, the "Erard stood half in the light of the window, the smooth surface of its case almost liquid against the rough backdrop of the room" (217). The piano is described as a beautiful artwork newly discovered, or perhaps, anthropomorphising the piano again, a beautiful young woman. Drake is overwhelmed by the piano in its rough surroundings: "I have known about this for over two months now, but I think I am as surprised as if I had just walked in from the jungle and seen it... I am sorry, I didn't think I would be so affected. It is... beautiful..." (218). Although these references are still quite clearly to an object, the piano is increasingly linked to femininity again. When Drake compares the piano to others by the same maker, he describes how

> [m]any of the Erards built during the same period were ornately decorated with inlaid wood, carved legs, even a sculpted nameboard. This one was simpler. A dark brown mahogany veneer stretched into curved, feminine legs, so smooth that they seemed almost lascivious; now he could understand why there were those in England who insisted that piano legs be covered. (218)

Drake's reference to piano legs needing to be covered stems from a persistent stereotype of the Victorians as hyper-sensitive to anything that hinted at sexuality and the physical. It is also discussed by Matthew Sweet in his book *Inventing the Victorians* (2001), where he calls it "[t]hat old chestnut about draped piano legs".[46] According to Sweet, the sexual connotation of draped piano legs was already a joke in the nineteenth century and there is no evidence that they were covered for any reason other than to protect them or from a general love of over-ornamentation. Drake's reaction, affected as he is by the piano's "lovely" looks, highlights the sentimental aspects of his character (218). The focus on emotions marks him as feminised and contrasts with the more masculine image of the disorganised scientist that the reader was presented with in Drake's London home. Instead, Drake comes to be portrayed as a kind of artist, even

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[46] Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. xii.

more so as Carroll requests him to perform for an important local Shan prince and his delegation.

A clear difference is created between the open-air performances Carroll gave while travelling with the piano and the more parlour-like one that Drake is requested, or rather pressured, to undertake by Carroll. Drake's role as subject to the leadership of Carroll, who takes him under his wing and educates him, also contributes to a kind of emasculation. Drake chooses to play a selection of pieces of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, "a tuner's piece, an exploration of the possibilities of sound" (278). He muses about his choice while he plays, thinking that

> [t]here is much I could tell the Doctor [...] about why I have chosen it. That it is a piece bound by strict rules of counterpoints [...] To me this means beauty is found in order, in rules – he may make what he wishes from this in terms of law and treaty-signing. I could tell him that it is a piece without a commanding melody, that in England many people dismiss it as too mathematical, as lacking a tune which can be held or hummed. Perhaps he knows this already. But if a Shan does not know the same songs, then just as I have been confused by their melodies, so might the Prince be confused by ours. So I chose something mathematical, for this is universal, all can appreciate complexity, the trance found in patterns of sound. (278)

This is one of the few scenes in the novel where the focus lies on the music itself rather than on the piano or the people connected to it. Music is used to cross linguistic and cultural borders but, as Drake realises, not all music is likely to be suitable for this purpose.

When Drake starts to tune and repair the piano, he first has to deal with a hole from a stray bullet that the piano received when masked rebels attacked Mae Lwin. Drake easily finds the hole in the soundboard but there is no exit hole. The piano is "[s]hot through the belly" and the bullet needs to be taken out. Here, the piano, as a vulnerable body, is a victim of the kind of weapon it was earlier made out to be. I mentioned before how some characters are described as 'going native', or are at risk of doing so. In *The Piano Tuner*, however, it is not only the characters who go native but the piano as well. When the top is opened, a "pungent odour rose from the piano. It was unfamiliar,

curried and heavy" (224; 223-24). Carroll explains the smell: "Turmeric. One of the Shan men suggested I put it into the piano to protect it from termites" (224). The piano itself is thus made to adapt to its new environment in ways that would not be required in a Western European setting.

Another example of the piano's adaptation to its surroundings is when Drake makes plans to repair the bullet hole, which has created a crack in the soundboard. According to Drake, it can easily be repaired with "'shimming', which meant inserting filler wood into the holes" (225). Shimming, however, is usually done with spruce, something Drake does not have easily available in such a different location. Instead, "his eyes settled on the bamboo walls. I would be the first to use bamboo to mend a piano, he thought with some pride. And it is so resonant that perhaps it will make a sound more beautiful than spruce [...] He liked the idea that he could take the wall of the fort, a product of war, and transform it into the mechanics of sound" (226). After being linked first to a weapon and then a wounded body, the piano now incorporates part of a defensive area, the different wood becoming a sign of otherness, marking the piano as not entirely European anymore.

Although Drake admits to Carroll that the longest he would need to stay to properly tune the piano is two weeks, he spends three months at Mae Lwin, becoming increasingly convinced of Carroll's ideas that music may help to create harmony between the different peoples and nations. It is of course important to remain aware that all the references to music as possibly enabling peace in the region are made by members of the colonising nation that invaded Burma for its resources. The longer Drake stays at Mae Lwin, the more the reader is invited to question the reliability of certain characters and their stories, especially when it comes to Carroll. He even pressures Drake into impersonating a British army official in a meeting with local leaders and while Carroll keeps convincing him that it is for the good of the peace in

the region, Drake, not familiar with the local languages, cannot know in what way his presence is (mis)used.

When Mae Lwin is about to be attacked, Carroll sends Drake away over the river with the piano, to float it to the nearest British garrison with the help of three young Burmese soldiers. Instead of being supported when they arrive, however, Drake's companions are shot and he himself is imprisoned. Despite the fact that Drake was starting to doubt Carroll's purposes, he continues to believe that music can facilitate peace. Captain Nash-Burnham, the same person who welcomed him to Mandalay, interrogates him during his captivity. He tells Drake: "You cannot admit Anthony Carroll is a traitor because it denies everything you have done here" (339). Upon hearing that the piano requested by Carroll was built in France, the Captain asks: "French? You mean the same French who are building forts in Indo-China?" (333). Nash-Burnham's suspicion towards France implies that European conflicts are not left at home but remain significant in the East, transported to colonial locations. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable in this situation to follow Drake's statement that "[p]ianos don't make alliances" – even if Carroll and Drake hope that piano music can facilitate them (333).

As Drake escapes captivity, his first thoughts are for the piano rather than his own safety. That he would rather have it disappear into the local landscape than once again become part of Western European culture not only continues the anthropomorphising of the piano – it, too, is 'captured' and needs to be 'freed' – but also refers to Drake's sense of ownership of the piano. He would rather destroy it than have someone else possess it, specifically someone who is part of the British Empire: "He could see it sitting in a powdered parlour, revarnished, retuned, and deep inside a piece of bamboo removed and replaced with spruce" (341). The removal of the bamboo, the wood that made the piano more native to its surroundings and connected it to Mae Lwin as a

defensive fort, implies a reappropriation or, more specifically, a 're-domestication' of the piano by the British. That Drake succeeds in releasing the piano, thereby almost certainly destroying it, parallels the instrument to Drake himself and to Carroll: both would rather die for their ideas than live under someone else's.

In the introduction to this chapter, I referred to Ricoeur's description of the trace. In an earlier chapter of volume three of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, it is not the 'present-ness' of the trace that is highlighted but the fact that a trace is left, by someone or something doing something.[47] This dynamic aspect of the trace is described as 'passage'. In Mason's novel, it is possible to speak of the passage of the piano: it has travelled a long way to become a meaningful object in a colonial location under pressure. Significantly, the piano only has a temporary presence: the Erard grand piano is left to float downriver without anyone attending to it, so that it becomes untraceable. This disappearance of the piano as an object may symbolise the temporariness of the Western presence in the colonies. Nevertheless, as a symbol of British civilisation and of the spread of European culture that this neo-Victorian novel presents as an essential part of the colonial endeavour, the piano in Mason's *The Piano Tuner* leaves its traces, not only figuratively but also through the novel that we may read. *The Piano Tuner* is a twenty-first-century novel and not directly representative of the experience of colonising or colonisation, but it is this very contemporaneity of Mason's novel which marks the text, and the piano described within it, as valid signifiers of present-day views on the colonial experience, even if they are romanticised and fictionalised. In my analysis of Rocklin's *The Luminist* that follows, questions on the temporariness or permanence of Western art also crops up as photography is introduced to the colony of Ceylon.

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[47] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* III, p. 119.

"You have no country, boy": Art, Nationalism and Identity in David Rocklin's *The Luminist* (2011)

Rocklin's novel *The Luminist* provides the reader with two rather different viewpoints: on the one side, that of Catherine Colebrook, wife to a much older colonial administrator, who tries to keep up her family's position on the island with little money and personal satisfaction. On the other, there is Eligius Shourie, a local boy whose father was shot before his eyes by the British as he tried to negotiate a legal settlement with them about the island's rule. Eligius' initial involvement with the Colebrook family is as a servant but he soon comes to play a larger role. As Eligius becomes Catherine's assistant in a project to make lasting and recognisable photographs, the woman and the young boy develop a special connection. Eligius' difficult position in the household of colonials at a time when revolutionary tension on Ceylon is mounting illustrates the multiple and intertwined connections that are inevitably created when one culture sets out to rule another. Photography, as an attempt to capture a moment in time that cannot last, comes to symbolise the relation between Britain and Ceylon.

While her name is not mentioned in either the blurb of the novel or the main text, it is clear that Catherine Colebrook is modelled on the nineteenth-century photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879). However, where Cameron did not take up photography until late middle age and did so at a time when photographic images, though not exactly easy to produce, were already becoming quite common, Catherine Colebrook is presented as a pioneer, corresponding with the great scientists of the age as they are trying to find a way to fix an image on paper. The similarities between Catherine and Julia Margaret Cameron can mostly be found in Catherine's family: like Cameron's, Catherine's eldest daughter is named Julia and Catherine's twin boys are named Ewen and Hardy Hay. Similarly, one of Cameron's five sons was also

called Ewen, another Hardinge, and her husband was Charles Hay Cameron, whose

first name again links him to Catherine's husband Charles Colebrook.[48]

Cameron was born in India as Julia Pattle, the third of seven daughters. She was

married at twenty-three, in 1838, to Charles Cameron. She was his second wife – he was

forty-three at this point. The marriage seemed a happy one. Charles Cameron was

concerned with Indian law reform and sat on the Indian Law Commission as English

member. Charles Colebrook, too, is involved with the legal situation in Ceylon and,

like Charles Cameron, is born in 1795, twenty years before both Julia Margaret Cameron

and Catherine. These similarities cause some discrepancies in Colebrook's novel,

however. Where Cameron takes up photography in the 1860s, a mature woman with

older children, Catherine's experiments with photography are set in the late 1830s.[49]

Despite her supposed young age – if born in 1815, Catherine would be in her early

twenties at this point – she already has a teenage daughter. Clearly, by wanting to

parallel his narrative closely to the life of Julia Margaret Cameron but placing his story

earlier in the century, Rocklin creates unnecessary difficulties for himself and his

narrative.

Although Julia Margaret Cameron is never named, her ghostly presence connects

the text to the novelistic subgenre of biofiction. In an article on neo-Victorian

biofiction, Marie-Luise Kohlke identifies three different modes of biofiction: 'celebrity

biofiction', 'biofiction of marginalised subjects' and 'appropriated biofiction'.[50] While

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[48] Further details about Julia Margaret Cameron's birth and marriage can be found in Amanda Hopkinson, *Julia Margaret Cameron* (London: Virago, 1986), pp. 35-38. Few biographies of Cameron mention her family in detail, but a family tree can be found in Ovenden, ed., *A Victorian Album*, pp. vi-vii.

[49] The camera was a present from her eldest daughter and son-in-law to stave off loneliness after Cameron's husband Charles had left for the East. See Helmut Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work* (London: The Fountain Press, 1948), p. 20; Brian Hill, *Julia Margaret Cameron: A Victorian Family Portrait* (London: Peter Owen, 1973), p. 100.

[50] Marie-Luise Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Biofiction and the Special/Spectral Case of Barbara Chase-Riboud's *Hottentot Venus*", *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 18.3 (2013), 4-21 (p. 4) <http://openjournals.library.usyd.edu.au/index.php/AJVS> [accessed 20 July 2016].

Kohlke describes the three modes separately, she specifies that one text can cover two or even all three of them. The first mode, celebrity biofiction, "speculates about the inner lives, secret desires, traumas, and illicit pursuits of high-profile public figures, most often writers, poets, and artists, that may have been left out of surviving records, including subjects' own self-representations, for example in letters, diaries, or memoirs".[51] Similar to her argument in "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel" (2008), Kohlke here states that in neo-Victorian biofiction, too, elements like "virtue and valour have distinctly less appeal than vice, transgression, and obsession".[52] Part of readers' reasons for turning to neo-Victorian fiction is, she claims, "to feel outraged, to revel in degradation and revulsion" so as to "extract politically incorrect pleasure from what has become inadmissible or ethically *unimaginable* as a focus of desire in our own time".[53]

Next, neo-Victorian biofiction of marginalised subjects can be connected to the efforts put into the rewriting of actual or fictional figures in postcolonial neo-Victorianism, like the example of Saartjie Baartman used by Kohlke or Jean Rhys' wish to provide a voice and life for *Jane Eyre*'s Bertha Mason in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). This second mode thus has "a clear re-visionary and political purpose", commemorating "not just the marginalised subjects, but the injustice of their historical disregard and silencing".[54] Kohlke divides the third mode of appropriated biofiction in two sub-strands, 'glossed biofiction' and 'divergent or alternative biofiction'. Appropriated biofiction is described as exploitatively "[r]epurposing real lives for still greater sensational effects", using a historical figure as a draw for readers but

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[51] Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Biofiction", p. 7.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Marie-Luise Kohlke, "Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel: Orientalising the Nineteenth Century in Contemporary Fiction", in *Negotiating Sexual Idioms: Image, Text, Performance*, ed. by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Luisa Orza (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 53-77 (p. 55, emphasis in original).
[54] Kohlke, "Neo-Victorian Biofiction", p. 10.

introducing "elements without any factual basis whatever or redeploy[ing] historical subjects in alternate realities and other worlds altogether". Hesitant to even still call it 'life-writing', Kohlke argues that such fictions instead become "free-wheeling phantasmagoria".[55] Glossed biofiction, meanwhile, though appearing to rely on "supposedly non-referential, made-up characters and plots", is still "extensively modelled on famous historical subjects, their lives, writings and/or art, often with little or no attempt at any effective disguise".[56] This mode is most applicable to Rocklin's novel.

In its biofictional nature, *The Luminist* connects to Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, which is a more direct rewriting of the lives of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. The significant role played by photography also links the novel to Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights*; a parallel can even be traced between the 'lights' in Jones' title, with her protagonist aptly named *Lucy*, and the title of Rocklin's novel. A connection also exists with the thesis' earlier analysis of *Arthur & George* when considering Catherine's emphasis on wanting to *see* things clearly. Finally, like the first text discussed in this chapter, Mason's novel *The Piano Tuner*, *The Luminist* attempts to illustrate the significant role of art (and science) in bringing Western civilisation to the colonies. Art may serve to create a connection between different cultures which is not possible otherwise. Photography, specifically, also connects to memorialisation and trauma culture, in that it is used as a means to negate death, capturing an aspect of people's spirits which continues to exist even after they have passed. This is exemplified by the opening of the novel. Here, Catherine Colebrook cradles her new-born twin sons as she visits a painter to commission their portrait. Only as the chapter unfolds, the reader realises that of the two boys she holds, only one has survived the birth. The painting is

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[55] Ibid., p. 12.
[56] Ibid., p. 11.

supposed to be a way to hold on to the moment, to portray the boy who never had a chance at life. From here on, it becomes Catherine's goal to fix a moment in time through art, trying to defeat death by capturing life.

Catherine's wish to preserve the moment connects the scene to the genre of neo-Victorianism as a whole, as one of the ways in which the Victorian has continued its presence in the present is through neo-Victorian texts. Although she refers to photography as an art, wanting to capture not simply an image but a "divine" moment, Catherine also considers photography a science, the "science of images. Of arrest".[57] In this, she is like Mason's protagonist in *The Piano Tuner*. He, too, recognises the art of music, while simultaneously arguing that he himself is not an artist but a craftsman. What music he plays is built around logic, a mathematical – scientific – structuredness rather than a high art form.

By starting the novel with an account by Catherine, the book opens with a white British viewpoint – albeit a female one. The second chapter changes this by introducing Eligius Shourie, a poor boy from Ceylon. The order of introduction may imply a power structure in which the white British viewpoint remains the most prominent one but, looking at the novel's narrative, this does not stay constant. As the story progresses, the reader is frequently provided with Eligius' view on the white colonials in such a way that it becomes easy to associate with him over the white, Western point of view. Eligius grows up with his parents in Matara, a small village in the forest. His father works as a servant in a colonial household and his mother keeps their small house. One night, however, "he simply noticed what he hadn't before. That his father Swaran, still in his servant tunic, ministered tirelessly to books of colonial laws, the Britishers' paper

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[57] David Rocklin, *The Luminist* (Portland, OR: Hawthorne, 2011), p. 25. Further references to this title are given in parentheses in the text.

reasons for being in Ceylon" (29). That the legal texts Swaran reads are described as "paper reasons" for colonisation highlights their arbitrariness.

As Eligius joins his father in his studies, "he learned the secret heart hiding in the language of English law", the role of trade and the wooing of emperors, with the goal of "bend[ing] India into the ornate, locked gates of empire" (30). Eligius' father wants, if not to beat the colonials at their game, then at least to know the rules they play by so as to address them in a way they might understand. In fact, his English language skills and knowledge of British colonial society turn Swaran into a kind of 'mimic man', as Homi Bhabha called it.[58] With a familiarity of the advantages and pitfalls of such 'mimic men', Rocklin also sets up an opposite to Swaran: Chandrak. Not at all like the bookish colonial servant, Chandrak is instead described as "[t]all, lean, dark as charred teak [...] A leader in Matara, revered among its lower-born", with the strong arms and hands of someone working in a quarry, hands that, in Chandrak's own words, "break men but make leaders" (32-33). By emphasising the physical differences between Swaran and Chandrak, a consequence of their different positions, Rocklin also stresses their class difference.[59] As part of the lower working classes, Chandrak is presented as a rebel, refusing to recognise the influence of the British and resenting their growing power. Swaran, conversely, has perhaps too much understanding, observing situations more from the British point of view than from that of his own people.

The first time Eligius and Catherine see each other is when Eligius accompanies his father to the courthouse on the day Swaran is shot. Catherine views Eligius as if he is already in a photograph:

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[58] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004 [1994]), pp. 121-131.

[59] Rocklin rarely mentions caste in his novel. I use the Western class system in my description but obviously this is not fully applicable to a different cultural system. One of the novel's few references to caste has Eligius applying his world view to British social structure. As other colonials distance themselves from the Colebrooks because of their empathy for the local people, Eligius observes: "The Britishers are not so different [...] They had their own castes" (175).

the Indian boy came within her view and remained. He stood stiffly next to an older Indian man. His father, perhaps. There was another man with them but he felt peripheral; he was sinewy and hard, as if he'd been broken from the ground and put to a whetstone. The boy, who appeared to be [her daughter] Julia's age, had skin the color of milky tea. He wore trousers and a tunic. The clothes gentled his lean physique, made him less a part of this strange country [...] The Indian boy's shape against the Court wall was a moment that she could not name. (49)

In this quotation, several things are highlighted. First, there is the photographic quality of the description, viewed in connection to the equipment Catherine is setting up: the boy's detailed physique, the edges of the imaginary frame already determined to exclude Chandrak from the picture. Simultaneously, the scene points to the kind of photographs Catherine wishes to make, photos that not only are taken from life but that capture a moment of significance, that fix a specific point in time. Finally, there are implied value judgments in the image. Not only is the lower-class labourer Chandrak dismissed as unimportant to the representation, Catherine also thinks of Eligius looking as if he does not belong in the country, or to it.

As Catherine observes Eligius, so too does he watch her: "Eligius saw her emerge from under a dark cloak. Despite the earthen sari adorning her, this woman was colonial. There was no mistaking the empire in her" (49). Whereas Catherine sees a local boy who appears not to belong to his country, Eligius immediately perceives Catherine for what she is: a white colonial woman, in Ceylon as part of the British Empire. Eligius' statement that 'there was no mistaking the empire in her' can be connected to debates about white women's roles in the colonies, described by critics such as Ann Laura Stoler.[60] While in nineteenth-century white, Western societies, women were generally in a lower position than men, in the colonies their whiteness provided them with a social advantage over the local population. In seeing the empire in Catherine, Eligius implicitly recognises their unequal social positioning. Eligius sees

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[60] Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 1-2.

Catherine "[r]egarding him from across the foyer" (49). The power of the colonial gaze is subverted as Eligius watches Catherine watching him, blurring the direction of the power flow. This matches the shifting point of view in the novel, transferring readers' identification between Catherine's and Eligius' perspectives.

Swaran's visit to the courthouse, where Catherine and Eligius first catch sight of each other, already signals the connection that will form between Catherine and Eligius as the story progresses. The purpose of Swaran's visit is to convince the colonial administration of the harshness of their laws to the local people by working within their own system but Swaran fails to make them listen. Perceiving this, Chandrak suddenly interrupts, shouting: "This is not your country! [...] We are not all weak men! [...] If we fall, so shall you!" (53). Chandrak is dragged out by the soldiers and is beaten heavily. As Swaran moves to intervene, he is viewed as a threat and shot. Chandrak himself, though badly wounded, survives the encounter and remains in an influential position in the village. Despite seeing his father shot by the British soldiers, Eligius stays true to his legacy, refusing to join Chandrak and the other revolutionaries who incite violence against the British.

Eligius blames Chandrak for his father's death: "They shot because of you" (59). In a political-philosophical narrative statement, Chandrak argues instead that "[t]hey shot because of all of us [...] Because of our skin and our language. Because we live at all" (59-60). In Chandrak's remark we can hear Rocklin's voice, using the character to insert his own comment upon the colonial politics of the past. Chandrak's claim points to an inherent racism in the colonial system: while educating and civilising 'the native' may be the openly stated goals of colonialism, in practice the focus was more often put on trade profits and sources for raw materials, which did not require an educated native presence. Implied in the sense that British, Western, white people were able to convey civilisation was the idea that they were superior to others and in fact, such a

feeling of superiority *required* a lower-placed other to identify themselves against. The British colonials cannot let indigenous men like Swaran – men who are able to use the English language – gain a higher social status as it would implicitly lower their own.

As the story progresses, Chandrak assumes the position that Swaran had held, not only through the respect of the villagers but also in a personal sense, as he starts to pursue Eligius' mother and attempts to assert a father-like authority over Eligius. The two native positions described, that of the Westernised mimic man and the mutinous rebel, seemingly merge into one, emphasising Chandrak's statement that the soldiers shot "because of all of us", as the distinction between different people and positions disappears. Although he holds no love for the British in Ceylon, Chandrak finds a place in a colonial household for Eligius. While Sudarma lets him go in the hope that he will earn some rupees, enabling her to provide a bit more food for Eligius' sickly younger sister, Chandrak turns out to have another purpose: "There's a greater good to be served [...] Do you know they want to stamp England across India's brow? The households they're creating, like the one your father served, are English households. No matter that Ceylon lies just outside the window" (67). By placing Eligius in an English household, Chandrak wants to destroy such Englishness from within – raising the question, of course, to what extent a local boy can become part of the 'inside' of these households. Chandrak's words echo the earlier phrase of India being bent into "the locked gates of empire" (30).

Although Swaran's role at the opening of the novel seems to signify the importance of not making a clear-cut, binary distinction between the native and the colonial, his death early in the story and the rebellion at the end of the novel highlight the differences between the local people and the colonials. Even Eligius, the local boy who becomes involved with a colonial household, cannot truly bridge the difference – it remains a choice of for or against, a black and white distinction without a grey in-

between area. Furthermore, readers constantly have to realise that while the novel provides the viewpoint of the local as well as the colonial, in fact both are created by Rocklin.

The colonial characters in *The Luminist* enable Rocklin to look at their society in what is constructed as an outsider's view. This enables readers to sympathise with the novel's colonial characters as they watch the British settle with complete disregard for local climate, circumstances or society. Although Chandrak is described as a lower-class labourer, he is nevertheless presented as insightful, such as when he analyses the construction of these English households: "In their homes, it's the role of the dutiful wife to govern her family's days and nights, their meals, their sleep, their social obligations and their cleanliness, and yet not be seen to govern anything, or else their husbands look weak" (67). Rocklin here addresses a topic that Stoler identifies as contradictory in her book *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*: the ideological image of British masculinity as dependent upon the presence of white women, as opposed to the actuality of European manhood in the colonies as "largely independent of the presence of European women". There is, she writes, a discrepancy "between prescription and practice".[61] The family Eligius will serve has difficulties: "Your memsa'ab's husband is infirm. She has two children, and with all this to manage and never enough to manage it with, she must maintain their position" (67). In such a household, a reliable servant can become important quickly and Chandrak intends for Eligius to use his position for the revolutionary cause.

Eligius is not the only servant in the Colebrook household. They also have a white woman, Mary, who is supposed to act as go-between, not solely because of her own in-between status but because she has of necessity acquired some Tamil to communicate with the local servants and traders. Eligius with his fluent use of English is an

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[61] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, pp. 1-2.

exception. Initially, he allows them to think he does not understand their conversations, highlighting discrepancies between what they say and what Mary makes of it. Mary's social position is an unstable one: she is a white woman in the colonies but also unmarried and a servant; and furthermore, she is the only white servant in a household barely getting by financially. This instability is highlighted when Eligius gains the trust of the Colebrook family and starts helping Catherine with her photographic pursuits. What privileges Mary initially has, especially her direct access to the family, lose their significance when Eligius gets the same license, emphasising their shared social status as servants over Mary's whiteness.

Eligius' and Mary's commonalities enable them to cross racial barriers by making class barriers more significant: "Everything about [Mary] – her bent posture, her headlong gait, her weathered hands – spoke of the harsh physical labor that informed her life. Yet he felt her need to speak unfurling like a sail. They were just two servants away from their masters, tongues loosening with the miles" (102). When Eligius later argues with Mary, he stresses the similarity of their position: "You're white like them, but low like me" (179). Mary's liminal status as white domestic help in the colonies creates a link across racial barriers when the two servants see the similarities in their social positions.

Eligius works for the Colebrooks to earn some money but he soon realises the precarious financial situation they are in. When market shopkeepers refuse to give them further credit, Mary commands Eligius to give her what little money he has. He, however, refuses to give it to her, stating: "I know what it means to starve" (104). As Mary digs in her own pocket to pay the butcher for a bit of stringy meat, she tells Eligius that while he may have known hunger, it is different to "be a Britisher and starve in plain sight of your neighbors [...] It's not our place to go without" (104). In her anger with Eligius, the racial line that was crossed in favour of class unity crops up again.

Still, these kinds of identifications across racial borders do not occur as explicitly in any of the other texts discussed. In most cases, there is either an invisible boundary between the racially other and the Western European 'us' or, when cross-racial identification does occur, it is described from a position of Western superiority.

In "Remembering Back", Rothberg claims that colonialism "involves a break in the intergenerational communicative memory of a colonized group".[62] In *The Luminist*, this break is symbolised by the death of Eligius' father as he is killed by the British. While Chandrak initially wants to take over a father-like authority role, Eligius refuses to be used for a revolution based on violence and later, after he witnesses Chandrak and the others kill a young British soldier, he shares his knowledge of the case, leading to Chandrak's arrest and death (161-63; 168; 185). Eligius' reasons for doing so are twofold: in the first place, it means Chandrak can no longer pressure him into following the path of the rebels. The second aspect is more emotional, however: when Eligius and Catherine again attempt to capture Julia's reflection on glass, Catherine shows the disappearing image to her husband and "[i]n that held moment, Eligius saw what it was that bound these two strangers together [...] he'd never before seen how small, how easily missed, how impregnable love could be" (167-68). The recognition of this bond between Catherine and Charles enables Eligius to connect differently to Charles. Rocklin, it seems, ascribes significant powers to love as an emotional force.

Because of his confession to Charles, Eligius gets a reputation with both the colonials and his own people as "[t]he Indian who chose us over his own", as one of the other servants tells him in the market (177). Still, where Swaran represented what Bhabha called a 'mimic man', an embodiment of "the desire for a reformed and recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" and Chandrak can be seen as the alternative, when the "ambivalence of colonial

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[62] Rothberg, "Remembering Back", p. 365.

authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry* – a difference that is almost nothing but not quite – to *menace* – a difference that is almost total but not quite", Eligius is in another position.[63] In his chapter on mimicry, Bhabha argues how it "*repeats* rather than *re-presents*".[64] Eligius, however, is carving out his own position not as a form of colonial mimesis aiming for Anglification but as a person and artist himself.

Eligius' confession to Charles implies a change of loyalties in him. Charles tells him to be truthful in his claims: "I pity you if I learn other than what you've told me. *You have no country, boy*" (168, my emphasis). In making this statement, Charles claims that by choosing to give up the people from his village, he should no longer consider himself a part of that community. At the same time, however, despite his involvement with the English family, he cannot claim their country for his own. Although Charles is associated with the death of Eligius' father, present in court the day of Swaran's death, he is described as a man who wants what is best for Ceylon: "I thought I would come, make my mark on this country. Give her laws that she might care for herself" (174). His best intentions, though, are very clearly marked by his own innate sense of superiority, describing himself as having the knowledge and ability to 'give' Ceylon the laws and order it 'needs'. Charles' use of the female pronoun portrays the country and its populations as feminised and dependent on male intervention. While 'helping' Ceylon and its people in this manner, Charles planned to "make a coffee fortune and return to London a valued civil servant untouched by his time away". But, he states, "Ceylon has come to be a part of me in ways I never expected" (174).

Charles' description of Ceylon influencing him as he intended to influence the country is intriguing in connection to the other texts discussed in this thesis. Anthony Carroll, for example, is tempted to create his own world in the Burmese jungle,

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[63] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 122; p. 131 (emphasis in original).
[64] Ibid., p. 125 (emphasis in original).

independent from the British army he is supposed to be a part of. Charles' continued confession indicates how deeply the country has become part of him: "I love it in the senseless manner that compels my wife in her own pursuits. To love something that eludes me is a terrible enough thing. To see it on the verge of catastrophe, to be too old and too indebted to do anything? I fear what will become of my soul if I leave it like this" (174). The word leave has multiple meanings: Charles' word choice refers to physically leaving the island, to leaving it be, to a lack of interference and references death, as Charles fears dying without having done what he can for the country and for himself. The emotions involved in Charles' story highlight that Britain's connection to its Empire is remembered as more than a business arrangement. Neo-Victorian novels like *The Luminist* reconstruct a romanticised view of love for a country and the influence the British Empire could have on people's identities.

Charles' use of phrases like 'fear for his soul' and the 'country that has become part of him' reference a kind of hybridity not often described in neo-Victorian fictions. Rather than a native becoming a kind of 'mimic man', here it is the white, Western upper-class man who admits to choosing the colonial country over Britain, at least some aspects of it. In the opening chapter of *Colonial Desire*, Young discusses the term 'hybridity' – its changes in meaning and the cultural connotations attached to it over time. "At its simplest", Young writes, hybridity "implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike living things [...] Hybridity is a making one of two distinct things, so that it becomes impossible for the eye to detect the hybridity of a geranium or a rose".[65] The use of visual detection in this quotation is significant, as visual differences are often the basis for defining otherness. In *Arthur & George*, people note that how George *sounds* does not match what they *see* when they look at him. In the same text, the character Arthur Conan Doyle even more explicitly references the idea of visual

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[65] Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 26.

detection, both through his work as ophthalmologist and in the ways his creation Sherlock Holmes uses visual evidence – ways that Conan Doyle himself exemplifies in the novel.

Hybridity as something that is or is not seen also references the art and science of photography that plays such a central role in *The Luminist*. Photography seems to promise objectivity, a representation of a moment frozen in time. In fact, this and other neo-Victorian novels use photographs to call up the interconnections between memory, history and fiction. Through such links, Kate Mitchell argues, the photographic medium becomes a haunted one, with novels like these "deploy[ing] the ghostly figure of photography in order to posit the persistence of the past as uncanny repetition and as embodied memory". Moreover, she claims, neo-Victorian novels about photography "use the language of spectrality to also position themselves as revenant".[66] What Charles describes is also a hybridity that is *not* seen, that is invisible. Rather than displaying the outward signs of someone who has 'gone native', Charles instead focuses on the internal, on his soul. Charles' invisible otherness is placed opposite the visibly and visually 'other' boy Eligius, the Indian boy who chooses the English colonials over his own people.

Rocklin sets his narrative in the late 1830s, with Catherine a scientific experimenter of photography. As mentioned earlier, in this she differs from Julia Margaret Cameron, who worked in the 1860s and 1870s, when photography, while still experimental, was

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[66] Kate Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction: Victorian Afterimages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 144. In an article in *Neo-Victorian Studies* on which the chapter in *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction* is based, Mitchell lists several other neo-Victorian novels that explore the uses of photography: Lynne Truss' *Tennyson's Gift* (1996), Robert Solé's *La Mamelouka* (1996, translated as *The Photographer's Wife*, 1999), Ross Gilfillan's *The Edge of the Crowd* (2001), Katie Roiphe's *Still She Haunts Me* (2001), Helen Humphreys' *Afterimage* (2001), Fiona Shaw's *The Sweetest Thing* (2003) and Susan Barrett's *Fixing Shadows* (2005). See "Ghostly Histories and Embodied Memories: Photography, Spectrality and Historical Fiction in *Afterimage* and *Sixty Lights*", *Neo-Victorian Studies* 1.1 (2008), 81-109 (p. 82) <www.neovictorianstudies> [accessed 25 April 2016].

already an established art form. What Catherine Colebrook, and later Eligius with her, works towards are the very first attempts at fixing an image permanently on some kind of medium. Here, too, Rocklin shifts time around, as he admits to having taken "broad liberties" with the history and origins of photography (viii).

The first form of photography to become popular was the making of daguerreotypes, a process invented by the Frenchman Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre in the late 1830s. The first recorded successful daguerreotypes were made by treating a highly polished silver surface with the fumes of various gases to make it light-sensitive. The plate was then exposed to light in a camera for a certain amount of time – depending on the intensity of the light, this could vary from a few seconds to several minutes – and afterwards it was treated with more chemical fumes to stop the material being light-sensitive and fixate the image. The resulting positive image was very vulnerable to damage and required some form of protection, often a specially made case. Another process, that of making calotypes, which used paper coated with silver iodine, was less commonly used, among other reasons due to patent restrictions.[67] In the early 1860s, however, these processes were replaced with the 'wet plate collodion process', often simply called 'collodion process', which created a negative that could be relatively easily flipped. The collodion process fixed the image to a glass plate of which multiple prints could be made. Whereas daguerreotypes were created with chemical fumes, the collodion process required the pouring of liquid solutions over a glass plate, first to prepare it and then to develop it. Although the process was labour intensive, it was much cheaper compared to daguerreotypes as it used glass plates rather than silver-plated copper ones.[68]

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[67] Owen Clayton, *Literature and Photography in Transition, 1850-1915* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 27.

[68] Helmut Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography*, 3rd edn. (New York: Dover Publications, 1986 [1965]), p. 12; p. 16.

While she was not unique, Julia Margaret Cameron was still a special case as a female photographer. For Catherine, therefore, to be involved not only in the artistic process of making photographs but even in its scientific development seems rather far-fetched, especially considering the fact that she is working from the colonies and not extremely well-off financially. Catherine's experiments are supported by Sir John Holland, another figure who adds to the biofictional nature of the novel as he is modelled on Cameron's close friend Sir John Frederick William Herschel. Herschel, who contributed much to the technical development of photography, supported Cameron's interest and she considered him as a teacher as well as a friend.[69] Cameron's portrait of Herschel (1867) is one of her better-known photographs.[70] Catherine's Sir John is placed firmly in nineteenth-century photographic circles, writing to her that "there are others working on matters of chemicals, surfaces, and the contraption itself. Reijlander, chiefly, in Sweden. Archer and Talbott. I am in correspondence with them. Through me, so shall you be" (43). O.G. Rejlander is the photographer of the picture of Cameron sitting at the piano that I used as the opening image of this chapter. Frederick Scott Archer and William Henry Fox Talbot, too, were early experimenters with the art of photography. In constructing a fictionalised version of Herschel, Rocklin once again emphasises the scientific aspects of photography, which connects to Drake's 'scientific' view on piano music in *The Piano Tuner*.

Catherine's apprentice-like position in her relation with Sir John Holland mirrors the relation she develops with Eligius when he becomes her helper. Just as Catherine surpasses her master, succeeding in creating recognisable images on a photographic

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[69] Larry J. Schaaf, "Herschel, Sir John Frederick William, 1792-1871, British Photographic Inventor and Muse", in *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph*, ed. by Robin Lenman and Angela Nicholson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), n.p. <www.oxfordreference.com> [accessed 22 April 2016].

[70] A detailed digitisation of Cameron's portrait of Herschel can be studied on The Metropolitan Museum of Art's website. <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/282064> [accessed 22 April 2016].

plate, so do Eligius' photographic successes come to overshadow Catherine's in the narrative. However, because of the fact that both Catherine and Eligius occupy a minority position in relation to their master (or mistress), their greater success remains implicit rather than explicitly recognised. Another significant difference is that where Catherine chooses her role, Eligius does not, at least not explicitly.

Although Catherine, with Eligius' help, makes some progress, they initially fail to create lasting images. As they prepare for another attempt, Julia again sits for them. Eligius arranges glass panes around her, the reflective surfaces capturing the sunlight and "bathing her in gold" (167). When Catherine looks through the camera at Julia, the sunlight "made baubles of her daughter's eyes" (167). The repeated use of the word 'baubles' links this scene to an earlier attempt, when they only managed to capture a fragment of an image on the page, lighted by the glass bauble Julia was holding at the time. On this occasion, however, they capture the image on the plate, if only fleetingly: "It came in tides of shape and shadow. Julia's folded hands, her arms, the soft lace of her dress, her thin neck and her hair cascading over her shoulder, unfastened to catch the wind. Her face came and stayed, longer and more vividly than ever before" (167). Nevertheless, the image does not remain but dissolves. Catherine's attempt to catch a moment in time is in itself also temporary, lacking the permanence she is looking for.

When Catherine and Eligius succeed in creating a photograph of Julia, the camera is described as if it can see more truly than the naked eye. This was a common view in the Victorian period and one used for, among others, criminal detection.[71] Through the camera's eye, Catherine looks at Julia: "The partition of the glass at her eye ceased its separation and became simply her sight. She studied her daughter's frank beauty [...] no longer did the muscles of her mouth or the aperture of her eye speak of youth in

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[71] Anne-Julia Zwierlein, "'The Gift of Seeing' – 'The Eyes of Faith': Visuelle Evidenze und Übersinnliches in Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* und anderen neo-viktorianischen Detektivromanen", *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 56.1 (2008), 31-48 (p. 34).

perpetual search of adolescent outrage at perceived slights. When had she become a woman? When had so much of the child departed?" (222). Perceiving through the camera what she did not see with the naked eye, Catherine silently asks that her work may "tie a bit of light to we who come into the world already on the path to departing it. Just a bit of light, so we can be seen a little while after we're gone" (222). Having succeeded in capturing the moment, Catherine thinks of her dead son Hardy, for whom prayers had meant nothing. "Prayers were dead words elevated to divinity by finite men. But this. *I brought forth the holy. I made light stop*" (223, emphasis in original). Light and time are connected here – by capturing the light, Catherine has captured a moment in time.

The constant references to light and life as well as its opposites, the dark shadows and death, point to the impermanence of the British Empire. This is underscored by the British losing their hold over Ceylon in the course of violent uprisings. Though he no longer has much power, Charles still hopes to bring things to a peaceful ending by engaging the rebels in negotiation. Father Ault, the local priest, argues with him, trying to keep him from travelling through the area of unrest: "What can you say that could possibly change things? [...] The populace has been looking for a reason to get angry". Charles shook his head. "The populace is looking for justice. They don't want a rebellion any more than we. These are the actions of a few, but they are spreading out of anyone's control" (231). Calling a meeting with some of the colonial elite who still respect his opinion, Charles poses a question to them: "Just what was it that brought us far from home with the hope of spreading our particular brand of civilization? Perhaps we can reclaim something of that youthful optimism in our twilight [...] Let us discuss how we should be remembered" (233). Charles' position, a low one compared to his better-off fellow colonials, recalls Swaran's when *he* tried to convey his message, mirroring the two men across time.

Charles' reference to a 'brand' of civilisation highlights the fact that we are reading a neo-Victorian narrative rather than a Victorian one: a twenty-first-century novel recognising the existence of a multiplicity of cultures. At the same time, the reference to civilisation over trade signifies an idealism masking the historical actuality of trade exploitation. The duality in this text, an awareness of postcolonial developments mixed with remaining traces of that same idealism Charles references, shows that neo-Victorianism is not always completely critical and critically aware. It is up to the reader to realise this, which adds another reflexive layer to the texts – not only that of the author but also that of the reader. Nevertheless, as I argue in the opening chapter of this thesis, neo-Victorian novels can display elements of a postmodern self-reflexive awareness even as they include romanticised views or, in some cases, imply a repetition of those same colonial endeavours that postcolonial theories have aimed to highlight.

Published in 2011, *The Luminist* has to contend with numerous other postcolonial neo-Victorian novels. This is highly visible in the narrative of the uprising of local people that Rocklin describes. As we read the examples of violence against the British colonials and the countermeasures taken by the local army, the novel calls to mind neo-Victorian narratives of the Indian mutiny, like J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), Julian Rathbone's *The Mutiny* (2007) and scenes from novels like M.M. Kaye's *Shadow of the Moon* (1979) and Elaine di Rollo's *A Proper Education for Girls* (2008). No conflict comparable to the Mutiny, or War of Independence, occurred in Ceylon at this time.[72] However, if we place the text in a more correct temporal framework, based on the development of wet collodion photography and the age-

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[72] An uprising did take place, but much earlier. In 1817-1818, the local population rebelled against British rule in what has come to be called the 'Uva rebellion', after the place it started, or third Kandyan War. See also Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), p. 28.

references, the narrative would be taking place in the early to mid-1850s, only shortly before the uprising in India took place.

The fact that the scenes from *The Luminist* evoke the historical event of the 1857 rebellion recalls Astrid Erll's assertion that the "'Indian Mutiny' is a *lieu de mémoire*, a site of memory which has emerged from the history of British colonialism".[73] In its similarity, *The Luminist* becomes another remediation adding to the way in which the event is remembered. What is more, because of its different setting, *The Luminist* substantiates Erll's statement that the 'Indian Mutiny' is no longer solely a *lieu de mémoire* for British and Indian people but can instead be seen as "a transnationally available pattern of representation".[74] Rocklin, as an American novelist writing about nineteenth-century Ceylon, is aware of this pattern and applies it in a related but different context.

When Eligius returns from a foray inland to attempt to find Charles, he arrives in the harbour city to see how all the colonials try to flee, hoping to catch a steamer from Port Colombo to return to Britain. Although Charles is later found alive after trying to confront the indigenous rebels, the already old and sick man deteriorates quickly and dies. Catherine makes plans to return to England with Julia and Ewen, but tells Eligius that she wishes for him to join them: "Clearly, I need your hand with me. Your light. The English sun can be as capricious as Ceylon's" (292). Her need for Eligius is both practical and emotional – she needs his help but she has also come to feel for him like a kind of son, coming in the place of her dead baby boy. Nevertheless, while Catherine repeatedly refers to her feelings for Eligius, the fact that she leaves Ceylon without him clearly illustrates her prioritising Julia and Ewen over the Indian boy with whom she has become involved.

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[73] Erll, "Remembering Across Time, Space, and Cultures", p. 109.
[74] Ibid., p. 127.

As the Colebrooks prepare to leave, Eligius takes Julia into the improvised studio. Setting up the camera so that it captures them both, Eligius photographs a moment of connection between Julia and himself. When the local insurgents arrive at the Colebrook's house, Catherine and her children manage to leave the place. Eligius drives their cart to the harbour, a chaos of people begging and shoving to be on the first ship out. As Catherine and her children fight for a place in the queue,

> Catherine grabbed Eligius' hand and pulled him next to her, so no one would mistake him for anything but hers. She'd seen what alarmed Julia. Ahead, the colonials' transit from the dock to the gangplank and safety. Behind, the Indians who had lived among the British. None of them moved forward. They didn't beg the soldiers for passage. Some silent message had already been conveyed. (300)

Catherine and her family have to leave Eligius behind if they are to escape the violence aimed at the British, even as they are forced to realise that his association with them may cost him his life. As she is about to board, Catherine turns and fights her way to Eligius, giving him the camera she grabbed from their improvised studio. Then she follows her children on board as they leave the colony that has been their home for their *real* home, which is spotlighted under threat: Britain. Just like Carroll left the piano in Drake's care in *The Piano Tuner*, so does Catherine leave Eligius the camera. Both objects have the potential to serve metaphorically as a weapon or to aid the mediation of peace in the colonies. However, while Drake releases the piano's raft, thereby most likely destroying it, the camera, in Eligius' hands, instead acquires an increasingly significant role.

A few years later after the rebellion, Eligius and his younger sister are staying at the empty house where the Colebrooks used to live. It is 1842 and Eligius has built himself a reputation with the camera left to him by Catherine:

> There were but a few others in Ceylon who had taken up the art. He'd heard of them. Colonials who came to shore in the months following the violence to stake claims on the abandoned estates [...] They brought as well new cameras that were smaller than his, with lenses like prisms, and new ways of coating the glass plates. But they were prisoners of their new world and its capricious light. None knew its ways like he did. None were willing to bathe in poisons like he was. Hobbyists, that was all they were. Effete portrayers of fox

hunts and christenings. No one save he went to the families needing their darkest moments arrested. Only him. (312)

With the Western technology of photography, the Indian boy Eligius has become a photographer of deceased colonials. There is an ironic power structure produced here that Rocklin was no doubt aware of. The Indian boy Eligius no longer intrudes British homes but is invited for his skill at creating a memory through photography. Afterwards, however, the photograph Eligius makes for the bereaved family members is put to another use. Eligius is paid for his work and returns home with some rupees and the photographic plate: "Later, he could use the glass to make photographic copies of her to sell at the bazaar. The colonials never went there and didn't know how highly pictures of dead Britishers were valued. He'd taken many of the dead and sold them twice, to the grieving and to the pleased" (314-15).

Eligius uses the Western photography to earn money from both the colonials and the local inhabitants. The popularity of his photographs gains a dual meaning: that of remembrance in death, but also that of symbolising a curious power structure, where the native boy is selected to construct the image British colonials are remembered by. The images made by Eligius are a reminder that white power does not last forever. The locals' obsession with the photographs indicates a breakdown of British power structures as they commemorate the death of the ruling elite. At the same time, through their circulation, the photographs also become material traces of British colonialism. By exploiting both the British and indigenous people, Eligius manages to earn enough for a ticket to England and travel to join the remaining Colebrook family. Nevertheless, Eligius' use of photography calls to mind Audre Lorde's statement that "*the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*". While they may allow

Eligius and other inhabitants of British colonies to "temporarily beat [the master] at his own game", they cannot "bring about genuine change".[75]

The novel's final chapter is simply titled 'The Luminist' and once again underscores the biofictional nature of the novel, as it opens with Lord Tennyson complaining to Catherine that he is tired of sitting still "for these interminable hours, robed like a dirty monk" (319). The Cameron family and the Tennysons were friends and neighbours in Freshwater on the Isle of Wight. 'The Dirty Monk' was what Tennyson nicknamed one of the portraits Julia Margaret Cameron made of him, one that, apparently, he liked best.[76] As sitters travel to Freshwater to be photographed, they are made to look at a photograph taken by Eligius just before the Colebrook family fled Ceylon, hanging in the studio. It is the imprint of a kiss exchanged between him and Julia. Guests call the intimacy between the white girl and the Indian boy various things: sad, inappropriate, even an abomination. The photograph can be seen to reflect common fears of the 'danger' represented by coloured people to white female purity and the perceived risks of racial mixing. For photography, itself a kind of hybrid between science and art, to represent the possibility of such a hybrid connection adds to the destabilisation of traditional ideas of race and society. Eligius' journey to England may turn the image into reality again but the difficulties of such a connection are more substantial than the text suggests.

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[75] Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House", in *Sister Outsider* (Berkeley: Crossing, 2007 [1984]), pp. 110-113 (p. 112, emphasis in original).

[76] Lord David Cecil, "Introductory Essay", in *A Victorian Album: Julia Margaret Cameron and her Circle*, ed. Graham Ovenden (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), pp. 1-7 (p. 6). Not all critics agree about the respectability of Tennyson's portrait, however: Hill quotes a review from the *Photographic News* of March 1868, in which the reviewer complains about Cameron's technique and the way in which she presents her subjects: "one portrait of the Poet Laureate presents him in the guise which would be sufficient to convict him if he were charged as a rogue and vagabond before any bench of magistrates in the kingdom" (*Julia Margaret Cameron*, p. 127).

Conclusion

In Chapter One, the novels I analysed portrayed people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds as a minority representing the otherness against which white British characters could identify themselves. Conversely, in this chapter, British characters themselves form the minority in different locations colonised by the British Empire. Despite their changed position, however, the white characters in *The Piano Tuner* and *The Luminist* maintain that their civilisation is the model which should be imposed on other parts of the world and continue their lives from an assumed position of superiority. Even the failure of the Western model in the colonies, which both novels display, appears to have no lasting influence on the colonisers' sense of cultural superiority. Of course, as twenty-first-century texts, the two novels are intended for a reading public who are aware of the fact that many of colonialism's cultural and political traces are still in place. The colonial society represented in *The Piano Tuner* and *The Luminist* is as authentically British as its participants can manage, mimicking the social structures at home. In cases where they become unable – as the Colebrooks do because of their lack of finances – or unwilling to continue what seems almost like a farce to the twenty-first-century reader, households are shunned and may even be expelled from colonial British society.

The refusal to let go of the standards that mark civilised society at home illustrates that despite their minority position in colonial locations, British colonials are described as making few adjustments to address the fact that in these different places, they do not represent the norm. Their seeming conviction that in fact they always represent the norm lasts only as long as they are able to remain in power in stable colonial locations; when British society comes under pressure, as we see in *The Luminist*, the pretence unravels and the only remaining option is to flee. Of course, we should

distinguish between soldiers, officers and others sent to keep the peace, and the society that grew around them – wives, children, servants and other civilians. A British presence did not automatically imply a society based on the format of the mother country; only when territories were deemed secure enough to host more extensive communities than army barracks did such a society develop.

The colony of Ceylon as Rocklin describes it in *The Luminist* appeared stable enough to host a British community, which is why the rebellion at the end of the narrative causes such chaos. In *The Piano Tuner*, Mason describes a settled colonial community as well as a more volatile environment. Drake first arrives in Mandalay, where he finds a mimicry of the kind of society he left at home. When he leaves for the hill station to join Carroll, however, he moves from an established community to a location under pressure, where the only inhabitants are soldiers, most of them locals converted to what seems to be the British cause but turns out to be Carroll's. The fact that Drake has to travel through the wilderness to get from one location to another emphasises the significance of different spaces in the construction of both the narratives and the colonial communities within them. The explicit distinction between such separate spaces – the city and the wilderness in *The Piano Tuner*, the colonial community and the local village in *The Luminist* – also stress the significance of people crossing these spaces. Both Swaran and Charles, crossing from the village to the colonial space and vice versa, risk their lives in doing so. In Mason's novel, passing from the city-space to the hills means that the protagonists move away from British society, making the process of 'going native' easier and more attractive.

Of the two novels discussed, *The Piano Tuner* is most explicit when it comes to the risk of British colonials going native. Potential danger is managed through violent intervention: when it turns out that Carroll is working for himself and the local people rather than for the British, the fort at Mae Lwin is attacked by the British soldiers who

are still loyal to the Empire. Drake, who shifted his sympathies towards not only Carroll but also some of the indigenous people, has to pay for his changed loyalties with his life, without regard for the fact that he acted on selective information. British people who are presented as collaborators can no longer be unequivocally placed on the Western side of an imaginary ideological divide. As a consequence, they blur the binary distinction between Western self and colonial other. By having a renegade protagonist, Mason succeeds in confusing the reader, making it unclear with whom to identify. Although Drake upsets binary distinctions, the structure of Mason's narrative still depends on a continuation of the dichotomies between self and other, British and foreigner.

Rocklin's *The Luminist*, while also using stereotypical dualities, depends less on their remaining in place throughout the narrative. One reason why Rocklin's novel is not as concerned with the perceived risks of British characters 'going native' is because of a focus on crossings in the other direction: first Swaran becomes a colonial 'mimic man' and after his death, Eligius leaves the indigenous village space for British colonial society. Eligius crossing these boundaries also has its attendant risks but these are more focused on hybridity and racial mixing; while Rocklin refers to these at the end of the novel through the photograph of Eligius and Julia, he does not discuss them in detail. Also, the potential significance of his references may very well be lost on some of his modern readers, who may not be aware of the difficulties surrounding a potential match between the 'native boy' Eligius and the white, Western Julia in the Victorian period.

The Luminist and *The Piano Tuner* imply the significance of art as a meaningful element of Western society, especially as their art forms are also linked to science and rationality – music through Drake's constant focus on technique, both his technique as a tuner and the structured aspects of the music he plays in Mae Lwin, and

photography as a developing science of light. The art forms described in the two novels come to be linked to Western civilisation, especially as they are presented as unique to the West, not so much in their general terms – making of music or images – but in their specificity – making *piano* music and the significance of the piano as a cultural object in British society, or photography capturing a moment in time in a picture in a way that a painted image cannot. Hindsight plays a role here, as in the twenty-first century, photography plays an even larger role in society (for example, in terms of its social function on social media and its use for research and medical purposes) and the piano as an instrument, though perhaps not as omnipresent in households as it was in those of Victorian middle and upper classes, remains popular across the world. At the same time, however, both – but especially photography – have lost much of their significance as markers of social status.

Cultural memory theorists highlight the significance of shared memories in creating communities. As memories are put into words, they can change from individual remembrances into a communal history of experiences. However, when they turn from personal to more universal narratives, the increased distance between the source and the person processing it means that people put their own spin on the memories. Neo-Victorian novels are examples of this: while authors often make use of historical narratives and sources, as signified by the number of neo-Victorian novels that come with a list of references, the fictional mediation of such narratives creates new memories for readers, memories that are even further away from historical events. While I am not arguing for a clear-cut distinction between fiction and history, with fiction being made-up whereas history is based on facts, it is important to be aware of the additional distance between an event and its mediated form that neo-Victorian fiction constructs.

Novelists may explicitly admit to providing a distorted view of history, as Rocklin does when he changes the timeline of photographic developments, but as novels generally have a much larger reading public than history books, their version of events may be as likely to become the popularly remembered version – or even more so. This is what I referred to when describing neo-Victorianism as a *lieu de mémoire*: as a representational format becomes popular and is copied in different ways and across different media, it becomes more and more distant from what is known historically, turning the fictionally created and constructed narrative into a shared cultural memory. This is also important in relation to my argument that colonial times of crisis highlighted those aspects of Western culture that were thought to be most significant. What is highlighted in postcolonial neo-Victorianism is a fictional reconstruction of the respective authors' ideas of Victorian colonial society.

In this chapter, I described the piano as a material trace which left physical and cultural tracks throughout Europe's former empires. The traces of photography, however, are even more significant, as they move in multiple directions: not only did photographic techniques make it possible to go to the East and document one's experiences, one could also take the images home. Photographs could become Western physical traces carrying colonial cultural traces. Here, too, it remains important to remember the mediated aspect of such remains: what we see in a picture is obviously not a neutral image. In some ways, photographs can be seen as memories made physical, only they may not be the memory of the person viewing the photographic image, especially when they are removed from us in time, in space, or both.

It is clear that the British Empire left physical traces on those spaces it colonised. The colonisation of time is less easily detectable. However, through genres like postcolonial neo-Victorianism, we can see the risk of a Western perception of history becoming the prominent – remembered – perception. It is important for readers to be

critical in their approach of fictional narratives and realise that the reimagined society presented in fiction is often not based on what that society and culture was like – in so far as we can access this – but on constructed and mediated cultural memories, multiple times removed from whatever the original may have been. Nobody reads objectively; we are all coloured by our experiences and cultural and social positionality. Neo-Victorian novels about colonial society are just that: fictional constructions aimed at providing the reader with a novel experience, not an authentic one.

Conclusion: Neo-Victorianism as "our strange inheritance"

> [T]he Victorian age certainly didn't end in 1901 [...] The age of Victoria, I submit, is still with us.
>
> This is our strange inheritance.
>
> (Hugh Tinker, "Race & Neo-Victorianism", 1972)[1]

This thesis begins and ends with a quotation from Hugh Tinker's article "Race & Neo-Victorianism". In the article, Tinker mixes critical analysis and personal experience to support his thesis that "in order to understand ourselves, we need to understand how much of our grandparents [or forebears, more generally] there is still within us".[2] Tinker, born in 1921, wonders how many others feel, like he does, that their life "has been shaped most of all by the Victorian experience".[3] Tinker's article was published almost half a century ago and, in certain points it makes, clearly shows its age. Nevertheless, Tinker lights upon many issues that are still discussed in neo-Victorian criticism and beyond it.[4] His statement that the Victorian Age "bequeathed to us not only our certainties, but also most of our uncertainties" resonates with more recent texts like Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben's introduction to *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma* (2010), in which they reference "the trauma of doubt and

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[1] Hugh Tinker, "Race & Neo-Victorianism", *Encounter* (April 1972), 47-55 (p. 47; p. 48).

[2] Tinker, "Race & Neo-Victorianism", p. 48.

[3] Ibid., p. 47.

[4] The publication date of the article, 1972, is the year before the United Kingdom joined what was then the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the European Union. While Tinker looks favourably upon this act, he also worries that a strengthening of ties with Europe will lead to a renouncing of responsibility "for those whom we insisted *were* our responsibility when we made them accept our rule" in what he calls "our present mood of Neo-Victorian Racism" (p. 55). The explicit reference to racism calls to mind the increase in reported incidents of racist violence after the 'Brexit' referendum of 27 June, in which the United Kingdom voted (by a small majority) to leave the European Union.

uncertainty" as one of the unifying devices that readers of neo-Victorianism see echoed across time.[5]

Neo-Victorianism as something that displays Victorian returns over time can be connected to present-day society's cultural memory, a topic discussed in detail by Kate Mitchell in *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (2010). In this book, Mitchell writes the following: "The re-presentation of the Victorian era in these [neo-Victorian] novels celebrates the potential of the literary text as an act of memory. Its imaginative re-creation stems from a desire to re-member the period as part of our shared history, our cultural memory, and asserts both continuities and discontinuities between Victorian culture and our own".[6] It is Mitchell's statement that literature potentially functions as an 'act of memory' that I want to highlight. When we read a text not only as a representation of memories but as something that actively contributes to the process of memory-creation, it becomes possible to see how neo-Victorian fiction may not only play a role in working through past memories of the Victorian era but also influences the ways in which the period is remembered, without recourse to historical source material. Literature's function in 're-membering' the Victorian period – at once providing it with a (physical) presence and making it part of the present – shows the significance of the past as part of the present. Furthermore, neo-Victorian fiction's contribution to remembering, and potentially memorialising, the Victorian age highlights how neo-Victorianism may function as a *lieu de mémoire*.

In this thesis, I looked at the representation of race, sexuality and empire in neo-Victorianism. Despite its overt references to the nineteenth century, neo-Victorianism

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[5] Tinker, "Race & Neo-Victorianism", p. 48; Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben, "Introduction: Bearing After-Witness to the Nineteenth Century", in *Neo-Victorian Tropes of Trauma: The Politics of Bearing After-Witness to Nineteenth-Century Suffering*, ed. by Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 1-34 (p. 13).

[6] Kate Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 182.

remains part of the present rather than the past. In analysing a selection of postcolonial neo-Victorian novels, I aimed to show the significance of both the colonial past and the postcolonial present to the ways in which we construct and experience society today. The question why the Victorian age, more than any other period, has received the amount of attention it has, is still open for debate. Nevertheless, regardless of whether it is because the Victorians are far enough from us in time to be different but close enough to be recognisable and familiar, or because literature can help us make sense of the world and our place within it, as Robert T. Tally argues; it is clear that something in the Victorian period draws both readers and writers to return to it over and over again.[7] In different ways, a process of recognition takes place between what people believe the Victorian period was like and what they believe their own period is like.

One aspect of this research is to consider if and in what ways neo-Victorian texts published in the twenty-first century reflect on current social concerns about our culturally mixed society. Neo-Victorian scholarship is highly engaged with the artificiality of (re)constructions of the Victorian era that take place in the different modes and (sub)genres neo-Victorianism includes. What receives less attention in these discussions, however, is that the images we create of present-day society are also constructed. The fact that a text writes about the present rather than the past does not necessarily make it any more real or actual. In both cases, the text provides a creative mediation of experience and history.

A main concern of this work is whether postcolonial neo-Victorian novels challenge or perpetuate Victorian stereotypes of race and sexuality. Because many of these stereotypes were based on nineteenth-century scientific lines of argumentation, this

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[7] Robert T. Tally Jr., "Introduction: Mapping Narratives", in *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, Representation, and Narrative*, ed. by Robert T. Tally, pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

thesis argues that splitting these three concepts of race, sexuality and science would prove unproductive in analysing their representation in fiction returning to the Victorian era. The three analytical chapters are organised according to their locational setting: in Chapter One, I looked at the representation of otherness within the metropole; in Chapter Two I focused on travel as representing a liminal space between the imperial home and the foreign colony; and in the final chapter I concentrated on the way neo-Victorian novels construct otherness abroad and in what sense this otherness can become part of the self.

The theme of self versus other is one that runs through all novels discussed in this thesis. Often this duality is represented by setting up characters in pairs: Dora and Din in *The Journal of Dora Damage*, Arthur and George in Julian Barnes' novel, Catherine and Eligius in David Rocklin's *The Luminist*. While these pairs are initially presented as opposites, whether that is because of their sex, class or, most often, their skin colour, in all cases it soon turns out that the pairs cannot be separated clearly along the points of opposition they supposedly reflect. In fact, in all these examples, it turns out that 'the other' is as much part of the Western characters as it is of those with a foreign-colonial background. When contrasted with the former slave Din, Dora may be seen as the white British angel in the house, but at the point the opposition is set up the reader is already aware that Dora in no way represents this stereotype of the Victorian housewife. As a middle-class working woman who has to deal with binding pornographic imagery for upper-class men, Dora is also 'other' to the stereotype she would supposedly represent. Similarly, the white Arthur Conan Doyle is contrasted with George Edalji, who is presented as the foreign other. When the two meet, however, Arthur draws parallels between them that undercut this supposed otherness, while George does not see himself as 'other' at all.

The distinction between self and other that is emphasised in Chapter One returns in the analyses of Chapters Two and Three. Ann E. Kaplan's use of the 'look' to replace film theory's more unidirectional 'gaze' destabilises the notion of one central point of power. Destabilisation – of location and, more specifically, of identity – is also a key aspect in the novels discussed in the second chapter. Furthermore, Catherine Colebrook's use of the camera and Eligius' growing involvement in the art and science of photography provides another example of the changes made possible by Kaplan's (and Jane Gaines') application of a more open "looking relation", as they both engage in ways of looking that do not match their respective positions (as a white colonial woman and a local boy on Ceylon) when staying with the distinction between gazing subject and passive object.[8] In Chapter One, I introduced Sara Ahmed's work on 'strange encounters'. In such encounters, Ahmed argues, there exists a power dynamic in which one person is able to identify another *as* other, as a stranger.[9] Just as with the shift from the focused gaze to the potentially multidirectional looking relation, however, the strange encounters that are described in the novels this thesis analyses are often unstable, making it unclear who occupies a position of authority from which to declare another to be a stranger.

Even more than Starling and Barnes, Rocklin problematises the idea of stable binaries. Eligius' father, for example, becomes other to his own people as a 'mimic man' but is shot by the British colonials. Eligius assumes the position of a servant, but also becomes a replacement son in the Colebrooks' home; he crosses racial boundaries in favour of class parallels with the lower-class servant Mary which she then re-establishes; and while the end of the novel supposedly creates an opening for Eligius

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[8] Ann. E. Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. xviii; Jane Gaines, "White Privilege and Looking Relations: Race and Gender in Feminist Film Theory", *Screen* 29.4 (1988), 12-27.

[9] Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3-9.

to become part of the Colebrook family and so move across a divide based on race and foreignness, Catherine's abandonment of Eligius on the quay as she flees from the uprisings in Ceylon with her two 'real' children casts a shadow over the potential unity implied. This unity, however, is re-introduced as a promise for the future when Eligius travels to England to rejoin Catherine. By referencing the instability of location exemplified by the Colebrooks and Eligius as they move between homes, Rocklin's *The Luminist* parallels the texts of Chapter Two. Eligius' potential to belong in Britain relates to the questions of British-English identity raised by Ian Baucom and Robert J.C. Young.

The two novels analysed in Chapter Two on travelling between metropole and colony are less overt in setting up a binary distinction between a white, Western protagonist and a foreign other; here, otherness is embedded in the white main characters. That Gail Jones' *Sixty Lights* and O'Connor's *Star of the Sea* are both concerned with liminal space, with what takes place in-between, shows how they instead appear to create a binary based on location, between what is considered 'home' or 'away'. However, this distinction also cannot be maintained. O'Connor's novel represents the breakdown of Britain as a unified imperial mother country, while Jones considers what happens when the imperial home is an imaginary construction, internalised only when the colonial home can no longer be maintained. Location plays a role in deciding who belongs and who, as Ahmed argues in *Strange Encounters*, comes to be defined as 'strange'.[10] The liminal experience of travel not only references how someone is described as in-between certain places or cultures but also, referencing Bjørn Thomassen, how that character her or himself is in transition.[11] Travel, then, serves to make characters into strangers.

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[10] Ahmed, pp. 12-13.
[11] Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 3-5.

Daniel Mason's *The Piano Tuner*, finally, uses both forms of constructing otherness mentioned. On the one hand, the eponymous piano tuner Drake is the imperial white male travelling to a colonial destination. Beginning his narrative in London, Mason appears to create a binary between the imperial centre and the foreign colony. As soon as Drake arrives in Burma, however, this binary turns out to be a false one: the society he has arrived in appears to mimic that of the home he has just left. Instead, a new opposition is set up between the British colonisers and their re-constructed British-colonial home on the one hand and the uncivilised wilderness on the other. This kind of binary, between the British colonial society and what lies beyond its boundaries is also visible in *The Luminist*, where Rocklin contrasts the colonial household space with that of the local village where Eligius is from. Similarly, Drake himself comes to represent the familiar as well as the foreign. During his time in Burma, Drake's decisions become progressively less rational and more emotional. This change also references the shifting position of Drake on the scale between the male and female binary.

In almost all the novels discussed, the gender of the author matches that of their (main) protagonist(s). Starling uses Dora to focalise much of the narrative and Jones uses Lucy. Similarly, Barnes switches between Arthur and George while O'Connor provides different viewpoints but most of them are male, like the central figures Lord Merridith and Pius Mulvey. Mason focuses on his male protagonists, Surgeon-Major Carroll and the eponymous piano tuner Drake. The women he writes into the novel have no more than a supporting role. David Rocklin is the only exception to this list, as *The Luminist* shifts between the viewpoints of Catherine and Eligius.

Just like most novels' central characters match the authors' genders, so do they match their cultural or ethnic background. Rocklin's novel is again an exception as the native boy Eligius features prominently in the text. Barnes, too, divides his narrative

between the Scottish Arthur and the half-Indian, half-English George. For most authors, selected characters from a non-white or non-Western background play little more than a supporting role. Thinking back to the complexities arising from O'Connor's Irish connections, *The Star of the Sea* is more difficult to place on this line, as most of its characters are European whites but in their Irishness, also represent colonial subjects. In analysing O'Connor's novel, this thesis took up Kevin Kenny's argument that it is not necessarily significant whether we now define Ireland as part of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland or instead as a British colony.[12] Instead, it is more productive to focus on how the Irish and the variety of roles they played in the Victorian period are represented in neo-Victorianism. The focus O'Connor places on the racial question in relation to the Irish, for example, may indicate that 'racial identity' is still significant to present-day Irish people.

The number of neo-Victorian novels that actively engage with questions of race and empire, with scientific racism and its connections with discriminatory stereotypes of sexuality is still relatively small when comparing it to the total of available neo-Victorian material. Authors seem to be wary of dealing with racism in fiction. With neo-Victorian novels both reflecting upon society's views and supporting their construction, this wariness in covering some of the historical grounds of racism may indicate a similar sense of unease about the actuality of these consequences of the West's colonial past. As discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity is, more than ever, an issue of great concern, it can be difficult to deal with the topic in a way that challenges people to think differently. Especially when narratives take place in a Victorian setting, it can be difficult to have characters that on the one hand are true to

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[12] Kevin Kenny, "Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction", in *Ireland and the British Empire*, ed. by Kevin Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1-25 (p. 2).

the values of the Victorian era, but at the same time also reflect upon contemporary values, either implicitly or explicitly.

Many narratives set in the Victorian period raise the issue of agency – a question that becomes even more significant when it concerns postcolonial neo-Victorianism. The novels analysed in this thesis all engage with more or less 'voiceless' characters when it comes to historical traces – women, the poor, those with another racial background. At the same time, biofictional novels like *Arthur & George* and *The Luminist* also show whose voices are deemed worthy of retaining – or repeating. In *Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction* (2012), Helen Davies states that an "association between 'voice' and social agency" is at work in neo-Victorianism, with critics discussing the "marginalised voices" of the Victorian period, or the attempt to "restor[e] a voice" to those who were silenced by the dominant cultures.[13] In this context, Davies argues, "the notion of 'having a voice' has become one of the more compelling motifs of identity politics".[14] Davies continues by claiming that there is a power dichotomy at work "between 'voicing' and 'silencing'. We see that the 'silenced' Victorians are granted a 'voice' by contemporary authors and this is largely perceived as a noble, politically-aware enterprise, an attempt to challenge and redress the broader social and cultural inequalities that lead to this 'silencing' in the first instance".[15]

Davies primarily uses voice to support her argument around ventriloquism, but the power dimension that she describes is highly relevant in connection to postcolonial neo-Victorianism. After all, even if 'giving a voice' to those silenced by history is done

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[13] Helen Davies, *Gender and Ventriloquism in Victorian and Neo-Victorian Fiction: Passionate Puppets* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 2; Mark Llewellyn, "What is Neo-Victorian Studies?", *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 1.1 (2008), 164-185 (p. 165) <www.neovictorianstudies.com> [accessed 9 February 2016]; Peter Widdowson, "'Writing Back': Contemporary Re-Visionary Fiction", *Textual Practice*, 20.3 (2006), 491-507 (pp. 505-506).
[14] Davies, *Gender and Ventriloquism*, p. 2.
[15] Ibid., p. 3.

with the best intentions, authors still assume a position of authority in relation to their characters, implicitly claiming that they have both the right and the knowledge to 'give back a voice' to those from whom it was taken. An added difficulty is that many authors of neo-Victorian fiction were raised in cultures that were once responsible for taking the voices of the people they write about. As a consequence, as readers we constantly have to ask ourselves whether an author writing about colonial life in the Victorian era is making reparations or instead is repeating the colonising processes of the Victorian period by assuming the right to speak for someone else.

I argued that neo-Victorian literature is at least as much concerned with the present as it is with the past – if not more. Literature can provide a way to mirror present-day social concerns in a fictional format. While the added distance provided by fiction, and the added temporal distance provided by (neo-)historical fiction, make it less confrontational to reflect upon certain difficult ideas or issues, that does not imply that neo-Victorianism necessarily engages with some kind of escapism. Instead, literature provides readers with the means to put themselves into someone else's shoes. In an article in *Science* that led to some controversial debates, psychologists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano used fragments from different literary styles or genres to test whether people's abilities to empathise with others were influenced by the kind of books they read. Using the contested category of literary fiction, Kidd and Castano argue that, more than other forms of writing (non-fiction, popular fiction) or than not reading at all, people who read literary fiction are made to engage with

> the psychological processes needed to gain access to characters' subjective experiences. Just as in real life, the worlds of literary fiction are replete with complicated individuals whose inner lives are rarely easily discerned but warrant exploration. The worlds of fiction, though, pose fewer risks than the real world, and they present opportunities to consider the experiences of others without facing the potentially threatening consequences of that engagement.[16]

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[16] David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind", *Science* 342 (18 October 2013), 377-380 (p. 378).

By reading literary fiction, Kidd and Castano seem to suggest, we may be able to view a character's experiences in a different light than we would in our day-to-day life. Whereas "many of our mundane social experiences may be scripted by convention and informed by stereotypes, those presented in literary fiction often disrupt our expectations".[17] By critically engaging with stereotypes from the Victorian past, postcolonial neo-Victorianism may thus increase readers' ability to respond with understanding to other people's situation instead of judging them for not adhering to whatever standards they may set themselves.

In this thesis, I have questioned whether neo-Victorian fiction uses the Victorian past as a mirror for present-day society. Using Kidd and Castano's argument on the role literature can play in enabling its readers to place themselves in another person's position, we can see neo-Victorian novels as a genre that adds to this experience. Perhaps it is less significant whether the neo-Victorians are seen as our ultimate others or, conversely, as historical figures in which we recognise ourselves. Instead, reading neo-Victorian (bio)fiction expands our vocabulary when it comes to positioning ourselves in relation to what we see as other, regardless whether this is the other within (within ourselves, within our society) or the other without (that which we claim to identify ourselves against).

Neo-Victorianism Crossing Borders

This thesis raised several questions concerning the terminology of 'neo-Victorianism', 'postcolonial neo-Victorianism' and 'neo-historical' fiction. As I argued earlier, the definition Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn provide in their book *Neo-Victorianism* (2010) still appears to be the most commonly used one. However, many critics using

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[17] Kidd and Castano, "Reading Literary Fiction", p. 378.

their terminology, with its emphasis on the postmodern self-reflexivity of the genre, have turned their attention to neo-Victorian texts (novels, films, TV-series, graphic art, and so on) that do not necessarily maintain a critical-experimental postmodern approach throughout. Similarly, many texts across the overlapping genres of steampunk and neo-Victorian fantasy fiction also limit their critical approaches to the Victorian period and its present-day traces to certain sections.

To avoid neo-Victorianism becoming limited to a closed and elitist selection of texts, Marie-Luise Kohlke repeatedly argues for an expansion of the term 'neo-Victorianism' so as to include a broader range of material.[18] However, while opening up the genre to a more varied selection of texts can provide valuable new insights, Kohlke's inclusive approach risks negating the Victorian aspects included in the term 'neo-Victorianism'. A term like 'neo-nineteenth-century' – admittedly somewhat unwieldy – or Elodie Rousselot's more general 'neo-historical' seems more appropriate when reviewing material that is not related to (present-day traces of) Victorian Britain and its former Empire with regard to narrative content, the author's background, the context of publication, or otherwise.

In an article published in 2013, three years after their book *Neo-Victorianism* came out, Llewellyn and Heilmann reflect upon some of the developments that followed upon the publication of *Neo-Victorianism*, both in their own thinking and in the way neo-Victorianism as a term and an area of research had progressed. The title of the article ("The Victorians Now: Global Reflections on Neo-Victorianism") already indicates some of its concerns: "To think about the 'Victorians now' is to challenge ourselves to reconsider the cultural generation of engagements with a past beyond

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[18] See among others Kohlke, "Mining the Neo-Victorian Vein" (2014) and "Abominable Pictures" (2015). These articles' approach to neo-Victorianism is also referenced in the introduction to this thesis.

simple classification".[19] While Llewellyn and Heilmann concentrate on analysing the broader cultural and political contexts of neo-Victorianism in the article, they raise several points that are also valuable in thinking about broadening literary approaches to the neo-Victorian. One thing they note is that "the focus remains largely on Anglophone engagements with Anglophone histories, stories and adaptations", so that neo-Victorian criticism "risks an implied imperialism in its response to such Anglocentricity" and may pave the way for a "homogenisation of heritage" across nations and cultures.[20] The Victorian period "has become a cultural touchstone in the heritage marketplace" and "global histories of the present are in danger of slipping too neatly into neo-Victorian modes of commemoration".[21]

A way of challenging the Anglocentricity of the neo-Victorian genre that simultaneously offers the chance to study the pervasiveness of the Victorian period across cultures is to focus on foreign-language neo-Victorian fiction. A quandary that immediately arises is connected to the immense variety of languages across which neo-Victorian texts are created.[22] Making use of translations, whether into English or into other languages, creates a power dichotomy between reader and text as the reader is able to access cultural material only in a mediated form. On the other hand, limiting oneself to texts available in languages one can read will in most cases lead to (regionally and culturally) limited studies. Neither option is ideal but both are valid, as long as a critic is able to justify the choice and situate her or himself in relation to the texts, whether original or translated.

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[19] Mark Llewellyn and Ann Heilmann, "The Victorians Now: Global Reflections on Neo-Victorianism", *Critical Quarterly* 55.1 (2013), 24-42 (p. 28).
[20] Llewellyn and Heilmann, "The Victorians Now", p. 26.
[21] Ibid., p. 30.
[22] The role of translation in neo-Victorianism is also discussed by Antonija Primorac in a special issue of *Neo-Victorian Studies* on "Neo-Victorianism and Globalisation: Transnational Dissemination of Nineteenth-Century Texts" that she co-edited with Monika Pietrzak-Franger, see "Other Neo-Victorians: Neo-Victorianism, Translation and Global Literature", *Neo-Victorian Studies* 8.1 (2015), 48-76 <www.neovictorianstudies.com> [accessed 18 July 2016].

This thesis briefly raised the issue of foreign-language neo-Victorianism, referencing Minae Mizumura's originally Japanese text *A True Novel* (2002, trans. 2013) and a selection of translated European neo-Victorian texts, including Carina Burman's *The Streets of Babylon* (2004, trans. 2008), Jean-Pierre Ohl's *Mister Dick* (2004, trans. 2008) and Iliya Troyanov's *The Collector of Worlds* (2006, trans. 2008). While these novels all clearly and overtly reference the Victorian period and its presence in the present, they also raise new questions for the neo-Victorian project, not the least whether foreign-language neo-Victorianism displays a different way of remembering the Victorian period and its empire than English-language texts do. Some critics are already looking at the different meanings acquired by neo-Victorian fiction in different languages and cultures (see for example the work by Elizabeth Ho and Antonija Primorac) but considering the variety of material available and the different locations in which it is produced, foreign neo-Victorian texts and their translations provide a valuable direction for further research into the genre and the different roles it can play.[23]

Making It Right?

In the Introduction to this thesis, I raised the question of whether neo-Victorian fiction plays a role in 'making the Orient right' (referencing Said's notion that the Orient is penalised and corrected for being Europe's 'other').[24] More generally, I wanted to examine whether postcolonial neo-Victorianism problematised depictions of colonial or 'other' characters, or if instead it perpetuated orientalist stereotypes. While critics generally assume that neo-Victorianism mirrors the occupations of the present, the

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[23] Elizabeth Ho, *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Primorac, "Other Neo-Victorians: Neo-Victorianism, Translation and Global Literature".
[24] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2008 [1978]), p. 67.

novels studied in this thesis show that this is only true to a certain extent. Some neo-Victorian novels most certainly do challenge Victorian stereotypes of race and sexuality and, in different ways, provide critical views on how these nineteenth-century stereotypes permeate our present-day society. What they are less able to do, however, is provide alternative ways of living and engaging with the present. And unfortunately, for every text that invites the reader to think about these things critically, there are others that perpetuate Victorian-era stereotypical ways of thinking. While the paper traces of colonialism may have been filed away in the cabinet of the past, its social and cultural traces are not as easy to put away.

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