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exOcanon

I E M Y R h d



UNIVERSIDAD
DE SALAMANCA

Depto. de
Filología Inglesa



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UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA

CUERPOS EXCÉNTRICOS

Figuras y narrativas liminales en la
literatura y cultura (neo)victoriana



Esculturas de Daniel Proulx

1 de abril de 2022

Facultad de Traducción y Documentación
Salón de Actos



<https://exocanon.usal.es/neovictoriana>

•9.30h. Inauguración y presentación de la asociación VINS con Ana Fraile Marcos (directora del Depto. de Filología Inglesa), Miriam Borham Puyal, (directora del simposio) y Rosario Arias Doblas (presidenta de VINS)

• 10h. Plenaria: Rosario Arias Doblas (Universidad de Málaga) «The Liminal Figure of Marie Corelli: The Contradictions of a Cultural Phenomenon»

In this talk I will discuss the figure of Marie Corelli (1855-1924), and her literary production through the lens of liminality. Corelli was caught in between late Victorian and Edwardian societies, and although she was widely read during her lifetime, she fell into oblivion after World War I. Therefore, I will consider Marie Corelli's liminal figure as a way to enter discussions of feminism, literature and culture at that time, as well as to explore her innovative literary techniques in her extremely popular fiction.

•10.45-12h. Panel «Contemporary Re-Imagings of Liminal Figures»

Paula Barba Guerrero (Universidad de Valladolid). «Retrophilia or Retrophobia?: Alternative World-Building in Onscreen Black Steampunk»

In her afterword to *Black Neo-Victoriana* (2022), Jennifer DeVere Brody meditates on the place and future of blackness in Neo-Victorian studies, addressing the in/visibility of nineteenth-century racial politics as a central concern for contemporary Neo-Victorian fiction and scholarship. Indeed, recent publications and shows reveal a growing interest in reclaiming the lives and stories of black Victorians beyond reductive caricatures (Brody and Gerzina 2020). Their exploration of the tangled relation between blackness and Victorian Britain faces, however, some representational obstacles (Gerzina 2003, Fowler 2022); for visibility, albeit necessary, not always signifies empowerment. Bearing this in mind, this paper addresses the dilemma of integrating black experiences to onscreen imaginings of Neo-Victorian worlds, analyzing divergent responses to nineteenth-century segregated practices in two renowned American adaptations, Barry Jenkins' *The Underground Railroad* (2021) and Shonda Rhimes' *Bridgerton* (2020-). It draws on an alternate history approach to explore the shows' retro-speculative aesthetic as means to either obscure or embrace African American cultural memory, reading the series as Neo-Victorian steampunk. In their approach to Victorian racial politics, these shows conjure alternate worlds that blend heritage

and possibility in ways that privilege or defamiliarize the Victorian aesthetic, depicting either fear of or a yearning for the past.

Laura de la Parra Fernández (Universidad Complutense de Madrid). «'No Matter What I Do, I Don't Feel Anything': An Affect Theory Reading of the Female Serial Killer and the Female Detective in BBC America's *Killing Eve*»

This paper intends to explore the representation of the liminal figures of the female serial killer and the female detective in BBC America's *Killing Eve* (2018–), as inheritors of the Victorian detective and villain ambiguous dichotomy seen in figures such as Holmes/Moriarty. In the series, Villanelle (Jodie Comer) not only kills, but does it for money, and is presented as enjoying the pleasures she could not aspire to as a child, such as designer clothes, luxurious food, and sex. Villanelle's gendered and social transgression is then projected on detective Eve Polastri's (Sandra Oh), who develops an obsession for the killer. Villanelle becomes a foil to Polastri, a middle-aged MI6 agent, who will become romantically and sexually involved with her. Unlike the Victorian female detective, Eve's values cease to be aligned with the community's, to instead grapple with her ambivalent conforming to the idea of the "good life". However, Villanelle and Eve's "ugly feelings" (Ngai, 2005) of boredom, disgust and loss turned into destructive action eventually turn self-destructive for both, as I will argue, thus depoliticizing their transformative potential.

Ana Tejero Marín (Universidad de Salamanca). «Neo-Victorian Dragons: Fantasy, Science and the Making of the New Woman in Marie Brennan's *The Memoirs of Lady Trent*»

Many neo-Victorian novels have tackled both the changing roles of women and the rise of new scientific ideals in the Victorian era. Marie Brennan's *The Memoirs of Lady Trent* (2013-2017) transports these concerns to a secondary world clearly inspired on our world during the 19th century, but in which different species of dragons live and are considered just another family of animals. The novels construct the portrait of a woman, Isabella, who wants to become a dragon naturalist and thus continually pushes the social limits in the same fashion as other neo-Victorian protagonists. The aim of this presentation will be to explore the role of Isabella as a liminal figure trapped between

societal expectations and her vocation, and how the novels themselves, mixing fantasy and scientific discovery, mirror the tensions exhibited by their main character.



·12.30-13.15h. Plenaria: Laura Monrós Gaspar (Universitat de València). «'Strong-minded' bodies on the Victorian Stage»

The "strong-minded woman" was a recurring motif in the literature of the nineteenth-century which pejoratively referred to women who challenged the prescribed role of the "womanly woman". Between the 1850s and the 1870s, the term was widely used on stage predating late nineteenth-century theatrical representations of the New Woman. Strong-minded women were related to a wide range of emerging professional women such as governesses, artists and nurses as well as bluestockings, philanthropic women and intellectuals. On stage, they also prefigured independent, self-assured women, often opposed to weak ladies and effeminate male leading roles. The purpose of this paper is to map the role of the strong-minded woman on stage focusing on the representation of her body.

·13.15-14.15h. Panel «19th Century Eccentric Women»

Marta Bernabéu Lorenzo (Universidad de Salamanca). «Of Rebeccas and Vashtis: Eccentric Ideation and (Neo)Victorian Affective Inheritance»

Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) is often studied from a neo-Victorian perspective for its connection to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and the Bluebeard story—one of the most popular Victorian tales. From its twentieth-century setting, *Rebecca* still reflects on nineteenth-century discourses around marriage, women's emancipation and the emerging figure of the New Woman in a way that re-problematizes *Jane Eyre* as a heroine for contemporary readership. Du Maurier's novel does so most conspicuously by introducing the ambiguous yet undeniably powerful presence of Rebecca, the protagonist's ghostly double that somehow updates Brontë's madwoman in the attic. It is my contention that, standing for the New Woman's model of transgressive femininity, Rebecca's bodily absence nonetheless attests to her eccentricity, and her liminal potential transforms and questions the nameless Mrs de Winter's identity through the latter's ideation of the former. In this sense, the relationship between Mrs de Winter and Rebecca recalls that of Lucy Snowe and Vashti from Charlotte Brontë's novel *Villette* (1853), an association that further highlights the affective inheritance and agency that eccentric bodies (and their ideation) exert from Victorian times to our present day.

Victoria Puchal Terol (Universidad Internacional de Valencia). «Elephantine Limbs or a Rival to the Gazelle: The Professional Female Traveller in Charles Mathew's *The Soft Sex* (Haymarket, 31 August 1861)»

In this paper we will examine the representation of the professional female traveller or explorer in the popular drama of London's West End during the mid-nineteenth century. To do so, we will propose the character of Mrs. Columbia Cosmos Cook, a marginal character in Charles Mathews' comedy *The Soft Sex* (Haymarket, 31 August 1861). As we shall argue, the character of Mrs. Cook attempts to put 'anomalous' women in place—that is, a 'different', difficult-to-define place. In the end, by drawing on zoomorphism and exaggerated mannerisms, Mathews' play goes on to perpetuate the idea of the professional female explorer as an alterity of the canonised (and well-respected) Victorian lady.