Quaint Empires: Japan, Aesthetics, and Imperial Politics in the Novels of Natasha Pulley and Lian Hearn

Helena Esser
(Independent Researcher)

Abstract:
In the exoticising Victorian British imagination, Japan was constructed as beautifully atemporal, at once modern and medieval, sophisticated and infantile, unintelligible and universal, outlandish and safely familiar, both asserting and challenging Western supremacy – not unlike the neo-Victorian gaze on the Victorian era. Responding to Antonija Primorac and Monika Pietrzak-Franger's call for global neo-Victorian studies, which considers the nineteenth century across temporal as well as global and transnational axes, this article examines how two British authors attempt to challenge and re-imagine Meiji Japan (1868-1912), by considering Natasha Pulley's *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* (2015) and *The Lost Future of Pepperharrow* (2020) and Lian Hearn's *The Storyteller and His Three Daughters* (2013). In confronting a Victorian Orientalist imaginary which instrumentalised aesthetics of quaintness, cuteness, and eccentricity, these works discuss Britain's relationship with and problematic implication in Japan as a rising Other Empire from a neo-Victorian perspective.

Keywords: aesthetics, Mary Crawford Fraser, cuteness, exoticism, global neo-Victorian studies, Lian Hearn, imperialism, Meiji Japan, Natasha Pulley, Orientalism.

*****

In her study, *Quaint, Exquisite: Victorian Aesthetics and the Idea of Japan* (2019), Grace Lavery provocatively concludes: "As Japan to the Victorians, in some sense, so the Victorians to us" (Lavery 2019: 33). It is this complex relationship between Britain and Japan, the Victorian and the neo-Victorian, that this article seeks to untangle through readings of British-authored neo-Victorian novels set in Meiji Japan. In so doing, it responds to Antonija Primorac and Monika Pietrzak-Franger's call for a global neo-Victorian studies, which examines neo-Victorianism as a "globally consumed and globally produced commodity" (Primorac and Pietrzak-Franger 2015: 1) that illustrates and embodies, but also interrogates and challenges nineteenth-

Neo-Victorian Studies
14:1 (2021/2022)
pp. 166-189

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

century Britain's globalising force on a transnationally connected, international stage (see Ho 2012: 26). Although this article examines the potentially Orientalist, British perceptions of Japan, both past and present, which Lavery's pithy conclusion outlines, its endeavour is nonetheless entangled in a "relational ontology" (Felski and Friedman 2013: 7) that demands "thinking simultaneously across both chronological and spatial distances" (Jones 2015: 38).

Neo-Victorian fiction can serve as a useful vehicle to explore intertwined Western and Eastern imperialist histories and the long, often traumatic shadows they cast. As Elizabeth Ho suggests, "'the Victorian'" in neo-Victorianism can provide "a powerful shorthand" and "aestheticized code" (see Ho 2012: 5) with which to confront and work through "historical relationships with the former coloniser, usually Britain, in order to pose deimperialised futures" and understand "how Asian cultures, their self-understandings, cultural forms and knowledge were formed by contact with Euro-American empires" (Ho 2019: 2, 4). Japan's role however, then as now, remains somewhat exceptional. As Yui Nakatsama outlines, for Japan, contact with the 'modern' West in the nineteenth century led to intense and ambitious rethinking of Japanese identities on both national and global scales, and the Meiji era (1868-1912) in particular "evokes nostalgia for the Japanese legacy of the success of industrialisation, technological development, and the modernisation of culture" (Nakatsama 2019: 21). In Japanese neo-Victorian cultural production, as Nakatsama argues, Britain may be seen as a modernising force whose emulation brought progress, a consolidation of nationhood, and participation on a global playing field. Japan's problematic rise to "Other Empire" (Lavery 2019: x) in Asia and its traumatic defeat in the Pacific War, however, may in turn be obscured in favour of Meiji nostalgia (see Nakatsama 2019: 22-24).

However, this article focuses not on such rich and active Japanese neo-Victoriana, but instead considers how British-born authors aim to respond to and reckon with the fraught legacy of Victorian Orientalism. In order to examine how neo-Victorianism puts past and present in dialogue with one another, it considers Lian Hearn's (aka Gillian Rubinstein's) *Blossoms and Shadows* (2010) and *The Storyteller and His Three Daughters* (2013) and Natasha Pulley's *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* (2015) and *The Lost Future of Pepperharrow* (2019). Aptly, Hearn's pseudonym and work pay homage to Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), chronicler of Japanese folklore for

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Western audiences. Through their engagement with transnational relationships, these texts explore, re-evaluate, and redress the global legacies of nineteenth-century Britain, even as they run the risk of 'writing over' postcolonial voices, re-centring on Anglo-centric perspectives, or even at times reiterating Victorian Orientalist perceptions.

Orientalism has been theorised by Edward Said as the Western reception of an ostensibly homogeneous and mysterious "East" as a means of appropriation and self-assertion, a process which continuously reinscribes "the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior" (Said 1978: 300). Although Japan held an exceptional position in the Western Orientalist imagination, the idea of Japan that emerged in the nineteenth century was complex and sometimes paradoxical, both Orientalist and not. Japan was imagined as a "peculiarly colonial/non-colonial, Asian/non-Asian, Western/non-Western space" (Sterry 2009: 8), as "beautiful but dangerous; as ultramodern or postcapitalist, but nonetheless stilly [sic] immersed within the cocoon of tradition; as Westernized, but still as the most un-Western place conceivable" (Lavery 2019: ix). British-authored neo-Victoriana about Japan therefore run the risk of becoming implicated in Orientalist perceptions in complex ways. This is not least because neo-Victorianism in itself can become a sort of "new Orientalism", that is, a mode that repositions the Victorian age as a "mysterious, eroticised, and exotic Other" (Kohlke 2008b: 67-68) in order to "conveniently reassert our own supposedly enlightened stance towards sexuality and social progress" (Kohlke 2008a: 346). Yet, as Lavery observes, although the European Victorian "version of Japan was and remains an Orientalist idea, it is not merely false" (Lavery 2019: ix).

This article explores how Hearn's and Pulley's neo-Victorian novels engage with Meiji Japan, how they negotiate and re-portray Euro-Japanese transnational encounters and relationships, and how they address or intervene in Orientalist Victorian receptions of Japan as a beautiful 'fairy-land' and aesthetic treasure trove. In approaching Japanese politics, I query whether Hearn and Pulley, as British authors, reflect on Japan's budding imperialist aspirations and Britain's influence on this "Other Empire" (Lavery 2019: x), or whether they sidestep that perspective in favour of a nostalgic portrait of a lost Japan.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

1. Japan in the Victorian British Imagination

Pulley's neo-Victorian novels contain speculative impulses and some steampunk aesthetics, but they take place in and re-imagine a 'real' Victorian past. Set in London in 1884, *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* revolves around Nathaniel (Thaniel) Steepleton, a Foreign Office clerk who, through a near-death experience with an Irish nationalist bombing, meets and falls in love with the Japanese clairvoyant toymaker Keita Mori. Both men struggle against heteronormative societal standards until Thaniel chooses his relationship with Mori. The novel lingers on a slow-paced, bureaucratic, gaslight-and-cobblestone Victorian London, where Mori's shop fits snugly into "a row of medieval houses" and an oncoming technological modernity feels at times jarring and uncomfortable, at least to Thaniel: "The fizz of electricity made him set his teeth. It sounded wrong, in the same way that the great river of tracks at Victoria felt wrong" (Pulley 2015: 44). As a story engaging in the idea of clairvoyance, Pulley's neo-Victorian setting ponders and highlights relationships between past and future, and the inevitability of historical events, especially when Mori manipulates events towards a particular outcome desired by him. This effect is heightened by the fact that Mori cannot foresee events of chance, such as which way a coin falls. Whereas Mori's main aim is a happy relationship with Thaniel, the foresight conceit infuses, or proclaims to infuse, the novel's neo-Victorian perspective with a certain meta-historical self-awareness. Nonetheless, in attempting to both create and critique the Victorian British setting, Pulley's novel also repeats some cultural clichés about the Japanese.

The watchmaker Mori, after all, makes dainty, whimsy, magical toys, like the automated octopus Katsu, and is perceived at first glance as a "neglected marionette" and "broken-toy [man]" (Pulley 2015: 45). Indeed, Mori is continually described as delicate and a little frail, and this view extends to other Japanese:

> With her black hair and her spring-coloured clothes, it should have been difficult to see that the girl was from the same country as the watchmaker, but in the bright light, their eyes were the same, and their fragile bones made them look like children. (Pulley 2015: 59)

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Although this echo of Victorian stereotypes is presented through Thaniel's eyes, such lapses into infantilising rhetoric complicate the novel's attempted deconstruction of racial stereotypes.

It is worth, at this point, to take a step back and establish the historical and cultural background against which Thaniel's reception takes place, namely the way in which Japan was imagined by the Victorian West. For most of the duration of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868), that is, until Commodore Matthew C. Perry's arrival in (then) Edo in 1853, Japan had maintained a strict policy of isolationism, and its perception in the West was shaped by reports of Dutch East India Company traders and Engelbert Kaempfer's *The History of Japan Together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam 1690-1692* (1727). The latter's republication in the wake of Japan's (involuntary) opening established "a sense of an unchanging, timeless Japan for the mid-century readers" (Sterry 2009: 46). Japan was imagined as "being cloistered from the corruption of change and retaining an unsullied, child-like innocence", its strange or singular aspects subsumed with patronising acceptance as eccentric, picturesque, and quaint, placing Japan "in the same category with women and children" (Sterry 2009: 46-47). In 1859, prior to his appointment as First Secretary of the British Legation in Japan in 1861, Laurence Oliphant echoed these views in accounts describing the Japanese as "civil, obliging, virtuous", dutiful, submissive to hierarchies, and "gentle and forbearing" (Oliphant 1969: 207); as such, they were viewed "as possessing values which mirrored closely-held Victorian values" (Sterry 2009: 47). (Somewhat ironically, Oliphant also received a lasting injury during a violent attack on the legation from xenophobic rogue samurai.)

In Britain, across Europe, and even in North America, Japan manifested through aesthetic objects and artefacts (screens, fans, vases, bamboo work, lacquered furniture, kimono) presented at international exhibitions in Dublin in 1853, London in 1862, and Paris in 1867, in galleries and museums (such as today's V&A). Their exotic appeal elevated these objects to "household essential[s]" (W. E. Henley, qtd. in Sterry 2009: 51), a staple of the "House Beautiful" (see Gere and Hoskins 2000), and James McNeill Whistler's and Oscar Wilde's aestheticism. "Japonisme" lastingly influenced Western fashion (see Matthews 2006: n.p.), the Impressionist and Decadent movements, and provided an aesthetic space for Victorian queers to challenge Western notions of gender (see Whittier Treat 1999, Lavery 2016, Reed 2016). Whereas Japanese craftsmanship, with its dainty,

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

exuberant visual beauty and dedicated artisanship, resonated with Ruskinite Arts and Crafts ideals and *l'art pour l'art* factions, it was also reduced to those aesthetic qualities to the point where Wilde, in his 1891 essay 'The Decay of Lying' (first published in 1889), claimed: "In fact, the whole of Japan is a pure invention. There is no such country, there are no such people. […] [The] Japanese people are, as I have said, simply a mode of style, an exquisite fancy of art" (Wilde 2008: 988). Whether this was satirising British culture with customary irony like "Edward Said *avant la lettre*", or "a narcissistic denial of even the most basic of ontic predicates to the ethnic other, and the assertion of an absolute right to produce, define, and exhibit the Oriental subject" (Lavery 2009: 1161-1162), Wilde's attitude epitomises the Victorian reception of Japan as an unreal, purely aesthetic imaginary.

Pulley's novel seeks to counter and redress such reductions and codifications of Japanese aesthetics as quaint and infantile by portraying Japanese people as individual characters, who confront and talk back to the Western gaze. From the outset, the novel seeks to establish a nuanced and critical perspective on Japan, for example through Thaniel's comment that "[a] man could have a character independent of his nation" (Pulley 2015: 45), or through its portrayal of Tannaker Buhicrosan's Japanese village in Hyde Park (1885-1887), developed in collaboration with W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's comic opera, *The Mikado; or: The Town of Titipu* (1885). Whereas the latter exemplifies how, by the 1880s, Victorians were so familiar with Japan that "the West developed a sense of propriety over all things Japanese, an ownership which gave artists and writers alike permission to begin to ridicule – albeit gently – the Japanese and their culture" (Sterry 2009: 52), Pulley strives to portray the model village as unfamiliar, but not exotic, enticing, or picturesque (see Pulley 2015: 56-57). When Thaniel asks what Japan is like, Mori answers: "Very similar to England. […] People have their factories and their politics and their preoccupation with tea" (Pulley 2015: 56). The Japanese village itself is described as follows:

> Paper lamps lit the way through the fog. They hung from wooden frames above little shops where sliding doors were already open for business. Kneeling on the floor beside coal braziers, artisans worked on the porches. One nodded to them, then turned his attention back to a spidery wooden framework of indefinite purpose. […] His hands were so

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

> swarthy that it was hard to see if he was dirty or tanned, and he held his tools in an awkward way, but he worked unfalteringly and the wooden framework soon resolved itself into the skeleton of a parasol.
>
> 'Three shillings', the man said, having seen him watching. His English was slurred but decipherable. Thaniel shook his head, wishing he did have three shillings. […]
>
> Beyond the parasol shop was a potter finishing the enamel on a tall vase. He had laid out his colours in rough bowls, but the painting was glossy and perfect. A tailor nearby spoke in broken English to a white woman dressed in the plain style of a governess. There were no other occidentals here.
>
> […] [A] woman sliding open the door of a tearoom […] saw him looking and bowed. (Pulley 2015: 56-57)

Several strategies complicate Thaniel's British gaze on the Japanese in this scene. Whereas words such as "swarthy", "awkward", or "oriental", and comments about English skills all hint at the Western lens with which he sees them, both the parasol maker and the tearoom proprietor markedly confront and return his gaze and so emerge as agents in a transnational dialogue. While the passage illustrates how Japanese objects are coveted in Britain as fashionable and decorative, it also highlights their artisanship and their price: the parasol maker and, presumably, the tailor, are depicted as craftsmen who know their products' worth, and Thaniel cannot afford the parasol. The passage also establishes a binary between "oriental" and "occidental" which, while simplistic and not without problems, echoes the Victorian perception, and which in this case helps define the village space as wholly Japanese. It is Thaniel and the English governess who are outsiders here.

With such strategies, the novel aims to eschew the Victorian idea of an 'Old Japan' as timeless, medieval, doll-like, fairy-like, ripe for aesthetic consumption, and "adorably irrelevant" (Lavery 2019: xii), an idea that was also central to Gilbert and Sullivan's work and echoed in other comic operas, notably Camille Saint-Saëns' *La Princesse Jaune* (1872), *Madame Chrysanthème* (1890) based on the novel of the same name by Pierre Loti (1887), or Giacomo Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (1904). Contrary to the eccentric quaintness of *The Mikado*, some of the village's inhabitants in *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* are rough-looking workmen and sullen,

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

xenophobic teenagers (see Pulley 2015: 58, 60), defying the British Victorian gaze by staring back or rejecting British customs. "I think they do draw the line here at brown tea", says Mori, and when Thaniel asks, "What's wrong with brown [tea]?", Mori replies, "Don't be stupid" (Pulley 2015: 57). The Japanese cast of Pulley's two novels is also enriched and diversified by the presence of Akira Matsumoto, a dandy and Oxford student who embodies the *haikara* type that Waiyee Loh discusses in her 2019 article on 'Japanese Dandies in Victorian Britain'.

Pulley thus complicates a voyeuristic, consuming gaze on the Japanese, as well as constructing and contrasting different national identities and nationalisms (British, Irish, and Japanese) to produce a global vision of history. Yet Orientalist perspectives are not completely absent, resurfacing as uncomfortable echoes in Thaniel's descriptions, for instance. Moreover, both Mori and Thaniel become willingly complicit in perpetuating the Orientalist, quaintly-eccentric vision of Japan for commercial gain when Mori obtains the post of pianist for Gilbert and Sullivan for Thaniel, so that the latter may pursue his love for music. Altogether, the novel both mobilises and critiques Victorian British stereotypes about Japan, but also becomes entangled in them, unable to fully disavow them.

2. The Past is a Foreign Country

Thaniel and Mori's second adventure takes place in Japan. *The Lost Future of Pepperharrow*, set in Tokyo in 1888 and 1889, portrays their struggle to keep their family (now containing the orphaned girl Six from London) together, while Mori and his clairvoyant abilities are drawn into a cat-and-mouse game with Japanese Prime Minister Kiyotaka Kuroda, who seeks to start a war with Russia. As such, the novel explores Meiji Japan at a crucial point in history, as a profoundly heterogeneous nation caught between tradition and innovation, old and new identities. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Japan was modernising rapidly, employing the expertise of Western architects, engineers, medical and military experts. Such rapid reforms included the abolishment of the samurai class (which led to the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion and the so-called sōshi movement), military reforms, the building of infrastructures for railways and steam ships, the synthesis of a modern constitution (inspired by the Prussian model), and budding aspirations towards occupying Korea (the Seikanron debate of 1873, the unequal Japan-Korea Treaty of 1876). Hence, Japan was quickly

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

transforming from a feudal society and 'medieval fairy-land' into a modern, industrialised nation seeking to redress its unequal status on the global playing field and become a global power.

This transition was largely possible due to its exceptional status in the Western Oriental imagination. Although unequal treaties with the West had placed Japan politically and economically at a disadvantage, imposing a semi-colonial status, "the West was never in a position to colonize or subjugate Japan" (Sterry 2009: 7). If Japan was not easily assimilated into Victorian "teleological histories of culture, narratives which tended to culminate in a celebration of European cultural supremacy" (Lavery 2019: 5), the country came to be imagined instead as exceptional in various ways: supremely beautiful yet unintelligible, eccentric yet safely similar, aesthetically universal, both deeply cultured and ahistorical, and quaintly exquisite. In short, such a reception contributed to "the construction of Japan as an aestheticized exception to various taxonomies of race, gender, nation, ethnicity, modernity and culture", made possible "*because* Japan confronted the West as an Other Empire" (Lavery 2019: x, original emphasis).

The Lost Future of Pepperharrow, then, conjures up Japan in this field of tension between tradition and modernisation, and rising from its subaltern position in the global network towards "an Other Empire". The novel embodies this through Kuroda's attempts to orchestrate a Russo-Japanese war using Mori's clairvoyance, and the tensions between old and new Japan are mirrored not least in those Thaniel, now the outsider, perceives between the familiar and strange. In its attempt to eschew a Victorian quaint exoticism, however, the novel instead presents a complicated image of Japan as "vast and nebulous" (Pulley 2020: 12), strange, foreboding, and unreadable to Thaniel, overwhelming in its obliqueness, its deep history, and its elaborate social customs.

> Thaniel […] [had] never thought of Mori's barony as being real in any sense but money. Mori described Japan as a tiny place in the middle of nowhere with no trains and a suspicious attitude towards telegraph lines. Somewhere along the way, Thaniel had filed it away with other middle-of-nowhere bits of the world and pinned on a matching idea of aristocracy. Tiny African states had kings, though they were kings of less land and fewer people than a Suffolk farmer oversaw in an

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

> afternoon. It wasn't the kingship of England or Germany, the sort that turned the world rather than crops. (Pulley 2020: 103)

Here, the novel calls out Thaniel's comfortably colonial prejudice, his Eurocentric and Orientalist mental map of the world, but it also problematically underlines Japan's exceptional status as more like European societies in reach and power than other, easily dismissed "middle-of-nowhere bits of the world". Kuroda and Mori's aristocratic social codes are outlined as bewildering to Thaniel, and in their exclusiveness, their own prejudice, and their jovial tone – "This your monkey?", asks Kuroda of Thaniel (Pulley 2020: 98) – they echo conservative English behaviours.

Whereas Thaniel, as a British representative finding himself 'on the wrong side' of Eurocentric global hierarchies and understandings, works towards building an effective critique of such Eurocentrism, Mori complicates this endeavour by echoing Western perspectives of Japanese aesthetics as doll-like and infantile. He disdainfully compares the kimono to a Morris dancer costume, viewing the traditional garment as the reason "why the American steam-roll us in treaty agreements; we all look like little dressed-up dolls. Imagine turning up to major international negotiations in ribbons and bells" (Pulley 2020: 88). His calling out of Western perceptions' impact on politics is a core theme of the novel and draws attention to unequal power balances between East and West. Here, however, given the important status of the kimono even in today's Japan, Mori's comment rings ironically Western.

Similarly complicated is the novel's setting up of 'Old Japan' as a repressive feudal, Gothic Other. In a flashback to 1871 (before the Sastuma Rebellion of 1877), Mori's samurai family is presented as warlike bullies who undermine the Emperor's new sovereignty and so the new social order. They link "Tokyo fashions", the wearing of watches, spectacles, and silk cravats, to "corsets and petticoats", so turning the feminising Orientalist gaze back on the West, but also lament "the inability to speak without peppering one's arguments with English phrases, the wearing of Western high collars, complimenting one's wife in public, forgetting how to speak Japanese" (Pulley 2015: 71). Whereas this passage illustrates how Western influence impacts Japanese culture, it also leverages present-day feminist values to implicate samurai culture as misogynist and, as such, unmodern. In such peripheral ways, the old, feudal Japan is continuously presented as, if not

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

actively oppressive, then at least stifling and backwards. Whereas such comments echo the assessment of some historical Japanese revolutionaries and Meiji reformers, they also portray Kuroda as confirming the (albeit crude) British assessment that "[t]hey're still samurai. They grew up being unofficially allowed to test out new swords on unwanted foreigners. They're still coming to grips with the idea that there are forces in the world they can't bully" (Pulley 2020: 11). Ironic as this utterance is, coming from a British Foreign Office agent during the time of British New Imperialism, it helps link Britain and Japan as mirror Empires – a connection also symbolised through the central couple, Thaniel and Mori.

Through the latter, the novel's stakes are always personal as well as global, as Kuroda aims to instrumentalise Mori's clairvoyance to defeat the Russian fleet in Japanese waters and systematically build Japan up as a world power. The nation's tenuous position on the global stage is illustrated through the presence and death of Mori Arinori, the Western-allied reformer who was assassinated by a nationalist on the day of the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution. A Russian invasion, in Kuroda's estimation, threatens annexation into the Russian Empire, and instead of de-escalation, he strives for "an industrial war the likes of which had never been fought before" (Pulley 2020: 14), foreshadowing Japan's increasingly imperialist foreign politics. By setting this conflict in the year of the Constitution, an important step in Japanese emancipation, but a time when the unequal treaties were still in effect, the novel mobilises historical tensions to maximum effect. Can Japan demonstrate its ability to become a worthy player on the global stage, or is it still vulnerable to subjugation from without? In Kuroda's hands, however, national pride grows into nationalistic jingoism when he tries to force Mori to predict "the coordinates that must be occupied by the Japanese fleet, in order for you to read of the sinking of one hundred per cent of the Russian fleet" (Pulley 2020: 398).

Mori, the novel explains, "remembers the future" (Pulley 2020: 330) as tree-like possible pathways that fade only as they become more and more unlikely. Haunted always by what might happen, he works to set the switches for certain outcomes, and so creates a meta-narrative of history as, if not predictable, at least lastingly shaped by individual choices. As Kuroda employs scientists to replicate his method, amplified presences of electricity make 'ghosts' visible, past events outlined in light that embody the presence of the past and allow Thaniel to disentangle and re-trace Mori's movements.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

In so linking past and future both as a chain of events and a lingering co-presence, the novel literally makes visible the central appeal of neo-Victorian storytelling, namely how the past sets the course for the present we occupy. When a ghostly light recording of Mori looks through time at the future Kuroda (see Pulley 2020: 342), this reciprocal relationship also implies the existence of 'future ghosts', a 'remembering' of the future capable of haunting the present.

What to the neo-Victorian reader seems an enticing connection to the past, proves a dangerous weapon in the intradiegetic hands of nationalist schemers. "What if, in the really long run, it's better if thousands of people die now and Japan folds under Russian rule?", asks the eponymous Takiko Pepperharrow at a pivotal point in the narrative: "What if it turns out that insane nationalists like those pricks outside end up being the deciding vote in everything, and a powerful Japanese Empire now means atrocities later?" (Pulley 2020: 423). The first half of that question echoes uncomfortably with modern readers, suggesting another way in which Japan may mirror Britain. Yet this moment also seems to foreshadow the path of Japanese imperial politics towards the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), the annexation of Korea (1910-1945), and the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) and, ostensibly, the attack on Pearl Harbour (1941), the event most associated with Japanese imperialism in the West. The novel's use of and emphasis on 'remembering the future' draws palpable connections between past and present, allowing our hindsight knowledge to give weight to the theme of choices and pathways in the story.

Altogether, *The Lost Future of Pepperharrow* mobilises its Japanese setting to turn the Orientalist gaze back on Britain, for example when a character calls the British "culty weirdos" whose "favourite hobby is policing people's bedrooms" (Pulley 2020: 19) in allusion to the 1885 Labouchère law amendment regarding what was then called sodomy. In portraying a queer romance and family, Pulley's novel also maximises the queer potential that Victorian aesthetes saw in a Japanese aesthetic. By activating the paradoxical tensions between a modernising, Western-allied drive, and the vestiges of the samurai's conservative nationalism, the text sets up a complex relationship between Britain and Japan as the "Other Empire". It also acknowledges Western imperialist politics' role in stoking Japanese nationalism when Thaniel explains that "[t]he men outside are angry because people like us have done terrible things here before. […] Bombs, warships. Treating people like

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

they're less good than us" (Pulley 2020: 414). Hence Britain becomes implicated in Japan's heterogeneous, in-flux identity.

In trying to redress a Victorian reception of a quaintly exotic Japan and instead portraying the country as a sovereign culture with deep history, not easily consumable by the West, the novel somewhat over-corrects and presents Japan as uncanny, unfathomable, cold, and even hostile. Especially its emphasis of pre-industrial traditional Japan, set up as Gothic Other, risks affirming Eurocentric teleological histories of progress and modernity. After all, the novel ends somewhat conservatively with Mori and Thaniel returning to England, to which Mori assimilates easily, and turning their backs on Japan, with which Thaniel cannot form a connection. At the end of the novel, a British fleet escorts new Japanese warships safely into harbour, an image that once again echoes British paternal politics.

3. *The Storyteller and His Three Daughters*

Lian Hearn's novel takes a different approach. It eschews Western perspectives altogether, but also relies, I argue, on Mary Crawford Fraser's *A Diplomat's Wife in Japan* (1899), written during her husband's service as head of the British legation in Tokyo (1889-1894). Fraser's account exemplifies how Japan became especially attractive to female travellers and travel-writers, placing them in a position to observe and mediate "unique, real-life views of Japan at a pivotal point in history", precisely because of its quaintly aesthetic image as an

> ideal Japan, a picturesque country whose people were submissive and pliant, [and which] presented an attractive destination for Victorian women who felt that their physical and moral safety would not be compromised in a gentle land made familiar through known images in the West. (Sterry 2009: 13, 53)

Both Pulley's and Hearn's novels take up episodes, social relationships, and political tensions observed by Fraser, such as the sōshi, the figure of Kuroda, and Mori Arinori's assassination. As such, Fraser's account complicated a Victorian reception of a quaint and docile Japan even then, and Hearn's novels capitalise on this tendency.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

After *Shadows and Blossoms* (2010), a stand-alone novel chronicling revolutionary Japan of the 1860s, *The Storyteller and His Three Daughters* presents the middle-aged storyteller Sei Akabane's first-person account of 1880s Japan, as he tries to navigate an increasingly baffling modernity, which comes close to home when two of his three daughters leave their husbands. In trying to write new material and so provide for these new additions to the household, he becomes fascinated with Takayuki Yamagashi, a charismatic and imposing leader of the sōshi, a nationalist group that venerates old Japan.

The portrait of the sōshi draws palpably on Fraser, who has sharp words for these men and their very real, xenophobic violence. Characterised by their "intense apprehension [of] the all-devouring foreigner", Fraser regards these "newly made radicals" as "the outcome of the great army of samurai who were disbanded when the Daimyos gave up their power and the feudal system was abolished", thereafter proving "a serious obstruction to the progress of the country" and "a constant trouble and embarrassment in life" (Fraser 1899: 65-67). The impoverished descendants of lesser samurai, a class the Emperor abolished in 1876, "trained to […] consider fighting the only possible occupation for a gentleman, scorned all humbler employments" and largely go about "nursing imaginary wrongs" (Fraser 1899: 65-66). If this group of young men, violently hankering after lost privileges and social accolades allegedly owed to them, evokes familiar images of Western white supremacist movements for the modern reader, Fraser's indictment offers even more striking echoes of reactionary movements in the present.

> These boys (for they are little more) talk the wildest nonsense about "Japan for the Japanese." […] [They] still claim profound veneration for the sacred institutions of old Japan, and declare that there will be no peace or prosperity for the country until foreigners are expelled and the old regulations put in force again. They are mostly very poor, and, as they only aspire to what they consider occupations of honour, present sometimes a pitifully forlorn appearance. They are so much in earnest that one cannot help being intensely sorry for them; but they are, as far as Japan is concerned, a potent cause of drawback and delay in the revision of the treaties, and, inasmuch as they do not confine themselves to words for the

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

> enforcement of their arguments, constitute a daily danger to the public peace. (Fraser 1899: 66-67)

The sōshi's resistance and hostility, both in Fraser's and Hearn's writing, complicates British identity as that of benevolent, civilising agents. Like Thaniel, British people in Meiji Japan find themselves Othered and reverse-Orientalised, sometimes in palpably hostile ways. In Hearn's novel, this provides an intriguing conflict, which the peaceable narrator Sei heightens through his skewed view of Takayuki. Though often observant and sharp, Sei also romanticises the sōshi and their nationalistic pride, which bravely resists Western influence. It is only their colonial aspirations towards Korea that make Sei uncomfortable. He introduces the sōshi through a man called Ushiwa:

> Ushiwa was one of those ruffians who swaggered around the streets of Tokyo getting into trouble, baiting the police, insulting foreigners and so on. Many of them described themselves as *sōshi*, stalwart youths, recalling the men of high purpose, the *shishi*, of the previous generation. I found these young men quite entertaining. Some supported the liberals or the People's Rights Movement while others were hard conservatives and were often employed by the police to break up the progressives' meetings. Most of the *sōshi* ended up fighting each other – a good brawl seemed to be what both sides really wanted. True to type Ushiwa had a black eye and a split lip, wounds he bore with all the pride of an old warrior. Not that he was from the former samurai class, although a few *sōshi* were; he was, more typically, a farmer's son, unemployed, estranged from his family and far from his home town. He affected the *sōshi*'s supposedly manly style of dress, dishevelled and rough, his hair unkempt. *Sōshi* pretended to despise women and formed close, almost erotic, bonds with each other as comrades and brothers-in-arms. There were stories there, I was sure of it […]. (Hearn 2013: 16, original italics).

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Hearn here embeds the sōshi's petulant conservatism symptomatically in the fabric of a changing social and political order but lets Sei view them with an apolitical sympathy and through the lens of his profession. Accordingly, Takayuki's old-fashioned self-styling, "entitlement perhaps and a concern for personal honour", and his "mysterious, unmistakable authority" are romanticised as "nostalg[ia] for the old feudal days" (Hearn 2013: 20) rather than potentially dangerous reactionism. When Takayuki invites Sei to a meeting of "Black Ocean", a sōshi group, Sei's ironic parroting of their politics echoes Fraser's sharp critique, for example when he diagnoses their "nostalgia for the clearcut loyalties of the past" (Hearn 2013: 65).

Sei examines the group's politics through their re-appropriation of two historical figures, "glorious failures of the type we Japanese like so much" (Hearn 2013: 55), whom the group has idolised in their shrine: both were rebels against the shogun, which made them pariahs under the shogunate but heroes under Meiji. Sei describes one of them, Saigō, as

> a hero to many samurai who felt, like him, that change had come too quickly and at too great cost to their class. National conscription had ended their status as a warrior elite, education was giving new opportunities to commoners and women, and the despised merchants were amassing not only wealth but political influence. (Hearn 2013: 55)

The sōshi emerge as a counterpoint to a Japan transforming itself into a commercial-capitalist state after the Western model in the span of only two generations, and as an obstacle to the egalitarian idea of 'modernity' and 'progress' which that entails.

Somewhat ironically, then, sōshi nationalism is linked to colonial aspirations towards Korea.

> Almost the first thing Saigō had wanted to do after the Restoration was invade Korea. The Koreans had somehow insulted and ignored the new government; they needed to be taught a lesson; all other civilised nations had colonies; Japan should have some too; Korea pointed like a dagger at the heart of Japan and so on. (Hearn 2013: 55)

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Imperial politics are presented, in the patriotic logic, as defining assets of a "civilised" nation and global power, which Japan strives to become. Indeed, Black Ocean's manifesto declares its reverence for the Emperor and an intention to end unequal treaties, remove moderate politicians from office, and influence public opinion towards invading Korea. In asking Sei to contribute to this last part, Takayuki employs strikingly familiar rhetoric:

> We must move into Asia and bring those backward countries into the modern era under the protection of Japan. […] At the moment our people don't know much about Korea. […] They have to see that war is necessary and that Koreans need saving from themselves. If you could introduce some Korean characters into your stories, put them in a bad light, mock their backwardness – [.] (Hearn 2013: 62-63)

Takayuki's placement of Japan in a leadership role at the helm of a teleological history of culture not only echoes the Victorian British rhetoric of New Imperialism, but also sets Japan up as a mirror image of Western, especially British, colonialism as the "Other Empire". More than that, the novel here explores the role of fiction-making, cultural stereotypes, storytelling, and aesthetic representation on perception and politics, indirectly pointing a finger at Victorian stereotypes about Japan. Korea assumes a similar role in relation to Japan as Japan does in the British Victorian reception: it becomes an unknown Other onto which is projected a patronising aesthetic, and which thus reflects back an imagined supremacy on the viewer.

Here, however, both rhetoric and stereotyping are mobilised not out of aesthetic curiosity, but due to a sense of "lacking a homogeneous 'Japanese' self", with the explicit aim to engender "the formation of the Japanese nation-state through the colonialization of Asia" (Barlow 1997: 12). In the novel, these political currents become so powerful that, when Sei, himself suspicious of and averse to them, refuses Takayuki's request and instead débuts a pro-Korean story portraying Japan's last invasion as barbaric, he is brutally beaten by sōshi and banned from the assembly hall until he resorts to more conservative stories.

Two other strands run through the novel. One is women's emancipation, as exemplified in Sei's daughters who want equal partnerships and to pursue a profession, as well as Michi Isataki, a medical student and

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Takayuki's lover. The other is Sei's fascination with *nanshoku* (a traditional form of male love), evident through Kyu, Takayuki's other, Korean lover and co-conspirator, and an actor on the kabuki stage, where a new play stages the heroic invasion of Korea in the seventeenth century. In treating the bisexual love triangle around Takayuki as natural, even traditional, Sei both presents an aspect of 'Old Japan' tabooed under Victorian values, and reflects on Western influence in 'modernising' Japan:

> I found myself reflecting on why the subject had become so delicate in recent times. For centuries *nanshoku* had been a staple, in one form or another, of warrior tales: an older man takes a young lover, educates and guides him, both are inspired to greater feats of martial glory, they die in each other's arms on the battlefield and so on and so on. It was an essential part of samurai culture, more admirable and more erotic than falling in love with a woman, which had something rather weak and common about it. It came as a shock to discover that Westerners had a different attitude, disapproving strongly with their public face, whatever their private preferences may be. Our leaders hastened to pass laws to prove we were a civilised nation and male love became for a short time illegal. (Hearn 2013: 23-24)

In kabuki theatre, where Kyu becomes a lover of lead actors and a star himself, as well as between him and Takayuki, *nanshoku* remains alive and well. Here, the novel portrays homosexual relations as an honoured samurai tradition that would have been impossible to understand, let alone articulate under a Victorian gaze, thereby evading, even defying, Western or Victorian taxonomies of gender and attraction (see Reichert 2006, Frühstück and Walthall 2011). This of course aligns with the neo-Victorian project of unearthing previously marginalised voices and identities, but Hearn's novel specifically calls attention to the fact that these identities were only marginalised under Western influence, calling the supremacy of its modernity into question.

The novel explores multiple ways of fiction-making through Sei's own profession, kabuki plays and their depiction of heroism, journalism, and the public treatment of Kyu as a newly famous actor, as well as through Jack

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Green, who transposes English stories into Japanese, and Satoshi, who teaches and translates French literature at the language academy. Finally, Sei blurs fact and fiction to imagine a happy ending for Michi and her son after Takayuki has died in the Eulmi Incident in 1895. The latter event was the second act to the failed Gapsin coup (Kōshin in the novel) of 1884, where most of the novel is set, and in which Korean reformers and Japanese allies attempted to invade the royal palace in Seoul and dispose of pro-Chinese politicians and the Korean Empress Queen Min. In 1895, this second act ends with the Empress' brutal death and Takayuki's demise. In weaving real historical events together through a perspective of storytelling, Hearn explores the heterogeneity of Meiji Japan at a crucial point in history, the cultural and political impact of trans-cultural relationships and narratives, and the influence of the Western presence on a budding Japanese nationalistic jingoism.

Aesthetics of Japanese life play no significant role as all characters are already immersed in their surroundings, and so there is nothing to be perceived as exotic, dainty, or picturesque. Japan's budding imperialism with forays into Korea during the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and Korea's colonialisation after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 is explored here through a complex constellation of characters, all embedded in a heterogeneous culture caught between tradition and rapid innovation, but on a path to becoming the "Other Empire". Altogether, the novel portrays Japan as influenced by Western ideas, models, and aspirations, but its scope remains defiantly self-contained, focusing on Japanese struggles, settings, and characters that in no way conform to British Victorian stereotypes of a "gentle and forbearing" quaintness (Oliphant: 1969: 207). Instead of a fairy-land ripe for consumption, we find a Japan that is in flux, unstable, uncertain, striving for the new or holding on to the old, full of violence and tragedy. Yet Hearn, through her romantically-inclined narrator and by indirectly implicating the West in Japan's path towards a colonial modernity, also runs the risk of having the novel read as a nostalgic indictment of an alleged corruption of an Old Japan, vanished forever under Western influence.

4. Quaint, Exquisite Empires

"As Japan to the Victorians, in some sense, so the Victorians to us" (Lavery 2019: 33). Echoing Lavery, we may then ask: are the Victorians to us as the Japanese were to the Victorians? What happens when such temporal and

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

transnational axes intersect, as in a global neo-Victorian approach, especially considering Elizabeth Ho's observations that the "return to the Victorian in contemporary global texts, ranging from literature to fashion, has become one of the primary memorial practices associated with the sense of crisis" precipitated by "the processes of decolonisation, the perceived collapse of the British empire" and "the erosion of Western global dominance more generally" (Ho 2019: 16, 2)? In order to evaluate how neo-Victorian novels represent Japan, it is important to scrutinise further the aesthetic reception of both Japan and the Victorians.

Much like the Victorian era appeals to us through "its (would-be) *transcended otherness*, alternately gothically horrid and cheerfully quaint" (Kohlke and Gutleben 2012: 12, original emphasis), Japan was quaint to the Victorians. Lavery describes 'quaint' as

> a word Victorians attributed, with a vagueness entirely compatible with obsessiveness, to Japanese culture. […] It referred to an oblique, slippery relation to history, a distinctive mode of passing into the past. Nothing is quaint from the get-go; an object, text, body, or event acquires the quality of quaintness as it becomes historical – or, more precisely, as it *fails* to become historical. (Lavery 2019: xii, original emphasis).

This use of the term as "describing or otherwise dwelling with the queeny, chintzy, and merely ornamental flotsam of history" (Lavery 2019: xii) echoes popular receptions of the Victorian era, such as Bruce Sterling's diagnosis of the period as "weird and archaic", a "funereal theatre" of obsolete and absurd remnants of the industrial paradigm (Sterling 2011: 13). Both the Victorian Japanese imaginary and our modern perception of the Victorian era, then, are caught in a paradoxical tension between obscurity and continuation, obsolescence and influence – or, as Kohlke and Gutleben posit, "neo-Victorianism […] tries to understand the nineteenth century as the contemporary self's uncanny *Doppelgänger*, exploring the uncertain limit between what is vanished (dead) and surviving (still living)" (Kohlke and Gutleben 2012: 4). As the Victorian era confronts us as both profoundly strange and eerily familiar, so was Japan imagined, in the words of the collector Rutherford Alcock, as "a place of paradoxes and anomalies, where

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

all – even familiar things – put on new faces, and are curiously reversed" (Alcock qtd. in Sterry 2009: 42).

Whereas neo-Victorianism usually categorises such unsettling effects as Gothic and uncanny – that which is both familiar and strange – Lavery chooses the idea of "exquisite" for the Japanese aesthetic: "*insuperable* beauty and *irresistible* violence, both of which Victorians relentlessly ascribed to their idea of Japan"; "an exquisite object is *extremely* beautiful; it is also *weirdly* incomplete" (Lavery 2019: x, 3, original emphasis). Both the nineteenth century in our cultural consciousness and Japan in the Victorian imagination thus occupy an uncertain space between "possibly knowable, but actually unknown, or not fully known" (Lavery 2009: x).

However, both the potentially violent and painful aspects of Japanese aesthetics and the Gothic qualities of neo-Victorianism are often safely blunted by temporal or geographical distance and an all-affecting, quaint, adorable irrelevance: "Like the rose petals of Heliogabalus", so Lavery, "quaintness first prettifies, then submerges, and finally smothers all with which it comes into contact" (Lavery 2019: xii). Sianne Ngai's concept of postmodern cuteness corresponds to both cases. According to Ngai, ascribing cuteness is "an aesthetic response to the diminutive, the weak, and the subordinate" (Ngai 2012: 53). Cute objects "have no edge to speak of, being simple or formally non-complex and deeply associated with the infantile, the feminine, and the unthreatening" (Ngai 2012: 59). Similarly, neo-Victorian media like to resort to safe stereotypes in their historical collaging, much as Japan was reduced to an aesthetic imaginary of quaint picturesqueness and adorable irrelevance by the Victorians. Uncanny and exciting in its exceptional eccentricity (see Lavery 2019: 16), yet reassuring and rendered familiar and controllable, Japan provided a safe haven for travel and tourism, neither physically nor morally threatening, especially to female travellers. In a similar manner, we may undertake imagined touristic journeys to the Victorian past and, depending on what we find, come away feeling reassured in our historical position relative to the nineteenth century.

Lian Hearn and Natasha Pulley's novels attempt to intervene and complicate such 'quaint' approaches, both by bringing to the fore queer voices and relationships otherwise marginalised by Victorian British values (at home as well as in Japan), and by calling into question and actively confronting Victorian stereotypes about Japan. Like Fraser's historical account, which undermined and supplemented the Victorian reception of

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Japan through first-hand observations about politics, society, and culture, these novels employ various techniques to undermine a Victorian Orientalist perspective in favour of more nuanced and complicated re-imaginings.

Both authors imagine Meiji Japan as caught between old traditions and new modernising forces coming at the cost of Western intervention and influence. While both confront their Victorian characters or readers with Japanese, sometimes anti-Western perspectives speaking back to the West, in so doing they also conceive of 'old' Japan as conservative, embodied by the samurai class and sōshi rebels, potentially backwards forces in conflict with the paths of progress, which risks relegating them to the status of Gothic Other within a Eurocentric, teleological understanding of history. Even though, as Nakatsama suggests, the Meiji era is viewed in today's Japan itself with nostalgia for such progress and the consolidation of nationhood (Nakatsama 2019: 22), both presentations of pre-industrial Japan are complicated when coming from British authors, in light of the Victorian legacy they seek to confront. Hearn's old Japan is presented as traditionally rich and queer, but also romanticised as nostalgic by the narrator, even while he ponders the advantages of modernity for his daughters. Pulley seeks to present Japan as autonomous, proud, and historically deep, but through both Thaniel's and Mori's perceptions also paints it as unfathomable and hostile. Both strategies illustrate how Victorian legacies of imagining Japan lastingly shape our perception, as both story-verses struggle to simultaneously represent and confront Meiji Japan's quaint exquisiteness without being able to fully disentangle themselves therefrom.

Rather than resolving the multiple and fraught tensions inherent in a neo-Victorian reappraisal of Victorian Orientalism, they illuminate and reframe them. Both Pulley and Hearn find ways to represent Britain and Japan as uncomfortably entangled through the spectre of imperialism and implicate Britain in Japan's rise to the "Other Empire". In contrast to Japanese neo-Victoriana, which seeks "to obscure both Japan's problematic rise to empire and the trauma of inflicting injury upon Asian countries, including the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki" (Nakatsama 2019: 24), Pulley and Hearn make visible the nationalistic forces that equate Japan's sovereignty and success on a global playing field with colonising Korea. Hence their novels point directly at the traumatic 'future' which, from the perspective of hindsight, already 'haunts' Meiji Japan – a legacy entangled in multiple, complex, and global ways with that of the British Empire.

***Neo-Victorian Studies* 14:1 (2021/2022)**
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Bibliography

Barlow, Tani E. 1997. 'Introduction: On "Colonial Modernity"', in Barlow, Tani E. (ed.), *Formations of Colonial Modernity in Asia*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Fraser, Mrs Hugh. 1899. *A Diplomat's Wife in Japan: Letters from Home to Home*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. 2013. 'Why Not Compare?', in Felski, Rita and Susan Stanford Friedman (eds.), *Comparison: Theories, Approaches, Uses*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 34-45.

Frühstück, Sabine, and Anne Walthall. 2011. *Recreating Japanese Men.* Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Gere, Charlotte, and Lesley Hoskins. 2000. *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior.* London: Ashgate Publishing.

Hearn, Lian. 2013. *The Storyteller and His Three Daughters*. Sydney: Hachette.

Ho, Elizabeth. 2012. *Neo-Victorianism and the Memory of Empire*. London: Continuum.

——. 2019. 'Neo-Victorian Asia: An Inter-imperial Approach', *Neo-Victorian Studies,* 11:2, Special Issue: *Neo-Victorian Asia*, 1-17.

Jones, Anna Maria. 2015. '"Palimpsestuous" Attachments: Framing a Manga Theory of the Global Neo-Victorian', *Neo-Victorian Studies,* 8:1, Special Issue: *Neo-Victorianism and Globalisation: Transnational Dissemination of Nineteenth-Century Cultural Texts*, 17-47.

Kohlke, Marie-Luise. 2008a. 'The Neo-Victorian Sexsation: Literary Excursions into the Nineteenth Century Erotic', in Kohlke, Marie-Luise and Luisa Orza (eds.), *Probing the Problematics: Sex and Sexuality*. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 345-356.

——. 2008b. 'Sexsation and the Neo-Victorian Novel: Orientalising the Nineteenth Century in Contemporary Fiction', in Kohlke, Marie-Luise and Luisa Orza (eds.), *Negotiating Sexual Idioms: Image, Text, Performance*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 53-79.

Kohlke, Marie-Luise, and Christian Gutleben. 2012. 'The (Mis)Shapes of Neo-Victorian Gothic: Continuations, Adaptations, Transformations', in Kohlke, Marie-Luise and Christian Gutleben (eds.), *Neo-Victorian Gothic: Horror, Violence, and Degeneration in the Re-Imagined Nineteenth Century*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 1-50.

Lavery, Grace E. 2016. 'Remote Proximities: Aesthetics, Orientalism, and the Intimate Life of Japanese Objects', *ELH,* 83:4, 1159-1183.

——. 2019. *Quaint, Exquisite: Victorian Aesthetics and the Idea of Japan*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287

Loh, Waiyee 2019. 'Japanese Dandies in Victorian Britain: Rewriting Masculinity in Japanese Girls' Comics', *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 11:2, Special Issue: *Neo-Victorian Asia*, 40-63.

Matthews, Mimi. 2006. 'Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Victorian Fashion', *Mimi Matthews: Romance • Literature • History*, n.p., https://mimimatthews.wordpress.com/2016/03/29/japonisme-the-japanese-influence-on-victorian-fashion/?preview_id=10191&preview_nonce=614a9f7d5b&post_format=standard&preview=true (accessed 14 October 2021).

Nakatsama, Yui. 2019. 'Japanese Neo-Victorian Fictions: Looking Back to the Victorian Age from Japan', *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 11:2, Special Issue: *Neo-Victorian Asia*, 18-39.

Ngai, Sianne. 2012. *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Oliphant, Laurence. 1969. *Narrative of the Earl of Elgin's Mission to China and Japan in the Years 1857, 1858, and 1859* [1859]. New York: Augustus M. Kelly Publishers.

Primorac, Antonija, and Monika Pietrzak-Franger. 2015. 'Introduction: What is Global Neo-Victorianism?', *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 8:1, Special Issue: *Neo-Victorianism and Globalisation: Transnational Dissemination of Nineteenth-Century Cultural Texts*, 1-16.

Pulley, Natasha. 2015. *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street.* London: Bloomsbury.

——. 2020. *The Lost Future of Pepperharrow*. London: Bloomsbury.

Reed, Christopher. 2016. *Bachelor Japanists: Japanese Aesthetics and Western Masculinities.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Reichert, Jim. 2006. *In the Company of Men: Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji Literature*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Sterling, Bruce 2011. 'The User's Guide to Steampunk', in VanderMeer, Jeff and S. J. Chambers (eds.), *The Steampunk Bible*. New York: Abrams Image, 11-12.

Sterry, Lorraine. 2009. *Victorian Woman Travellers in Meiji Japan: Discovering a 'New' Land*. Folkestone: Global Oriental.

Whittier Treat, John. 1999. *Great Mirrors Shattered: Homosexuality, Orientalism, and Japan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilde, Oscar. 2008. 'The Decay of Lying' [1891], in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Stories, Plays, Poems, & Essays*. New York: HarperCollins, 993-1008.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7700287