

Call for Papers:  
Black Neo-Victoriana:  
Interrogating Presence, Challenging Absence

Recent developments in neo-Victorian cultural production seem to have at least partially acknowledged the steadfast urge put forth by actors, readers/viewers, and critics to include Black experiences in their storyworlds. TV formats like *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016), *The Frankenstein Chronicles* (2015- ), *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (2015- ), and *Peaky Blinders* (2013- ) as well as films such as *Wuthering Heights* (2011), *Belle* (2013), and *Lady Macbeth* (2017) feature Black characters as part of their screenscape. Yet even though extensive research has brought to light the manifold Black experiences in Victorian Britain, filmmaker Julian Fellowes (*Downton Abbey*) continues to justify the overwhelmingly white cast in his period productions through a whitewashed conception of historical accuracy. Thereby, as Kehinde Andrews argues, "big budget films present as the historical hallucinations to support the distorted view of reality produced by Whiteness." (2016, 436) Similarly, literary fidelity has been upheld as yet another mechanism to exclude Black characters from neo-Victorian film. The scarcity of Black portrayals and concerns with issues of race in neo-Victorian film and TV holds true for its literary counterpart as well. This steadfast tension between inclusion and exclusion, between presence and absence, calls for an equally attentive, critical, and comprehensive interrogation.

Located at the intersections of Black Studies and Neo-Victorian Criticism, the overarching theme of this volume, *Black Neo-Victoriana*, calls for a diverse engagement with the manifold ways in which neo-Victorian texts represent Black experiences. As such, it can be framed as a meaningful component of the global trend to reimagine and rewrite Victorian experiences that have been continually marginalised in both historical and cultural discourses. We thus adopt a relatively wide interpretation of 'neo-Victorian' in order to account for representations that lie outside the narrow national and temporal margins that the term 'Victorian' may evoke. This volume speaks to the notion that neo-Victorian fictions understand the 'Victorian' past as a complex repository from which new narratives can arise that do not reproduce such racialised (and often gendered) biases. Neo-Victorianism can then unfold its revisionist potential of interrogating or indeed rewriting the past by giving voice to previously marginalised viewpoints. We seek contributions which carefully intersect the dynamic intricacies of Black presence and absence in neo-Victorian fictions. Thus, we welcome essays on a wide range of source texts, including literature, film and TV, digital media, and material culture. Papers may draw on but are not limited to the following aspects:

- Portrayals of Black characters and representations of Black experiences in neo-Victorian texts
- Neo-Victorian approaches to the effects and after-effects of Empire on Black lives in Britain
- Theorizing Black neo-Victoriana and (re)claiming neo-Victorianism
- Black absence/presence between the poles of period drama's country house and

neo-Victorian Gothic's underground imaginaries

- Black agency in re-imagined Victorian Britain and the postcolonies
- Adaptation as a mode of intervention
- The relationship between othering, historical accuracy, and literary fidelity
- Intersectionalities of race, gender, and class in neo-Victorian culture
- Queering the neo-Victorian landscape through Black experiences
- Black neo-Victorian aesthetics across genres and media, including e.g. steamfunk, videogames, material culture
- Black involvement in crafting neo-Victorian culture: From film production to publishing

Please address enquiries and expressions of interest to Julian Wacker ([juwacker@wwu.de](mailto:juwacker@wwu.de)), Marlena Tronicke ([marlena.tronicke@wwu.de](mailto:marlena.tronicke@wwu.de)), and Felipe Espinoza Garrido ([espinoza.garrido@wwu.de](mailto:espinoza.garrido@wwu.de)). Abstracts (approx. 300 words), along with a short biographical note, will be due by **May 31, 2018** and should be sent via email to the same address. Successful submissions will be notified by **June 15, 2018**. Final articles (6,000 to 8,000 words incl. references) will be due by **January 31, 2019**.