

Past Styles, New Paths: Neo-Victorian Illustration in 21st Century Yal and Children's Books

Los estilos del pasado, nuevos caminos: ilustración Neovictoriana en el siglo XXI, libros para jóvenes y para niños

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Este documento se centra en el tema de las tendencias de estilo Victoriano y Neo Victoriano en la industria de la impresión de libros , sobre todo en la literatura para jóvenes adultos y libros para niños. Sostenemos que este renovado interés por la época victoriana se relaciona con el comportamiento nostálgico de los consumidores y estrategias del retro marketing, influyendo en diferentes aspectos como sean el diseño de los libros , el estilo en la ilustración, en la literatura y los temas. Proponemos un análisis de la ilustración que recrea la estética de la época victoriana y esperamos poder señalar algunos caminos a explorar en la ilustración nostálgica Neo Victoriana.

This paper focuses on the subject of Victorian and Neo-Victorian tendencies in book printing industry, particularly Young Adults Literature and children's books. We argue that this renewed interest in the Victorian period is related to nostalgic consumer behaviour and retro-marketing strategies, influencing different aspects such as book design, illustration and literary style and themes. We propose an analysis of illustration recreating the aesthetics of the Victorian period in their work, and hopefully point some paths to be explored in Neo-Victorian nostalgic illustration.

Palabras clave: Ilustración, Neo Victorianismo, Diseño, Literatura para niños, Literatura para jóvenes adultos

Key words: Illustration, Neo-Victorian, book design, children's literature, young adult's literature

1. Introduction

The subject of Victorian and Neo-Victorian imagery and aesthetics is not new in the field of study of illustration. One of the reasons for this is the great impact that the Industrial Revolution had in the book printing industry, which was instrumental in increasing the number of books being printed and published, but also in improving the reproduction of illustrations. Social policies of the day also contributed to the achievement of mass literacy in the Western world, creating a vast number of new readers. It is commonly accepted that "by the 1890s, 90 per cent literacy had been almost uniformly reached, and the old discrepancy between men and women had disappeared" (Lyons, 1999). The Victorian period also marks the birth of a new perspective on childhood. As a result, the concept of literature for children also shifted: instead of moralising tales and poems, literature to entertain and delight. Illustrators became instrumental, cooperating with authors and publishers to create beautiful and colourful books, and rose to a position of importance in the production of children's books. This made the nineteenth-century and early 1900s an exciting time for book publishing and illustration.

Thus, it is no surprise that we find an emergence of graphic languages common in the Victorian era today. In fact, it is not new. When analysing mid twentieth-century illustration works in the realms of Gothic or Fantasy, for example, we find close resemblances with nineteenth-century prints and illustrations. Edward Gorey, back in the 1950s, recreated the etching and cross-etching found in nineteenth-century prints and that Victorian parody for which he became famous. In the 1970s, Alan Lee and Brian Froud turned to Arthur Rackham, and other nineteenth-century fantasy illustrators, such as Edmund Dulac, for their faery portraits and sceneries. The works of Arthur Rackham are, in fact, a great inspiration for illustrators when it comes to Fantasy, as Tony DiTerlizzi, an American illustrator and author. He stated to be greatly influenced by Rackham when he illustrated the *Spiderwick Chronicles*, in 2003.

We argue in this paper that there seems to be a renewed interest in this period in the printed book industry, as a part of nostalgic consumer behaviour and retro-marketing strategies. This is also visible in the area of children's books and young adult's literature, particularly book design, where illustrators are also playing an important role, in the reprinting of Victorian classics of literature, with the original illustrations or works by contemporary artists, in the themes being published, such as Gothic literature for children and young adults, detective stories (popular genre in the nineteenth century), and in illustration, as some artists "reproduce" the Victorian style and aesthetics and others seek a more realistic recreation of that historical period in their own particular graphic language. In the first section of this paper we will make a brief historical approach to the printing and publishing industry in the 1800s and early 1900s, especially illustration and illustrators,

and their main aesthetic and artistic influences. In the second section, we will discuss the importance of nostalgia in the book publishing business, with particular emphasis on Neo-Victorian motifs and themes, and in the third section of this work, we will analyse how some illustrators recreate the aesthetics of the Victorian period in their work, and hopefully point some paths to be explored in Neo-Victorian nostalgic illustration.

2. The Victorian book industry: the rise of children as different individuals and illustrators as important agents in bookmaking

There is no turning away from the fact that the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the innovations in communication, transportation and distribution (e.g., the invention of telegraph, and the expansion of the railway network and postal services) and the mechanization of press gave way to an increasing market for the written (and illustrated) word. The effect of those innovations marked the second half of the nineteenth century as the beginning of a movement towards globalization, in which books, and more emphatically, illustrated press and magazines played an important role. Publishers had then the possibility to print more numbers and faster. Thus, the nineteenth century marks the birth of the paperback and serialized books (many of these were sold as supplements to magazines and newspapers). Marketing strategies led to the concept of literature for the masses – in England, these strategies translated in George's Routledge's "Railway Libraries" and the popular Yellowbacks, and similar publications were being made throughout Europe and the United States of America.

Magazines and newspapers were, in fact, the preferred vehicles of information and relied both on strong imagery produced by illustrators and photographers, and, many times, sensationalist writing to convey information and opinion. Image and word were indissociable when it came to satire and social and political critique. Thus, it is argued that "most of the popular illustrations created during the Victorian period were produced for magazines, newspapers and books – children's and adult. [...] The leading periodicals of the day ran a regular diet of news, comedy, commentary, and fantasy, sometimes all in one magazine, other times in niche journals" (Heller & Chwast, 2008). Periodical press conveyed both the traits of exaggerated graphic ridicule, grotesquerie and anthropomorphism, and the idealistic depiction of Victorian society that help to define the period. It is no coincidence that the term "cartoon" was coined during the Victorian period by the famous English periodical *Punch*. Satirical periodicals were by no means exclusive to England, there were *L'Eclipse* in France, *Puck and Life* in the United States of America, and many other throughout the industrialized Western world. In Portugal, we had the renowned cartoonist Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro (1846-1905) created the character *Zé Povinho*, the comic symbol of the Portuguese people, and also provided cartoons to some of the most prestigious Portuguese newspapers and magazines



Fig. 1 A Little Pretty Pocket-Book.
John Newberry. 1744

of his day. It is in periodical press, so, that we find the most characteristic imagery made in the Victorian period: engravings of pen and ink drawings with intricate hatching and cross-hatching, illustrated type-faces and capital letters, and illustration style full of mannerisms and eerie, absurd, idealistic and realistic motifs. Periodicals joined in their pages the ambiguous and opposing motifs of what became known as Victoriana: the eerie and the absurd versus the whimsical and fanciful, the grotesque and the ideal beauty.

As we have seen, illustration played an important role in press, it reached new levels of quality and excellence in the book printing industry, especially in poetry gift books and, later, in children's books. Technological innovations in the reproduction of illustrations, new artistic and aesthetic movements, new concerns towards design, and the "invention of childhood" were instrumental in the creation of children's literature and illustration as we perceive it today.

Although the first book for children was in fact published in 1774, by John Newberry, an English bookmaker, it is commonly accepted that "children's literature today, as a distinct genre distinguished not only by its intended audience but by stylistic and formal features, might be better dated back to the Golden Age of children's literature in the Victorian period. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, originally published in 1865, arguably represents the first children's book that children today still recognise as children's literature and do in fact continue to read" (Jackson, Coats and McGillis, 2008). The fact we do not recognize John Newberry's *A Pretty Little Pocket-Book* is due mostly to its rigid moralistic intention. This was so with most of the books for children made during the eighteenth century. The ideals of the Enlightenment, and particularly the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, informed the making of such books. Children were considered as *tabula rasa*, to be inscribed with the ideals of rationalism and to become enlightened men and women. This views on childhood coincide with the extirpation of scary elements, such as ghosts, witchcraft, hauntings and others, from tales for children and marked the shift of those elements into adult literature, thus creating a new literary genre – the Gothic. These elements did not stay away from childhood's universe for long, though, as we shall see. (Fig. 1)

It was Romanticism, but as a consequence of Enlightened ideals, that brought on a different role for the child, as a symbol of innocence, purity and beauty, untouched by the corruption of adulthood and, to a similar extent, progress. They were finally perceived as individuals, they had clothes designed especially for them, they were the heroes in the literature made for them, they were one the subjects for the Victorian craze for photography and they had a special place in the house for them – the nursery – where they would play, eat, study and sleep, a place far from the intricacies of adult life.

Thus, the importance of a phenomenon in book publishing – the nursery rhymes – that created a playful, and often wildly fantastic

world for their readers. They provided the child with innocent entertainment, and won their popularity through careful design and illustration. The figure and work of the illustrator was paramount to the bookmaking process, and some rose to the status of stars, such as Randolph Caldecott and Walter Crane, two of the most famed and successful writers and illustrators of nursery rhymes, picture books and illustrated ABCs from the second half of the nineteenth century. Both of them were greatly influenced by the ideals, aesthetics and artistic movements of their time, mainly the Pre-Raphaelites and Romanticism, although Walter Crane, as both a member of the Arts and Crafts movement and considered a precursor of Art Nouveau, had a particular style of illustration, the children-in-the-garden motifs and floral fantasies, extraordinarily complex and intricate, especially if we consider that the reproduction of illustration was made mostly by wood engraving. Both based on the ideal of childhood as the embodiment of purity and beauty, thus depicting children, even in the most dire situations, in an aesthetically pleasing composition, thus contributing for those endearing and very characteristic representations of the Victorian child. We find such an example in Randolph Caldecott's picture book *The Babes in the Wood*, based on a gruesome old tale of two orphaned children abandoned in a forest and their subsequent death. Both the death of the children's parents and the children themselves is depicted in a somewhat idyllic fashion. We can not see the horror.

Somewhat different are the illustrations Charles Dickens commissioned for their books. Considering that many of them were originally published as serialized fiction, as supplements to periodicals, and that he was concerned in raising awareness to social issues of his time: such as poverty, the importance given to Progress and Industry in detriment of Man, the inhabitability of many parts of the city of London, child abandonment, the disease-ridden and ill-fitted orphanages, for example, arguably some of his works were not meant for children alone (e.g., *The Old Curiosity Shop*, first published in serial form in 1840-1, inserted in the periodical *Master Humphrey's Clock*). Dickens worked closely with the illustrators, so that the plates were truly a team work, combining the sensibilities of the author and the artists. As Janes (2013) says on his article on *The Old Curiosity Shop* and its illustrations, Dickens can be considered "as an active participant in the rich development of Victorian visuality and visual culture because he intended that his text and the artists' images should be in dialogue with each other". Considering the texts and themes, many of the original plates can be deemed Gothic in some ways – the innocent child-hero is depicted purposely in dark, sometimes decaying, ambiances, surrounded by odd characters, some very ugly and even grotesque (the representation of their own evil). As some Gothic, there is a certain eerie humour to it, both in the text and the illustrations, made from plates full of etching and cross-etching, to create a certain tension. Thus, the original illustrations of some of Dickens'

works are in consonance with the more lugubrious side of Victorian visual style. When compared with illustrations on the same texts by early twentieth-century artists, such as those of Arthur Rackham for *A Christmas Carol* (1915), we can see some of the darkness was sponged off, to better fit different aesthetic and cultural sensibilities. We must not forget that Art Nouveau made its appearance in the last decade of the nineteenth century in detriment of academical realism and, arguably, the more rigid and darker early Victorian.

The exception, when it comes to the late nineteenth-century and the rise of Art Nouveau supposedly brighter imagery, is of course the Arts and Crafts movement of the 1880s, with their penchant for the Gothic. William Morris became the most influential spokesman of the movement and the Private Presses, which had a special concern towards bookmaking and typography. His Kelmscott Press was instrumental in rising the standards of book design and production. Its carefully designed books, with the characteristic printed illustrations are a reference to many designers and illustrators to this day. Among those who collaborated regularly with William Morris were Eric Gill, Edward Burne-Jones and Aubrey Vincent Beardsley, who had a liking for the darker side of human nature and a very recognizable curvilinear style.

Fantasy and nonsense were two very important themes in many literature for children in the Victorian period, as mentioned before. The illustrators were inspired by both the words they were meant to illustrate and Victorian visual culture, with its' synthesis of old and modern, Romanticism, Realism, Gothic, Art Nouveau and Symbolism, to create the whimsical fairy and fanciful art that we still recognize. If we do not consider the chronological gap and the technological advances in the reproduction of illustrations that set apart John Tenniel's original illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865, wood engraving) and the ones made by Arthur Rackham for the same book (1907, photomechanical processes), we can see how both artists mesh the fantastic and the real by juxtaposing careful realistic depiction of some elements, as, for example, Tenniel's White Rabbit, even though wearing a vest, and a more whimsical recreation of nature. Also in the second half of the nineteenth century, adventure novels, such as those of Jules Verne and Albert Robida, the fathers of science fiction, provided new motifs for illustration. Illustrators such as Gustave Doré, French master engraver, became famous for their imaginary and yet very realistic imagery for this type of literature. From this blend of reality and imaginary fantastic illustration was born and Victorian illustrators in this style are major influences still to this day.

In the chapter of the reproduction of illustrations and technological innovation, and since these are instrumental in the iconic Victorian imagery, we have to point out that wood engraving was the most common method to replicate illustrations in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The woodblocks, however, were not fit for long

print runs. This became possible with new advances in technology, particularly stereotyping and electrotyping. As far as 1860, wood engraving for colour printing in relief was very popular, particularly in children's books, such as those by aforementioned Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott. Colour prints were, however, still very expensive and used mostly to illustrate limited editions, albums and luxury books, richly illustrated and bound, to meet the demand of the wealthier buyers and collectors.

Experimentation with new materials and techniques developed throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and steel began to be used for printing plates – it is stronger than copper and it allowed for finer lines and cut closer together which resulted in beautiful tonal works. This period marks the emergence of artists, printmakers and illustrators like Gustave Doré, in France. Lithography became popular after the 1830s and it was used both in reproducing illustrations for expensive books and printed advertisement material. It was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century, with the application of photography to the reproduction of illustration allowed for the image to be directly transferred to the book by mechanical processes. The reproduction of watercolours, pastels, with its rich tonalities and nuances, and other artistic techniques became possible. This was the time of Beatrix Potter, Edmund Dulac, and Arthur Rackham, just to name a few. The rich, colourful illustration of this period is the epitome of Victorian illustration. .

3. Nostalgia meets the neo-victorian in the printed book industry

In the field of marketing, nostalgia and nostalgic consumer behaviour are a factor of study since the late twentieth century. As a result, there are many definitions for nostalgia, some consider it a mood, others a preference. In 1997, Divard and Demontrond defined nostalgia as: "a bittersweet affective reaction, possibly associated with a cognitive activity and which is felt by an individual when an external or internal stimulus has the effect of transposing him or her into a period or an event from an idealised recollection of the past which may or may not be part of his/her personal experiences" (in Kessous, 2014). Thus, these recollections of the past are not an exact account, rather an embellished ideal of a bygone era, focusing on its positive traits. Such positive feelings towards this idealised past are used in retro-marketing, retro-branding and retro-design to induce a feeling of comfort and an emotional bonding to products or brands. Silva (2010) argues that these nostalgic trends rise from the quest of an identity prior to globalisation as a response to our troubled times.

Nostalgic, retro and retro tendencies are considered an international phenomenon and we can see the impact it has on such divergent areas as the car industry, cinema, fashion, packaging and interior design. As a result, we have now the reanimation of the Star Wars saga and Star Trek, the success of the modern Sherlock Holmes TV show,

the rebirth of the Volkswagen Beetle, the opening of new commercial venues with retro interior design and the increase in number of second-hand and vintage shops. In Portugal, nostalgia translated also into a new found interest in traditional music, national handmade products, old national brands, heritage products shops like A Vida Portuguesa and the rehabilitation of old local and historical landmarks. But nostalgia is not a mere tool for marketing departments. As Mitchell (2010) says, on the subject of Neo-Victorian fiction, nostalgia can have a "positive and productive role in recalling the past, a project that seems important, even necessary, in a culture that multiplies historical narratives in a variety of media". Nostalgia is therefore linked to memory and our necessity to recall the past and produce memory. Not historically accurate memory, but a memory nonetheless.

This leads us to the subjects of Victorian and Neo-Victorian nostalgia. Many claim that we call the Victorian period is a complex mix of ambivalent political, social and cultural ideals, by-products of contradictory feelings towards industrialization, for its' benefits and the making of the Modern Man, but and the loss of beauty and innocence that came with it, translated in the exploitation of men, women and children, poverty and a certain sense of doom. Such ambivalence also stretched to the ideal of childhood, the romantic vision of the child as innocent, pure and the personification of Beauty, and the Christian notion that children were born of sin and had to be carefully taught in the paths of Good. Literature meant for childhood also followed these opposing tendencies, we still had moralizing and cautionary tales being published, as well as fantastic and nonsense literature and Gothic inspired fiction, such as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. The illustration of the period was not impervious to those tendencies and oscillated between the floral fantasy and the Gothic tradition, the fantastic and the realistic, the grotesque and the beautiful, the lugubrious and the bright, the colourful and the dark, the whimsical and the uncanny. So why our apparent fascination with the Victorian?

It seems clear, from what was said so far, that the Victorians are not that different from us. They also experienced a certain *fin-de-siècle* feeling towards a rapidly changing world, the same scepticism towards progress. Victorians are part of the past, but one that is not so removed, or in truth, different, from us. We can still identify with the iconic Victorian imagery, because we still live in their space, so to speak. Many of our cities are full of memories from that period: monuments, buildings, pictures and depictions of days gone by, but still very present. But we also experience some ambiguity towards the nineteenth and early twentieth-century: we know, by reading Dickens, for example, that the Industrial Revolution brought a great number of people to the cities to work in the new factories. Many of them lived in poverty, and dwelled in degraded parts of the expanding metropolises. However, most of us, when called upon to give a description of the Victorian period are more likely to recall the ladies in beautiful

garments and monumental hats, the furniture, the décor, the first cars, the imagery of the Victorian child, the more whimsical illustration of the period, and certainly, Lewis Carroll's Alice. We are more likely to reproduce the same stereotypes found in *My Fair Lady*, for example, the musical film adaptation of 1964, directed by George Cukor and based on George Bernard Shaw's stage play *Pygmalion* (1913). In fact, the second half of the twentieth century marks the rehabilitation of the so called Victoriana and there was a new interest towards Victorian artefacts. Arguably, it was also in the mid-twentieth century that the term Neo-Victorian was coined in the field of literary studies. Nonetheless, we seem to be surrounded by Neo-Victorian products and commodities. Even though the more recent tendencies point to dystopia and post-apocalyptic worlds, Victoriana persists and publishers are also aware of this.

It is not uncommon to find republished old classics in attractive dust jackets and covers with a vintage look-and-feel and cloth-bound hardbacks reminiscent of bygone eras on the shelves of every bookshop. This revivalism of Victorian book design by revisiting old printing and binding methods has been a strategy of several book publishing companies to face an increasingly competitive market and also, the rise of the e-book. We can find such an example in the Penguin Classics collection, in 2010, with cloth-bound hardbacks designed by Coralie Bickford-Smith, made to resemble those of late nineteenth century books. In Portugal, the publishing company Tinta-da-China has also turned to nostalgic book design – many of their covers also resemble those found in the Victorian and Edwardian periods – and publishing classics of literature. It seems there is a “growing market for limited edition books with high production value” (Gbadamosi, 2010) and nostalgic design, either because people like the physical object and can create an emotional bond with it, as opposing a digital file, or they want to own something created by their favourite designer or illustrator.

Illustrators, printmakers and artists, as well as designers, have been instrumental in this wake of nostalgia and have been enrolled by publishers to create beautiful and appealing covers reminiscent of certain periods or styles, such as illustrators Stanley Donwood, who designed the retro gold-foiled linocut covers for White's Books first four books, and Andrew Davidson, who created the woodblock illustrations for Bloomsbury's Harry Potter series, adult reader edition, in 2013.

Children's books and YAL also reflected nostalgic consumer behaviour and the new interest in Victorian style. Arguably, as a response of some publishers to branded fiction (books published as a part of a brand strategy, to sell other products, as, for example, Hannah Montana's books or *Monster High*, more recently) and the aggressive marketing around it, for branded fiction is commonly associated with TV shows. Thus, publishers turned to well-loved classics of children's literature, like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *The*



Fig. 2 Paperback cover illustration for J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Puffin Chalk Series, Puffin Books. Dana Tanamachi. 2013

Fig. 3 Cover illustration for Edgar Allan Poe's *Les Contes Macabres*. Benjamin Lacombe. 2010

Fig. 4 Cover illustration for Neil Gaiman's *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. Chris Ridell. 2014

Wonderful Wizard of Oz, either republishing them with the original illustrations or commissioning artists to provide new illustrations. There is also a shift towards nostalgic design in children's and young adult's books. We can find an example for this in the collection Puffin Chalk, featuring old classics of literature, with reproductions of manual illustrations and lettering by Dana Tanamachi, reminiscent of nineteenth-century book covers. (Fig. 2)

It has been pointed out that one of the reasons behind this surge of nostalgia, and, in some cases, Victorian and Neo-Victorian motifs, is the fact that there are more adults buying young adult and children's literature, either for children or for themselves. As it seems, the success of the Harry Potter series marked a significant growth in crossover reading. The Harry Potter phenomenon also contributed for the revival of some Victorian and Neo-Victorian fiction, as we shall demonstrate in the following section of this paper.

4. Neo-Victorian fiction and illustration in twenty-first century yal and children's books: different approaches

For the scope of this work, we shall consider as Neo-Victorian the illustration that: a) reproduces the etched and cross-etched of nineteenth-century engravings; b) recreates or mimics Victorian motifs and mannerisms; c) is clearly influenced by mid-nineteenth century and early twentieth century artists, as the works by Brian Froud, who incorporates influences of Arthur Rackham and other acclaimed Victorian fantasy illustrators in their own graphic language; d) recreates or reinterprets Victorian quotidian, making use of both old stereotypes and historical and visual records of the era and mixing them with personal graphic language. This broader view on Neo-Victorian illustration draws near the notions on Neo-Victorian fiction and the perspectives on Neo-Victorian style as a way to produce new memory.

We can not dissociate Neo-Victorian illustration of the fiction its meant to encompass. Thus, the rise of Gothic in children's literature initiated by the Harry Potter phenomenon also created a new interest towards Victorian authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, and fiction around Victorian historical and imaginary characters, such as Sherlock Holmes

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in the children's books public. But how does the wizard boy with the scarred forehead fit in Victorian and Neo-Victorian fiction?

Harry Potter, as argued by Vasconcelos (2009) is a Victorian-like boy in a school structured according to Victorian principles, Hogwarts, even though living in our very own contemporary technological world, but, more to the point, Harry Potter's fiction has many of the elements that marked the nineteenth-century Gothic. Its success allowed for a revival of this literary style in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. Thus, Gothic inspired series such as Lemony Snicket A Series of Unfortunate Events (1999), illustrated by Bret Helquist, and Holy Black The Spiderwick Chronicles (2003), illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi, quickly ensued. The first years of the twenty-first century saw the début of adult fiction writers in children's literature of Gothic influence, such as Neil Gaiman, with *Coraline*, in 2002, and *The Graveyard Book*, in 2008, and Chris Priestley with the series *Tales of Terror*. The change in sensibilities and our perception of childhood lead, also, to the republishing of Edgar Allan Poe's tales for a younger public in 2010, by Soleil, with illustrations by Benjamin Lacombe (Fig. 3).

In illustrating such fiction, authors such as Ridell and DiTerlizzi, say their main references and inspiration comes from some of the most famous illustrators of the Victorian period. Both created hatched and cross-hatched illustrations, like some of their Victorian counterparts, in their own graphic language. Interviewed for the periodical *Books for Keeps* in November, 2014, on his most recent work – *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, written by Gaiman, Chris Ridell said, "I have always loved detailed black and white illustrations. The works of John Tenniel, Gustave Doré, Aubrey Beardsley and William Heath Robinson, have all been influences – Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Don Quixote, Salome, and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, respectively. [...] William Morris frontispiece illustrations were an influence." (Fig. 4)

We must stress that, even though influenced by Victorian illustrators and Gothic imagery, today's illustrators do not seek to mimic them: they take those influences and make them their own, changing them into their own graphic language. Also, illustrators are men and women of their time. And times have changed: we, and subsequently, our children are not afraid of the horror. We find candid depictions of children in the face of danger only for the effect of parody or pastiche, like in the works by Edward Gorey. Contemporary children's Gothic provides the child-hero with tools to defeat their enemies, and, sometimes, the child-hero is actually responsible for the evil that comes into her life. In that same pace, illustration no longer shies away from showing all the horror and to create unease in the reader. Children today, are far from the helpless and innocent depiction of Victorian times, and everybody knows they love to experience fear or the pretence of fear.

In the early years of our twenty-first century, there was a new found interest for the detective stories, also a popular genre in the Vic-

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torian period, especially the character Sherlock Holmes, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887. The intrepid detective also found a place in juvenile literature with the series *Sherlock, Lupin & I* (2011), a project by Piedomenico Baccalaro with illustrations meant to recreate a certain Victorian style by Iacopo Bruno, and, more recently, in 2013, *La Liga de Los Pelirrojos*, illustrated by Iban Barrenetxea. Barrenetxea, in an interview for the web-site *Un Periodista Nel Bolsillo*, stated that he concerned with recreating the reality of the Victorian era in his graphic language: "Tuve que tomar algunas decisiones 'comprometidas'. Intento mantener al máximo la veracidad de las historias en cuanto a ambientación, vestuario, etc."

We can not discuss the subjects of Neo-Victorian fiction and illustration without a reference to Steampunk and some Fantasy Illustration that either recreates the Victorian fairy illustration or closely follows the works of acclaimed artists of that era. As for Steampunk, although this genre has mostly expression in BD, both the republishing of Victorian adventure novels and early science fiction, for instance, and the recent penchant for dystopia may provide good opportunities for illustrators in this genre.

As we have seen, Neo-Victorian illustration is as complex as the Victorian period in which it is inspired. Some say that it derives from the joy of the process, when referring to hatching and cross-hatching illustrations. It has also been pointed out that Neo-Victorian style is used for pastiche and parody – affect and effect. However true these notions are, we can argue that Neo-Victorian illustration is much more than just an imitation of Victorian style, it is, as referred, a reinterpretation and a recreation of that visual style and, albeit identifiable, new. It is a fruit of our nostalgia for that period and certainly of the impact Victorian artists had in reshaping illustration.

5. Some final thoughts

From all the above, we can say that there is a niche for Neo-Victorian illustration, fiction, and book design. Neo-Victorian illustration has been treading some familiar paths so far: the etching and cross-etching typical of nineteenth century engraving are greatly followed, we have many artists working with pen and ink and creating engraving-like designs, others work in watercolour or other media and include Victorian motifs – both these options mean to resemble the illustration of the period. However, there have been some new approaches to the Victorian period, such as the "old-photograph" approach, as discussed above, in which illustrations are made so that they resemble the sepia or grey tones found late nineteenth century and early 1900s photographs, thus creating the illusion of being somehow real; and the more realistic depiction of the Victorian era itself, allying old clichés and individual graphic language, as we have seen in Iban Barrenetxea's illustrations for *La Liga de Los Pelirrojos*. As the digital media find their way into Neo-Victorian illustration, we may expect more of a mix of the old and the new.