

## THE HISTORY AND MODERNITY IN THE BRITISH NOVEL OF THE LATE XX<sup>th</sup> AND EARLY XXI<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

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**Abstract.** The article examines the characteristics of the British historiographic novel of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The article aims to explore the preconditions for the emergence of a new approach to historical facts in the artistic system of the historiographic novel. The article aims to identify the distinctive features of Victorian interpretation and its connections to modern times using A.S. Byatt's novels "Obsession: A Novel" and "Morpho Eugenia" as examples. The article utilizes historical-genetic and historical-functional research methods.

**Keywords:** tradition, historiographical metanovel, postmodernism, time category, Victorianism, intertextuality, interpretation, reconstruction, stylization.

**Annotatsiya.** Mazkur maqolada XX asr oxiri va XXI asr boshlaridagi Britaniya tarixshunoslik romanining o'ziga xos xususiyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi tarixshunoslik romanining badiiy tizimida tarixiy faktlarga yangicha yondashuvning yuzaga kelish omillarini o'rganishdan iborat. Shuningdek, A. S. Bayettning «Obsession: A Novel» («Mahliyo bo'lish: roman») va «Morpho Eugenia» asarlari misolida viktorianizm talqinining o'ziga xos jihatlari hamda uning zamonaviylik bilan aloqalari aniqlanadi. Tadqiqotda tarixiy-genetik va tarixiy-funksional tadqiqot usullaridan foydalanilgan.

**Kalit so'zlar:** an'ana, tarixshunoslik metaromani, postmodernizm, vaqt kategoriyasi, viktorianizm, intertekstuallik, talqin, rekonstruksiya, stilizatsiya.

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматриваются особенности британского историографического романа конца XX — начала XXI века. Целью исследования является изучение предпосылок формирования нового подхода к историческим фактам в художественной системе историографического романа. На примере произведений А. С. Байетт «Одержимость: роман» и «Морфо Евгения» выявляются особенности интерпретации викторианства и его связи с современностью. В исследовании используются историко-генетический и историко-функциональный методы.

**Ключевые слова:** традиция, историографический метароман, постмодернизм, категория времени, викторианство, интертекстуальность, интерпретация, реконструкция, стилизация.

**Introduction.** The last decades of the XX<sup>th</sup> – early XXI<sup>st</sup> century have revealed obvious signs of a transitional artistic consciousness, which was expressed in the desire of writers to understand the changes taking place in all spheres of human life, to understand his searches, experiences, reflection. For the English literature, this is a time of comprehension of serious changes in the political, social and cultural life of society, which entailed a change in value orientations. On the one hand, the reason for this was a premonition of changes that accompanies the end of any century, and even a millennium. On the other hand, it was the desire to take stock of the outgoing century, rethinking the entire cultural experience that preceded it.

**Literature Review.** Recent studies on the contemporary British novel emphasize the growing interaction between history and fiction, particularly through historiographic metafiction and neo-Victorian narratives. Scholars such as Linda Hutcheon, Malcolm

Bradbury, and Victoria Cunningham highlight the renewed interest in Victorian culture and the reinterpretation of historical experience in postmodern literature. Research on A. S. Byatt demonstrates how her novels *Possession* and *Morpho Eugenia* combine Victorian literary traditions with contemporary narrative techniques. Existing scholarship mainly focuses on intertextuality, historical reconstruction, and the dialogue between past and present, showing that neo-Victorian fiction serves as a means of reinterpreting both history and modern identity.

**Methods.** During the XX<sup>th</sup> century the interaction of various methods of artistic worldview was observed, the problem of artistic tradition and continuity most clearly manifested itself. A.M. Zverev distinguishes two opposite approaches: the first is a break with tradition, recognition of the discrepancy between the classical heritage and the modern view of the world; the second is «a kind of archaeological reconstruction, recognition of the accomplishments of classical realism as an indisputable canon and adherence to tradition». [1, p.40]

Noting a steady trend towards the heritage of past centuries, British critics call the literature of the end of the twentieth century the «literature of farewell», retrospective, old-fashioned, «elderly, sedate, devoid of a future ...because in the future it is only death, but life, culture and others are in the past». [9, p.104] English reality evokes in modern novelists a longing for the past – the golden age of Britain, for the century of the novel, which laid the foundation for all national literature of the XX<sup>th</sup> century. It is the interest in the genre of the novel that literary scholars associate with «a specific English interest in the life of the individual», serving a tradition that is nowhere felt with such force as in England. [2, p. 9]

**Discussion and results.** The interest of modern writers in the literature of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, which arose in the 1960s and was called the «Victorian Renaissance», did not exhaust itself in the 1980s and 1990s. This interest was not a tribute to fashion. English critics have defined this serious, missed in the artistic imagination perception of modernity through the perception of the Victorian era as «an obsession with the past», «an obsession with history». The convergence of literature and history, the unflagging attention of writers to historiography, to the category of time is defined as the general trend of British prose at the end of the century in the fundamental works «History of the English Novel. 1950–1995» (1990) of Stephen Connor and «Realism and Power. Postmodern British Novel» (2001) of Alison Lee.

English writer and literary critic Malcolm Bradbury notes that the fascination with retrospective literature in Britain in the last third of the XX<sup>th</sup> century was epidemic: «The retrospective fiction has now become very popular; indeed, the return to the past began to take on an almost epidemic character within a decade». [9, p.101] According to Bradbury, the interest was also aroused by the similarity of two «eras» – the era of the Queen Victoria (1837-1901) and the peculiar era of Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990): «During the

time of Mrs. Thatcher, who sought to restore the “Victorian values”, the revival of tradition began to be associated with the Victorian classics. At this time, a large number of authors turned to the era in which individualism seemed strong, social facts were clearer». [9, p.101] Touching upon the problem of perception of the Victorian tradition in modern literature, the critic notes: «It is now clear that the concept of “realistic narration” has again taken its place in the discussion of fiction ... ». [9, p.101]

W.Cunningham, calling the «obsession» with history a distinctive feature of the modern literary situation in Britain and analyzing its root cause, explains: «The past is a classic. That is why the past invades the modern literary consciousness in the form of some unattainable power, causing both envy and regret». [3, p.228]

The author of the books "Understanding Britain» and "Understanding English Literature» K. Hewitt, tracing the connection between modernity and the Victorian era, concludes that the XIX<sup>th</sup> century is associated in the minds of a modern Englishman with truly great events: «Firstly, the last century is not so far from our time. It is not difficult for us to convince ourselves that we are capable of understanding the way of thinking and feeling of Victorians. Secondly, in England there is a wonderful tradition of realistic prose of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, in which we find all kinds of artistic parallels». [12, p. 236] According to the researcher, the main reason for the attractiveness of the Victorian era for writers of the last third of the XX<sup>th</sup> century is that the outlook and mood of the Victorians, their «persistent search for the meaning of life is in many ways similar to the feelings of a modern person who is accustomed to living without religion and unable to create his own life if it is devoid of meaning». [12, p. 236]

The characteristic features of the modern English novel, a significant part of which are the works of postmodern writers – interest in history, retrospective narration, interweaving of time plans, transferring the action time into the past, double plot action – aroused serious interest among British researchers. Projects were launched to study a special phenomenon in the literature of the late XX<sup>th</sup> century – the fascination with the past and, in particular, the Victorian era. Guides to the Victorian literature were prepared and published, such as «The Longman companion to Victorian fiction» (1988) by J. Sutherland, «The Longman companion to Britain in the nineteenth century 1815–1914» (1999) by C. Cook and «The Cambridge Guide to the Victorian Novel» (2001) by D. David [14]. In literary criticism, the term «neo–Victorian novel» has become widespread. It appeared for the first time in Dana Schiller's article «A saving past in a neo–Victorian novel» where the author defines it as «a historical novel that combines postmodern historiography with a traditional cultural-historical approach, and turns into the past for that to trace how this past is modified under the influence of modern events». [13, p. 541]

The Victorian text for novelists of the late twentieth century became a means by which one can understand and comprehend the present. For the British, Victorianism is

thus a special era, something more than just the past, the history, and the literature is a huge precedent text. It is not surprising that modern writers – J. Fowles and P. Ackroyd, A.S. Byatt and D. Lodge, G. Swift and J. Barnes, D. Setterfield, and many others – turn in their work to the literature of the XIX century, seeking to retell classic examples of the Victorian prose. Almost every English novel of the last third of the XX<sup>th</sup> century points directly or indirectly to predecessor writers, but this is not a simple return to tradition. Turning to the past, writers strive to understand, first of all, the contradictions of the present. According to the fair remark of A.P. Sarukhanyan: «increased interest in tradition and rejection of traditionalism is not a paradox, but a pattern. The deep meaning of the return to realistic forms of narration, I think, should be sought in the acutely felt need to return to life, not to create your own mythologized world, but to explain the real one». [5, p. 105] The critic proposes to consider the Victorian tradition as the tradition of the classic realistic novel of the 19th century as a whole, noting that the «tradition-experiment dichotomy throughout the century was largely determined by the fact that literature perceived itself in co- and opposition to the previous century as an era Victorianism». [5, p.102]

The process of historicizing English literature has attracted the attention of Russian researchers as well. The appearance of neo-Victorian novels in the last third of the twentieth century the Russian literary scholars associate with a new, postmodern view of history in general, and the Victorian era in particular, emphasizing that the modern concept of history is based on its critical understanding, doubts about the reliability, revision and rethinking of the linearity of the movement of historical knowledge. In the light of the historiographic concept, which offers «an infinite number of different interpretations of the same historical events and their special place in the life of every person, giving rise to the idea of the constant presence of the past in the present» [6, p.16], G. Swift's novels in S.A. Strinyuk's dissertation were considered. Yu.S. Reinecke in his thesis «The historical novel of postmodernism and traditions of the genre (Great Britain, Germany, Austria)» [4, p. 8] considers the problem of history and the place of man in it, as well as the ways of historical movement.

At the heart of the appeal of writers of the late XX<sup>th</sup> century to the Victorian novel is the idea of continuity and preservation of the literary tradition. The connection of the modern novel with the Victorian literature can be traced at various levels of text organization: it can be borrowings, variations of certain themes, motives, ideas, variation of plot schemes of previous texts, polemics or agreement with them.

Historical novels of the late twentieth century are associated with new concepts of the historical science. The principle of correlating the historical process and personal experience of a person is the main one in most works. It is not the disappeared realities that are investigated, interpreted, but their trace in the present. The past penetrates into the present not as a single whole, but in fragments, in a scattered way, and therefore white

spots are found in it due to an insufficient number of sources, documentary data, misinterpretation of historical materials. All this contributed to the emergence of a historiographic metanovel (L. Hutcheon's term). The researcher refers to this genre variety of the historical novel of the end of the century such works as «[A History of the World in 10½ Chapters](#)» by J. Barnes, «Waterland» by G. Swift, «Possession: A Romance» by A.S. Byatt, «The House of Doctor Dee» by P. Ackroyd, «The History Man» by M. Bradbury and etc.

The historiographic novel gives the writer the opportunity to take a fresh look at historical events within the fictional narration. Forced to reckon with the prevailing interpretation of an event and a historical person, the writer has the opportunity to choose those facts that correspond to the idea of the work and allow reflecting the author's view. The main question that the historiographic metanovel raises is the question of the relationship between truth and fiction, the process of cognition. Literary scholars associate the emergence of this type of historical novel with J. Fowles' novel «The French Lieutenant's Woman» (1969).

The neo-Victorian novel in the English literature of the late XX<sup>th</sup> century is primarily associated with the names of A.C. Byatt and D. Lodge (who are also philologists like J. Fowles), since the tendency of reference to the past, to the era of Victorianism was especially clearly expressed in their work.

Antonia Susan Byatt holds a special place in the contemporary British literature. Her novel «Possession: A Romance» that was published in 1990 not only brought the writer the fame and became a cult, but now, three decades later, remains her most significant work. The high appreciation that the literary community gave to this novel was expressed in the awarding of the Booker Prize to the author (1990).

The novel characterized as a philological crossword puzzle, a masterpiece of postmodernism, an encyclopedia of Victorian life, and a romantic mystery novel. The plot of the novel developed in two time layers simultaneously, in the XIX<sup>th</sup> and XX<sup>th</sup> centuries. The modern researchers of the creative work of Victorian poets Roland Mitchell and Maud Bailey accidentally discover the love correspondence between Randolph Ash, whose work Mitchell was studying, and Christabel La Motte, whose poems have been analyzed by Maud Bailey for many years. The found correspondence that revealed new facets of the creativity and personality of the predecessor writers completely changes the views of researchers. Consequently, all modern researchers of the creative work of these two Victorian poets begin to hunt for these letters, what creates a tense detective intrigue in the novel. The intrigue was resolved quite unexpectedly by another sensation, which is the relationship of the researcher Maud Bailey with the Victorian poet Christabel La Motte. Foreign researchers have established a connection between the images of Victorian writers Holly and Christabel La Motte with their prototypes Robert Browning (partly Alfred Tennyson) and Emily Dickinson (partly Christina Rossetti) by drawing numerous parallels

between the correspondence of the characters in the novel and the correspondence of the Browning spouses.

The title is the key to understanding the novel. Back in the 1980s, Byatt, who taught a course in the history of English literature, in her book «Wordsworth and Coleridge and Their Era», expressed the idea of the polysemy and different interpretations of the term of «possession» in the English language. This thought was the one that determined the choice of the name for the future novel. Having carefully studied the correspondence between Robert and Elizabeth Browning, and especially the letters from George Eliot and the circumstances related to the burial of the letters with the writer, Byatt recreated a similar situation in her novel — an episode with an exhumation. (George Eliot, being Byatt's favorite writer, appears more than once in the pages of «Possession»; even Byatt's understanding of history gravitates toward Eliot's history portrayal in «Middlemarch»). As Byatt noted, George Eliot's correspondence made an indelible impression on her, because much of the life of famous personalities of the past centuries is hidden from the eyes of their biographers and critics. Biographies, according to the writer, are «a game of shadows («shadow-play»), and what is really of great importance, this eludes researchers, turns out missing». [11, p.37]

In Byatt's novel, poems, diaries, dozens of letters are stylized for the XIX<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, the text of the novel is full of quotes from the works of W. Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, A. Tennyson, E. Barrett-Browning, R. Browning, Christina Rossetti, and contains legends, secrets, fragments of biographies, what was typical for the works of writers of the Victorian era. Thus, a bizarre text created from poetry, letters and prose appears in the novel. The past is palpable from the very first pages of the narrative. Firstly, it is thanks to the image of the library, archives, where the main characters spend quite a lot of time. Maud Bailey considers his discovery, the existence of which none of the researchers suspected, a real sensation. The very first pages of the novel mention Thomas Carlyle and George Eliot who visited the London Library, which became the favorite place to stay for the protagonist of the novel, Roland Mitchell, and he himself lived in the basement floor of a dilapidated Victorian house. A little later, the image of a black lace mantilla, worn by George Eliot, appears. The intertwining of the present and the past at the plot level, as well as the presence in the text of the novel of objects that have passed to the characters from the past (for example, the watch of Randolph Ash possessed by Mortimer Cropper, the brooch of Christabel La Motte possessed by Maud Bailey), is the confirmation of the indestructible connection of times, an explanation of the failures experienced by the characters and emphasizes the need to turn to the past in search of the meaning of the present.

In the preface to the novel, Byatt, explaining the appearance in it of poems in the spirit of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, emerging from her pen, admitted: «My consciousness was filled with lines from Tennyson, Browning, Rossetti and Keats since childhood, I read and

reread Emily Dickinson, and discovered that they took possession of me». [10, p. 4] Based on this confession, the researcher of Byatt's creativity work N.B. Harag called «Possession» «a novel about intertextuality»: «Dialogism acts here as an organizing principle: this is indicated, first of all, by two time levels – the 1980s of the XX<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century; plot duplication – the development of romantic relations between scientists-researchers of the XX<sup>th</sup> and poets of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century; two-story narration – the deliberate alternation of chapters about events of the past with chapters about modern events, endless parallelisms in the narrative technique, images-twins (Maud Bailey and Christabel La Mott)». [8, p. 84]

In English literary criticism, there is no consensus on the genre nature of «Possession». Some features of Byatt's novel allow us to refer it to the genre of historiographic metanovel. First of all, these are the means and images for describing the relationship between the modern human and the past:

a found artifact, evidence of the past, which changes the established picture of this past;

a character obsessed with the past follows the trail of a poet, writer, unravels the mysteries of the past;

play with time, mixing of time layers, which indicates a close relationship between the past and the present, the influence of the past on the present;

introduction to the narrative of memories, excerpts from works of fictional or real poets (writers), letters;

Yu.S. Reinecke in the dissertation «The Historical Novel of Postmodernism and the Traditions of the Genre» studies these features of the historiographic novel. [4, p. 147-148] The features identified by the researcher are generally presented in the basis of the novel «Possession». This is the found artifact – drafts of Randolph Ash letters; characters obsessed with the past – Roland Mitchell and Maud Bailey; the motive for forgery is revealed in the epilogue, when the reader learns about the meeting of Ash with his daughter Maya, unknown to researchers. The play with time, transitions from the present to the past and vice versa permeates the entire textual space of the novel «Possession». The letters of Victorian poets, their poems, excerpts from diaries are also presented in full. The dialogue with the reader begins with the first words of the epilogue. The open ending of the narrative carries out several functions: confirms the thesis «the past lives its own life» and reflects the concept of time of the modern historical postmodern novel, speaks of a certain acquisition of the past and the need to recreate and rethink it.

Other researchers, in particular Dana Schiller in the article «The Saving Past in a Neo-Victorian Novel», classifies «Possession» as a neo-Victorian novel, explaining the new modification of the genre of the historiographic novel as «typical for postmodernism and full of historicity and reminiscent of the novels of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century». [13, p.183] Drawing parallels between the novel by Byatt and «Middlemarch» by J. Eliot, D. Schiller

concludes that modern neo-Victorian novels «show the postmodern present, saturated with plots of the past and pricelessly enriched by them». [13, p. 183]

The connection with the Victorian novel is also found in the content. As in the traditional bildungsroman, the «Possession» presents the process of becoming a personality, the acquisition of truth by the protagonists. The presence of coincidences and multiple plot lines in the novel, makes «Possession» closer with the novels of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, for example, with the novel by Charlotte Bronte «Jen Eyre». Both novels share common features in portraying female characters. Bronte shows women who are superior to men in the wealth of the spiritual world and the strength of moral foundations, Byatt elevates Maud over Roland in a slightly different way: in terms of social status, economic independence. The heroines – Jen and Christabel La Motte – belong to the same era, both are representatives of the middle class, without any wealth and family support. On the other hand, both of them at the same time are outstanding personalities, both find themselves in a situation of choice, both disappear being unable to come to terms with the situation. In addition, in the novel «Possession», one of Christabel La Motte's letters contains an allusion to one of the facts of the biography of Charlotte Bronte herself, associated with a poem she sent to Robert Southey for evaluation and received very restrained praise for the writer.

A philologist by education, an expert of English literature in general, and the XIX<sup>th</sup> century in particular, Byatt imbues her story with the spirit of a XIX<sup>th</sup> century novel. Here are the diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell, the facts of the biographies of George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope. As Thackeray in the «Vanity Fair», Byatt introduces a well-known author into the narrative. Byatt admitted that she herself has a hard time writing stories without resorting to characters from the real life: «I know about, at least, one suicide and one suicide attempt due to the fact that living people became heroes of novels ... Now, when there are blogs and Facebook, everyone became writers, and any statement about someone, benevolent or cruel, fair or unjust, ends up on the Internet ... Writers realize the power of the word too late». [15] «Possession» also contains excerpts from the Victorian literature. Allusions to the novels by J. Austin, Ch. Dickens, J. Eliot recreate the special background of the Victorian era novel. Byatt enters into a dialogue-continuation, a dialogue-variation on the theme of Victorian prose, as well as a dialogue-game with the literary tradition. Dialogue is essential for the writer. That is because it revives the most significant literary monuments of the Victorian era in the reader's memory. Furthermore, it reconstructs the images and motives that are typical for the Victorian novel as a whole. Thus, an appeal to the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, a rethinking of its main ideas, becomes the main theme of the writer's work.

Byatt's intertextual dialogue with the Victorian literature resembles a situation of eternal return, a revival of the classical tradition of the English literature. This is primarily a dialogue-reconstruction, through which the main features of the poetics of the Victorian

prose are restored and reborn such as themes, problems, plot-compositional techniques, a system of characters, and peculiarities of language.

In the next novel «Morpho Eugenia» (1992), Byatt recreates the atmosphere of life in a Victorian mansion. Here are all the attributes of XIX<sup>th</sup> century English middle class life: a large family and numerous inhabitants (servants, housekeepers, governors and governesses). The main character is the children's writer Olive Welwood, who neglects her own child. According to Byatt, the story for the novel came to her mind after she noticed a pattern: there were many suicides among the children of writers. Based on the true events involving Alfred Tennyson's family and the circumstances of his friendship with Arthur Hallam (Gallam), as well as the romantic story of the relationship between Emily Tennyson and Arthur Hallam, the novel has many similarities with the novel «Possession». «Morpho Eugenia» is also permeated with the poetry: the narrative includes quotes and excerpts from the poems by A. Tennyson, J. Keats, J. Milton, which help to recreate the atmosphere of the era. Through the realities and characteristics of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century, Byatt seeks to create a special Victorian atmosphere of storytelling. She reconstructs the characters of the past, as well as the past itself in order to comprehend the problems of the present, creating modern historiographic novel that illustrates the main thesis of George Eliot – «history is a contradictory unity».

Many of the techniques used by Byatt in «Possession» and «Morpho Eugenia» date back to the Victorian literature. One of them is the technique of parallelism of plot lines, known from the works of Charles Dickens, as well as the technique of two-planarity inherent in the narrative of J. Austen and W. Thackeray. In addition, this is the multi-character characteristic of the Victorian novel, the multiplicity of plot lines tied to one center, and the bringing of these lines into one whole. One of the key techniques of the writer become the dramatic nature of the events described, the symbolic and allegorical imagery. Byatt borrows the system and relations of the characters of the Victorian novel, the principles of their depiction, among which the methods of detail and contrast play an important role, and also reconstructs the motive of rewarded virtue characteristic of the Victorian literature. Byatt develops features that are characteristic to J. Eliot's novels: the principle of parallel development, the reflection of one fate in another one (Christabel La Motte and Maud Bailey), the principle of contrast (Matty Crompton and Eugene Alabaster), and psychologism. The plot crossings with Victorian literature, which exist in Byatt's novels, are a clear example of the meeting of two texts - modern and Victorian, characterized by their mutual penetration into each other, comparison and opposition. According to O.A. Tolstykh, «It is customary to assert that a transposition into the Victorian language of a non-Victorian plot takes place in Byatt's novel. However, it would be more fair to say that the transposition of a Victorian plot into a non-Victorian language takes place... She interprets the familiar to the reader plot in a new way, against the background of echoes of previous cultures, thereby causing the effect of an intertextual

polylogue of different authors and revealing a polyphonic and ambiguous perception of a literary text. In this case, intertextuality performs, in addition to the main function of dialogization, contact-establishing, text-generating, expressive, poetic and referential functions. Byatt appeals to the hidden, unclaimed possibilities of Victorian literature, creating a special ideological and artistic space on the pages of his works, where the past is combined with the present, and the real with the fictional». [7, p. 15-16]

The works of A.S.Byatt considered in the article show that the modern English novel is reaching a new level of storytelling, allowing, on the one hand, to return to the past, plunge into the atmosphere of the Victorian reality, and, on the other hand, to approach the solution of issues connected with the present, with the problems of the twentieth century. Undoubtedly, the direction of the «traditional» historical novel will be further developed in the literature of Great Britain. As for the new modification of the genre of the historiographical novel, it can be assumed that even if it ends in the works of these writers, as well as in the works of P. Ackroyd, G. Swift, S. Waters, S. Rushdie, its experience will become an important contribution in the development of the genre as a whole. The analysis revealed that a connection to tradition is becoming a fundamental principle of the poetics of the contemporary novel, which is constructed simultaneously as a continuation and reinterpretation, as well as a "discovery," a new reading of past literature. For novelists of the late XX<sup>th</sup> century, the Victorian text became a means by which to understand and comprehend the present. For the British, Victorianism thus represents a special era, something more than simply the past and history. Byatt's intertextual dialogue with Victorian literature resembles a situation of eternal return, a revival of the classical tradition of English literature. It is, above all, a dialogue-reconstruction, through which the fundamental features of Victorian prose poetics, its themes and problems, plot and compositional devices, character system, and linguistic features are restored and revived.

**Conclusion.** The analysis shows that contemporary British historiographic fiction combines historical reconstruction with modern literary techniques. Writers, particularly A. S. Byatt, reinterpret Victorian traditions to explore contemporary cultural and social issues. Through intertextuality, dual temporal structures, and the integration of historical and fictional elements, neo-Victorian novels establish a dialogue between past and present. As a result, history functions not merely as a background but as an active means of understanding modern identity, culture, and literary tradition.

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