Rethinking generational history: Queer histories of sexuality in neo-Victorian feminist fiction

HDL HANDLE:  
http://hdl.handle.net/10149/96377

TITLE:  
Rethinking generational history: Queer histories of sexuality in neo-Victorian feminist fiction

AUTHORS:  
Carroll, R. (Rachel)

EDITORS:  
Bazin, V.; Fawcett, H.; White, R.

AFFILIATION:  
University of Teesside

CITATION:  

PUBLISHER:  
Georgia State University

JOURNAL:  
Studies in the Literary Imagination

ISSUE DATE:  
Sep-2006

URI:  
http://hdl.handle.net/10149/96377

ABSTRACT:  
In The Victorian Woman Question in Contemporary Feminist Fiction, Jeanette King suggests that historical fiction by women can be placed in the context of a "wider project, pioneered by second wave feminism, of rewriting history from a female perspective, and recovering the lives of women who have been excluded or marginalized" (3-4). Such fiction could be understood, then, as a generational endeavor; the project of "recovering" the past is one which both produces a feminist history and confirms a feminist present as the location from which such a project is possible. However, Judith Roof has questioned the way in which generational thinking "creates a perpetual debt to the past" (71). The past to which such projects of recovery are understood to be indebted can itself be understood as the effect of feminist historiography and its narrative forms rather than its cause; indeed, the history discovered by a return to the past will perhaps necessarily be shaped in advance by the imperatives motivating the return. Such a complex and productive (rather than simply restorative) relationship to the past is, however, obscured by what Roof has termed the "reproductive familial narrative" of "generation" which assumes a "linear, chronological time where the elements that come first appear to cause the elements that come later" (71). In this essay I aim to suggest the ways in which a non-generational historiography might allow for an encounter with the past other than as origin or legacy; I will do so by exploring the complex historicizing of non-reproductive sexuality in Sarah Waters's 1999 neo-Victorian historical fiction Affinity.

TYPE:  
Article

LANGUAGE:  
en

KEYWORDS:  
generational history; sexuality; Victorian; feminist fiction

ISSN: