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GAZİANTEP UNIVERSITY
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**THE ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW KNEALE'S *SWEET
THAMES* AND PETER ACKROYD'S *DAN LENO AND
THE LIMEHOUSE GOLEM* AS NEO-VICTORIAN
NOVELS**

MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

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ABSTRACT**THE ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW KNEALE'S *SWEET THAMES* AND PETER ACKROYD'S *DAN LENO AND THE LIMEHOUSE GOLEM* AS NEO-VICTORIAN NOVELS**

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Neo-Victorianism is a contemporary field of study in fictional works providing a look at the Victorian era and the nineteenth century. With the rise of neo-Victorian novels in literary fields, the contemporary authors possess opportunities to look back at Victorian history grasping the peculiarities of the era. In their works, contemporary authors portray the Victorian era with a renewed version of the past. Being aware of similarities and differences between the Victorian and contemporary times, these authors provide a critical view of history under the light of neo-Victorianism. The works produced within neo-Victorian theory lead to the recreation of the Victorian era through the perspective of contemporary periods. Such a reestablishment is produced by intermingling the past and present, which is portrayed through various subjects. Among these, the concept of mystery holds a prominence because this concept contributes to the improvement of neo-Victorian fiction. Also contributing to the popularisation of novels, mystery notion is a useful tool to uncover the parallelisms between neo-Victorian novels and various forms of mystery. In this respect, Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* (1992) and Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) are significant novels that demonstrate the associations between the concept of mystery and neo-Victorianism contextually and technically. This thesis will essentially discuss the concept of mystery under the light of neo-Victorian fiction through discussions on history, authenticity, narration and mystery in Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* (1992) and Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) novels.

Keywords: Neo-Victorian, Matthew Kneale, Peter Ackroyd, History, Mystery

ÖZET

MATTHEW KNEALE'IN *TATLI THAMES* VE PETER ACKROYD'UN *CİNAYET SANATI*'NİN NEO-VİKTORYEN ROMANLAR OLARAK ANALİZİ

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Neo-Viktoryacılık, kurgusal eserlerde Viktorya dönemine ve on dokuzuncu yüzyıla bir bakış sağlayan çağdaş bir çalışma alanıdır. Neo-Viktoryen romanların edebi alanlarda yükselişiyle birlikte, çağdaş yazarlar, dönemin özelliklerini kavrayarak Viktoryen tarihine bakma fırsatlarına sahip olmaktadır. Eserlerinde, çağdaş yazarlar Viktoryen dönemi geçmişin yenilenmiş bir versiyonuyla tasvir etmektedirler. Viktoryen ve çağdaş zamanlar arasındaki benzerliklerin ve farklılıkların farkında olarak, bu yazarlar neo-Viktoryacılığın ışığı altında eleştirel bir tarih görüşü getirmektedirler. Neo-Viktoryen teori çerçevesinde üretilen çalışmalar, Viktoryen dönemin, çağdaş dönemlerin perspektifinden yeniden doğuşunun yolunu açmaktadır. Böyle bir yeniden kurma, çeşitli konular aracılığıyla resmedilen geçmişle şimdiki zamanın birbirine karışmasıyla üretilmektedir. Bunların arasında, gizem kavramı bir ehemmiyet tutmaktadır çünkü bu kavram neo-Viktoryen kurgunun gelişmesine katkıda bulunmaktadır. Romanların popülerleşmesine de katkıda bulunarak, gizem kavramı neo-Viktoryen romanlar ve gizemin çeşitli şekilleri arasındaki paralellikleri ortaya çıkarmak için kullanışlı bir araçtır. Bu bakımdan, Matthew Kneale'ın *Tatlı Thames* (1992) ve Peter Ackroyd'un *Cinayet Sanatı* (1994), gizem kavramı ve neo-Viktoryacılık arasındaki ortaklıkları bağlamsal ve teknik olarak gösteren önemli romanlardır. Bu tez esas olarak Matthew Kneale'ın *Tatlı Thames* (1992) ve Peter Ackroyd'un *Cinayet Sanatı* (1994) romanlarında tarih, gerçeklik, anlatım ve gizem üzerine tartışmalar yoluyla neo-Viktoryen kurgu ışığında gizem kavramını tartışacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Neo-Viktoryen, Matthew Kneale, Peter Ackroyd, Tarih, Gizem

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INTRODUCTION

Neo-Victorianism is a retrospective field of study which negotiates new perspectives on history, authenticity, narration and mystery in contemporary works. History has been an unsettled issue due to its true-life experiences both in the actual time of the nineteenth century and in the ensuing times because there is an uncertainty of what happened in the past. Due to the uncertainty of history, its authenticity has also been questioned when it is textualised, which could be seen in neo-Victorian works. While this thesis will mainly deal with neo-Victorian fiction, which employs the Victorian era as the focal point of historical context, historical contents are also generally observed in other movements like postmodernism. However, the originality and authenticity of historical records have been somehow contradictory due to fictional revisitations of works, which focus on historical themes and previous centuries in a totally different age as seen in neo-Victorian works. Another reason is that the past is reflected in the contemporary era by imitating some stereotypes and historical facts, and this takes the historical records out of their original structures. Through those stereotypes of a specific century and historical realities, history of the nineteenth century has been studied many times in various forms of works, including movies, books, articles, and theories to understand the past in a better way as it constitutes an important position in literary studies being a breaking point in history. Although history was experienced once with its realities, there is an unignorable similarity between history and contemporary era, especially between the nineteenth century and the contemporary ages which furthers a need to study the past.

For understanding historical representations in a period after a certain time, in which those representations were experienced once, historical novels have a significant position to understand the past in the light of neo-Victorian theory. As the name suggests, the main concern of historical novel is history which means that a time

period is represented through historical figures, wars, set values or historical facts, etc. Jerome de Groot (2010) suggests that a historical novel could deal with expressing nationality through the past, emphasising “the subjectivism of narratives of History”, indicating the significance of realist narration under the aspect of authentic image, investigating the issue of writing, or tackle with “historiographical convention” (p. 2). Centuries, historical figures, cultural structures, or moralities may be a concern of historical novels because these novels are not limited to only one area of history. Nonetheless, the peculiarities found in historical novels make provision against the problems of authenticity and the fictional creations, reinforcing the originality. As Groot (2010) suggests: “Historical fiction points towards its own insubstantiality” (p. 113). Therefore, the historical facts, figures, societies and values of a particular age make it possible to render the authentic nature of a historical novel as neo-Victorian fiction also demonstrates due to its conversion of Victorian values.

While there may be similarities between the past and the present, these two share a problematic relation as well. According to Groot (2010), “[h]istory is other, and the present familiar” and the task of a historian is to clarify the shift between history and present (p. 3). Similarly, neo-Victorian fiction intends to revive the Victorian spirit as its focus shifts between the past and the present. What distinguishes neo-Victorian fiction from history writing is, then, the cornerstone of the Victorian era because neo-Victorianism mainly revisits the Victorian times from a contemporary perspective and fictional eye. Still, history writing is not limited to neo-Victorianism but to many other genres just as there are various postmodern novels which employ the concept of history or modernist novels which focus on historical facts. The specific adoption of the nineteenth century is also a distinguishing point to characterise neo-Victorian novels. Over and above that, the historical themes are found in the Victorian era as well, because historical contents in different literary movements hold a crucial place in the novel genre, especially from the Victorian era till the contemporary times as the nineteenth century is a turning point in history and it prompted an awareness of realism which goes hand in hand with historical facts in literary texts. Hence, the efforts of mirroring historical evidences in a totally different age are observed neo-Victorian fictions with significant emphasises on realities, narratives or the main themes such as mystery, and this will be explored further within the content of this thesis.

In the matter of neo-Victorian theory of writing history, the problem of authenticity and originality might be a problem for both of historical writing and neo-Victorian fiction but it is resolved due to a presentist perception of the past in neo-Victorian fiction and historical novels. As Samantha J. Carroll (2010) claims, “neo-Victorian fiction and its writers are *not* native to the nineteenth century, but to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries” (p. 180). The original perspectives, therefore, are created with contemporary lenses through which the problems of the present can be addressed in history as well as the similarities among centuries. Besides, the readers might also read a recreated form of the Victorians because there is an inevitability of fictional additions through which authors of neo-Victorianism can create a distinctive movement. By saying this, it is apparent that readers have the chance to question the reliability of the information that is presented to them in neo-Victorian novels, and this is mainly provided with narrative techniques and mysterious incidences. Even though there are historical elements that are inherent in the nineteenth century settings, they are reinvented by employing both similarities and differences between the nineteenth century and contemporary times.

Nonetheless, another aspect emerges as the gaps in history which need to be addressed in contemporary writings through lost voices, minorities, fictional additions, and the concept of mystery is an opportunity to give voice to such gaps. In mysterious plots, there are always some spaces to be filled such as problems to be solved by detectives or researchers and these plots which are created through revived historical matters and figures serve as an essential aspect to be studied because neo-Victorian fiction revisits the past to recreate its disappearance. As known, detective fiction was initiated earlier than in the twenty-first century but the changing perspective towards this type of fiction makes it possible to have new eyes. In the nineteenth century, detective fiction preserved a “definite shape and substance” (Steele, 1983, p. 435). However, its representation under the title of ‘detective mystery’ without a professional detective figure proves how neo-Victorian can convert traditionally set rules of fiction into fresh gazes. Through investigations and questions, detective mystery under the concept of mystery maintains itself a durable stance, benefiting from historical contexts to add another layer to its mysterious composition. When the voices of minorities are considered, neo-Victorianism is a suitable theory to apply the presence of individuals in the contemporary times although they were ignored previously in the

nineteenth century because the contemporary times question the equality issues and marginalised people have the chance to question their positions. And the use of mystery and detective mystery add a multi layered exploration of the past, which is quite important.

Still, the analysis of history by contemporary writers, critics and theorists has been problematic due to varying understandings of the past. While contemporary authors may have an inspiration to look back with an aim to rediscover what is hidden in the blank pages of history, they may also be influenced by certain techniques and analyse them with definitive techniques such as “intertextuality” in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969) or “historiographic metafiction”. “Historiographic metafiction”, mainly known through postmodernism, is a relevant example of such techniques as some of the postmodern novels, which include this technique, turn back to history through the viewpoint of a contemporary author who discovers the transition between history and fiction, and also past and present. In this context, neo-Victorian theory holds a crucial place in literary studies due to its enriched contexts about the Victorian era and its reinterpretation, especially in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The main reasons for returning to the nineteenth century may be its mystery, authentic image or simply a curiosity to uncover what is hidden in the faded times with their realities. Or else, it may be linked to the similarities between the nineteenth century and contemporary times because both periods share not only differences but also a lot of similarities.

While the nineteenth century is known for the age of developments such as the Industrial Revolution of which consequences were felt in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries or the Great Exhibition in 1851, it was also a period of deterioration due to child labour, pollution and unemployment. This has not only caused traumatic consequences for people who felt the negative consequences of economic and social problems but also there have been class differences, which could be observed in the conditions of both twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Additionally, Marie-Luise Kohlke (2008) refers to “trauma” issues, including outspread traumas of social problems such as illnesses, criminality, sexual corruption, international problems, and wars which were marking subjects of the nineteenth century (p. 7). Mentioning such problems, the problems of the twentieth or twenty-first centuries become familiar because those troubles can be witnessed in the

contemporary times, especially in the twenty-first century, due to crimes, patriarchy, pollution, or pandemics as well. Matthew Sweet (2001) exemplifies the similarities and differences between the Victorians and the contemporary times as clear as possible: “The Victorians are the people against whom we have defined ourselves. We are who we are because we are not the Victorians” (p. 231). This also constitutes a ground for returning to the past to understand it in a more comprehensive way.

In respect of neo-Victorian fiction’s journey between the past and the present to uncover both similarities and gaps, there is also a matter of remembering the nineteenth century with all its characteristics such as stereotypical representations like patriarchy or class-based society, or developments and deteriorations as mentioned. While neo-Victorian novels differ from Victorian works, they demonstrate “the creatively impoverishing effects of over-recruiting the same stock characters and social scenarios for exposure and/or liberation” (Ferguson, 2013, p. 24). Even though each period has its characteristics, it is unignorable that every time has a piece from the Victorian times with values, culture, or principles. Charlotte Boyce and Elodie Rousselot (2012) express that neo-Victorianism, as a gratitude and review of the nineteenth century, brings “the idea of celebrating while contesting, of looking back while moving forward” (p. 2). This is mainly due to both a similarity and a distinction between the Victorian era and next centuries after it in which neo-Victorian literature could turn back and come back. As Kate Mitchell (2010) claims, “[n]eo-Victorian fiction ensures that the Victorian period continues to exist as a series of afterimages, still visible, in altered forms, despite its irrevocable past-ness, its disappearance” (p. 7). This claim proves that history, or the nineteenth century particularly, is not only studied to fill the gaps but also to understand it, for better or worse because the next centuries after the Victorian era is like a continuity of the nineteenth century.

Another triggering force is characterised by nostalgia since the revival of the past is seen in every medium with a reflection of the past as good and old days. Mark Llewellyn (2008) proposes that the contemporary time in many mediums witnesses a “nostalgic tug” in which “(quasi-)Victorian” deals with a dominant recognition of its period, looking for the past (p. 168). This brings a nostalgic turn to the mind as well as a longing for the past since people in the contemporary culture live a present time through bits and pieces from the Victorian times. Neo-Victorian texts, mostly characterised by a sense of returning to the Victorian past, imply a nostalgia with some

of the inclinations of good old days. While the fictional productions of neo-Victorianism indicate the stereotyped Victorian figures, these figures give a sense of nostalgia to the ones who consume them. If novels are considered, neo-Victorian novels offer readers a feeling of nostalgia demonstrating that it, Victorian history, was good and old days, which are different from the contemporary times, and it also provides a comment on history through the recreations of the official history. In this sense, the distancing effect between the Victorian era and the present times causes a differentiating relationship as the presentist eye captures its time as worse than the past.

Due to a problematic relationship between the past and the present, similarity and difference may create a conflictual process for neo-Victorian authors because they are supposed to bring something authentic and original by borrowing from already-known historical elements. Carroll (2010) explains that “[p]art of neo-Victorian fiction’s dilemma lies in its ready association with retrieval practices that idealise the nineteenth-century (particularly Victorian England)” (p. 173). This argument of Carroll proves that there might be an “idealisation” of the Victorian past and London city, with its hazy atmosphere, may be a fictional element in many novels. The affectionate missing of Victorian history mainly lies in the fact that it was an age of developments as well as strict norms on social lives. Morality may come into mind because there were set rules for men and women who were supposed to fulfil the roles that were assigned to them in the history. However, the contemporary times of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries observe a kind of destruction of such roles due to the changes in roles. For example, women are able to work without being dependent on their husbands or fathers, while the reverse is true for the Victorian times. How this implies a nostalgia for a moment when women were not given much voice is related to a notion of seeing the past as a protective aspect of society such as keeping people under control for moral and cultural issues, and recognising the past as a valuable time like an antique object.

What is more, neo-Victorianism holds a special position in literary studies due to its broad scope extending from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century, while it will undoubtedly continue till the next centuries because it covers a range of studies such as film adaptations, books or fictional works in general, focusing mainly on the Victorian essence. If neo-Victorian fiction is aimed to be studied in literary

criticisms and works, its scope should be understood clearly. In an attempt to introduce the characteristics of neo-Victorian fiction, the Victorian era, and most importantly, the word “Victorian” needs to be understood first. Andrea Kirchknopf (2008) mentions the term “Victorian”, similar to Elizabethan, through Queen Victoria as sovereign, claiming that this term has a “denotative meaning” as it covers the life of a historical figure, but its sequential borders may expand as it indicates the features of a period as well (p. 55). So, the Victorian past may be reinterpreted in neo-Victorian works or post-Victorian works although the common definition depends on Queen Victoria because the era is formed out of her name clearly. Referring to a historical person, the cultural and social norms of the nineteenth century come into mind because the Victorian era is clearly marked by its values which are revisited in neo-Victorian works. Hence, the Victorian conventions are inevitable parts to create a neo-Victorian fiction.

Besides, there are many authors who revive and revisit the Victorian era, such as Matthew Kneale and Peter Ackroyd. Although both authors may be categorised as postmodern novelists, they have produced works which may fall under the categorisation of neo-Victorian fiction. Whereas these two authors are completely different from each other in their approach to literary conventions, as their works suggest, they have both employed historical content in their novels, which can be categorised as neo-Victorian fiction. Kneale and Ackroyd, as authors of the contemporary times, not only focus on neo-Victorianism but also on historical subjects in their novels. The stories they create may turn around different characterisations or plots, but history emerges as a significant source to position these stories within the realm of historical representations. On the one hand, as a contemporary author, Kneale has produced different works from a variety of themes such as the theme of colonialism in his *English Passengers* (2000) or the historiography in *Sweet Thames* (1992) which will be scrutinised in the frame of this thesis. Being a keen writer of history, Kneale has produced various works on history proffering a substitute for real history. On the other hand, Ackroyd has produced many novels, which cover different themes, and he has a proven importance in English Literature. Among his works, *The Mystery of Charles Dickens* (2002) suggests that he deals with the portrayal of a historical figure, benefiting from the powerful structure of mystery as it allows authors to create and fill spaces. Yet, his most important works, which include history or mystery as two main

bases, such as *Hawksmoor* (1985), *Chatterton* (1987), *The Life of Thomas More* (1991), and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) which will be analysed in this thesis.

At this point, the importance of mystery cannot be ignored because two of their novels, Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* (1992) and Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), can be analysed through neo-Victorian theory, through Victorian history and the concept of mystery which is related to the content and the form. With historical contents in Kneale's novel, *Sweet Thames*, neo-Victorian theory continues to maintain itself a powerful position, taking a place in contemporary novels. Originally this novel covers the set norms of the Victorian era with a lot of similarities in institutions, characterisations, attitudes in moralities and so on, but it also revisits all of these aspects from a fresh perspective by adding something different and original, which is one of the mysteries to be solved in this thesis. Additionally, *Sweet Thames* is regarded as a "fictional recreation of the devastating 1849 London cholera epidemic", in which the things are observed by the lenses of Jeavons (Ureczky, 2016, p. 103). The connection with the Victorian values is seen to be interrupted by some new portrayals of characters, especially in gender issues. Hence, the transitory position of this novel between the values of the nineteenth century and the understanding of the contemporary times demonstrates how a neo-Victorian fiction provides its readers with a reinterpretation of the past.

In Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* (1992), the main character, who is Joshua Jeavons, is a disciplined and an ambitious engineer who deals with the cholera epidemic and the problematic relationship with his wife who disappears. Even these two conflictual occurrences suggest that there is something to be solved. On the one hand, the cholera problem requires a professional skill of Jeavons as an engineer, on the other hand his problem-solving skill may be useful for his search of his wife, Isobella. The characterisation and observations of Joshua Jeavons in the novel suggest that the content of the novel emerges as mainly detective fiction which will be referred as detective mystery in this thesis. The reason why mystery is used is that there are constant gaps in this novel and they create a sense wonder both in the endeavours of Mr. Jeavons and in the readers of this work because what will happen is not directly represented but given in a sense of suspense. For this reason, it proves to be a useful theme to capture the attention of the readers through inquiries.

Besides, the transition between the past and the present is observed in this novel which is also a common characteristic of neo-Victorian fiction as this genre goes back to the Victorian era and comes to the contemporary times. With the fictional creation of London City by Kneale, the observations towards dirtiness, sewage organisation, economic issues, and gender norms prove “the most pressing urban and gender anxieties of the Victorian era” (Ureczky, 2016, p. 103). Due to worsening conditions because of filth and cholera, class issues, poverty, unseen figures in the depths of the city, and gender problems, *Sweet Thames* revisions the nineteenth century understanding of all those subjects through the presentist perspective of view, which is associated with a blending of Victorian history and contemporary times. Although the novel bears some resemblances to the Victorian era with specific subjects as mentioned, its originality lies in its portrayal of the plot organisation, narrative structure of Jeavons, and the subversion of set values of the nineteenth century such as saving Jeavons from the conditions of miserable poor people of Victorian history and putting him under the categorisation of an ambitious engineer, or freeing Isobella as a female character. No matter how these two characters may arise out of socially constructed norms of Victorian history, the details of their categorisation suggest that they cannot avoid predetermined values of the nineteenth century, which will be analysed critically and in detail. Yet, with Kneale’s presentist eyes in *Sweet Thames* (1992), Joshua Jeavons goes back to the depth of his memory and narrates his experiences and suddenly he comes back to his present day remembering his past experiences as sources to solve the problems, which is a neo-Victorian characteristic of this work.

In the case of history, Ackroyd also has a crucial position since his various works also employ history as a significant element. According to Shiller (1997), imagination in terms of literature includes mainly the skill to ingest and restate the history for Peter Ackroyd (p. 553). Working from authenticity to murder, from history to detective, Ackroyd prominently constructs his narration in the light of postmodernism. In doing so, Ackroyd benefits a lot from historiography, by writing either about historical figures or historical periods. Although he has a significant place in the postmodern movement of literature, his novels do not have to be categorised as postmodern fictions totally and necessarily. Some of his books, as given, may be important examples for representing postmodern techniques and theory. However, his

Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem proves to be a significant example of neo-Victorian fiction as it features a reconstructed Victorian time through murder mystery.

In addition, Ackroyd's position as a postmodern author proves the associations between neo-Victorianism and postmodernism since these two movements feed each other through techniques and contents. Although postmodernism is predominantly marked by the rejection of an absolute centre and indication of pluralities, it restores historical contents which are reconstructed by authors through the combination of history and fiction, which may also be a source of analysis in neo-Victorian novels. With this technique, the authors can reshape the historical facts through fictional plots and it contributes to the revivalism of the nineteenth century in neo-Victorianism by creating an authentic story which blends history and fiction. Not being totally under the shadow of the past, Ackroyd makes use of history to prove its double-sided truth, which means that Ackroyd reshapes the past to prove the uncertainty of history, especially in his *Chatterton* (1987), by depicting the themes of authenticity, truth and originality.

In Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the neo-Victorian portrayal of the nineteenth century is given evidently within the light of murder mystery. As a novel, which is based on various murders and crimes of killing people, this work enriches the concept of mystery, by providing the readers with a gaze into the past. The fragmented narrative structure also strengthens the attitude of reconstructing the past because there is not a particular truth or certain chronological order, but the narrative shifts back and forth. This shift is essential in that both neo-Victorian authors and the narrators or protagonists go into depth of their memories and retell them. Telling historical times in a contemporary time, Ackroyd collects historical facts and values and transmits them to his readers from the perspective of a presentist eye. Similarly, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* has a variant narration and it captures the attention of its readers making them re-question the reality, truth, and authenticity under the image of violent crime scenes.

The argument of revisiting the Victorian past through the gates of a new age also benefits from historiography. While Victorian history was nearly over with the death of Queen Victoria, from whom the age has taken its name, she was a marker for defining the Victorian era in addition to various stereotyped points. If these fixed things are regarded as the markers of the Victorian era, a new perspective towards them

undoubtedly requires an act of subverting them. In this way, originality and authenticity may be achieved while the novelists of neo-Victorian theory could discover the similarities and differences between their times and the Victorian era. Referring to “historiographic metafiction”, Hutcheon (1988) explains that it “works *within* conventions in order to subvert them” (p. 5). This explanation is of much importance for postmodern and neo-Victorian literature as it implies because neo-Victorian novels also address their readers under historiography, namely history writing to establish a formulaic representation of its own theory. Being in the norms of history contributes a lot to the historical contexts of neo-Victorian novels, and literature allows the authors of these types of novels to reshape the historical knowledge.

In the light of these, this thesis will cover the concept of mystery through neo-Victorianism by questioning the position of presentism, authenticity, narrative and history in Matthew Kneale’s *Sweet Thames* (1992) and Peter Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994). With regard to the reasons why history is constantly studied in different periods or movements, the need for filling the gaps, giving a voice to the ones who were ignored in the blank pages of history and a continuous flow of values, which remove the strict borders among centuries, could be given as essential factors. On the one hand, these contribute to the contextual development of mystery with the contents of these novels, on the other hand, the revisitation of the Victorian history and the narrative strategies by the authors make it possible to provide a commentary on the form of the mystery. The transition in narrations, representing intertextual texts and double endings are some examples to exemplify the form of mystery in neo-Victorian fiction.

In Matthew Kneale’s *Sweet Thames* (1992), it is possible to observe a personal story of the protagonist, Joshua Jeavons and his invaded mind due to several questions and problems, which create a mysterious plot. While he is in a constant mood of struggling to find answers, he sometimes feels a sense of lostness similar to ‘otherised’ people in the Victorian novels. What distinguishes Jeavons from a typical portrayal of a Victorian figure is his social status as well as his notions which will be dealt with in depth analysis in the coming chapter of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is certain that the attitudes of Jeavons comply with both the Victorian times and the contemporary times, making Kneale’s novel a new Victorian fiction, providing the

readers with a transitory stage between the past and the present. In addition to him, gender problems of the Victorian era are revisited in this novel, adding a multi-perspective approach to the unheard figures. When Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) is considered, several murders emerge to be the main subject matter in the novel, but their representation includes the concept of murder mystery under neo-Victorian portrayal of the past. Mysteries as contents given in two novels establish not only a content-based mystery but also a historical mystery because the two works discover the concept of mystery through historical clues. This thesis will deal with the concept of mystery under the light of neo-Victorian fiction and theory, by examining the issues of history, authenticity, narration and the concept of mystery in Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* (1992) and Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994).



CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF NEO-VICTORIANISM

1.1.A Retrospective Present and Neo-Victorian Terminology

“IT was the best of times, it was the worst of times...”

(Dickens, 1983, p. 1)

To understand the neo-Victorian glimpse of history in literary works, its terminology and sources hold a significant position. In answering the question of what neo-Victorianism is, one must pay attention to the principal phrase of the word ‘Victorian’ since neo-Victorian works represent a new image of the Victorian era. However, the chief difference is the time period between Victorian and neo-Victorian works because neo-Victorian fiction wears a presentist repercussion by introducing a new Victorian style in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For Marie-Luise Kohlke (2008), neo-Victorianism within a theoretical frame is apt to “re-popularising (nineteenth-century) history, rendering it accessible, newly topical, and appealing to present-day sensibilities” (p. 11). This explains that neo-Victorian theory allows its readers to be familiar with the nineteenth century, by at the same time grasping it from a presentist perspective. The similarities between the nineteenth century and the contemporary era strengthen this argument as for a continuity of the Victorian era and its values till the twenty-first century. The adoption of Victorian stereotypes, which are aspects related to general characteristics of the Victorian era such as hazy London or social norms, in neo-Victorian literature and fiction contributes a lot to a revival of the past in the present.

Pertaining to revisiting the Victorians in neo-Victorian fiction, the new perspectives towards the past allow contemporary readers and authors to have a grasp of what those Victorians experienced in their age. In this context, it may not be wrong to argue fact that neo-Victorianism reminds readers and authors of their ancestors and their way of lives to survive within a blend of advancements and problems. Driven by cultural anxieties related to weakening ties among social norms, moralities, and cultural memories, the contemporary times need to look back on to have an understanding of the present. As Boyce and Rousselot (2012) claim: “In a time of pervasive cultural anxiety, the past offers an ostensibly safe refuge from which to negotiate and work through the concerns of the present” (p. 3). Accordingly, the complicated nature of the contemporary times offers an excuse for neo-Victorian authors to reconsider the past and reimagine it. This leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the past, which establishes a base for the present because two different periods of past and present inevitably bear many resemblances in terms of culture, society, and values.

The reasons for re-writing about Victorians may be attempted to be answered, however, there is not an exact answer to it because there are many reasons for revisiting them. For instance, Mark Llewellyn (2008) claims that turning back to Victorian history in a contemporary time, there may be a turning back to an atmosphere of extensive field of study, attitude to the essence of history, and people captured in stories that are uncovered through reconsidering and revisiting the past (p. 170). This claim of giving a new voice to trapped figures who need to raise their voices has a crucial place in neo-Victorian fiction because it could reverse every norm that has been peculiar to the Victorian past. The reason is that it is produced in a contemporary age where the restriction of people is questioned, and this shows itself mainly in other fields such as popular culture, feminist writings, works critically approaching race and class issues and so on. In this respect, the fictionality of the novel genre and the compositional abilities of authors are taken into consideration when the neo-Victorian novel is mentioned because it is formed out of facts and fiction, no matter how different the content may be. This proves that neo-Victorian authors blend fact and fiction, and saving the trapped figures from Victorian history lies in the creation of fictional plots, which do not have to obey historical records completely. Since the nineteenth century was a period with a controlling nature over the marginalised people, the contemporary

lenses of neo-Victorian authors have saved those individuals as *Sweet Thames* and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* demonstrate.

Such a fictional composition of reality and imagination in neo-Victorian fiction is a similar case for previous novels such as the “historical novel”, which dealt with history, fact and fiction. While the impact of the “historical novel” on neo-Victorian fiction cannot be ignored, the separation of “historical novel” from other genres may be made possible with this blending of fact and fiction similar to neo-Victorian fiction. This composition absolutely leads to a more independent atmosphere for trapped figures because they are given an alternative voice in a contemporary age through the subversion of set norms of the nineteenth century by neo-Victorianism. The facts might be present in neo-Victorian novels similar to historical novels, which take some historical details from a specific time and reinterpret them according to the fictional composition of an author as seen in neo-Victorian novels, but they are rediscovered with fictional recreations of plots or figures, which also give a voice to different issues. Besides, this is related to neo-Victorian fiction’s particular attention on the nineteenth century and their being influenced by contemporary circumstances.

To understand the development of neo-Victorianism as a theory, it should be noted that the nineteenth century and the works which were originally produced in the Victorian era are inspirational sources with stereotypical characters, political or social events, cultural values, and the reality of life in that era. This not only furthers the inevitability of the nineteenth century works for the foundation of neo-Victorian works, which in a way benefits from clichéd reminiscences of Victorianism such as the general atmosphere of London, patriarchy, social values, morality, or developments, but also the clear-cut boundaries between the bases of Victorian and contemporary periods. In light of this, the popularisation of previous conventions owes a lot to postmodernism in literature that combines history and fiction at the same time. The reason is that postmodernism also benefits from history, and even Victorian history in its novels and this creates a fertile ground for the novels having historicity as it laid bare for the emergence of neo-Victorian novels. Basically, Tim Woods (1999) argues that “[p]ostmodern fiction reveals the past as always ideologically and discursively constructed” (p. 56). His claim proves that a postmodern novel, which employs history as a subject, conveys the set notions of a period that it highlights, and it may decentralise those constructions of history. In doing so, there are some changes in writing historical themes by contemporary authors including postmodern authors, and

a similar condition is seen in neo-Victorian authors. The difference is that the revisitation of the Victorian era allows the authors of neo-Victorian novels to create an authentic and original image separately.

In connection with postmodernism and neo-Victorianism, there are some techniques which are employed by the novels of both movements. Linda Hutcheon (1988) exemplifies that postmodernism “uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges” in various fields (p. 3). A similar technique may be observed in neo-Victorianism as well since neo-Victorian fiction represents and subverts the nineteenth century essentially. Although the popularity of neo-Victorian novels is observed especially in the late twentieth century or in the twenty-first century, some postmodern novels prove that neo-Victorian novel as a genre dates back to earlier periods. John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969) is an example of one of the earliest neo-Victorian novels, even though it may be also classified as a postmodern work. The Victorian subjects and “historiographic metafiction” depicted by Fowles in this novel indicate a tendency towards neo-Victorian theory, which will be discussed further in this thesis, because it creates an awareness of the historical facts and fictionality. This also proves how postmodernism may nourish the development of neo-Victorian theory by contributing to its structure and technical reflections in fictional works.

In an attempt to answer the reasons behind the retro-fascination with the Victorians, similar to the postmodern employment of history to impose its theoretical arguments upon the past, it would be correct to turn to the sense of being lost in the contemporary times. With the flourishing of postmodernism and changing attitudes towards literature, society and culture in general, readers are aware of the abundance of texts, either didactic or merely literary, but they also have a sense of lostness due to seeking answers to find a solution to contemporary problems in every layer of their lives. Utilising history in fiction, postmodernism can turn its face to multiplicity and rejection of one history. In postmodernism, there is “an openness to multiplicity” and a “closure of theories or narratives” that aim to give only one or dominant effects (Goodman, 1993, p. 20). With such pluralities, it becomes harder to understand the core of the present, and neo-Victorian literature emerges as an ideal way to get rid of this burden. Samantha J. Carroll (2010) finds that neo-Victorian literature, marked with nostalgia and retrospection, is a field in which “the nineteenth century is often expressed as the present’s point of origin – an historical parent to whom the present

looks for guidance” (p. 173). Such a perspective gives the contemporary authors a chance to look back and find their roots, providing readers with a grasp of the Victorian times as the ‘good old days’, and neo-Victorianism appears to be a coherent point to preserve the unity of the past and the present rather than dispersing everything it represents.

In addition to subverting history which is seen in postmodern and neo-Victorian novels, there exists a nostalgia to the nineteenth century in neo-Victorian fiction. If the past is taken under a mere history writing with an aim to give information as it emerges like a didactic prose, it may not be possible to observe a nostalgic approach toward the past. However, giving a renewed version of historical records with a blending of fact and fiction, unlike mere history writing, allows the readers to subvert it because of the freshness added by contemporary eyes. Despite the newness added by contemporary lenses, this nostalgic impulse toward history, especially the Victorian era, causes a kind of fascination by celebrating the nineteenth century with its values because of seeing the past as valuable times. The interconnection between such values, or the stereotypes that are marked by Victorian history such as the developments of the nineteenth century and contemporary times makes it possible to create a familiarity with the Victorians.

As the Victorian era is over, the next generations inevitably have the chance of seeing the past as valuable and antique. Whereas “the high literary modernism and the popular culture” in 1900-1950s is explained through its repudiation of Victorian norms of culture and society, this repudiation has led to not only a comprehensive and conflictual study of Victorian history, but also “the charm of antiquity and the exotic” which proves that “even its worst abuses seem to fascinate rather than appal” (Kaplan, 2007, p. 6). With his claim, Kaplan indeed proves that the next generations after the Victorians not only provide a criticism of the Victorians, but also a fascination with them as Victorian history has faded. This argument of Kaplan about the fascination with the old Victorian world, may set up a foundation for writing about the Victorians, but the reasons that trigger a sense of this “retro-fascination”¹ should be investigated as well.

¹ Mentioning “Victorian-centred novels”, Sally Shuttleworth (1998) indicates these novels “reveal, nonetheless, an absolute, non-ironic, fascination with the details of the period, and with our relations to it” (p. 253).

Although it was an age of developments, there were inevitably many inhumane practices in every layer of life, ranging from child labour to the humiliation of lower-class people or gender prejudices which always favoured men over women. Nonetheless, the deteriorating conditions of the contemporary era prove that history witnessed better conditions when the two periods are compared. Or else, the similarities and close kinship between the generations of the Victorian era and contemporary times trigger a sense of definition and finding a meaning for present times. This is accompanied by nostalgia because the contemporary era needs a sense of retrospective look at the past by missing the so-called good old days, for better or for worse, with an aim to find resemblances and understand the present times. In addition, the contemporary lenses, which witness the harsh realities of capitalist societies, wars, starvation, and many other violent things upon humanity, may consider that they witness the worst conditions ever. Despite the inhumane practices that surround every layer of life, people continue their practices no matter how critical they are and experience things as first-person practitioners. However, the novels that are based on history or previous times reverse this idea since people from the contemporary ages do not experience things that they hear from previous times. For this reason, the authors in the contemporary times are not influenced by the conflicts from the previous centuries as much as they do in their period and this may prompt them to think about the past times as better times as well as considering those lost centuries as 'good old days' with a value as well as the connection between the Victorian era and the later centuries, which possessed a piece from Victorian history in every layer.

It might be common to see that neo-Victorian texts imply a nostalgic venture to the past but it was a period of underdevelopment even though it brought many advancements. One of the main subjects of such underdevelopments is 'otherised' individual that is common to see in Victorian times through lower class people, women and so on, and the deterioration of those things are present in the contemporary times despite the nostalgic impulse because neo-Victorian works have to portray the realities of the Victorian era as well. Matthew Sweet (2001) proves that some texts which give information about the nineteenth century portray women as marginated figures out of the economy, unable to go out of the domestic sphere of houses (p. 181). If this patriarchal system, or even class distinctions of the Victorian era is taken into consideration, one might ask the question of whether it is necessary to emulate the so-

called ‘good old days’, which are notional and problematic for contemporary readers. A reader who defends the rights of women and promotes equality among genders might criticise Fowles’s novel *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969) for representing the clichéd woman type, confirming the nineteenth century moralities for women’s chastity because the main female character is attributed a bad fame, which needs to be criticised in the contemporary times. In her analysis of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Hutcheon (1988) deduces that “[t]he past is always placed critically—and not nostalgically—in relation with the present” (p. 45). As a postmodern text, out of neo-Victorian nostalgia, this novel also carries the qualities of postmodernism and neo-Victorian fiction at the same time because of its portrayal of the Victorian era, and the past. For this reason, the postmodern quality of criticising, metafiction, and intertextuality, which are seen in this novel, may contribute to the development of neo-Victorianism.

Moreover, neo-Victorianism holds the power of rejecting or subverting the past partially, similar to postmodernism, and this is raised from an inspiration of bringing an alternative to retro-fascination under the conditions of contemporary era. Likewise, Kate Mitchell (2010), referring to nostalgia, argues: “Rather than falsify and trivialise the past it produces multiple stories, at least some of which challenge and critique official historiographies and other dominant images of the past” (p. 6). Notwithstanding the harsh criticism towards the Victorian past, neo-Victorianism embraces Victorian history and reinterprets it through the conditions of the present, which are observed through the alternatives to history. This is also a reflective aspect for recognising a similarity between postmodernism and neo-Victorianism in order to give them mutual characteristics. According to Hutcheon (1988), “[postmodernism] critically confronts the past with the present, and vice versa” (p. 39). When the subversive nature of postmodern literature is considered, it is inevitable to see a familiar standing in neo-Victorian literature as it is born partially under the shade of postmodernism.

Nevertheless, when contemporary ages are taken, it is inevitable to see the influence of technological advancements in the positioning of neo-Victorian studies because the works themselves are prepared according to technological advancements which took place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries being a part of the presentist image of the novels. Kohlke (2008) also comments on this, claiming that critics of neo-Victorianism must investigate the influence of media on neo-Victorian

fashion based on the views and replies of audiences (p. 6). This indicates that the neo-Victorian process is affected by media and audience implying a presentist image because media and technology play a major role, especially in the twenty-first century. The feedbacks from audiences are also important because the works must meet the desires and expectations of audiences to survive in the capitalist mode of contemporary times. Such an argument illustrates how there has occurred a revisionist approach to fiction from postmodernism to neo-Victorianism due to the changes in time. Besides, the importance of science makes itself evident in neo-Victorian novels because these works feed on the Victorian times, when science was developed unlike any other times up to that time. Science, as a common motive for both Victorian and contemporary times, makes it possible to understand the parallelism between the past and the present as well.

If neo-Victorian fiction, especially the novels as they constitute a major role for the popularisation of neo-Victorian theory in literary canon, is regarded as revisiting, rewriting and any other form with a 're' prefix, it will be easier to comprehend their reflection in the present. Such a revisiting takes place in the present moment of neo-Victorian authors, and they indeed look back and see what happened previously representing a renewed version of the past in their novels. To portray this, Simon Joyce (2007) uses the image of "rearview mirror" as he argues that it is impossible to face the real Victorians; instead, "a mediated image" is seen like someone can see in a rearview mirror (p. 4). Similarly, neo-Victorian novels are thematically based on a reimagination of the Victorian era borrowing from that period and adding originality with a contemporary eye of the authors. Put under the category of postmodern reimagination, Andrea Kirchknopf (2008) claims that the plots are from the nineteenth century, or stretch to the twentieth century set in England despite various settings as well, and themes are based on conventional Victorian quarrels, including moral values, scientific issues or reassertion of cultural and literary things which can also be found in contemporary ideology (p. 54). This claim exemplifies a handling of the Victorian era by contemporary authors either in the twentieth or in the twenty-first century.

The novels produced under the shadow of neo-Victorianism might bear the characteristics of postmodernism due to a variety of techniques used by both theories, and some postmodern novels can be outstanding examples because they also have the characteristics of neo-Victorian fiction. However, postmodern and neo-Victorian

fiction also share differences as well although some critics use the prefix of 'post' to explain the context of neo-Victorianism, which is also a crucial issue to be solved within the next part of this thesis because neo-Victorian is not postmodern. According to Kohlke (2008), the theoretical context of neo-Victorian as a multidimensional series rather than a pseudo-postmodern production in the second half of the twentieth century is an apprehension of neo-Victorian thinkers. Kohlke also comments on the scope of neo-Victorian productions, suggesting that neo-Victorian investigation should include various literary forms since most of the discussion is surrounded by novels and films with market concerns in neo-Victorianism, and this leads to unanswered issues about the engagement of neo-Victorian taste in different forms (p. 5). Although alternatives may also contribute a lot to neo-Victorian ground, the novels and movies play the main role because the books of this movement have the chance to give the realities of the Victorian era in such a way that reality and fiction are mixed, recreating the past and present consciousness in detail through words. When it comes to the movies, it is inevitable to observe the impact of movies in the contemporary times to make books popular.

In light of these, it must be noted that the theoretical side of neo-Victorian fiction is critically examined in many articles and works, yet one main issue is its naming. Kirchknopf (2008) questions the rewritings of the Victorian period by using the terms such as "historical novel, post-Victorian fiction or adaptation" in her article titled "(Re)workings of Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Definitions, Terminology, Contexts" (2008) in which she also questions the differences among those terms and also definitions (p. 54). Although there are many terms which are used to refer to neo-Victorian as a genre, they may fall under different categories of novels by different critics or theorists. Kirchknopf (2008) also questions the naming of rewriting of the Victorian period through terms such as "*Victoriana*, *Victoriographies*, *retro-*, *neo-* or *post-Victorian novels*" by also asking questions about holding to already known terms such as "*historiographic metafiction*" and "*historical novels*" (p. 59). The fact that postmodernism and neo-Victorianism share mutual characteristics proves that the prefixes of 'neo' and 'post' are perhaps the most suitable ones to name the rewritings about the Victorian era. Kirchknopf (2008) also arrives at a similar suggestion, claiming that she will conclude by using "*post-Victorian fiction*" (p. 59), in viewing the terms since it shows little difference by not being disassociated from

postmodernism. This claim of Kirchknopf might be rooted in the fact that post-Victorian fiction can be viewed under postmodern recreations of Victorian history.

Indeed, some works that are classified as neo-Victorian were published during the period of postmodernism. Even though different terms are used to define what neo-Victorian fiction is, 'neo,' 'retro,' and 'post' are used with different layers of meaning and slight differences, as mentioned. For example, with 'retro', there might be a restriction of history writing because an apparent nostalgia takes place, while 'neo' adds the emphasis of the newness. Although the term "post-Victorian" might embody the combination of Victorian history and postmodern representation in one formula, it prevents the freshness of a novel from putting the work under old-fashioned literary styles. The newness found with the prefix "neo" suggests a re-establishment of the Victorian spirit in a new age, which is quite appropriate to the name. For example, Louisa Hadley (2010), in her *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative: The Victorians and Us*, also uses "neo-Victorian" in terminology because this term demonstrates that the Victorian period is gathered with a fresh tie by not being a shadow under this freshness (p. 3). Therefore, this thesis will review the reworkings of the Victorian period mainly as neo-Victorian since the emphasis is on the presentist eye rather than focusing on only historical realities completely, or postmodern representation.

In this perspective, it is inevitable to find a fertile ground upon which neo-Victorian works are constructed because the works in which the Victorian soul is reflected can fall under the category of neo-Victorian fiction to some extent, although each work may be classified as a part of different theories or forms such as historical novel, postmodern fiction or only as neo-Victorian novel. To discuss the terminological background of neo-Victorianism, it should be noted that retrospection, presentism and newness are the essential words to divulge. Before considering it, the source of neo-Victorian novels should also be clarified with such terminology. Kirchknopf (2008) assumes that the criticism through "*historical fiction* or *historiographic metafiction*" is given for explaining the groundwork of the novel while suffixes and prefixes such as "*neo-, retro-, post-Victorian* or *Victoriana*" are deployed to reapproach the contemporary rewritings in diverse views (p. 59). This means that the soul of the Victorian era is represented directly with various explanations which differ from work to work. The newness that is to be emphasised can be found in the prefix of "neo-" itself since the title of *Definition of 'neo-'* in *Collins Dictionary* (n.d.) defines "neo-"

as a prefix which is practised with nouns to create adjectives or nouns that indicate a modernised version of some patterns from the past (n.p.). While this definition leads to a composition of forms that were found in the past as a modern version, the main meaning is ‘new’. The online source of *Merriam-Webster* (n.d.), with *neo-* title, demonstrates that “neo-” means “new” or “recent”, or else it means “new and different period or form of” while its etymology goes back to “Greek *neo-*, combining form from *néos* ‘young, fresh, new’” (n.p.). This proves how the focus of neo-Victorianism is carried to newness and presentist criticism rather than mere historicism.

Along with dictionary meaning, the terminological suggestions demonstrate that something positioned with “neo” is made up of newness and originality. In other words, the original is formed into something new, which is parallel to the term “neo-Victorian” as it is, in a way, a new Victorian, and its origin is the Victorian. According to Fredric Jameson (1991), the contemporary “discourse” strives to incorporate “primary text” into its peculiar texture by reestablishing it with alterations and using its own pieces, “in order to forge the neologisms, that is to say, the official terminology of the theoretical wrapper from them” (p. 103). In this way, the logic of neo-Victorian is that it is both new and original, not only in terms of Victorian but also neo-Victorian. By this, it is meant that the original values belong to the Victorians, but the newly established neo-Victorian is also original with its presentism. Mark Llewellyn (2008) confirms this, claiming that a neo-Victorian work returns to a substance from the nineteenth century with a purpose of replenishing and rejuvenating the significance of that thing in the present. Llewellyn also mentions that “contemporaneous historicism,” which is found in a neo-Victorian work, is important for the designation of the neo-Victorian (pp. 170-171). In this way, something from the past, in the nineteenth century, is recomposed by mixing the peculiarities of a specific time with the quality of a later century.

These may be family problems, social issues, the spirit of the culture, or historical and important people. In this perspective, the ability of neo-Victorianism to fill the gaps cannot be ignored as it constitutes a vital position to create the fictional side of neo-Victorian novels as well as historical traces. Although the Victorian era has some deteriorated issues in terms of gender and class conflicts, they are reversed and complied with in neo-Victorian fiction, and this adds a lot of originality to the

composition of neo-Victorian novels. Taking Victorian people as figures who are “cruel, hypocritical, repressive, intolerant, prudish and cheerless” will give a chance to “post-Victorian” novels to handle such problems (Sweet, 2001, p. 232). The main reason is that such “post-Victorian” or “neo-Victorian” novels, as will be dealt with in this name, are composed in times of human rights and contemporary developments. Besides, the gaps that are filled by the stories could come out of the lost voices of minorities and ignored subjects in the Victorian era, and neo-Victorian literature is able to use such things to create its separation from Victorian literature by removing the problem of authenticity.

With themes from a variety of subjects, such as blank spaces waiting to be filled, ghosts, mysterious events, murders, and detective stories, neo-Victorian fiction finds a place for itself to fill the gaps with fictional lines. For instance, ghost or murder stories can also be found in neo-Victorian books, and they not only further the thrilling effect on readers but also these stories have some emptiness within themselves, which are filled by authors, with different layers of comments by researchers. Kohlke (2008) comments on “haunting”, arguing that it could be analysed “as indicative of personal and cultural trauma: in Freudian terms, as the compulsion to repeat the past that has not, as yet, been adequately processed and integrated into consciousness” (p. 9). Kohlke (2008), then, refers to the term “spectrality” to explain “the neo-Victorian's preoccupation with liberating lost voices and repressed histories of minorities left out of the public record and, hence, with imagining more viable ways of living with one another in the future” (p. 9). In connection with this, the neo-Victorian novel also has the opportunity to give voice to suppressed groups who were ignored in the nineteenth century works of the Victorian era, by giving a voice to minorities such as individuals, who have been marginalised.

Although postmodernism, which gives a place to minorities in novels, struggled to change things through different techniques, the attitude of giving voice to ‘other’ is also essential for neo-Victorian fiction because it expresses an independent preference of people without being tied by previous Victorian conventions. No matter how new preferences might be employed in the formation of neo-Victorian theory, it inevitably benefits from postmodernism, which also struggled to change things. For example, Hutcheon (1988) finds that “assertion of identity through difference and specificity is a constant in postmodern thought” (p. 59). Her argument implies that

postmodernism has a perpetual idea of challenging things by giving a voice to what is left out. In connection with neo-Victorian theory, in the Victorian era, the ‘others’ were not accepted into the mainstream culture because there was a conflict between males and non-males, or higher-class and lower-class people, of whom first options were accepted while the second ones were ‘otherised’. This becomes a chance for neo-Victorian authors to revisit the past by reinterpreting the lost voices since the present has seen a change in the rights of people, which also marks a similarity between neo-Victorianism and postmodernism. Yet, the separation of both theories is made possible due to neo-Victorian fiction’s essential focus on the Victorian era itself by rewriting them. Thus, neo-Victorian stands as a theoretical frame for refreshing the lost times of the nineteenth century from a contemporary view by blending the past and the present; and this proves how its terminological structure is shaped according to presentist images as well as the use of Victorian times.

1.2. Writing History and Historical Novel

Clarifying that the use of Victorian conventions in neo-Victorian novels is inevitable, it should be noted that neo-Victorianism is influenced by the “historical novel” and postmodernism in terms of its approaches to the history of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the imposition of history in fictional works has been observable in many periods of literature with works, which make use of specific historical times through original plots. Although there are some exemplary fictional works which are categorized as “historical novels”, the origin of “historical novels” is somehow problematic. Before passing on this claim, the definition of the “historical novel” might prepare an essence upon which the contextualisation of history writing could be analysed. For Alastair MacDonald Taylor (1938), “the historical novel” is a “form of fiction which attempts to reconstruct the past, and which is written by someone who, having never seen the age about which he is writing, therefore never once speaks with personal authority” (p. 470). With this definition, the most crucial content of a historical novel emerges as the presence of historical realities with people such as kings or queens, social or political events and a peculiar time in history that happened before the relevant novel has been produced. However, historical novels do not simply and only focus on such realities. As Hayden White (1987) asserts, “real events should not speak, should not tell themselves” (p. 3). Rather than this, it is the fictionality that tells itself in historical novels, and the process of narrativization encourages the merging of

history and fictionality in this context. The real events may be found in historical novels; however, they are not at the centre but the fictional recreation of those historical themes is on the ground.

As its contextual borders, a historical novel is supposed to bring history and fiction together, presenting readers with an original structure. Still, it has some definitions and explanations as well. In a pursuit to answer what a historical novel is through a clear and correct reply, Harry E. Shaw (1983) explains that a historical novel expresses a type of novel which cannot be discerned from other kinds in relation to describing organisational methods like a picaresque novel, or to raise a group of feelings as found in the gothic novel and sentimental novel or in relation to an era when it was composed like an eighteenth-century novel. Rather than this, the element of distinction includes “the milieu represented,” which is intimately associated with the industrial novel (p. 20). This explanation proves that the principal representation of a historical novel should be an atmosphere, an environment which could be represented through individuals and historical events. The atmosphere that is given through a “historical novel” is supposed to echo the spirit of a time, but it does not necessarily give only a period. Instead, the purpose of a historical novel is to represent the soul and spirit of an environment.

While there may be a variety of reasons for writing history in a recontextualised form, such as to fill the gaps, to give a voice to unheard figures, including suppressed people, or to understand history more comprehensively through the conditions of the contemporary times, it should be recognised that history has been experienced once with all its realities. In his discussions about “historicism”, Fredric Jameson (1979) formulates this by asserting that history is not available without “textual or narrative form,” and it is not a text, narration or a master one, which means that history can be accessed “only by way of some prior textualization or narrative (re)construction” (p. 42). Such a claim can be found as an excuse for neo-Victorian novels as they represent textual and narrative styles of the Victorian era through a process of recreation and considering Victorian history as a base. Still, this problematises authenticity by bringing into mind the question of which texts are real and authentic. As Victorian history is a milestone in history, due to its developments and problems which share many resemblances with later periods, the discovery of the nineteenth century life is aesthetically and factually essential for literature. To differentiate Victorian history from its reconstructions, minor details and plot

constructions contribute to an innovative image; therefore, the content of neo-Victorian novels through contemporary and historical details is quite important to discover.

Another reason for the emergence of the “historical novel”, which includes facts of a specific time period, is related to important events such as the Industrial Revolution, which apparently shows its consequences in many novels of the nineteenth century. While the Industrial Revolution is one example for the creation of realist novels in Victorian times, other social events also have a key impact on the formulation of different novel movements, just like the change in life due to mass developments in popular culture, which could be found in postmodern novels. This is exactly what links a novel with contemporary influences because the novels are inevitably influenced by contemporary events although they may adopt historical periods as well. This also illustrates the source of historical novels as both the history of past times and the fictionality of present times. Accordingly, in neo-Victorian fiction, both are mixed because they transmit the spirit of the Victorian era through a wide range of themes, plots, characterisations, and forms from contemporary times. At this point, the neo-Victorian novel’s position may be questioned as to whether it is a contemporary novel or a historical novel, and the answer may be given as a contemporary historical novel.

The representation of history and contemporary times simultaneously arises mainly from intermingling reality and fiction, and historical novel essentially achieves this combination essentially. A compositional ground for this mixture may be eighteenth century, or nineteenth century novels, which cover fictional stories along with historical representations. While there are many novels which can be categorised as historical novels, some authors adopt a technique of mixing history and reality at the same time through a specific character or a plot in which history is narrated. Jerome de Groot (2010) finds that the authors of historical novels get the basis of history through realities, spheres, words or facts, and they create a story through the blank spaces (pp. 9-10). Within this explanation, the fact that fact and fiction meet in a historical novel is evident because the historical facts may be given in a historical novel, but the presence of a fictional story is also a must because it is what separates a historical novel from history writing.

When the “historical novel” is considered, the impact of Leopold von Ranke, an important German historian in the nineteenth century, is necessary to examine as his ideas contributed a lot to the development of the “historical novel”. As for the

significance of Ranke, he provided “important contributions to the emergence of modern history writing and is recognised as the father of the ‘scientific’ historical school of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (Boldt & Fullagar, 2017, p. 6). For this reason, it may not be wrong to consider him as a leading figure in the development of historiography and “historical novels”. In his approach to history, Ranke thought, “all sources, without exception” must be examined, and he proposed more detailed arguments about history. (Eskildsen, 2019, p. 258). Being a historian, Ranke has been a guiding figure for promoting dependence the sources of history, preserving the significance of research in writing history. He considered history as the reflection of realities and focused on “objectivity”, separating history from various fields including literature and created a professional field for history (Chen, 2020, p. 92). His realist and objective approach to history may comply with the realist perspective of the Victorian era but this approach seems to have changed due to the questions towards history by postmodernism and neo-Victorianism since both theoretical grounds aim to question and subvert historiography, unlike a totally objective evaluation of facts. However, Ranke’s opinions inevitably paved the way for the development of a professional and scientific approach to history writing since he added value to historiography, giving it a peculiar attention.

In his evaluation of history, Ranke has been affected by the realities of his era, which proves that realism has been a dominant impact among critics and researchers in the nineteenth century even though it has gone under change during contemporary periods since the authors added another dimension of subverting such things. As the Revolution in 1830 had influenced Ranke’s opinions about history, he created his own formulations for history by merging his ideas about revolution and history (Krieger, 1975, p. 3). The impact of the Revolution of 1830 might have affected Ranke to form his approach to history writing but this is, indeed, a clue for the fact that historical events, which are generally quite important, and trigger critics and scholars to turn their faces to the realities of their era. As regards his interest in history, the involvement of Ranke in famous historical issues of “the Reformation” and “the compendiums of ancient literature” inspired Ranke to examine sources (Bourne, 1896, p. 389). This is what nineteenth century literature saw exactly, in an era when the novel was at its peak of realism by representing the realities of society. With this consciousness in mind, the Victorian authors also turned their faces to historical matters, being aware of the

developments that they experienced as it brings the necessity to study history to understand the present.

As to the emergence of “historical novel” in the nineteenth century, the impact of Sir Walter Scott cannot be ignored because he is considered as the founder of the “historical novel” in a way. Richard Bradford (2007) mentions that the historical novel, which was “a subgenre”, emerged with Sir Walter Scott in the nineteenth century, and he was accepted as “its most influential and popular practitioner” (p. 81). However, other researchers may suggest that he is not the only influential or beginner of the historical novel as a genre. As an example, Groot (2010) suggests that whereas the historical novel genre is regarded to be produced firstly in the early times of the nineteenth century, especially with the works of Sir Walter Scott, it has definitely former examples till the nineteenth century (p. 11). Through this claim, the novels which embrace historical contents in the eighteenth century become exemplary works such as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which narrates the history of an isolated man through the themes of colonialism and imperialism, or Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) which is related to 1745 rebellion. However, the significance of the nineteenth century novels with historical contents cannot be ignored as the novels produced in the nineteenth century were marked by realism, which could also be associated with the historical realities. The theoretical inception of the nineteenth century in conventional writing was a life-changing development due to “the Industrial Revolution”, and the common impulse for writing history is tied to “the notion of change” (Price, 1996, pp. 223-224). This will also clarify how some of the nineteenth century novelists felt a need to represent the realities of the age along with the previous times because reality was a dominant force found in their novels as their era required this due to important changes.

In studying history, Sir Walter Scott emerges as an important author, as he is considered one of the leading authors of historical novels in the nineteenth century. In his novels, he merges historical figures and his fictional abilities, which end up being a historical novel. Interconnection between official history and fictional world that encompasses such a history is also solved, if it is considered as a problem, in Scott’s technique. While Scott’s historical novels through different methods of writing history are important for converting official history into something personal, imaginative and fictional, he also uses history as an adjunction to his plots. Ina Ferris (1988) asserts the historical novel enriches real history, creating an outgrowth, and both these outgrowth

and enrichment are important for Scott's management of restoring the past with something messy, extreme, and disparate elements that history restrains or ingests controlling episodes towards a relevant design (p. 78). The evaluation of history as an additional force to enrich the content of fictional writing clarifies this idea as well. Besides, Scott's influence is mostly observed in the nineteenth century when historical novels fed on realism in addition to history. In most of the novels that were produced in nineteenth century England, an inevitable concern is to witness the realities of the age mainly due to the Industrial Revolution because the Victorian authors witnessed significant changes in their ages, which triggered them to study their history combining realism and historical contents.

Turning back to Sir Walter Scott, who is considered a key figure for the rise of the historical novel, especially with his work *Waverley* (1814), his novels employ different ages such as the twelfth century, as in *Ivanhoe* (1819) or middle-ages in *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828), which employ different characterisations and plots. In a general context, a historical novel is supposed to adopt a time and reestablish it according to a fictional world. This means that historical figures or events may be mentioned in a historical novel, but the crucial point is to create a fictional world that does not have to obey history exactly. According to Georg Lukács (1963), a historical novel of Scott is an extension of "the great realistic social novel of the eighteenth century" and his examinations on the authors of that century, although it does not diffuse much totally in terms of theoretical part, affirm a deep information and a comprehensive examination on that literature (p. 31). While Scott is generally known as a nineteenth century writer, the realities that he represents in his novel remind readers of the literary style of the eighteenth century, which also adopted a realistic style. In his technique to convert history into fictional production through time periods, the beginnings and conclusions of his novel seem to have a crucial role. According to Ina Ferris (1988), within the complicated nature of Scott's involvement and opposition to real history, beginnings are important as they are supposed to go out of formal history and dive into personal fields in which fiction is able to function without restriction, and performs its common priority to presume (p. 76). Such a technique of Scott may be linked to the unique representation of a historical period in a historical novel in which fact and fiction meet.

When it comes to the development of the "historical novel" as a genre after the nineteenth century, the twentieth century holds an essential role with its modernism

and postmodernism, which come into mind as two major literary movements of the century. In modernist novels, themes such as existentialism, individualism or isolation may be observed, and these issues point out that historical facts are not so common in modernist novels. The transition from realism, or the realities of some times, to individual themes, is what breaks the ties between the eighteenth or the nineteenth century novels and modernist novels. Mentioning the 1930s after the First World War, Groot (2010) suggests that the historical novel was detached from the genre of novel in general and it progressed like “a sub-genre at a tangent from the mainstream” (p. 45). This claim demonstrates that the historical novel in the modernist era was considered a smaller portion of literary works as it constituted a part of the general atmosphere of a disillusioned population with war. Although there are some novels which employ historical traces such as colonial or imperial themes in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), there was a decline in realist and historical contents in the modernist era. The main reason behind this is that the authors wanted to break the ties with already accepted literary norms of literature such as didactic aims or only pleasure, and they experimented with literature itself by introducing new themes and subjects, which were unique during the conditions of the twentieth century.

However, there was a turnaround to historical subjects in the postmodern era, which was marked by several historical themes or techniques such as “historiographic metafiction”. Linda Hutcheon (1988) claims that “historiographic metafiction” separates “its formal auto-representation and its historical context” which leads to a contradiction in the recognition of history as there is not an agreement or “dialectic” but an unsettled discrepancy as she suggests in her work *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) (p. 106). Through this idea, the postmodern technique of deconstructing and playfulness come into mind because there is no certain truth but a plurality of truths in a postmodern work. The association of this with the “historical novel” as a genre is connected with the mixture of history and fiction in a historical novel because both postmodern novels, which employ historical themes, and historical novels benefit from an intermingling of history and fictional stories. Combining reality and fiction, postmodernism is a critical juncture as it represents radically different novels with several techniques. As Groot (2010) argues historical fiction demonstrates the combination of recognised and fictitious aspects with “the innate textuality of history” as well as “the use of the realist mode to present a story which is clearly fiction”, and these are the parts of “the contemporary postmodern historiographic

critique” (p. 113). Even this claim demonstrates that postmodern historical novel has brought its readers an awareness of the fictionality and historicity of its texts, which is quite unique.

Therefore, the lost ties between historical contents from the nineteenth century to the modernist era or to the postmodern movement become vivid because there has been an apparent gap due to the modernist breaking of the content from the historical novel. In this way, the remembrance of the past as a trend in the postmodern era is apparent due to a popular tendency of postmodern authors who wanted to split off from the previous movements. The use of historical contents in postmodern novels is not limited to only the second half of the twentieth century when postmodernism was at its peak. Instead, the techniques adopted by postmodern novels such as decentralisation in accordance with historical themes are found in the work of Scott indicating his own method of composing a historical novel. While Scott depicts famous historical individuals, he gives the primary role to his fictional characters who are not much of importance in real history (Lukács, 1963, p. 38). Through this, Scott’s formula of the historical novel includes a reversion of real history with all its truths and facts since the characters reverse history through their importance which adds another dimension to the significance of fiction. In addition, Milda Danytė (2007) argues that there is a probability of “decentralization of both historical and fictional narratives” (p. 34). What postmodernism shares with the historical novel could be this technique of rejecting the central argument of history. Although major figures held a primary position in the real history of the world while minorities remained in the background, Scott reverses this set rule of history, and creates his own model of history. The common motive found both in the postmodernist novel and the historical novel as a genre lies in the adoption of decentralisation since both novel types destroy an already accepted formula, either as various themes in postmodernism or as historical subjects in historical novels, by introducing the creative art of fiction to history as neo-Victorian fiction also subverts the real history of the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, the interconnection between postmodernism and neo-Victorianism makes it difficult to explore the distinction between the novels of these two movements. The boundaries between postmodernism and neo-Victorianism might be blurred because of the periodisation problems since both theories go hand in hand in the twentieth century or the shared contents of history and techniques. If this claim is analysed in depth, it will be correct to define neo-Victorian similar to a sub-branch

that is influenced by postmodernism. Carroll (2010) considers neo-Victorian works as a successful present-day production tied by a “reinstatement as a subgenre of postmodern fiction with its capacity to renovate textual representation” (p. 173). Through this claim, she sees neo-Victorian fiction regarding postmodern fiction with a difference of text, or content. However, the techniques or subject matters with the employment of history, in general, may be similar, but the content is based on the Victorian era in neo-Victorian fiction. Approaching specifically Victorian values is what distinguishes neo-Victorianism from other genres or movements with a dimensionally new perspective.

With regard to the distinctive feature of neo-Victorian novels, neo-Victorianism emerges as a particular approach to the nineteenth century since neo-Victorian works are, either as novels or as movies, directly surrounded by the values of the nineteenth century as historical contexts in addition to fictional creations of authors. While postmodern authors could also reconstruct historical subjects through some techniques, which will be explained further in the next parts of this thesis, neo-Victorian authors and their approach to history differs greatly from postmodernism, due to their handling of specifically the nineteenth century, unlike postmodernism, which is not limited by only one century to write about it. Besides, neo-Victorian authors are out from the periodisation of the postmodern movement, which is nearly marked as the second half of the twentieth century, while neo-Victorianism dates to the twentieth century and continues in the twenty-first century.

Even though neo-Victorian novels are inevitably influenced by historical and postmodern novels, they have their own understanding of the nineteenth century as well as being affected by contemporary issues. In an age of profits through the popularisation of books on the shelves, not only neo-Victorian novels but also fiction, in general, holds a crucial place as it constitutes a major position among books, and detective novels or mystery novels, being a part of popular culture, hold a privileged position. Kate Mitchell (2010) argues that neo-Victorian novels struggle with the aspect of restoring Victorian history according to the desires and wishes of readers from contemporary times as well as bringing the nostalgic times back with a financial achievement (p. 3). If both wishes of having success and representing history at the same time come together, the intermingling of history and mysterious topics in neo-Victorian fiction will be an opportunity for authors and readers as well who could discover the filled gaps of the history and mysterious subjects that have an impact on

the flowability of the neo-Victorian novels. Therefore, these gaps, revisited by contemporary eyes, may contribute to the development of detective or mystery novels as well as neo-Victorian and historical novels because they allow a space for authors to fill.

1.3. Postmodern Version of History and Neo-Victorianism

Along with the “historical novel” as a genre, the impact of postmodernism upon the structure of neo-Victorianism has a crucial significance because they share many technical and contextual similarities. First of all, dealing with history in a literary sense has been a mutual characteristic of postmodernism and neo-Victorian theory. Gaining popularity, the representation of history in the twenty-first century has been a common motive for revisiting lost senses. Especially with postmodern historiography and neo-Victorian fiction, this has been a source of interest for those, who academically pursue the reasons behind this and the consequences. Rewriting dead figures and values, history writing opens problematic questions as to its originality, imitation issues, accuracy or reliability. During his discussions on postmodern historiography, Groot (2010) suggests that history is introduced with an “order and meaning” and it is “unknowable” in his discussion of history writing and historical fiction (p. 111). As its trustworthiness may be questioned, the life like events and accounts are partly responsible for the creation of an authentic, and original piece of work if postmodern or neo-Victorian fiction is considered. Additionally, the alternatives to original historical realities found in fictional works, which deal with historical themes, make it possible to compose a contemporary-based view of the past as it is seen in neo-Victorian novels.

Although neo-Victorian works are produced under the impact of the Victorian era and contemporary times at the same time, the impact of postmodern elements cannot be ignored, which ultimately leads to calling neo-Victorian fiction “post-Victorian” fiction for their approach to history. Even when the chronological order is taken into consideration, neo-Victorian fiction seems to overlap with postmodernism. In terms of content, neo-Victorian fiction apparently benefits from the Victorian era by reinterpreting it, but postmodern fiction does not necessarily have to focus on the Victorian era. The juxtaposition of history and presentist gaze is quite important as it becomes a source for future generations and future works, just as the past works are the motives for the production of later works. The boundaries between postmodernism

and neo-Victorianism may prevent classifying neo-Victorianism as a subheading under the title of postmodernism and determine that neo-Victorianism is directly related to the Victorian era, unlike postmodernism. Nevertheless, both of them share mutual techniques in literary works to some extent, and the application of such techniques in the formulation of neo-Victorian novels bring these novels an original and authentic structure. One common technique deployed by two genres is “historiographic metafiction”, which is associated with the delineation of history, in addition to deconstruction, dispersal, nostalgia, or irony. In Ihab Hassan’s book *The Postmodern Turn* (1987), postmodernism covers “Decreation/Deconstruction, Antithesis, Absence, Dispersal, Text/Intertext” and so on (pp. 91-92). While his distinction is mainly based on the differentiation between modernism and postmodernism, the techniques included under the title of postmodern theory may pave a fertile background for the experimentation of neo-Victorian theory with an original structure benefiting from the nineteenth century.

It would not be wrong to indicate that neo-Victorianism as a theory has gained popularity with postmodern works because there was a return to history in postmodernism after a modernist period. The scrutinising of the nineteenth century as a fertile source could be a chance for contemporary authors to bring a unique combination of the past and the present with a specific century. Samantha J. Carroll (2010) also argues that if the present is regarded as the postmodern period, when the twentieth-century works and postmodern background bring a mask worn by the neo-Victorian fiction, there occurs a “marriage of influences between the Victorian *and* the postmodern”, namely Victorian history and the present, which defines this new genre as “neo-Victorian” (p. 181). Thus, there is a mixture of the present and the past in neo-Victorian works because neo-Victorian authors take the traces of the nineteenth century as a source and reinterpret them in a new form. Moreover, neo-Victorian authors rediscover the past with some elements from the past, such as the settings of London, the atmosphere, morals or society, but there is an inevitable use of present-day characteristics such as developed technology, changed perspectives towards morals and so on.

Both within the borders of postmodernism and outside it, neo-Victorianism may be positioned as a part of postmodernism or as a totally new genre due to its distinctive representation of the nineteenth century. As both movements make use of certain techniques to show the uncertainty of history, plurality of truths, authenticity

and retrospection, there is an interconnection not only in terms of historical contents but also formulas. In postmodernism, there are two attitudes towards history, as Hutcheon (1988) asserts: “It reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in so doing, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge” (p. 89). By converting the absolute knowledge of history into something uncertain, postmodernism benefits from plural voices and history writing, which ultimately can be associated with neo-Victorianism. In this perspective, postmodern novels limit the presence of only one reality by imposing plural realities. In neo-Victorian novels, the difference for plurality is the presence of multi-layered perspectives towards history. While the nineteenth century is experienced once with its reality, neo-Victorian novels employ that reality and mix it with contemporary perspectives, which consequently leads to more than one real history. What causes the problem of authenticity is also relatable if such a plural representation is considered.

As a radical movement in the literary canon, postmodernism stands for its giving importance to history as well as the rejection of singularity. By rediscovering the lost connections with the past, postmodern literature borrows a lot from history as it reinstalls the past in the present age, similar to neo-Victorianism. For Fredric Jameson (1991), in his “Introduction” of *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), “[i]t is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place” (p. ix). In an age of radical changes due to advancements in every layer of life, when thinking about the past is absent after a modernist experimentation of individualism or experimentation, remembering the past lays bare for understanding the significance of the present more comprehensively. To illustrate Jameson’s claim, Kate Mitchell (2010) suggests that the fashion of looking back is determined by a rapid reshaping of historical forms in an artistic way rather than interpreting them within a general historical background when they originated (p. 5). Thus, the artistic formulation of historiography adds the fictionality side to novels, and this could be a nourishment for both postmodern and neo-Victorian novels. Although both approaches of Jameson and Mitchell prove that they insert a critical perspective by taking the historical facts out of their general context, neo-Victorian fiction does not totally ignore the realities; instead, it takes the realities of the Victorian era partially and reinterprets them. Similarly, the significance of the past in postmodern literature also lies in postmodernism’s ability to subvert and diverge history writing because it

gives a reshaped portion of the past to its readers. This is also demonstrated through the fact that postmodern novels offer multi-dimensional voices with multiple identities or centres. As Hutcheon claims: “postmodernism establishes, differentiates, and then disperses stable narrative voices (and bodies) that use memory to try to make sense of the past” (p. 118). For this reason, the ability of postmodern fiction to conceive multiplicity lays bare for the foundation of rewriting history out of its realist context, by making readers think about the past and grasp their present.

Pertaining to “historiographic metafiction”, which is a term known popularly for postmodern literature, especially with Linda Hutcheon, the novels in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are involved in a progressive order of reshaping history. To define “historiographic metafiction”, Hutcheon (1988) refers to famous works “which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (p. 5). As those novels are aware of the fictionality that they mirror, they also do not avoid moving back to historical traces. The transition between fictional and historical motives is made possible with self-reflexivity of the reality and the fiction as it demonstrates a journey between past and present. Even if this argument may be applied to postmodern novels which borrow from different times, neo-Victorianism must necessarily focus on Victorian markers. Nonetheless, neo-Victorian fiction applies its own historiographic fictive techniques through a connection between the realities of the Victorian era and the original contributions of contemporary authors.

Still, this awareness of fictionality or the presence of fictional elements is crucial to distinguish real history from fictional recreations of it. Hayden White (1987) states that in “Historiography”, the narrative process is highlighted because there is a competition between “the imaginary, the possible” and “the imperatives of the real, the actual” (p. 4). In other words, the combination of reality and fiction in a skeleton of debates leads to authenticity and originality, which is also one of the problems of historical fictions that should be solved in this thesis. As known for sure, rewriting a history may lead to the problem of originality and authenticity because a moment was lived in the past, and it is revisited, which is seen both in postmodernism and neo-Victorianism. At this point, the fictional worlds that the authors create correspond to such a problem by removing the problem of authenticity and originality and saving the work from mere imitation. Groot (2010) argues that if a novel points to the “authenticity” of history by using “fictional tropes” to preserve the authentic representation, it should also show “the gap between written text and truth” (p. 111).

Such a gap is what authenticity and originality make themselves clear because the undiscovered parts filled by authors make it possible to discover the originality of the work.

Nevertheless, the position of postmodern historiography is a turning point for writing history in distinctive ways, unlike previous ages or movements, which have also given a place to historical contexts. In postmodernism, the term “historiographic metafiction” has been standard for reviewing history in a multi-dimensional way more than only one real history. Before giving a magnitude for fictionality in this technique, the priority of historical tracks must be settled because the facts comply with the veracity of sources. Similarly, it is not able to get rid of managing the issue of evidence and records similar to “historical fiction and narrative history” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 122). Instead, it combines both facts and fiction in an exclusive way. This is also a part of fictions based on history writing as seen in novels, to position themselves against a strict chronological depiction. Within historiography, the incidents do not have to be represented according to “the chronological framework” in an originally constructed sense, instead, they should be “narrated” with “a structure, an order of meaning” rather than only an order (White, 1987, p. 5). This mixture of events from reality and narration constitutes a ground upon which historiography or neo-Victorian fiction could lay bare while historical occurrences do not have to be given in a purely chronological order.

In its evaluation of history, postmodernism differentiates itself from other theoretical grounds due to its challenging and subversive nature. Accordingly, Hutcheon (1988) argues “[postmodernism] suggests no search for transcendent timeless meaning, but rather a re-evaluation of and a dialogue with the past in the light of the present” (p. 19). So, it promotes a presentist look to past, but in a way of communication as well as overturning it with pluralities, decentralised objections, and looking to history in general rather than a specific period. When neo-Victorian fiction is considered, it is also inevitable to turn towards historical texts, history writing, metafiction, self-reflexivity, parody, pastiche or any other forms about history. The distinctive characteristics of neo-Victorianism lie in its focus on the Victorian context, even if there is an evolvment of what a Victorian time or life could be. The contemporary attitudes and cultural elements add a lot to such an evolution since the authors of the twentieth or twenty-first centuries benefit from their own times as a source of inspiration and at the same time, having retrospection. Thus, neo-Victorian

fiction's ability to connect the past and the present subverts what postmodernism comprehends in a challenging way towards everything.

With respect to the depiction of historical subjects in neo-Victorian fiction, the distinguishment becomes quite vivid in its separation from the postmodern depiction of historical themes by reviving Victorian history with an influence of the contemporary eras, including twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Rather than totally rejecting the historical facts or subverting them radically, neo-Victorian novels adhere to the general atmosphere of the Victorian era in order to reflect a soul of the past with a nostalgic impulse as well as reshaping it. By evaluating neo-Victorian novels, Mitchell (2010) argues that these novels are interested in procedures through which fiction alleges history, without its incapability, temporarily and partly (p. 3). Thus, neo-Victorian novels not only shed light on the lost values and tastes but also the historical accounts of its reinvention of history. In its perspicacity of the past, neo-Victorian novels should also be engaged with "re" prefixes as discussed because neo-Victorianism restudies the maturity of the Victorians heretofore. Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn (2010) argue that if a work is to be categorised as "neo-Victorian", it should deliberately deal with "(re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians" (p. 4). Hence, the critique of historiography, either negatively or positively, lies in the neo-Victorian exploration of its ancestors.

However, readers and critics can observe historical contexts in both fictions even if neo-Victorian essentially portrays Victorian history by representing and subverting it to some extent unlike postmodernism, which is in a more independent state. Another difference may be given as the use of history in the narrative process because Victorian history is also found in postmodern historiography, as said. At this point Christian Gutleben (2001) claims that: "The presence of Victorian voices in the postmodern novel is first and foremost ostensible in the extensive use of quotations and citations" (p. 16). Unlike such quotations in postmodern historiography of Victorian history, neo-Victorian historiography gives a predominant centre of attraction in the nineteenth century, offering a broad glimpse of Victorian culture, society and life. No matter in what form it is given, the nineteenth century stands alone to be the core of neo-Victorian theory through a dispersed mirroring of elements from Victorian history rather than only quotations from other texts, which is a part of intertextuality in postmodernism. Even if neo-Victorian theory benefits from the

intertextuality, borrowing from the Victorians and their culture, it achieves this in a manner of emphasising Victorian literary conventions.

By reinterpreting the Victorians, some critics may question the urges behind such a movement or the triggering forces to rewrite the Victorians. As illustrated, there are Victorian times and the contemporary times, yet Victorians continue to exist due to the similarities between them. Critically observing the similarities between Victorian culture and contemporary culture, Sweet (2001) concludes that “the Victorians shaped our lives and sensibilities in countless unacknowledged ways; that they are still with us” (p. xxiii). Although their era is over with its true and life-like experiences, their habitual approaches to life, culture, society, equality, or gender continue to exist in changed forms, at the same time reminding the contemporary times of their ancestors, the Victorians. This is not only a similarity but an issue of survival because the Victorians may have faded away historically, but they continue to sustain themselves and keep themselves alive culturally and socially in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Therefore, the reinterpretation of the Victorians with their realities and gaps in fictional works constitute a major role for the development of neo-Victorian theory. At this point, the significance of the concept of mystery cannot be ignored as it has some associations with such gaps, journeys between the past and present and the issue of authenticity and originality, which will be clarified.

1.4.The Concept of Mystery in Neo-Victorian Fiction

Proving that neo-Victorianism benefits from the “historical novel” and postmodernism in a genre-based criticism, its content is of much importance to create something original and popular in the contemporary periods. In literary works, mystery as a general theme and concept is used in many novels to evoke a sense of horror, sense of wonder, spiritualism, hunting, dark images, murders, crimes, detectives, or anything that is related to a problem which needs to be uncovered. In neo-Victorian fiction, mystery is also observed as an important motive, and it mainly contributes to the content of the novel. While neo-Victorian fiction is supposed to bring the past onto the surface in a completely different period, it must convey the spirit of the Victorian times. But this does not necessarily indicate that all the novels of neo-Victorianism should include the concept of mystery; instead, mystery has been observed in many literary works from Victorian times till contemporary times. As for the contribution of mystery as a concept in neo-Victorian novels, both of them are observed to feed each other by

sharing mutual gaps to be filled and subverted in thematic structures. On the one hand, the novels, which employ mystery as a common motive, possess some gaps and these gaps arouse from the questions, conflicts, secrets and suspicious cases. On the other hand, neo-Victorian novels also have some gaps, which arouse from revising history; yet, both neo-Victorian fiction and the theme of mystery have gaps to be filled, through a development of conflict, with a multiplicity of spaces deriving from history and questions at the same time. Pertaining to its analysis in neo-Victorian fiction, mystery has a significant role to provide researchers, critics and scholars with an inquiry to the past with multi-dimensional stories, which offer substantial plots in terms of content and form. For this reason, it could be argued that both neo-Victorianism and mystery under theoretical substances feed each and share parallelisms, which can be convenient to establish a coherent story for revisiting the past through a particular theme of mystery.

On the subject of the occupation with mystery, it is no coincidence that literary texts, which carry the concept of mystery, can find a popular place for themselves. In a literary sense, “[a]rt requires mystery” (Casey, 2017, p. 193). Rather than only facts or evidence, something must be revealed, and be apparent to readers in order to prompt a literary enjoyment, and this explains how the use of mysterious subjects makes novels popular, finding a place for authors in the capitalist mode of contemporary eras. Instead of taking mystery as a general type of fiction, like a genre, it could be taken as an “essential quality in all fiction that cultivates curiosity, stimulates the imagination, invites participation, and generally keeps readers reading” (Gelfan, 2024, para. 1). This not only allows the authors to grasp the attention of their readers making their novels popular, but they can also offer a fictional unity through different questions, by creating an interactive atmosphere between the reader and the book, of mysterious subjects.

Benefiting from the concept of mystery, either as content or form, authors find an opportunity to move among irrelevant subjects in a coherent way since there may be various questions surrounding the minds of protagonists and they are supposed to be resolved within a unity no matter how many questions there are. This is especially found in Matthew Kneale’s *Sweet Thames* in which the narrator shifts from one subject to another, by at the same time providing a unity and coherence. Although the protagonist shifts among his memories, he does not give an irrelevant narration, but he provides a coherent narration uncovering the parallelisms between his struggles of

finding a solution to the conflicts. Within this framework, the gaps waiting to be discovered are represented in a constant mood of shifts in narration as well as narrative. From first person speaker to third person narration, Kneale gives a unique impression of his plot because readers are captured in fluid of events, complying with the story architecture. In addition, Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* observes a similar structure due to its fragmented narration, which evolves among four narrative strategies. No matter how fragmented the structure of Ackroyd's novel, there exists a unity through the development of murder mystery since everything shares some parallelisms in terms of murder and questions.

In the case of neo-Victorianism, a mystery not only contributes to the plot or the main story, but also to the popularity of novels. Authors who prefer detective stories or mysterious plots are undoubtedly preferred a lot by contemporary readers, and they gain a high level of popularity. Kenneth King (2014) argues that "[m]ystery is the prerequisite for art and wonder, and it eclipses and transcends reason" (p. 350). Therefore, the mystery is quite convenient for neo-Victorian authors to question the factuality of history. As mysteries reveal what is unknown, they can arouse interest in readers, and this proves why detective fiction is popular. Indeed, there are various reasons why novels handling the concept of mystery can capture the attention of readers, but the main reason is the suspense and a sense of curiosity that is created in the minds of readers. So, "mystery" becomes "a strong card" for the authors (Fenn, 1893, p. 434). Just as a detective novel flows smoothly by offering a flow of events that are organised in order, the readers are put into this flow and they follow what will happen through problems and solving. The ability of a detective figure is quite important for this process because he creates a sub-flow while he tries to solve the main conflict in a novel, including postmodern and neo-Victorian fiction.

Somehow, the mystery becomes problematic as it could be discussed from two perspectives. On the one hand, mystery is seen as a part of the plot which includes horror, ghosts, murder, detectives, and investigations. On the other hand, mystery is observed through the conveyance of the past in a presentist line, which fills some gaps of the past through a unique perception. According to the second instance, mystery needs to be analysed, including the relationship between the past and the present, to understand the motives under tangible work. Kohlke (2008) also mentions the input of neo-Victorian fiction in "cultural memory work, including mourning, commemorative practices, and the construction of both public and private memory" through which neo-

Victorian fiction conveys a repetitive “spiritualist trope” which functions as an image and comparison coming from a connection between the lost and unfadable nature of the past through the present. (p. 9). Moving back to the subject of mystery and discovery of unexposed spaces, spiritualist practices also have a place in neo-Victorian fiction as implied. Such a claim can indeed be associated with both thematic mystery and periodical mystery as two instances given because the content of a neo-Victorian novel, which is created through mysterious subjects, is put upon a lost generation which needs to be rediscovered in the present.

In applying the concept of mystery to fictional works, one must deal with ghosts, spiritual practices, detectives, or crimes because mystery itself stands for a hidden aspect to be discovered. The beginning of novels may imply a secret from readers who will go hand in hand in the process of investigating and solving the problematic puzzle, yet there is no strict category for classifying novels as mystery novels. Therefore, a neo-Victorian novel, which consists of a crime that is supposed to be solved by uncovering the murderer and leading to justice by a logical detective figure, may be studied through the concept of mystery. Scientific problems such as environmental issues and family problems, which create a sense of wonder both in readers and in characters who are fictionally unaware of what will happen at the end, may be contributors to mystery novels. If one of the most common genres is taken into consideration, detective fiction is an important one for the concept of mystery because this type of fiction includes secrets and mystery itself. Peter Hühn (1987) defines the structure of detective fiction as a genre that consists of a sophisticated exertion of specific narration methods because a classical detective novel includes a reestablishment of a buried or absent narration which can be a crime, and the course of reestablishment, which is the detection is concealed with fundamental aspects from readers respectively (p. 451). From this definition, a story is, in a way, hidden and needs to be brought to light to solve the pattern.

Moreover, the plot is of much importance as it constitutes the tendency of characters and the destiny of what is unknown. Whether there will be justice with everything solved or not is also a consequence of the flow of events in the plot. For George Grella (1970), many readers and authors of detective novels defend that the main mystery brings the principal charm for the structure (p. 31). Thus, investigation and research are important and are conducted mainly by detectives, scholars, researchers, and any other figures who deal with solving a problem professionally. The

importance of investigation is also common in mystery fiction as well as detective novels. For example, Steven D. Boyer (2007) prompts the readers to think of the most familiar type of mystery, which perhaps has the least importance of religion and is related to detective books or crime programs on television. He attributes this type of mystery to “investigative mystery” because the main coherent aspect is discovered in this instance, which includes the criminal, or practice and reason, of the fault is unexplored (p. 90). Pertaining to the importance of mystery through hidden stories, investigative and detective actions prove themselves to be at the centre and investigation has a major role. Its parallelism to neo-Victorian fiction is found in the process of investigating both the past and the mysterious questions as themes.

The word “mystery”, when mentioned in a sense of curiosity, causes a kind of secret, which should be declared to people who are included in this secret even though they do not know every truth about it. Such a mystery can be about a crime, something lost, or a religious context. Providing a variety of mysteries, Steven D. Boyer (2007) comes up with another explanation for the mystery, implying that mystery cannot be only limited to hidden things but can cover “eternal or heavenly secrets that have been made known to humanity” (p. 90). In light of this comment, the religious context of mystery is emphasised because something about heaven or hell, good or evil, may be tied by religious context if these things are declared to people through holy or religious books. No matter how the mystery is represented, it covers a sense of secrecy and hidden things waiting to be discovered. As Maud Casey (2017) demonstrates, “mystery involves an undoing that yields wonder” (p. 189). For this reason, there should be problems and solutions to them, either as problematic events or secrets, and it must arise a sense of fascination, or “wonder”, as Casey says. This “wonder” is also relatable thereupon in the neo-Victorian revival of history since some gaps are created by contemporary authors, and they are rediscovered with puzzles and conflictual plots. The essentiality of mystery lies in its ability to arouse curiosity in readers absorbing them to the fluidity of events through historical revivals and suspense.

With reference to the types of mystery, there may be a variety of subtitles under the concept or genre of mystery novels. Still, a common perception of mystery is about the feelings of curiosity, wonder, and a process of uncovering something problematic. It must include questions, problems, investigations, analysis, and dense feelings such as curiosity or excitement, especially in detective mysteries and murder

mysteries. Accordingly, “mystery” should be founded according to a cautious expression of “questions” and “the experienced meaning” through a unique content of fiction (Casey, 2017, p. 189). Thus, the questions and their representation should be made in a unique way that adds originality to the work, similar to the production of historical novels, which also require additional forces to have originality and authenticity to avoid a repetition of history. In mystery novels, this avoiding turns into a struggle to avoid a repetition of an ordinary story from the past under neo-Victorian theory. Instead of a typical flow of events with rises and falls, mystery fiction is covered by constant questions, struggles to solve them and research, which create fascination and shocking effects mostly in the readers, as can be seen both in *Sweet Thames* and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* novels.

Nevertheless, this thesis will mainly deal with mystery by discussing detective traits and murder mystery under the concept of mystery in general, by uncovering the arguments about the content of mystery as well as its historical associations in neo-Victorianism to prove that these two kinds of mystery, which include researching, subversion and historical details, may be fertile works to nourish historiography under the light of neo-Victorian fiction. Yet, the first excogitation of detective mystery requires the concept of mystery in a general sense because there is not a detective figure necessarily, but his characteristics remind the readers of a typical detective, who is in a constant pursuit of solving problems. To understand detective mystery, the kind of detective fiction is a source upon which detective mystery is established. The detective figures in mystery fictions look for “truth” as well as re-establishing the “social order in the face of crime” (Goldman, 2011, p. 263). In detective fiction, or detective stories, a problematic issue such as a crime is given at first and it is supposed to be solved by a professional detective figure who is able to analyse everything by scrutinising details. Additionally, the character traits are of fundamental importance because they are the main things which add detective frames to the story. Some detective novels present “qualitative issues and fuse ingenuity of plot with the richness of characterisation” (Steele, 1983, p. 441). Similar to this, the professional figures who are capable of scrutinising everything in the slightest detail emerge as hero-like individuals or superior people whose notions are totally different from other characters. This ability of scrutinising every detail is related to neo-Victorian authors’ purpose of uncovering the factual details of the nineteenth century,

and there exists a similarity between the struggles of neo-Victorian authors and their inquisitive characters, who are in search of a truth or solution.

Apart from characterisation issues, detective fictions and detective mysteries are mainly produced from an intermingling of questions, secrets and conflicts. While detective fiction is mostly related to the problematisation of a subject and solving it, it may also be about murder which intermingles detective mystery and murder mystery. Similarly, there are different assumptions about the classic formula of a detective fiction which imply a mixture of detective and murder mystery. For example, George Grella (1970) proposes a definition of a detective story which includes some individuals gathering together in an alienated location like “an English country house” and they find out that a friend of them is killed (p. 30). With this type of detective fiction, the subject of detective and murder mystery can be a murder which is common in both of them but there are nuances to differentiate these two as well.

When murder mystery is examined, the presence of a murder, which includes someone dead and a murderer, is inevitable in this type of novel. As murder mystery implies, there must be more than a crime of murdering someone because this occurrence is not known by everyone with its details but the murderer is hidden from other people and police who want to know the killer. Either collaborating with the police or emerging as a skilled professional, detectives are the main contributors of murder mystery as they analyse every detail about the person who is killed by going to the place of the happening, scrutinising the floor or clothes. The curiosity that rises in readers is often due to their capacity less than the detective’s mind. As Grella (1970) argues: “Because the reader seldom possesses the detective’s exotic knowledge and superior reason, the important clues often mean little to him” (p. 31). For this reason, readers of murder mysteries are taken into the flow through the narration of a detective, which contributes to the popularisation of this type of mystery on bookshelves.

Another quality of murder mystery is the presence of a constant thrilling effect, horror, and suspicion. As there is a crime, a murder commonly in murder mysteries, the readers of these novels are expected to be brought in an excited mood to follow the events, suspects, and the murderer ultimately. In a murder mystery, there occurs an inevitable use of “confusion and suspicion” rather than any “hypocrisy” or sentimental ties (Hellerstein, 1971, p. 477). With such an understanding of this type of mystery, it may be wrong to conclude that murder mysteries produced in literary works are away from feelings totally because readers may attach an emotional connection

with the characters, who lost their lives, having a mercy and pity for them. Still, the main emphasis emerges as the crime by a murderer and the presence of victims, who lose their lives as *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* suggests. In this novel, it is inevitable to witness a sense of horror, violence and constant suspicion about the identity of the murderer and the reasons behind the murders, which seem as the mysteries to be solved.

For a novel to be categorised as mystery fiction, there are essential aspects which must be present in the story line. Just as detective fiction needs some stereotyped points to be classified as a detective novel, a similar condition may be observed in the novels which employ the concept of mystery such as suspense. The stories that include “mystery” could be “formulaic” and these stories depend on “certain relatively fixed conventions” through her arguments (Goldman, 2011, p. 262). These may include a typical problem which needs to be solved by an expert just like a detective or it may be related to a spiritual context which includes ghosts and spirits haunting humans. However, there is a fixed portrayal of characters because a detective-like figure is inevitable in mystery novels since this person must be present in such novels to solve the problems about mysterious subject matters. In this perspective what detective fiction and mystery fiction share in common is the presence of a problem that can be solved by a skilled figure.

As previous parts illustrate, there may be interconnections between past and present, history and fiction, or history and detective. So, a detective tries to find an explanation for mysterious subjects and this explanation is given by analysing tangible clues, inquiring the bystanders cautiously, and “through a process of retracing, recovering the past” (O’Gorman, 1999, p. 20). This argument strengthens the neo-Victorian approach of claiming history in a renewed perception because detectives or detective-like figures in neo-Victorian novels not only discover the mysterious events during a process of researching, but they also rediscover the past in terms of history and experiences. In other words, detectives or researchers in a neo-Victorian novel, which includes the theme of mystery, go through a process of scrutinising everything and by doing so, they rediscover the past of what needs to be solved as a problematic instance and historical associations. For example, a detective may be supposed to solve a crime in a neo-Victorian novel, and this requires a process during which this detective approaches the final solution step by step. This process, indeed, proves that this detective learns the roots of a crime by uncovering the guilty figure, and he also stands

for the rediscovery of historical issues similar to the exploration of the nineteenth century in a neo-Victorian novel. As a detective figure or researcher reaches a resolution gradually, a similar trait is also observed in a neo-Victorian author, whose main aim is to research and come up with a resolution of an original work. This parallelism not only proves that the concept of mystery may be useful for neo-Victorian authors, but they also have their reflections on the mystery.

As for the connection between the concept of mystery and neo-Victorianism under theoretical ground rather than pure content, it is accurate that neo-Victorian literature holds the potential to retell what was hidden in the past. Heilmann and Llewellyn (2010) put that: “So many neo-Victorian fictions are rewritings of the Victorian that the issue of what is ‘kept’ or what remains of the specifically ‘*Victorian mystery*’ becomes of fundamental importance” (pp. 16-17). For this reason, neo-Victorian fiction promotes an analogy of uncharted sides of the Victorians and this analogy elucidates the presentist perspective towards the past. The subversion of normalised Victorian morals contributes to this analogy because it offers an alternative to the ones, who were previously put into certain groups in Victorian history. As an example, the minorities, who were otherised in the Victorian novels, may find a space for themselves by filling the mysteries with their own voices. In other words, these individuals may find a right to form their own identities out of Victorian history, complying with the conditions of contemporary times and positioning themselves in the mysterious plots.

While the position of mystery as a concept in neo-Victorian fiction is clarified in depth in the coming chapter of this thesis, the form of mystery should also be explained in addition to its content as said. From a contextual perspective, mystery covers hidden secrets, and revealing those secrets creates a path to classifying novels as detective and murder mysteries, which is the general analysis of this thesis. However, the form of the concept of mystery is as important as its content. As Maud Casey (2017) explains: “If mystery, the genre, is about finding the answers, then mystery, that elusive yet essential element of fiction, is about finding the questions” (p. 189). Whereas this quotation does not include a notable clue regarding the form and appearance of mystery novels, it clarifies the inevitable use of questions and answers, which are inseparable parts of the concept of mystery. Along with the questions and answers, the existence of a constant research or investigation can also be a part of the mysteries that are presented to the readers.

Furthermore, the revealments constitute a key part of the composition of mystery, especially in novels and fictional forms. If a neo-Victorian novel is highlighted under the concept of mystery with derivations of detective mystery and murder mystery or so on, the questions and answers are supposed to be presented to readers within the framework of a set series of information, investigations, secrets and puzzles that need to be solved. Although the process of uncovering a secret leads to the solving and removal of mysteries, its inevitability cannot be undermined as well. As Boyer (2007) claims, “knowledge is the foundation” rather than the destruction of a mystery (p. 92). Hence, the information that is given in a circle of questions and answers constitutes a ground upon which mystery is founded. In the context of neo-Victorianism, such knowledge or information is not limited to only fictional types of plots but to historical contexts as well. Benefiting from Victorian history, neo-Victorian fiction allows its readers to learn about Victorian times in addition to fictional enjoyment within a blending of history and fiction under mysteries, which share similar traits with neo-Victorian fiction through a theoretical perspective of view as they feed each other. While these aspects may be fruitful for historical researches and contemporary works with a criticism towards the impact of the concept of mystery, the associations between the concept of mystery and neo-Victorian theory are the essences of this thesis. In addition, the criticisms towards the concept of mystery are not only content-based, but they also provide a look for the relationship between the mysteries and neo-Victorian theory. Thus, next parts will demonstrate how the impact of mystery and neo-Victorianism are found in Matthew Kneale’s *Sweet Thames* and Peter Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* with references to the issues of history, authenticity and narrative strategies.

CHAPTER II

MATTHEW KNEALE'S *SWEET THAMES*

2.1. An Introduction to Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames*

Matthew Kneale, as a prolific author who has produced several works, contributes a lot to the field of history and contemporary studies. Although his novel, *Sweet Thames* turns mainly around the mysterious incidences and questions, his other novels are based on different historical themes as well. While he is best known for his novel *English Passengers* (2000), he has several novels which can be categorised through different subjects. In his *English Passengers* (2000), the main themes are colonialism and the problem of racism, which can be traced back to the nineteenth century. Through historical observations, Kneale gives a historical account of the problematic context of colonial issues. Among his other novels, *Sweet Thames* (1992) is a novel, which turns to history through the Victorian era and provides the readers with a contemporary understanding of Victorian values. Written in a contemporary period, this novel exemplifies a suitable fiction of neo-Victorianism through a new perception of Victorian history with factual similarities and fictional creations. The presentist perspective of the contemporary times is also found through the theoretical reflection of neo-Victorianism by subverting Victorian conventions or offering alternatives to history.

His novel, *Sweet Thames* (1992), is an outstanding work for understanding the essence of neo-Victorianism under a theoretical account. In the work, one of the salient things that emerge is the timing of 1849 and the Victorian era with its historical hints and traces. In the same way that Kneale discloses the factual details of the

nineteenth century, he fulfils the alternatives that are supposed to be brought with a renewed version of history. Within the content of the novel, he portrays historical figures, epidemics, foundations, class and gender issues and so on, which could be precisely linked with Victorian history. However, he reinvigorates all historical and factual details with his contemporary lenses. For achieving this, Kneale subverts the already accepted conventions of Victorian history and he manages this through his characterisation of the main characters, such as Joshua Jeavons and his wife, Isobella. He attracts attention to class issues and gender issues because the social and moral conflicts are revisited.

In an attempt to revisit the Victorian era, Matthew Kneale's protagonist in *Sweet Thames* appears as an idealistic and determined engineer who not only tries to find relief for cholera but also tries to find his wife as she disappears suddenly. During his struggles for solving both problems surrounding him, Jeavons comes up with a mysterious portrayal of events because he does not reach an end suddenly, but a suspense within the frame of mystery is manifested. The narrative strategy of Kneale through Jeavons holds a prominent position for the unity of the novel even though Jeavons is the first-person narrator, and the observer comes into the narration at some points. Providing the readers with a fragmented structure of narrations, Kneale offers a plainly fragmented memory course of Mr. Jeavons because Jeavons delivers all his memories, by losing his voice as the first-person narrator sometimes, and he then simplifies that he told his recollections at the very end of the novel. Similar to such a fragmentation, Kneale also conveys the Victorian times to contemporary readers as a contemporary author and he brings a new voice to history, faded times.

Respecting the content of the novel, the concept of mystery is quite influential in revealing the connection between the past and the present. By bringing an alternative voice to real history, Kneale handles the thematic structure of his novel within the form of mystery. While there are many unanswered questions, which form the concept of mystery in terms of content, the formulaic and technical representation through transitions among such unanswered questions, the use of language, which blends the nineteenth century discourse and the contemporary gazes, and the narrative strategy add a neo-Victorian interpretation of the mystery. Through these, mystery not only contributes to the neo-Victorian side of the novel but also demonstrates how mystery and neo-Victorian fiction can feed each other contextually and technically. It is also able to reverse the already accepted formula of detective mysteries and stories because

Jeavons acts as if he were a detective, although he is an engineer. In a typical detective fiction, the detective's main duty is to discover the evidences and "solve the mystery" skilfully (Dechêne, 2018, p. 16). In a pursuit to find answers and solutions, Jeavons weaves everything gradually and collects clues for solving the conflicts around him. Thus, this brings the detective mystery side of the concept of mystery even though there is not an apparently present detective. Yet, an overall evaluation will be slanted towards a general mystery concept for bringing a correct evaluation of the past and the present with a sense of curiosity and wonder.

While detective novels are supposed to have a crime, and a resolution of it by a logical detective figure; it does not necessarily have to follow such a structure as *Sweet Thames* highlights. P. D. James (2009) also supports this argument proposing that the main mystery in a detective novel does not have to include a bloody death; however, a murder is "the unique crime" to be reflected with "repugnance, fascination and fear" (p. 5). The reflection of this argument may be observed in both of Kneale's and Ackroyd's novels. In Kneale's novel, *Sweet Thames*, the central mystery is related to family issues and cholera problem, and the researcher figure of the novel is not necessarily a real detective although his manners comply with a detective-like figure. When it comes to Ackroyd's novel, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the chief mystery emerges as various murders, and police detectives try to find the murderer to come up with a resolution. Yet, neo-Victorian fiction's ability to subvert the set rules of detective stories is also observed in these novels because both works are not detective novels, but they are neo-Victorian works which focus on different types of mystery.

Over and above that, the novel turns around different questions that can be observed through the lenses of Mr. Jeavons. In the beginning pages of *Sweet Thames*, Jeavons implies that most of his endeavours will cover his attempts to find Isobella, who is his wife and suddenly disappears after a dinner organised by Jeavons for revealing his plans for cholera to official figures. After this evening, Jeavons goes into Haymarket Street in London and falls into the dark atmosphere of London with miserable conditions; and this, at the same time, arouses his curiosity to find a place as well as details for his drain scheme for cholera. In the end, Jeavons witnesses a horrible fact related to the disappearance of his wife as he finds that his wife is abused by her own father, Augustus Moynihan. Throughout the plot until the end of the novel, the puzzles, and questions, such as the disappearance of the protagonist's wife as the

main question of the novel, are stressed to draw attention to the organisation of the mystery since a mystery includes a secret and a solution to it. The remnants of Jeavons also constitute a valuable spot to trace the parallelism between the past and present as a whole.

As for such a parallelism, neo-Victorian analysis of the novel has important connotations for revisiting the Victorian era through the contemporary lenses of Matthew Kneale because the newness and presentist eyes are added to a reshaped picture of the nineteenth century by neo-Victorianism. Being a contemporary author, Kneale portrays a reorganised and reestablished structure of the nineteenth century by bringing alternatives into voice. For accomplishing this under the shade of neo-Victorian fiction, Kneale combines both fact and fiction since he brings the realities of the nineteenth century into his fictional portrayal of the novel. Besides, he connects the past and the present through the memory of Jeavons as he clarifies at the end of the novel. As a neo-Victorian text, this novel bears a resemblance to the historical and postmodern novel, but its distinguishing characteristics lie in its ability to focus on the Victorian spot with everything related to Victorian history, either chronologically or culturally. Technically and contextually, *Sweet Thames* may employ some aspects of historiography, which is seen in the historical and postmodern novels as well; but the particular attention paid to the nineteenth century makes this novel a neo-Victorian text. Besides, its ability to question and reestablish shares some parallelisms with the mystery, which is a useful concept to rewrite history. Hence, the thematic structure and formulaic representation through narrative highlight this novel as a significant example of neo-Victorian fiction within a blending of mysteries, which need to be addressed without being lost between the past and present.

2.2. The Mystery with the Unknowns

Sweet Thames (1992), in general, offers a neo-Victorian approach to history with its embracement of Victorian spirit. The main character, Joshua Jeavons, is a hardworking engineer working for Augustus Moynihan, his father-in-law. In general, the novel portrays the professional abilities of Mr. Jeavons as a detective-like figure. This is an ideal position for neo-Victorianism because the history of the nineteenth century is scrutinised with details through the lenses of a researcher who tries to solve different mysterious occurrences. On the one hand, one of the problems that arises in the novel is cholera; on the other hand, another problem is the disappearance of

Isobella Jeavons, who is the wife of Joshua Jeavons. To give a sense of mystery through narration, Kneale illustrates transitions between the past and the present through the mind of Mr. Jeavons. This gives not only a contextual mystery, which constitutes the major part in the creation of the plot, but also a reshaped past in which gaps are filled with fictional aspects.

The novel covers a wide range of questions, problems, and investigations, mainly through the lenses of the protagonist, Joshua Jeavons. Despite a presentist imagery with a reestablishment of the Victorian times, this novel maintains some of the Victorian values such as class differences. However, it is given in a new form as a part of the new Victorian understanding. Another example of representation and subversion through the renewal of Victorian history is found in the patriarchy of the nineteenth century. One chief example for this is the hypocrisy of the patriarchal society as the Victorian era imposed upon females, because Isobella, whose disappearance constitutes the main mystery as a theme, is violated both by her father and husband. Even with her disappearance, she is given notorious imputation by her husband although he does not know the realities, and cheats on his wife. The neo-Victorian perspective of her existence can be observed with her partially liberated personality because he does not accept her father's decision about her marriage and gets married to Jeavons as she wishes.

The first example of class issues indeed accepts and subverts the Victorian era just as postmodern novel becomes a source of nourishment for the development of neo-Victorianism. In the Victorian novels, the lower-class people would generally include factory workers or working-class people while the upper classes include factory owners, who put strict borders between themselves and the workers. In *Sweet Thames*, a similar relationship between the boss and the employee is observed in a new form. To mention Jeavons as a member of middle-class, his contributions to the London City hold a prevalent role. Similar to his role, the middle-class of the Victorian era is related to "the growth of cities and the expansion of the economy" (Loftus, 2011, para. 2). But he always reminds him of his lower conditions when compared to upper classes, and this portrays Jeavons like a working-class member due to his thoughts at first, and miserable experiences later on. Even though Augustus Moynihan is the boss of Joshua Jeavons, who wants to get married to Moynihan's daughter, a strict tie of boss and worker cannot be observed because Joshua is not an ordinary or poor worker, but a successful engineer having ambitions and goals. When he is considered as a

member of the middle-class, this will make more sense of representing a typical Victorian middle-class member; however, the miserable conditions that Jeavons falls into do not allow such a categorisation completely, and putting him into a certain class becomes impossible. This relationship between Moynihan and Jeavons is of much importance because it represents and reverses the set ties between workers and employers in Victorian times, bringing a voice to workers in a contemporary time, when people could seek their rights to speak for themselves and develop themselves.

Touching on the concept of mystery, *Sweet Thames* (1992) constantly makes it clear that the main struggle of Mr. Jeavons is to solve something because he mostly analyses little details and provides a comment for the things that he observes, which is the focus of this chapter in this thesis. His struggles to solve the mysteries around him is summarised briefly: “Jeavons finds himself in the midst of a double search, first, for the figurative origin of the cholera contagion and then, for the literal location of his missing wife” (O’Leary, 2013, p. 82). In one of his major struggles to solve the conflicts, his wife’s disappearance may be an important subject because he tries to find out the complications about his wife. Mr. Jeavons makes this clear even in the beginning of the novel: “And what is my story? Most of all it is of the search for my wife. And where I eventually found her” (Kneale, 2018, p. 12). To understand the relationship between this struggle of solving something, by at the same time analysing details, and Victorian history, Kneale portrays the characterisation of a professional figure. The character traits of Mr. Jeavons are quite similar to those of a historian since he narrates his past experiences in detail. This brings the question of truth and authenticity as they are found in historical narration which is uncertain if historical truths are taken into consideration. And mentioning the cholera problem in the novel brings the authenticity of history to light. In the past, many cholera epidemics caused a lot of deaths in London in 1848-1854 (Tulchinsky, 2018, p. 80). For this reason, his exploration of public and personal history mainly lies in the memories of Jeavons providing the readers of the novel with a relationship between the past and the present through the imagination of Kneale. Set in 1849 and mirroring Victorian figures such as Queen Victoria, the novel brings the Victorian past to the present through a set of mysteries surrounding the protagonist, whose fictional personal history and public history of the nineteenth century through cholera problems are narrated.

However, the personal experiences of Mr. Jeavons remove the problem of authenticity in terms of history because he tells his own history. Passing to the mind

of Kneale, authenticity becomes an issue to be analysed again since Kneale portrays the Victorian era in his novel. Therefore, the narration is produced not only through the lenses of Mr. Jeavons but also Matthew Kneale and this exemplifies the side of authenticity and historical accounts such as cholera disease. This is also apparent in many parts of the novel because the narration shifts from a first-person narrator to a third-person narrative. An example is seen after Jeavons tells his experiences through a first-person narrator strategy in his meeting with Moynihan, the father of Jeavons' wife, and then he passes to the situation of an observer: "Joshua Jeavons, unable to help himself constantly staring at the house, from tapping the railings beside him with the frequency of an operator of the electric telegraph" (Kneale, 2018, pp. 89-90). Such a transition is quite repetitive, as will be demonstrated, especially when the protagonist, Joshua Jeavons, feels a sense of lostness among many questions and problems surrounding him. This also reflects the self-mysteriousness of the novel itself because the readers cannot be sure whether Jeavons knows everything that he follows or not because of a multi-layered narration and fictionality of his own accounts.

At this point, the concept of mystery is an ideal tool to understand how historical issues and mysterious events can feed each other, and solutions to the mysterious issues of the past emerge as a principal aspect to be analysed, which is the main subject of this thesis. While Mr. Jeavons is portrayed as an engineer who deals with a drainage plan for London city and cholera problem, he proves to be a professional researcher due to his job. Considering that Jeavons's ideals are destroyed because of the disappearance of his wife, Tomaiuolo (2016) considers Jeavons as a "detective-like" figure, whose journey into the miserable parts of London is given (p. 109). Besides, his endeavours, as a pseudo-detective, to understand the complicated personality of his wife, Isobella, and her disappearance prove the multi-dimensional side of mystery. Even though the problems that Mr. Jeavons deals with are depicted within the concept of mystery, by creating suspense and curiosity for readers, historical mysteries are also represented through Victorian history. What makes this novel a significant example of neo-Victorian fiction is the interconnection between personal and official histories rather than an absolute truth, which reminds the readers of postmodern plurality coming from the rejection of an absolute truth.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist, Joshua Jeavons, narrates the story as a first-person narrator, and he chronicles the events by going back and forth. Even though he narrates everything he observes in detail, there is a breaking point in his

narration, which adds fictionality to the historical details because of his transition from first-person narration to a third-person narration. Still, his observations are given from a personal perspective of view by proving that this is a story of him. In this perspective, his language plays an essential role in the formulation of this novel as a detective mystery and a neo-Victorian fiction. In his statement, Mr. Jeavons says: “Nor only here; half the metropolis required urgent attention. A giant cleansing, a renewal” (Kneale, 2018, p. 8). This “renewal” is not only peculiar to the city but also it is related to the “renewal” of Victorian history on which neo-Victorianism embarks since *Sweet Thames*, as a neo-Victorian fiction, renews and reestablishes Victorian history through contemporary gazes of Matthew Kneale. The comprehension of this becomes possible when readers witness a mixture of Victorian and contemporary social circumstances. Besides, the narrator’s detective skills combined with his use of language and narration strategy prove to be useful forms to categorise this novel as neo-Victorian fiction since there occurs a constant sense of transitory states between the past and the present, the first-person and third-person narration. The renewal of history through a reestablished version of the nineteenth century is also parallel to putting things into order, solving conflicts and filling the gaps by at the same time solving a variety of puzzles.

However, there occurs a constant transition in narration process because the readers of the novel witness that the narrative shifts to third person narrator at some points, emphasising the character Joshua Jeavons especially. This transition is best understood in the neo-Victorian understanding of liberating minorities, which will be explained further. Yet, the main character, namely Joshua Jeavons, apparently struggles to be heard, although he is not superior to other figures economically or socially. He is an engineer, and he seeks to find out the problems and reasons behind them, especially about his marriage. He is also engaged with his drainage plan pursuing to make it accepted by official figures and institutions. Under the typical conventions of Victorian history, this novel is supposed to highlight Isobella as the main character to represent the patriarchal system if her victimised situation is considered because of the hypocrisy of male figures around her. The reason is that she goes through violent actions by her father, and also her husband, who is a typical patriarchal figure; and this is a typical life for Victorian females in Victorian novels due to the patriarchal order. But it reverses the historical focus on usual depictions, and it gives a voice to Mr. Jeavons to prove that males may have serious problems despite the harsh times that women go through because the personal experiences of Isobella

cannot be compared to the problems of Jeavons under normal conditions. The main reason lies in the fact that going outside the normalised forms of Victorian novels and history, neo-Victorian fiction may give a relative independence to minorities and ‘otherised’ characters, either like Joshua Jeavons, who feels inferiority and falls into this position in the later parts of the novel, or Isobella, who is the victim of her own father being also mysteriously portrayed. So, all these are covered by a series of mysterious things surrounding Mr. Jeavons, who goes into the depth of his memories.

In the novel, the protagonist faces several warnings either about the cholera disaster, or about his wife. Intermingling two main problems like these, Kneale offers a multi-layered mystery to his readers. One of the warnings that Jeavons faces may be given as the letters, which include some messages about his marriage and his wife, Isobella. An example to this is the letter that has a message of a general warning: “SOME HUSBANDS SHOULD KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON THEIR WIVES” (Kneale, 2018, p. 17). Just as this letter includes a prompting message for Jeavons, it foreshadows the coming events for the destiny of the protagonist because he will face the loss of his wife, who suddenly disappears. Still, this letter is quite important in its portrayal of the concept of mystery because the sender is unknown, and Jeavons is portrayed in a curious mood, wondering who sent this letter. His curiosity covers his suppositions like that: “Someone from work, jealous of my having married the daughter of Augustus Moynihan, owner of the company?” (Kneale, 2018, p. 17). Whereas Jeavons is able to estimate a possible character, he cannot solve this puzzle and this illustrates how mystery is portrayed through its contextual frame. If Jeavons is taken as a detective-like person, his purpose is to solve the central puzzle of the disappearance of his wife, and this provides a mysterious plot similar to detective fiction. The questions, estimations and answers similar to this are the basis for the foundation of the concept of mystery in terms of a content-based analysis as well as creating a ground for a neo-Victorian author like Kneale to question the nineteenth century.

Under detective mystery and murder mystery, the presence of answers is to be expected because there is a process of investigation, which ultimately paves the way for solving the crimes, losses, or hidden aspects. Still, a general overview of the concept of mystery proves that its undecipherable nature assists the figuration of secretiveness. King (2014) explains that “[m]ystery is what cannot be known or resolved, yet makes itself manifest” (p. 352). So, even some existences of masked

things make themselves apparent through their mysterious representation. Although *Sweet Thames* portrays some things which cannot be solved towards the end of the novel, their resolution strengthens the classification of this novel as a detective mystery because the puzzle is solved by a figure who acts like a detective. This clarifies why this novel is analysed under detective mystery even though it cannot be totally categorised as detective fiction because the main character is not a detective but an engineer.

Jeavons's struggles to solve the things concerning his problematic marriage and wife, who has apparently some secrets in herself as her manners imply, and the cholera epidemic, which threatens the countries and prompts people to find possible solutions. About his marriage problems, the mind of Jeavons is full of thoughts to solve things constantly but he is also in a manner of complications because of his unsure thoughts. For instance, he cannot resolve why he pursues things with so much endeavour. Although he tries to find out the complicated manners of his wife, her disappearance and secrets all about his marriage, he cannot even tell why he does so. He does not even know why he is with her wife: "Was it not her innocent dignity that I so admired?" (Kneale, 2018, p. 36). If this is love, he cannot fully comprehend its affectionate sides because Jeavons is able to associate his wife with notoriety with only the things that he hears, rather than seeing. This is also found in the Victorian ascription of women, which will be discussed in the neo-Victorian analysis of this novel as well. However, the complications in the mind of Jeavons add another layer to the mysterious reflection of the plot in general because he is unable to clarify his thoughts about events.

While Jeavons cannot fully give his notions about his marriage, he is also unable to figure out the sudden changes in the manners of his wife. As affectionate and close as possible at the beginning, the changing manners of Isobella suggest that she has some problems in herself, hiding them from her husband too. One of those changes can be her changing attitudes towards her so-called 'friends' at church. Through the lenses of Jeavons. Isobella has changed a lot towards her friends, although most of them did nothing wrong: "Gone was her fascination with their lives" (Kneale, 2018, p. 65). Whereas he makes observations like a detective about the attitudes of Isobella, he cannot figure out the reasons behind this which is a part of mystery in its content. The representation of such problems makes it possible for readers to analyse the multi-layered side of mystery and the importance of interpreting or analysing the concept of

mystery becomes of fundamental importance. When “mystery” is considered, the correct “interpretation” becomes possible if there is a consistency of plot in narration (Goldman, 2011, p. 265). If the flow of events in *Sweet Thames* is focused, the unity of the story is influential to excite attention in readers, and this exemplifies how a neo-Victorian fiction could survive in a contemporary time, arising wonder and enjoyment in readers.

Concerning another main mystery in this novel, the beginning of marriage issues between Isobella and Joshua Jeavons emerges as quite problematic and mysterious. When Jeavons reveals his intention of marrying the daughter of his boss, Augustus Moynihan, Moynihan does not approve of this marriage decision. However, Moynihan’s decision suddenly changes with Isobella, who did something. This something is of much importance because it is not revealed to readers clearly. From the perspective of Jeavons, Isobella enters the house, probably to speak to her father, but he does not know what is going on: “Joshua Jeavons, unable to help himself constantly staring at the house, from tapping the railings beside him with the frequency of an operator of the electric telegraphy” (Kneale, 2018, p. 90). This piece of a sentence is very important in its revealment of the detective mystery categorisation of the novel. While Jeavons does not know what Isobella does inside the house, he views everything carefully with the slightest details so that the readers could also apprehend the imagery as well.

When Isobella appears again, the readers of the novel will be presented with the fact that Augustus Moynihan consents to the marriage decision between the couple. But what reason behind this acceptance lies is not clear, instead, the air and face of Isobella prove that there is something to be discovered as a secret between her and her father: “Indeed, she seemed possessed of something like power, sudden and dangerous” (Kneale, 2018, p. 90). Under the Victorian conditions, a girl cannot have power against her father due to patriarchy and this portrayal of Isobella as a determined and challenging figure supports how neo-Victorian fiction can reverse the manners towards female characters. A powerful portrayal of Isobella like this is not quite surprising; because, many of the neo-Victorian novels could tell the woman protagonist who have an “awakening to feminist consciousness and her own self-worth” (MacDonald & Goggin, 2013, p. 6). Although the problem of Moynihan is solved, the process is not revealed to the reader, creating a mysterious room to be filled. The notion of Jeavons supports this mysterious room as well: “Afterwards, hard

though I tried, I never could induce Isobella to explain how she had caused him to change his mind” (Kneale, 2018, p. 90). No matter how willing Joshua is to uncover the questions that invade his mind, he cannot fully comprehend the reasons and the answers to such questions. However, his struggles will ultimately find an answer in soon.

Despite the lack of solving everything at first, the constant struggles of Jeavons to find answers and fulfil his wishes illustrates how a mystery could cover everlasting challenges similar to detective fiction. The conflicts, problems and questions also support this argument because, “mystery confronts nothingness—death and disappearance” (King, 2014, p. 353). With the approval of the marriage decision of Isobella and Joshua Jeavons, the next chapter shifts to the cholera problem, giving a piece of text about the seriousness of the epidemic in London. While Jeavons observes that: “Indeed, she quietly declined to discuss the matter in any way”, the next chapter starts with the warning for the epidemic of cholera (Kneale, 2018, pp. 90-91). Despite a sudden transition of events from marriage issues to cholera, each chapter preserves its unity among the transitions in paragraphs offering a fluent following of the plot for the readers, by at the same time dragging them to the unique representation of the concept of mystery because all the events are intermingled. Analysing the possible sources and reasons of cholera, Jeavons is captured by a series of questions for “miasma”: “Had not many men seen it? Had I not seen it with my own eyes? What doubts could there be?” (Kneale, 2018, p. 93). The interception of his mind by such questions reinforces the fact that mystery requires questions certainly to be named as ‘mystery’. No matter how he cannot find absolute answers to his questions, it is certain that mystery preserves its place and makes itself clear to readers through even only questions rather than a problem and solving knot. Mystery continues to exist “just out of reach” (Casey, 2017, p. 192). Accordingly, this novel brings the fact that mystery cannot be attained and resolved suddenly, but it can be observed, investigated and solved through a process.

In addition, the use of London and its atmosphere with differences from hazy atmosphere to spring-like representation, Kneale gives the transitory stages of the city as a source for composing his mystery in a formulaic sense: “I strode out of the churchyard, observing that the trails of smoky vapour seemed to be lifting slightly, filling the street with strange light; a luminous dusk” (Kneale, 2018, p. 121). While the depiction of London may change according to the observations of Jeavons, the shifts

from one subject to another are also parallel to such a depiction as both of them create spaces, places for the creation of mystery. Whereas the utilisation of locational aspects may be invalid for detective mystery, “mystery writing” is an expansive ground for location in literature (McManis, 1978, p. 319). Therefore, the depiction of London city, with transitory narratives and changes in everything including the atmosphere, not only contributes to new perspective towards the Victorian past in neo-Victorian sense by observing the Victorian atmosphere in a present age, but it also has the parallelism with the thematic representation of mystery through foggy atmosphere. In addition to these, the novel bears many gaps between the narrative perspectives of Joshua Jeavons as he gives some spaces among the events, which is related to his transition among occurrences. While he mainly focuses on cholera problems and the disappearance of his wife, he cannot fully comprehend everything as an omniscient narrator. Such a lack of reflecting everything as a single truth is related to the absence of truth in postmodern thought since there is not a single historical truth. This also brings the parallelism between the unreliability of history, which is rewritten in neo-Victorian fiction and personal histories because Jeavons also narrates his personal history.

In the novel, the importance of cholera is on the foreground as it becomes a fundamentality for Jeavons, who comes up with a plan to destroy the malady. Before passing to the inclinations of cholera, the title of the novel, *Sweet Thames*, is suggestive in terms of the fact that it may be the cleanest source of drinking water as it was not inflected with the disease or the bacteria causing cholera, or a symbol related to the nostalgia for the old London. Still, the epidemic threatens the whole city of London and many other countries, by killing people. Jeavons, with his drain plan, at first seeks the support of his father-in-law but he is rejected and the attitude of Moynihan towards Jeavons proves that there is something hidden: “There had been the man’s reluctance to give me any real role in the workings of the firm...” (Kneale, 2018, p. 42). Although Jeavons is an ambitious engineer, he is not at all supported by his employer and the reason of this is not revealed to readers, who may possibly think of the fact that everything might be planned as will be explained. Despite the failures he encounters, Jeavons does not give up on his aims to come up with a plan for cholera. Previously mentioning his plan, Jeavons reveals the public representation of his “Effluent Transformational Depositories” in “*The Times*” under the title of the article, “New Drainage Plans for London”, and he makes commentary on the plans of other engineers (Kneale, 2018, pp. 78-80). Giving the readers some scientific terminology, Jeavons

meets the expectations of his professionalism as an engineer, by formulating a scientific explanation for his drain scheme. Yet, when the concept of mystery is considered, his explanations serve as gradual steps to his aim to solve the problem of cholera, which is a mysterious disease with all its cures and nature. Just as a certain cure cannot be found for the malady, it also expands rapidly with a mutant nature and a certain explanation cannot be provided for the disease.

With respect to the main problem, as uttered by Jeavons, the disappearance of Isobella, Joshua's wife, occupies a central stand as it encompasses the mind of Jeavons. Despite his vain attempts to find where his wife is, Jeavons comes up as a part of patriarchy, which will be dealt with in the neo-Victorian analysis of this novel. In a sudden sense, Jeavons experiences the lostness of his wife: "All within was quite as usual; everything in place, all faintly lit by the dawn light shining in through the windows. Except that my wife was not there" (Kneale, 2018, p. 137). This piece of writing from the novel is of a much importance because it reveals that there is a mysterious incident, a problem to be solved although everything around Jeavons is ordinary. The effect behind this uttering by Jeavons proves there exists a puzzle or an abnormal situation, which needs to be addressed. Even if the space seems to be normal, the loss of his wife creates a mysterious atmosphere both mentally and physically. Besides, Jeavons says: "Examining her bed, I saw it had not been slept in" (Kneale, 2018, p. 137). At this point, the use of words is crucial to discover the concept of mystery under the light of detective mystery because Jeavons "examines" rather than only looking at things or seeing them basically. This investigative personality of Jeavons bears resemblances to the qualities of a detective in a typical detective novel. The inevitable ground for this personality is found in a typical detective's ability to come up with a revealment of problems. In other words, a detective comes up with "a solution to a mystery or mysteries" (O'Gorman, 1999, p. 20). For this reason, the investigative personality of Jeavons may not surprise readers or researchers of neo-Victorian fiction to classify him as a detective-like figure under the light of mystery as a thematic umbrella.

Nevertheless, the attempts to find Isobella by Jeavons prove that he tries to find something because he constantly reminds the readers of solving a mystery step by step like a detective. In this process of solving such a mystery, Jeavons keeps solving everything step by step, and gradually. No matter how Jeavons approaches his wife gradually, he sometimes falls into the depth of uncertainties during his journey as he

reveals: “Nothing was certain” (Kneale, 2018, p. 150). The uncertainty that is felt by Jeavons and readers at the same time possesses the concept of mystery in itself through the use of words due to unreliable witnesses, utterances, and thoughts. This uncertainty also covers the position of Jeavons because he is critically examined by the officer as he heads towards the police, who take statements of Jeavons: “But could one be sure? I was struck by another possibility; what if I had fallen victim to the machinations of some jealous rival in the world of drainage?” (Kneale, 2018, p. 152), through which Jeavons creates a parallelism between his profession and wife. Thinking about possibilities, Jeavons proves his detailed and analysing personality as he digs for every possibility about the disappearance of Isobella.

He finds the witnesses, the clues, and meets different characters, who constitute a path to Isobella although they are ineffective to find her in one blow. After Reverend Michael Bowrib, another character in the novel, reveals to Jeavons that he saw Isobella, Jeavons falls under a sense of mystery as he considers: “Why had she not visited me? Written to me? Something” (Kneale, 2018, p. 156). As seen, Jeavons is in a desperate mood of thinking because he is quite sophisticated due to the witness. Searching through the streets of Haymarket, Jeavons encounters a match-seller, and a dog-seller who states that he saw Isobella and “a bloke” together (Kneale, 2018, p. 160). Although Jeavons doubts a close association between Isobella and Gideon at first, he is quite shocked after hearing that a foreign guy accompanies his wife. Yet, the further details will prove that everything is not like this as Jeavons suggests. After the dog seller, Jeavons has gone to different cafes around Haymarket and his desperate mood is apparent to readers. In the sixth of those cafes, which is “the Castelnau”, Jeavons learns about Isobella from a waiter who saw her with another man. Upon this, the complications covering the mind of Jeavons are emphasised: “Gone were my last hopes. And I was left with whom?” (Kneale, 2018, p.162); this is because he does not know what to think as a man, who learns about his wife being with different men. This is, indeed, quite significant for the patriarchal system, which can easily stick a bad fame to women, when they are out of their domestic houses and it will be further analysed in the neo-Victorian understanding of this novel in terms of gender issues later.

Turning back to the subject of mystery, Jeavons seems to question himself upon learning some things about his wife as his narration suggests. Even though he struggles to find Isobella, the process of collecting clues about her disappearance

seems to have affected him negatively. The clues coming from witnesses also strengthen the complicated notions of Jeavons, and this mystery adds another layer to its thematic representation as both mysterious subjects and their impacts on the mind of Jeavons are narrated. Afterwards, Jeavons is seen to see Moynihan and talk about the loss of Isobella and when their meeting has ended, Jeavons suggests a crucial thing to the readers of his story: “Of course it was to be the last time I saw him. At least alive” (Kneale, 2018, p. 169). From this piece of narration, the readers are acknowledged that Moynihan will die in an implicit tone, but how his death will take place remains mysterious as only the fact is given by Jeavons. The tone and the use of words by Jeavons prove that he gives important occurrences in a simple and clear utterance but their resolution requires a great force similar to his aim to find Isobella at the beginning of the novel.

Although most of the novel seems to cover the subject of mystery within the shadow of Isobella’s disappearance, the impact of the cholera epidemic cannot be ignored as it constitutes an intermingling effect for the researches of Jeavons and his ambitious personality, who is in the pursuit of solving problems around him. Passing back to the subject of cholera in the seventh chapter, Jeavons also brings light to the mysterious side of the disease: “The cause of this sudden thriving of the industry of death was a mystery to nobody” (Kneale, 2018, p. 172). Although it is a malady, Jeavons proves that it has a mysterious side because the disease has a mutant nature for whom to kill. By mentioning the problematic sides of cholera, Jeavons does not forget to intermingle it with his wife as he mixes both problems to which he aims to come up with a resolution. After discovering a piece of writing like a letter from his wife, who suggests Joshua to forget about her, Joshua Jeavons again reminds the readers of the complications in his mind: “Confusion; this was my soonest response” (Kneale, 2018, p. 174). Although these words may fall under the thematic analysis of mystery, they create an explanatory representation due to the choice of words and language or discourse of Jeavons, who is able to deliver his psychology to the readers of *Sweet Thames* as well as reflecting the mystery in terms of content through complications.

Moreover, the discoveries made by Jeavons complicate everything that he perceives to be so simple or complicated paradoxically because he seems as the only person, who struggles to find his wife, but there will be another mystery to him, to complicate him more. While he encounters the dog seller once more, Jeavons

surprisingly learns that he is not the only one looking for Isobella and another mysterious man tries to find her. Upon learning this, the confusion of Jeavons is made apparent: “My concern at this mysterious rival made all the more galling the relentless failure of the Cafe Castelnau to offer up either my wife or the young aristocrat” (Kneale, 2018, p. 176). With such anxieties, Jeavons grows more eager to find his wife and finds a place to stay where Isobella has been seen. The curiosity of Jeavons enlightens the theory of mystery in a logical way because he is involved in a process of unveiling. After finding the man that the waiter mentions at the Cafe Castelnau, Jeavons is thrown into a more detailed inquiry about his wife, and this man, known as Herbert, brings another dimension of confusion to the mind of Jeavons because he admits that he saw Isobella going with a different man, who is known as Count Nemis. Although Jeavons thinks that his wife has affairs with all the men about whom he hears from different characters, the finding of Isobella will bring a considerable shock to him. No matter how angry Jeavons may feel against Isobella, he also has mysteries for his changing attitudes towards the matter:

The truth of it was, though her betrayals still sharply stung, and the mysteries of her vanishing were not at all reduced in their relentless allure, I no longer felt the raw hatred I had for my wife; the wish for undetermined revenge. Something was changed. (Kneale, 2018, p. 237)

Even Jeavons has his mind being upside down and he cannot provide a stable account of his memory. The changes in the mind of Jeavons might have also resulted from conscience because he is the one, who cheats on Isobella because he has an affair with Katie, another woman figure in the novel. For collecting other clues to construct his way to Isobella, Jeavons finds Herbert, who is said to have seen Isobella but the inquisitive personality of Jeavons is still apparent. When he asks about his wife, Herbert recalls the name of “Isobella Farqueson” and Jeavons supposes that: “She might have given another name” (Kneale, 2018, p. 221). Whereas this piece of sentence may seem an ordinary quotation from the novel, it covers the logic of Jeavons like a detective because he is able to think of the slightest detail and possibility. To classify a work as a detective fiction, there has to be “a central mystery” which is solved by a logical figure in the end of the novel without “good luck or intuition” (James, 2009, p. 5). For this reason, the categorisation of *Sweet Thames* under the title of detective mystery becomes more vivid and logical when the language and perspective of Jeavons are taken into consideration.

Still, all observations of Jeavons are not always on clues, but there is a realisation of the fragmentation as well. After meeting Count Nemis and finding that the woman with him is not Isobella, Jeavons is given in a fragmentation of events and the passing of time with no solid resolution is delivered to the readers by Jeavons: “The remarkable elasticity of time” (Kneale, 2018, p. 276). The slippery nature of time can be a tool for an impeccable settlement of problems but the opposite is valid for Jeavons as he cannot resolve things as he expect despite his challenges and struggles. However, the readers will be presented a sudden and a devastating fact, especially for Jeavons, as soon as he finds Isobella, with his father dead next to her for harassing her. As Jeavons considers, “That stain. Following the line of it with my eyes, I had the feeling of having been pursuing this path all these months, these years” (Kneale, 2018, p. 295). Seeing the blood and dead body of Moynihan, Jeavons is shocked with the slightest detail he observes, and he is now aware of the emptiness between him and his wife. This resolution of seeing the devastating fact of his life brings his detective mystery and all of the mysterious questions surrounding him into lights as he discovers the causes of coldness from his wife, who has been a victim of her father.

As Jeavons solves the greatest mystery of his life as he implies at the beginning of *Sweet Thames*, the results are not quite pleasant for him. Mentioning even the word itself, “mystery”, for many times in the novel, Jeavons constantly gives his readers a sense of the puzzle, the problem, or the conflict. He also provides the readers with a formula of the concept of mystery saliently by giving a multiplication of “momentum” and “curiosity” which results in his own name and he clarifies his desire through “a soul hungry for relief” (Kneale, 2018, p. 264). This formula is quite important for uncovering the formulaic nature of mystery because every step that Jeavons takes occurs through clues, answers, questions, language. In addition, the narration creates a totality upon which the content feeds this totality, and the result emerges as the concept of mystery under detective mystery. While the mysterious aspects create a coherent plot within the plot, its inclinations towards neo-Victorian theory should also be discussed to understand how the mystery and neo-Victorianism feed each other.

2.3. Neo-Victorian Notions in *Sweet Thames*

As a novel of mysteries, *Sweet Thames* is also a work to be categorised as a neo-Victorian text under its new and fresh approaches to the past, by revisiting the

nineteenth century and reversing the set norms with contemporary gazes. Shedding a light upon class differences, the institutional realities, historical diseases such as cholera epidemic, gender problems with prejudices towards women, this novel under the light of neo-Victorian theory provides a critical gaze towards the past. Having historical traces, *Sweet Thames* apparently carries the characteristics of neo-Victorianism within theoretical frame. As Eszter Ureczky (2016) thinks, "... this neo-Victorian historical thriller itself casts a retrospective glance at nineteenth-century constructions of disease as well as the notions of urbanity and normalization in general" (p. 104). What makes this novel a neo-Victorian text is the presence of a usual London atmosphere, historical figures such as Queen Victoria and her husband Albert, class issues, gender roles attributed to women particularly, and historically present cholera epidemic, which also affected countries in the nineteenth century. Besides, the similarities among the formal institutions contribute to the portrayal of neo-Victorian theory because they belong to the Victorian era as well.

As for a representation of the Victorian conventions and margins in a new form, Kneale gives a chance to Joshua Jeavons. As said, he is worker of Augustus Moynihan, who is apparently richer than him. However, it is not possible to strict class differences unlike the Victorian novels, which illustrated harsh class structure among people. Originally, Victorian history and its classes were dominantly consisted of the working-class and the upper-class as the novels of the nineteenth century portray strict divisions between working-class and upper-class members, yet, the fading times have also struggled to change this strict division among people with the contemporary times. In a polite manner between Moynihan and Jeavons, this destruction of strict class borders is clarified. As Jeavons utter: "“You disapprove my background? Is that not it? You worry I’ll not be worthy of her? But I’ll make myself worthy of her. I’ll work hard, I’ll...”" (Kneale, 2018, p. 89). In this struggle to gain the consent of Moynihan to get married to his daughter, Isobella, Jeavons clarifies that there is an implicit problem of class differences, which is a conventional characteristic of the Victorian era. Although not uttered in an explicit manner, he thinks that he may not be a suitable match for the daughter of his boss but his efforts as mentioned to persuade Moynihan proves how neo-Victorian understanding of class difference can reverse things because Jeavons has the courage to reconcile someone from an upper position to accept his wishes.

A similar effort of Jeavons may be given his challenge of making his drainage plan be heard and accepted. His plan, which is “Drainage of London: The Benefits of a System of Effluent Transformational Depositories”, is published in the newspaper among several pieces of texts regarding the reasons of the disease. Upon reading the title of his plan, Jeavons thinks that: “So the world now knew. I was heartened by the sight of the words – so familiar to me – firmly inscribed in black print, and my own name written clearly below” (Kneale, 2018, p. 93). This text from the novel has a crucial place to uncover the personal identity of Jeavons out of formal structures. The desire to be heard and known is associated with neo-Victorian revival of minorities, who were ignored in the nineteenth century. As will be proved, Jeavons narrates his memories and recollections acting as if he lives in the present although he revives his past. As a neo-Victorian canon, this text reveals how a member of a minority can be neglected in the nineteenth century, in a newly established perspective of Jeavons, who is out of strict boundaries.

Along with the personal identity, personal history of Joshua Jeavons surrounds the novel in general as Jeavons explains even at the end of the novel: “Such are the lessons I won from the summer of 1849, the summer of revelations” (Kneale, 2018, p. 302). The ending of *Sweet Thames* proves itself to be a part of memory and history by the perspective of Jeavons, who is in a constant perplexity of solving the questions around him. With this explanation, Jeavons also clarifies that he narrates his memories, past and history at a point of his life, but from a present perspective of view rather than living in it. However, he gives the impression of the fact that everything occurs in present consciousness of his experiences throughout the novel and this also characterises a specific quality of this novel as a neo-Victorian text because the narrator is able to reverse things in a unique narrative style. Similar to his presentist approach to his memories, neo-Victorian fiction also provides the contemporary readers with a presentism towards history. Because, the neo-Victorian novel also “‘excavates’, revisits and foregrounds” contemporary views for the past (Tryniecka, 2015, p. 258). Hence, the impact of presentism and contemporariness cannot be ignored in both Jeavons’s and Kneale’s lenses.

Although the novel bears some resemblances to the Victorian times with class differences or patriarchal moralities, they are reinterpreted in the contemporary conditions. With regard to class differences as told, Jeavons is seen to struggle with finding a place, a voice for himself, which is an opportunity to give a voice to

minorities in the contemporary times because these times question the rights of people and have the chance of criticising class and gender problems. Jeavons also formulates his place through transitions in his narration as this novel gives both of first person and third person narration at the same time. One example to this transition is found after Jeavons passes from first-person speaker to the third-person narration: “Joshua Jeavons walking through thick smoky fog that has his eyes watering, through London streets half vanished away” (Kneale, 2018, p. 119). From this point of view, Jeavons seems to feel a sense of loneliness in the streets of London, feeling himself perhaps as a lonely person. After a constant emphasis on the first-person narration, his transition to the position of an observer implies a sense of lostness because he feels lonely and lost. The main reason for such a transition between the narrations is also explained through the fact that Jeavons tries to find a place for himself as well as the emphasis on his identity as a researcher or a detective-like figure.

Whereas he challenges authorities to raise his drainage scheme and plans for the deadly epidemic of cholera, he is ignored mostly. In the dinner, which has been organised by Jeavons to propose his plan for cholera, this disregarding and the importance of profits become more evident as the attention is paid to benefits and profits rather than the possibility of saving the city, which is quite conventional and typical for the Victorian era when people gave more importance to the materialist desires. Besides, the anxiety of Jeavons, mixed with his messed attention, bring a fragmentation to the novel in terms of the content, and this fragmentation adds a postmodern peculiarity to what a neo-Victorian fiction may borrow from postmodernism. As Jeavons puts, “The sooner I brought amongst them the unifying device of my drain plan, the better. I glanced impatiently towards the door, wondering what might be delaying the arrival of Jenny” (Kneale, 2018, p. 127). Although Jeavons organises this evening for his drain plans, his attention, most of the time, is given to Jenny, who is the servant for the dinner. The fragmentation therefore not only occurs in the narrative style of Kneale, by employing mainly first-person narrator and occasionally giving voice to an omniscient like narration, but also in the content of the novel. As Woods (1999) notes, one of the peculiarities of postmodern novels is “narrative fragmentation and narrative reflexivity; narratives which double back on their own presuppositions” (p. 65). Thus, this characteristic illustrates how Kneale’s novel benefits from a mixture of postmodern and neo-Victorian fragmentation by

dissolving a specificity within a nineteenth century setting, which demonstrates the association of having gaps and fragments in both neo-Victorian fiction and mystery.

In addition, the behaviours of Jeavons' guests suggest that class differences depend on the choices of lives. In spite of their expectations, Jeavons lives in a relatively small house, and he is also aware of this differentiation against him. No matter how ambitious Jeavons is, he cannot resist class distinction as an engineer. The neo-Victorian thought behind this is that the class issues are revisited by characterising an idealistic engineer, who is beyond extremely poor people. As said, neo-Victorianism has an association with the similarities between the nineteenth century and contemporary times, yet; its interpretation lies behind the renewal of old values. Thus, the class differences, which were inseparable norms of the nineteenth century, are reestablished out of strict boundaries and limitations. However, Jeavons is aware of his difference from upper members and his anger can be seen as he conveys his thoughts in that way:

I wondered if they had assumed Moynihan had housed us in some urban mansion; if they had been looking forward to an evening of fashionable entertainment. Perhaps they had even hoped my father-in-law would be present, and they might talk with that great man of engineering. (Kneale, 2018, p. 124)

As regards the disregard issues, the characters such as Harold Sweet and Edwin Sleak-Cunningham are seen too critical towards suggestions for cholera. Both, having a discussion, critically debate on the profits and benefits as Sweet retorts: "D'you really think the great banks of the City would sit back and let their premises be engulfed in effluent? Of course not" (Kneale, 2018, p. 128). Therefore, Sweet clarifies that the profits are at the forefront rather than the researchers and their works, which is a materialistic part of the nineteenth century and contemporary times. Another example is found in the prohibition for doctors to visit people with cholera when Mr. Sweet thinks that: "Charity can be a dangerous thing" (Kneale, 2018, p. 251). As a reinterpretation of the Victorian times, this neo-Victorian text is supposed to bring the conditions of the light side of contemporary periods to the front. However, the disregard of authorities proves the reverse as they pay regard to their profits and benefits rather than giving a chance to researchers like Jeavons or considering victims of cholera. This is also a part of materialist and profit-based desires of the upper classes, which can be traced back to the nineteenth century, when there were strict ideas to create boundaries among classes with upper-classes having more and more wealth. Even as an engineer rather than a working-class member of a poor state,

Jeavons is ignored many times and this is principally observed through his efforts to be heard.

Furthermore, this is extended to the neglect towards the sick people, who suffer from cholera. This is a direct reference to the hypocrisy of the upper-class members in the nineteenth century as Jeavons observes: “Doctors prohibited from seeing those struck. It seemed beyond comprehension; the invention of some grotesque satirist of the last century” (Kneale, 2018, p. 250). Considering victims of cholera as evil-like figures may be triggering force behind this decision; but it also clarifies how victimised people of cholera, including Mr. Jeavons, could be left alone with miserable conditions such as devastating illnesses. Or else, the hypocrisy of upper-classes is not limited to authorised individuals but Moynihan is also a hypocritical person. The reason is, *Sweet Thames* also highlights that one of the respected figures of social order, like Moynihan, becomes a symbol for “moral and physical corruption” (Tomaiuolo, 2018, p. 43). For this reason, the hypocritical nature of upper-classes is illustrated to the readers through different characters and reasons.

Turning back to the disregard issue, Jeavons is even ignored by his wife, which is quite abnormal for a typical Victorian woman. Traditionally, in Victorian history, women were supposed to be dependent on their husbands, pleasing them and fulfilling domestic duties without a powerful voice. The neo-Victorian portrayal of Isobella indicates how a contemporary text can change the attributions towards women because Isobella is able to influence the decisions of her father and deciding on whom to marry with her own will. Still, she changes towards Jeavons after their marriage is completed because she gives his husband the cold shoulder even though Jeavons tries to create a romantic and required relationship between them. In the face of his attempts, Isobella grows quite aggressive towards her husband and she suddenly disappears. Yet, their problematic relationship proves that a male figure can be neglected in neo-Victorian portrayal of history unlike Victorian history while a woman could possess a partial voice of her own by rejecting her husband and also a mysterious sense of existence due to her manners.

The problems towards Jeavons, creating an image of him as the ‘other’, may hint that he is the sufferer, but what happens to Jeavons and more are relevant for Isobella too. Although Isobella seems to be a more independent figure unlike a typical nineteenth century woman, her sufferings at the end of the novel as Jeavons discover prove that she cannot resist the male figure such as her father and she becomes a victim

of his desires. Besides, her female side adds another layer of discrimination towards her when she disappears because Jeavons is able to make quite evil epithets to her in a notorious way. For instance, when Jeavons hears from the waiter that Isobella has been with another man, different from the man whom the dog-seller saw, Jeavons credits Isobella with a bad reputation: “My wife seemed to be familiar with half the manhood of London” (Kneale, 2018, p. 162). Through this explanation, Jeavons, indeed, considers Isobella as a common prostitute, who may have an affair with every man that she meets. Besides, he thinks of her as “dirty”, “loose”, “cheap”, and “the betrayer” (Kneale, 2018, p. 162). Such an evaluation of Isobella by the perspective of Jeavons is quite ironic because Jeavons is the betrayer himself as he has cheated on Isobella with Katie, who is his mistress. Such an attitude towards a wife reflects the hypocritical nature of patriarchy from the nineteenth century, when women were easily attached a bad notorious name.

As an evident norm of the nineteenth century, patriarchy holds a powerful position not only in historical accounts but also in contemporary works as Kneale’s novel portrays. Even though Isobella is portrayed as a half independent figure, who can luckily decide on her marriage issues, her independence is limited to Jeavons and Moynihan in any respects because she cannot go beyond their limitations and rise as a totally independent figure. Besides, the raping of her by her father brings another violating fact of the nineteenth century when women were expected to be silent similar to Isobella. As two main male characters, Joshua and Moynihan, share common traits because they want to limit Isobella only to themselves and her “only option is to become more and more what patriarchal society has made of her” (Ureczky, 2016, p. 114). Hence, the characterisation of Isobella is also bound to the decision and voice of her husband, Mr. Jeavons, who can make any comments about her due his being a male, imposing an authority over her individuality.

While there are notorious attributions to Isobella, perhaps due to her gender, and class issues, the neo-Victorian analysis of *Sweet Thames* is not limited to such things, but real historical accounts and mentions are easily found through the narration of Jeavons himself, who proves that he transmits his experiences from 1849. Before passing to the historical facts, it is visible that the title of the novel suggests a lot for a nostalgic impulse towards the past as there is something missed and yearned. “Sweet” may be about the lost soul of London, which had good old days as the passing of time inevitably changes everything it touches. The choice of “Thames” is also crucial in

terms of the fact that the River Thames is like a spirit for recognising London. The Thames has contributed not only to the globalisation of London but also the city was a source of commerce in previous times due to this river (Wood-Burgess, 2022, para. 1). As a famous river, Thames maintains its position in this novel for supplying life to people with a clean source of water and the title of the novel also explains why “sweetness” is attributed to this river; or else it may impose something ironic because the city is filled with filth in many layers from the father figure to the cholera problems. Besides, the foundations and important names are benefited by Kneale, and one of the most important foundations is “the Metropolitan Committee for Sewers”, or a direct mention of Queen Victoria and Albert as Jeavons often refers.

Furthermore, addressing readers and providing them with multiple endings brings the neo-Victorian evaluation of *Sweet Thames* into light since histories are represented demonstrably, and readers are aware that they read historical stories through the present time. The main reason behind such a metafiction construction of historical setting may arise from the deliberate attempt to make readers think that they read something fictional. Or else, it may indicate some clues for future criticisms. Therefore, the use of detective-like figures is appropriate in that they are able to refill the empty spaces or reconstruct already faded times. With “neo-Victorian detective fiction”, a detective is shaped both as the narrator and the historical writer in metafictional way (Hadley, 2010, p. 67). This is apparent when Jeavons is considered as he is both the narrator of the novel and the visitor of Victorian history. In his reconstructive approach to the past, Kneale’s portrayal of Jeavons is engaged in a constant process of seeking truth and resolution, which could make him categorise as a detective figure obsessed with solving the problems. In addition, neo-Victorian fiction is able to discover “the forms of historical narratives” while it can also investigate its place “as historical narratives” (Hadley, 2010, p. 67). Therefore, the use of metafiction becomes more logical and appropriate because neo-Victorianism’s claim to the past makes it possible to position itself as a part of historical writing, which can indicate some clues for future researches.

Pertaining to the metafictional narration of Jeavons, it is noted that he communicates with the readers of the novel to make them aware of the fact that they read a fictionalised form of history. A suitable example of this is found when Jeavons addresses the readers: “You are likely shocked, my readers” (Kneale, 2018, p. 234). Although Jeavons narrates his story and endeavours to find Isobella and solve the

cholera problem, his addressing to readers at a sudden point with changing subjects in the novel proves that neo-Victorian fiction is aware of its own fictionality. While it is possible to see neo-Victorian fiction as a revisiting of the Victorian era, classifying it as a historical novel of the nineteenth century, there may be occupations towards the categorisation of neo-Victorian novels as works, which contribute to the development of the historical novel in a contemporary era with a total attention upon the nineteenth century. Still, the main issue of metafictional narrative is tied by the combination of historiography through realities and fictionality of Kneale's portrayal of the nineteenth century in the twentieth century as an author of such a time.

Moreover, the ending of the novel has a significant position to consider the neo-Victorian associations with historical realities and authenticity because it gives an additional ending, which includes historical details as well. Kneale narrates this through such a way that: "Some readers may be curious to know a little more about the historical matters dealt with in this novel. And so learn the true end of the story" (Kneale, 2018, p. 303). While the author, Matthew Kneale, addresses the readers directly, he makes references to the real history of the past, by mentioning official figures and structures through his scientific approach to cholera. At this point, the importance of science can also be seen through the reconstruction of history, by bringing an alternative to real history. Within the condition of "historiographic metafiction", Daniel Candel Bormann (2002) suggests that the expression of "science" is subtractive and clear because "historiographic metafiction" already complicates "the notion of history in the most explicit way possible" (p. 96). Hence, the position of this technique emerges as a fundamental thing for observing faded times as well as connecting the past and the present.

In addition, Kneale, in a way, decentralises the set notion of history because he offers an authentic ending, which is alternatively used to reflect two endings. At this point, historiography and fictionality, which are mainly explained through the mixture of the nineteenth century figures in a contemporary era by fictional recreations as the alternative ending of the novel suggests, proves that neo-Victorian attempt to focus on historiography and metafiction is not limited to postmodernism, but it rises as an independent version of the Victorian era. Although the novel ends with what Jeavons has learnt from 1849, the epilogue and its subtitle "the real end" make it complicated that the readers have read something fiction with a metafictional language as revealed. As well as demonstrating the fictionality of the novel, Kneale explains the

creation of fictional characters such as Edwin Sleak-Cunningham. For his characterisation, Matthew Kneale reveals that: “First there was Edwin Chadwick, upon whom I based the character of Edwin Sleak-Cunningham; a civil servant of great influence, also an early champion of government intervention in social matters” (Kneale, 2018, p. 303). Through the representation of such a reality of history and a real human figure, Kneale proves that he has constructed something original and authentic, by borrowing from realities of history. Here lies the fundamentality of the Victorian era most significantly because the characters and the institutions are portrayed from Victorian history, which makes this work as a fresh and renewed version of the nineteenth century problems and life.

2.4. Conclusion

Matthew Kneale’s novel, *Sweet Thames*, intermingles fact and fiction, history and present, and ultimately it consists of several questions, which take the attention directly to the concept of mystery. The novel brings several questions within the mind of Joshua Jeavons, the protagonist and narrator, and this leads to the creation of a fiction like a detective novel. To classify a work as a detective fiction, there has to be “a central mystery” which is solved by a logical figure in the end of the novel without “good luck or intuition” (James, 2009, p. 5). This is what is exactly observed in Kneale’s work with a central puzzle of the disappearance of Isobella and Jeavons’s struggles to find her with his mind. However, his existence as an engineer destroys the familiar tradition of a detective fiction. The reason is that Jeavons emerges as a detective-like character but his real profession is engineering even though his personality and character traits comply with the qualities of a detective, who is in pursuit of solving crimes, problems and so on. When his challenging traits to solve the problems surrounding his life in every layer is combined with an authentic image of Victorian history, it is inevitable to observe that the mystery seen in this novel and the exploration of the Victorian past in the present times, namely neo-Victorian recovery of history, contribute to each other by sharing a lot of similarities and associations.

Content-wise, the mystery appears as a consequence of the disappearance of Jeavons’s wife, Isobella, because she fades suddenly after a dinner, in which Jeavons organised a meeting with the authorities from the Committee to talk about his plans for cholera. After this, Jeavons is portrayed in a constant struggle of finding his wife and solving the family problems since she has already had bizarre behaviours. During

this struggle, Jeavons sees the miserable conditions of London, which is not only influenced by the pathetic conditions of the Victorian era but also by the cholera disease. Yet, the process of investigation reveals Mr. Jeavons like a detective; and the existence of problems, puzzles and questions forming the mystery illustrate this novel as an example of detective mystery. The gradual development of plot mixed with questions and attempts to answer them also creates a suspense, which is typical in many novels; but its distinguishment lies in that this suspense is brought within a blend of unanswered puzzles. While the case of Isobella forms the main mystery in *Sweet Thames* as a content, its technical representation is found in transitory stages of narration, in which the narrator is lost among his observations. This may also indicate a self-mysterious position of the novel as said because there are gaps, which come from such transitions. The combination of this mysterious issues with the cholera epidemic, which is also mysterious due to its uncertain and unknown existence through its cures etc., adds an authentic layer to the novel because it brings the realities of the past into the fictional plot.

Furthermore, the realities and factual details from the nineteenth century may remind the readers and critics of the “historical novel” or “postmodern historiography”. However, this novel accomplishes the qualities of neo-Victorianism because it is directly associated with the nineteenth century and the Victorian era. In the novel, the presence of Queen Victoria, Victorian moralities or conventions prove that the historical truths are represented to the readers; but they are alternatively subverted and changed because the novel is written in the contemporary era no matter how much it depicts the history with its realities. The new understanding and reestablishment of the Victorian era is understood through the subversion of Victorian conventions, which are represented and subverted at the same time. Such a depiction and destruction also prove the postmodern influence upon the formulation of neo-Victorian fiction because neo-Victorianism is inevitably influenced by “historical novel” for its reflection of history, and postmodernism. Nevertheless, the subversion of the Victorian era conventions directly refers to neo-Victorian impact on this work. On the one hand, the class differences and gender problems are revealed to the readers, and subverted partially with a destruction of strict borders for class issues and a relatively independent woman figure. On the other hand, these comply with the conventions of the contemporary times as well as employing Victorian history. So, the composition of both the past and the present become vivid through evidences and

alternatives specifically through the Victorian era. Therefore, a fully reference to the Victorian era with its conventions and subverting them through alternative additions prove the neo-Victorian side of the novel, which is reestablished from the real and authentic past.

Last but not least, the interconnection between the mystery and neo-Victorianism is made apparent through a series of examples. First of all, mystery as a general concept requires some abstract gaps to be filled and these gaps are the problems or secrets, which are filled with solutions at the end. Similarly, neo-Victorianism requires some gaps to fill because it reestablishes the past by filling it with alternatives and additional contributions. Another similarity between two things is that they construct and destroy at the same time. In other words, a mystery develops a secrecy, which is constructed through a series of puzzles and suspicious cases. But it is also destroyed through the resolution at the end, which is general shocking as the ending of *Sweet Thames* demonstrates through the violence applied on Isobella by her father. When neo-Victorianism is considered, there exists a similar condition because it constructs the history through its own authentic reflection, and then it subverts this reflection through contemporary lenses. This not only furthers the claim of the fact that the mystery and neo-Victorianism share parallelisms, but they also feed each other. Another reason to employ the concept of mystery in neo-Victorian fiction is explained in that the contemporary readers are interested in detective-like figures such as Mr. Jeavons, the popularisation of the novels owes a lot to mysteries. For these reasons, it is evident that neo-Victorianism and the concept of mystery feed each other by sharing similarities and parallelisms, and the mystery emerges as a useful tool to enrich the future of neo-Victorianism in critical studies since it could resolve the secrets of the Victorian past as well.

CHAPTER III

PETER ACKROYD'S *DAN LENO AND THE LIMEHOUSE GOLEM*

3.1. An Introduction to Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*

Peter Ackroyd has held a dominant position in determining the limits of postmodernism in general. Ackroyd, mostly known as a postmodern author, has produced a history-based and murder mystery novel, which is known as *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994). Also known as *The Trial of Elizabeth Cree*, this novel provides a contemporary look at the Victorian times. The historicity of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* lies in its comprehension of dark sides of Victorian history mainly through murders, crimes, and moral issues. As a work which constantly draws attention to historical dates, the novel consists of the extracts from the trial of Mrs. Cree, the main character, diary of John Cree, the husband of Elizabeth Cree, third-person narrator and first-person narrator. The historical records are formulated within a mixture of four narrative strategies and the specific dates are also used to prove that the plot takes place in a Victorian time. The contemporary lenses of Ackroyd are prominently found by way of character traits and time perceptions because the narrative shifts among different time cycles.

While the novel predominantly underlines historical records and dates from Victorian history, it consists of various murders, of which reason and murderer are not known to the readers until the very end of the novel. The murderer, disguised as an unknown figure, kills prostitutes, a scholar, and so on; and his/her identity is not revealed, which is one of the major mysteries to be solved. At this point, the reflection

of murder mystery is an important point to achieve the novel's status as a popular work by taking the readers into its own structure: "In keeping with the murder mystery material, Ackroyd makes the reader share in the generation of meaning" (Higdon, 2005, p. 224). Throughout the novel, a certain explanation for the murderer cannot be provided just as there is not an absolute resolution to a series of murders as they keep going on. One of the reasons behind such a secrecy is based on the intelligent acting skills of Elizabeth Cree, who can hide her real identity like a genius. Moreover, another important mystery is about the trial of Mrs. Cree, who is accused of killing her husband even though this is not proved clearly at first sight. Not only the murderer but also the reasons behind such crimes are not revealed and a series of killings take place consequently. Whereas the readers can question why these crimes occur, the neo-Victorian analysis of the novel will provide them with a meaningful interpretation and possible causes for murders.

In the matter of murder mystery, neo-Victorian elements found in this work prove to be quite useful for creating a connection between the past and the contemporaneity. Reproducing marginalised lives, Ackroyd draws parallelisms for revisiting the otherised individuals of Victorian times from a contemporary view; and he brings them a new voice or excuse to prove themselves because of their traumas. Referring to trauma subject, Muren Zhang (2022) argues that the traumas in the past are revived and studied in neo-Victorian novels under the light of present and future views (p. 10). Therefore, the protagonist, Elizabeth Cree, who has a traumatised childhood experiences since her mother applied violent and inhumane doings on her, emerges as a female, whose traumas are represented. After the death of her mother, Elizabeth grows herself and becomes a theatre player after attending the team of Dan Leno, whom she watched at the theatre in Craven Street. As she disguises under different identities, she develops a perfect acting skill and finds a voice for herself by justifying her violent crimes. The combination of factual history through Dan Leno, Karl Marx and Victorian elements with fictionalisation by Ackroyd adds another layer to the thematic structure of murder mystery because neo-Victorianism enters the surface by reinventing those figures within the frame of mysterious incidents.

First and foremost, Ackroyd revives already passed figures in a contemporary time; and to achieve this, he brings some newness to the faded times of Victorian history. Especially through the textualization of historical facts from the nineteenth century and Victorian era, this novel may be categorised as a neo-Victorian text rather

than a postmodern or historical novel. Nevertheless, Ackroyd, as a dominant author of postmodern theory, does not neglect to employ some specific techniques of postmodernism, such as “historiographic metafiction”, but it appears with a few examples. The most remarkable side of this novel as a neo-Victorian text, lies in its comprehension of Victorian individuals and reestablishment of Victorian norms. Even though Elizabeth Cree is supposed to resign herself to her fate under Victorian time conditions, she emerges as an independent figure, who can decide on her destiny with her choices and attitudes, similar to Isobella who had less power when compared to Elizabeth. In addition to her, the narrative process of Ackroyd with four different types fictionalises and problematises the real history as everything is presented within a fictional structure, which is made apparent through language and narration.

For the analysis of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* under neo-Victorian theory and mystery, gender issues hold serious and critical status because most of the crimes seem to happen as a result of traumatic experiences of Mrs. Cree due to her childhood experiences. Not accepting the naturalisation of womanhood, she rejects the set norms of Victorian history for women. The act of killing prostitutes is a proof of this argument since they have to be vanished according to a mindset, which does not accept womanhood into mainstream. Not only purifying London city from the problems of chastity, but the murderer also provides the readers with a justifying interpretation due to the problematic memories. The psychological traits are also significant as the diary of John Cree indicates because he seems to commit many murders slaughterously. As the introduction part for *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* of this thesis will not reveal who the murderer is, the murder mystery will be explained through the details in order to prove how a neo-Victorian fiction like this novel is able to subvert and re-establish familiar history.

3.2. Murder/Mystery with Subversion

In his novels, which benefit from historical issues and authentic images, Ackroyd offers his readers a chance to be engaged in history, of which reality is subversive according to contemporary understanding. Rather than classifying him as only a historical novelist or postmodern author, his *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* proves Ackroyd's independence from such limitations because this novel serves the characteristics of neo-Victorianism as well as holding historical clues within the framework of mysteries. In the novel, the main subject matter is based upon murders

and crimes, yet their resolution and gradual developments bring a sense of mystery, with many questions and problems unresolved. Within this perspective, the concept of mystery in Ackroyd's novel emerges as murder mystery, which is settled in the nineteenth century atmosphere with references to Victorian history as well as from the lenses of Ackroyd. Although this novel borrows some characteristics of postmodernism, which will be told in detail, the neo-Victorian content is obvious in that it draws mainly the Victorian era through the perspective of a contemporary author, and the clues of presentism are critically found with a detailed analysis.

To understand, a detailed survey of murder mystery more comprehensively under neo-Victorian light, the fragmented narrative structure may capture the attention of the novel's readers, and critics because there is not an absolute narrator, but the narration shifts between the first-person narrative of Elizabeth Cree, who is accused of killing her husband, and the third person narrative, who provides the readers with a detailed observation of the events, similar to Kneale's narration. In addition, the extracts from the diary of John Cree, the husband of Elizabeth Cree and the trial of Mrs. Cree enrich the multi-layered structure of the novel, offering a fragmented formula. In this fragmented structure, the parallelism between the fragmentation of the past and the present is obvious because the narration shifts between memories, personal experiences, present trials and so on. The neo-Victorian fiction's aim to go back and forth suits a lot to such a narration as Ackroyd draws. Besides, such a fragmentation makes it possible to construct the concept of mystery because there are many unknowns such as even the narrators or observers, and the mystery also stems from the representation of unresolved secrets.

With respect to the content, one of the biggest mysteries can be given as the logical explanation for the crimes committed. Although Mr. Cree seems to murder different people such as two prostitutes, whose names are Jane Quig and Alice Stanton, and a scholar named Solomon Weil, the reason of his act is not given at the inception. Furthermore, the novel, which opens with the trial of Elizabeth Cree accused of killing her husband, does not provide the readers with a coherent trial scene but a fragmented inquiry and the ending of the novel suggests a totally different fact of murders as will be demonstrated. Hence, the subversive content of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* may capture the attention of its readers at the very end of the novel, when the main hidden mystery is resolved. Just as King (2014) claims, "[m]ystery is always hiding in plain sight—creation has a double lining, the interplay of many dimensions"

(p. 364). The use of murders and fragmented structure inevitably add originality and authenticity to the composition of this novel under neo-Victorian theory.

By making use of ambivalent murders, this novel portrays an apparent crime story. While crime fiction is “good at story telling, of course, is because it offers a mystery, a series of questions that have to be answered” (Dunant, 2000, p. 10); it also conveys a murder mystery as this novel exemplifies. As well as the contextual matter, namely the content and themes, the characterisation also prevails the composition of this novel within the light of murder mystery. Through the trial of Elizabeth Cree, the readers are confused in that she killed only her husband in the beginning of the novel. Her intelligence, similar to the intelligence of Mr. Jeavons as portrayed in the previous chapter, reflects that what truth seems to be can be subverted easily with the implementation of human logic. In this perspective, disguising holds a prominent role in this novel since the main character, Elizabeth Cree, can perfectly disguise herself under different positions. Even her real name is revealed as “Lambeth Marsh Lizzie” although she explains: “That was once my name, sir” in her trial to the question for her name (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 10). The change in the name of Mrs. Cree also signals a mystery as the reason for such a change is not explained and it waits to be resolved like any mystery.

Along with disguising issues, the characterisation of Elizabeth Cree holds an essential role for subverting realities and truths. The intelligence of Elizabeth, mingled with her behavioural abilities, deceives the readers as they may consider her as a blameless figure who is charged with killing her husband by mistake (Tekin, 2018, p. 1523). Her calm and steady answers to the questions that are forwarded to her during her trial also approve of this argument because the readers are aware that she also got some powder for a rat and her husband is found dead. However, she signals that there is a lot to discover as she is questioned when she says that her “husband had destroyed himself” to her neighbour during her trial (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 33). Although she confesses that she was in an anxious state of mood, this utterance implies that this is not a simple murder based on a single reason and it will be discovered under the shadow of murder mystery.

For a detailed analysis of mystery, or more specifically murder mystery, it should be highlighted that the murderer of two different contexts is unknown. On the one hand, it is not certain that Mrs. Cree has killed her husband as her trial exemplifies because she manages to give logical answers, which prove her innocence. On the other

hand, the murderer of various people from woman to man is not known even though John Cree seems to compose a diary in which he confesses the details of his violent acts. The reason behind the second context stems from the fact that the readers are thrown into a mode of suspicion, thinking about possible murderer candidates for such crimes. Besides Ackroyd manages this suspicion through the portrayal of hidden and weird manners of other characters, all of which will be mentioned further. The manners of both Mrs. and Mr. Cree are of much importance since these reveal something hidden behind them as a clue; and this clue arouses curiosity, wonder and suspicion in the readers, allowing them to have a grasp of murder mystery concept.

Before passing to the issue of murders and mysterious incidents in historical setting of London and Victorian society, the title of the novel proves itself to be an inclusive balance because embraces both reality and fiction. First of all, "Dan Leno" is a real and historical figure, who lived in the Victorian era as a music hall actor, and his presence in this novel of Ackroyd is an example of neo-Victorian revival of a passed history. In the second place, "the Limehouse Golem" is the fictional part of the novel because the murderer is referred as "the Limehouse Golem" due to his violent acts, which arouse horror in people during that time as the plot suggests. The monstrous side of "Golem" is ideally explained in the novel as well, mentioning it as a figure of fear: "It was an object of horror, sometimes said to be made of red clay or sand, and in the mid-eighteenth century it was associated with spectres and succubi who have a taste for blood" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 4). This explanation also serves for neo-Victorian connotation of the novel itself since it gives a historical clarification of a fictional creation by Ackroyd. As the murders start and continue in the Limehouse Reach, the combination of Limehouse and golem becomes inevitable, making it as a symbolic figure of fear in Limehouse area. Another title of the novel, "The Trial of Elizabeth Cree" features a process of punishment of the main character and it is more associated with a fictional story although it includes historical elements. Still, the obscurity of the serial killer, regardless of both titles, adds a sense of mystery to the plot since nobody, including police and detectives, do not know who this golem is.

Concerning the mysterious murders, which do not make sense in the readers and in the characters of the novel as the reasons and the murderer are not known clearly, the plot starts with the death of a woman, and a scholar; and another woman and more people are found dead. Throughout the narrative of Ackroyd, it seems that the readers are involved in a crime fiction or a story of a serial killer. For taking the

attention of the readers into such an understanding, Ackroyd outlines a chronological structure of murders from the diary of John Cree, who tells every detail of his murders. The first murder mentioned in the novel is the killing of Jane Quig, then Solomon Weil, and Alice Stanton with details. In an analysis of Stanton's body, the secret of "Golem" is mentioned openly: "Upon the pyramid itself the word 'golem' had been traced in the blood of the dead woman"; and the newspapers featuring the name of "golem" paved the way for the birth of "the legend of the Golem" (Ackroyd, 1994, pp. 6-7). Through the fame aroused in public, the title of the novel, "the Limehouse Golem", becomes more apprehensible. Likewise, the word "golem" appears in other murders such as the killing of a scholar; and in this murder, as narrated by John Cree in his diary, the golem becomes a more common motive for making mention of the murderer. As soon as the murderer kills the scholar, he finds a book upon which "golem" is mentioned: "On the page was delineated the image of some mighty demon and, beside it, a short history of the golem" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 86). Hence, the murderer apparently becomes the source for remembering the golem, and its mystery is critically analysed step by step as the plot develops.

Furthermore, the murder mystery accompanied by a "golem" figure appears when the narration shifts from John Cree to the third-person narrator. Speaking of "golem", the narrator explains that: "It was an emblem for the city which surrounded them and the search for the Limehouse Golem became, curiously enough, a search for the secret of London itself" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 88). While terrifying murders surround London city, the secrecy becomes multi-layered since the murders represent a secret or a mystery to be solved. Even in the murderous acts of John Cree, as the readers will find, his manners awake a sense of mystery while he is approaching his victim, the scholar, slowly and about to take his mallet to kill him: "You and I both have a sense of the sacred, have we not? We understand the mystery" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 86). In this type of mystery uttered by the killer, the mystery lies in his bag, which is waiting to be emerged. Nonetheless, only the readers witness the resolution of this mystery rather than the public at that time when events happened.

As a historical and real figure, Dan Leno remains a central and chief figure; and his appearance in the novel is not based on only realities but he is also represented within the frame of mystery. Referring to the acting skills of Dan Leno, Elizabeth narrates that: "I often wondered where it came from, not finding it in myself, but I presume that there was some little piece of darkness in his past" (Ackroyd, 1994, pp.

96-97). This narration of Elizabeth Cree may make the readers consider him as a potential murderer due to the darkness as told and his unclear personal history because his intelligence is given rather than his life and past, which remains as a source of mystery. His intelligence also implies a capability of hiding the true identity of the real murderer because he might be a golem, too. However, his mystery is also related to his excellent acting skills on stage as a music hall and theatre performer. As Elizabeth puts it: "Dan always remained something of a mystery to us, although his mystery was really his artistry which was obvious even to the lowest class of audience" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 108). The mystery that is alluded to may, therefore, be considered as his genius, of which source and inspiration cannot be known. For this reason, the multi-layered structure of mystery is also obvious in the portrayal of Dan Leno, who is involved in a murder story as well.

In addition to Dan Leno, the plot follows a mysterious reflection of George Gissing, whose story is given in a brief summary in the twenty-first chapter of the novel. Losing everything that he owns for the sake of his wife, Nell Harrison, to take care of her, Gissing one day sees that Nell disappears suddenly after he follows her. This is similar to the disappearance of the wife of Joshua Jeavons, Isobella; but the mysterious disappearance of Nell will result in a murder. Contrary to expectations, it is not Nell who dies but another woman is found dead, and she is the one, who opened the door to Gissing when Nell entered a dwelling with her husband aiming to catch her. Ultimately, the third-person narration clarifies the presence of golem: "The third attack of the Limehouse Golem, after the murders of Jane Quig and Solomon Weil, was upon the woman who had greeted Gissing at the door of the house in Whitecross Street" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 124). Murder mystery shows itself to be present with an unknown murderer unlike the accounts drawn from the diary of John Cree.

On the contrary to a typical detective fiction, this novel also demonstrates the ability of subverting a typical structure, by making use of murder mystery. To differentiate *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* from a typical detective story in which a murderer is aimed to be found by police detectives or so, the organisation of plot and narration are of much importance. Grella (1970) argues that the creative techniques and genius of an imaginary murderer can slip away from all people except a detective (p. 32). However, Ackroyd's novel, as a neo-Victorian text which can subvert history, also subverts the set notion of intelligence of detectives since the police detectives are unable to find the murderer. Additionally, the diary of John Cree does

not remain as the only clue for indicating Mr. Cree as the murderer, but there are also other hints to accuse him. Mentioning the clothes of Alice Stanton, who talked to Gissing, there seems to be a hint towards John Cree: “The dead woman had purchased it from the second-hand clothes dealer, whose shop upon the Ratcliffe Highway had already been visited by John Cree” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 125). The evidence for creating a parallelism between the death of Alice Stanton and John Cree may therefore accuse Mr. Cree as a potential murderer as he had killed her. Then, another killing of the Gerrard family by “the Limehouse Golem” aroused a common anxiety among people of London. Since nobody has been able to come up with a logical explanation of the murderer, there has been various speculations about the golem:

Some dark spirit had been released, or so it seemed, and certain religious leaders began to suggest that London itself – this vast urban creation which was the first of its kind upon the globe – was somehow responsible for the evil. Reverend Trussler, of the Holborn Baptist Church, compared the murders to the smoke of the London chimneys and denounced them as the necessary and inevitable results of modern existence. (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 162)

Evaluation of London city, with all of its filth and beauty, as a source for the emergence of the golem legend is not only related to the historical connotations such as the London chimneys, which are the stereotypical reflections of the city with foggy air in the Victorian era, but also to the spiritual figures. This combination of factual details and spiritual beings exemplifies how history and mystery are merged to offer a coherent story as they complete each other. At this point, the importance of historical sources, such as the diary of John Cree and other details indicating him, cannot be ignored because they blend reality and fiction. In addition, the sources play a key role for the resolution of finding the true murderer, as a piece of writing from the diary of Mr. Cree, who went to a pantomime with Elizabeth in order to see Dan performing, demonstrates: “I laughed as loud as anyone, because I knew that there was a murder in the air” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 167). The sense of feeling the “murder” by John Cree positions himself as a psychologically disturbed man, who yearns for violent actions of killing people; and this also serves as a main source to accuse him because this diary can be found by police detectives in any time.

When it comes to who the real murderer is, it is explored that Elizabeth Cree is the legendary “Limehouse Golem” who killed many people. Although the reason behind her violent crimes is not revealed, her childhood traumas because of her mother can be given as a triggering force upon her; and they will be critically analysed further in the neo-Victorian context of this novel. In her confession to the priest, Elizabeth

tells that: “Well, I made up a diary and laid the guilt upon him. I had finished a play for him once, you see, so I knew all the lingo” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 273). Together with her confession, her intelligence and acting skills become to the foreground once more since she planned everything related to her crimes in a perfect manner and as a genius. Because of a fragmented narrative and the suspicions towards different figures, the readers are confused in their recognising of the murderer as “a young man” and this causes a failure of creating a tie between the murderer and Elizabeth Cree (Tekin, 2018, p. 1523). By putting the blame on her husband, Mr. Cree, Elizabeth perhaps hoped to get rid of a punishment, but the revelation of all the mysterious Limehouse murders paved the way for further crime and punishments. An example of this is obviously her killing of John Cree since: “He wanted to change the denouement, and expose my little adventures to the world” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 273). While John has threatened to tell the truth behind Limehouse golem and murders, his action resulted in his death by his wife, which is the second main murder mystery to be analysed.

While there are a series of killings towards people randomly, the identity of the murderer and the exact reasons behind such killings are not revealed to readers till the very end of the novel. With various narrative perspectives, Ackroyd takes the readers towards “the mystery to play detectives themselves—to piece together from the different entries who is the real murderer, the real ‘Limehouse Golem’?” (Cameron, 2024, p. 358). Holding a mysterious position as a theme in the plot of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, this secrecy is accompanied by the mysterious death of John Cree. Within a gradual process of solving the mysterious death of John Cree, his wife Elizabeth Cree is put into a trial, during which she is asked questions about the death of her husband. To discuss the death of John Cree, the trial of Mrs. Cree holds a prominent role as it demonstrates how a murder can be brought into a state of secrecy and mystery. In her trial, Elizabeth seems to believe in the fact that Mr. Cree suffered from a gastric disease; however, there is a claim that she said, “John has destroyed himself” to a neighbour (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 33). Her contradictory claims and utterances, accompanied with her buying of “arsenic powder” to get rid of the problem of a rat in her house, are then drawn to a series of inquiries (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 9). Referring to the self-destruction of John Cree in her explanation, Elizabeth also claims that “he had threatened self-murder before” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 35). Upon the consumption of such a writing from her trial and witnessing the details of John Cree’s

diary, the readers may believe in the fact that John Cree has felt a guilt of killing many people violently and then committed suicide.

However, things begin to get complicated as the trial goes on because of the contradiction between Elizabeth and her maid, Aveline Mortimer. In the trial, Aveline seems to admit that “there were no rats” and Elizabeth then insists on a self-murder of John Cree, claiming that: “He believed that he was condemned. And that demons were forever watching him” (Ackroyd, 1994, pp. 41-42). This contradiction may, therefore, prompt readers to think of other possibilities outside committing suicide, such as a murder by Elizabeth Cree. Despite this thought, the readers are drawn into the innocence of Elizabeth when she admits that: “He was a good husband to me” to her lawyer (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 70). With this explanation, Elizabeth indeed proves that there is no reason for her to kill her husband because there are not any problems between the couple. No matter how innocent she may seem, Aveline Mortimer, as a witness, confuses everything more and more when she is brought to the court to be questioned by the barrister, Mr. Greatorrex. In her testimony, Aveline says that John Cree said to her wife: “You devil! You are the one!”; and Aveline admits that Elizabeth is “a very hardened woman” (Ackroyd, 1994, pp. 133-134). The reason behind this may be parallel with the strict behaviours of Mrs. Cree both towards her maid and husband, or with the arguments between the couple.

The position of Aveline Mortimer in the trial process is of fundamental importance because of her past relationship with Elizabeth, previously known as Lizzie. Perhaps because of her jealousy of Elizabeth, Aveline tricks her into saying something associated with death to her audience, although Elizabeth believes that she says something positive about the holiday to her audience. Upon noticing the reality behind the phrase, Lizzie, referring to Aveline, admits that: “She had always been envious of my success, but it was the most spiteful act she could possibly have performed” (Ackroyd, 1994, pp. 176-177). When this is revealed to the readers and to the music-hall team, there might be a possibility of thinking of Aveline as the murderer of John Cree because this might be an opportunity to get rid of Elizabeth by putting the blame on her although it is Elizabeth, who committed all these bloody crimes of killing people including her husband.

As Elizabeth confesses her guilt of killing her husband, the readers and the court, at the same time, are able to resolve the second murder mystery. With a gradual development of the trial process, the readers are drawn into a flow of event, and they

are also involved in a variety of mysteries surrounding them; yet, their presence emerges within the framework of a murder mystery due to a set of killings towards many people. In her confession to the priest who has been present for her forgiveness, Elizabeth confesses everything she has done and the main reason behind her act of killing her husband. She tells the priest that: “He threatened me. He wanted to prevent me” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 273). With this utterance, there exists a mystery for the reason she is being followed by John Cree because there is a secret about her. To reveal this secret and resolve the mystery behind this issue, Elizabeth says: “He suspected me. He watched me. He followed me ... Surely you have heard of the famous Limehouse Golem” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 273). With these sentences from Elizabeth Cree, she obviously implies that she is the “golem” and her husband felt a sense of mystery, which triggers him to follow his wife. Therefore, the reasons behind the death of John Cree and the identity of the murderer become apparent with a gradual development of the trial process of Elizabeth Cree, who is the guilty of many murders as well, and the murder mystery behind the death of John Cree is also resolved. The evolution of the plot structure in this perspective owes a lot to the history of the nineteenth century because it blends fact and fiction, which will be discussed in the neo-Victorian analysis of the novel as well.

3.3. Neo-Victorian Notions in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*

Neo-Victorian analysis of Peter Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* proves itself to be a dominant evaluation of this work due a variety of historical connotations from the Victorian era. As its title suggests, Dan Leno, a British music-hall performer, emerges as the main historical figure from the nineteenth century; and he is revived according to the fictionalisation of Ackroyd, who includes Dan in a series of crimes. In a historical context, Dan Leno, born in 1860 and died in 1904, was a gifted “music hall comedian” in the late nineteenth century who was able to utilise the opportunities (Parker, 2023, para. 1). An example to benefiting from the opportunities may be given as the job opportunity offered to Lizzie when Dan proposed an employment for her. The reason behind this opportunity may be the talent of Lizzie or the intelligence of Dan, who wanted to take advantage of an opportunity. However, his portrayal is mostly associated with a revival found in the light of neo-Victorian fiction because it is not certain that everything he experiences is factual or historical reality. Instead, his involvement in the story of Elizabeth Cree demonstrates that Dan Leno is

brought to light in another context out of his real presence.

Moreover, the revival of historical figures is not limited to Dan Leno; Karl Marx, George Gissing and Thomas de Quincey are also revived as real and life-like individuals. The references to Quincey's work *On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts* (1827) or George Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* (1860) demonstrate the impact of intertextuality in Ackroyd's novel as if the readers were involved in a real nineteenth century atmosphere. Indeed, in the writings of Ackroyd, "intertextuality" plays a significant role as a "structural device" which is mainly seen in Ackroyd's blending of authentic historical individuals or imaginative figures (Chalupský, 2010, p. 129). Mixing historical associations with his fictional abilities, Ackroyd also uses neo-Victorian "intertextuality" by shaping it according to the representation of Victorian texts and authors. In this respect, the use of intertextual references not only complies with the references to mysterious murders as Quincey's work implies, but these also prove that "intertextuality" appears as a Victorian type in neo-Victorian works.

Along with the title, suggesting the revival of a historical figure like Dan Leno, the structure of the novel in terms of its narration has a serious function because it shifts among four main narrations which are first person narrator, third person narrator, the diary of John Cree and the trial of Elizabeth Cree. This shifting, accompanied by chronological order of the diary, foreshadowing, and a regular flow of events, may seem confusing, but their combination paves the way for a coherent story as well as a historiography. The technique of using different narrative structures not only leads to a prominent use of history but its subversion also makes it possible to reestablish the past, which is a direct aim for neo-Victorian fiction. The subversion found in this context is mostly observed in the portrayal of Elizabeth Cree as a masculine figure out of Victorian conventions of a typical woman, like the "angel in the house" idea, and the shocking effect produced by the murder mystery in this novel because what seems to be real is found wrong. The subversion of a character and the contextual reality proves how neo-Victorian fiction can reestablish a new identity both within and outside Victorian history as well as collapsing everything it establishes as Elizabeth is found the serial killer rather than John Cree.

The merging of the golem, the title for the murderer of many people in the Limehouse area, together with a serial killer, not only revives a fictional story but also its gradual development with historical realities may refer to history writing, making

readers be confused about the division of fact and fiction. In many parts of the novel, reality and fiction are merged, and the entity of music hall serves as a useful source for connecting fact and imagination. Within a fictional novel, the presence of plays through the portrayal of theatre characters on stage paves the way for the readers to consider the fictionality of the work mixed with historical realities. Nevertheless, this may also impose some confusion on the readers whether they read historiography or fictional writing. And the resolution is achieved with a combination of both aspects because the novel brings history to the present with a made-up story. However, the use of some phrases may confuse the stage and reality according to the mind of the murderer, who is seemingly John Cree, as he depicts in his diary upon killing Gerrard: “The play has just begun” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 161) Even though the readers may understand that they read a fictionalised form of history, it may not be applicable for the characters in the story such as John Cree as demonstrated.

The exact dates shown in the diary of Mr. Cree and the summary of the days imply that everything told is real rather than fictional. Nevertheless, the fragmented narrative structure demonstrates the fictionality of the work because it proves that there is a story being told rather than a mere historiography of listing the chronological dates with factual details. The beginning of the novel narrates that: “On the 6th April, 1881, a woman was hanged within the walls of Camberwell Prison. The ceremony was to be performed at eight o’clock...” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 1). With such an ambiguous introduction, the readers are informed that there will be a punishment for a woman, and it is set in the nineteenth century. The second, and perhaps the most crucial, example of listing the chronological dates from Victorian times or reflecting historiography-like narrative is John Cree’s diary, which stands for the subversion of official historiography as a subjective object. Although the diary seems to tell the murders to the readers as a credible “historical source”, it appears that this diary is “as unreliable as Elizabeth” (Bal, 2019, p. 224). For this reason, the unreliability of Jeavons’s memory and diary may be merged in that they do not provide a reliable demonstration of historical events. The resolution of proving the presentist perspective is given at the inception of mirroring the pieces from the diary: “These extracts are taken from the diary of Mr. John Cree of New Cross Villas, South London, now preserved in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, with the call-mark Add. Ms. 1624/566” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 24); and after this explanation the piece of writings from the diary of John Cree enter the narrative structure as a common motive,

in which John Cree details every murder and his life-like experiences. However, the explanatory remarks demonstrate that there is a combination of a fragmentation as the narrative shifts between back and forth; and it may therefore prove the presentist perspective towards the past by putting the fictionality of the novel into focus.

The connection between fact and fiction may confuse the readers at some points making them question the authenticity or originality of events, but the fictionalisation of the plot by Peter Ackroyd proves that history is combined with a fictional creation. The novel, offering a “a fully exploited retrospective opening” also clarifies the dominance of the past (Higdon, 2005, p. 224). At this point, “historiographic metafiction” plays a prominent role because Ackroyd, although seldom, addresses his readers, making them aware of the fact that they read a fictional creation. An example for this addressing to readers is given in the preparation process of Elizabeth: “You can imagine my nervousness as I dressed up for the first time” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 104). While this quotation from the novel illustrates a metafictional, the “historiographic metafiction” is also observable. In the novel, Gissing questions the problems around him such a murder due to his wife, Nell and after his realisation of blaming Nell, Ackroyd makes use of “historiographic metafiction” by taking the attention to the fictionality of the work: “He blamed his wife for his situation, as we have seen, but up to this time she had never threatened his very survival” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 148). As a valuable source of historical realities, the novel bears some resemblances to historiography, but to save it from the limits of history writing and put into the categorisation of neo-Victorian fiction, the fictionality of the work must be inevitably emphasised. Hence, the use of “historiographic metafiction”, although it is not much common in this novel, becomes an important source for reviving history like the Victorian era in a fictional way as a neo-Victorian context aims to achieve.

Another issue to be analysed in the light of neo-Victorian context is the presence of Victorian times in this novel. This presence is not only limited to historical dates, but the stereotypical representations from Victorian history also appear as the focal aspects to be critically evaluated. Talking about the atmosphere, the people of London are affected by the foggy atmosphere due to the consequences of the Industrial Revolution: “Their lungs seemed to be filled with the quintessence of coal dust...” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 43). Being a typical atmosphere in Victorian London, the foggy air mixed with the hazy air and fog shows itself to be reflected in a neo-Victorian novel

through its reality and authenticity. Besides, it revives the connotation of “murder mystery”: “In Victorian London, the fog became, to use Eliot’s term, an objective correlative of murder and mystery” (Kucala, 2011, p. 92). In addition to the foggy atmosphere, the constant emphasis found in a song uttered by Dan Leno adds a realisation of the fact that the nineteenth century is being lived: “Our nineteenth-century stores!” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 52). Representing the air and the general atmosphere of London then emerges as a common example to revive the Victorian era by Ackroyd himself. Moreover, this reflection is found commonly in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* through the depiction of foggy air and nostalgic images:

There was an oil lamp gleaming at the corner near the river, with some people gathered around: I could see that it was some kind of pie-stall, and so I walked that way to purchase a saveloy for myself. It was a bitter cold evening, and the hot coals offered some comfort as well. (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 53)

In addition to portraying the London atmosphere in the Victorian era, the nostalgic impulse, as a part of neo-Victorian fiction, is also observed in Ackroyd’s novel. This nostalgia is not associated with ‘good old days’ idea, but it is related to a general comprehension of London in the nineteenth century. One example of the nostalgic impulse is found in the imagination of Elizabeth: “I could not remember the rest of it, but it was enough for me to imagine myself dancing upon the stage with the beautiful picture of London behind me” (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 56). Through a portrayal of the London city in her imagination, Elizabeth feels an emotional attachment to the beauty of the city, and the depiction of this imagination in a contemporary time by Ackroyd proves that it was actually a beautiful city to think of it. Despite the problems in the streets of London, including filth, crimes, minorities or dark times of the Victorian era, this nostalgic impulse brings the idea of reviving the past with its beauty since it was not a terrible era totally.

Contrary to a common nostalgic sense awakened by Elizabeth, Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* mostly employs the fallen individuals of the Victorian era such as the female figures as seen in this novel because of the patriarchal society. When all of the lives and destinies of women in this novel are taken into consideration, it is inevitable to consider the fate of Elizabeth Cree as the victim of the society. Her mind, covered with childhood traumas because of the demonic attitudes of her mother towards her, serves a source to direct the flow of events as her every action and manners indicate. Doubtlessly, the family as an institution possessed an important position in the Victorian era. Therefore, Jina Moon (2016) proposes that:

“The ideology of the family as sacred, in the Victorian period, was spread through education, cultural media, and political/social discourse” (p. 2). However, the lack of a family institution could mean notorious fames for women with child as seen in the case of Lizzie, who saw a domestic violence from her mother as an illegitimate child. Her childhood traumas coming from the violence applied upon her illustrates how violence can lead to another violence. In addition to being a victim of a patriarchal and deteriorated society, marginalised individuals also play a vital role as they are revived and given a voice to be re-established. The ‘otherization’ towards many people such as Jane Quig, Alice Stanton, the mother of Elizabeth Cree, or Solomon Weil proves the realities of Victorian history as these people are like the fallen individuals due to their identities, either as women or religious choices.

Furthermore, these prejudiced approaches to figures making them otherised may be considered as the triggering forces for the violent and evil side of Elizabeth Cree since she is the murderer. Contrary to the ‘angel in the house’ idea from the Victorian era, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* subverts the idea of what a typical woman is supposed to be in Victorian history. As a neo-Victorian, it achieves such a subversion by portraying Elizabeth as a figure who is out of normal conventions towards women because she prefers masculinity over femininity. This is, indeed, a characteristic of neo-Victorian novels that represent a new perspective on Victorian times, while Llewellyn (2008), referring to the nineteenth century, argues that neo-Victorian fiction aims “to re-write the historical narrative of that period by representing marginalised voices” (p. 165). In order to find a way out of being a victim or marginalised individual of the society, she escapes from her first life and enters her second life as a stage performer, in which she has found the opportunity to become a male figure under different titles. However, this masculinity is not limited to only stage but she also performs her masculinity during her crimes. Her physical traits are also very important because they constantly indicate an abnormal position for a woman, and they also hint at her as a potential murderer for the crimes committed in the Limehouse area.

The limitations imposed upon women in the nineteenth century are seen to be destroyed to some extent with a masculine portrayal of a female figure like Elizabeth. Throughout the novel, it is possible to observe the masculine traits of Elizabeth, which also make her a potential murderer. The constant focus on the big size of Elizabeth's hands indicates both “an incredibly destitute, toilsome, and detested childhood” and a

clue for the bloody crimes caused by these hands in Limehouse area (Tekin, 2018, p. 1524). Her being away from an innocent girl is often emphasised with her male roles on the stage as well as her big hands. These hands are also combined with the violent psychology of Elizabeth because she implies a sense of murderer in many senses. When Dan Leno and Lizzie, namely Elizabeth, are performing, she may be pressing so hard with her hands on Dan's throat and the shock of Dan is revealed then: "'The last thing I felt,' he said, 'were those big hands of yours. Whatever did you think you were doing?'" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 182). Whereas this piece from the novel may imply an ordinary acting scene, Elizabeth frequently draws attention to her violent side, which is innate in her soul. Another example of this is related to her acting when she was performing *Little Victor's Daughter*: "... I grew sick of *Little Victor's Daughter*. She was just too sweet, and I longed to kill her off by some violent action" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 150). Upon reading this piece of a writing from the novel, the readers may inevitably suspect from Lizzie as a possible murderer of the Limehouse crimes because she transfers the feeling of horror and violence to the readers as well as her fellow worker on the stage.

When all of these are considered, Ackroyd evidently portrays the typical gender problems of the nineteenth century and then subverts them similar to Kneale, who dealt with this subversion through class and gender issues. Indeed, in Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, "the 'Other' who was mostly marginalised in Victorian literature and culture" is restored (Maier & Ayres, 2024, p. 12). Making female figures of the streets as victims of a murderer, there may be an aim of cleaning the streets from these victimised women, which is like a cleansing process for minority groups. This prejudiced approach to such women can be easily connected with Victorian history and contemporary ages as well; however, the traumatic experiences of Elizabeth Cree emerge as a powerful tool to subvert biased perception toward women, which considers women as weak figures. Such an approach is quite contrary to Victorian history but it is an ordinary approach for the contemporary ages, in which women can see themselves equal to men. For this reason, the masculine attributions to Elizabeth hold a privileged position to subvert the gender borders, making a female figure from the Victorian era out of its conventions and adapting her to the conditions of the contemporary eras. This is also found in the freedom of Elizabeth as she puts: "I could be girl and boy, man and woman, without any shame" (Ackroyd, 1994, p. 153). With this part, the readers have the chance of hearing the marginalised figures

just like Elizabeth due to her family problems and gender; and this chance comes from the neo-Victorian attribution of voice to trapped figures.

The continuous flow of events within a blending of murder mystery and historical subject matters therefore triggers a combination of murder mystery and contemporary revisitation of the nineteenth century. The historical references that are put at the centre of the novel could mark this novel as a “historical novel” or a postmodern work, as many of Ackroyd’s novels are recognised as postmodern works. Nevertheless, the revival of the nineteenth century figures such as Dan Leno, Karl Marx, Solomon Weil or Thomas de Quincey, and exact dates from the Victorian era are adequate to classify this novel as a neo-Victorian text. Besides, the representation of Victorian values in terms of gender and family issues is the indicator for the portrayal of Victorian history. However, a partial subversion of such a Victorian history owes a lot to the characterisation of Elizabeth Cree as an independent and powerful individual despite her traumatised childhood, gender and family background. Such a subversion combined with a fragmented and scattered narration implies a journey between the past and the present because the novel consists of memories mostly. Besides, the use of mysterious events within murder mystery provides a glimpse of understanding how the concept of mystery and neo-Victorianism go hand in hand with subversions and fragmentations, which create some gaps waiting to be filled. Hence, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* by Peter Ackroyd is a key example of neo-Victorianism through its complete emphasis on the Victorian era with all its peculiarities, and also presentist creation by a contemporary author, who gives a place to trapped figures of history causing a journey between the past and the present.

3.4. Conclusion

Upon a critical study of Ackroyd’s novel, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the readers, researchers and critics are aware of the blending of murder mystery and neo-Victorianism. While the representation of both aspects may seem to be separate entities; their mixture is given in a unity of events and coherent ways to make sense in the minds of the readers. As the fundamental core of the novel, the existence of Victorian history possesses a vital stand because it is not given under a chronological historiography but it is revived, revisited and reestablished under a series of killings, which seem quite realistic. As a thematic structure, the mystery of the novel has an undeniable significance because it captures the attention of the readers like a detective

story. The murders committed in the Limehouse area are not revealed with their truths such as the murderer and reasons behind those bloody crimes. However, the readers are given a clue of seeing John Cree as the murderer due to his chronicles in his diary. This clue is then scattered through indicators that consider another possible murderer rather than John Cree. Consequently, the readers are presented the fact that Elizabeth is the Golem and the murderer of her husband, who followed and threatened her.

Throughout the process of revealing the real murderer, the readers and also the characters in the novel are taken into a gradual development of inquiries by police detectives, who strive for finding the golem of the Limehouse area. Unable to find the real serial killer, the detectives of this novel appear as some professionals who lack the genius and capacity of a traditional detective in detective fictions. In this respect, the duty of finding the murderer cannot be fulfilled; Elizabeth's own confession in the end of the novel to the priest and her weird manners suggest that she is the golem. At this point, it is possible to see that the professional skills of Elizabeth may falsify everyone including detectives, her fellows, and even the readers. Nonetheless, the resolution in the ending of the novel is enough to bring everything to the light and solve the main mystery of the novel, namely who the real murderer is. When it comes to the reasons behind her starvation for killing people, the clear-cut reasons are not given; but her traumatic childhood experiences may be given as the reasons for her acts.

Along with such mysterious incidents, the existence of Victorian history either through dates or historical people is the major part of this novel. The representation of certain time periods like years or chronological dates from the diary of John Cree can falsify the readers in that they read a historiography. But the fictional and creative plot by Ackroyd, who imagines a series of killings in real setting through different characters, suggest that historical points from the Victorian era are revisited with an imaginative plot and presentist views. Positioning Elizabeth, a marginal figure of Victorian history being an illegitimate child without a father, as a powerful and masculine person, Ackroyd reconstructs typical Victorian females with authentic problems from the past according to the circumstances and ideologies of the contemporary eras. Often regarded as a postmodern author, the density of the Victorian existences and aspects mark this work as the neo-Victorian text no matter how much it benefits from technics that are associated with postmodernism including "intertextuality", "historiographic metafiction", or "deconstruction". Those claim also articulate neo-Victorian use of different technics because it forms such usages

according to the portrayal of Victorian history. Even the fragmented structure of narration suggests that there is a playfulness upon the plot; but this playfulness is indeed associated with the journey between the Victorian past and the contemporary times.

The interconnection between murder mystery and neo-Victorianism then appears as a fundamental source to give a critical look at this novel. Reviving real individuals from the nineteenth century such as Dan Leno, Karl Marx, George Gissing, or the life-like norms from the Victorian era such as gender problems, Ackroyd portrays a subverted version of Victorian history by contributing to those realities from his contemporary lenses and presentist views. Similar to Matthew Kneale's work, *Sweet Thames*, murder mystery and neo-Victorianism share common aspects to feed each other in literary sense in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. In Ackroyd's novel, the subversion of a typical marginalised female from the Victorian period is combined with her secrets, which are revealed in the end of the novel proving that she is a killer of several people. At this point, the fragmented structure of the narration has an undeniable significance because it creates gaps among events, which constitute a mysterious space; and it also implies a transitory stage between the past and the present through the memories of different narrators. For all these are considered, murder mystery and neo-Victorian side of the novel not only share common points but they also contribute to the development of each other. This development is seen in the reflection of murder mystery in neo-Victorian sense; and it could also be fruitful for further studies about the mysteries of the past.

CONCLUSION

The arguments that are represented throughout this thesis prove that neo-Victorian fiction benefits from the concept of mystery in many ways. While both neo-Victorian fiction and the concept of mystery seem to be separated from each other, they have an intermingling effect when they are combined. Before giving a detailed analysis of this combination, neo-Victorian theory's position in Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* and Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* should be explained. Fundamentally, neo-Victorianism may be defined as a new approach to the Victorian age since it reestablishes the Victorian era in contemporary literary works. To achieve this, neo-Victorian fiction borrows from the typical conventions of Victorian history in terms of society, culture, norms, values, moralities, and gender or class issues. After adopting such conventions, neo-Victorianism appears as a structure which interprets the previous conventions belonging to the Victorian era according to the conditions of the contemporary times. For this reason, it is inevitable to witness the shadow of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in neo-Victorian works.

In neo-Victorian fictions, there are many connections between the past and the present. The readers, at this point, hold a privileged position to understand such an association because they are made aware of the fictionality of the works that they read frequently as *Sweet Thames* and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* suggest. So, neo-Victorian fiction allows the readers to remember the fictionalised form of the past by recreating "the dis(re)membered pieces of the past" through the works (Mitchell, 2010, p. 7). Such a past, which consists of neglected aspects, are also the reflections coming from the lenses of the contemporary ages. Within the context of this thesis, these ignored points emerge as the minority figures, who could not find a place to themselves in the Victorian era. When the contemporary times are observed, it is possible to see that there have been developments in the rights of human although

these times bear many resemblances to the past. However, neo-Victorian fiction emerges as a useful tool to give a voice to ‘otherised’ people, who can be classified as either minorities or socially disadvantaged people such as poor people or women being victims of patriarchy in the nineteenth century. Hence, the impact of giving a voice and right to such people are the reflections of the contemporary ages, when people question their rights.

While neo-Victorian novels seem to be influenced by the circumstances of the contemporary era, these works also carry the characteristics of the “historical novel” and postmodernism as well. In the first ground, the use of “historiography” shows itself within a blending of factual details and fictionalised contents, which take neo-Victorianism out of a mere narration of chronological facts and history itself. While history is a hard way for investigating “the past”, “historical fiction” is something imaginative utilising historical figures and occurrences (Rodwell, 2013, p. 54). On the one hand, the “historical novel” employs historical figures or times by adapting them according to a fictionalised form; on the other hand, neo-Victorian novels also take historical aspects from Victorian history and reinterpret them. However, this utilisation of history is found as the representation of the Victorian era directly in neo-Victorian fiction, which puts a border between the “historical novel” and neo-Victorian fiction.

Another distinguishment comes from postmodernism and neo-Victorianism, which is quite problematic to explain because the two theoretical bases share mutual characteristics in many ways. First of all, the use of history is common in both kinds of fictional works because postmodern novels also depict the past as many postmodern novels can illustrate. Such a historical depiction may be seen in postmodern novels and neo-Victorian works at the same time but the specific representation of the Victorian era in neo-Victorian fiction should be emphasised. Although a “historical novel” or postmodern work can portray any period or time from the past, the obligation of sticking to Victorian history is a must in neo-Victorianism. The postmodern representation of the past becomes separated from neo-Victorian fiction with the existence of Victorian times solely and exclusively. This argument is also supported by Hadley (2010): “Although neo-Victorian fictions engage with ‘postmodern’ questions about the possibility of narrating of the past, they move beyond the self-reflexivity of postmodern fiction to consider specifically Victorian forms of historical

narratives” (p. 19). Such a claim demonstrates that neo-Victorian fiction is marked by the “Victorian” specifically, unlike postmodernism.

However, both postmodern and neo-Victorian novels bear a lot of similarities since they have mutual techniques. First and foremost, “historiographic metafiction” appears an important characteristic found in postmodern novels just as it is found in *Sweet Thames* and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, which are classified as neo-Victorian novels that make their readers aware of the fictionality and historical derivations from the Victorian times. Or else, the establishment of typical Victorian conventions and deconstruction of these may be found in postmodern and neo-Victorian works at the same time because history is portrayed with its realities and authenticity; but it is also deconstructed through fictional additions taking them out of a mere historical writing. The most substantial feature of neo-Victorian fiction lies in its ability to focus on Victorian history thoroughly, even though it is ordinary for neo-Victorianism to be affected by postmodernism, which inevitably contributed to the development of neo-Victorian theory. Besides, there may be complications about the terminological matters because neo-Victorian could be recognised as “post-Victorian” according to some critics as analysed in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. Nonetheless, the prefix of “neo” appears to be the most suitable one through its emphasis on the freshness and newness that are brought to the rewritings about Victorian subjects.

In addition to all these, mystery shows up as a useful concept, no matter how it appears in novels through its intriguing nature and different kinds. The novels that are studied within the context of this thesis are mostly focused in terms of the concept of mystery to understand the thematic and technical reflections of mystery in the neo-Victorian sense. While the novels, *Sweet Thames* and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, are critically analysed by the mystery with their contents, their neo-Victorian contexts add a crucial side to the reflection of different types of the mystery. Both of these novels turn around mysterious events, of which reasons are not known and the resolution is found in the very end of the novel; but perpetual questions, doubts and clues trigger a sense of wonder in the readers. This content, consisting of mysterious situations, is coupled with narrative techniques such as transition in narration or fragmented narrations that are seen in both novel examples. When neo-Victorian aspects enter the stage, the mystery and neo-Victorianism share associations, which contribute to the development of neo-Victorian side of the novels. The gaps,

unexplored spaces, transitions and revived people also interweave the mystery and neo-Victorianism.

Matthew Kneale's novel *Sweet Thames* portrays a plot, in which the protagonist is in search of his wife, who is out of sight unexpectedly. Whereas this searching may sound something ordinary as a typical matter in a novel to arouse curiosity, the existence of constant questions, progressive exploration of clues and a shocking effect produced in the end of the novel put an emphasis on the development of the mystery. This mystery, often accompanied by the obscure nature of cholera disease which comes from the real history, reveals itself through questions, estimations, evidences and resolution ultimately. The revival of official figures such as Queen Victoria, her husband Prince Albert or Edwin Chadwick, who really existed in the past, and the atmosphere of the Victorian times mark this novel as a neo-Victorian text. In addition to these, the mixture of history and mystery add a multi-layered perspective on the past by keeping the readers at the flow of the plot through mysterious and historical subjects. In this respect, the gaps such as the unanswered questions under the mystery and the fictional additions to Victorian subjects under neo-Victorianism portray the main mutual characteristic. Moreover, the representation of narrative transitions indicates not only a self-mysteriousness but also a neo-Victorian journey between the past and the present. This transition, often considered an indicator of the self-mysteriousness of the novel implying a doubtful situation for Mr. Jeavons as said, is also parallel to neo-Victorian transition between the past and the present. This is also related to the construction and deconstruction of the Victorian conventions because Victorian history is portrayed through realities and authentic images while they are also subverted by the contemporary gazes and presentism.

Furthermore, such circumstances and associations are observed in Peter Ackroyd's novel *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* through many examples. In this work, the most significant point is revealed as a series of murders, which are portrayed within the conceptual frame of the mystery. Yet, the reasons or the real murderer is not revealed to the characters, who experience those fearful events; but the readers are presented the fact that John Cree is the murderer. Despite all these clues, the readers are also deceived in that they are given some clues to indicate a different murderer. In the ending, the real murderer appears as Elizabeth Cree, who rises as an independent female unlike a typical portrayal of Victorian woman. Due to her sufferings and traumas from her past, Elizabeth appears as a female, who denies the borders for

women contrary to Victorian history. Although a certain reason for her crimes is not declared, her past experiences form a ground for her violent murders. This subversion of a silent woman belonging to Victorian history and the portrayal of a masculine female like Elizabeth brings the neo-Victorian analysis of the novel to light.

The subversion of a typical “angel in the house” approach to women, which put women in the houses to carry out the domestic duties, is apparent in a neo-Victorian perception of the Victorian values. When Victorian novels are considered, they are seen to promote an idea of regarding the house as the base of an ultimate happiness no matter how domestic violences took place in these houses (Moon, 2016, p. 2). Unlike those novels, Ackroyd’s work turns up as a criticism upon the domestic violence when the evil practices of Lizzie’s mother are portrayed creating a traumatised childhood for Lizzie. This critical view is the source for the independence of Elizabeth, or Lizzie, because she is given a right to form her own life as a performer, and she shows up as an independent female. However, her traumas are constantly applied either through her acts or language as mentioned. In addition, the fragmented narrative structure hints a neo-Victorian evaluation because it can signify a transition within a fragmented division of the past and present. The gaps shared by murder mystery and neo-Victorianism as well as transitory stages between the past and the present found within a blending of murder mystery and neo-Victorian evaluation of the novel suggest that both murder mystery and neo-Victorianism feed each other in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. Hence this interconnection between murder mystery and neo-Victorianism creates a fruitful source for further studies on the mysteries of the past along with trauma studies.

Upon taking all of these into consideration, the concept of mystery and neo-Victorianism correlate with each other through history, originality, authenticity and narrative. They not only feed each other but also contribute to their developments in literary studies. While neo-Victorianism is a freshly established canon in literature, it is necessarily affected by “historical novel” and postmodernism in addition to historiography. Blending the authentic images of Victorian history with imaginative abilities of contemporary authors, neo-Victorian fiction comes up as a renewed version of the Victorian era. In neo-Victorian novels, the subverted Victorian conventions can be the reestablished part of the past because they are formed out of contemporary circumstances. In Matthew Kneale’s *Sweet Thames*, this is given through the removal of strict class borders and patriarchy partially while Peter Ackroyd’s *Dan Leno and the*

Limehouse Golem gives a more profound renewal through a masculine female, who rejects conventional portrayals of women in Victorian history. Combined with the concept of mystery either as detective mystery in *Sweet Thames* or murder mystery in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, neo-Victorianism as a theoretical ground has a shared reflection with the mysteries given. When all the evaluations of the novels in this thesis are examined, the mystery and neo-Victorianism feed each other by contributing to the development of each other for future studies and sharing mutual characteristics. Hence, Matthew Kneale's *Sweet Thames* and Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* exemplify how the concept of mystery can share associations with neo-Victorian theory through fragmentations, subversions and historical representations.



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