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**Postmodern Elements in Neo-Victorian Fiction: A Study of
Selected Novels by Sarah Perry, Tracy Chevalier and John
Fowles**

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Conclusion

This dissertation has endeavoured to provide a reading of Perry's *The Essex Serpent*, Chevalier's *Remarkable Creatures*, and Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* through the lens of postmodernism and neo-Victorianism. The three novels under study are not classic realist fiction that will operate only within the past Victorian times; rather they are specimens of historiographic metafiction that depart from typical patterns of historical fiction, and thus significantly alter the readers' expectations.

As neo-Victorian novels, there are many references to different aspects of Victorian society. As this study has sought to show, Perry, Chevalier and Fowles examine the complex relationships between men and women and the social framework which determines their behavior, as well as their roles in society. They portray Victorian women in a non-traditional narrative; they present strong female protagonists defying every societal rule. In addition, they highlight the differences in social class showing the way social status affects the feelings and behaviors of characters; moreover, they represent how preconceived notions of social class affect the way characters view each other. They also offer an interesting discussion about evolution, science and superstition and their relationship with religion. In revisiting the Victorian era, the three texts simultaneously employ and disrupt social and literary traditions. They parody the contradictions of the age that become visible to the reader through the depiction of Victorian style and codes of behavior. Despite the fact that neo-Victorian literature is inspired by Victorian content, postmodern characteristics are easily identifiable when it comes to the form.

Chapter one of this thesis has attempted to display features of both postmodern and neo-Victorian fiction. It has tackled different postmodern elements, such as multiple narrative patterns, metafiction, intertextuality, pastiche, parody, fragmentation, blurring of genres and multiple endings. It has also discussed that deployment of contemporary elements within texts that are set in Victorian England, deliberately emphasizing their departure from the traditional realist mode of writing. The use of postmodern techniques throughout the three novels categorize them among the historiographic metafiction genre, which blurs the lines between present and past worlds, fiction and reality, and the elitist and the common. They are all linked together, with one evoking the other.

Chapter two has endeavoured to analyze *The Essex Serpent* as a postmodern historiographic metafiction. *The Essex Serpent* is an exceptional, postmodern metafiction with a strong female protagonist challenging every societal rule, interesting characters, an enigmatic monster and intriguing mysteries. This chapter has discussed the elements of postmodern and neo-Victorian fiction applied in the novel. It has tackled the way Perry reflected the intricacies of human friendship in this novel, as well as the link between faith and reason, as science and religion try to make sense of the Serpent's mystery. Moreover, it has pointed out and explained the postmodern elements discerned in the novel such as intertextuality, parody, pastiche and the playful manipulation of time.

Chapter three has sought to discuss *Remarkable Creatures* as a postmodern historical novel, besides it has highlighted the postmodern elements in the novel. It has attempted to investigate the way Chevalier opposes both Walter Scott's male hero and his more traditional models for women in traditional historical fiction. It has also clarified how the distinctive narrative style Chevalier used openly rejects the male-centrally defined

women, and provides current readers with an alternative choice to explore women's identity in post-modern neo-Victorian literature. This chapter has pointed out the postmodern inclination to disregard any rigorous distinctions between the past and present.

Chapter four has attempted to tackle *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a neo-Victorian novel that represents themes and characters of the nineteenth century that explore controversial topics such as the fossil record, Marxism, existentialism and evolution. It also has also discussed the main postmodern strategies and how they emerge in the novel. The novel is a blend of Victorian and modern narrative elements applied by Fowles, thereby turning the novel into a contemporary one. The relationship between Sarah and Charles is embodied as the clash between twentieth century consciousness and Victorian mentality. The postmodern techniques used by Fowles in the novel reflect his deep contempt for Victorian England.

The Essex Serpent, *Remarkable Creatures* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are novels which are not just set in the Victorian era, but also endeavour to replicate the tone and style of a Victorian novel. Despite being written in the present day, they provide fresh insights on issues and themes that Victorian authors were less free to explore. A cursory examination of the content of a neo-Victorian novel and the manner in which it is presented, may usually lead to conclusions that can be applied to the current day. As a result, neo-Victorian literature provides an experience for both readers and those who want to learn more about it. Neo-Victorian novels aim at putting forward a debate about Victorian culture and literature, which is not merely to set a novel in the Victorian era because of nostalgia, but rather to rediscover, reinterpret, or make a statement about one or more features of Victorian literature and transfer these findings to contemporary readers.