Postmodern Elements in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na konflikt mezi realistickým vyobrazením viktoriánské doby v románu Johna Fowlese: *Francouzova milenka* a postmoderními prvky, které kontrastují s iluzi, kterou autor aplikuje. Nejprve se práce zaměřuje na to, jaké techniky John Fowles používá, k vytvoření věrohodné a realistické viktoriánské atmosféry. Dále práce poukazuje na problematické společenské oblasti, kde se Fowlesovi podařilo zachytit a popsat to, co se viktoriánským spisovatelům nepodařilo. Poté se práce zabývá záhadnou hlavní postavou románu (Sarah Woodruffovou), která v tomto románu zaujímá poměrně neobvyklé postavení. Nakonec se práce zaměřuje na to, jak postmoderní prvky (intertextualita, postmoderní styl vyprávění a fragmentace) kontrastují s realistickým popisem viktoriánské společnosti.

Klíčová slova: *Francouzova milenka*, John Fowles, postmodernismus, román

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis focuses on the tension that lies between the novel's realistic portrayal of the Victorian era and Fowles's postmodern techniques that shatter the illusion Fowles is applying in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. First, the thesis focuses on what techniques John Fowles uses in order to create a proper realistic Victorian mood. Furthermore, the thesis points out the problematic societal realms where Fowles managed to capture and describe what the Victorian writers failed to do. Then it attempts to characterize the enigmatic central figure of the novel (Sarah Woodruff) who occupies a rather unusual position in this novel. Lastly, the thesis focuses on how the postmodern elements (intertextuality, postmodern narrative style, and fragmentation) challenge the realistic description of Victorian society.

Keywords: *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles, postmodernism, novel

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has, as a contemporary postmodernist novel, received worldwide praise for its narrative structure, in-depth analysis of Victorian society, and psychological profundity. In 1981, 12 years after its publication, the novel, due to its popularity, was made into a film. The award winning movie stars Meryl Streep as Sarah Woodruff and Jeremy Irons as Charles Smithson. The novel starts as any other Victorian novel would but then it evolves into a parody that emphasizes and attacks Victorian customs and social norms. (Onega 1989, 70) The component which attracts the most attention in this novel is the narrative technique.

In this bachelor's thesis, I will focus on the tension that lies between the novel's realistic portrayal of the Victorian era and Fowles's postmodern techniques for shattering the illusion that Fowles is applying. Linda Hutcheon described postmodernism as a: "Contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concept it challenges – be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, TV, music, philosophy, aesthetics, theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or historiography." (Hutcheon 1988, 18) Therefore, postmodernism is rather a state of mind and is not limited only to one field, domain, or medium. (Connor 2004, 24) In this novel, John Fowles operates within Victorian conventions and social norms with the intention of undermining them. Postmodernism is in its essence contradictory because it destroys what it is built upon. (Hutcheon 1988, 20)

For example, Fowles uses an unreliable narrator to narrate the story. Throughout the story, the narrator, on purpose, introduces alternatives to the story. Victorian novels also employ rather linear and straightforward narratives, but the narrator here uses postmodern playfulness and jumps back and forth in the story to make it more captivating. Many characters are here depicted as strictly Victorian (Ernestina Freeman or Mrs. Poultney) and always act within Victorian conventions, but the heroine (Sarah) challenges the role of a Victorian woman. She is able to do so only because Fowles gave her the tools – fiction-making, the power of one own's identity, and intellectual superiority. Furthermore, the narrator claims that he is not fully in charge of the characters and that they have their own free will and are, therefore, independent. Another postmodern element employed in the novel is parody. The role of parody is not to destroy the past but rather to question and expose its sanctimoniousness. Parody can sometimes be also seen as paradoxical since it simultaneously embodies and questions its subject. (Hutcheon 1988, 26) Fowles often

exaggerates some Victorian customs or features in order to ridicule them. The goal of this social critique is to reveal the hypocrisy of Victorians. Fowles also uses metafictional elements, where he reveals to the reader the writing process – sometimes he uses footnotes to explain some Victorian customs or conventions. The narrator also addresses the reader directly, asks him questions, and tries to get him involved in the story – this postmodern feature is not employed in Victorian novels. Fowles tries to show here that the novel goes beyond what is written on the paper. Intertextuality is also frequent in the novel; every chapter starts with a quote that bears relevance to the chapter itself. Some allusions are not even chronologically possible. This "cheating" is used here to remind the reader that the narrator lives in the year 1967 and not 1867 – the year in which the novel takes place.

In the introduction to the novel John Fowles clearly states that he is not interested in writing a historical novel. The whole concept of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* started as a vague image – which came to Fowles in the autumn of 1966 – of a Victorian woman situated "at the end of a deserted quay" (vii) staring out to the sea. This vigorous vision made Fowles put aside his other projects and focus on this enigmatic and mysterious woman. (Tarbox 1989, 60) Fowles's residence at that time might have also played a role in the choice of the century and location: "The woman obstinately refused to stare out of the window of an airport lounge; it had to be this ancient quay – and as I happen to live near one, so near that I can see it from the bottom of my garden, it soon became a specific ancient quay. " (vii) Fowles here, just as the narrator in the novel, demonstrates that the woman has her say in her own story.

In his memorandum to the novel, Fowles states that he is writing something the Victorian novelists failed to write rather than something they forgot to write. Emphasis is also given to the etymology of the word *novel* and to the effort of the author to create something new and original. He also follows the rule that the reader should know that the year 1867 is just a pretence. One of the first problems Fowles encountered was the language – mainly the dialogues. The language of 1867 was far too close to the language of 1967. Fowles wrote that the language: "Fails to agree with our psychological picture of the Victorians – it is not stiff enough, not euphemistic enough." (x) This problem resonates with our perception of Victorians and their day-to-day functioning. Since language plays a big part in conceiving and interpreting cultures, Fowles was forced to cheat a little bit here and ultimately decided to use more formal and archaic language.

The female characters in this novel tend to intellectually dominate the male characters – Sarah treats Charles, despite their social distance, as an equal, without any pretence. (xvii)

This phenomenon is part of Fowles's writing style and it can be seen in other Fowles's novels as well. The same applies to existentialist philosophy. Just as the two previous Fowles's novels, this novel is also based on existentialist premises. (xi) This existentialist notion is demonstrated by the heroine Sarah and by the metamorphosis that Charles is forced to undergo. These characters have free will and are looking for meaning and their own place in the world. Sarah, for example, prefers finding meaning on her own rather than submitting to the theological doctrine. Nevertheless, this approach is rather modern since existentialist philosophy was unknown to Victorians. This can be seen as another fictional construction employed by Fowles. In his memorandum to the novel Fowles also stated that: "You are not the 'I' who breaks into the illusion, but the 'I' who is a part of it." Here Fowles clearly distinguishes his narrative persona from himself and uses the narrator as another character of his novel – although this character belongs to a very different category than other characters. (xiii) John Fowles of 1967, therefore, lets his limited narrator comment and intervene in a fictional story happening in 1867. This rather postmodern decision to kill the author and simultaneously make the narrator unreliable makes the novel an entertaining and captivating work of art.

The first and foremost mistake is to think that John Fowles is the narrator, these are two different entities living in two different worlds. This realization makes the narrative strategy simultaneously entertaining and problematic. (Pifer 1986, 119) Unlike in other Victorian novels where the narrator and the author are one and occupy a God-like position, here we are dealing with three Gods and, therefore, three very different worlds. First, we have a world where our characters live, then there is a world of our narrator who briefly descends into the story, and then there is a world of the mastermind of all of this – John Fowles. (Pifer 1986, 119; 132) Another point of interest is the ending, or endings to be precise. As opposed to other novels or short stories this novel offers two possible endings. The first ending is by critics considered to be "Victorian" or "romantic." On the other hand, the second ending is called the "modern" or "existentialist." (Onega 1989, 89) The second ending is also generally considered due to the "logic of coherence" to be the true ending. (Onega 1989, 93)

The ground-breaking and illusion-destroying chapter 13 gives the reader a brief glimpse of the backstage of novel writing. (Pifer 1986, 118) In this chapter, the narrator presents his idea and definition of God: "the freedom which allows other freedoms to exist." (97) Freedom and fiction-making, then further in the novel, occupy a crucial role for other characters – mainly for Sarah who is obsessed with freedom and creating her own identity. (Pifer 1986, 126) The narrator makes it clear in this chapter that he also grants his characters

their freedom. He tries to persuade us that he is not fully in charge of his creation. (Pifer 1986, 128) The separation of the author and the narrator is crucial for the interpretation of the novel. By removing himself from the picture the author offers the reader a more objective point of view. With the author out of the picture, the reader can interpret and enjoy the novel without any biographical influences. Roland Barthes in his essay *The Death of the Narrator* states that by assigning an author to a text we impose limitations on that text since we are creating connections between that text and the author. Barthes, therefore, concludes that: "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author." (Barthes 1978, 148) The narrator then addresses the reader and asks him about his reality, pointing out that even we adjust and interpret our past according to our mood – subjecting it to fantasizing and daydreaming. By mixing the fictional characters in the novel with historical characters the narrator blurs the line between fiction and reality. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator introduces Ernestina Freeman – Charles's fiancé – and in chapter 5 claims that this character: "died on the day that Hitler invaded Poland." (29) Further in the novel the narrator goes so far as to make one of his characters (Sarah) interact with the Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

The French Lieutenant's Woman holds rather a unique place in contemporary English literature since it begins as a Victorian novel and then evolves into a postmodernist metafiction that uses parody and allegory to subvert Victorian conventions. (Onega 1989, 91)

1 REALISM VS POSTMODERNISM

Fowles's objective was to create an honest novel about the Victorian age. To set the mood the narrator concentrates on numerous aspects of Victorian life. He also establishes a precise Victorian image with a very accurate and detailed description of Victorian clothes, houses, furniture, and other things that surround us on a daily basis. Some aspects, however, are adjusted to correspond with our perception of the Victorian age – for example, the language is to some extent modified. We can notice two registers in the novel. The first one is the Victorian/realistic register, which sets the proper Victorian mood and gives us the impression of reading a Victorian novel. In this case, the narrator uses elements like formal language, complex sentence structure, archaisms and historicisms, and Cockney dialect to install the Victorian mood. The other register is the modern register; when the narrator comments on the events or breaks into the story to inform the reader about some important Victorian practices or conventions, he uses modern vocabulary and, informal and straightforward language.

The language employed in the novel may seem to a modern reader rather obsolete and sometimes even sarcastic/ironic. For example, in chapter 37 when Mr Freeman persuades Charles to step in and be in charge of his enterprise. We know that Charles takes pride in and treasures his aristocratic origin and detests the bourgies values that Mr Freeman represents (Mr Freeman is aware of Charles's notion). (Pifer 1986, 126) So, when Mr Freeman urges Charles to reconsider his offer Charles responds in, what may seem to a modern reader, a sarcastic/ironic manner: "Mots certainly. Of course. Most serious thought." The modern reader who is not familiar with the Victorian language and convention may interpret Charles's response as an insult. However, this way of talking was, nevertheless, required by Victorian high society. Furthermore, the narrator also, throughout the novel, employs the illusion of spoken language; this is demonstrated through the voices of lower-class characters like Sam and Mary – in order to show their subordinate social position. For instance, when Sam talks to Mary in chapter 17 their conversation is written in a spoken manner with an emphasis on phonological variation – giving the reader the illusion of spoken language: "I bet you 'ave. I 'eard you 'ave." "'Tis all talk in this ol' place. Us izzen 'lowed to look at a man an' we'm courtin'." (133) The narrator here appeals to the reader's knowledge of Cockney's dialect and his ability to read and interpret the written form in a spoken manner. Nevertheless, this practice may prove to be quite a challenge to a reader who is not familiar with Cockney's dialect.

Most of the characters in the novel are described in a strict Victorian fashion. The narrator simply takes a page or two to summarize all the information necessary about the character. For instance, the narrator describes Dr Grogan in chapter 19 in this manner. He describes his philosophical and emotional state of mind, his past and its relevance to the present (year 1867), and other aspects that help us to imagine what kind of a person he is. Then, ultimately, the narrator sends him to the stage where we can see how this character behaves in action – we move from the theoretical part to the pragmatic part; we see the dialogue and we also have access to his state of mind. Nevertheless, Sarah – the main character in the novel, which deserves the most descriptive attention – is here depicted in a rather postmodern way.

Some critics do not like the novel because they feel that it parodies and criticizes the Victorian age. (Tarbox 1989, 78) They feel that the portrayal of some characters and their behaviour is used solely to satirize the Victorians. Moreover, certain characters represent some problematic Victorian qualities; for instance, Mrs Poultney resembles the hypocritical Victorian relationship that exists between theological dogma and its manifestation in the real world. However, her corrupted soul is equalized by all-loving, helpful, and compassionate Aunt Tranter who brings light into the darkness of Victorian hypocrisy and sanctimoniousness. Aunt Tranter shows us that one can simultaneously be a good Victorian – acting in accordance with all the Victorian conventions – and a good person whose objective is to sincerely do good. (Tarbox 1989, 78)

Fowles also incorporates a very intricate web-like system of parallels in the novel. We can notice that some characters share certain distinctive features with other characters. For instance, Sarah shares some qualities with Mary. Both exhibit warm, vigorous, and natural sensuality that attracts other male characters (Charles and Sam) and goes beyond what is by Victorians considered acceptable – unlike Ernestina whose societal position makes her rather cold and stiff. Mary's sensuality and voluptuousness are elevated by this subtle but effective remark: "if her God was watching, He must have wished himself the Fallen One that night." (109) This biblical reference highlights Mary's beauty; the subtle contrast is what makes it so peculiar. The narrator, here, refers to the Book of Enoch where angles fall prey to the beauty of women. This weakness brought them devastating punishment and the world had to be cleansed by Noha's flood; he, therefore, compares Mary's beauty to the beauty of women who are so pretty that they are able to seduce angels and condemn mankind. Sarah and Mary also share an acumen which helps them to correctly assess people and be genuine and honest. (Tarbox 1989, 80)

There is also a connection between Sam and Mr. Freeman; they are both obsessed with the societal role of a gentleman. They both share a low-class origin but desire to climb higher on a societal ladder – something troublesome for Sam due to his Cockney dialect. These two aspiring gentlemen eventually find their way to each other. Another parallel can be seen between Aunt Tranter and Dr Grogan; both are nice, selfless people who want to genuinely help others. They are unmarried, progressive, individualistic, and unconventional. Nevertheless, they both share one reactionary trait: the inability to evolve – which in Groan's case is quite paradoxical; that he, despite his Darwinist belief, is not able to transform in accordance with the environment. Ernestina shares with Mrs. Poultney the way she speaks and her social attitude toward language. These two characters also have similar views when it comes to matters concerning conventions and society. Moreover, they assess people based on the same metrics – which are purely Victorian and sometimes cloud their judgment. We can also notice a peculiar contrast between Sarah and Ernestina; the contrast is so intense that these characters are represented rather as concepts than people. We can notice an interesting manifestation of this contrast between Sarah and Ernestina in their attitudes toward the question of sex. Not only does Sarah accommodate these "sinful" thoughts she even – as a woman – talks about them with ease. Whereas Ernestina franticly eliminates any sinful ideas as soon as they cross her mind with a repressive:" I must not." (30) The narrator also demonstrates how useless this practice really is because it does not rid the individual of the problem:" But though one may keep the wolves from one's door, they still howl out there in the darkness." (30) This metaphor shows that sexual repression is the cause of Ernestina's hysteric behaviour – Ernestina's breakdown when Charles revokes the engagement. (Tarbox 1989, 65) We are also able to draw some allusions between Sarah and her supposed lover Vargueness. (Tarbox 1989, 80)

In this novel, Fowles elaborately examines the topic of sex and sexuality. It is here, where Victorian writers failed to provide any accurate description of the intimate life of Victorian society. Most people, when they think about Victorian sexual life, imagine sex as a passionless act necessary for procreation. This notion is also reflected in Victorian literature and art. Victorian writers would not dare to write about these sinful things. Chastity, for instance, was considered one of the highest virtues, and any text in such manner would immediately be, by Victorian high society, condemned. The narrator approaches the question of sexuality with a rather modern view. This notion is explained in depth – along with other Victorian hypocritical features – in, yet another theoretical, Chapter 35. The narrator unveils the reality of Victorian society; a society where one could buy a teenage

girl, for just an hour or two, for only a few shillings; a society where brothels and churches grew in number almost simultaneously, yet every literary display of passionate behaviour ended with a mere kiss. (268-269) Additionally, the accessibility and quantity of prostitutes are demonstrated further, during Charles's rogue London episode with a prostitute called Sarah: "Under each light, in every doorway stood prostitutes." (309) In this chapter the narrator also steps in and, with the use of extensive footnotes, enlightens us about the pragmatic aspects of intimacy in the Victorian age. Furthermore, the comparison of sex and sexuality between the higher and lower classes demonstrates the true deficiency of literary material reporting the intimate life in rural areas. Many texts were, throughout history, written for the educated class, i.e. middle/higher class – the narrator calls this the „distortion of reality." (272) This phenomenon causes an imbalance of perception, where on the one hand we have the ideal of purity (woman cherishing their virginity and saving themselves for marriage) and on the other hand we have the so-called: "tasting before you buy" phenomena (pre-marital intercourse) which was quite common in rural England. (272), (Tarbox 1989, 79)

The topic of sex and intimacy is inherently linked with power. (Onega 1989, 89) Every relationship, whether fictional or real, is established on power and control. Fowles's novels are based on this phenomenon and employ several power/control levels – author-book, narrator-character, character-character. In Fowles's *The Collector* Clegg controls Miranda with the use of physical force; on the other hand, Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* controls Charles with the use of psychological force. Furthermore, the power structure exists in every relationship – supposed there is one – in the novel.

Initially, we are led to believe that Sarah is the poor, melancholic, powerless creature that needs to be saved by a knight in shining armour – which is supposed to be Charles. Nevertheless, as we delve deeper into the story, we begin to doubt our initial image; for it is not Sarah but Charles who needs to be saved. The usual Victorian notion or perception of power structure would hardly allow a low-class woman to exercise power over a high-class man. Throughout the novel, Charles feels like he is the one saving, when in fact, he is the one being saved. Charles does what we all, to some extent, do: we project our own ideals onto other people:" The individual has an ineradicable tendency to get rid of everything he does not know and does not want to know about himself by foisting it off on somebody else." (Jung 1958, 102) By this fiction-making strategy, we modify reality as we like – although it is rather a subconscious process, so we voluntarily take little to no part in it. (Tarbox 1989, 65) And since both these perceptions are skewed, the reader is misled by them and is also

forced to believe in them. Instead of the obvious Victorian-like display of power and adherence to conventions, we receive a subtle subversion of social order, and manipulation from a modern character. (Tarbox 1989, 64)

2 POSTMODERN ELEMENTS IN THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

Fowles offers us two ways of reading this novel. We can say that we are dealing with two distinct novels – a realistic Victorian novel and a postmodern novel. The narrator, to maintain his objectivity and to preserve the illusion he so carefully created, gives us two possible endings – which are, in their own context, perfectly valid. (Onega 1989, 88) The duality is also further demonstrated in the Charles-Sarah-Ernestina relationship; when Charles is essentially torn between two worlds – these worlds could also represent two fragments of Charles's mind. (Pifer 1986, 126) The contrast between these two worlds is highlighted and employed by the use of postmodern elements. Postmodern authors are aware of the elements they employ and the impression these elements have on the reader. (Connor 2004, 24) When the narrator claims, for instance, that he is not in charge of his characters he does so, for the sake of the artifice. Fowles, however, does not focus only on the story but also on the form of the novel which is something that brings the most attention to this contemporary fiction.

The popularity of the novel lies in the fact that it is able to attract both elitist and common readers. The elitist notion is manifested, for example, by the frequent use of Latin expressions or phrases; this notion is quite apparent in chapter 8: "*Scala Naturae*," "*nulla species nova*," "*exempli gratia*." Furthermore, this "hybrid novel" encompasses and develops several philosophical, political, sociological, religious, and historical topics and themes. (Hutcheon 1988, 35) Postmodernism, paradoxically, through the use of irony "closes the gap" that exists between distinctive levels of art – mainly between the high and low forms. It is able to do so, only because it does not entirely operate in either field; it occupies a very different and unique position in its own realm. (Hutcheon 1988, 59) Fiction plays a crucial role in our lives and also in literature, we all perceive reality differently; this phenomenon is inherent and something that is deeply embedded in our nature. The question, however, is how these fictional worlds are created. These worlds seem to share the basic elements like time, space historical figures, and events with our real world. (Hoffmann 2005, 19) Nevertheless, literature allows us to modify these elements and to create something that cannot exist in the real world. For instance, the literature allows the writer to distort the time as he likes; the writer then can, for the sake of the impression, fragment the linear flow of time – something that can never happen in real life. Or the writer can make a real historical person interact with his fictitious character.

2.1 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a common literary element. It includes quoting or referring to other works of literature or other works of art. It is something intrinsic and we can say that it is a part of every modern text and also a part of our everyday life. Roland Barthes in his book *Image-Music-Text* claims that:

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (Barthes 1987, 146)

Intertextuality is deeply embedded in the novel by very common references and allusions. The narrator quite frequently refers to or quotes famous politicians, philosophers, other writers, and also artists. Throughout the novel, we can also notice the inclusion of several full or rather extensive texts. For example, chapter 28 is dedicated to the trial of Lieutenant Émile de La Ronci*ère.* The purpose of this text is to persuade the reader, just like Dr Grogan and Charles, to misjudge Sarah and to interpret her behaviour in a different manner – the poor assessment is already mentioned in chapter 19 where Dr Grogan carries out his verdict and states that Sarah suffers from "obscure melancholia". (155) The trial is about a neurotic young woman who falsely accuses the lieutenant of inappropriate and malevolent behaviour and sends him to jail. After this story, the narrator includes other, rather disgusting, cases of female hysteria. The purpose of this intertextuality is to mislead the reader (and Charles) by false analogy; to picture Sarah in a mischievous way – this is how the narrator wants the reader to picture Sarah and her conduct towards Charles who is by this story described as the victim. Throughout the novel, we can notice that the narrator includes, in the story, several well-known Victorian poems (Mrs Caroline Norton's *The Lady of La Garaye* (chapter 16); Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (chapter 48) and others). Two poems are also attributed to Charles during his stay abroad – these poems have a self-reflexive purpose. The first one in chapter 58 describes how Charles is lost in his new world – to which he was forced to by Sarah. The second poem in the following chapter, however, represents Fowles's existential premiss and symbolizes Charles's hope: "Methinks in them I see a time to which a happier man ascends." (439)

The narrator also includes in the novel a subtle reference to a painting/paintings of a real-life painter and poet – Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In chapter 60 where Charles confronts

Sarah in the Rosetti residence Sarah takes Charles to the artist's studio to talk; here Charles comments on one of the paintings: "a hint of a young woman looking sadly down, foliage sketched faint behind her head." (447) This passage can be interpreted as a reference to one of Rossetti's paintings – *Proserpine*. Sarah, then, tells Charles that she is Rossetti's amanuensis and sometimes also serves as a model for his paintings; the narrator by this claim states that Sarah (a fictitious character) serves as a model for Dante Gabriel Rossetti (a real historical figure). The reader can now, with this information at his disposal, search for Rossetti's paintings to see what Sarah might actually look like. Linda Hutcheon also addresses the frequent phenomenon of the inclusion of historical personages:

> "The meeting of fictional characters and historical personages in the novel may also have a function in the problematizing of the nature of the subject in the sense that it foregrounds the inescapable contextualizing of the self in both history and society." (Hutcheon 1988,99)

This practice is employed in the novel quite frequently and its purpose is to move the fiction closer to reality. It is an attempt to include the reader in the story and to move or conceal the, yet barely noticeable, line between reality and fiction. (Hutcheon 1988, 131)

We can also notice several religious allusions and references. Some references are even repeated more than once; for instance, psalm 119 is here mentioned on two occasions. It is first mentioned when Mrs Poultney tests Sarah's abilities and admits her to her house in Chapter 6. The same psalm is then mentioned in Chapter 12 when Mrs Poultney confronts Sarah about frequenting the infamous Ware Commons. The psalm and its meaning could be interpreted in chapter 6 spiritually – that Sarah, as long as she lives with Mrs Poultney, should lead a respectable life – and in chapter 12 literally – that Sarah should not visit the Ware Commons anymore. Mrs Poultney believes that Sarah will embrace the reprimand as ardently as the author of the psalm verse, she references:" [127]Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold, [128]and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path." Mrs Poultney is initially hesitant about whether to use Psalm 119 or 140 but she eventually decides to use Psalm 119, but Psalm 140 – which is titled: "Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man" – has also its importance; this psalm in this context can refer to Varguennes.

The novel is also filled with symbolisms or subtle hints that show the reader certain hidden parallels. For instance, the surname Freeman is in the novel used ironically. Because both Ernestina and her father would like to limit or restrict Charles in a certain way. Mr.

Freeman would like Charles to step in and be in charge of his company, nevertheless, Charles refuses the "Freeman bourgeoise values," and rather chooses his aristocratic freedom and his origin – later in the story, Charles is forced by Sarah to face even bigger freedom. (Pifer 1986, 126) Fowles shows here his definition of existentialism: choosing once is in its essence not enough, one has to choose one's fate over and over again in order to prove that one's conviction and dedication are honest and real. (Tarbox 1986, 76) Charles predicts Sarah's master plan in chapter 53: "How can one build a better self unless on the ruins of the old?" (399) Here Charles himself demonstrates Sara's intent – she wants to destroy Charles's old self so that the new better self can emerge. We can also notice that Charles throughout the story becomes Varguennes; this idea is highlighted by the risky French letter mentioned in chapter 25; furthermore, it is Charles and not Varguennes who forces himself on Sarah and takes her virginity. (Pifer 1986, 127)

2.2   Narrative structure and the narrator

The position of the author/narrator is crucial for the interpretation of the novel. Every author, after all, has complete and absolute power over his/her text. Roland Barthes, however, argues that the reader should have a certain freedom when it comes to interpreting the text and that he should not be restricted by the author's God-like position. (Barthes 1978, 147) If the author/narrator claims that he does not know something, or that he cannot control something it is because he does not want to know, or he does not want the reader to know – for whatever reason. The narrator also creates within his novel another dimension, i.e. the reader dimension. Where he openly states that the reader also has his own freedom of interpretation.

In this novel, we are dealing with an unreliable, limited narrator who frequently disrupts the reader's belief that he is completely in charge of the character's actions and the consequences that follow. (Onega 1989, 78) He frequently questions his conventionally indisputable authority by several mistakes concerning judgment, insight, apprehension, and awareness. (Tarbox 1986, 70) The narrator's limitation is quite well demonstrated in chapter 60 when Charles informs Sarah that he no longer intends to marry Ernestina; Sarah acts astonished and the narrator notes: "She had not known" (447) but the reader – as well as the narrator and Charles – will later find out that she, indeed, knew all along about the broken engagement. The narrator shows by this that his power is limited and that Sarah is the only character in the novel that can operate outside of his realm – in her own. She, as an

autonomous free character is, therefore, able to charm the narrator, Charles, and also the reader. (Tarbox 1986, 83)

Furthermore, he creates the illusion of freedom when he describes how his own characters disobey him and behave differently than he anticipated – like when Sarah vanishes, and the narrator does not know where she is, or when Charles disobeys his direct command. (Tarbox 1986, 82). In addition to this narrative voice, we can notice several other narrative voices as well; these narrative voices have considerable influence on the effect this novel is trying to achieve. (Duffy 2009, 125) The second most frequent narrative voice is Charles's voice. We can notice several instances of the narrator's neglectful behaviour, where he does not allow himself to explore the mind of his own characters: "And I no more intend to find out what was going on in her mind as she firegazed than I did on that other occasion when her eyes welled tears in the silent night of Marlborough House." (282) Furthermore, he purposefully hides certain crucial information and reveals them to the reader when the times is right. For example, in chapter 42 we can see two letters; one letter written by Charles and the other by Dr Grogan. The narrator decides to show both letters next to each other – despite the fact that one letter was written much earlier.

Subjective interpretation of Sarah is for the reader a must because he does not receive enough information from the narrator and the information, he does receive is frequently skewed. Furthermore, the narrator does not include Sarah's internal monologue which would clarify her inner state; she communicates either orally with another character – mostly Charles – or by body language – which seems to provide the most reliable source of information. Sometimes the narrator reminds the reader of his indisputable authority and control with subtle comments: "and then in the first truly feminine gesture I have permitted her," (281) or when he is faced with the difficult duty to end his story: "Now the question I am asking, as I stare at Charles…what the devil am I going to do with you?" (408) This paradoxical ambivalence of power and control builds up tension throughout the novel and also widens the gap between reality and fiction. This tension is ultimately broken in chapter 55 when the narrator himself becomes one of the characters of the story he is narrating. The narrator also likes to tease the suspenseful reader by slowly building dramatic tension – almost reaching climax – and then he switches the course of action for a few pages or even chapters. (Tarbox 1986, 83) For instance, in chapter 14 when Charles and Ernestina visit the Marlborough House, Mrs. Poultney complains how Sam behaved inappropriately towards Mary. Nevertheless, we, as readers do not know anything about the episode and the narrator does not want to share this crucial information yet; instead, he for two chapters, progresses

in the main story. The incident that occurs between Sam and Mary is later revealed in chapter 17. This fragmented narrative keeps the reader in a suspenseful state. This tactic is used several times throughout the novel; for example, in chapter 29 when Charles arrives at the cabin the reader expects to see who is in the cabin, but the narrator digresses, describes a different episode, and then returns to the matter of the cabin; or when an intruder in chapter 31 surprises Charles and Sarah and the narrator switches to Ernestina instead of revealing the identity of the intruder.

The narrator also, on numerous occasions, destroys the notion that he has been building since the beginning; the notion that what we are reading is, in fact, reality and not fiction:" This story I am telling is all imagination." (95) Fowles in the introduction to the novel states that he wants the reader to always know that the narrator is part of the story – this notion is further employed when the narrator sits across Charles in the same train cart. (Tarbox 1986, 81) Furthermore, the narrator purposely interrupts the traditional, realistic narrative and also parodies Victorian storytelling. (Duffy 2009, 126) The use of parody is in postmodern art quite common, and it operates in the same realm it parodies; this element also points to the root of the issue and forces the reader to reconsider the foundations of numerous sociological problems. (Hutcheon 1988, 26) However, some aspects that are frequently the target of parody are often artificially exaggerated, so the author/narrator can ridicule them and make his point. We can also notice that the use of parody opens the writer a realm that he can use to share and express his own, personal stance. This historiographic metafiction offers the reader a completely different perspective on the past. Furthermore, it allows the writer to comment on the events from within the discourse; this notion is clear by making the narrator a character in the novel. (Hutcheon 1988, 50) However, the postmodern paradox of parody lies in the function of this element; making fun and ridiculing the past does not mean destroying and rejecting it but rather questioning it and using it to enlighten our present and reflect upon the change the times underwent. (Hutcheon 1988, 141)

We have already established that we are dealing with two distinct novels with specific styles and structures. For instance, the Victorian novel, when it comes to composition, is structured very traditionally. Every chapter could start with a title that would tell us its purpose – as is the case, for example, in Stendhal's *Black and Red* and other 19th-century novels. The chapters could potentially be titled like this: "Charles in the church," "Mrs Poultney and the Vicar," and "Charles and Dr Grogan." (Tarbox 1986, 80) The structure of the postmodern novel, however, would rather resemble a collection of essays, as states the narrator in chapter 13:

> Instead of chapter headings, perhaps I should have written 'On the Horizontality of Existence', 'The Illusion of Progress', 'The History of the Novel Form', 'The Aetiology of Freedom', 'Some Forgotten Aspects of the Victorian Age'…what you will. (95)

Another interesting postmodern phenomenon employed in this novel is the idea of: "the presence of the past." (Hutcheon 1988, 19) We are dealing with several different approaches when it comes to the past and present. First, we have the character's past which is everything before the year 1867, making the year 1867 their present. And then we have the narrator's past which is everything before the year 1967 which is the present for the narrator and the future for the characters. The narrator has 100 years of history at his disposal. He can, therefore, bring the past closer to the reader; he can also use contemporary terminology or philosophy to explain certain concepts to the reader. This timeless practice is used many times throughout the novel. For instance, when the narrator talks about Mary and her granddaughter, or when he uses the term "agnostic" (which was unknown to the Victorians) to describe Charles's attitude towards religion. Fowles also explores the fact that "times are parallel" and claims that certain human and societal qualities are shared regardless of time or place. (Tarbox 1989, 78) Characters like Charles, Mrs. Poultney, or Sarah have existed before, exist now, and will surely exist in the future. The narrator connects Charles's past and the future in order to justify his behaviour and to paint him in the light the narrator wants – he urges the reader not to discern Charles so easily.

> Perhaps you see very little link between the Charles of 1267 with all his newfangled French notions of chastity and chasing after Holy Grails, the Charles of 1867 with his loathing of trade, and the Charles of today, a computer scientist deaf to the screams of the tender humanists who begin to discern their own redundancy. But there is a link: they all rejected or reject the notion of *possession* as the purpose of life, whether it be of a woman's body, or of high profit at all costs, or of the right to dictate the speed of progress. (298)

2.3 Who is Sarah?

This question remains, throughout the novel, unanswered. Sarah's resumé was promised to the reader by the end of chapter 12 by the questions: "Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?" (Tarbox 1989, 81) Chapter 13 should, therefore, explain Sarah's inner thoughts, motives, and also her emotional condition. But instead of this clarification, the narrator greets us with:" I do not know." (95) He, then, states that women like Sarah exist

and he does not understand them, which means that neither the reader gets to understand the true nature of the french lieutenant's woman. Sarah, therefore, remains a mystery for both the reader and the narrator.

The narrator makes it clear to the reader that he is not in charge of his character/s – or rather he pretends it for the sake of the impression. Victorian novel conventions suggest and prefer the existence of a plan or fate when it comes to individual characters. A Victorian narrator would not be able to handle characters in this manner. The Victorian narrator is a god, and the Victorian era expects him to behave as one. (Tarbox 1989, 81) The question, however, is: why does Sarah choose to play this humiliating role and where lies her strength to do so? We can notice that she voluntarily excludes herself from the rest of the Victorian society that she finds tyrannical so she can have some space for self-realization. She, therefore, values her freedom more than societal judgment.

Sarah's power lies in imagination; in her own reality, she creates her own ambivalent cosmos where she deliberately supports her identity of a betrayed, sinful, and humiliated woman. (Pifer 1986, 124). The phenomenon of fiction-making as a power tool is here inherently associated with love and sexual possession (Pifer 1986, 126) Fiction-making is the tool that bends reality to one's liking. In the novel, this practice is employed by Sarah as well as by many other characters. Fiction-making allows Sarah to live freely and to better endure the oppressive Victorian society. Sarah could not find meaning in Victorian society, so she decided to create her own meaning to endure the hostile environment: "I think I have a freedom they cannot understand." (176). This practice gives her freedom and power that seems incomprehensible to other – purely Victorian – characters. Her power and her freedom lie in her carefully constructed imagination. (Pifer 1986, 128) The possibility to acquire this freedom was opened to her by the world of fiction: "Thus it had come about that she had read far more fiction, and far more poetry, those sanctuaries of the lonely than most of her kind." (54) We can say that she used fiction to create her own fiction.

The narrator in chapter 49 urges the reader to remember that every Victorian had two minds: "This – the fact that every Victorian had two minds – is one piece of equipment we must always take with us on our travels back to the nineteenth century. It is a schizophrenia seen at its clearest." (371) The duality is also mentioned during Charles's stay abroad when he reminisces about Sarah and admits to himself that he holds two versions of Sarah in his mind and that these versions gradually blended and are now indistinguishable: "he became increasingly unsure of the frontier between the real Sarah and the Sarah he had created in so many such dreams: the one Eve personified, all mystery and love and profundity, and the

other a half-scheming, half-crazed governess from an obscure seaside town." (432) Sarah's enigmatic persona also fragments the ending of the novel; the narrator does not possess all the information when it comes to Sarah, so he – in order not to take sides – presents two endings portraying Sarah in two different lights. This is a postmodern demonstration that Sarah – the main character – cannot be pinned down and characterized – not even by Grogan's philosophy. (Tarbox 1989, 69) The two endings, then, offer two characterizations of Sarah that are in conflicting opposition.

Throughout the novel, we can notice a drastic change in Sarah's identity. First, Charles hears that Sarah is a betrayed and humiliated woman and he treats her as such; then during their conversations, Charles notices that Sarah treats him as an equal (which is something unusual in Victorian society). Then Sarah seduces Charles and loses her virginity to him and vanishes. When Sarah disappears Charles uses considerable effort to find her but fails; this failure causes Charles to travel. But then he receives a note saying that Sarah is found; he immediately assumes that it was her who sent the note (an act of desperation) and pictures her in a tragic state. However, he finds her to be Rossetti's amanuensis. The change of her identity is indeed extreme: from a helpless humiliated woman to a woman who talks with Charles as with an equal to a manipulator who seduced him and disappeared to Rossetti's assistant. Sarah here possesses many faces and her true identity, therefore, remains for the reader hidden forever.

Sarah sees through Charles and realizes that he is not happy in his current situation which is apparent during a confident talk between Charles and Dr Grogan in chapter 27; Charles here confesses to Grogan that he has been living a purposeless life with no real sense of duty. Sarh understands it and decides to save him and to make him as free and existentially aware as she is – this task requires a lot of deceit and manipulation. Although being manipulated and lied to by Sarah, Charles acts freely and is fully aware of his actions and the subsequent consequences. When Charles realizes that Sarah is only playing a role in order to possess him he instantly becomes desperate. (Onega 1989, 86) Her goal with Charles is to compromise him with the relationship so that he will not be able to return to the old world full of propriety and societal conventions – she makes Charles, ultimately, experience her own (made-up) fate with Varguennes. (Tarbox 1989, 71) The reader can be sure of only one thing and that is the fact that Sarah – although being described as one – is not at all a crazy, hysterical woman. The beauty of the narrative dwells in the image of Sarah. The reader forms an image of Sarah based on the narrator's and Charles's perceptions. The reader walks

throughout the novel with Charles and they are simultaneously betrayed by how the narrator describes Sarah and interprets her actions.

2.4 Fragmentation

The purpose of fragmentation is to challenge the usual (coherent and continuous) notion of narrative and to attack the concept of wholeness and straightforwardness. The narrator narrates the story in a nonlinear/fragmented narrative; he decides, on several occasions, not to continue the story chronologically and jumps forward or backwards. This notion is rather postmodern because, unlike Victorian novels that usually follow the chronological narrative structure this novel fragments the narrative. Sarah, the named protagonist of the novel, on numerous occasions simply vanishes from the picture and is nowhere to be found – which also fragments the narrative. Fragmentation is mainly manifested in the novel by the unconventional multiplicity of the endings. The narrator first offers the reader an early hasty conclusion to the story in chapter 43. Then, in chapter 55, he expresses the desire to maintain objectivity and, therefore, decides to present two possible endings to the story.

2.4.1 The dream ending

The first premature dream/imaginative ending begins in chapter 43 with the sentence: 'Are we stayin' the night, Mr Charles?' (335) This sentence then opens a window to an imaginative universe where we are able to see the outcome of one of Charles's feasible decisions. In the following chapter, we can see a rather romantic and even adorable interaction between Charles and his fiancé Ernestina; in this dream/imaginative ending, Charles chooses Ernestina over Sarah and decides to tell her everything that transpired between him and Sarah. The narrator gives us a very brief unconventional ending and brings all the important matters to an end. Nevertheless, the sharp and shabby ending of this chapter resembles rather the work of a neglectful and lazy narrator – one might think that the "writer's breath has given out." (343) The narrator does not seem to be sure of the aftermath and fate of his own characters and does not even seem to care; for instance, he snubs off the life of Sam and Mary. He also presents a rather extensive report of Mrs Poultney's after-life which offers the reader satisfaction because justice has been made and Mrs Poultney gets what she deserves – an eternity in hell.

Nevertheless, an attentive reader might have guessed – given the fact that the book he is reading still contains more than a hundred pages – that what he is reading is not the real ending. This dream/imaginative ending shows the possibility, but as the narrator states in the

theoretical chapter 13: "possibility is not permissibility" (96) Furthermore, he shows here his undisputable creator role as the narrator. This ending is simply not permissible (in its own context) because it undercuts all the previous philosophical notions and progress. The next (semi-theoretical) chapter (45) reveals that what we have just read did, in fact, happen but not in the way we think. The narrator here states that it was just an imagination. Furthermore, in chapter 45 the narrator again mentions the same sentence that opened the window to the imaginative dream ending – 'Are we stayin' the night, sir?' – and sends us back to Exeter and the story continues where it previously digressed.

2.4.2 The first ending

The narrator informs us in chapter 55 that the idea of ending the story with Charles on the train crossed his mind. However, his own logic – previously implied in the novel – allows no such thing and, therefore, he decides to give the reader a proper ending. Nevertheless, the narrator then encounters another problem; and that is the problem with objectivity and his wish: not to take sides in this story. He, therefore, states that in order to maintain his objectivity he will present two distinct endings to his story. However, he expresses a certain concern regarding the sequence of the endings; he states that the second ending is going to leave a stronger impression on the reader and will seem like the "real" ending. This paradoxical situation results in direct conflict between the endings. Furthermore, the two endings could also be interpreted as a response to the question posed in chapter 12:" Who is Sarah?" (94)

Charles arrives at the Rossetti household with the misapprehension that it was Sarah who sent the note of her current residence. He comes with the intention of saving Sarah from her deprived position: "He had come to raise her from penury, from some crabbed post in a crabbed house, in full armour, ready to slay the dragon – and now the damsel had broken all the rules. No chains, no sobs, no beseeching hands." (448) However, he – to his astonishment – finds her being a respectable member of a rather controversial household.

The continuous flow of the narrative is fragmented by this sentence in chapter 60:" No it is as I say." (456) After this sentence the reader is presented with the first ending to the story. When Charles talks to Sarah he is still not able to shake off his aristocratic and pretentious language, therefore, creating a chasm between Sarah and himself; this approach is – due to the fact that they were intimate with each other – quite ironic. The more Charles talks to Sarah the more he realizes that she, indeed, is not insane and does not suffer with – as Dr Grogan calls it – "obscure melancholia." The first ending, therefore, supports Charles's

point of view, i.e. that Sarah is not a lunatic. Sarah's conduct is, in fact, a necessary evil; the manipulation and lies that persuaded Charles to step outside the boundaries of what is considered conventional in Victorian society eventually lead to evening their social position. Charles, in order to be with Sarah has to be in the same societal category and Sarah with her conduct makes Charles swallow a "bitter pill" (Onega 1989, 88) and therefore makes it impossible for Charles to return to his former life. And so, once they are equal, in societal terms, they can finally be together – along with their daughter Lalage – and their love faces no further societal obstacles.

Throughout the novel, Charles develops a specific view when it comes to Sarah; he sees her as an endangered species that needs to be nurtured and cared for. (Onega 1989, 88) Charles's eventual surrender and flight to the religious doctrine and acceptance of the divine: "And he comprehended: it had been in God's hands, in His forgiveness of their sin." (462) is quite ironic since it is Charles who, throughout the novel, frequently shares his anti-theological Darwinist notions and is even called an agnostic. The first "neat romantic conclusion" (Duffy 2009, 128) suggests that the outcomes of the actions of the characters correspond to the certain logic of cause and effect. (Onega 1989, 90) Another interesting thing is that the narrator is playfully tempting the reader by not revealing the name of the person with whom Sarah resides; he is only offering clues that might prove helpful to a more educated reader. We can also notice a parallel between Sarah the prostitute and her daughter and Sarah Woodrough and their daughter Lalage because it is an infant who is able to calm Charles's mind completely. Furthermore, we can notice that the impresario is mentioned again as a character in chapter 61 where he observes the house of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and patiently waits for the promised second ending – very much like someone who is waiting for the second act in the theatre. (Pifer 1986, 119)

2.4.3 The second ending

The second ending is described by critics as the "modern/existentialist." (Onega 1989, 89) The second ending begins in chapter 61 with the same sentence as the first ending: "No it is as I say." This very sentence opens the reader another ending to the story. In this ending, Sarah stays the demonic possessor and manipulator whose goal is only to possess: "She could give only to possess." (468) Sarah seems to suffer from incurable neurosis which means that her need to possess is ultimately unsatisfiable: "to possess him was not enough." (468). The notion of possession as the purpose of life is also seen in other Fowles's novels – Fredrick Clegg and Sarah Woodrough seem to share this belief. (Onega 1989, 89) Lalage,

a character that eventually unites Sarah and Charles is in this ending mentioned only briefly and is not even named but her existence is solely hinted at. Furthermore, Lalage's relation to Sarah and Charles is completely omitted in this ending. The second ending is, by logic, required because only in this ending can Charles's metamorphosis be complete – Victorian gentleman becomes a modern existentialist. (Onega 1989, 90) Charles, in this ending, receives from Sarah the thing she cherishes the most – freedom. In this novel, we are dealing with multiple microcosms/worlds and each of these worlds has its own God – Sarah, the narrator, and Fowles – and these worlds allow only this second ending. (Pifer 1986, 132) The story has been moving towards this ending from the beginning and this ending is, therefore, presented as the only logical result. (Onega 1989, 98)

In the dream ending Charles marries Ernestina and works for her father which reduces his freedom and they do not live happily ever after – as mentions the narrator. The first ending is not a happy one either because the relationship between Charles and Sarah has an imbalance of power and control that hinders the relationship and if they marry this imbalance persists and will only intensify. The second ending is the only one that leads to the happiness of both Sarah and Charles; the two previous endings contain a certain falsehood that prevents the characters from truly attaining their potential happiness and well-being. The narrator also urges the reader not to consider the second ending the less plausible one (469) despite the fact that in chapter 55 he worries that the second ending might leave a more intense impression on the reader. The narrator trusts the reader that with the power of freedom, he will choose his own ending and overall impression of the novel. (Tarbox 1986, 84) Cathrine Tarbox states that: "The reader takes over the function of a novelist and his imagined end becomes a disclosure of his identity." (Tarbox 1986, 85) We, therefore, occupy the role of participants rather than mere spectators. The practice of freedom-giving could also function as a self-reflexive method. Fowles would, therefore, like the reader to take from the novel something about himself, that was even unknown to the reader himself.

CONCLUSION

In this bachelor's thesis, I focused on the tension between the novel's realistic portrayal of the Victorian era and Fowles's postmodern techniques. This postmodern approach allows Fowles to criticise the Victorian conventions from within the discourse. (Hutcheon 1988, 50) The decision to employ postmodern elements is a conscious one; Fowles was aware (while writing the novel) of the effects of his unique writing form and style. (Connor 2004, 24) Some people consider this novel to be simply a parody of the Victorian age (Tarbox 1989, 78). It is true that Fowles emphasizes some Victorian features in order to ridicule them, however, the goal of this parody is not to destroy the past; the goal is to point out the apparent differences and to demonstrate how much the times have changed. (Hutcheon 1988, 141) Fowles, in his introduction to the novel, states that he wants to write something that the Victorian writers forgot to write. In this novel, he focuses on many aspects of the Victorian period that are not mentioned in Victorian novels – for instance, the topic of sex and sexuality. Here the narrator provides a pretty detailed description of the intimate life of not only the middle-high social class but of the lower class as well.

Fowles also modified the language that is employed in the novel because he considered the actual language of the Victorian age to be quite similar to the language of 1967 (the year in which Fowles began to write the novel). In some cases the language may come out as sarcastic or ironic, however, the reader needs to remember that although the novel was written in 1967 it takes place in the year 1867 when this form of language was mandatory. The modification is supposed to resonate with our perception of the Victorian age. By doing this, Fowles bent the reality for the sake of his intended impression. He also includes the illusion of spoken language; this phenomenon is manifested by low-class characters like Sam and Mary. The narrator relies on the reader's ability to read/interpret the transcribed spoken form of Cockney's dialect.

In the novel, we can notice a web-like system that connects individual characters. For example, Sarah and Mary seem to share some personal qualities (natural sensuality, attitude toward intimacy, and acumen) Then we have Sam and Mr Freeman; these two characters share a low-class origin and an obsession with what it means to be a gentleman in the eyes of the society. Then we can also notice a connection between Aunt Tranter and Dr Grogan; they share an inability to evolve and amiability. Nevertheless, we can also notice that some characters are in total opposition; for example, the modern character Sarah contrasts with the purely Victorian counterpart Ernestina. They seem to have contradictory attitudes in

every aspect (intimacy, artificial formal language, stance towards conventions, etc.) and it seems that they are portrayed more as ideas than as actual personas. (Tarbox 1989, 80)

In the middle of the novel stands the enigmatic Sarah Woodruff. Her true nature is never thoroughly explained and she forever remains a mystery for the reader. The narrator also states that he does not understand his main character; he then supports this claim in the novel by frequently losing track of Sarah. He also fails to interpret her motives and actions and he misleads the reader with his, quite common, false judgments; this allows Sarah to charm the reader. For example, Sarah throughout the novel quite frequently vanishes and the narrator cannot seem to know where she is or why she vanishes. Sarah creates an identity of a betrayed woman in order to attain freedom that is to Victorian society incomprehensible; this decision helps her to endure the hostile Victorian environment.

Sarah does not fit in Victorian society because she refuses to conform to the hypocritical view of society. When Charles tells Sarah that she was ill placed in Mrs Poultney's house she responds by saying:" where I am not ill placed." (251) Not only was Sarah ill placed in Lyme Regis she, as a modern character (a character with modern characteristic features), is ill placed in this century. Sarah's power and stability lie in fiction-making – she invented *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. This title is a euphemism given to Sarah by the rest of the Victorian society. But for Sarah, it is a metaphor for how she managed to attain her freedom (Tarbox 1989, 71). Furthermore, we can notice that Sarah is not embarrassed nor afraid to use a harsher variation of her humiliating label (The French Lieutenant's Whore) during her conversation with Charles.

The first postmodern element I focused on in this thesis is intertextuality. We can, for example, notice the inclusion of several full or partial texts that serve a certain purpose. We can see that chapter 28 is solely dedicated to the trial of Lieutenant Émile de La Ronci*ère*, then we can notice several famous Victorian poems. Two poems are also attributed to Charles himself and have a self-reflexive purpose. Apart from these texts, we can also notice very frequent references to many politicians, philosophers, writers, and artists. Furthermore, every chapter starts with a quote that has relevance to the chapter.

One of the most interesting elements in the novel is the narrative and the narrator's persona. In his memorandu to the novel Fowles urges himself to keep in mind several things while writing the novel. For instance, the idea that the narrator is one of the characters; this notion is fully realized in chapter 55 when the narrator descends into the story observes Charles and decides his fate. Fowles also states that he should remember that the narrator comments on the events (the year 1867) from the year 1967 – this gives the narrator an

opportunity to use contemporary terms and science. The narrator also employs playfulness in the novel. For instance, in chapter 55 he playfully installs a sense of randomness when he states that the sequence of the endings depends on a mere coin flip. On a couple of occasions, the narrator loses track of the characters; which gives the reader the impression that the characters in this novel have autonomous free will and are not subordinate to the narrator. (Tarbox 1986, 82). The narrator also frequently builds dramatic tension when he nearly reaches the climax of the episode and then he switches the course of actions for a few chapters – teasing the reader. We can also notice three different creator figures (Fowles, the narrator, and Sarah) that operate in their own microcosms. In their own world, they possess the ability to create which is inherently linked with freedom and power. (Pifer 1986, 119)

Sarah's enigmatic personality fragments the narrative and the narrator is, in order to preserve his objectivity which he considers important, forced to present two endings. But before the narrator presents his two endings we encounter a very shabby dream ending in which Charles abandons Sarah (and she does not bother him anymore) and marries Ernestina. This ending is not classified by the narrator as a happy one because Charles succumbs to the will of Ernestina and takes over Mr Freeman's business (this decision conflicts with his aristocratic convictions). The purpose of this ending is to show that "possibility is not permissibility." The first Victorian/romantic ending shows that if Charles and Sarah end up together then Sarah's plan – to make Charles free of Victorian hypocritical conventions – fails. In the first true Victorian/romantic ending Sarah truly loves Charles and they are united by their daughter Lalage. (Onega 1989, 88) However, Sarah previously states that she does not want to be chained by marriage which suggests that this ending is also not the happy one. Furthermore, Charles marries Sarah because he considers it his duty and Sarah is forced to take up the role of a wife. In the second modern/existentialist ending, Sarah remains the demonic and manipulative figure but Charles's metamorphosis (from a Victorian gentleman to a modern existentially aware man) is complete; unfortunately, we cannot fully witness it because the novel ends. (Onega 1989, 89)

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