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Postmodern Themes and Strategies

in

The French Lieutenant's Woman

(Diploma Thesis)

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

In Prague, 15th of April, 2011   ……………………………………..

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Acknowledgments:

Abstract:

The thesis focuses on postmodern themes and strategies employed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles. The aim of this work is to discuss the postmodern themes and strategies, analyse these elements in the novel, and show what constitutes *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a work of historiographic metafiction. The thesis also aims to show the main differences between the traditional nineteenth-century realist fiction and the innovative postmodern genre of historiographic metafiction.

Abstrakt:

Tato práce se zabývá postmoderními tématy a strategiemi v románu *Francouzova milenka* od Johna Fowlese. Cílem práce je charakterizovat hlavní témata a strategie, jež postmodernismus ve svém umění využívá, analyzovat tyto postmoderní prvky ve *Francouzově milence* a zároveň tak ukázat, jak se tento román liší od tradičních realistických románů devatenáctého století.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The nineteenth-century era produced some of the most acclaimed novelists and greatest literary works in British fiction. The Victorian novel set a precedent on how this genre should look like, and, for many decades, served as a model for writing a large number of authors adhered to. However, with the changes that are inevitably provoked by the course of time, the focus and treatment of literature changes as well. It is said that literature is "the mirror of the society" and reflects the ideological, cultural, social and political twists, not only in the themes, but also in the strategies it deploys. It is obvious, then, that the traditional mode of realist writing has gone through various stages – stages, in which it was imitated, refused, or reworked with irony. An ironic eye on tradition was indeed cast by postmodernism, an era the British literature slowly entered on in the 1960s and which both re-constructed and de-constructed the past tradition under the influence of new, present tendencies.

In 1969, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles was published. This novel is considered a landmark between the old tradition and the new experimental attempts, a bridge between the Victorian and the modern world, and one of the most exemplary and influential novels of the 1960s British fiction, which reflects the changes stimulated by postmodern philosophy and view of the world.

This thesis focuses on the postmodern themes and strategies employed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* – that is on the themes and strategies which, under the rising influence of postmodern philosophy, reflect the changed attitude toward the old and familiar constituents of fiction, and prevent the novel set in Victorian England to become "another" traditional historical fiction. In contrast, the deployment of these themes and strategies categorizes *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a historiographic metafiction, a postmodern genre which bridges the gap between the past and the present, and thus gives a new life to the old forms. The aim of the thesis, thus, is to point out and discuss the postmodern elements in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and show what constitutes it as a genre of historiographic metafiction, experimenting with and innovating the traditional.

The postmodern themes analysed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are History, Author and Authority, and Ontological worlds; on the borderline between postmodern themes and strategies the issue of Intertextuality is discussed; and the strategies discussed are Metafiction, Experimental playfulness and Parody. This work concentrates on the depiction of these particular themes and strategies because they are the most significant and distinctive postmodern elements deployed within the novel, which, on the one hand, disconnect *The French Lieutenant's Woman* from the Victorian tradition, yet, on the other hand, show how the tradition is continued in the new context of postmodernism. Such paradoxical and contradictory tendency is inherent to postmodern art and makes *The French Lieutenant's Woman* a remarkable example of historiographic metafiction, which showed another level of the possibilities of a novel, and influenced successive authors in their rendering of history and reality.

The overall structure of the thesis is divided into seven main chapters, according to the seven themes and strategies analysed. Each chapter is further subdivided into a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part discusses the specific themes or strategies in the general context of the postmodern art and the changes it has stimulated within the tradition. The practical part then analyses the specific postmodern features in the context of the novel and shows in what respect *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a historiographic metafiction re-works the traditional Victorian novel.

POSTMODERN THEMES

1.1. HISTORY

1.1.1. History

The philosophy of postmodernism puts into question a whole range of concepts and assumptions upon which we put order and coherence onto our understanding of the world. The once accepted certainties are interrogated; life suddenly becomes unstable, chaotic and fragmented (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 57-58). The postmodern era questions and contests all the totalizing narratives offering the explanation of the world and challenges everything that is considered permanent, universal, and thus stable and unchangeable.

War on totality: incredulity toward metanarratives

The total "theories which claim to account for all aspects of human existence" (Waugh, *Postmodernism* 5); the "myths and stories to explain the world" (Grenz 50); the "systems by which we usually unify and order (and smooth over) any contradictions in order to make them fit" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* x) and all the "givens" that "go without saying" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 119) and grant meaning are the so called "metanarratives" (or master/grand narratives), which the postmodern sets out to "de-doxify" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 119). The key concept of postmodern theory could be characterised in the words of Jean-Francois Lyotard, one of the most significant postmodern thinkers, as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv). The "incredulity", or critique, of metanarratives expresses the disagreement to impose any kind of grand order to unify and totalize the world and our comprehension of it.

The fact that postmodernism has declared a "war" on totality and demands an attack on any claim to universality, singularity and timeless truth explains that one of the central metanarratives both exploited and contested by postmodernism is history. It is only natural that the "new", postmodern perception and view of the world would change the status of history and make it a frequently discussed theme in postmodern art.

As academic discipline, history has traditionally claimed the right to account for the past, to impose order on past events and neatly change them into unquestionable and all explaining historical "facts". These "fossilizing" tendencies are, however, exactly what the postmodern philosophy and art challenge, and the reasons why history has become a rather problematic issue.

Reality, Knowledge, Truth: objectivity versus relativity

The works of Derrida, Foucault and Rorty, some of the most influential postmodern philosophers, assert that there is no point in the quest for a totalized grasp of an objective reality. The central concept of postmodernism argues that "all is difference" (Grenz 16) and that the world as a unified, coherent whole does not exist. There is no centre, only multiple viewpoints and perspectives that differ according to contexts in which they appear. Reality is relative to the subject who interprets it (Grenz 15-17). In rejecting the idea of the objective reality, postmodernism also rejects the assumption of an objective knowledge. Postmodernism considers knowledge as always incomplete, historically, culturally and ideologically determined.

The refusal of the objectivity of reality and knowledge necessarily results in contesting the existence of an absolute and timeless truth. The truth is relative and significantly conditioned by the context to which we belong. What is accepted as the truth and even the way the truth is perceived is largely dependent on and conditioned by the community the interpreting subject is part of. The former concern for "lies and falsity becomes a postmodern concern for the multiplicity and dispersion of truth(s)" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 108), which are relative to the specificity of time, place and culture.

These assumptions imply that there is not a single meaning of the world. Quite on the contrary, postmodernism believes in plurality of meanings. Instead of grand narratives, it expresses the preference for "context-specific agreements, heterogeneity" (Waugh, *Postmodernism* 6) and small narratives. No authority or institution thus has the right to impose their own understanding of reality on the world and present it as the

ultimate, metanarrative one. As Michel Foucault claims, such assertion of knowledge is a violent act of power (Grenz 15-19).

The attempts of history to impose order on and attribute meaning to all the past time events go counter the postmodern philosophy, which questions any concept of unity, singularity, certainty, totalization, system and order. The "fossilizing" practises inevitably result in incredulity toward history and, consequently, in questioning all the aspects history has traditionally used and built on.

Historiographic metafiction

In times of such significant changes concerning our perception of metanarratives, history in particular, the genre of traditional historical novel could not stay unaffected. Naturally, the tradition of the classic historical fiction had to shift to a new genre where the twists in thinking and the questions that arose would be reflected. A solid new platform that categorizes the works of postmodern historical fiction exploiting the postmodern themes and strategies, yet still drawing inspiration from the tradition, has been found in the genre, which Linda Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction.

Historiographic metafiction is a genre of postmodern fiction, which, like other postmodern cultural means of expression, focuses on contingency and temporality, implicitly rejecting the ideal of a timeless, universal truth (Grenz 36). It simultaneously exploits and questions notions of universality, totalization and closure that are part of the challenged metanarratives, and casts doubt on the possibility of any fixed guarantee of meaning and of the possibility of knowledge granting any authoritative and final truth (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 55). Historiographic metafiction, in contrast, is open to various interpretations, and thus keeps its texts "alive".

History versus histories

In opposition to the claimed timeless truth and validity of metanarratives, postmodernism argues that history cannot stay unaffected by the constant changes the

world and society are subjected to. In contrast, history changes and varies, as it is shaped by the time and various contexts in which it is approached and viewed, and thus is open to new interpretations and meanings. As a corollary, then, in the anti-metanarrative terms, postmodernism presents us not with one ultimate History, but with plural, varying and sometimes even contradictory *histories*.

The past is not a closed system. Historiographic metafiction, like other postmodern art forms, often juxtaposes the world of the past and the world of the present and closes the gap between these two. Postmodern fiction implies that rewriting and presenting the past in fiction and in history means opening it up to the present. In other words, postmodern fiction opens itself up to history, which prevents it from being conclusive (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 110, 124). By contrast, it opens new opportunities to re-interpret and re-construct what has already been inscribed as the "official", and it helps to generate new meanings where meanings have already been generated and attributed.

The influence of the present context on our knowledge of the past is significant as viewing the past from our present perspective offers just one of many histories - the history from our contemporary perspective. One of the basic questions postmodernism asks is "how do we know the past today and what can we know of it?" The "nature of the past as an object of knowledge for us in the present" is rendered problematic (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 92). The existence of the real past is not denied, but the whole idea of our knowledge of it is being rethought and the assumptions of how we make meaning of the bygone times are questioned.

Human constructs: fact versus fiction

Postmodernism claims that we are "epistemologically limited in our ability to know the past" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 122). We "know", as opposed to "experience", the world through the past and present narratives of it (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 128). The once really existing past is accessible to us today only through textualized remains, such as archives, documents and eye-witness accounts. However, these reservoirs of available materials, as implied by postmodernism, have the same textual and narrative quality as

fiction. Apart from this correlation, postmodernism points out to the act of creation in the urge to impose order on the past. Both history and fiction are thus considered "human constructs" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 125) and postmodern texts are acknowledged to "consistently use and abuse actual historical documents and documentation in such a way as to stress both the discursive nature of those representations of the past and the narrativized form in which we read them" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 87).

"Narrativization" and "fictionalization" is what historiographic metafiction often relates writing history to. It is obvious, then, that this genre casts doubt on the reliability of official versions of history and that it makes us aware of the necessity to question them (McHale 96). The fact that postmodernists fictionalize history suggests that history itself could be fictionalized, and, thus, a form of fiction.

Following the proclaimed issue of "narrativization", or "fictionalization", postmodern art intentionally twists the belief that "history's problem is verification, while fiction's is veracity" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 112). Historiographic metafiction refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by challenging the grounding of this claim in historiography and by suggesting that fiction and history are constructs. The boundary between fiction and history is thus simultaneously installed and blurred.

Historiographic metafiction cannot avoid dealing with the problem of distinction between "events" and "facts". It is argued that all past events are potential historical facts, however, not all the events "make" it into the "official" records. Only some are chosen to be narrated and these are the ones, which become facts. While events occurred in the real empirical past, facts are constituted of those events by deliberate selection and narrativization. This means that we know of the past events (or, rather, some of them) only through their discursive inscription and traces in the present; traces, which have textual nature and by which we infer meaning and grant factual status to the empirical data.

The point historiographic metafiction thematizes is that the real world can never be reflected in the mirror of these archival traces in all its complexity as the mimetic

representation is never one of absolute identity. Both the historical and the literary are seen to derive from verisimilitude rather than from any objective truth; both are identified as constructs; and both appear to be intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their own textuality (Hutcheon, *Politics* 79). All this leaves the archival records open to various possible interpretations. As Patricia Waugh says, "'history' like 'fiction' is provisional, continually reconstructed and open-ended" (*Metafiction* 125).

The essential difference between events and facts, which postmodernism foregrounds, is that events have no meaning in themselves, whereas facts are given meaning. The facts are made from brute events and they are always already interpreted and textualized. Historians, who transmute events into facts and impose meanings on them, are compared to fiction makers because, like them, they can decide to silence or exclude certain events, or people from their "narrative". Apparently, another question posed by postmodern fiction, which acknowledges the process of making "facts", is "whose truth is told?", or "what are the official historical records the records of?" The traditional answer "of the winners", or "of the male white sex" can no longer suffice in the age, where centralistic, homogenizing tendencies are abandoned in favor of de-centralization and heterogeneity. Postmodern novels openly assert that there is never one single History and Truth, but always *histories* and *truths*; and that there is rarely falseness, only the truths of others (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 60-65, 107-109, 122-123). Historiographic metafiction redresses the balance of historical record by writing the *truths* and *histories* of "the losers as well as the winners, of the regional (and colonial) as well as the centrist, of the unsung many as well as the much sung few, and … of women as well as men" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 66). Boundaries between the majority and minorities are broken. The formerly excluded into history's dark areas is now getting into the center of attention.

Dark areas and apocryphal history

The clear refusal of the existence of one official history often draws the postmodern novelists into the realm of "dark areas", where they are "permitted a relatively free hand" and "some freedom to improvise" (McHale 87) in order to revise,

reinterpret and demystify the orthodox version of the past, and also to transform the norms and conventions of traditional historical fiction itself.

"The 'dark areas' are normally the times and places where real-world and purely fictional characters interact in 'classic' historical fiction" (McHale 87). However, there is a significant difference between classic historical fiction and historiographic metafiction. Classic historical fiction attempts to make the transgression between the real and the fictive as discreet and unnoticeable as possible, camouflaging the boundary between historical reality and fiction: by presenting pure fiction only into the "dark areas"; by avoiding anachronisms; and by matching the structure of the fictional world to that of the real world. Postmodernism, by contrast, makes the transition between the two realms as conspicuous as possible - by violating the constraints on and conventions of traditional realist historical fiction. This is achieved by ostentatiously contradicting the archival records; by flaunting anachronisms, causing tension between the past and the present; and by incorporating the historical and the fantastic (McHale 90).

Postmodern fiction achieves to create an alternative or "apocryphal" history, which contradicts the public records of official history. It either operates within the "dark areas" of history in conformity to the norms and conventions of traditional realist historical fiction, but in fact parodying them; or it ostensibly violates the "dark areas" constraints by, for example, playing upon the truth and lies of historical records and by deliberately falsifying some known historical details to foreground the possible failures of recorded history (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114, 157; McHale 90). In both cases, the officially accepted versions of the past are juxtaposed with versions that are often radically dissimilar. The tension between the two versions raises questions about the ontological status of the literary works. Sometimes, the official version of history seems to be overshadowed by the apocryphal version; sometimes it is the apocryphal version that seems delusional, while the official version appears to be sound and irrefutable. Such hesitation corroborates the claim that postmodern fiction installs and contests traditional guarantees of knowledge and that it does not suggest a privileged access to "Reality".

1.1.2. History: The French Lieutenant's Woman

History is one of the main themes explored in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The novel is set in Victorian England of 1867 and full of historical detail and information about the Victorian time. Readers are given a thorough and insightful look into the nineteenth-century society and thinking. They learn about Victorian attitudes to duty, love, sex and religion; about the view of life and prevailing fear of death; about the permeating evolutionary ideas and their impact on old beliefs; about the twists in class relationships and the differences between those who are gentlemen by birth and those who become gentlemen through wealth; about the social role and position of women, ranging from miserable prostitutes to the daughters of well-to-do upper-class families (McSweeney 136).

However, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is not a classic realist fiction, which would remain and operate only within the past Victorian times. It is a historiographic metafiction, which breaks traditional patterns of historical novels, and thus considerably changes the expectations readers might have.

In concord with the refusal of totalizing metanarratives, postmodernism refutes the idea that there exists a single version of History and that we could achieve an ultimately true and fully objective knowledge about it. The interpretation of the past and the meaning assigned to it is considerably dependent on the context, in which it is perceived. For this reason, postmodernism rejects any strict traditional separation of the past and the present as two distinct entities, and, in contrast, opens the two worlds, lets them interact and stimulate new meanings and truths.

As a result, it is not only the time in which the plot is set that is significant. A major importance is attributed also to the time of the creation of the story – because what we read is not the History, but a history constructed in a particular context. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was written in 1969. What we are presented with, then, is not a novel about the nineteenth century, but a novel about the nineteenth century from

the twentieth century perspective. In other words, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a twentieth-century version of the Victorian era and readers are constantly reminded about it.

Past versus present: the gap closed

The crossing of the boundary between the past and the present is made overt by intrusive comments of a narrator who explicitly acknowledges that he comes from the twentieth century, by abundant comparisons he makes between the two centuries and by numerous flaunting anachronisms he employs to make the "presence of the past" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 19) even more obvious.

The play with the time levels starts right at the beginning of the novel, when the opening scene is introduced and the narrator briefly describes the Cobb area and the appearing characters. The narrator operates within three time layers: the first is the time of 1867, the time narrated: "if you had turned northward and landward in 1867, as the man that day did…" (10); the second is the present time, the time of narration: "I can be put to test, for the Cobb has changed very little since the year of which I write" (10); the third is the "future" with respect to the time in which the story is set: "style that the resident ladies of Lyme would not dare to wear for at least another year" (11). All the times are interconnected, and this allows and brings many comparisons between the Victorian and the twentieth-century world: "The colours of the young lady's clothes would strike us today as distinctly strident; but the world was then in the first fine throes of the discovery of aniline dyes" (11).

By using the inclusive "us" and "today", the narrator implies that he identifies himself with and belongs into the same ontological world as the reading audience. It is understood that the narrator comes from the time of the creation of the story. This temporal distinctness allows him to compare the two centuries, the two cultural contexts, in terms of contemporary perception and interpretation of certain nineteenth-century phenomena. The two centuries merge and the narrator presupposes and discusses how readers would probably react to the fashion of those times. He tries to

make the picture of the era more realistic and relatable to them by comparing the concepts of the Victorian age with the contemporary ones. Even though this temporal distinctness makes it explicit that it is not a Victorian who is presenting the picture, it can still make the portrayal more believable and understandable to the readers as they belong to the same context and inevitably share some common ground.

Apart from Charles, Ernestina and Sarah, the main characters we get to encounter in the first chapter, there is also a brief mention, the first and the last one in the book, of a "local spy … focusing his telescope" (10) and overlooking the scene. The spy may symbolize the modern narrator who looks at the past with a twentieth-century perspective "telescope", mediates the image to the readers, and thus closes the gap between the two worlds.

Present and past compared

The fact that the narrator overtly distinguishes himself from the time of the story, by including himself into the time of the readers: "We, who live afterwards" (114), gives the novel a dimension, which cannot be found in classic historical fiction. The narrator is not restrained to describe only the past time, he brings the past back to life through links and comparisons with the present and through enunciating the contemporary perception of specific Victorian phenomena. When we read about Charles and his travelling experience, we learn that:

> His travels abroad had regrettably rubbed away some of that patina of profound humourlessness (called by the Victorians earnestness, moral rectitude, probity, and a thousand other misleading names) that one really required of a proper English gentleman of the time (22).

The narrator expresses his views, and the assumed views of his contemporaries, on the qualities of a proper Victorian gentleman. He "translates" the "earnestness, moral rectitude, probity" as perceived in the nineteenth-century context into a term that would adequately express the views of the twentieth-century context - "humourlessness". With

a critical distance and a twentieth-century mindset, he passes a rather mocking judgement on the Victorian standard gentlemanlike behaviour, which in the present world would be considered dull and boring. The history is thus interpreted and given meaning. The importance of the context for meaning-generating and the openness of history to further interpretation imply the postmodern notion of the impossibility of having just one History, only plurality of histories.

When we are acquainted with Charles as "palaeontologist", wearing his uncomfortable clothes and impeccably prepared, heavy equipment for his pursue of fossils, the narrator assumes that: "Nothing is more incomprehensible to us than the methodicality of the Victorians" (51). The over-dressing and the over-equipment seems ridiculous in the twentieth century, where comfort and practicality dominate our activities. Nevertheless, the narrator admits that there is perhaps "something admirable in this dissociation between what is most comfortable and what is most recommended" (52). Here the narrator points out the guiding concept of the Victorian era and the "bone of contention between the two centuries" – the perception of duty and the question whether it should "drive us, or not" (52).

Even though being a gentleman required following the recommendations of the time, it was even a more crucial condition for being considered a respectable woman. As we find out, Charles's fiancée Ernestina was not the epitome of a conventional woman for her age, particularly because she had a strong will of her own. Nevertheless, she still "had a very proper respect for convention" (33-34), which was strong enough to make her observe the Victorian demands on a proper lady and predetermined her to become the "angel of the house" once she got married.

The French Lieutenant's Woman shows that the part of Victorian human existence, which was solely permeated by duty and in which duty was most strictly required, was the area of love and sexuality. Like other respectable women of that time, Ernestina viewed physical love as a "payment" and consciously suppressed all the "female implications of her body, sexual, menstrual" with the self-imposed commandment "I must not" (34). Yet, she "sometimes wondered why God had

permitted such a bestial version of Duty to spoil such innocent longing" (35). It is obvious that natural human feelings and the dictates of the prudish society clashed in Ernestina. Yet, she was strong enough to let her "respectability" win.

The Victorian obsession with duty is explained by their "schizophrenia", or "fatal dichotomy (perhaps the most dreadful result of their mania for categorization) ... which led them to see the 'soul' as more real than the body ... indeed hardly connected with the body at all" (354). As the narrator claims, to understand the context of Victorian times better, "the fact that every Victorian had two minds, is the one piece of equipment we must always take with us on our travels back to the nineteenth century" (354). Otherwise, the motives behind the omnipresent, and, in fact, even omnipotent Victorian concept of duty might be incomprehensible to the twentieth-century person for whom duty has never been such a demonizing and determining force in life.

Again, the importance of duty and the implications it had upon the nineteenth-century life is not just simply described and discussed within the re-constructed world of the past. The narrator opens up this past issue to the present and says that it is predominantly because of the sexual restraint that duty has become "a key concept in our understanding of the Victorian age – or for that matter, such a wet blanket of our own" (35). What Charles's "time calls duty, honour, self-respect", the narrator's time would call "prison" (349), as restrictions on personal freedom and feelings are considered an offence.

However, the nineteenth century is not portrayed as the era "inferior" to or worse than the modern world. Comparing the two worlds in terms of the exposure to sexuality and the frequency of intimacy, the narrator makes a parallel pretty much in favour of the Victorian restraint: "We are not so frustrated as the Victorians? Perhaps. But if you can only enjoy one apple a day, there's a great deal to be said against living in an orchard … you might even find apples sweeter if you were allowed only one a week" (261). The narrator suggests here that the overexposure to sex in the modern world might, in fact, numb the desire.

We are presented with an example of what it would be like for a twentieth-century "spirit" to live in the "two-minded" era. Sarah is a Victorian governess, yet, she is attributed the psychology and attitudes of twentieth-century "modern women" (97). She finds the "prison" of conventions and obligations toward society smothering and refuses to become a puppet in the hands of others' ideas of a respectful, dutiful, yet inauthentic life. In her quest for authenticity and freedom, she is inevitably "crucified" (349) by most of the rigid Victorian society. Nevertheless, to preserve her true self, she takes on the role of a misfit and an outcast willingly, with an air of self-gratification.

Sarah impersonates the image of a "New Woman". The modern narrator projects into her the emancipation tendencies arising with the "second-wave" of feminism, which was seeded in the 1960s (Head 83). As works of historiographic metafiction, following the postmodern de-centralizing theories, often draw attention to the ex-centric and the formerly "unsung", it is not surprising that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* exploits the theme of the role of a woman in society, while employing the modern tenets of gender issues. Attributing Sarah the twentieth-century mindset broadens the gap between the image of the "Old" and the "New" woman, but once again closes the gap between the present and the past.

Anachronisms

The tension between the past and the present is intensified by an abundant deployment of anachronisms. As already mentioned, Sarah is attributed psychology of a modern woman, which foregrounds the difference between the "old" and the "new" attitudes and thinking. Apart from this, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* contains numerous nineteenth-century referents in the twentieth-century context (McHale 93). These referents are, nevertheless, only alluded to and employed within the ontological world of the modern narrator. They do not enter the world of the characters.

Mrs. Poulteney is compared to a member of "Gestapo" (26) and her weakness for laudanum, a near equivalent "of our own age's sedative pills" makes the narrator call her "an inhabitant of the Victorian valley of the dolls" (94); "Charles of today" is a "computer scientist" (285), his feelings are without the "benefit of existentialist

terminology" classified as "anxiety of freedom" (328), and his fondness for sciences is asserted to prevent him from being shocked "had news reached him out of the future of the aeroplane, the jet engine, television, radar" (17); Sam's fashion style is compared to the "'mod' of the 1960s" (47); Sarah's "computer" (103) in her heart assesses and stores impressions of the people she meets; people are a lot more isolated because the distance was then "unbridgeable by radio, television" (129) and the Victorian evenings are spent "without benefit of cinema or television" (113).

These are some of the flaunting anachronisms, which make the openness of the past to the present even more striking. It is also one of the possible ways to reflect the postmodern attraction to juxtapose diverse entities.

Real-world figures

Popular historiographic metafictional novels are "intensely self-reflexive and yet also lay claims to historical events and personages" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 5). *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a typical example of historiographic metafiction. Throughout the novel, real-world figures not only from the Victorian, but also from the twentieth-century context, are constantly referred to. Some of the most significant personages of science, history, politics, sociology and art are mentioned to authenticate the context of the time: Darwin, Marx, Disraeli, Gladstone, J.S. Mills, Austen, Hardy, Tennyson, Arnold and Rossetti to name but a few. Some of the personages enter the world of the characters, some remain in the world of the narrator; some of the personages remain only characters' topics of discussions, some interact with them. The allusions to and employment of the real personages help to introduce the milieu of the Victorian era and to reinforce the authenticity, credibility, or the illusion of reality.

The modern narrator often introduces the real-world figures in the realm of "dark areas", where the "official" record would not be contradicted. For example, when Marx is introduced in the novel, the narrator says: "Needless to say, Charles knew nothing of the beavered German Jew quietly working, as it so happened, that very afternoon in the British Museum library; and whose work in those sombre walls was to

bear such bright red fruit" (18). Marx is presented within the ontological world of the characters not long before the release of his influential book: "…in only six months from this March of 1867, the first volume of *Kapital* was to appear in Hamburg" (18).

As McHale says, thanks to the "dark areas" (87) in history, narrators are given a relatively free hand. We do not know if Marx really was in the museum library on that March day and we probably never will. Even the encounter of the "real" Pre-Raphaelites with "fictive" Sarah and Charles remains within the "dark areas". It is pointed out here that we are considerably constrained in our knowledge of the past and by what historians present as "facts". "Facts" of the literary "dark areas" are as unverifiable as any other records, or "facts", presented by historiography.

Protagonists like Charles, Sarah and Ernestina are clearly fictitious, so the co-presence of the Pre-Raphaelites "in the same novel complicates considerably the metafictional fallaciousness of reference." (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 145). The traditional idea that "what history refers to is the actual, real world; what fiction refers to is a fictive universe" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 142) is no longer valid. The postmodern art views "history as a text, a discursive construct" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 142), and thus as having the same textual quality as fiction. This allows for the two worlds, the historical and the fictive, to cross each other's boundaries and to merge.

Even though the deployment of the real-world figures installs the illusion of reality, the truth-value of the discourse is still, in the postmodern paradoxical mode, undermined: not only by implying that both history and fiction are human constructs, but also by the self-consciousness and acknowledged limited omniscience of the narrator; by the revealed process of creation; and by a single instance of integrating the historical and the fantastic, that is when Mrs. Poulteney arrives after death at the Heavenly Gates and, in so doing, breaks "the 'classic' paradigm of constraints on the insertion of historical realemes" (McHale, 89).

Reality distorted

The French Lieutenant's Woman poses essential postmodern questions about the "realness" of historical accounts. It casts doubts on any claims to ultimate truth and objective reality as historical records we have access to are asserted to be constructs, which "construct its object" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 78) like fiction.

When the narrator talks about Mrs. Poulteney's servant Millie and her "ten miserable siblings" (155), he admits his loathe of the reality twisting paintings of the "contented country labourer and his brood" by George Morland and Birket Foster, because "those visions" were "as stupid and pernicious a sentimentalization, therefore a suppression of reality, as that in our own Hollywood films of 'real' life" (155). These paintings turn the dire conditions Victorian labourers lived in into an idyll. The fact that art can be a means of such a dishonest distortion is something the narrator cannot accept: "each guilty age, builds high walls round its Versailles; and personally I hate those walls most when they are made by literature and art" (155).

Another solely postmodern question subverting the existence of the objective Truth and ultimate knowledge, which the novel indirectly asks is: "Whose truth gets told?" The narrator acknowledges that the textual traces about the past we have access to are always more or less distorted as their final, "official" version depends on those who make the accounts: "The vast majority of witnesses and reporters, in every age, belong to the educated class; and this has produced, throughout history a kind of minority distortion of reality" (261). The prudish view we have of Victorians, is "a middle-class view of the middle class ethos" (261). If we want to reveal the dark, hidden, "cold reality" (261) of the Victorian era, the narrator recommends us to go to Commission Reports – not to Dickens as he, like most of his "compeers", totally "bowdlerized" the sexual aspect of Victorian life.

Historiographic metafiction challenges the truth-value of historical records. It expresses the "tensions between what is known about history and what is narrated in the text" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 147). *The French Lieutenant's Woman* draws attention to this

issue and reveals some of the aspects the Victorian writers "failed" (Fowles, *Notes* 141) to write: sex, prostitution, premarital intercourse, birth-control.

Postmodernism makes it clear that one way of accessing history might be through eye-witness accounts. One of these accounts is incorporated into the discourse to provide evidence on the "taboo" issue of "premarital intercourse" (262). The narrator says that the lady witness is "still living" and that "she was born in 1883" (262). These are the only "facts" that should grant the veracity to the lady's report. Again, Truth-value of historical records is both installed and undermined.

History and literature, art and life, are the same narrativized constructs, which often twist or silence or gild the past or "reality". The narrator is open about the fact that the real is always connected with the fictional, and thus may get distorted. For this reason, he blurs the distinction between the real and the imagery, and thus preserves honesty of his work and avoids realist pretensions and claims to ultimate truth and reality.

1.2. AUTHOR AND AUTHORITY

1.2.1. Author and Authority

Postmodernism is famous for juxtaposing variety of styles and techniques in its art. The celebration of diversity is not, however, only a means of drawing attention. The attraction to multiplicity and difference is part of the postmodern philosophy; it is the desire to attack all order-imposing attempts and all totalizing theories claiming transcendence, as employed by different institutions and dogmatic traditions. For this reason, one of the concepts postmodernism discusses, thematizes and tries to subvert is the traditional concept of the author as a single, unique, originating and original artist (Grenz 28-29, 34). Contesting of the unified and coherent subject is the expression of challenging totalizing or homogenizing tendencies.

Structuralist – Poststructuralist – Postmodern

Postmodern assumptions about the status and the role of the author are in concord with the theories of structuralism. A major influence on the perception and understanding of this concept has the perception and understanding of the notion of the "self".

The perception of the "self" as a conscious subject being the source of meaning is no longer valid. It is "dissolved" because "its functions are taken by a variety of interpersonal systems that operate through it" (Culler 28). The "self" is viewed more as a construct, shaped by various systems and conventions, and thus also limited by the cultural and social contexts in which it appears. If the "self" is a construct, it can simply no longer be considered a source of meaning. As Foucault claims, the author is always an ideological product constituted by specific operations, reading processes, and a collection of discourses (Culler 30; Grenz 135).

The notion of the author as an individual source behind the literary work is challenged. The fact that he or she wrote it and composed it is not doubted. However, it is asserted that the work could be written and composed only within a particular system of conventions constituting and delimiting discourse varieties; and while presupposing reactions of imagined readers who has assimilated these conventions (Culler 30). Postmodernism exploits the notion that no piece of literature can be considered original. Otherwise, it would make no meaning for the reader, who operates during the reception-production processes through constituted "series of conventions" and "grids of regularity" (Culler 258). Only as a part of prior discourses can the text derive meaning. As Patricia Waugh puts it, "'authors' do not simply 'invent' novels. 'Authors' work through linguistic, artistic and cultural conventions. They are themselves 'invented' by readers who are 'authors' working through linguistic, artistic and cultural conventions" (*Metafiction* 134). Obviously, the author can no longer be assumed the origin of meaning within the postmodern literature.

Death of the author, birth of the reader

The postmodernist rejection and subversion of the humanist notion of the author as "the original and originating source of fixed and fetishized meaning in the text" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 126) is probably most famously proclaimed and discussed in an influential essay by Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (1968).

According to Barthes, giving a text an author means imposing a limit on the text and closing the writing (147). Instead of the "author", Barthes comes with the idea of a "scriptor" (145), a producer who comes to the existence only during the reading of the text. The assertion that "there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now" (Barthes 145) suggests that with varying enunciative situations meanings vary as well.

The text is, then, not a closed system of author's constituted intentions anymore, and it does not have any final meaning. In contrast, the text opens and gets "re-written" and re-interpreted with each reading. It is not the author who attributes meaning to the text, but the receiver. The meaning is not inherent in the text itself, it depends on the one who enters into dialogue with it. As the text opens, it can have a surplus of meanings - as many as it has readers.

It is obvious that the traditional omnipotent and omniscient God-like status of the author and the traditional passive role of the reader are undermined. The dominant position shifts to the receiver of the text, who is in postmodern writing ascribed a vital meaning-generating role (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 220).Readers are no longer passive consumers of the text. They are transformed into fully active participants in the meaning-making process and encouraged to collaborate on the text production.

The process of reading is dynamic and the role of the reader is indispensable. The reader establishes "facts" and generates meaning according to his or her previously acquired knowledge and experience. The context in which the text is received and interpreted is as important and influential as the context in which the text was produced.

The active role of the reader, as postulated by Barthes, and the openness of the text without the author imposing any ultimate meaning result in an active production of limitless and multiple meanings (Mahmoud 30-33).

The participatory process is only induced by intertextuality, which is so characteristic for postmodern literature. Readers suddenly find themselves in the network of numerous intertextual references and allusions and their cognitive thinking is incited to start linking the various threads of presented texts. Related to intertextuality is also the question of originality. It has already been acknowledged that, in terms of postmodernism, writing never comes from a unified source of origin. Barthes claims that a text is merely a mixture of non-original writings, "a tissue of quotations". The writer never originates, but always imitates "anterior" discourses (146). Intertexts may thus be considered the inspirational sources for the author and the building blocks of his or her work.

Even though the concept of the "artist as unique and originating source of final and authoritative meaning" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 77) may be dead, the discursive authority is still alive, as it remains inscribed in the act of enunciation. Readers are still constrained by the text they read, however "free and in final control of the act of reading" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 81) they are. Nevertheless, the producer is never implied, but always "inferred by the reader from her/his positioning as enunciating entity" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 81). In other words, reading in a different context, by a different reader results in a different understanding, interpretation, and thus inferring of a different producer. All these processes involved within the production and reception of texts turn the reader into an active participant. As Barthes suggests, the death of the author indeed is the birth of the reader (148). The loss of power and control of the author results in the end of reader's subordinate position and the start of his increasing importance and activity.

1.2.2. Author and Authority: The French Lieutenant's Woman

The French Lieutenant's Woman undermines the authority of the narrator. As Fowles writes in an essay on the creation of his novel, in the democratic, egalitarian twentieth century, "we suspect people who pretend to be omniscient" (*Notes* 141). In other words, we tend to be suspicious toward any ultimate authority imposed on a text. This is the reason why so many contemporary novelists choose to write in the voice of a subjective first-person rather than in the objective and omniscient third-person. In fact, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as a crossover novel between the traditional and the experimental tendencies, shifts between the use of "I" and "he" in its narration. Nevertheless, the ironical "I" is the major narrative form undermining the narrative authority and affecting the overall treatment of the issues of power, freedom, creation and control, and inevitably also the role of readers and the status of characters.

The whole novel is permeated with narrative intrusions through which the narrator comments on plot developments and the behaviour of characters, explains and provides further information on certain situations, and enters into a dialogue with supposed readers to discuss various issues, such as the process of creation. However, these intrusions are in its essence often rather tentative. The narrator assumes rather than asserts. He openly acknowledges that the information he has and transmits is often incomplete and that he sometimes only guesses and expresses his subjective feelings and opinions. The narrative authority is thus undermined by the narrator himself.

Limited knowledge

The lack of knowledge on the part of the narrator is reflected, for example, when the narrator describes a night scene at Mrs. Poulteney's house, with Sarah and Millie lying in one bed. Millie is referred to as a girl of "nineteen or so" (154), which suggests that the narrator has a limited knowledge of her age. Further on, the narrator discusses the issue of lesbianism. In respect to the lady of the Marlborough House, he says: "I doubt if Mrs. Poulteney had ever heard of the word 'lesbian'; and if she had…" (154). The hesitant expression "I doubt" makes it explicit that the narrator only assumes a

certain fact. This inference is made on the basis of his available knowledge about the Victorian era. As he says, "some vices were then so unnatural that they did not exist" (154), so lesbianism was presumably not considered an issue in the context of the nineteenth century. In fact, the narrator starts the discussion only because he assumes that "lesbianism" is what the image of the two girls lying in one bed might have brought into the minds of the twentieth-century readers. Before the actual word "lesbian" is mentioned, the narrator addresses the readers and suggests: "A thought has swept into your mind" (154). He does not feel the need to be more specific as he expects the reading audience to share the twentieth-century thinking and outlook with him, and thus to be able to complete the missing information themselves. The past and the present once again interact as the twentieth-century view influences the way in which certain Victorian phenomena are discussed. The doubtfulness and hesitation is partly caused because of the temporal distance between the time of narration and the story narrated.

When the narrator asks whether there was something sexual in the girls' feelings, he does not give a clear, unambiguous "yes" or "no" answer. Instead, he answers "Perhaps…" (156). In respect to Sarah, we read that concerning lesbianism, she was as ignorant as Mrs. Poulteney, even though, unlike her, she believed that there is physical pleasure in love. However, to dismiss the possibly arising questions, he adds that "she was, I think, as innocent as makes no matter" (155). Again, the narrator does not impose his authority over the statement. He acknowledges that the conclusion he makes is based solely on his assumptions and not on an ultimate knowledge.

In fact, Sarah is the character where the limited omniscience of the narrator is most obvious. Throughout the whole story she remains an enigmatic figure. The narrator does not have an insight into her psychology, he cannot read her mind; her feelings are unknown, motives unexplained. The narrator cannot report on Sarah's inner state, the only facts he can report on are the "outward facts" (99). When Sarah and Charles meet on the turf above the sea, the narrator tells us about "a vigour, a pink bloom" (118) of her skin, but, as he says: "whether it was because she had slipped, or he held her arm, or the colder air, I do not know" (118). Sarah is "not to be explained" (342) and "not to be understood" (342). In fact, Sarah is so out of the narrator's power

that he not only does not know what she wants, but at one point, he acknowledges that he is "not at all sure where she is at the moment" (389). As a "misfit" protagonist on a quest for authenticity and freedom, she remains a mystery impossible to impose any authority on.

Loss of power and control, rise of freedom

It is obvious that the narrator's limited knowledge results in the lack of control over the characters and the plot. In chapter thirteen, where the narrator's voice changes from the "teller" into the "inventor" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 33) of the story, we read that "a world is an organism, not a machine" (98) and that only a world independent of its creator can be real. As the narrator, or, in this case of the metafictional frame-break, the voice of the "author", admits, he does not fully control his characters; it is only when the characters "begin to disobey … that they begin to live" (98). The postmodern rejection of the author as an omnipotent institution imposing an ultimate power on his work, and thus closing it, is expressed here. Art can imitate life only when the tyranny of power and control is avoided and readers, characters and authors themselves can act freely. For this reason, the modern novelist is no longer portrayed as the omniscient god of the Victorian image, but as a "freedom that allows other freedoms to exist" (99). Narrative authority becomes an undesirable concept while preservation of freedom, openness and plurality of possibilities a major principle. The limited omniscience allows the characters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* to be "free" and act in variance to authorial intentions.

Birth of the reader

As the knowledge of the narrator is undermined, the role of the reader is emphasized. The tentativeness and the lack of knowledge expressed by the narrator in phrases, such as "I think", "I doubt", "I have no doubt" or "I do not know", gives readers the freedom to make their own assessments and conclusions of certain situations and circumstances. Frequently, events are not explained and readers are provided with incomplete information, or just hints. They are thus provoked to deduce and to make

connections with the previously acquired knowledge and experience, so that they could fill the gaps with the missing information and make their picture complete.

When the author says that Mrs. Poulteney in the beginning "knew only the other, more Grecian, nickname" (26) of Sarah, the readers might guess that he means "Tragedy", not the other, vulgar nickname "whore". After the narrator gives a "lecture" on the conflict between lust and renunciation of the Victorians, he says: "You will guess now why Sam and Mary were on their way to the barn" (264). The meaning-generating process of the readers is once again enhanced to make them realize that the couple went to the barn to make love. The reader can also deduce that Sarah, in fact, set a trap on Charles in the hotel in Exeter. Apart from a Toby jug, she bought a dark-green shawl, a nightgown to look seductive and a bandage to help her pretend to have a twisted ankle. When she says upon Charles's visit: "Forgive me. I … I did not expect …" (333), the readers can deduce that she not only expected him, but also planned to seduce him, because she is sitting there in her new nightgown and a flattering shawl over her shoulders. Her motives, however, remain shrouded in mist, and thus left to readers' imagination. The major involvement of the readers comes when they are given the freedom to choose from the two offered endings.

In concord with Barthe's concept of the death of the author, and with the undermined authority of the narrator, the importance of readers rises. It is no longer the Victorian god-like omniscience and omnipotence, but the freedom, contingency and openness that are emphasized. Readers are made active throughout the reading process and they are stimulated to cooperate on the generating of meanings by numerous gaps left for their imagination and deduction to fill with information. With less authority imposed on a text, the freedom of the participants in the production/reception processes grows and the texts open to new interpretations.

1.3. ONTOLOGICAL WORLDS

1.3.1. Ontological Worlds

The loss of the center as proclaimed by postmodernism has brought about major changes in artistic expression. One of the most distinctive features of postmodern art is celebration of pluralism and openness. Instead of singularity, it chooses heterogeneity and diversity, often mixing styles and techniques, which were traditionally considered incompatible and mutually exclusive.

According to Jean Baudrillard, an influential French philosopher, postmodern age is the age of "hyper-reality" and simulations where the signs of the real are substituted for the real and where we lose the ability to make a distinction between the real and imagery, or, between the nature and artifice (Baudrillard 1-3).

Reality and fiction juxtaposed

Following the model of contradictory elements and reflecting the philosophy of the time, postmodern literature often juxtaposes the world of reality and fiction. The authors often interject themselves into their works and self-consciously discuss the process and problems involved in the act of fiction-making (Grenz 35-36). These are some of the paradoxical devices authors use to blur the boundary between the real and the fictional. The juxtaposition of often radically different realities raises questions about how these realities can coexist and interweave.

As McHale argues, the dominant of postmodern fiction is ontological and asks: "What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?" (1987, 10).

Postmodern theory challenges the separation of the real and the fictional. It claims that the boundary between these two worlds is fluid, and fiction thus merges with fact

and fact merges with fiction. Historiographic metafiction confronts the paradox of real versus fictive representation by asserting that its world is always both resolutely fictitious, yet undeniably historical. It first establishes and then crosses the frames distinguishing the narratives of the two worlds. The frame-breaks are made as jarring as possible, so the readers always have the double-awareness of both the fictiveness and the "reality" (Hutcheon, 1995, 105, 109-110, 142).

Real personages within fictional contexts

The ontological boundary between the real and the fictional worlds can be crossed in many ways. Inserting real world figures into fictional contexts is one of them. As McHale argues, this violation of boundaries has a certain appeal for readers. It involves a kind of ontological "scandal" to insert real historical figures into fictional situations, where they interact with purely fictional characters. Such "transworld" interconnections constitute "enclaves of ontological *difference* within the otherwise ontologically homogenous fictional heterocosm" (McHale 28). Yet, there is nothing strictly postmodern in these strategies. Real world figures are inserted into fictional situations in traditional historical novels as well.

The major difference between the classic historical fiction and the postmodern historiographic metafiction lies in the way the frame-break "insertions" are handled. The ontological transgressions in classic historical fiction are very discreet, subtle and occur consistently within the "dark areas" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114; McHale 84-92). The real figures are usually deployed there to authenticate or validate the fictional world, as if their presence was to hide the seam between fiction and reality. Postmodern historiographic metafiction, however, prevents any such obfuscation. The "dark areas" constraints are often violated and the frame-breaking is intentionally exhibited and drawn attention to.

Author versus fiction

Ontological relations of fiction to its author also present one way of how the ontological boundaries can be broken. The artists at the age of postmodernism refuse to be invisible. They exercise the freedom to create worlds by thrusting themselves into the foreground of their works. They represent themselves in the act of making, or unmaking, their fictional worlds. On one hand, they make themselves visible in their work; on the other hand, however, artists represented in the act of creation or destruction are themselves inevitably a fiction. As a result, a hierarchy of ontological worlds is established. The *real* artist, the person who masterminds the whole creation/destruction process, always "occupies an ontological level superior to that of his projected fictional self, and therefore *doubly* superior to the fictional world. … There is a possibility here of infinite regress, puppet-master behind puppet master *ad infinitum*" (McHale 30).

One step further from the authors thematizing themselves in the process of creation are the "authors" entering their fictional worlds and confronting their characters in their roles of authors. The interview between the "author" and his or her character constitutes one of the characteristic features of the poetics of postmodernism. The postmodern writing tries to "short-circuit" the gap between the real and the imagery, in order to shock the reader and thus "resist assimilation into conventional categories of the literary" (Lodge 15). Bringing "real", historic authors into the fictional context is yet another way of drawing attention to their fictitious status and questioning the whole process of writing and reading fiction.

1.3.2. Ontological Worlds: The French Lieutenant's Woman

As a work of historiographic metafiction, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* operates within contradictory yet overlapping worlds. One of the major postmodern paradoxes of the novel is breaking the boundaries between reality and fiction, making the two worlds merge and, as a corollary, rendering the separation of the real and the fictitious narratives undesirable, and even impossible.

The novel oscillates between two contradictory, metafictional tendencies: establishing the illusion of reality and exposing its fictionality. On the one hand, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* draws attention to its artifice and to the processes involved in the act of creation; on the other hand, it is anchored in the real, historical world through the deployment of or allusions to real-world figures, events or works of art. Some of the names and actualities appear only in the discourse of the narrator, for example George Sand, J. S. Mill, Adolf Hitler; some, in contrast, enter also the discourse of the characters, for example the Pre-Raphaelites, Charles Darwin and Jane Austen. Either way, the deployment of referents of the real world gives the text an impression of veracity.

Literature within literature

The discourse of the characters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is often permeated by allusions to literature and literary characters of that time. When Charles sees Sarah, the expression of her face reminds him of Emma Bovary; and the gradual changes in his servant's behaviour makes him wonder "if there wasn't something of a Uriah Heep beginning to erupt on the surface of Sam's personality" (316); Sarah, not trying to hide her "shame", calls herself a "scarlet woman of Lyme" (121); and Ernestina, on a romantic walk with Charles, shows him "the very steps that Jane Austen made Louisa Musgrove fall down in *Persuasion*" (14). Charles and Dr. Grogan also spend a considerable amount of time discussing Darwin's revolutionary work, and Ernestina reads parts of Mrs. Norton's *The Lady of La Garaye* in evenings.

The deployment of such allusions serves to authenticate the characters and to raise the credibility of the story. Fictitious characters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* identify themselves with the ontological world of the historical, real-world authors even though they have, in fact, the same fictional status as the literary characters they allude to, like Emma Bovary or Uriah Heep. In compliance with postmodern philosophy, the status of reality and fiction is questioned and the two worlds merge.

Ontological frame-breaks

However, the established illusion of reality is disrupted once the intrusive "author's" voice declares that all his work and characters are imagery creations. At this point, the metafictional intrusion violates the impression that the world of the novel is a continuation of the world outside of it - that is of the world of the readers. Introducing the "author" into his fiction thus flaunts the ontological distinctness between the real and the created world, and poses questions about the actual status of the author.

In chapter thirteen, the "author's" voice breaks the ontological frame by declaring the artefact status of his fiction. In chapter fifty five, the author enters his fiction and shares a train compartment with Charles. While he watches his character sleeping, his "authorial" thoughts are considering Charles's future within the story. In chapter sixty one, the "author" enters his own story as a character, an impresario, who helps to change the course of the story finale.

It is obvious that all these ontological frame-breaks establish a hierarchy of worlds which differ on the scale of "realness". The self-consciously acknowledged "creator" of the story, who is introduced into the fiction as an "authorial" voice, character, or in his role of the author, foregrounds his superior reality to the reality of the story and characters he creates. However, his reality is less real than the one of the actual John Fowles, in whose mind the idea to write the tale of Sarah, Charles and Ernestina was born and who was sitting at a desk, while writing about his narrator's personae sitting on a train. In other words, "the metafictional gesture of frame-breaking is … a form of superrealism" (McHale 197) and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* encompasses worlds within worlds, some more "real" than the others, yet all of them existing side by side.

The "authorial" voice in chapter thirteen says that, writers "wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is" (98), and that characters "exist, and in a reality no less, or no more, real" (99) than the one he has just broken. Once again, the

postmodern notion that the worlds of reality and fiction are inseparable, that "fiction is woven into all" (99), is expressed here.

The novel displays numerous instances of boundary crossing between fiction and reality. When the narrator describes the Toby jug Sarah is unpacking at Exeter, he says that "the Toby was cracked and was to be recracked in the course of time, as I can testify, having bought it myself a year or two ago for a good deal more than the three pennies Sarah was charged" (268). Here the modern narrator claims to be from the same ontological world as Sarah and the jug, and thus, in fact, instead of reinforcing the illusion of reality, he disrupts it. The characters and the whole story are claimed to be all fiction, so the narrator cannot be from the same universe as his reality is one level "more real".

When the "creator" says that Mary's "great-great-granddaughter … is one of the more celebrated English film actresses" (78) and that she celebrates her birthday in the month in which he writes, it is clear, that he overtly identifies himself not only with the world of his characters, but also with the world of readers. A similar ontological overlap is related to the La Ronciére case. The narrator says, in a footnote, that he has taken the story "from the same 1835 account that Dr Grogan handed Charles" (229), and thus again breaks the line separating reality and fiction.

As historiographic metafiction, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* lays claim to historical personages. It introduces The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood into its world, where the unconventional artists interact with the novel's fictional characters, particularly with Sarah. Even though this interaction adheres to the "dark areas", and thus does not violate the constraints upon the insertion of real referents into fiction, there is a paradoxical overlap into the ontological world of the readers. As we learn, Dante Rossetti often painted Sarah, however, there is no possibility that we could find any portrait of Sarah in Rossetti's artistic legacy, as she is a mere creation of the novelist's mind.

The juxtaposition of fiction and reality in postmodern art shows also the parallel between crying Mary and "a better educated though three years younger girl in the real world" (264) in Dorchester. The identity of the girl "in the real" world is revealed when we are told that she was waiting for a "pale young architect newly returned from his dreary five years in the capital" (264). The previous few paragraphs in the novel make it clear that the girl was Tryphena, Hardy's muse, and that it was him she was waiting for.

It is clear that *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as a representative work of historiographic metafiction, defies any strict separation of the real and the imagery. The two worlds always co-exist, and ontological questions about the kinds of worlds and realities, such as: What differing worlds and realities are out there and what happens when the boundaries between them get violated? are asked.

II. POSTMODERN THEMES/STRATEGIES

2.1. INTERTEXTUALITY

2.1.1. Intertextuality

Postmodernism expresses critique toward anything that could be labelled as unified, totalized and closed, and celebrates everything showing openness, diversity and pluralism. It uses and abuses various sources, juxtaposes what was traditionally considered strictly separate, and it flaunts its non-originality. These representative features of postmodernism are embodied in the form of intertextuality, the theme and strategy highly employed in postmodern fiction.

Network of texts

Intertextuality is a thoroughly discussed theme and an overtly used strategy in postmodern literature. Text is never perceived as an original, unified, autonomous and isolated unit. It is always conceived of as a part of a larger context, overtly displaying links and connections to other texts. Texts are thus considered to be part of a network of other texts. As Foucault says, text "is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (in Hutcheon, *Poetics* 127). "Network of texts" is indeed a concept reflecting postmodernist ideas about art and creation.

The theme of intertextuality is closely related to the question of originality. Postmodernist assumption that there is no such thing as an original literary work subverts the traditional concept of the author as an original and originating institution who creates original literary works. What postmodernism suggests is that "no one ever manages to be the first to narrate anything, to be the origin of even her/his narrative" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 129). Every text has already been written, every story has already been told and everything gets repeated. These are the ideas, which the employment of intertextuality reflects and endorses.

Active readers, open meanings

The notion that every text exists only in relation to other text also implies that only in the network of other texts, within prior discourses, can it get meaning. In other words, meaning is rendered textual and intertextual. Reflecting postmodernist rejection of totalized, closed metanarratives, intertextuality challenges any closure and single, ultimate meaning. In contrast, it supports openness and pluralism. When text is taken from its original context and gets incorporated into another text, new meanings inevitably arise.

Many of the intertexts historiographic metafiction works with and deploys are textualized narratives of the past. When the textualized past is incorporated into the text of the present, the two worlds are necessarily bridged and the past gets re-read, re-interpreted and re-written in a new, present context. Instead of closing the meaning, intertextuality initiates new production of them.

Inserting texts into different contexts or discursive situations opens them up. Readers are then free to generate and attribute new meanings, differing from those they might have generated and attributed had they read the text in its previous, original context. This means that interpretation and the meaning attributed to texts may vary considerably in reliance on the context and the discourse in which the texts are employed (Culler 153).

Intertextuality resists and avoids closure, single truth and meaning, and thus satisfies not only the postmodernist attraction to pluralism, openness and relativity, but also the role of a reader as an active participant in the reading and meaning-making process. Readers are constantly motivated to relate their previously acquired knowledge and experience in new situations; and the new situation might be embodied by an unexpected and sometimes even shocking deployment of the intertext. Postmodernism is a truly anti-unification enterprise, so it frequently juxtaposes contradictory styles and discourses, high and low or fictive and documentary, and breaks the expectations dictated by a specific genre of the text. In this case, the reader is jolted from his or her

conventional reading expectations and the cognitive and collaborative processes are activated. Intertextuality and dynamic reading process keep the texts "alive" as they are unfinished, still open to new readings and interpretations.

The historical and the literary conjoined

Intertextuality installed within historiographic metafiction points to the doubled status of historiographic metafiction as it incorporates intertexts that are both historical and literary. The question about what we can know of the past and how we can know it is thus once again asked.

There is no doubt that the "real" past did exist, but the past that is accessible to us today is only a narrativized construct made of the empirical past, transmitted in a textualized form. The text of the historical is inevitably linked to the text of the literary and traditional trust in the authenticity and veracity of documentary accounts reconstituting events into historical facts is shaken (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 128). The ground for problematizing the relation of the real to the imagery in historiographic metafiction is set.

One view of history in postmodern art is "history as intertext" where "history becomes a text, a discursive construct upon which fiction draws as easily as it does upon other texts of literature" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 142). It is obvious that juxtaposition of "real" and fictive intertexts in historiographic metafiction casts doubt on our traditional belief that history refers to the real, whereas fiction to the imagery.

The past is accessible to us only through constructed textualized remains. The empirical past events are presented to us only through facts, which are constituted by narrativized accounts of events and are always already interpreted and given meaning. This suggests that historical records must have gone through the same narrativization processes as fictional texts and, consequently, must display the same narrative quality as fiction. The formerly exclusive claim of history to veracity is doubted.

In historiographic metafiction, the historical and the fictive worlds are never separate and the life and art always overlap and interact. According to Barthes, "the world was a text, the text was a world" (in Bradbury, *Modern* 345). This assertion implies that we can "read" the world, which is accessible to us through a collection of diverse textualized narratives. This assumption leads to the idea that we can make meaning of the past and reality through both the real and the fictive – because both are, in the end, texts: "even the event closest to us personally can be known to us afterwards only by its remains: memory can create only texts. There is no such thing as the *reproduction* of events by memory" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 153-154). Text seems to form a bridge between the real and the imagery.

It is evident that the questions that are posed within historiographic metafiction are never limited only to its own discourse, but always overlap into the discourse of readers. Intertextual parallelism of the historical and the literary invokes readers to question and reassess traditional humanist perception of reality and the way they make meaning of it. Historiographic metafiction overtly asserts that it does not seek to reproduce events. It helps "to direct us, instead, to facts, or to new directions in which to think about events" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 154). It is clear, then, that textuality plays a significant role in our construction of reality.

Paratexts

Postmodernist assertion that the once existing empirical past is accessible to us only through textualized remains assumes a considerable distance between the "really real" and the transmitted, narrativized and textualized "real". As Linda Hutcheon puts it, "history is not 'what hurts' so much as 'what we say once hurt'" (*Politics* 82). We are all distanced from history and the real pain, yet we still presume the right to grant meaning to that real pain. Historiographic metafiction, a paradoxically fictive and historical writing, focuses on the processes of both production and reception of meaning and asks questions about how historical intertexts could get incorporated into a fictional context without losing their documentary value. Incorporating typical representations of history writing seems to be a satisfying, problem solving answer. This is why

paratextuality is so often employed within historiographic metafiction, footnotes and epigraphs in particular.

However, these conventional forms of history writing are what postmodern novels use and abuse. The deployment of paratexts in historiographic metafiction paradoxically establishes a complex dichotomy, signalling a dual status of its representation. On one hand, it acknowledges that the historical facts they present are just fictionalized events and created forms; on the other hand, the paratextual devices often display a certain degree of their rooting in actuality, in the "real". Footnotes especially are considered the guarantees of credibility. Nevertheless, in the whole milieu of historiographic metafiction the concept of an objective and unproblematic historical documentation is challenged.

The conventional functions traditionally associated with paratextuality are parodically both inscribed and undermined, as these devices have a contradictory effect on the reader. While they give the impression of historical factuality and authenticity, they also draw attention to the narrativity and fictionality of the text. It is mainly because they subvert the linearity, continuity and organic structure of the text, foreground the materials used to create the illusion of reality, and thus disrupt our reading and shatter the believability (Hutcheon, *Politics* 82-86).

The subversion of linearity and reading disruption is another reason why paratexts are so frequently employed in postmodern writing. As David Lodge argues, postmodernist writing seeks alternative principles of composition, which would subvert narrative linearity and continuity, a quality typically expected from writing (13-14).

Breaking boundaries, closing gaps, contesting metanarratives

Intertextuality is a means of expressing postmodernist view of reality as a compilation of texts, where the boundary between the historical and the fictive is blurred. As a strategy employed within postmodern texts, intertextuality focuses on how the historical and the fictive interact and how the worlds of life and art overlap. As a

result, readers may revise their ideas about the status of what is assumed to be reality and find new ways of possible perception of the "real" and the "fictive".

However, intertextuality does not only violate the strict real/fictive seam. It also closes the gap between the past and the present. Integrating the textualized past into the present narrative opens the "fossilized" historical accounts to new meanings and, as a consequence, generates new versions of history. This is yet another way in which postmodernism, or historiographic metafiction, expresses its anti-metanarrative attitude, re-writes and re-presents the past and contests any totalizing tendency.

2.1.2. Intertextuality: The French Lieutenant's Woman

The French Lieutenant's Woman is a book by John Fowles. This is the information we get from a quick glance at the cover. However, when we open the book and browse through it, it is clear that this is not entirely true. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a work which could not have existed had it not been for anterior works of others. Without any exaggeration, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* displays a parade of various textual sources determining the overall spirit of the novel and categorizing it as a postmodern historiographic metafiction. Even though John Fowles is the person who wrote the story, the authorship is, in fact, shared with many others whose works inspired him and became an integral part of his twentieth-century rendering of the Victorian novel.

At first sight, it is clear that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* deploys a collection of texts, which, on the one hand, are incorporated into the novel, but, on the other hand, stand besides the fictional plot and disrupt the linearity of reading. This is true particularly of epigraphs and footnotes, the paratextual devices so often employed by works of historiographic metafiction.

Epigraphs

The epigraphs employed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are constructed of quotations from documentary, poetic and fictional works of other authors. They open each chapter and are parallel to the themes and situations explored within the story they precede. They, in fact, introduce the plot of the following chapters. The first chapter, where we first meet Sarah, is introduced by Hardy's poem "The Riddle":

Stretching eyes west
Over the sea,
Wind foul or fair,
Always stood she
Prospect-impressed;
Solely out there
Did her gaze rest,
Never elsewhere
Seemed charm to be. (9)

At the end of the chapter, there is a first mention of a figure of a woman, Sarah, who, despite the wind moving her clothes, "stood motionless, staring, staring out to sea, more like a living memorial to the drowned, a figure from myth" (11). Both Hardy and Fowles describe a woman solemnly overlooking the sea with the wind blowing and no one accompanying her. The woman in both cases is mysterious – a "riddle" for Hardy and a "myth" for Fowles.

The famous metafictional chapter thirteen, where the narrator acknowledges that he does not know who Sarah is and where she comes from, is introduced by a quotation from Tennyson's *Maud*: "For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by the veil…" (97). The mysteriousness of the heroine is thus once again expressed in both the epigraph and the text itself. The "Maker" in the context of the following chapter symbolizes the producer of the text, and the "veil" symbolizes the mystery, in which his "drift", his heroine and all creating intentions, are shrouded.

The chapter about Charles's servant Sam is introduced by an excerpt from Marx's *Capital*, where he talks about the "constantly extending scale, of the ancient domestic slaves under the name of a servant class" (43). Chapter thirty five that reveals the "cold" reality of the Victorian life is introduced by an excerpt from the disturbing *Children's Employment Commission Report* (258), where the labour of young children is discussed. The chapter where Charles goes home with a prostitute, is introduced by Arnold's poem "Parting", expressing the situation of loving a woman who had been with others before:

"To the lips, ah, of others,

Those lips have been prest,

And others, ere I was,

Were clasped to that breast…". (299)

Chapter forty-four where Charles conforms to the duty and conformity, and thus brings the novel to the traditional Victorian ending, is preceded by poem "Duty" by Clough:

"Duty – that's to say complying

   With whate'er's expected here …

 […]

'Tis the coward acquiescence

   In a destiny's behest …". (322)

The chosen quotation from Lewis Carroll's *Through The Looking Glass* is a parallel to the role of the "author" and the much discussed control over his creation. Alice is said that she is only a "sort of thing" in King's dream, because if he woke up, she would "go out – bang! – just like a candle" (387). This excerpt introduces chapter fifty five, where the narrator's personae breaks the ontological frame, enters the world of characters and contemplates over further development of his story and destiny of his characters.

It is obvious that there exists a reciprocity and communication between these paratextual devices and the following text. The quotations are taken out from the

original context and get employed in a different discursive situation. The re-contextualization of the texts of the past into the text of the present bridges the gap between the two worlds. The two worlds communicate which opens possibilities for new interpretations. As the meanings readers ascribe to the epigraphs in the context of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* might differ from the meanings they might have ascribed had they read the quotations in the original context, the closure of history and of the texts is prevented. The cross-temporal employment of texts gives readers an opportunity to view the epigraphs and the story itself in a more complex view. Nineteenth-century phenomena are enunciated with twentieth-century background knowledge, and this adds to a better illumination of the whole discursive situation. The deployment of epigraphs also challenges the concept of originality as it shows that everything has already been said and stories get repeated – within different contexts and discourses.

Epigraphs in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* could be divided into three major categories: quotations from documentary or scientific sources; quotations from Victorian works of fiction; quotations from Victorian poetry.

The first category is comprised of quotations from philosophers and various scientists whose works provide the view of the nature of Victorian life and of the main evolutionary changes that were shattering old orders and beliefs. It also comprises several excerpts from newspapers and various reports that equally contribute to make the picture of Victorian society complete. The whole book opens with Marx's quotation emphasizing the need of freedom in quest for humanity. Other quotations from Marx illustrate how modern societies have little regard for labourers and still produce "slaves". The writings of Darwin correspond with the situation of Charles and the whole class of aristocracy, which has been selected for natural extinction, so that the middle class, more fit for the survival, could rise. The social and historical aspects of Victorian society are portrayed in the excerpts from G.M. Young and E. Royston Pike.

The second category of epigraphs consists of quotations especially from the novel *Persuasion* by Jane Austen. The quotations from this fiction are predominantly about the Lyme region and help to introduce the local scene.

The third category, comprising works of Victorian poetry, is the largest and reflects the feelings and the situation of Victorian people affected by the loss of certainties caused by scientific upheavals and changes in the view of the world. The quotations are taken in particular from Hardy, Clough, Tennyson and Arnold. Quotations from Hardy describe the mysterious woman and help to set the scene. Tennyson's poetry from *In Memoriam* speaks of the doubts, fears and anxieties of the Victorian age; quotations from *Maud* focus on the transformations of a man who falls in love. Clough focuses on a clash between the duty, the conformity to the society and the feelings stimulated by love. Quotes from Arnold's poetry speak of isolation and loneliness (Palmer 25-28).

It is obvious that the epigraphs employed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* try to cover the Victorian era in all its complexity. The quotations are almost exclusively taken from the literature of the nineteenth century to heighten the illusion of reading a Victorian novel. The twentieth-century text blends with the texts of the past and this makes the illusion more authentic. Epigraphs help to provide the readers with the real, historical context of the nineteenth century, within which the main story of the novel operates, and thus incite a deeper and a more complex view and understanding of the Victorian era. In fact, these quotations set out to show what it was like to be a Victorian and assert the factuality of the primary text.

However, paradoxically, the use of epigraphs at the same time reminds us of the fictionality of the novel and destroys the illusion of reality. Not only do the epigraphs disrupt the linearity of the text, and thus draw attention to its status of a narrative; they also suggest that these are the available sources the author used to reconstruct the Victorian era. In other words, the past can never be represented as it really happened. We can make only a construct of history, or rather of our twentieth-century view of it, through accessible textual remains.

The fact that in the chapter openings both fictitious and documentary texts are used has further implications. Both discourses are put on the same level. None of them is ascribed more prominence, as they are both employed to attribute equally to the authenticity of the novel. The unavoidable result of using the discourses of poetry, fiction and documents in one narrative is narrativization of the past and historicizing of fiction. Our knowledge of the past is thus questioned as both historical records and the works of fiction are considered to have the same textual quality, and a status of human construct. The boundary between fact and fiction blurs.

Footnotes

Footnotes are another paratextual device highly employed within *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Using this device typical for the works of historiography signals that the author wants to reinforce the authenticity of his work, and thus assure readers of its credibility. Footnotes give a feeling of believability, yet, at the same time, they disrupt the linear reading, and thus the reader's ability to make a complex and "coherent, totalizing fictive narrative" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 85). The postmodern strategy of crossing the boundary between the real and the fictitious is once again employed. Footnotes also inscribe the openness of the past to the present as the nineteenth-century phenomena are commented on or explained from the twentieth-century perspective.

Footnotes are employed most intensely in chapter thirty five, where the readers are provided with information on Victorian birth-control practices, social and marital habits of labourers and the dire circumstances they were forced to live in. The footnotes also explain details about vocabulary: "agnostic" (20); give translation of the words that may be problematic for contemporary readers to understand: "dollymop" (130); discuss some issues of Victorian politics, particularly the politics of Gladstone and Disraeli (104); comment on science, such as on the forgotten, unsuccessful book on geology, *Omphalos* (158); and even comment and add more information on the used epigraphs: chapter thirty nine is introduced by a letter of a prostitute that was published in *The Times* in 1858, where she defends her position in the "rotten" society. As we can read in the footnote: "The substance of this famous and massively sarcastic letter, allegedly

written by a successful prostitute, but more probably by someone like Henry Mayhew, may be read in *Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age*" (288).

Many of the footnotes refer to other historical texts so that the reader could find more information related to the discussed themes. One more example can be the footnote on the infamous trial of Lieutenant La Ronciére, accused of sexual abuse. This footnote refers us to another historical book where we could learn more about this controversial case. Drawing the attention of readers from the core of the text to the footnotes is, in fact, another way of activating the reading audience. Readers are constantly stimulated and educated and reminded that the world of the fiction overlaps with the world of reality.

Intertexts incorporated in the primary text, discourses

The French Lieutenant's Woman incorporates works by other authors not only outside, but also within the main body of the primary text. For example, in respect to the discussed La Ronciére trial, a few pages from the study of Dr. Karl Matthei, who appealed against the accusing verdict, are incorporated into the novel. Matthei's study covers various bizarre cases of woman hysteria which were meant to prove La Ronciére's innocence. When the narrator wants to illuminate the hidden part of Victorian social life, the prostitution and brothels, he quotes from *Fanny Hill*, the first English erotic novel by John Cleland and "a masterpiece in the genre" (293).

It is obvious that both historical and literary texts are employed to give the impression of historical authenticity. This is another example of blurring the distinction between the fictitious and the documentary. These materials are treated as both narratives and human constructs, and their value of "realness" is thus not compared, but rather paralleled.

Intertextuality in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is also partly related to the variety of discourses this novel displays. In this respect, there is no unification, but plurality. Apart from the main plot, we are given lectures on geology and

palaeontology; on Darwinian principle of adaptation and the consequences of such changes for the class of aristocracy; on Hardy's life and events that influenced his work; on Mrs. Norton and her sentimental, "feminist" literature; we learn about the first movements fighting for the right of women to vote and about the political atmosphere of the era.

The French Lieutenant's Woman adds to the multiplicity of its discourses by employing instances of personal correspondence and legal papers. It employs documents, fiction and poetry. Together with the works of the most acclaimed Victorian poets, folk poems are deployed. Along the greatest Victorian novelists and their masterpieces, erotic and sentimental novels are mentioned. This is yet another paradox of postmodernism and the works of historiographic metafiction are famous for: conjoining the mass and the elite, the "high" and the "low" art.

All this variety that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* displays offers a complex view of the Victorian era, extends readers' perspective and makes the whole plot of the story more believable. It also shows that postmodern tendency in historiographic metafiction to reject any strict distinctions and operate within overlapping worlds of the past and the present, the real and the fictive and the "high" and the "low".

III. POSTMODERN STRATEGIES

3.1. EXPERIMENTAL PLAYFULNESS

3.1.1. Experimental Playfulness

Social, ideological and cultural transformations re-shaping life and demanding new interpretations and concepts of reality called for the breakdown of old hierarchies and cultural inhibitions. In the late 1960s, John Barth came up with the term "literature of exhaustion", by which he did not mean "anything so tired as the subject of physical, moral, or intellectual decadence", but "the used-upness of certain forms or exhaustion of certain possibilities" (64). The form of the nineteenth-century realist narrative, which held a particularly strong position in British novel, was inevitably considered "exhausted" and new literature from the pluralistic, chaotic age was needed.

Changes in literature were also stimulated by the key concept of "the death of the author", as asserted by Barthes in 1968, and by the appearance, around this time, of the French *nouveau roman*. The "new novel" often focused on "the nature of language, imagination and their shaping of reality" (Stevenson 116). It problematized or dismissed the traditional narrative, offered no fulfilled plot, dispensed with characters and conventional psychology and disintegrated human subject (Bradbury, *Modern* 344, 346). It is obvious that under these influences the familiar and traditional constituents of fiction, such as authority, characters, plot, ending and representation necessarily came to be questioned. The sixties provoked authors to explore innovative literary paths, and thus stimulated a climate of experimentalism and the appearance of new forms.

Postmodern fiction is, as David Lodge calls it, a "crossover fiction" (in Bradbury, *Modern* 408), which experiments with crossings of traditionally impenetrable boundaries of self-contained worlds. It crosses and blurs boundaries between fact and fiction (or art and life), the past and the present, genres, discourses and styles; it juxtaposes "high" and "low" art forms, fictional and factual intertexts; it mixes realist

reference and modernist self-reflexivity. It is especially the genre of historiographic metafiction that installs and then subverts familiar conventions and constituents of art.

Metafictional crossovers: fact versus fiction, past versus present

The age of uncertain, multiple realities, when the boundary between imagination and actuality was problematized and when history seemed more like a fiction inevitably called for a new approach to the fictive and the real. The independent reality of fiction and the fictionality of reality are fully explored in a playfully self-conscious and self-examining metafiction, which experiments with the traditional realist notion and strict distinction of the real and the fictitious (Bradbury, *Modern* 344, 408). In metafiction, texts self-consciously assert their fictionality, fact merges with fiction and "authors" intrude upon their works.

As Patricia Waugh claims, with the rising of postmodern thinking, writers felt the need for novels to theorize about themselves and to transform the old fictional quest into a "quest for fictionality" (*Metafiction* 10). She points out that there is a similarity between the world of metafiction and the "real" world as the world outside novel also starts to be aware of "how its values and practises are constructed and legitimized" (*Metafiction* 19). One of the basic assumptions of metafiction thus points out to the fact that the processes involved in the act of construction of fiction could be paralleled with the processes involved in our construction of reality.

Particularly in historiographic metafiction, the crossover between the real and the fictitious is complemented by the crossover between the past and the present. As postmodernism refuses the traditional notion of the past as an "archaeologized", timelessly true and valid institution, it opens the past to the present (and vice versa) and closes the gap between the two worlds. To foreground the fact that the representation of the past takes place in the present, narrators use often striking anachronisms and intrusive comments revealing their knowledge of the future (in relation to the objects narrated) or of the present (in relation to the time narrated), or the narrators simply explicitly acknowledge that they belong to a different time. The pretence of the classic

historical novel that the narrator belongs to the same ontological world as the characters is no longer valid and this new approach is reflected in the experimental use of different time levels within one narrative.

The role of narrators and fiction makers in metafiction is also significantly connected with the metafictional frame-breakings and subsequent merging of various hierarchies of ontological worlds. Narrator or narrator's personae intrude upon their fiction either through metafictional comments on the creation process and the fictionality of the work, or through entering the story – as one of the characters or in the role of the "author". Either way, these metafictional intrusive strategies shatter the ontological boundaries between the worlds of characters and "authors" who break into their fictions. Postmodern experimental forms often operate with "Chinese boxes of narrators and fiction makers" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 45) which make the whole narrative more complex and the reading process more playful, engaging and sometimes even challenging.

Readers: players

Postmodern "incredulity toward metanarratives" and rejection of any attempt to impose a total order on our world experience question the role of the author as an ultimate source of a fixed and final meaning. According to Barthes' theory, such concept of the author is, in fact, "dead". In opposition to the traditional model of literature where the author was very much "alive" and dominant, postmodernism shifts the importance to the reader. Metafictional writers activate readers by openly discussing the fictionality of their stories with them, and, as a corollary, making them participate in the process of creation.

The loss of the author's God-like omniscience and authority and the importance ascribed to the reader introduces a certain degree of randomness, freedom, contingency and playfulness into fiction. There are no longer fixed, authoritative plans and forms are no longer believed to be permanent, closed, impenetrable and unified. The newly introduced freedom puts an end to cultural inhibitions and strictly defined forms and

enables experimental crossovers between what was previously rigidly isolated. It broadens the ground for readers to participate on the construction of meaning and to get actively involved in the process of collaboration on the development of the story.

As postmodernism rejects any total closure and, instead celebrates openness and multiplicity, postmodern novelists often employ a narrative strategy of non-ending, or plural endings in their works. This strategy directly activates the readers and make them part of the metafictional game, as they are invited and free to decide the final development of the story by choosing the ending they prefer. Ronald Sukenick says in a story entitled "The Death of the Author" (1969) that "what we need is not great works but playful ones. . . . A story is a game someone has played so you can play it too" (in Waugh, *Metafiction* 34). This idea does not suggest only the postmodern questioning of originality, but also the endorsement of engaging the readership. Metafictional novelists frequently "make the reader aware of his or her role as player", and thus change the perception and status of literature from a "monologic and authoritative version of history" to a "collective creation" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 42). Readers thus become not only present to the process of creation, but also active participants of it.

The description of literary work as "collective" as opposed to "monologic and authoritative" reflects postmodern tendency to contest any attempt to insert a total power and to defy any quest for a single meaning and ultimate truth. Instead of centralization, postmodernism believes in fragmentalization; instead of an imposed, "higher-order" truth, postmodernism believes in the truth, which is context-bound and context-shaped, and thus always plural and open to interpretation.

The strategy of open endings is a part of postmodern subversion of a neat closure of classic realist texts. Metafictional novels indeed set out to contest deeply rooted literary traditions by defamiliarizing conventional structures, such as the final ending, the definitive interpretation, the authority of the omniscient narrator - "author" and the illusion of reality. The counter-conventional techniques, on the one hand, distance readers from the familiar base and their conventional expectations, often disrupting the suspension of disbelief they succumb to while reading the fictions of

classic realism; on the other hand, however, it makes them far more active in the construction of meaning as the new structures of experimental novels can be comprehended through the old structures. The new (unfamiliar) can thus be understood and enjoyed through the links with the old (familiar) (Waugh, *Metafiction* 13). As the innovative can be comprehended, enjoyed and appreciated only when compared with the "old", postmodernism never turns away from tradition. In fact, it acknowledges that it is rooted in tradition and that it stems from it. Historiographic metafiction thus uses and abuses, inscribes, yet at the same time, subverts the conventions and the discourses of the past (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 44). This paradox is best deployed through parody and irony – the essential constituents of the poetics of postmodernism.

3.1.2 Experimental Playfulness: The French Lieutenant's Woman

The French Lieutenant's Woman is a novel which bridges the Victorian literary tradition with the experimental tendencies stimulated by the new postmodern era. This means that, on the one hand, it draws upon the legacy of the Victorian novel genre, but, on the other hand, it transforms it, using the innovative and experimental "devices", and thus re-shaping the traditional historical fiction into the postmodern genre of historiographic metafiction. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* thus playfully re-works the tradition and breathes new life into the novel genre.

Chinese-box of narrators

One of the constituents of the traditional Victorian fiction is the voice of an omniscient, God-like and unified narrator. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, however, following the postmodern philosophy, rejects any such imposition of an ultimate authority upon the text, and, in contrast, introduces a mixture of narrative voices, as Hutcheon says "Chinese-boxes of narrators and fiction makers" (*Poetics* 45). The "author" of the novel appears within a variety of impersonations: as a voice of a modern narrator; a traveller sharing a train compartment with Charles and leaving a "speck of dirt" on Charles's nap as a surrogate for himself; and as an impresario who enters the "stage" of his artistic performance and manages its.

The traditional God-like status of the "author" is subverted by the fact that he is not fully in control of his characters who "disobey" (98) his intentions. Sarah is the character who, in fact, lives her own life within the novel, creates her own "fictional" story and manipulates others in order to preserve her authenticity, and remains a total mystery to the "creator".

Chinese-box of worlds and open endings

The fact that the "author" appears in the story in several impersonations introduces various levels of ontological worlds, and thus various levels of "realness" into the world of the fiction. As the "author" exercises his prerogative to write and re-write the story, we can also find several fictional worlds within the novel which appear with each re-writing.

The French Lieutenant's Woman clearly plays and experiments with the traditional Victorian notion of closure, and, in concord with the postmodern celebration of openness and plurality, offers three diverse endings, and thus three fictional worlds within one narrative. The first, typically Victorian ending is achieved in chapter forty-four, where Charles conforms to the duty, leaves Sarah, marries Ernestina and enters her father's business. However, this traditional ending cannot be satisfactory in the age openly expressing new demands on changing the paths of the "old" literature. In chapter forty-five, another stage of the story begins and Charles's quest for his mysterious *femme fatale* resumes.

The playful rebellion against the nineteenth-century restrictions upon closure also implicates the readers. They are invited not only to enter the fictional world through the "author's" metafictional comments on the fictionality and creation of the story, but also to participate in the creative process by choosing from another two offered versions of endings, and thus resolving the events of the world of the fiction.

In his essay on *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles says: "Follow the accident, fear the fixed plan" (*Notes* 137). This is what makes the narrator's personae travelling on the train decide to give up the "fight-fixing" and leave the choice of the closure up to the readers. As the "author" re-working tradition, he rejects to impose his authority on the text and flips a florin in order to decide which of the two versions to present in the last chapter. In the end, chapter sixty offers the ending where Charles's fantasies about a happy life with Sarah fulfil and the two finally unite. The last chapter, chapter sixty-one, offers a completely different, and perhaps a more "realistic" conclusion of the story in respect to the previously thematized questions of freedom and authenticity. Charles is left alone, never to see Sarah again. However, under the influence of what Sarah "taught" him throughout the novel, he is capable of understanding the importance of freedom and true self, and thus of embarking on the new stage of his life.

Only the contingency inherent in the act of coin-flipping can dismiss the "tyranny of the last chapter" suggesting "the final, the 'real' version" (390), and the tyranny of the traditional omniscient narrator who has an ultimate power and control over his story, characters and, in fact, the readers as well. The challenge of the total closure reflects the postmodern rejection of any attempts to impose power and an ultimate meaning on the text, and thus close it to further interpretations and meaning-generation.

The experimenting with the endings *The French Lieutenant's Woman* employs changes the traditional view of the reader as a passive consumer of the text and, as a corollary, changes the tradition of the process of reading itself. The narrator in the metafictional chapter thirteen says: "perhaps it's only a game" (97). The readers indeed become players involved in the "game" of reading, each of which opens the novel and gives it a new "version of life".

3.2. PARODY

3.2.1. Parody

Postmodernism does not see the world as a closed, unchangeable and "given" system. In contrast, it views the world as an open system, where meanings, truths and histories are constantly being constructed and re-constructed, interpreted and re-interpreted. The world is thus inevitably considered unstable, always subjected to change.

Reflecting the pluralistic attitude, new forms, innovations and liberation from the strictly defined structures are provoked. However, this does not mean that postmodernism would disconnect from the past and traditions. In fact, it returns to history and traditional forms, but the return is, in concord with the nature of postmodernism, contradictory and full of paradoxes. In order to reflect the instability and pluralism of the world, history and traditions need to be re-worked, re-invented and re-presented. As Hutcheon argues, "postmodernism is a fundamentally contradictory enterprise: its art forms (and its theory) at once use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention" (*Poetics* 23). The innovation within the tradition, or the re-presentation of the past in the present context, is in postmodern art achieved mainly through the employment of parody.

Parody is indeed one of the most significant strategies reflecting and expressing postmodern philosophy and thinking. It resists all totalizing attempts, questions all claims to ultimate truth and the search for timeless meaning. Instead, it stimulates the dialogue with and re-evaluation of the past in the context of the present by juxtaposing the traditional and the innovative within the same context. The historical and the traditional dimensions thus open to the present and get re-worked in the mode of contemporary views and philosophy. As Hutcheon argues, "postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in the fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (*Poetics*

110). "To re-write and re-present the past" also suggests the re-writing and re-presentation of the traditional mode of writing. Historiographic metafiction is a perfect example of such strategies.

As it has already been established, postmodernism is not ahistorical and in complete break from the tradition - and so is not parody. In fact, parody undermines the notion of closed and strictly defined past and tradition, and, in concord with the anti-grand narrative approach, revivifies the old forms and opens doors to new meanings and interpretations (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 126). Parody thus epitomizes the postmodern paradox of continuing in, yet changing tradition, and of both questioning and enshrining the past.

Parody defined

As Hutcheon argues, "parody" does not mean the "ridiculing imitation of the standard theories and definitions that are rooted in eighteenth-century theories of wit". She redefines parody as a "repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity". In historiographic metafiction, this parody "paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity" (*Poetics* 26) and leads "to an exploration of difference and resemblance" (Culler 152). It is clear, then, that parody gives new meanings to old forms through bridging the gap between the present and the past and that the past representation is a basis for the present representation. Writers of historiographic metafiction always relate to the past tradition, which they install, while simultaneously undermine. The past is thus not destroyed, only "re-written". In other words, parody shows how present representations and meanings are derived from past representations and how continuity is always related to difference.

The reverent, yet undermining re-working of "old" works and traditions, which Hutcheon calls "parody", is what other authors often call "pastiche" (Bradbury, *Modern* 409; Head 229). Frederic Jameson, for example, views parody as the "ridiculing imitation" and sees pastiche as a form of "neutral or blank parody" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 26).

The urge to re-work and re-write through parody could be related to Barth's rendering literature "exhausted" and "used-up". While conventions pose a limit on what a certain form can express and what can be its content, parody breaks the restraints, opens and shows new possibilities through giving classical forms "a new and different twist" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 31). As Waugh argues, "parody renews and maintains the relationship between form and what it can express, by upsetting a previous balance which has become so rigidified that the conventions of the form can express only a limited or even irrelevant content" (*Metafiction* 68).

Parody, however, not only re-works traditional constituents of fiction, but it also paradoxically draws attention to what has been re-worked. Readers always employ their previously acquired knowledge or reading experience in new reading situations. Whenever the conventional constituents "malfunction" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 31) and certain expected patterns are broken, readers are surprised and urged to become more active and to start processing what in particular worked counter their expectations and activated them. Parody helps readers to get liberated from their conventional assumptions about and expectations of fiction.

3.2.2. Parody: The French Lieutenant's Woman

Parody is one of the main strategies *The French Lieutenant's Woman* deploys to show both the continuation and the change of the novel genre as it employs the traditional within the modern, experimental context. Fowles sets out to recreate the ambience of the Victorian world and the grand style of the Victorian authors, but he also re-shapes, or parodies and pastiches the Victorian tradition under the influence of the modern narrative "devices" rebelling against any restrictions upon the techniques as established in the nineteenth-century novel.

The traditional constituents of classic historical fiction that get typically questioned are the illusion of reality, the treatment of a plot and characters, the chronological story-telling, the omniscient and god-like voice of the narrator and the

sense of a neat, final ending. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* sets out to challenge all these familiar structures.

The essential feature of realist fiction is presentation of itself as of the "real thing", and thus creating the illusion that the story the readers are presented with is not a construct. Thanks to this illusionism, classic historical novels reinforce the "suspension of disbelief" of their readers. However, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* disrupts the illusion of reality through constant intrusive and self-conscious comments of the narrator foregrounding the fictional status of the story; through the crossovers between the past and the present; and through conjoining the fiction and reality.

The French Lieutenant's Woman also shows the loss of the narrator's omniscience, power and control over the story and characters. The traditional imaginary hierarchy between the narrator being the superior and the reader being the subordinate is shattered. The narrator openly acknowledges his lack of knowledge and turns the readers into active participants in the meaning-generating and in the creation process.

Fowles in his novel rehearses the greatest authors of the Victorian era, such as George Eliot in its intrusive moralizing; Thomas Hardy in its mysterious heroine; Jane Austen in its ironic voice; Matthew Arnold in its suggestion of the suspension between two worlds that, as regards Charles, were presented by Ernestina and Sarah; and Charles Dickens in its portrayal of the figure of a Cockney servant Sam (Waugh, *Metafiction* 125). The character of Charles's servant Sam is based on Sam Weller of *The Pickwick Papers*. However, the type of Sam Weller is parodied under the influence of the social changes and the Darwinian theory of natural selection: "The difference between Sam Weller and Sam Farrow (that is, between 1836 and 1867) was this: the first was happy with his role, the second suffered it" (46). It is obvious that the developments in society with rising demands on the adjustment to the changes, even at the cost of abandoning moral scruples, favoured Sam Farrow, the changed continuation of Sam Weller, to survive.

This particular example displays how *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, a work of historiographic metafiction, changes the archetype of the Victorian novel, revivifies it in the new context, and thus opens the novel genre to new possibilities. As a strategy which shows both the compliance with and the break from the tradition, parody ensures that literary works will never become obsolete, but always capable of being renewed so that they reflected the demands of the reading public.

3.3. METAFICTION

3.3.1. Metafiction

When the world of fiction acquires a visible maker, it becomes less the mirror of reality, more a visibly made thing. The devices of art and status of fiction are revealed and the artwork is inevitably presented "*as* an artwork" (McHale 30). Such characteristics are inherent to metafiction, a mode of writing typically associated with postmodernism.

Patricia Waugh defines the term as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (*Metafiction* 2). Linda Hutcheon uses a parallel with Narcissus, a figure from Greek mythology, and calls the contemporary self-reflexive novels, which are "intensely aware of its own existence, continuously drawing attention to its own storytelling processes and linguistic structures", "narcissistic" (*Narcissistic* i). Concerning the question of historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon claims that its language always refers primarily to "the reality of the discursive fact itself (hence the designation as metafiction) but also the reality of other past discursive acts (historiography)" (*Poetics* 151). The apparent metafictional paradox that, in fact, forms the genre of historiographic metafiction is drawing attention to its artifice, while, at the same time, anchoring its world to the "real" world through allusions to actual historical events and personages.

Metafictional self-consciousness is, however, not a strategy invented by postmodernism. The practice is old and it is employed in other types of fictional works as well. To name but one example, Tristram Shandy (1760) by Laurence Sterne is a novel entirely about itself, and thus can be seen as the prototype of the contemporary metafictional novel. Nevertheless, it is especially in the age of postmodernism that the novelists become considerably aware of the theoretical issues involved in constructing fictions and simultaneously of the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary text (Waugh, *Metafiction* 2).

Language: constructing reality inside and outside the world of novels

As the works of metafiction constantly draw attention to the process of their creation, it is clear that they do not attempt to hide the fact that what readers hold in their hands is a construct someone has written. They openly present their status of an artifice and emphasize the significant role language and textuality play in our construction of reality.

Metafiction openly questions how narrative conventions shape the picture of presented reality. All genres, both fictive and historical, are considerably limited by conventions and regularities, which form the specific literary expression. These conventions, however, set limits also to the "reality" they present. In fact, the world as it really is cannot be represented. "Reality" is always unavoidably filtered because fiction "does not mirror reality; nor does it reproduce it. It cannot. … Instead, fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 40).

The process of constructing and mediating the knowledge of the world through language in literary works is what metafiction relates to the process of how "reality" outside the world of novels gets constructed. The overtly discussed process of creation in metafictional works then provides a model for understanding the construction of the world outside novels. Metafiction explores and problematizes the relationship between the world of the fiction and the world outside it. In other words, it problematizes the relationship between life and fiction, and consequently undermines the notion of the

existence of a single objective truth and reality. The assumption that language reflects and mediates an objective world is no longer valid as "the observer always changes the observed" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 3). Metafiction is yet another means of challenging the traditionalist pursue of a single, ultimate truth, objectivity and reality, and of encouraging readers to scrutinize their internalized beliefs.

Shattered illusion of reality

Self-reflexivity undermines the "realness". As metafiction foregrounds the writing process and flaunts its artifice, readers are constantly reminded that what they are reading is a "made" thing and, as a result, they are prevented from forgetting the construction underlying reality. Laying bare the condition of artifice signals the overt refusal to provide an "illusion of reality", a typical device of traditional realist fiction. For what postmodernism asserts and postmodern literature exploits is the blurred boundary between what is resolutely fictive and undeniably real. Postmodernism does not operate in any clear-cut distinctions and this is why they treat the world of art and life as inseparable, and why the illusion of reality is purposefully shattered.

Apart from self-reflexive comments on how the story is told, the illusion of reality is destroyed also through narrator's direct addresses to readers. It is a feature typical of contemporary self-reflexive novels to directly address the reading audience and involve them actively in the process of creation. In the age of postmodernism, readers indeed cease to be passive consumers of the authoritative and authorial constructs. In contrast, they are initiated into the writing process and attributed a significant role of "imaginative co-creators" (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* i), who sometimes even have the power to decide the development of the story. As typical of paradoxical nature of postmodernism, the addressing of readers works in two ways. On one hand, they are demanded to participate in the fictional process, on the other hand, however, they are distanced by textual self-consciousness of the novels.

When narrators intrude upon their fiction, address their readers, openly declare the fictionality of their works and discuss the creation process with them, they metafictionally break the ontological frame, as they occupy an ontological world one

level superior to that of the world they create. Some "authors" even confront readers with the image of themselves in the act of producing their works, which establishes an even more elaborate hierarchy of ontological worlds: superior to what is written on the page lies the reality of writing itself; however, behind the reality of the writing lies yet another superior reality of the *act* of writing that has produced it (McHale 197-198). The process of frame-breaking and merging different ontological worlds inevitably results in breaking the illusion of reality.

Another type of a total metafictional/ontological frame-break occurring in postmodern fiction and destroying the illusion of reality takes place when the "author", or rather the "narrator's personae" (Hutcheon, *Narcissistic* 57), enters the fictional world and starts an eye-to-eye interview with his or her character - or is at least confronted with them. As McHale claims, this frame-breaking strategy is, in fact, so widespread that it almost amounts to a postmodernist cliché (213).

The metafictional intrusions of the "author" also renders the concept of "the death of the author" paradoxical. As Waugh argues, "the more the author appears, the less he or she exists. The more the author flaunts his or her presence in the novel, the more noticeable is his or her absence outside it" (*Metafiction*, 134). The act of "self-advertisement" paradoxically involves "self-effacement" (McHale 199).

In metafictional novels, "authorial" intrusions have a paradoxical effect. On one hand, they strengthen the connection between the real and the fictional; on the other hand, they display the ontological distinctness between them. With every such frame-break, the illusion of reality is shattered and readers realize that the "suspension of disbelief", which they succumb to while reading traditional literary works, is in postmodern metafictional novels suppressed (Waugh, *Metafiction* 33-36). The transition between the context of reality and that of fiction sets out to problematize the interpretation of the two and to provoke readers to scrutinize and re-evaluate their sense of reality - the main concerns of metafiction.

3.3.2. Metafiction: The French Lieutenant's Woman

When we read *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, we are constantly distracted from the main plot - that is from the tale of Sarah, Charles and Ernestina. The modern narrator makes numerous digressions from this story to supplement various information about the Victorian era, and thus to make the image of the nineteenth century the readers create as complex and as comprehensible as possible. Apart from the love trials the main protagonists are subjected to, we learn, for example, about Victorian social life, scientific breakthroughs, changes in the society, politics and the first waves of woman emancipation. All these facts about the nineteenth century heighten the believability of the story and the illusion of reality. Readers "suspense" the disbelief and read the story as if it was "real". However, a digression which ultimately destroys the illusion of reality occurs in chapter thirteen.

In chapter thirteen, readers' attention is drawn from the contents of the story to the circumstances of its creation. The narrator's voice guiding us through the story changes into the voice of a creator of the story, and this voice openly acknowledges that "This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind" (97). The illusion of reality is shattered as the status of the work as fiction is revealed and self-consciously drawn attention to. This is one of the main reasons why *The French Lieutenant's Woman* ranks among the works of historiographic *metafiction*. On the one hand, it tries to create a believable world full of historical details, on the other hand, it makes the readers aware of the fictionality of the text.

Under the influence of the new novel and the proclaimed exhaustion of literature, the postmodern approach toward writing changes. The plot ceases to be in the main focus, the "core" of writing. It is the writing itself that is ascribed importance and comes into the centre of attention. The process of creation is thematized and the techniques involved are laid bare. This changed approach toward literature is what *The French Lieutenant's Woman* reflects, starting in this famous metafictional chapter. The

previously unspoken artificiality of literary works is now fully voiced and the creative process becomes a subject of postmodern writing.

Once the artificiality of the novel is enunciated, the readers become a part of the creative process. In fact, they become the co-creators of the story. As the voice of the "author" says, he does not fully control his characters "any more than you [readers] control" (99). Readers themselves thus gain the status of fiction makers. One of the main issues metafiction assumes is the parallel between constructing fictions within the world of literary texts and the world outside it. Fictionalizing processes involved and self-consciously revealed in literature are claimed not to be dissimilar to the fictionalizing processes which are part of our life in the real world. In other words, the theory of metafiction suggests that the world outside the literary text may as well be fictional.

As we can read in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: "Fiction is woven into all" (99). The traditional distinction between the real and the imagery is, in the era of postmodernism, no longer tenable. Any attempts to dismiss such claim and to live within the strictly separated worlds are refuted with contempt. As the voice of the creator says, everyone creates fiction of their lives; everyone transforms their own past and the real reality with regard to their current needs, feelings or whims. In respect to the past, readers "dress it up", "gild it or blacken it, censor it … fictionalize it" (99). The boundary between reality and fiction blurs, and metafiction suggests that it is not only a novelist, but also the reader who creates fictions.

The voice of the creator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* foregrounds and lays bare the fictionality and the process of creation of his book. He also implies that readers are novelists themselves, using the same techniques while creating a book of their own lives, their own autobiography. Nevertheless, the creation process outside the literary world does not involve only the past, but also the future of the readers. As it is asserted, we are all novelists, who "have a habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves" (327).

The fact that we all tend to make and imagine our future is pointed out in chapter fifty-five where the narrator's personae, the "author", breaks the ontological frame, enters the fictional world of his characters and contemplates on how to continue with his story and what future to create for his characters. Once again, then, the worlds of the real and the fictitious overlap and another parallel between constructing fictions and the reality of the world outside literary texts is made.

It is obvious that the metafictional thematization of the process of creation inevitably involves the thematization of the "creator" during the process of the creating activity. To introduce the "author" into the fiction, he needs to break the ontological frame between reality, or rather a reality superior to the one of his creation, and fiction. Such frame-breaking is a solely metafictional gesture.

In chapter thirteen, the "author's" voice intrudes upon his world to declare its fictionality and, at the same time, to compare the construction of fiction to the construction of "reality". In chapter fifty five, the "author" breaks into his world and discusses the possibilities of further developments of the story and the future of his characters. He describes novelists' strategies involved in the decision-making about the continuation of their works, and compares them to "fight-fixing" (390). As he considers his choices, he comes to the conclusion that the best decision would be to come with two versions of the story finale, and thus to leave the "fight-fixing" to the readers. In chapter sixty one, the "author" enters the fictional world as a character and "arranges" the switch from one ending to another by taking his watch and making "a small adjustment to the time" (441).

Introducing the "author" into the fiction leads to the postmodern concept of "the death of the author". As Waugh claims, metafiction shows that this concept is paradoxical, because "the more the author appears, the less he or she exists" (*Metafiction* 134). Flaunting and advertising the "author's" presence thus inevitably necessitates his absence in the world outside the text. This is yet another instance of metafiction problematizing the traditional strictly clear-cut fact/fiction boundaries.

The French Lieutenant's Woman reveals the process of creation and self-consciously draws attention to its fictionality. Readers are present to the creative activity which is no longer hidden, but, in contrast, drawn attention to. They are, in fact, made the co-creators who can participate on the development of the story. The flaunted fictionalization of literary works is compared to the fictionalization of reality. The strategy of metafiction thus once again activates the readers and provokes them to re-consider their ideas on the status of the real and the imagery as well as on how we construct fiction and reality.

CONCLUSION

The thesis has focused on the discussion of the main postmodern themes and strategies and on their depiction and analysis in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles's masterpiece from the end of the 1960s decade, in which the calls for a literary innovation that would reflect the changes in the worldview and change the familiar paths were ever more insistent. The deployment of these "contemporary" devices within the story that is set in the Victorian England intentionally foregrounds its split from the traditional realist mode of writing. Yet, in concord with the postmodern philosophy, the break from the old forms is not complete. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* both challenges the conventional constituents of fiction, yet, it simultaneously installs what it challenges by overtly showing the possibilities of the continuation of the "old" within the "new".

The postmodern themes and strategies *The French Lieutenant's Woman* displays in such abundance categorizes this novel among the genre of historiographic metafiction which crosses the boundaries between the worlds traditional historical fiction kept isolated. Just like the worlds of the present and the past; the fiction and the reality; the elitist and the popular; the mockery and the reverence and the continuity and the change blend in the novel, so do blend the postmodern themes and strategies. They are all interconnected, one necessarily evoking the other.

Discussing intertextuality necessarily stimulates questions about the author and his or her originality; about opening the present to the past; about the status of both fiction and history as human constructs and, consequently, about the reliability of historical records; intertextuality also provokes considering the role of the reader, his activity and participation in the meaning-making process; about the meanings changing with re-contextualization, and thus about the parody of texts, and the list could go on. Parody is, in fact, a strategy which permeates all the themes and strategies in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Novels of historiographic metafiction, a typical genre of postmodern literature, are always double-voiced, installing, yet subverting the tradition; mocking, yet enshrining its sources.

It is obvious that the *French Lieutenant's Woman* opens countless stimulation for its readers and, there is no doubt, that the playful postmodern re-working of the great Victorian tradition will keep the story of Charles, Sarah and Ernestina open to the readers' worlds and hearts.

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