AMBIDEXTROUS NARRATIVES
- A Study of Dialogism and Polyphony in
The French Lieutenant's Woman

Thesis

Morten Pedersen

19971707

Supervisor: Aidan Day

Institute for Language, Literature & Culture

Department of English

1 October 2004

Ambidextrous Narratives

Akkorden er intet harmonisk nydelsesmiddel, men er polyfoni i sig selv, og de toner der danner den, er stemmer. Men jeg hævder: de er dette desto mere, og akkordens polyfoniske karakter er desto mere udtalt, jo mere dissonantisk den er.

(THOMAS MANN, *Doktor Faustus*)

'For those who lack the ability to question their beliefs.'

(DJANGO BATES, The loneliness of being right)

Table of Contents

Introduction

> The double voice of postmodern fiction presents a challenge because it requires that we question the way we read and interpret not only postmodern literature but also literature as a whole.[1]

So. This thesis will undertake a close reading of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) by John Fowles (1926-) from a Bakhtinian perspective against a backdrop of poststructuralist theory. The intention of this approach is twofold and serves: 1) to create an environment in which Bakhtinian formulations may be embedded in a poststructuralist vocabulary in a way that makes it possible for each theoretical discourse to highlight and explore key features in the other; and 2) to deliver a close reading of Fowles's novel that reveals the complex operations of dialogism and polyphony in connection with intertextuality, the orchestration of narrative, the formal evolution of the novel genre and the development of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s major themes and motifs.

As should hopefully be clear by the end of this study, dialogism and polyphony function as deconstructive forces in the novel. Double-voiced discourse foregrounds the constructedness of narrative and it is precisely in the construction of his narrative the author's self-conscious use of the double voice can be seen to unsettle not only the Victorian novel but also postmodernist fiction. At the same time, the dialogic interplay between different modes of writing; that is, the literary conventions of the Victorian period and those of the postmodern period, conspire to deprive the Author of any finalising power.

In Fowles's construction of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, parody is the most significant mode of double-voiced discourse. Parody is not only directed at the Victorian novel but also at postmodernism, including the Author's own postmodern position, and perhaps even at the relationship between reader and text; yet, for all the double-voiced critique the novel offers, its point of view remains a distinctly postmodern one.

In this connection, the many intertextual references and the quotations from other writers used as epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter, as well as inside the text, become an uncontrollable force that challenges the author/narrator's discourse, because they work, not just in accordance with the authorial intention – to underpin and elaborate key issues in each chapter – but remain double-voiced, resist appropriation by the author and thus form dissenting voices within the narrative.

By virtue of its double-voicedness, all levels in the novel – narrative, thematic, fictional – are brought into dialogic play, so that e.g. the quest for existential authenticity and freedom is mirrored in the polyphonic structure.
Dialogism, then, functions as Fowles's primary means of critically engaging both the Victorian and postmodern periods.

In this thesis, I will not involve myself to any significant degree with the vast literature that has been, and is still being, written on John Fowles, although I have, of course, made myself

familiar with a substantial section of it in the course of my work. The reason for this lack of involvement is not that I find it without value. Indeed, I would not have been able to undertake the work at hand without having acquainted myself with the detailed insights into a great many aspects of Fowles's *oeuvre* provided by critics such as Katherine Tarbox, James Acheson, Linda Hutcheon, Daniel Punday and Susana Onega. Yet, the only critics to seriously engage Fowles from a perspective that resembles my own are Frederick M. Holmes and Deborah Bowen. Holmes's article 'History, Fiction, and the Dialogic Imagination: John Fowles's *A Maggot*'[2] proves that there is much to be gained from a dialogic study of his fiction, but at the same time reveals that we have, thus far, only scratched the surface of Fowles's "dialogic imagination". In 'The Riddler Riddled: Reading the Epigraphs in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*', Bowen develops the idea that Fowles's intertexts work not only in accordance with but also against authorial intentions in a very different direction.[3] The reason, then, is rather that whereas existing criticism offers invaluable studies of a wide range of issue from ethics, existentialism and evolution to the role of the magus, Marxism and metafiction in Fowles's novels, it leaves matters of dialogism and polyphony virtually unexplored. Furthermore, I find going back to the original texts of Bakhtin and Fowles, rather than invoking a host of critics, conducive in establishing my own point of view, my own voice.

Thus by choosing to approach *The French Lieutenant's Woman* from the, perhaps rather oblique, angle of Bakhtinian thought set against a backdrop of poststructuralist theory, it has proved necessary to leave aside most of the established criticism. Instead, I will give an introduction into the central concepts in Bakhtin's work on dialogism and polyphony, as well as those poststructuralist theories of language that provide their "dialogising background"; and only draw upon the established criticism on Fowles where it directly informs the argument made in this thesis.

This approach will necessarily leave unaddressed a number of aspects that have previously been regarded as essential to the understanding of Fowles's fiction, but in doing so I hope to uncover other layers of meaning and dialogic relationships that will prove equally interesting and important.

Two of the central notions in operation in this thesis are those of "difference" and "otherness", and it is my hope that the reading of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* undertaken here will be, indeed, both distinctly *different* from and *other* than previous studies of the novel; yet, all the while, preserve their analytical integrity.

On the choice of theory

In recent years, two distinct trains of thought have become unavoidable presences in the critical community: the theoretical work of poststructuralist thinkers like de Man, Deleuze, Barthes and perhaps most significantly, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), and the diverse writings of the Russian literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) on dialogism, polyphony, carnival and the chronotope. Some notable similarities immediately assert themselves between these "schools" of thought, although I use the word "school" reluctantly, since it implies a much more uniform structure than it is viable to assume in a context of such diversity as poststructuralism, which precisely seeks to uncover the inconsistencies and instability of assumptions of structure, origin and presence; and the unorthodox, yet hugely inspirational, writings of Bakhtin.

Poststructuralism sets itself against the reductive analytical practises of structuralist methodology, while Bakhtin polemically engages the literary criticism of the Russian formalists. Both seek to insert complexity in the heart of simplicity, difference in the heart of similarity; both open up, what Paul de Man calls 'vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration';[4] both point to the unstable and contradictory nature of language, to the 'unpindownability'[5] of meaning, to the hybridity of linguistic constructions; both are inherently political in their scope and implications; both set out to question and unsettle ideological assumptions and presumptions that have hitherto remained unquestioned and, even, unquestionable and both resist the isolated analysis of literary language outside its context. And yet, for all these similarities, it is important not to 'use resemblance as a way to disguise differences' (de Man, Semiology: 16) for some crucial differences remain that will need examination. Where poststructuralist theory offers a critique and dismantling of traditional logocentric assumptions of the privilege of presence over absence, speech over writing, origin over derivation and a stable centre that organises structure,[6] Bakhtin bases his entire conception of language on the 'social word' of 'the speaking subject' – albeit a subject who is not single and unitary but plural and contradictory, a subject who is defined in and by discourse;[7] and thus firmly roots his theories within a framework of presence, centre and origin.

It would lie beyond my powers of abstraction to reconcile Bakhtinian and poststructuralist views on literature and language within the scope of this study nor is this my objective. Indeed, the exploration of dialogism and polyphony in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the primary concern of the thesis, but the investigation will be undertaken with an awareness of poststructuralist or deconstructive theory.

My intention, then, is to attempt the very thing Bakhtin claims is at work in the polyphonic novel; that is, to bring 'together ideas and worldviews, which in real life' are 'estranged and deaf to one another', and '[force] them to quarrel' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 91), in the hope of uncovering previously unseen constructions of meaning, the orchestration of narrative as well as dialogic relations among themes, voices and intertexts in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In contrast to

formalist or structuralist approaches to literature, neither poststructuralist nor dialogic modes of criticism constitute theoretical approaches that can be applied to a literary text from the outside. The task of the dialogist, if such a one is conceivable, or the deconstructionist is to examine how dialogic relationships establish themselves among various, often contradictory and conflicting, positions of the text, and how these relations assert themselves in the production of discourse; or to reveal the ways in which the text deconstructs itself.[8]

Chapter I: Theory and methodology

In Bakhtin's vocabulary, the concepts of polyphony, dialogism and heteroglossia are closely intertwined and difficult to discuss in separation but for the sake of clarity I will try to isolate specific features of each in turn. In brief, heteroglossia means differentiated speech. It may be seen as the wider term which describes the social reality of a living everyday discourse composed of multiple stratifications of language into social-languages, whereas dialogism describes the way the languages of heteroglossia interact and polyphony relates to the aesthetic organisation, or orchestration, of dialogised heteroglossia in a narrative work of art. Language in Bakhtin's conception is 'a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning'. [9] In his discussion of language, he takes it 'not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 271). This insistence on treating language not as a system but as a concrete social phenomenon sets Bakhtin apart from structuralist and poststructuralist linguistics, which, based on the widely influential linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, study the system of language (*langue*) rather than any particular occurrence of language (*parole*).[10] On the other hand, if heteroglossia describes languages and dialogism describes a relation among languages then this relational aspect of dialogism may be linked with the linguistics of Saussure and treat language as a system of difference on the level of the *parole*. In the way Bakhtin describes it, though his emphasis is on language as social occurrences, dialogism seems to lend itself both to the language system and to individual occurrences of language and thus to be something that shapes itself around and in between these two categories of language. Language is always tension-filled, always unsettled and unsettling. 'The word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 284). In this respect, dialogism seems, within the territory of the *parole*, to some extent to occupy much the same space as Derridean *différance*[11] within the context of *langue*. Thus dialogism may be influential in the deconstruction of a literary text.

Dialogism and heteroglossia, or double-voiced discourse, may enter the novel in a number of ways: through inserted genres, parody, stylisation, characters' discourse and *skaz*.[12] According to Bakhtin, any instance of

> heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever the forms for its incorporation), is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they – as it were – know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other (Bakhtin, Discourse 324).

Obviously, this also relates to intertextuality, since all instances of texts incorporated into the context of another occur in a refracted form and consequently become double-voiced in the process. The dialogic nature of intertextuality is a complex issue that is particularly relevant in a discussion of a postmodernist fiction like *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, which, so to speak, wears its intertextuality on its sleeve.

To fully appreciate the implications of the concepts of dialogism and polyphony in Bakhtin's writing, one must take a detailed look at his two most extensive works on the subject. Bakhtin's 1929 study *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*, published in a revised and expanded edition as *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* in 1963, deals explicitly with the idea of polyphony and the polyphonic novel, whereas the long essay[13] 'Discourse in the Novel' from 1934-35 discusses dialogism in great detail. The two terms polyphony and dialogism seem to be more or less, though not completely, synonymous to Bakhtin. Both terms refer to double-voicedness but where dialogism is used both in a novelistic and a linguistic sense, referring both to 'particular instances of language, perceptible in novels and popular speech' and a 'defining quality of language itself, and its most fundamental sense-making capacities' (Vice: 45); polyphony 'refers precisely to the construction of the voices of characters and narrator in the novel' (Vice: 112). Bakhtin's development of his theory on dialogism undergoes a shift of emphasis from a primary interest in polyphony in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* to one primarily in dialogism in 'Discourse in the Novel'. Without becoming completely synonymous, dialogism takes on most of the attributes hitherto ascribed to polyphony, making dialogism the priviliged term in Bakhtin's vocabulary and the key term to unlocking his diffuse and, at times contradictory, theories. In the process of this shift, Bakhtin also changes his attitude as to which works of art fall under the category of polyphony. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, he draws a sharp distinction between so-called 'monologic' works, works that, to put it simplistically, are structured from a single authorial point of view that permeates their every aspect, and works of the polyphonic kind that are '*multi-accented* and contradictory in [their] values' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 15). So exclusive is Bakhtin's distinction that the polyphonic novel becomes almost synonymous with Dostoevsky's novel. He celebrates Dostoevsky for his invention of the polyphonic novel and almost seems to fault other authors for writing 'monologically'.[14] In the transition from polyphony to dialogism, this exclusive position shifts to a more inclusive one, allowing more works polyphonic status. In order to investigate this transition, let me first map out some fundamental features of the polyphonic novel and how these may relate to and take on a different perspective in connection with postmodern writing.

The polyphonic novel

Polyphony in the novel means the existence on the same level of a '*plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices* […] a *plurality*

of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 6). According to Bakhtin, 'not a single element in the [polyphonic] work is structured from the point of view of a nonparticipating "third person"' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 18). The polyphonic novel excludes the position of an omniscient third person narrator, because this position subsumes any individual free voice and thus leaves no room on the level of the author/narrator for a character who speaks up for himself with equal rights. Thus by introducing a third person narrator, or an authorial voice, polyphony is monologised, and in effect neutralised. Instead, the polyphonic novel combines a 'plurality of equally authoritative ideological positions and an extreme heterogeneity of material' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 18).

In the polyphonic novel, characters are not created in the conventional (monologic) sense as a 'character's objectified image'. Instead they are present '*not only* [as] *objects of authorial discourse but also subject of their own directly signifying discourse*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 7). Accordingly, a character's self-consciousness is the all-important feature in the creation of the polyphonic novel for Bakhtin. The hero only 'interests Dostoevsky as a *particular point of view on the world and on oneself*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 47). 'What must be discovered and characterized' in Dostoevsky's novel 'is not the specific existence of the hero, not his fixed image, but the *sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness,* ultimately *the hero's final word on himself and on his world*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 48). Self-consciousness thus becomes the '*artistic dominant*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 50) of the work of fiction. All features of the character are thrust in to his own 'field of vision' and the 'author retains for himself, that is, for his exclusive field of vision, not a single definition, not a single trait, not the smallest feature of the hero'. Thereby, 'all the concrete features of the hero, while remaining fundamen-tally unchanged in content, are transferred from one plane of representation to another, and thus acquire a completely different artistic significance' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 48). This process of structuring the polyphonic novel on the basis of the self-conscious voices of characters presupposes a new '*integral* authorial position' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 58). A new position that takes the form of 'a *fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position,* one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and the indeterminacy of the hero' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 63), and it is this emphasis on the authorial position, on the unsettled nature of discourse itself and on self-consciousness that makes the concept of novelistic polyphony particularly interesting in connection with much postmodernist literature and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in particular.

Polyphony in Fowles's novel is distinctly other than that of, say, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) or Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1974) where the blending of the disturbing "fury" of Benjy's narrative with that of other members of the Compson family – along with the lack of diacritical marks that engenders a proliferation of possible semantic units – creates a jarring dissonance between the individual voices in the former; and the sheer

overabundance of voices in the latter makes it impossible to retain a monologic structure. At first glance, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* would even seem to fall outside Bakhtin's description of the polyphonic novel. It employs an intrusive authorial third person narrator and clearly does not place characters and narrator on the same level, nor allows them to speak on an equal footing. On closer inspection, however, Fowles's fiction is perhaps polyphonic in a different way. If Dostoevsky achieves polyphony by placing the self-consciousness of his characters on a different plane than his predecessors, then, it might be argued, Fowles and other postmodernist authors achieve the same by another repositioning of self-consciousness; namely, on the level of fiction itself. Bakhtin says that

> [s]elf-consciousness, as the artistic dominant in the construction of the hero's image, is by itself sufficient to break down the monologic unity of the artistic world – but only on the condition that the hero, as self-consciousness, is really represented and not merely expressed, that is, does not fuse with the author, does not become the mouth-piece for his voice; only on condition, consequently, that accents of the hero's self-consciousness are really objectified and that the work itself observes a distance between the hero and the author (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 51).

From a postmodernist point of view, one might rephrase Bakhtin in the following way: *fictional self-consciousness*, as the artistic dominant in *the construction of the image of a fiction*, is by itself sufficient to break down the monologic unity of the artistic world – but only on the condition that the *fiction*, as self-consciousness, is really represented and not merely expressed. Postmodernist fictions tend to do precisely this; that is, create fictions about the fictitiousness of fiction, a fiction that employs narrative strategies that foreground the process of its own construction. Postmodernist fiction holds a refracting mirror up to itself and thereby achieves fictional self-consciousness on a structural level through a kind of defamiliarisation process and begins to interact dialogically not only with itself but with literature as a whole.[15] Furthermore, fictional self-consciousness in the self-reflexive mode dialogically questions, polemicises, mimics, opposes and subverts language in order to investigate its not only differential but also deferential nature, its *différance*. In this foregrounding of its metafictional aspects the postmodernist novel is always double-voiced, always dialogically engaged with several contexts, both fictional and non-fictional, at once.

Dialogism

> Dialogic relationships are reducible neither to logical relationships nor to relationships oriented semantically toward their referential object, relationships *in and of themselves* devoid of any dialogic element. They must clothe themselves in discourse, become utterances, become the positions of various subjects expressed in discourse, in order that dialogic relationships might arise among them (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 183).

Dialogic relationships, then, seem to belong inescapably to the sphere of the *parole*, because they exist on the border of and in the space between utterances, in '*discourse*, that is, language in its concrete living totality' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 181). On the other hand, Bakhtin insists

that dialogism is 'an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 40). If this is the case, it is difficult to see how dialogism might belong exclusively to the domain of concrete practises of language without being part of the system of language. In *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, Ken Hirschkop argues that the critical debate over the meaning of dialogism stems from Bakhtin's own ambiguous use of the word 'whether it is a relation among utterances or styles, or whether it is a relation between any two intentions or an "authorial" and a "heroic" one' and suggests a third possibility, that dialogism means 'the intersection of two or more "contexts" in an utterance; that is, the interaction of the social and historical contexts of heteroglossia'.[16] Perhaps the answer is that dialogic relationships belong to neither and all at the same time and that Bakhtin is simply presenting a comprehensive theory of language and the novel which is capable of accounting for all these inter-semantic relationships within the novel.

Bakhtin never gives a comprehensive definition of the polyphonic novel in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, but the overall impression of its formal characteristics seems to come close to the following definition of the novel in general in 'Discourse in the Novel'

> The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. In it the investigator is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls […] the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its "languages". […] The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized (Bakhtin, Discourse 261, 262).

Here it is evident that Bakhtin has transferred most of the characteristics hitherto reserved for the polyphonic novel on to the novel genre on a broader scale; but it is equally evident that a shift of emphasis has occurred in the transition from polyphony to dialogism. Bakhtin has moved on from a primary concern with the formal construction of the polyphonic novel to an interest in discourse, language diversity and heteroglossia.

The reality of heteroglossia is the context from and into which the novel is created, and by virtue of its heterogeneous form, the novel according to Bakhtin is the only genre that can successfully incorporate heteroglossia into its structure and thus create a fundamentally double-voiced environment for the unfolding of its narrative. Dialogism brings out the conflict, the heterogeneity, the tensions and inconsistencies of individual voices and social languages wherever they occur in the territory of the novel and outside its boundaries.

This may be seen, for instance, in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) where the distinctive social-language spoken by Alex's gang forms a significant component in the gang's violent subversion of societal restraints, or in the highly idiosyncratic discourse of the narrator in Nick Cave's *And the Ass Saw the Angel* (1990).

One of the clearest examples of the interrelationship between heteroglossia, polyphony and dialogism in a postmodern context, however, is found in the novel *Trainspotting* (1994) by

Irvine Welsh. The entire novel is written in a Scots dialect, which forces the reader to reconsider the standard of written English because standard English, by virtue of the reader's knowledge of conventional spelling and pronunciation, shines through, though heavily inflected by the Scots dialect. This points to the stratification of a single national language into regional languages and its further stratification into a welter of different sociolects, since Renton and the rest of the Skag Boys all use the "specialised" language of drug addicts and social outcasts. Finally, the novel's polyphonic structure is clearly marked by the absence of any unifying point-of-view into which place steps a series of individualised first person narrators who are differentiated and can be identified only by the linguistic idiosyncrasies in their voices. All these layers, narrative, structural and linguistic, are dialogically interrelated and can only be viewed and understood in relation to one another. Thus all aspects of the novel are mutually illuminated by the dialogic relationships that exist among them.[17]

Hybridity: stylisation and parody

In both *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin creates a virtual encyclopedia of the several different forms double-voicing may take in the novel. In the following, I will briefly outline the most important forms of dialogic discourse the in novel: stylization, parody and hybridisation. In our context of a study of dialogism in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, parody is the most important and will be subject to the most consideration. The treatment of parody in a postmodern context is a highly complex issue and will necessarily have to be dealt with in more detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis, but I find it essential to establish a foundation before moving on to an in-depth study of Fowles's use of parody. Localised occurrences of double-voiced discourse such as 'internal polemic', 'the word with a sideward glance' and 'the word with a loophole' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 195, 196, 233) etc. will be addressed when they are needed in the analysis of Fowles's novel.

Bakhtin applies the term *hybridity* to any 'mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance' that are 'separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor (Bakhtin, Discourse: 358). Thus hybridity is used as an overall term that incorporates a variety of different types of 'double-voiced', 'double-accented' and 'double-languaged' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 360) discourse, including stylisation and parody.

'Every authentic stylization', according to Bakhtin, 'is an artistic represent-ation of another's language. Two individualized linguistic consciousnesses must be present in it: the one that *represents* (that is, the linguistic consciousness of the stylizer) and the one that is *represented* which is stylized' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 362). Stylisation presupposes a recognisable style, which can be imitated and assimilated into another context. In this process the 'stylizer uses another's discourse precisely as other, and in doing so casts a slight shadow of objectification over it' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 189). This slight objectification also happens to the various Victorian

quotations used as epigraphs in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

In Bakhtin's conception, parody in contrast to stylisation entails a distancing from the represented style but not a ridiculing or distorting one. Parody, 'is an intentional dialogized hybrid. Within it, languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another'.[18] In it, an earlier discourse is not only represented. No, 'a semantic position' is introduced into that discourse 'that is directly opposed to the original one'. As a consequence, 'the voices are not only isolated from one another' they 'are also hostilely opposed' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 193); 'they depict a real world of objects not by using the represented language as a productive point of view, but rather by using it as an exposé to destroy the represented language' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 364).

This conception of parody as something that always holds an antagonistic position to its object is difficult to retain in a discussion of postmodern art. The postmodern use of parody is not always hostile and subversive in relation to the object of representation, but often uses the earlier text as a productive point of origin. In *A Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon outlines a different strategy for the use of parody in the postmodern work of art. To her, parody 'is a form of imitation, but imitation characterised by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text.' It is 'repetition with a critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity'.[19] In the postmodern parody, the parodied text is not necessarily an object of ridicule or derision so much as the context against which and often into which the postmodern text may construct itself. Thus the earlier text is re-functioned and re-activated in a different context without a clear-cut line of demarcation between the two. The postmodern form of parody 'does not always permit one of the texts to fare any better or worse than the other. It is the fact that they *differ* that this parody emphasizes and, indeed, dramatizes' (Hutcheon, *Parody*: 31). In this way the postmodern parody emphasises certain aspects of Bakhtin's conception of the genre, namely parody as 'an intentional dialogized hybrid' within which 'languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another' (Bakhtin, Prehistory: 76). Postmodern parody dialogically plays off languages against languages, styles against styles, texts against contexts in a way that casts all preconceived notions of hierarchies of originality, tradition and convention into doubt. Finally, it emphasises the heterogeneous and contradictory nature of the literary text since, in Bakhtin's words, 'to introduce a parodic and polemical element into the narration is to make it more multi-voiced, more interruption-prone, no longer gravitating toward itself or its referential object' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 226).

Everything that seemed simple became complex and multi-structured

When deconstruction, or what we identify here under the wider term of poststructuralism, arrived on the critical scene in the late nineteen-sixties, it marked the beginning of a colossal reorientation of thought in critical communities throughout the world. Everything that seemed relatively

simple and unproblematic under the influence of structuralist theories of language now became suspect and laden with contradiction. The stable binary opposite favoured by structuralist critics in their analyses of cultural phenomena from public lavatories and bicycles to literature and art as a vantage point from which to comprehend the systems governing these phenomena was overthrown by poststructuralists, who argued that it was impossible to view the world in terms of binary opposites and that the binary opposite was, in fact, no opposition at all, but rather a hidden hierarchy in which the ideologically favoured term received a priviliged position. The poststructuralist shift of emphasis from structure to dissolution of structure is revealed in the titles of some of their writings such as *Difference and Repetition* by Gilles Deleuze or Jacques Derrida's *Dissemination* and *Writing and Difference*, which all point to the key issues at stake in poststructuralist theory; that is, the valorisation of writing over speech, language's ability to disseminate multiple meanings and the irreducibility of differences. According to Lois Tyson, '[t]here are generally two main purposes in deconstructing a literary text […] (1) to reveal the text's "undecidability" and/or (2) to reveal the complex operations of the ideologies of which the text is constructed' (Tyson: 252). In the present study of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the second of these purposes is the most useful, particularly in relation to Bakhtin's theories of the social word of dialogism, as I seek to explore the processes of Fowles's revision of the Victorian period in the novel and how dialogic relationships within the text reflect, and to some degree determine, the outcome of this revision. Indeed, difference and otherness, multiplicity and fragmentarity can be identified as major themes within the narrative, or *narratives*, of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Not only does the novel make use of these categories in the construction of its narratives but *narration itself* is flagrantly thematised through a dialogic interplay between Author, narrator, intertexts and reader that simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the conventions of historiography, literature, the act of writing and reading and the fictional world created in the novel.

This is not the place for any prolonged discussion of the origins of post-structuralism, but in preparation for the analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* we do need to give a brief account of structuralist and poststructuralist conceptions of language and ideology and to begin to understand the basic operations of deconstructive analysis.

Difference

Structuralist criticism operates on basic assumptions about the nature of the linguistic sign and the non-referentiality of language put forward by Saussure along with his practise of analysing language synchronically; that is, in a frozen cross-section outside context, and as a language system rather than actual occurrences of language.[20] From these origins, structuralist theories branched out to incorporate a broad spectrum of social sciences. These origins also initiate the practise of viewing the world in terms of binary opposites and it is perhaps that which tends

to make structuralist analyses limited in their accounts of the world. By treating everything in terms of binaries, they are actually 'inventing […] similarity, generating it with the model of analysis, or actively *saming* things that are in themselves neither similar nor different' (Currie, *Dif.* 16), rather than discovering hidden structures of difference.

It is in this use of reductive analytical strategies that poststructuralism intervenes and where it is possible to identify an analogue to Bakhtin's attack on stylistics 'understood in the spirit of Saussure' where 'stylistics is transformed into a curious kind of linguistics' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 264) and his advocation of a new line of dialogic criticism that is better fitted to 'deal with the life and behaviour of discourse in a contradictory and multi-languaged world' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 275).

The binary opposition, which in structuralist terms governs all aspects of communication and social life, is replaced by a dynamic, complex, multi-structured and contradictory set of vacillating differences. 'After structuralism there is a new interest in borderline territory, in margins, in zones of contestation between signs that defy the oppositional logic of the binary opposition' (Currie, *Dif.* 48). The current appreciation of Bakhtin, which has been growing alongside that of poststructuralism,[21] can be seen in connection with this interest in margins and borderline territory, since he precisely emphasises the space between, the zones of intersection between, multiple contexts.

The binary opposition occupies a central position in the poststructuralist attack on structuralism, as one of the favourite strategies employed in unsettling structuralist theories is to invert the binary opposition in order to reveal its structure and thus show that the binary opposite is no opposition at all but an ideologically saturated hierarchy.[22] At the same time, the inversion of the binary opposition reveals that it in fact glosses over the infinitude of possible meanings that every word disseminates. One often-used example is the binary opposition of "day" and "night", which if only understood in opposition to one another leaves out several intermediary stages like "dusk" and "dawn". This simultaneously hides the fact that "day" is ideologically priviliged over "night", because "day" prompts associations like light, whiteness, knowledge, innocence, reason and kindness; whereas "night" is associated with darkness, blackness, ignorance, cruelty, madness and evil (Currie, *Dif.* 2, 48). This set of associations may be further linked with the spirit of Western Enlightenment philosophy and its attempt to dispel the supposed ignorance and superstition of the so-called Dark Ages. Having identified the ideological nature of the day/night opposition, we can move on to invert the pair and establish, if not how "night" may be regarded as priviliged over "day", then at least how it is impossible to pinpoint the priviliged concept; to establish the undecidability of meaning. This might be done, for instance by pointing out that some of the words that are habitually associated positively with day such as "whiteness" are also often also associated with death and decay,[23] or that the English language comprises idiomatic expressions such as "the *cruel light* of day" and "the

sun *beating* down on him". The point being that in pursuing meaning we are often led to an impasse because language continually disseminates multiple meanings*,* and that language is fundamentally ideological. In this way, language defers meaning to the point where Derrida is able to claim that language is not only non-referential but in fact deferential, since the sign does not consist of an inseparable unity of signifier and signified but on the contrary of infinite rows of signifiers. 'There is no getting beyond language, beyond the play of signifiers, because we exist – we think, we see, we feel – within the language into which we were born' (Tyson 246). This is what is entailed in Derrida's concept of *différance,* which he coins from the French words meaning 'to differ' and 'to defer' in order to identify a state which is always in transition, always in play (Derrida, *Dif.* 53-56). It goes without saying that this conception of language as constituted by *différance* cannot leave out human identity. In *Critical Theory Today*, Lois Tyson summarises the central aspects of deconstruction in the following way:

> For deconstruction […] language is the ground of being, but that ground of being is *not* out of play: it is, itself, as dynamic, evolving, problematical, and ideologically saturated as the world-views it produces. For this reason, there is no center to our understanding of existence. There are, instead, an infinite number of vantage points from which to view it, and each of these vantage points has a language of its own, which deconstruction calls its *discourse*. (Tyson: 249)

It is precisely in this claim that human beings are constituted by discourse that poststructuralist theory is simultaneously at its closest and its most to distant to Bakhtin. For in Bakhtin's conception the world *does* have a centre from which it orients itself in relation to its other. But the centre for Bakhtin is not logocentric 'illusion of presence' it is 'a *relative* rather than an absolute term […] one with no claim to absolute privilege, least of all one with transcendent ambitions'.[24] Thus identity is at the centre of discourse rather than being constituted by discourse. Bakhtin roots his theory of language in the speaking subject rather than in abstract grammatical categories and conceives existence and identity in terms of relations of one body to its other. A thing can only be understood against its background because '"opposition pure and simple necessarily leads to chaos and cannot serve as the basis of a system. True differentiation presupposes a simultaneous resemblance and difference"'.[25] At the same time, literary polyphony may be said to be a way of dramatising precisely an ex-centric conception of existence like the one espoused by the poststructuralists, by distributing discourse among a plurality of heterogeneous, conflicting voices that in turn produce multiple world views.

The all-important difference between Bakhtin and poststructuralism is that in Bakhtin meaning and reference are still possible, albeit never in any finalised or settled way, whereas in poststructuralist thought it is not. One might even argue that a true differentiation between Bakhtin and poststructuralism precisely presupposes a simultaneous resemblance and difference and that Bakhtin and the poststructuralists stand on opposite sides of Fowles contention in *Daniel Martin* (1977) that 'the word is the most imprecise of signs. Only a science-obsessed age could fail to comprehend that this is its great virtue, not its defect'.[26]

It may be virtually impossible to reconcile these views of language and identity, but for all this, poststructuralist and Bakhtinian thought, in my view, still benefit from being brought together not as a whole but in relation to one another with one working as the "dialogising background" for the other. Difference, then, no matter how it is conceived, is still the central aspect in the creation of meaning.

Having thus introduced the main theoretical concepts of both Bakhtinian and poststructuralist thought and intimated how these may be relevant in connection with postmodernist fiction, we can now move on to the analysis of the function of dialogism and polyphony in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* that is the central concern of this study. We begin by situating Fowles's novel within the context of postmodernist literature and establishing how the construction of this type of fiction may be seen as an inherently dialogic endeavour.

Chapter II: *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a postmodernist fiction

Self-consciousness, multi-voicedness and the tendency to create hybrids of cultural materials from a variety of different periods, cultural circles and social spheres are often foregrounded as constitutive elements in postmodernist fiction. These are, of course, also obvious features of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and thus the first move in this study must be to regard the novel's tendency towards polyphony and hybridity and its self-conscious use of double-voiced discourse in relation to the literary context of which it is part.

In the article 'The Literature of Replenishment' published in *Atlantic Monthly* in 1980 as a sequel to his 1967 article 'The Literature of Exhaustion', the American novelist John Barth includes Fowles on a list of authors, ranging from Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut and Barth himself over Samuel Beckett and Jorge Luis Borges to Gabriel Garcia Marques and Italo Calvino, who may be identified under the label 'the postmodernists'.[27] This labelling, of course, invites a discussion of what is meant by the term "postmodernist", how it may be applicable to a group of writers of such diversity as the ones mentioned above and, in particular in the present context, how it may be a suitable epithet to John Fowles and a novel like *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Issues of the name and nature of postmodernism have caused a great deal of intellectual controversy over the last three decades, and questions that seek to elucidate the matter tend to lead into decidedly murky waters. What constitutes postmodernism? How may we define it? What is its relation to modernism? Some see postmodernism as a reaction against modernism; others as an extension of the 'movement toward sophistication and mannerism, towards introversion, technical display, internal self-scepticism' that according to Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane 'has often been taken as a common base for a definition of Modernism'.[28] Brian McHale identifies the relation between modernism and postmodernism in terms of a 'shift of dominant from problems of *knowing* to problems of *modes of being*'[29] and, consequently, postmodernist fiction as an artform that foregrounds ontological uncertainty; while postmodernism for Linda Hutcheon 'is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges' – a conception that also informs her central notion of 'historiographic metafiction'.[30] From a Bakhtinian perspective postmodernism might be seen as a 'carnivalisation'[31] of modernist aesthetic principles; a hyperbole, an ironic inversion, a travestying, a regeneration through laughter that is embedded in, and simultaneous with, a modernism that cannot be restricted to the early twentieth century but continues to assert its influence on contemporary modes of artistic representation.

Barth envisions his 'literature of replenishment' as 'a synthesis or transcension' of 'premodernist and modernist modes of writing' (Barth, Replenishment: 71, 70); that is, a literature that retains the readability of the great nineteenth century novelists while at the same time incorporating some of the self-reflexive solipsism of modernist writings of the first half

of the twentieth century. This rather vague formulation of his ideal postmodernist fiction does little to dispel the impression of the 'awkward and faintly epigonic' (Barth, Replenishment: 66) Barth himself detects in the term "postmodernism", rather it seems to be the image of a watered-down modernism – a kind of blockbuster avant-gardism.

Yet, it is precisely this balance between sophisticated artistry and broad public appeal Fowles strikes so successfully in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Where, then, does this leave the novel in terms of postmodernism? With its frequent blending of ontological levels and the temporal disruption at the very end,[32] the novel does generate ontological quandaries of the kind a fiction like Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy* (1957) inspires,[33] but it hardly constitutes an ontological dominant. Neither does it resemble the "inventory" of cultural surplus material that makes up substantial sections of George Perec's *Life: A Users Guide* (1978), nor is it not overtly carnivalesque like Terry Gilliam's 1985 film *Brazil* or Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Instead of searching for a comprehensive definition of postmodernism, perhaps, it makes more sense to make what is in itself an obviously postmodern move and discuss this strangely hybrid phenomenon in the plural; as a plethora of postmodern*isms* existing alongside one another but sharing a number of elements such as self-reflexivity, a preoccupation with plurality and diversity, a tendency towards the parodic and an marked interest in margins.

In his bid for postmodernism, Fowles seems to favour '"to rebel along traditional lines," […] to prefer the kind of art not many people can *do:* the kind that requires expertise and artistry as well as bright aesthetic ideas and/or inspiration',[34] as Barth says in 'The Literature of Exhaustion'. As such, he appears to place himself in a kind of medial position: not quite the modernist, yet not quite the postmodernist either; a position that is foregrounded, as I shall show, by his deconstruction of both Victorian modes of writing and the postmodernism of Barthes and Robbe-Grillet. When Fowles finally does come down on the side of postmodernism, it is precisely because *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a novel constructed 'with ironic intent by a composer quite aware of where we've been and what we are', a novel 'which imitate[s] the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of the Author' (Barth, Exhaustion: 33, 31). This position is perhaps best encapsulated in the portrait of the artist, Breasley, in Fowles's novella 'The Ebony Tower' (1974): 'behind the modernity of so many of the surface elements stood both a homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition'.[35] Such a conception of postmodernism is also reflected in the title of this thesis, which recognises *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a hybrid of *ambidextrous narratives*; that is, double-voiced narratives that are artistically skilful but simultaneously challenge and subvert the very grounds on which they are constructed.

Both homage and thumbed nose suggest a subtle adherence to the carnivalisation of pre-existing forms that in my view engenders a sense of postmodernism as a mode of viewing and making art that continues to exist inside the aesthetic boundaries of modernist art but

nevertheless constitutes an ironic inversion of the principles of modernism. At the same time, it establishes Fowles's dialogic position at the point of intersection between multiple contexts and discourses that illuminate shifting facets of each other. Thus *The French Lieutenant's Woman* becomes an interrogation of the Victorian period and the Victorian novel through the lenses of modernity, but at the same time questions modernity from a Victorian point of view.

Speaking with Malcolm Bradbury, Fowles's fiction 'reconstructs and deconstructs […] the Victorian novel as archetype, the sum of the writings of and indeed about the idea of Victorianism' (Bradbury, *Novel*: 357) and as such creates not just 'an image of a language' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 259) in the Bakhtinian sense but also an 'image of a fiction' that breaks down the ostensible unity of Victorian fiction (as it is constructed by Fowles) and makes the novel a thoroughly double-voiced endeavour.

Fictional self-consciousness

'Self-consciousness, as the artistic dominant in the construction of the hero's image is by itself sufficient to break down the monologic unity of the artistic world' according to Bakhtin 'but only on the condition that the hero, as self-consciousness, is really represented and not merely expressed' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 51). Self-consciousness, then, is identified as a key feature in the construction of literary polyphony. But it is not enough merely to express that self-consciousness. No, it must be an integrated part of the hero's image. The hero must be able to engage himself dialogically and this self-engagement must be represented in the work of fiction.

In postmodernist literature, self-consciousness is usually posited at the level of the fiction itself rather than as an element in the construction of character. Postmodernist works tend to investigate, and even dramatise, their own fictional status and often incorporate a continuous metafictional commentary on the process of their own construction. This self-reflexivity is prominent in the Italian novelist Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979), which explores the process of reading and by extension the nature of fiction and its relationship with the perceiving subject, but is, of course, a no less conspicuous feature in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Calvino's novel about reading gives the opening of twelve different novels, each of which are terminated after the first few pages – a technique that repeatedly frustrates the reader's narrative desire[36] and establishes *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller,* not so much as a fiction in its own right, but as an extended dialogue between reader and novel and as *the self-conscious construction of the image of a fiction*.

In the foreword to his book of poems (1973), Fowles states that the 'crisis of the modern novel has to do with its self-consciousness'.[37] A point he later elaborates in an interview with Dianne Vipond: 'I strongly feel that the novel is *not* dying. And that the greater complexity of technique caused by its added self-consciousness does or can fulfil the ultimate purpose of both

explaining and teaching more'.[38] Certainly, the self-conscious aspect of Fowles's fiction adds both complexity and another level of insight into his characters and fictional worlds. Fictional self-consciousness forces the reader's attention on to the process of narration, to the "novelness" of the novel, by focusing on the enunciatory site – in a way similar to more traditional Chinese-box novels. When Joseph Conrad, for example, introduces the anonymous first person narrator who listens to and occasionally comments on Marlow's narrative in *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow himself becomes a being that demands attention in his own right rather than a mere mouthpiece for the narrative. As a result, the reader's attention is re-focused on the details of the story and of storytelling.[39] By moving its self-consciousness from the level of character to the level of fiction itself, postmodernist fiction dialogically engages the process of its own construction to a point where it is able to hear and reply to its own fictitiousness. This type of fiction is always a thoroughly double-voiced.

Samuel Beckett's short "novel" *Worstward Ho* provides a striking example of this sense of self-consciousness on a fictional level. In this strange, obfuscating text, it is not the few insubstantial characters that occupy the minimal landscape but the text itself that is the primary object of (anti)-representation. The "novel" is a remarkable piece of self-erasing text constructed, as a sequence of 'better failures' where everything that is 'said' must subsequently be 'unsaid'. In this way, the text is paradoxically diminished by its own growth, unwritten by the very process of writing. *Worstward Ho* shapes itself in the self-conscious awareness of the impossibility of genuine representation. An awareness that has grave structural implications for the text, as it seems to self-destruct in an attempt to rid itself of its very *being* – to rid itself of its self-consciousness.[40]

If fictional self-consciousness takes a less radical form in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, it does, nevertheless, play a significant role in Fowles's construction of the novel. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is an intentional dialogised hybrid, which, in the words of John Barth, 'imitate[s] the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of the Author' (Barth, Exhaustion: 31). Certainly Fowles's novel imitates the form of the Victorian novel as archetype just as Fowles imitates the role of the omniscient narrator, and this reconstruction is carried out in the author's constant self-conscious awareness of his own historical position and his novel's status as a postmodernist fiction. Thus Fowles shapes his novel partly in opposition to the "meaninglessness" Robbe-Grillet proposes as an aesthetics for the *nouveau roman*:

> In the construction of future novels, gesture and objects will be *there*, before they are *something*; and they will be there afterwards, hard, unalterable, ever-present, and apparently indifferent to their own meaning, which meaning tries in vain to reduce them to the precarious role of utensils, to a temporary and shameful fabric which has form only by kind permission of a human truth that has chosen it as a means of self-expression, after which it immediately reconsigns this embarrassing auxiliary to oblivion. [41]

It is clearly in the light of these propositions for the modern novel we must read some of the metafictional comments in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. 'If this is a novel, it cannot be

a novel in the modern sense of the word', Fowles muses in chapter thirteen, 'perhaps I am writing a transposed autobiography [...] Perhaps it is only a game [...] Or perhaps I am trying to pass off a concealed book of essays on you'.[42] Fowles's fiction seems to be marked by a reinsertion of the '*something*' – the discovery of a renewed sense of the pleasure of narrative and of reference. Yet at the same time it emphasises the "thereness" of language. Throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* from the overtly 'literary' quality of the opening chapters to the extensive use of epigraphs, language appears under a slight shadow of objectification. The novel continually instils the sense that 'the author does not speak in a given language (from which he distances himself to a greater or lesser degree),' as Bakhtin says, 'but he speaks, as it were, *through* language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectivized, that he merely ventriloquates' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 299). This usage of an objectified language is highlighted in 'Notes on an Unfinished Novel' when Fowles states that

> the genuine dialogue of 1867 (insofar as it can be heard in books of the time) is far too close to our own to sound convincingly old. It very often fails to agree with our psychological picture of the Victorians – it is not stiff enough, not euphemistic enough, and so on – so here at once I have to start cheating and pick out the more formal and archaic (even for 1867) elements of spoken speech. [43]

The word in Fowles's novel may well refer beyond its own boundaries but nonetheless it is always already a presence in its own right. In this way, Fowles creates a novelistic hybrid that incorporates the scope, narrative prowess and readability of the Victorian novel but simultaneously inscribes the *nouveau roman's* self-reflexiveness, preoccupation with the nature of language and respect for the autonomous "thingness" of the word.

The metafictional reflection that takes place throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman* involves both Fowles and reader in a continuous questioning of the nature of fiction and the form of the novel. On a much profounder level, as we shall see, this discussion seems to be reflected in the deepest reaches of the novel's structure as it continually explores and contests the boundaries of its form. The structural ramifications of this kind of metafictional exploration arise from Fowles's simultaneous dialogic engagement with the Victorian and the postmodern. As *The French Lieutenant's Woman* moves forward, the Victorian novel is slowly unravelled and a new form comes into being that simultaneously confirms and challenges its own position as a postmodernist fiction.

Dialogic metafiction

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon defines the postmodernist novel in terms of 'historiographic metafiction', a kind of novel that 'asks us to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time' (Hutcheon, *Poetics*: 105). As such, historiographic metafiction 'keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in doing so problematizes

the very possibility of historical knowledge, because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here – just unresolved contradiction' (Hutcheon, *Poetics*: 106). And, one might add, *dialogics.*

For even if there is no sense of reconciliation or dialectic, the juxtaposition of past and present, fiction and history does not go unmediated. The polyphonic novel precisely provides the ground of intersection between multiple contexts, multiple historical periods and multiple ideologies. Not as a means for establishing the synthesis sought in dialectical systems but rather to generate dialogical relationships, to allow conflicting voices to collide and be illuminated by their mutual interrelationships.

Inserting dialogism into the concept of historiographic metafiction has the advantage of highlighting the process by which this type of fiction achieves its double-directed destabilisation of fiction and history. Not only does this type of postmodernist fiction allow the simultaneous construction and deconstruction of our modes of viewing the past and foreground fiction and history as 'notoriously porous genres' (Hutcheon, *Poetics*: 106), it also points out the double-voicedness of its own discourse – a kind of self-conscious awareness that is particularly evident in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* Here Paul de Man's words on the function of dialogism in the works of Bakhtin become equally applicable to the processes identified by Hutcheon and Fowles's use of double-voiced discourse:

> Dialogism […] functions, throughout the work and particularly in the Dostoevsky book, as a principle of radical otherness or, to use again Bakhtin's own terminology, as a principle of *exotopy*: far from aspiring to the *telos* of a synthesis or resolution, as could be said to be the case in dialectical systems, the function of dialogism is to sustain and to think through the radical exteriority or heterogeneity of one voice with regard to any other, including that of the novelist himself.[44]

Indeed, if de Man is right in his identification of the function of dialogism – and I think he is – then Bakhtin seems to prefigure Hutcheon's concept of historio-graphic metafiction in anything but name.

Above all, however, it points to the problem of unchecked relativism. Hutcheon's stance asserts itself as the very image of the postmodern double-bind: the impossibility of claiming that everything is relative without presupposing a stable position from which to do so. What is interesting in the insertion of dialogism into the concept of historiographic metafiction is that it seems to allow this kind of stability without yielding to the finalising order of the absolute or surrendering its own destabilising power.

And it is precisely this that makes dialogism so useful in regard to *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* By resurrecting the figure of the omniscient narrator and subsequently subjecting him to interrogation, Fowles installs a centre to his narrative, albeit one that holds no claim to absolute privilege. Fowles's self-conscious construction of the role of the narrator foregrounds the *figure* of the narrator rather than the *narrator* and it is this foregrounding that causes him to lose his finalising power in relation to his characters and fictional world. More than dissolving the centre and laying claim to a paradoxical *absolute relativism*, the novel foregrounds and

questions the centre precisely as *centre*. Thereby, it allows the multitude of heterogeneous discourses surrounding it to impinge upon and erode its foundation as centre. What the subject-centeredness of dialogism makes clear, however, is that even a centre that is defined in relative terms retains its function as centre, as the thing that allows dialogic relationships to arise around it. A relative centre is a centre nonetheless.

The French Lieutenant's Woman, then, may be defined precisely as a *dialogic metafiction* – an inherently double-voiced work that dialogically engages several contexts at once including its own construction and its situation within postmodernist literature. Dialogism is a constitutive element in Fowles's self-conscious creation of *the image of a fiction* – representative of the need to sustain and continuously interrogate the heterogeneity of one voice in relation with any other, including that of the novelist himself and the first step towards polyphony. These basic assumptions about *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s status as a postmodernist fiction and its continued dialogic engagement with the process of its own construction allow us to move further into the analysis of the novel and focus on problems that arise as a consequence of Fowles's self-conscious investigation of the role of the author.

Chapter III: Narrative problems

One of the key questions that needs to be addressed in connection with any discussion of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the role of the narrator and his position in relation to the author. The narrator is often regarded as "the usual suspect" of postmodernist fiction, and thus focusing on the role of the narrator is particularly relevant in regard to a type fiction that often foregrounds and challenges the narrator and his participation in the construction of the work of literature. By narrative problems I do not mean the kind of problems facing narrators in, for instance, Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy* (1987), or Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), where the act of narration either gradually dissolves the narrator or becomes a physical threat; but rather the problems that arise due to the foregrounding of the constructedness of fiction which challenges the position of the autorial/narratorial point of view in a novel like *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

Before turning to the discussion of the author/narrator in Fowles's novel, let me briefly address a few methodological concerns that will inevitably arise in this connection. True to Eastern-European critical conventions, Bakhtin does not distinguish clearly between the author who lives and writes in the real world and the position within the literary text that is often identified in terms of the 'implied author'.[45] The reason for this lack of clear-cut differentiation is not immediately discernable, but given the profoundly "human" nature of Bakhtin's theories of the novel, it would be reasonable to assume that he finds a complete dissociation of "author as creator" and "author as textual participant" – 'the death of the author'[46] propounded by Roland Barthes – untenable. This uncertainty is also deliberately generated by Fowles in his reflections on the nature of his fiction: 'perhaps I am writing a transposed autobiography' (97). In most of Bakhtin's writings, however, 'author' does seem to designate some kind of organisational principle at work within the novel akin to the 'implied author'. Below, I would like to follow Bakhtin in using "author" in this way, as I sense an unpleasant mechanistic quality to the term 'implied author' that I am anxious to avoid. However, in a work of such narrative complexity as *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where "author" may be said to designate several different entities, this lack of distinction is impossible to keep up for practical reasons. Therefore, some clarification of terminology will be necessary. Narration in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* may be said to take place on three different levels: a fictional, a metafictional and (for lack of a better word) a meta-metafictional. Correspondingly, the figure of the author is present in three different guises: 1) the narrator imitating the omniscient narrator of nineteenth-century fiction, 2) the Author who makes metafictional comments about the nature of the narrator's voice and 3) the "author" whose presence is felt implicitly on the occasions where the Author doubles himself and appears as a character in his own fiction. Due to the highly self-conscious nature of narration, however, the narrative position used most extensively in the novel is a compounding of the Author and the narrator. This position will be designated simply: the author/narrator.

The narrator

Other reasons for wanting to retain the human quality to the discussion of the novel is Fowles's own apparent distaste for the poststructuralist mode of modern literary criticism, which he sardonically satirises in *Mantissa* (1982),[47] and the fact that in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* Fowles seeks to reinsert the figure of the author in opposition to other postmodern attempts at extirpating him completely from the novel. In 'Notes on an Unfinished Novel', Fowles says that he wanted to resurrect 'the ironic tone of voice that the […] great nineteenth-century novelists […] all used so naturally', but which has become 'rigorously repressed' in modern writing 'out of fear of seeming pretentious' (Fowles, Notes: 20). Fowles goes on to discuss his relationship to Robbe-Grillet's theory of the *nouveau roman,* which, according to Fowles, is 'indispensable reading […] even where it produces no more than total disagreement' (Fowles, Notes: 18). The *nouveau roman* may not be attractive to Fowles in his search for a direction for the modern novel, but, nonetheless, it affects the outcome of his writing to the extent that it seems impossible to resurrect the ironic tone of voice, and consequently the omniscient narrator, without extending that irony to the narrator himself. This may be seen from a memorandum Fowles wrote to himself during the composition of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: '*You are not the 'I' who breaks the illusion, but the 'I' who is part of it*' (Fowles, Notes: 20). Such a conception is central in a Bakhtinian perspective, since it clearly establishes a dialogic position in which the author must be regarded as a point of view on the world that is 'not only [an object] of authorial discourse but also subject of [his] own directly signifying discourse' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 7, emphasis omitted). In poststructuralist terms, it means that *the authorial position is not out of play*. This constitutes the division between the figure of the Author as textual participant, who is present in the novel, either as the 'I' or as a character, who remains in play; and the 'author' as organisational principle, who continues to assert his influence, if not precisely as a stable centre of structuration. This is subtly highlighted in Fowles's contention that 'a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (*a world that fully reveals its planning*) is a dead world' (98, my emphasis). Fowles goes slightly back on his own point here about fictional autonomy, since he clearly states that even though the fiction tries to give the appearance of being "unplanned" it is, nonetheless, a deliberately planned world. It also points to the problem of the circularity of relativism, because, in the words of philosopher Donald Davidson, it foregrounds the fact that:

> The dominant metaphor of conceptual relativism, that of differing points of view, seems to betray an underlying paradox. Different points of view make sense, but only if there is a common co-ordinate system on which to plot them; yet the existence of a common system belies the claim of dramatic incomparability.[48]

Samuel Beckett's short novel *Company* (1980) may be seen as a radical attempt at escaping the stabilising influence of the subject by representing a subject that is constituted by *différance*. Beckett's text refuses to name its subject 'I', because naming it would immediately override the

fragile relativity of its central subject.[49] But even a radically relativist text like *Company* cannot completely dispel a lingering sense of a point view. In connection with *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, it remains clear that the positing of an 'I' immediately establishes a stable ground from which to view and narrate the world.

The skill Fowles shows in making the fictional world of a highly plotted novel like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* seem convincingly unplanned, is perhaps partly what adds a greater depth to his work than those of other postmodern writers of metafiction, which often tend towards the mannerism of surface values and language pyrotechnics; such as the technically flawless but perhaps rather too clinical stylisations of A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990).

The answer to the conundrum, then, lies in the use of double-voiced discourse, in stylisation, in ironic inversion and in parody. Thus in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* Fowles stylises the literary 'convention universally accepted at the time of [his] story: that the novelist stands next to God' (97). By initially assuming 'the vocabulary and "voice"' (97) of the omniscient third person narrator with unlimited access to every aspect of his characters and fictional world, Fowles weaves the illusion of writing a Victorian novel only to suddenly break this illusion in chapter thirteen and digress into a discussion of the nature of fiction, the role of the author and the autonomy of characters.

First of all, this breach of illusion reveals that what Nicolas discovers about Conchis's 'godgame' in *The Magus* is equally true of the author/narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: that it is possible to 'discern two elements in his "game" – one didactic, the other aesthetic'[50] and that Fowles is teaching the reader how to read his novel through the very process of narrating it. Furthermore, it discloses the fact that the convention of the omniscient author/narrator is highly suspect, since his omniscience is, in fact, only pretence. 'He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does' (97). To some extent this neutralises the paradox the apparently omniscient narrator of the first twelve chapters creates when he claims to know nothing of Sarah's 'mind and innermost thoughts' (97). In fact, the author only exposes a heresy built into the convention of the omniscient narrator and waives the right to perpetuate the pretence since 'possibility is not permissibility' (98). On the other hand, the neutralisation of one paradox immediately establishes another; that is, the paradox that omniscient narration is used expressly to dismantle this very mode of narration. Exposing one type of narrator as suspect, however, does not make the discourse of the author/narrator any less so. Throughout the novel, the author/narrator ostensibly casts himself in a range of dubious personae from the 'local spy' (10) to the 'successful impresario' (441) while simultaneously claiming to be 'the most reliable witness' (98) to his own discourse. Not only does this instil a strong sense that the author 'doth protest too much' about his own failings, as well as merits, to be entirely convincing; it also intentionally generates uncertainty in regards to his position in the novel as he shifts between several different narrative positions. Waiving authorial rights, at least partially, has serious

implications for the construction of the novel, because it sends repercussions through every fibre of its structure. If, indeed, the Author wishes '*to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is*' (98), he must extend the same degree of freedom to all characters regardless of his intentions or feelings toward them. He must respect the only 'good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist' (99). Interestingly, autonomy on the part of the characters seems to be granted by necessity rather than will, almost against the intention of the author. The independence gained by the characters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, then, is not immediately the freedom on a structural level that Bakhtin asserts for Dostoevsky's characters,[51] but rather a freedom that is gradually achieved through various dissenting acts. Thus, chapter thirteen becomes the breeding ground for the growing polyphony of the novel. Indeed, it appears that the novel becomes deliberately more polyphonic after the Author's intervention than it was prior to it. This is indicated by the increased occurrence of hidden direct discourse shining through the author/narrator's voice, and in the far more frequent use of inserted genres: letters, poetry, legal documents etc. If the decision to stop at the Dairy for a 'deliciously cool bowl of milk' (87) really does come from Charles then he is growing into a dialogic position from which 'he hears' the Author 'and is *capable of answering him*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 63), and, consequently, beginning to assert his 'freedom vis-à-vis the usual externalising and finalizing authorial definitions' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 13). On the other hand, Sarah seems to have already arrived at such a position, since the Author states that 'in the context of my book's reality [...] Sarah would never have brushed away her tears and leant down and delivered a chapter of revelation. She would instantly have turned [...] and disappeared into the interior shadows' (98). This tacit repudiation of the Author's inquiry into her state of mind clearly indicates that Sarah is in no way placed in an inferior position in relation to the Author, which is further substantiated by her tendency to fictionalise her own existence and present it in narrative terms. Indeed, in her ability to make her various accounts of the Varguennes story seem convincing, she might be held to the same yardstick as other 'writers of fiction' who are judged 'both by the skill they show in fixing the fights (in other words, in persuading us that they were not fixed) and by the kind of fighter they fix in favour of' (390). Thus, polyphony is not merely present in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*; it seems to be present in an evolving state, one that is written into being as the narrative unfolds and may be linked with the novel's overall evolutionary theme.[52]

Chapter thirteen is central to the understanding of the role of the author/ narrator because it provides the occasion for the intersection of several contexts that mutually illuminate each other and, in turn, make up the dialogising background for much of the novel. By invoking 'the theoreticians of the *nouveau roman*' (389), the Author also suggests why he tends to describe himself in less than favourable terms elsewhere in the novel. His discourse shapes itself in the self-conscious awareness that this assumed mode of narration is an anachronism

'in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes' (97), and even though *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is written partly in opposition to the theories of the *nouveau roman,* these are nonetheless a constant presence behind the voice of the author/narrator. Significantly, these figures surface in each of the Author's major interventions. In chapters thirteen and fifty-five they are invoked explicitly, if ironically, but in the final chapter of the novel they reappear in a far more ephemeral, yet highly suggestive, way, as the 'something rather foppish and *Frenchified*' in the Author's comment's about himself '*as he really is*' (441; first emphasis mine, second in original). Thereby signalling that the influence of the *nouveau roman* cannot be escaped since, no matter how ironically it is treated by the author/narrator, it is still a noticeable element in the very structure of his voice. Within the text of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* this displays the questions that Fowles himself raises in 'Notes on an Unfinished Novel': To what extent am I being a coward by writing inside the old tradition? To what extent am I being panicked into avant-gardism?' (Fowles, Notes: 18) These questions disclose Fowles as someone caught in an 'anxiety of influence',[53] to adopt Harold Bloom's term, and further raise the problem of Fowles's attitude to both tradition and innovation; that is, his position in relation to postmodernism and its re-activation of preceding cultural material. The answer to these questions, perhaps, lies in the fact that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* seems to transcend both tradition and challenge. By ironically re-functioning the conventions of the nineteenth century novel from a postmodern perspective, and simultaneously critically engaging modes of writing employed by certain types of postmodernist fiction, Fowles challenges and deconstructs both these novelistic conventions and the challenge raised by the *nouveau roman*, and creates a novel that is both conspicuously traditional and distinctly postmodern. However, for all these assertions the author/narrator still seems marred by the awareness of the instability of his position in relation to the context and historical moment he is writing into and, consequently, constructs his narrative with a continuous 'sideward glance at some one else's hostile word' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 196). In this respect, the double-voiced nature of the author/narrator discourse is not only directed towards the Victorian novel he parodies, but also towards the contemporary type of literary poststructuralism. By virtue of its double-voicedness, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* emphasises that the only way to move beyond the challenge of the *nouveau roman* is to inscribe its techniques in a context that forces it to dialogically engage not only postmodernist fiction but literature as a whole. Fowles, precisely '[brings] together ideas and worldviews, which in real life [are] estranged and deaf to one another, and [forces] them to quarrel' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 91), but does not necessarily allow any one discourse to fare any better or worse than another. Exposing the *nouveau roman* as the 'papier-mâché Mephistopheles' (Conrad: 41) of postmodernist fiction, and simultaneously parodying the conventions of the Victorian novel, leaves Fowles caught in the postmodern double-bind. If Fowles's fiction, 'behind the modernity of so many of the surface elements', really represents 'both a homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very

old tradition' (Fowles, *Ebony*: 23), then this dualism seems to be no less directed towards the modernity of which it is part – and thus inescapably includes his own narrative position.

Positions: author ∴ narrator?

The breach of the Victorian literary convention in chapter thirteen has further implications for our perception of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Firstly, it turns stylisation into parody and, secondly, reveals three connected features of Fowles's fiction: 1) the frequent juxtaposition of disparate materials which creates dialogic relationships that illuminate parallels, tensions and inconsistencies within the novel; 2) the *retarding strategy* used throughout, not only to create suspense, but also as a means of forcing the reader to reassess the preceding chapters (e.g. retrospectively recognise the supposed stylisation in the first twelve chapters as parody) and to read the whole of the novel from a different point of view which, in turn, reveals the profoundly double-voiced nature of the text; and 3) a *re-positioning* of the narrator in relation to the fiction we are reading. 'The novelist is still a god, since he creates' (99) but he can no longer be seen as the omniscient, intrusive authorial figure of the Victorian convention. Neither, however, can he be regarded as the third person narrator with only external knowledge of his characters so common in modern literature.[54] As a consequence, the boundaries between Author and narrator become porous and the two figures are, albeit not completely, conflated in the figure of the author/narrator. Interestingly, the high degree of structuration in the novel tends to go against the grain of the Author's discourse about his self-imposed limitations, since he is seemingly able to control events to an extraordinary degree. However, the polyphonic nature of the narrative undercuts the author/narrator's attempts at structuration and unsettles his authorial position. This conflict will be dealt with more fully below.

For now, let us return to the questions that concerns us at present; that is, the question of shifting narrative points of view, the self-conscious construction of the author/narrator and the multiple roles played by the figure of the Author. The investigation of these issues inevitably leads towards one central question.

Who narrates the narrator?

The conflation of author and narrator in turn creates problems of establishing narrative perspective when the two are suddenly *not* overlapping. When the Author places himself in the train compartment with Charles, and thereby inserts himself into his own narration, he creates a strange doubling effect. As a consequence, we are forced to adjust our perception of him by the abrupt shift in narrative perspective that occurs in the re-positioning of the 'I' who describes the man on the train from the outside to the 'I' sitting in the seat opposite Charles.[55]

> In my experience there is only one profession that gives that particular look, with its bizarre blend of the inquisitive and the magistral; of the ironic and the soliciting.
> Now could I use you?

Now what could I do with you?

It is precisely, it has always seemed to me, the look an omnipotent god – if there is such an absurd thing – should be shown to have. Not at all what we think of as a divine look; but one of a distinctly mean and dubious (as the theoreticians of the *nouveau roman* have pointed out) moral quality. I see this with particular clarity on the face, only too familiar to me, of the bearded man who stares at Charles. And I will keep up the pretence no longer.

Now the question I am asking, as I stare at Charles, is not quite the same as the two above. But rather, what the devil am I going to do with you? (389)

Here the presence of "author" is clearly felt, for who orchestrates the doubling of the Author if not a third reincarnation of the authorial voice. The split, in short, raises the question of who narrates the narrator? By virtue of the split by which the Author divides himself, the questions 'Now could I use you? / Now what could I do with you?' can no longer be seen as directed towards the 'other' but acquire an almost rhetorical status and turn into a kind of self-reflexive questioning. The Author dialogically engages himself as two participants in a conversation: one part 'omniscient god', one part bewildered and uncertain as to how he might proceed. The contradictory, relative, identity of the Author is articulated in the 'bizarre blend of the inquisitive and the magistral, of the ironic and the soliciting'. The personal pronoun 'I', then, covers not only the first person, but incorporates also the second and the third. The pronoun thus truly becomes 'one of the most terrifying masks man has invented' (320) because it glosses over a multitude of variables in the distinctly plural and contradictory nature of identity.

The re-positioning of the Author also creates a challenge in connection with Bakhtin's contention that polyphony cannot be achieved in the presence of a non-participating third person, for how can an author/narrator who enters his narration as a character be said to be *non-participating*? As a consequence, a narrative position is established which is no longer external but precisely the 'thoroughly dialogic' integral position Bakhtin claims for the polyphonic narrator. The relationship between author and narrator is foregrounded and put into dialogic play, as the author/narrator is clearly at odds with himself. This conflict may be seen in the fact that he tends to describe himself in slightly deprecating terms as some 'one of a distinctly mean and dubious […] moral quality' (389) and later on as a 'successful impresario' (441) or someone who goes in for 'fight-fixing' (390), and thereby extends the ironic tone of voice to include his own position. The author/ narrator's discourse is profoundly double-voiced and his discourse must be seen as 'internally polemical'. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin says that

Internally polemical discourse – the word with a sideward glance at someone else's hostile word – is extremely widespread in practical everyday speech as well as in literary speech, and has enormous style-shaping significance. Here belong, in everyday speech, all the words "that make digs at others" and all "barbed" words. But here also belong all self-deprecating overblown speech that repudiates itself in advance, speech with a thousand reservations, concessions, loopholes and the like. Such speech literally cringes in the presence or the anticipation of someone else's word, reply, objection. The individual manner in which a person structures his own speech is determined to a significant degree by his peculiar awareness of another's words, and by his means for reacting to them (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 196).

The author/narrators speech is thus shaped in the constant awareness of other, alien, discourses that impinge upon and buffet it from all sides. Again, this feature of the author/narrator's discourse apparently limits his authority and foregrounds the question of his reliability, since it dialogically engages not only the immediate context of the novel of which he is part, but also contexts outside its boundaries: art, history and literature as a whole. 'The word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 284), according to Bakhtin, and consequently shaping one's discourse in anticipation of the contradiction or interrogation of another is to be found everywhere in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, not only in the voice of the author/narrator but also in the voices that surround him.

Another example of this tendency to filter one's tone of voice in anticipation of a response is provided in Ernestina's diary entries. The author/narrator explicitly points to this when he says:

> You may have noticed a certain lack of Ernestina's normal dryness in this touching paragraph; but Charles was not alone in having several voices. And just as she hoped he might see the late light in her room, so did she envisage a day when he might coax her into sharing this intimate record of her prenuptial soul. *She wrote partly for his eyes* – as, like every other Victorian woman, she wrote partly for *His* eyes. (246; first emphasis mine, second in original).

Indeed, this mode of narration filled with reservations, concessions, loopholes etc. is a significant aspect of the multitude of other voices that speak up for themselves in the novel. These alien voices combine with the narrative problems that arise as Fowles parodies the omniscient narrator in Victorian fiction and at the same time acknowledges the necessity of inscribing modern narrative techniques to destabilise and subvert the authorial position, as I have shown in the analysis above. Fowles's simultaneous dialogical engagement with Victorian and postmodern modes of writing unsettles the author/narrator as the novel evolves into an increasingly polyphonic state. As a consequence, the authority of the author/narrator's discourse is slowly eroded by a proliferation of other, alien voices. And it is to these other voices that we must now turn.

Chapter IV: Stories: multiple voices/multiple narratives

The perception of "other surrounding voices" in this connection cannot be limited to the speech of characters but must be extended to encompass the host of alien writers from Tennyson and Matthew Arnold to William Manchester who are present in the novel in the form of epigraphs, inserted genres, translations, allusions and citations. Alien voices, moreover, frequently sound through in the voice of the author/narrator. Examples include the voice of "public opinion" heard in the author/narrator's description of 'the distinguished soprano from Bristol' and 'her accompanist, the even more distinguished Signor Ritornello (or some such name, for if a man was a pianist he must be Italian)' (127); that of the 'fashionable young London architect' who owns the 'damp, cramped, two-room cottage' once inhabited by the servant girl Millie's family 'and loves it, so wild, so out-of-the-way, so picturesquely rural' (155) and many others. Apart from these alien voices and the rebellious acts performed by the novel's characters against authorial control, the texts by other writers represent dissenting voices within the narrative of *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

> Not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context […] it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. (Bakhtin, Discourse: 294)

The "dissenting" feature of the intertexts will be investigated more fully in chapter five of this thesis, which deals explicitly with the intertextuality of the novel. Our present concern, however, is with the function of dialogism and polyphony in connection with the novel's characters and the implications of granting them the freedom to act autonomously.

Articulating one's position in the world is a significant theme in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* that ties in with Fowles's idea of 'existence as authorship';[56] that is, the idea that we all "write" our own existence by striving for, in existentialist terms, "authenticity in life" and correspondingly remain true to the consequences of our choices. This is an issue that is highly relevant in connection with the author/narrator's attitude to his characters. But it also points to the fact that 'fiction is woven into all (99), as well as to our tendency to conceive of our being in narrative terms, to hypothesise about our lives by 'writing fictional futures for ourselves' (327) and thus to construct ourselves in *discourse* – something akin to Oedipa Mass's problem of 'projecting a world'[57] in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965). These issues lie at the heart of both Bakhtin's contention that what is at stake in the polyphonic novel is the '*sum total of the hero's consciousness and self-consciousness,* ultimately *the hero's final word on himself and on his world*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 48), and the poststructuralist claim that identity is constituted by discourse.

In contrast to Fowles's perhaps more obviously polyphonic novel *A Maggot* (1985) – composed of shifting characters' narrative accounts of the same sequence of events that precisely

do *not* add up to a uniform whole; despite the ferociously empiricist lawyer Henry Ayscough's attempts at structuration – the characters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are forced to assert their opposition from within the voice of the ostensibly omniscient narrator. Initially most of these characters seem to be cast deliberately by the author as *types* rather than individuals but gradually "take on flesh" and become more three-dimensional in the course of the novel, even if they never emerge as fully rounded characters.

Sam Farrow, a deliberate evocation of 'the immortal Weller' of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836), provides a particularly conspicuous example of this phenomenon. The author/narrator explicitly makes it clear that 'it was certainly from that [literary, fictional] background that this Sam had emerged' (46). The marked intentionality with which the narrator establishes the parallel between the two Cockney servants suggests that his remarks are not to be read solely in terms of social change, as is most common in previous readings of the novel, [58] but simultaneously as a metafictional commentary. Thus Sam originates not so much from 'the close proximity to a gin-palace' (45; emphasis omitted) than from the intertextual background of the novel and is consequently embedded in the voice of the narrator. Significantly, the seed of Sam's rebellion, not only against his position of servitude to Charles but also against the controlling influence of the narrator, grows from his awareness of his own fictitiousness: 'He even knew of Sam Weller, not from the book, but from a stage version of it; and knew the times had changed' (46). The change in medium from book to theatre is suggestive because it implies a potential space for variation and interpretation. Once published, the text of a book is a fixed whole full of 'petrified, fossil organisms' (Fowles, Notes: 28) whereas no two theatrical performances are ever completely the same. If read in this way, the narrator's comment on 'the difference between Sam Weller and Sam Farrow' being that 'the first was happy with his role, the second suffered it' (48) indicates that Sam turns his back not only on Mary's 'bag of soot' (48) but also on the narrator's 'externalising and finalizing authorial definitions' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 113).

It thus becomes clear that although Charles and Sarah are the most obvious examples of characters that are given an autonomous voice, Sam, Dr Grogan, and the range of minor characters in the novel are also to a certain extent capable of speaking up for themselves and of mapping out their own position in relation to the author/narrator. Thereby, each voice becomes the articulator of his, or her, own narrative – the projector of his or her own world.

Charles

Gaining an independent and fully valid voice with which to express his point of view on himself and his world is one of the major tasks that involve the male protagonist of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Just as the novel revolves around Charles's quest for existential authenticity, so this quest is mirrored in its polyphonic structure. The search for existential authenticity

is also the search for an independent voice – a portrayal of the necessity for establishing a genuinely dialogic position for oneself. In this connection, attaining independence in relation to the controlling influence of the author/narrator is, of course, an important element in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. As was suggested earlier, some characters, most notably Sarah, seem to have attained a structurally independent position from the outset, whereas others, like Charles, only begin to assert their independence in the course of the novel. This in turn suggests that polyphony is present in the novel in an evolving state; one that becomes increasingly pronounced as the narrative unfolds.

Like Sam, whose own dialogic position develops in opposition to his initial casting as the archetypal Cockney servant, Charles has to carve out his own ground as a polyphonic character from within the voice of the author/narrator. Of all the characters in the novel, Charles is the most fully developed, the one on whom the author/narrator intrudes the most and the one whose 'mind and innermost thoughts' (97) are most frequently laid open to scrutiny by the author/narrator. Consequently, Charles is perhaps the character who has the most to gain by rebelling against the authority of the author/narrator and thereby assuming his own place in the polyphonic structure of the novel. From his very first independent thought: 'there slipped into his mind an image: a deliciously cool bowl of milk' (87) to the point where the author/narrator makes it emphatically clear that he is capable of independent movement: 'Meanwhile, Charles can get up to London on his own' (257), the novel traces his attempts at gaining an independent voice, a point of view on himself and on the world. Parallel to Fowles's simultaneous construction and deconstruction of the Victorian novel, Charles appears in a kind of threshold position, suspended at the end of an era with a new one not yet begun. In a sense he is a double anachronism, a member of the 'dying species' (285) of the aristocracy and 'an existentialist before his time' (Fowles, Notes: 19), and it is in response to the anxiety of this position that Charles needs to find a new language – a vocabulary that is capable of incorporating an infinitude of new knowledge and new sensitivities.[59]

Another parallel between Fowles's novel and his male protagonist imme-diately establishes itself when looked at from this perspective. The conventional irony of Charles's voice resembles the ironic mode of narration employed in nineteenth-century fiction from Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad – precisely the tone of voice Fowles is trying to resurrect in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. By virtue of this conflation of voices, Charles's search for an adequate vocabulary mirrors Fowles's attempt at reconstructing the nineteenth-century tone of voice with an awareness of the shift of paradigm that characterises the century between 1867 and 1967. A century marked by the radical re-orientation of thought that was necessitated by Nietzsche's proclamation of God's departure from the world, Einstein's theory of relativity, Freudian psychoanalysis and Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, as well as the upheaval of cultural institutions and artistic expression that ensued when modernist artists attempted to

rise to the challenge of a chaotic and expansive universe.[60] Thus Charles's continuous life on the threshold between conventionality and modernity reflects Fowles's own dialogic position, poised between Victorian and postmodern modes of writing. Fowles's sustained interrogation of Charles's language, then, is simultaneously a self-reflexive questioning of his own voice – *an image of his own language*.

The image of a language

More than any other character, the portrait of Charles is constructed through his language. From the glib conventionality of Charles's conversation with Ernestina as they walk on the Cobb at Lyme and his fondness for laboured puns across the deliberately pseudo-intellectual language, peppered with stock Latin phrases, he speaks with Sam to his stumbling attempts at expressing himself in poetry, Charles's being is continually observed through the image of his language – through the texture of his various voices.

The multi-faceted nature of language is elaborated through the relationships that are formed between Charles and his surroundings. Charles is frequently immersed in a gaggle of alien surrounding voices that intrude upon him and buffet him from all sides. The scene at the Lyme Assembly Rooms where he 'had to listen to Mrs Tranter's commentary – places of residence, relatives, ancestry – with one ear, and to Tina's *sotto voce* wickednesses with the other' (126) is one instance of this immersion. Another, Charles's direct confrontation with the reality of heteroglossia when he is 'plunged into the heart of Mayfair' (280) and suddenly finds himself in a carnivalesque underworld of 'servants from the great Mayfair houses, clerks, shop-people, beggars, street-sweepers […] hucksters, urchins, a prostitute or two' (281) where a 'harsh little voice sped after him, chanting derisive lines from a vulgar ballad' (282). The immersion into, and confrontation with, the various social languages of Victorian society, forces Charles to adapt his own voice in accordance with his surroundings, to play roles according to the social contexts he enters. This quality to Charles's language is foregrounded when, during the second conversation between Sarah and Charles in the Undercliff, the author/narrator steps in to say that

> Charles, as you will have noticed, had more than one vocabulary. With Sam in the morning, with Ernestina across a gay lunch, and here in the role of Alarmed Propriety … he was almost three different men; and there will be others before we are finished. We may explain it biologically by Darwin's phrase: *cryptic coloration*, survival by learning to blend with one's surroundings – with the unquestioned assumptions of one's age or social caste (143).

What is being particularly interrogated and exposed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the conventionality of Charles's language, designed to put himself 'at ease in all his travel, his reading, his knowledge of a larger world' (121), and its inadequacy when confronted with a discourse that refuses to yield to conventionality; a discourse that is disturbingly *other*. In his relationship with Sarah, Charles is forced time and again to recognise the dissonance between

their two languages: 'the formality of his language […] and the directness of hers' (428). What is at stake in Charles's confrontation with this *discursive otherness* is precisely a questioning of the hitherto unquestioned, and perhaps even unquestionable, assumptions of the Victorian age and class system of which he is a part. As we shall see below, Sarah's deliberate adoption of the fool's marginal position grants her 'the right to rip off masks',[61] to act as *society's perpetual other*, the power to expose the conventionality and hypocrisy of her surroundings. As such, her dismantling and deconstruction of the complex of ideologies that make up the foundation of Victorian society is really a carnivalisation of Victorian conventions. It is in presence of this subversive discourse that *cryptic coloration* is revealed to be 'an artificiality of conception' (428), an inconsistent game of charades in a world of surface values and misleading appearances.

The relationship between Sarah and Charles provides the ground of intersection between two heterogeneous types of discourse: the direct intentionally dialogic discourse employed by Sarah and the ironic conventionality of Charles's. Interestingly, the resemblance between the conventional irony of Charles's voice and the ironic tone of voice used in nineteenth century fiction emphasises the parallel between *The French Lieutenants Woman* and Sarah: the novel deconstructs the voice of Victorian fiction; she deconstructs Charles's.

What is so disturbing for Charles in his confrontation with Sarah is that to him irony is much more than a speech mannerism; it is a constitutive part of 'his negative but comfortable English soul – one part irony to one part convention' (20). For Charles, *irony is simply a mode of being*. Thereby, the challenge offered by Sarah is not only a challenge to the conventionality of Charles's language but to the very ground of his existence. This conception is further underlined by the impact the loss of this faculty has on Charles on his night-time wanderings through the underworld of Mayfair.

> The mist thickened, not so much as to obscure all but sufficiently to give what he passed a slightly dreamlike quality; as if he were a visitor from another world, a Candide who could see nothing but obvious explanations, a man suddenly deprived of his sense of irony.
>   To be without such a fundamental aspect of his psyche was almost to be naked; and this perhaps best describes what Charles felt (280).

Losing his sense of irony is a profoundly disturbing experience for Charles, because it suddenly deprives him of his *savoir vivre*, and instils the horrible realisation that he has become nothing. 'No one turned and looked at him. He was almost invisible, he did not exist, and this gave him a sense of freedom, but a terrible sense, for he had in reality lost it' (282). In the strange, 'faintly dreamlike' air of Mayfair, Charles, for a time, assumes a position similar to Sarah's in her role as The French Lieutenant's Whore. Like her, he has become 'nothing, […] hardly human anymore' and, like her, he experiences the freedom 'beyond the pale' (171). In the carnivalesque atmosphere of nightly London, in the 'torrent of colour – and fashion, for here unimaginable things were allowed. Women dressed as Parisian bargees, in bowler and trousers, as sailors, as señoritas, as Sicilian peasant-girls; as if the entire casts of the countless neighbouring penny-

gaffs had poured out into the street' (292); Charles is the outcast – the fool.

Charles seeks a release from the bonds of respectable society; that is, the prospects of his marriage with Ernestina and 'the Poultney contingent in Lyme' (125) by indulging in the allurements of London's 'red light district' (265). Yet, though the author/narrator tries to persuade the reader to 'see him for what he is: a man struggling to overcome history […] even though he does not realize it' (286), his response to his immersion in the flipside of respectable society is the utterly conventional one represented by 'a bowl of milk punch and a pint of champagne' (287) and 'a last debauch' (291).

If Charles's remedy to the problems that have arisen during his night of 'soul-searching' (288) seems rather inadequate, it does, however, lead him on to a far more profound experience of reality and, consequently, nearer to the freedom of the dialogic position; a position from which he can begin to engage not only himself but the context of his age and history.

This comes about from his meeting with Sarah the Prostitute – the carnival image of Sarah Woodruff.

> She was not really like Sarah. He saw that the hair was too red be natural; and there was a commonness about her, an artificial boldness in her steady eyes and red-lipped smile; too red, like a gash of blood. But just a tinge – something in the firm eyebrows, perhaps, or the mouth (297).

Again Charles is confronted with the *other*, but this time, due to the carnivalesque inversion of his sensitivities, this other represents the conventional image of 'the fallen woman'; all that society accuses Sarah of being. And again conventionality is connected with artificiality, with *cryptic coloration* – with dressing the part.

Charles's failure to rise to the occasion, so to speak, of his 'great debauch' (308), suggests an inability to reconnect with respectable society, to re-engage with conventionality. This is further emphasised in his confrontation with the child in the wake of his unsuccessful attempt at intercourse with Sarah the Prostitute which brings about, not only 'a restoration of his sense of irony, which was in turn the equivalent of a kind of faith in himself', but also 'a far more profound and genuine intuition of the great human illusion about time' and a glimpse 'of the truth: that time is a room, a now so close to us that we regularly fail to see it' (308, 309).

What is suggested by the simultaneity of the restoration of Charles's sense of irony and his profound insight in to the illusion of time is that a change is gradually beginning to assert itself in his perception of the world, and consequently in his mode of discourse. A change from a conventional ironic discourse to one that is capable of accommodating a new set of sensibilities. Charles is moving into a dialogic position that greatly affects his mode of discourse. Like that of the author/narrator, Charles's discourse is bifurcated into one that simultaneously adheres to the conventions of Victorianism and remains slightly askew. In this, Charles is indeed asserting his independence vis-á-vis the author/narrator, since he is no longer merely an object of the author/narrator's discourse but also the subject of his own directly signifying discourse.

Charles emerges from the underworld with the capacity to tell his own story – to project his own world.

The French Lieutenant's Woman

In her position at the margins of respectable society, Sarah takes on a role similar to the one Bakhtin attributes to the fool or clown figure in 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel'. Not of course in the sense that Sarah *is* a fool or a clown, but by donning the mask of 'the French Lieutenant's Whore' she assumes a position 'beyond the pale' where 'no insult, no blame can touch [her]' because she has become 'nothing, […] hardly human anymore' (171); a position akin to the one customarily held by the fool, clown or rogue in literature. According to Bakhtin, the fool, by virtue of his marginalized position, has the ability to penetrate and expose conventionality and secrecy. The role of the fool is deliberately anti-rational and is therefore not taken seriously by his surroundings. Thus, he becomes the perfect spy in any number of intimate situations since his presence goes unnoticed beyond the role he plays. Speaking with Bakhtin, the fool 'is in life, but not of it, life's perpetual spy and reflector' (Bakhtin, Chronotope: 161). By virtue of this being *in* but not *of* life, the fool functions as *society's perpetual other*, a distorting mirror held up to otherwise unchallenged assumptions of ideological life.

Furthermore, the fool or clown is always a dialogic figure since – like the clothes he wears – he himself is a plethora of contradictions, a "force field" of contending discourses from the semi-serious to the parodic and thus he can never be regarded as uni-directional or one-dimensional. The fool's discourse is always double-voiced. This multi-dimensional element in the fool is subtly echoed in Sarah's clothing, she wears no dunce cap, but the faintly androgynous appearance of her 'black coat – which was bizarre, more like a man's riding coat than any woman's coat that had been in fashion those past forty years' (15) inspires a similar kind of uncertainty of motive as the strangely incongruent apparel of the fool or clown – 'it gave her a touch of the air of a girl coachman, a female soldier – a touch only, and which the hair effortlessly contradicted' (163). Like 'Dostoevsky's hero', according to Bakhtin, Sarah 'always seeks to destroy that framework of *other people's* words about [her] that might finalize and deaden [her] (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 59).

In 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', Bakhtin extends the position of the fool or clown to the novel genre as a whole, claiming that the positions of the author, or narrator, are similar to the one held by the fool, as he is often comparable to a fly on the wall, an observer that remains for the most part unobserved himself and for this reason is able penetrate the most intimate situations of private life. The novel, in its inherently dialogic and heterogeneous nature, always functions as a ground for exposing conventionality, bigotry and hypocrisy and as such possesses an attribute comparable to Sarah's 'uncanny […] ability to classify other people's worth: to understand them, in the fullest sense of the word' (57). The novel is a state

of perpetual rebellion.

This is a conception that certainly seems applicable to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, a novel that continually undermines and exposes the conventions it is constructed upon and frequently pulls the rug out from underneath both its characters and reader. If the novel is indeed a kind of literary rebellion, then Sarah is the emblem of this rebellion inside its boundaries which gives added emphasis to the kinship between and shared identity of novel and character, both Sarah and Fowles's novel are *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Masks

> In the struggle against conventions, and against the inadequacy of all available life-slots to fit an authentic human being, these masks [of the fool, the clown, the rogue] take on an extraordinary significance. They grant the right *not* to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life; the right to parody others while talking, the right not to be taken literally, not "to be oneself"; the right to live a life in the chronotope of the entr'acte, the chronotope of the theatrical space, the right to act life as a comedy and to treat others as actors, the right to rip off masks, the right to rage at others with a primeval (almost cultic) rage—and finally, the right to betray to the public a personal life, down to its most private and prurient little secrets (Bakhtin, Chronotope: 163).

Wearing masks in order to attain freedom is a significant feature of Sarah's construction of life, of her 'reproach on the Victorian age' (Fowles, Notes: 15), and of her struggle to achieve existential authenticity. It is interesting to note how Bakhtin above seems to prefigure the kind of language used by the French existentialists of the nineteen-sixties and, in the process, to circumscribe both Fowles's intention of '[showing] an existentialist awareness before it was chronologically possible' (Fowles, Notes: 18) and Sarah's intention of achieving such an existentialist awareness and instilling a similar one in Charles. By her shifting constructions of reality – portrayed in the different renditions of the Varguennes story – Sarah grants herself 'the right to live a life in the chronotope of the entr'acte' – and to treat life, if not as comedy, then certainly as a tragedy; as her 'other, more Grecian, nickname' (26) specifically emphasises.

This inclination to construct the world as a narrative stems from Sarah's quixotic tendency to view the world in fictional terms and seems to be a direct result of her having

> read far more fiction, and far more poetry, those two sanctuaries of the lonely, than most of her kind. They served as a substitute for experience. Without realizing it she judged people as much by the standards of Walter Scott and Jane Austen as by any empirically arrived at; seeing those around her as fictional characters, and making poetic judgements on them (58).

Significantly, her choice of location for her first "confession" to Charles resembles 'a kind of minute *green amphitheatre*', and her furnishing of the room at Endicott's Family Hotel with 'props': the 'dark-*green* shawl' (recalling the greenness of the amphitheatre?) and the seemingly insignificant 'roll of bandage, which, stopping a moment *to look back* at the *green-*and-white *arrangement* on the bed, she carried back into the other room and put in a drawer of the mahogany chest' (163, 269, my emphases); sets a stage upon which to "act out" the

circumstances of her supposed fall before both Charles and reader and makes us take it in with all the power of evocation of a good theatrical performance. The theatrical quality to Sarah arrangements 'at the Endicott Family' (267) is emphasised by the sudden switch from past to present tense narration in the author/narrator's description of the hotel.

> It is a grey evening turning into night. Already the two gaslamps on the pavement opposite have been pulled to brightness by the lamplighter's long pole and illumine the raw brick of the warehouse walls. There are several lights on in the rooms of the hotel; brighter on the ground floor, softer above, since as in so many Victorian houses the gaspipes had been considered too expensive to be allowed upstairs, and there the oil-lamps are still in use. Through one ground-floor window, by the main door, Mrs Endicott herself can be seen at a table by a small coal fire, poring over her bible – that is her accounts ledger; and if we traverse diagonally up from that window to another in the endmost house to the right, a darkened top-floor window, whose murrey curtains are still not drawn, we can see a good example of a twelve-and-sixer – though here I mean the room, not the guest (266).

Apart from the flagrantly cinematic quality to this passage with its camera-like movement across the façade to Sarah's window on the top floor, the author/narrator's tone of voice becomes conspicuously double-voiced as he slips into the language of a stage direction, establishing mood and setting the scene in preparation for the play to commence. In this way, the author/ narrator and Sarah construct a 'meta-theatre' – a kind of real life drama, an aestheticising of life – similar to the one conceived by Maurice Conchis in *The Magus* for testing and teaching authenticity in life.[62] This 'meta-theatre' resembles the ancient forms of carnival that 'in essence […] was limited in time only and not in space;' analysed by Bakhtin, who continues to assert that 'carnival knows neither stage nor footlights' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 128). What Sarah achieves through her 'struggle against conventions, and against the inadequacy of all available life-slots to fit an authentic human being' is precisely a kind of carnivalisation of Victorian conventions. Sarah is carving out an authentic dialogic position for herself, a *sortie* from the restraints of Victorian society. This kind of role-playing and subversion of convention is comparable to the one undertaken by the *other* French Lieutenant's Woman: the novel itself. In its stylisations and parodies, its playfulness and nostalgic spite, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* mirrors the behaviour of its heroine by time and again constructing and dismantling the readers' expectations. This is interesting from a polyphonic point of view, since Fowles, Sarah and the novel itself seem to place everyone, characters and reader, on the same level and in so doing simultaneously place themselves on the same level, as orchestrators. Just as Charles, Dr Grogan, Mrs Poulteney, the vicar of Lyme etc. all habitually misread Sarah by erecting a host of theoretical explanations of her behaviour; the reader's attempts at structuration of, and insight into, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are frustrated and ultimately defeated by novel and heroine alike. By pulling in a number of conflicting directions, the novel seems to assert its heroine's words on several different occasions and thereby always seeks to destroy that finalising and deadening framework of other people's words: 'All I have found is that no one explanation of my conduct is sufficient' (169). 'Do not ask me to explain what I have done. I

cannot explain it. It is not to be explained' (342). Sarah, or rather her various *personae* from 'poor Tragedy' (14) to 'The French Lieutenant's Woman', are all constructed by discourse, by second-hand accounts of her story, presented by the narrator, Ernestina, the vicar, Dr Grogan and Sarah herself. All these shifting and sliding narratives assert both the Bakhtinian view of the relational subject and the poststructuralist contention that identity is constituted by discourse and thus always in flux. The resulting uncertainty and lack of explanation is also reflected in the novel's multiple endings that, moreover, the author/narrator claims are not to be regarded in succession but rather, paradoxically, as simultaneous.

It is, however, perhaps precisely in this assertion that no single explanation is sufficient that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* becomes the most polyphonic and the most dialogic. Sarah's discourse is double-voiced throughout the novel, filled as it is with loopholes, concessions and multiple meanings. The author/narrator manages to hint almost imperceptibly at this through numerous asides that comment on the tone of voice assumed by the speaker: 'Something new had crept into her voice, an intensity of feeling that in part denied her last sentence' (167). But for all her ostensible freedom, the independence gained by Sarah is a precarious one, not only because she is spurned by her surroundings, but also because her freedom goes only as far as her inventor allows. Just as the authority of the author/narrator is undermined, so Sarah's independence is frequently put in doubt. The author/narrator's assertion that he knows nothing of Sarah's mind or motives is contested by the fact that he remains a controlling force right up to the moment of her final seduction of Charles in Exeter:

> At last she pensively raised and touched its [the green shawl] fine soft material against her cheek, staring down at the nightgown; and *in the first truly feminine gesture I have permitted her*, moved a tress of her brown-auburn hair forward to lie on the green cloth (269, my emphasis).

What happens here? Does the narrator have the ability to control his characters down to the movement of a hand, or is he merely saying that he has not permitted Sarah's feminine side to enter his narrative? Both, seems to be the obvious answer. The author/narrator does provide ample evidence that he is able to control events to an extraordinary degree; he has Ernestina 'outlive all her generation' and die 'on the day that Hitler invaded Poland' (33), and has a complete spatial and temporal overview which is evident from the fact that he can see both Charles in Lyme Regis and 'the beavered German Jew, quietly working, as it so happened, that very afternoon in the British Museum library' (18) to name but a few examples. At the same time, however, his characters frequently slip out from under his control and he is forced to admit that 'what the protagonist wants is not so clear; and I am not at all sure where she is at the moment' (389) when his heroine suddenly leaves Endicott's Family Hotel and disappears.

The slippage in authorial control will be investigated more fully below. For now, however, let us return to the discussion of the relationship between the main characters, the ensuing intersection of heterogeneous discourses and the orchestration of narratives in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Encounters

The relationship between Charles and Sarah unfolds through a series of encounters – in the Undercliff, Exeter and finally in the Rossetti household in Chelsea – in which the validity of Charles's conventional discourse is slowly eroded and an alternative discourse gradually installed. As we have seen, the relationship between the two main characters predominantly forms the occasion for exposing two distinctly different discourses to each other: the conventional irony of Charles and the direct double-voiced discourse of Sarah. Through their mutual exposure, these discourses inform and illuminate each other as, on the one hand, the conventionality of Charles's language is revealed by its intersection with the otherness of Sarah's and, on the other, this discursive otherness is accentuated precisely in the presence of convention. Throughout their various encounters, Sarah's discourse is presented as the dominant one, as it is Charles's language that is exposed as an inadequate medium for viewing and interpreting the world. Of course, the reader can only surmise the impact of Charles's language on Sarah to a certain extent since we are denied access to the workings of her mind for the most part. The encounter between Charles and Sarah, then, is the encounter of

> two languages, betraying on the one side a hollowness, a foolish constraint – but she had just said it, an artificiality of conception – and on the other a substance and purity of thought and judgement; the difference between a simple colophon, say, and some page decorated by Noel Humphreys, all scrollwork, elaboration, rococo horror of void (428-29).

What is interesting, however, is that Sarah's language seems to derive much of its subversive power from its very directness because it denies any interlocutor the protection afforded by of a mask of formality. When reading from the Bible to Mrs Poulteney, for instance, 'she did not create in her voice […] an unconscious alienation effect of the Brechtian kind ('This is your mayor reading a passage from the Bible') but the very contrary' (62). The directness of Sarah's language is remarked upon time and again in the novel and it is precisely this directness that marks its impact on the surroundings. But it is also by this directness that it becomes distinctly double-voiced, since it serves the double intention of expressing the validity of Sarah's discourse while simultaneously exposing the conventionality, hypocrisy, and inadequacy of the hegemonic discourses that govern Victorian society. In this sense, it also serves two speakers at once as it functions as the vehicle for expressing Sarah's own worldview and the author/narrator's contesting of the Victorian period. The subversive role played by direct discourse takes on an even more double-voiced quality when used in conflation with Sarah's own branch of wearing masks; that is, in her shifting fictional constructions of reality and her 'life in the entr'acte'.

Both the relationship of Charles and Sarah and the intersection of their heterogeneous discourses come to a head on the occasion of Sarah's seduction of Charles and their only sexual encounter in Exeter and in their final confrontation in the house of the Pre-Raphaelite community.

The encounter in Exeter is the result of Charles's existentialist choice on the train between

abandoning Sarah and committing himself to an inauthentic life with Ernestina; or rejecting the security a of conventional life to the prospect of casting himself 'out again, upon the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea' (445) and live an existentially authentic, if personally isolated, life.[63] The scene in Sarah's room at Endicott's Family Hotel brings about not only the fulfilment of Charles's sexual desire, but also the realisation that he has been deceived, that in his brief sexual relation with Sarah he has 'forced a virgin' (341), and that the story of Sarah's having given herself to Varguennes is, in fact, a fiction. The 'apocalyptic horror' (341) of this realisation initially leads Charles to a violent rejection of Sarah, but also, in turn, to his emergence as a fully dialogic figure, even if this position is not a lasting one.

As we have seen, Charles's immersion in the carnivalesque underworld of Mayfair for a time places him in a position similar to the one held by Sarah, a position which leaves him with the capacity to project his own world. Yet potential is not ability and Charles struggles with the conventionality of his discourse throughout the novel. On leaving Endicott's Family Hotel, Charles seeks refuge in a nearby church and it here he briefly emerges as a dialogic character beyond the bonds of convention.

> He got to his knees and whispered the Lord's Prayer, his rigid hands clenched over the prayer ledge in front of him.
> The dark silence and emptiness welled back once the ritual words were said. He began to compose a special prayer for his circumstances: 'Forgive me, O Lord for my selfishness. Forgive me for breaking Thy laws. Forgive me my dishonour, forgive me my unchastity. Forgive me my dissatisfaction with myself, forgive me my lack of faith in Thy wisdom and charity. Forgive and advise me, O Lord in my travail …' but then, by means of one of those miserable puns made by a distracted subconscious, Sarah's face rose before him, tearstained, agonized, with all the features of a Mater Dolorosa by Grünewald he had seen in Colmar, Coblenz, Cologne … he could not remember. For a few absurd seconds his mind ran after the forgotten town, it began with a C … (345).

As Charles's miserably inadequate prayer deteriorates into the fragmented contingency of deferential language, he is, in fact, spinning away from Convention (another entity beginning with a C) and coming to the understanding of the futility of this kind of inauthentic existence. In choosing a future direction for his existence, he can only move in one direction; that is, towards yet another C – himself, Charles. The process leading to this insight is dramatised when Charles's being is split in two and 'his better and his worse self' (347) begin to engage each other in dialogue. The outcome for Charles is to remain 'loyal to the nightmare of [his] choice' (Conrad: 81) and commit to an existentially authentic life with Sarah.

The problem of this committal to existential freedom is, of course, that this too is based on an 'artificiality of conception' (428) as Charles begins to formulate 'another chapter from his hypothetical autobiography' (351), trying 'to imagine unknown Sarahs – a Sarah laughing, Sarah singing, Sarah dancing' – and 'dressing Sarah! Taking her to Paris, to Florence, to Rome!' (357, 352). Even in his affirmation of breaking with conventions and resolving to commit himself to Sarah, Charles's language betrays him as he envisions himself, not with Sarah as she is, but

with a construction of Sarah – a Sarah rewritten to conform with his own expectations. This is further emphasised by the love letter Charles writes immediately after leaving the church, a letter in which 'the formality of his language' is 'seen at its worst' (428). For all his reversions to formality and continued misreadings, however, Charles is undergoing a transformation from 'the scientist, the despiser of novels' (16) to the man whose 'only attempt to express his deeper self was in the way of verse' (408) – a confirmation of Charles's changing sensibilities and his search for a new vocabulary. The change is suggested in the quotation above by the fact that Charles's conventional prayer language deteriorates not into a scientific language but into a language of art and poetry – to the image a painting by Grünewald and the intimation of poetic language in the alliterative 'Colmar, Coblenz, Cologne…'. Like Roland Michell's 'compulsive and desperately important' lists of words that will one day turn into poems in *Possession*[64], Charles poetry, in the midst of its 'iambic slog-and-smog and rhetorical question-marks' contains the seed to the formation of a new language encapsulated in 'the really not too bad "vast calm indigos"' (417). The transformation of Charles, however, is never completed. The novel leads its hero to the brink of revelation, but then extends the conclusion beyond the limits of the final page.

Inside the novel, the investigation of heterogeneous, conflicting languages continues to the final encounter of Charles and Sarah in the Rossetti household in Chelsea. Throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* the dissonance between Charles and Sarah is identified as one of language and of Charles's habitual misreading of her meanings and motives caused by a worldview based on inadequate (if gradually more inclusive) means of conception and representation.

The resolution of the conflict of languages is, of course, rendered notoriously inconclusive by the double ending Fowles writes for his novel. In one, the radical heterogeneity of one voice in relation the other becomes the productive ground for a continued dialogical engagement as Charles and Sarah are united through their mutual child; in the other it remains an insurmountable obstacle.

In contrast to Charles, Sarah does not undergo any significant transformation in the course of the novel. The change from poor Tragedy haunting the Cobb at Lyme to the 'electric and bohemian apparition' (423) standing on the landing of 16 Cheyne Walk is predominantly one of outward circumstance. Throughout the novel she seems to be less a character in her own right than a symbol of discursive otherness, a vehicle for the carnivalisation and deconstruction of Victorian attitudes that takes a central position in Fowles's fiction. Yet the aloofness and taciturnity of Sarah does not diminish her as a polyphonic character, nor reduce the influence of her voice on her environment. 'A character in a novel always has,' Bakhtin says, 'a zone of his [or her] own, a sphere of influence on the authorial context surrounding him [/her], a sphere that extends – and often quite far – beyond the boundaries of the direct discourse allotted to

him [/her]' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 320). Sarah's discourse, due to the kinship and shared identity between heroine and novel, presents itself as an amalgam of all the various discourses in the novel – the site where every subversive comment, every ironic inversion, every mask torn away come together. Dressed in 'the full uniform of the New Woman, flagrantly rejecting all formal contemporary notions of female fashion' (423), she reflects Fowles's own rejection of the *nouveau roman*, and with it all formal notions of contemporary *literary* fashion. It is perhaps also this very construction of Sarah as an element of discursive otherness and as the emblem of the formal interrogation of the contemporary novel that constitutes a blind spot in relation to Fowles's own discourse as the one thing that is never significantly questioned is the validity of the world view that is espoused by this type of discourse. Nevertheless, Sarah continues to hold a position of her own in the novel and is never reducible to a mere mouthpiece for an authorial discourse. Sarah's discourse cannot be summed up by any *one* voice within the novel, least of all her own, but must be comprised of several heterogeneous voices and discourses. In this sense, Sarah is the most polyphonic of all characters in Fowles's novel, and seems to encapsulate the very notion of the polyphonic novel – a novel that continues to defeat any attempt to monologise it and offer one unified reading of its fictional universe. According to Bakhtin's claim that what is at stake in the polyphonic novel is nothing beyond '*the sum total of* [the hero's or heroine's] *consciousness and self-consciousness*, ultimately *the hero's* [or heroine's] *final word on himself* [/herself] *and on his* [/her] *world*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 48), the sum total of Sarah's mind and discourse must be regarded as whatever can be derived from reading the tissue of quotations and multi-directed discourses that constitutes Fowles's fiction. Both Sarah and the novel are, indeed, *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

Before moving on to the discussion of alien voices constituted by the novel's many intertextual references, let us briefly summarise the conclusions drawn from this chapter and see them in relation to those of the preceding chapters. The analysis of other, alien voices shows that polyphony functions as means of carrying out the investigation of fictional autonomy. As the novel progresses, character independence shifts from a thematic preoccupation to a structural necessity and the novel's polyphonic design thus becomes the vehicle by which Fowles's preoccupation is carried through on a structural level. The development is seen primarily in the analysis of the relationship between the main characters that forms the ground of intersection between the conflicting discourses of Charles and Sarah, but is no less evident in the development of the novels minor characters. Polyphony may be seen as the direct result of Fowles's simultaneous dialogic engagement with the Victorian and the postmodern as it stems from his acknowledgment of the impossibility of resurrecting the conventions of Victorian fiction without inscribing them in a (post)modern context. Polyphony, or the need for multiple voices to present their own narratives, thus springs from Fowles's self-conscious construction of the image of a fiction – a construction that is further developed through the use of

double-voiced discourse and intertextual references. This, again, may be linked with the urge to dramatise heterogeneity we have identified as a central preoccupation in Fowles's novel. Intertextuality, then, is a significant factor in furthering double-voiced discourse in the novel and a major contributor to the growing polyphony of voices, and it is from this perspective we must continue our investigation of dialogism and polyphony in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Chapter V: Intertextuality

'A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody [and] contestation' (Barthes: 171), Roland Barthes said once. An assertion that more than emphasises Bakhtin's claim that 'the word in language is half someone else's' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 293) – and that in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the word is at least that. The dialogic nature of language which forces the word to an existence on the boundaries of several styles, intentions and contexts, leads straight to the intertextuality that plays such a prominent part in Fowles's construction of the novel. In this respect, any novel, or indeed text, is a tissue of quotations, inserted genres and parody. To give an example of the densely intertextual nature of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, we need to look no further than the first page where the narrator gives a description of the Cobb at Lyme Regis:

> to a less tax-paying, more discriminating, eye it is quite simply the most beautiful sea-rampart on the south coast of England. And not only because it is, as the guide-books say, redolent of seven hundred years of English history, because ships sailed to meet the Armada from it, because Monmouth landed beside it … but finally because it is a superb fragment of folk-art.
> Primitive yet complex, elephantine but delicate; as full of subtle curves and volumes as a Henry Moore or a Michelangelo; and pure, clean, salt, a paragon of mass (9-10).

Within the space of a few lines, a multitude of different contexts and references to English history, tourism, classical and modern art and ordinary tax-paying life come together in a microverse of the novel as a whole with its juxtapositions of high and low, past and present, history and aesthetics. The Cobb offers the symbolic ground of intersection between all the narrative strands that form the texture of Fowles's fiction, initiates the theme of palaeontology and forms the setting for the first encounter between the principal characters. Finally, it becomes a link between *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and nineteenth century fiction, as the Cobb also provides 'the very steps that Jane Austen made Louisa Musgrove fall down in *Persuasion*' (14) – a formulation that hints subtly at the novel's preoccupation with issues of authorial control.

In addition to its many direct quotations and references, Fowles's novel mimics a multitude of genres from the quest romance and the historical novel to poetry and the critical essay. More than anything else, of course, it mimics the Victorian mode of writing as an *archetype* – a hybrid construction incorporating various features from the novels of Thackeray, Eliot, Dickens and Hardy. Fowles has stated that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is not an attempt 'to write something one of the Victorian novelists forgot to write; but perhaps something one of them failed to write' (Fowles, Notes: 17; emphasis omitted). The act of reading and interpreting a work of fiction, then, is a process not only of deciphering themes and preoccupations of the text itself but of recognising and constructing the context(s) into which it is embedded. As the novel in Bakhtin's conception always grows from the contradictory and subversive reality of heteroglossia even when this reality is not directly reflected in the work itself, the novel shapes itself in the continuous awareness of its position in relation to other surrounding texts

– historical as well as fictional. Constructing *The French Lieutenant's Woman* not as a historical novel about the Victorian age but as a modern novel masquerading as a Victorian novel *about* the Victorian novel while continuously 'mak[ing] sure the reader knows it's a pretence' (Fowles, Notes: 17; emphasis omitted), foregrounds the dialogic nature of intertextuality as it playfully situates the novel within several contexts at once. It is of course part of Fowles's illusion to generate this kind of uncertainty about the nature of his fiction, an illusion that is instilled by the remarkable doubleness of a novel that remains suspended between, and dialogically engaged with, the Victorian and the postmodern. Dialogism and intertextuality combine to foreground the constructedness of fiction and the precarious position of the novelist as they highlight the grounds of intersection, conflict and contestation between different texts. Thus, by invoking surrounding texts within the context of his own, the novelist exposes his own voice to interruptions and deprives his discourse of any finalising authority. Akin to the polysemous multi-directedness of heteroglossia, intertextuality, moreover, challenges any notion of cognitive certainty or stability by emphasising that we can only know the world through discourse and that any "truth" is a matter of representation. This also pertains to the function of intertextuality in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* where the novel's dialogical engagement with Victorianism and the *nouveau roman* simultaneously constructs and deconstructs, continues and unsettles both modes of perceiving and representing the world. Any intertext is inherently deconstructive and double-voiced.

The Victorian intertext

By virtue of the Victorian intertext that permeates *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles's "unwritten" Victorian novel portrays Victorianism in terms of a 'schizophrenia', one that led the Victorians 'to see the "soul" as more real than the body' (354) and one that was subjected to a broad-scale 'concealment operation' (355). 'Never' according to Fowles 'was the record so completely confused, never a public façade so successfully passed off as the truth on a gullible posterity; and this I think makes the best guidebook to the age very possibly *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*' (355). It is this monster lurking beneath a respectable appearance Fowles seeks to unveil by focusing on 'deletions and alterations […] correspondence that somehow escaped burning […] private diaries […] the petty detritus from the concealment operation' (354-55). In doing so, however, Fowles consciously perpetuates an image of the Victorian age that may not necessarily correspond with the reality of the historical moment. In order to be '*true to life*' he has to '*start lying about the reality of it*'. Language is adjusted 'to sound convincingly old', the attempt 'to show an existentialist awareness before it was chronologically possible' (Fowles, Notes: 17, 18) has to disregard the writings of Kierkegaard and in his selections from Tennyson, Clough, Arnold and Hardy he focuses mainly on the most rigidly 'Victorian' aspects of their writings. The general picture of Victorianism: 'its tumultuous life, its iron certainties and rigid

conventions, its repressed emotion and facetious humour, its cautious science and incautious religion, its corrupt politics and immutable castes' (349-50) is perhaps exposed and contested by Fowles, but it is simultaneously being perpetuated by his construction of the Victorian age, his parody of its modes of representation and his choice of intertextual references.

In connection with Fowles's image of Victorian schizophrenia, it is interesting to note that mental illness elsewhere in the novel is almost invariably associated with reading and, significantly, with *mis*reading. In their bewilderment over Sarah's behaviour, Dr Grogan and Charles resort to "reading" her in terms of 'melancholia' (220), a psychological disorder comparable to 'a cholera, a typhus of the intellectual faculties' (217), which seems to provide an explanation for the inexplicable. The conception of Sarah's irrationality is, however, based on a set of preconceived assumptions about human behaviour and Grogan's affirmation that: 'No one of foresight could have behaved as she has' (217). This is of course a misreading of Sarah's psychological state as she is in fact 'far less mad than she seemed … or at least not mad in the way that was generally supposed' (68) but in her shifting constructions of reality seems to know exactly what she is doing: 'the damsel had broken all the rules' (426). This gives rise to an implicit intertextual reference connected with the epithet 'poor Tragedy'. For Sarah's "madness" resembles the "madness" of Hamlet and functions as a deliberately assumed mask. A mask that grants 'the right *not* to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life' (Bakhtin, Chronotope: 163) and as such works to expose the hypocrisy of the surroundings. The theme of misreading is continued in Charles's reading of the German physician Karl Matthaei's *Observations Médico-psychologiques*, a book of psychological case stories Grogan lends Charles as 'evidence' (222) for his diagnosis of Sarah. Charles, on reading the account of the trial of La Roncière finds 'himself fatally drawn into that' and identifies 'almost at once with miserable Émile de La Roncière' (229) even if on closer inspection of 'Matthaei's paper on hysteria' he 'saw fewer parallels […] with Sarah's conduct' (230).

Charles's and Grogan's misreading of Sarah's 'melancholia' and the tendency of the Lyme community to cast her in the convenient role of the archetypal 'fallen woman', mirrors Fowles's own way of constructing the image of Victorian schizophrenia as both readings show a tendency to 'use resemblance as a way to disguise differences' (de Man, Semiology: 16) as de Man says. Yet at the same time the novel's self-conscious awareness and exposition of the impossibility of accurate representation undermines the validity of the archetype. The novel emphasises that any reading is always already a misreading, just as any attempt at establishing a unified portrait of a historical period; language or individual psychology is fraught with contradiction and misrepresentation.

In this respect, we might take the cue from Fowles and pay attention to the omissions and absences in *his own text*; that is, to the margins of his own novel.

One such "marginal" detail, for instance, is that the title of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

itself appears to be a euphemism derived from Ernestina. 'They call her the French Lieutenant's … Woman' (14), she says when first introducing Sarah's nickname on the Cobb. Ernestina's slight hesitation and evasion of the 'gross' (14) word 'whore', used by most of Lyme, including Sarah herself, seems to have somehow worked its way into the title of Fowles's novel; an indication that Fowles is deliberately not being as forthright in his description of the historical setting as he might have been, but perhaps more than this, an indication of the difficulty, even impossibility, of accurate representation. The ellipsis suggests that it is in the space between words, the space between the signs of representation that alterations and double-voicing insert themselves and that representation is always a matter of selection – a matter of aesthetics and rhetoric. The self-conscious reworking of the past stresses its provisionality and in this way subverts any claim to certainty of historical knowledge. However, by re-creating the Victorian novel as a *type*, Fowles also objectifies and distorts this type of novel. His construction seems in part to belie the polyphonic heterogeneity of voices in Dickens or the satirical buoyancy of Thackeray and in the process tends to monologise it – to deprive it of much of its own multi-directedness and subversive power. Linking again the construction of an archetypal Victorian novel with the theme of misreading, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* undermines the validity of its construction by its self-conscious awareness of its own fictionality, its dialogism and polyphonic design.

On the other hand, the Victorian novel remains an unavoidable presence within Fowles's novel where it continues, as we shall see below, to assert its influence on Fowles's own mode of writing.

Epigraphs

From what he says on the acknowledgements page of the novel, Fowles clearly intends his epigraphs to give a glimpse of 'the reality behind [his] fiction'; that is, to form the historical background against which the novel can be perceived. Furthermore, the epigraphs are meant to inform and accentuate central aspects of each individual chapter; a purpose that is made clear by a remark Fowles makes in a footnote to the chapter introducing Ernestina: 'The stanzas from *In Memoriam* I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter are very relevant here' (35). This emphasises not only the dialogic nature of the relationship between text and intertexts within the novel but also the larger relationships that exist between different historical periods as well as between historiography and fiction.

Extrapolating from Fowles's remarks about the nature of his epigraphs on the acknowledgements page, Brian Caraher has spoken of these as 'fossils from the Victorian age'.[65] The analogy between the epigraphs and palaeontology is an apt one in conflation with the novel's major theme of evolution. But it is also applicable in connection with Bakhtin's assertion that quotations and inserted genres often either retain their significance in themselves

or are completely objectified as "things" when appropriated by another's voice and inserted into another's context.[66] A third possibility, however, is that the quotations become double-voiced by virtue of their very objectification, as appears to be the case in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The "thing-like" or "fossil" quality, noted by Caraher, is particularly pronounced in the epigraphs Fowles uses at the beginning of each chapter as they stand isolated in the margin of the text with a 'label' pinned to them. This usage of epigraphs is lifted directly from George Eliot and may be seen perhaps as an expression of the Victorian 'mania for categorization' (354) identified by Fowles but also as an extension and continuation of this same urge. Objectifying the Victorian quotations as artefacts on display and treating their writers deliberately as "marginal" in terms of placement, has the double consequence of distancing the modern period from the Victorian and of bringing the Victorian into the modern world as part of our cultural heritage. If Fowles's fiction represents 'both a homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition' (Fowles, *Ebony*: 23), it does so by elevating writers like Tennyson, Clough and Hardy which makes manifest their continued presence in the Victorian literary canon but simultaneously seeks to undercut their position as representatives. This subversion is achieved by their marginalisation within Fowles's text and his treating them as evidence for the Victorian schizophrenia 'seen at its clearest, its most notorious, in the poets I have quoted so often' (354) and thereby identifying these writers as an unavoidable presence and a part of the 'disease' of Victorianism. On the other hand, the frequent quotations from other writers demand attention in their own right and thus challenge the authority of Fowles's own discourse, cause it to be 'more interruption-prone' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 226) and render his position less settled. In this sense, the marginal position held by the epigraphs may be seen as a centrifugal, even deconstructing, force within Fowles's fiction, since they threaten to push the reader's attention away from the work at hand and into surrounding contexts. Intertexts, not only in the form of epigraphs, but also as stylisations, parody, inserted genres and translations add to the polyphonic design of the novel, as they must be conceived as alien, surrounding voices; voices that intrude upon the author/narrator's voice and threaten the authority of his narrative. Inserting these other voices into the novel's structure, introduces a multitude of different world-views that constantly challenge and illuminate one another. This sense of intersecting, mutually contesting and illuminating contexts is predominant throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, but may be exemplified by the epigraphs to the last chapter of the novel. Here Fowles juxtaposes a quotation on evolution from *The Ambidextrous Universe*, a nineteen-sixties biology book by Martin Gardner, with one from Matthew Arnold:

> Evolution is simply the process by which chance (the random mutations in the nucleic acid helix caused by natural radiation) co-operates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive.
> Martin Gardner, *The Ambidextrous Universe* (1967)

> True piety is *acting what one knows.*
> Matthew Arnold, *Notebooks* (1868)

And then comments directly on these epigraphs on the last page of the novel:

> I have returned, albeit deviously, to my original principle: that there is no intervening god beyond whatever can be seen, in that way, in the first epigraph to this chapter; thus only life as we have, within our hazard-given abilities, made it ourselves, life as Marx defined it – *the actions of men* (and of women) *in pursuit of their ends*. The fundamental principle that should guide these actions, that I believe myself always guided Sarah's, I have set as the second epigraph. A modern existentialist would no doubt substitute 'humanity' or 'authenticity' for 'piety'; but he would recognize Arnold's intent (440, 445).

The unmediated juxtaposition of modern scientific language with Arnold's statement on piety dissolves into a dialogic engagement as Fowles steps in to relate the epigraphs, not only to each other, but also to the thematic development of the novel as a whole. The way in which Fowles addresses the epigraphs brings to light the complex operations of intertextuality. It embraces the novel's juxtaposition of past and present as well as the absence of a god in any religious sense and the attempt to affect the image of the Victorian period by viewing it through a modern objective. But significantly, it also reveals the problems of Fowles's attempt to force the Victorians to 'come clean' (143). For substituting the absent God for the random operations of hazard-ridden natural processes alleviates the presence of an organisational principle no more than disclaiming the authority of the novelist. Fowles, by proclaiming the absence of an 'intervening god beyond whatever can be seen, in that way, in the first epigraph' actually inscribes (in the sense of physically writing *in*) an ordering entity that is not present in Gardner's description of the evolutionary process. Similarly, Arnold's statement implicitly testifies to the presence of an existentialist awareness in the Victorian period Fowles is seeking to show, but the brief sentence also seems to sum up the essence of the Victorian spiritual malaise. By positing 'piety' (with its host of religious connotations) not as an article of faith but as an article of knowledge, Arnold roots piety within the realm of human activities rather than in metaphysical doctrines. Yet he still circumscribes it with the (waning) religious connotations associated with the word piety. In this sense, Arnold epitomises the anxiety of Victorian life suspended between the affirmation of God's existence and the onslaught of scientific knowledge that challenges and erodes the very foundations of faith – an anxiety that is continuously down-played in Fowles portrait of the Victorian age. The implied existentialist awareness, however, is not enough for Fowles who accentuates its presence by suggesting how Arnold's statement might be re-written by 'a modern existentialist' in a way that relieves it of the last vestiges of religious language. This clearly displays the effect of dialogic re-writing and re-contextualisation inherent to the concept of intertextuality, since it emphasises the importance of *context* in the creation of meaning. Simultaneously, the problems of appropriating another's words into one's own context are foregrounded by the resistance the words of both Arnold and Gardner seem to mount against this kind of appropriation. Both epigraphs may be seen to point in the direction Fowles suggests, but at the same time they also reflect contexts that go against the grain of his argument. Context, then, is never a settled and unified whole but rather a constantly shifting environment that changes

according to the angles of intersection between various discourses. This kind of oscillation may also be seen in the continued double presence of ironic antagonism and homage toward traditional storytelling in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and may be identified, moreover, at the heart of the novel's most pervading types of double-voiced discourse.

Irony and the postmodern parody

Any parody, according to Bakhtin, 'is an intentional dialogized hybrid. Within it, languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another' (Bakhtin, Prehistory: 76). Parody presupposes the presence of two discourses, an original and a second one that are set in opposition to one another. Most often, the second discourse is intended to amuse or is mockingly hostile and ridiculing in its attitude towards the original and 'depict[s] a real world of objects not by using the represented language as a productive point of view, but rather by using it as an exposé to destroy the represented language' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 364). This, as we have seen, is not necessarily the case in postmodern uses of parody, which Hutcheon claims are 'characterised by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text' (Hutcheon, *Parody*: 6). Postmodernist parodies, then, precisely take the original object as a productive point of origin against which they can assert their difference and begin to construct their own discourse. They emphasise and dramatise *difference*. In the case of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, a synthesis of these two notions seems to be called for. Implicit in Bakhtin's as well as Hutcheon's formulations of parody lies the concept of *otherness* that is a fundamental component in any relational system. Where the two part ways, is in the conception of the relation between the represented and the representing voice which for Bakhtin is one of hostile antagonism whereas Hutcheon characterises it in terms of ironic inversion; that is, a sense of parody that is neither necessarily amusing nor mocking or hostile. Both, however, recognise parody as a double-directed enterprise where 'languages and styles actively and mutually illuminate one another'. Notably, the parodied text is not a passive object of representation, as could be said to be the case in stylisations, but rather remains an active participant in the creation of meaning. This also lies at the heart of the contention that it is impossible to parody something without simultaneously perpetuating it. Thus, the represented voice continues to assert its influence on the representing one because its point of view is inevitably being restated even if only as an exposé for its destruction or ironic inversion. Parody takes the represented text as its *other*, in fact cannot exist in the absence of this other, as it is precisely the background against which it can assert its difference and establish itself as a text in its own right. The parodied text cannot be assimilated into the new context but must retain its own point of view in order for the parody to exist as a parody. For this reason, the represented text must be allowed to continue as a living entity rather than congealing into a solidified object. The represented and the representing voice must continue to inform one another, continue to exist simultaneously as an organic hybrid

construction; that is, in a kind of permanently double-voiced relationship of mutual contestation, conflict and ironic interplay.

Where, then, does this leave Fowles's use of parody in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*? Into what kind of relationship does Fowles enter with his intertextual references and contexts? And how is this relationship dramatised in the novel?

Irony takes centre stage in Fowles's parodic treatment of the disparate materials that make up his novel. His most common strategy is to present the reader with a piece of information about the Victorian world, a character, the nature of modern fiction etc. and then undercut and destabilise it. This is done either by presenting the given information with an ironic inflection or by inserting an anachronistic comment into an otherwise carefully maintained stylisation. The former is often used, as we have seen, in the treatment of 'the theoreticians of the *nouveau roman*' (389)*,* whereas the latter, for instance, comes into play when the author/narrator says of 'the abominable Mrs Poulteney' (99) that 'there would have been a place in the Gestapo for the lady' (26). Another strategy is providing counter information that self-consciously calls attention to the constructedness of the novel and the distance between the author/narrator's own time and the time of his fiction, as when he describes Charles as 'a healthy agnostic.*',* then adds in a footnote: 'Though he would ton [sic.] have termed himself so, for the simple reason that the word was not coined (by Huxley) until 1870; by which time it had become much needed' (20). Finally, the author/narrator often builds up tension only to simply tear the rug out from underneath the reader's expectations. This technique is evident in the description of the exchange in which Mrs Fairley relates to Mrs Poulteney Sarah's habit of walking in the Undercliff:

> 'I have something unhappy to communicate, ma'm.'
> This phrase had become as familiar to Mrs Poulteney as a storm cone to a fisherman; but she observed convention.
> 'It cannot concern Miss Woodruff?'
> 'Would that it did not, ma'm.' The housekeeper stared solemnly at her mistress, as if to make her quite sure of her undivided dismay.
> 'But I fear it is my duty to tell you.'
> 'We must never fear what is our duty.'
> 'No, ma'm.'
> Still the mouth remained clamped shut; and a third party might well have wondered what horror would be coming. Nothing less than dancing naked on the altar of the parish church would have seemed adequate.
> 'She has taken to walking, ma'm, on Ware Commons.'
> *Such an anticlimax!* Yet Mrs Poulteney seemed not to think so. Indeed her mouth did something extraordinary. It fell open. (68-69, my emphasis)

What is being parodied here is not only the stilted formality of polite conversation or even the ironic tone of voice of the nineteenth century narrator, but the reader's narrative desire; the need for affirmation of our expectations and even a kind of impertinent sensationalism. The 'third party' specifically invoked by the author/narrator is of course not only the author/narrator

himself, who seems to know already what is coming, but the reader who is being led to imagine the worst possible of scenes. But simultaneously the author/narrator's smug exaggeration of the kind scenario that would form the objective correlative to Mrs Poulteney's agitation diminishes the gravity of Sarah's "crime" even before it is pronounced. Any informed reader will, of course, recognise this subversive irony but at the same time perhaps involuntarily be anticipating some revelation akin to the scenario presented by the author/narrator. Thus, the destruction of these expectations and the disregard for the conventions of narrative fulfilment are as shocking to the reader as Mrs Fairley's words are to Mrs Poulteney. The 'anticlimax', then, is not so much tied up with the apparent triviality of Mrs Fairley's news (which does have the desired effect on its audience) as it is with the frustration of the reader's expectations and the destruction of conventional rules of storytelling. In this brief disruption of the narrative, the author/narrator anticipates the far more severe breach in chapter thirteen. Parody, in this connection, becomes the device for the development of the metafictional interrogation of the relationship between reader and text; as well as the interplay of anticipation and frustration that forms the backbone of the retarding narrative strategy employed throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

The parodic use of nineteenth century irony is simply the means by which Fowles is able to conduct his simultaneous investigation of his characters' psychology, the Victorian period and the novel as a genre. The effect of this may be traced through the example of Fowles's analysis of Mrs Poulteney's vehement condemnation of anything associated with Ware Commons. 'The first simple fact', says the author/narrator,

> was that Mrs Poulteney had never set eyes on Ware Commons, not even from a distance, since it was out of sight of any carriage road. The second simple fact is that she was an opium-addict – but before you think that I am wildly sacrificing plausibility to sensation, let me quickly add that she did not know. What we call opium she called laudanum […] a very near equivalent of our own age's sedative pills. Why Mrs Poulteney should have been an inhabitant of the Victorian valley of the dolls we need not inquire, but it is to the point that laudanum, as Coleridge once discovered gives vivid dreams.
> I cannot imagine what Bosch-like picture of Ware Commons Mrs Poulteney had built up over the years […] But we may safely say that it had become the objective correlative of all that went on in her own subconscious (94).

Again, the author/narrator subverts narrative expectations and ironically elaborates the image of Mrs Poulteney as a draconic hypocrite. And again, he dialogically engages the reader, not implicitly as before, but by addressing a metafictional comment qualifying his own previous statement directly to the reader. All the author/narrator's parodic narrative strategies: ironic inversion, anachronism, counter information and deflation of expectations, combine in this paragraph alongside an abundance of intertextual references. Allusions to contemporary pulp fiction (Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls* (1966)) and implicitly to nineteen-sixties slang where 'dolls' refer to tranquillisers, the grotesque medieval 'surrealist' paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, the drug enthused I-expansion of Romanticism with its emphasis on the processes of the imagination (Coleridge) and self-conscious irony are brought together to form a simultaneous

exposition and dismantling of Mrs Poulteney's state of mind.

Many more examples might be given, but Fowles employs a similar strategy throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in developing the novel's major themes of evolution, existentialism, historical revisionism and the construction/deconstruction of the Victorian novel. By drawing parallels between literature and art, juxtaposing different historical periods and establishing dialogic relationships between different modes of writing, Fowles creates a novel that self-consciously challenges and extends the limitations of its own form as well as pushes the boundaries of what can be attained through the use of parody.

Parody, then, is the primary means for the introduction of dialogism and polyphony in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and as such becomes the vehicle by which Fowles is able to sustain and think through the radical heterogeneity of one voice in relation to any other. By virtue of its inherent double-voicedness, parody precisely focuses on the relationship between heterogeneous voices and discourses and provides an instrument for dramatising the relationship between these discourses. In a postmodern context, parody, in combination with the centrifugal forces of intertextuality, allows the development of a radically provisional environment in which any claim to axiomatic stability is interrogated, challenged and subverted. This may be seen in the author/narrator's inclusion of his own position in the parody, his ironic treatment not only of conventional storytelling but also of contemporary, postmodern modes of writing and his constant need for qualifications vis-à-vis his own narrative. For all its emphasis on the provisionality of existence, its ironic inversions and self-conscious destruction of its other, the postmodern parody cannot lay claim to any "absolute relativism" as its very self-consciousness lays it open to interruption, to the possibility of a rejoinder from the *other*.

To sum up, intertextuality, ultimately, simultaneously constitutes the structure and dissolution of structure into which *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is embedded, as it both informs and unsettles Fowles's construction of his image of the Victorian age. By his use of intertextual references and parody, Fowles opens his own discourse to interruption from both Victorianism and the influence of the *nouveau roman*. As such, intertextuality works not only in accordance with but also against authorial intentions, adds to the growing polyphony of voices and deprives the author/narrator of any finalising power. By virtue of this double-directedness, intertexts further the destabilising power of dialogism as they insert multiple worldviews into the novel and drive wedges into the discourse of the author/narrator – confirming the slippage in authorial control that we have noticed time and again throughout this study – a slippage that is becoming steadily more pronounced.

Chapter VI: Slippages

The pervading sense that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* becomes increasingly polyphonic as the novel moves towards its conclusion is manifested in the several occasions on which the author/narrator's voice is inflected by the voices of characters or by other texts that impinge upon his discourse. Of course, on a fundamental level it is an illusion to believe that the Author can be completely extirpated from the novel. He will naturally always be there in the figure of the real living novelist, but also as a kind of organisational principle at work within the novel. Thus all these voices are *allowed* to take over; are *allowed* to impinge upon his word. The notion of the "author" as an organisational principle is obviously closely related to Fowles's notion of 'the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist' and is consequently built into the novel at its most fundamental structural level. On this level, it is impossible to escape the influence of the author: *the "author" is always in control*; but orchestrates the multitude of different voices in such a way that they retain their independence within the novel's polyphonic design. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* the author/narrator deliberately stands aside on several occasions and permits alien voices to speak in his place. Most notably in the description of the proceedings at Ma Terpsichore's, where the narrator's voice is replaced by a long quotation from Shurgrue's *The History of the Human Heart* (1749); or in the case of Matthaei's *Observations Médico-psychologiques*. In the latter, however, the representation of the trial of Émile de La Roncière takes on a distinctly double-voiced quality as it is presented to the reader in the narrator's translation 'of the pages that the doctor [Grogan] had marked' (226), and is thereby imbued with a sense of objectification.

Accepting a certain controlling influence as inevitable, however, does not mean that the Author is able to hold everything in his sway; nor that texts hold no power to resist their writer and to push him in different directions. Some texts, like 'A ∴ I' from Thalia Field's collection *Point and Line* (2000), seem to actively oppose their creator, to be drawn towards their own margins and to dissolve the very language that constitutes them; a process similar to Samuel Beckett's 'unsaying', or 'unwording', of the fictional world in *Worstward Ho*, which reduces the object of representation and the text itself to its final irreducible minimum as we saw earlier. Without drawing a direct comparison between the opaque and much more radically self-reflexive texts of Field and Beckett and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, they do point to the tendency of many postmodern literary texts to offer a resistance to their narrator and to unsettle and disrupt the flow of narration by inserting multi-directed discourses into their texture. One of the distinguishing traits of literary polyphony is precisely this ability of texts to subvert, question and expose the intentions of their maker and to make their presence felt independently of the Author. In self-reflexive texts like 'A ∴ I' or *Worstward Ho,* this ability seems so pronounced that it becomes an extension on a textual level of Bakhtin's claim that characters in the polyphonic novel are '*not only objects of authorial discourse but also subject*

of their own directly signifying discourse' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 7) – an ability that is also noticeable, if in a less radical form, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.*

As we have seen, one such imposition made by the text on the author/ narrator's discourse is the influence the *nouveau roman* maintains throughout the novel. Another rises from the Victorian modes of writing that are being parodied and re-functioned in a postmodern context. In 'Discourse in the Novel', Bakhtin asserts that some words actively resist appropriation into an alien context by acting 'as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 294). This kind of "textual insurgence" is frequent in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and remains a destabilising force within the discourse of the author/narrator. Even though they are being continually interrogated and dismantled by the author/narrator, the conventions of Victorian fiction are still capable of asserting their influence on his voice.

When the author/narrator plays with the idea of leaving the novel with an inconclusive ending after 'having brought this fiction to a thoroughly traditional ending' in chapter forty-four and subsequently dismisses this possibility as a figment of Charles's imagination: 'what he spent the hours between London and Exeter imagining might happen' (327), the conventions of Victorian fiction intervene:

> Now the question I am asking myself as I stare at Charles, is not quite the same as the two above [Now could I use you? / Now what could I do with you?]. But rather, what the devil am I going to do with you? I have already thought of ending Charles's career here and now; of leaving him for eternity on his way to London. But *the conventions of Victorian fiction allow, allowed no place for the open, the inconclusive ending* (389, my emphasis).

Here the author/narrator's correction in tense, from *allow* to *allowed* is significant, because it suggests that the narrator finds himself entangled in the Victorian fiction he parodically deconstructs. It looks very much like a slip of the tongue; as if the author/narrator needs to remind himself of the hundred years that lie between him and the Victorian age. This small-scale 'insurrection' mounted by Victorianism, however, is perhaps the last gasp of a ~~novel~~ 'under erasure' (Derrida, *Dif.* 51), to borrow a term from Derrida; for at the same time Fowles reminds himself that it is time 'to overcome history' (286), to move beyond the limitations of the Victorian novel and make the final leap into postmodernism. As the novel grows steadily more polyphonic, the form of the Victorian novel slowly disintegrates and is replaced by the postmodern, which, however, retains traces of what has preceded it. In this way, Fowles's questioning and re-employment of elements of the Victorian novel relate to his remarks – closely resembling Barth's '"literature of exhausted possibility"' (Barth, Exhaustion: 29) – earlier in the novel on the 'succession of superseded forms': 'Death is not in the nature of things; it is the nature of things. But what dies is the form. The matter is immortal' (285). This formulation clearly emphasises Fowles's concern with the formal evolution of the novel.

Fowles's parody and re-functioning of Victorian literary conventions, then, create a novel that is an intentional dialogised hybrid of old and new, but the intentionality of Fowles's

treatment of the Victorian period does not necessarily mean that he is in a superior position to, and consequently in complete control of, the Victorian intertext. Interestingly, the contention that the form ceases while the matter persists is as double-voiced as any other in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as it seems to belie the fact that the novel in the outward appearance of its surface elements retains a distinctly Victorian quality even as its aesthetic princip-les are being slowly emptied of their content.

One way of moving beyond the limitations of the Victorian novel is to annul the conventional ending; that is, the principle that a novel cannot be left with an indefinite open ending; that all threads must be neatly tied up, all characters accounted for. Yet the 'Victorian ending' Fowles pastiches in chapter forty-four is so blatantly naïve and banal that it would hardly seem permissible even in a Victorian context. It certainly cannot be afforded in a postmodern one and is consequently rejected. Fowles circumvents the problem of the traditional ending by consigning it to Charles's imagination and inventing another fictitious 'I', an aberration who 'was not myself' but 'merely the personification of a certain massive indifference in things' (328). Thus the author/narrator is able to continue his interrogation of the Victorian novel by writing alternative, contradictory endings, leaving *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in a radically inconclusive state.

Paradoxically, the method Fowles employs in orchestrating the double ending simultaneously shows the author/narrator at his most intrusive, most omnipotent, his most manipulative and confirms the slippage in authorial control that is becoming steadily more pronounced as the novel progresses towards its conclusion.

When, in chapter 61, 'the extremely important-looking person that has […] been leaning against the parapet of the embankment […] takes out his watch' and 'makes a small adjustment to the time' (440, 441), it is, of course, a major intervention by the author/narrator, even though he tries to dismiss it as a relatively minor one and to rid himself of any accusation of tampering with his fictional world. As on the earlier occasion when the author/narrator placed himself in the train compartment with Charles, the blending of ontological levels creates a strange doubling effect that foregrounds the role of the "author" behind the Author. But this time the Author is not only split in two and appears simultaneously in the first and third person; two conflicting intentions are also immediately discernable in the author/narrator's discourse.

> I did not want to introduce him; but since he is the sort of man who cannot bear to be left out of the limelight, the kind of man who travels first class or not at all, for whom the first is the only pronoun, who in short has first things on the brain, and since I am the kind of man who refuses to intervene in nature (even the worst), he has got himself in – or as he would put it, has got himself in *as he really is*. I shall not labour the implication that he was previously got in as he really wasn't, and is therefore not truly a new character at all; but rest assured that this personage is, in spite of appearances, a very minor figure – as minimal, in fact, as a gamma-ray particle (440).

The author-persona clearly 'has got himself in' against the Author's will. Significantly, this

reveals that even as the author/narrator makes his most intrusive foray into the fictional world of the novel and actually *reverses time*, the structural independence of his characters is now so pronounced that it includes even his own position. The Author's double is beginning to disobey, to live a life on his own. The slippage is complete and despite appearances the authorial position is no longer a position of authority. ''I' is simply another character' (Fowles, Notes: 21).

It is, of course, as stated above, a rather paradoxical affirmation of the slippage in authorial control, as the very act that completes the slippage also sees the author/narrator at his most intrusive – at the site of Fowles's most radical departure from the conventions of traditional storytelling and the most widely debated issue of his novel: the multiple endings.

Endings: dialogism in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

Taking his cue from Fowles*,* David Lodge makes problematical endings in the novel the subject of his essay 'Ambiguously Ever After: Problematical Endings in the Novel'. With *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a point of departure, Lodge discusses a line of novels from Charlotte Brontë's *Vilette* (1853) and Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) to Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* that have ended on a note of ambiguity. In the case of *Great Expectations*, Dickens first wrote an unhappy ending but published the novel with an alternative happy ending due to the influence of readers and publisher.[67] *A Clockwork Orange* was published in both a British and an American version that respectively retained and omitted the final twenty-first chapter in which Alex sees the error of his 'ultraviolent' ways and decides to begin a new life as a reformed citizen (Lodge, Endings: 50-51). Ambiguity, then, has arisen mostly as a consequence of publishers' demands for either a happy or an unhappy ending. Brontë's *Vilette*, on the other hand, actually leaves the decision of whether the main character's fiancé returns from his journey or perishes at sea be up to the reader's disposition.[68] The main difference between these anterior examples and Fowles's novel is that in the earlier cases the endings have not been published deliberately in the same volume and thus do not generate the same kind of ontological uncertainty as *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Lodge concludes his analysis by asserting that

> Fowles does not […] avoid the onus of decision by giving both endings. The second ending disqualifies the first, and not only because it comes second. The happy closed ending is Victorian; the unhappy, open ending, which leaves Charles walking grimly along the deserted Embankment, beside a Thames figured symbolically as 'the river of life, of mysterious laws and mysterious choice' – this is modern, and commands our assent. More plausible than either, by empirical criteria, is the first discarded ending, where Charles decides to let Sarah go, and settles for a safe, respectable, married life with Ernestina. But not even a modern existentialist novel can afford to have an ending as banal, as anticlimactic, as that. (Lodge, Endings: 53-54)

More than being an issue of the nature of each individual ending, however, it seems to me that the problem of the double ending constituted in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* lies in the fact that *both* are literally present and therefore refuse to be reduced to a matter of mere ambiguity

– of happy vs. unhappy, open vs. closed, modern vs. Victorian ending. The multiple endings seem to contradict the very concept of an ending by forcing the Victorian and the modern sense of an ending to engage each other dialogically. In this sense, the endings cannot be discussed as a matter of choice, of unresolved ambiguity, but must be seen in terms of double-voicedness: two juxtaposed voices that actively speak up for themselves and demand attention each in its own right.

The double ending is perhaps the clearest example of the growing polyphony of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and emphasises the role played by dialogism in the novel's continuous engagement with both Victorian and postmodern modes of writing. Again Paul de Man's identification of the function of dialogism as a principle of radical otherness that contrary to aspiring to a finalising synthesis or resolution functions as a means for the sustained interrogation of the very need for a synthesis or resolution. In connection with Fowles's multiple endings, dialogism establishes itself in opposition to 'the tyranny of the last chapter', which seeks to instil the appearance of being 'the final, the real version' (390). It also creates, and, indeed dramatises, the need for a mode of writing that is capable of accommodating a double-voiced discourse that resists being fused into the synthesis of a finalised conclusion.

Fowles's response lies in an immersion into what Brian McHale, borrowing a title from Jorge Luis Borges, calls 'a garden of forking paths' (McHale: 110); a type of narration where narrative can be analysed 'into a system of branchings. At each point in the story, the narrative agent is faced with a bifurcation, two possibilities, only one of which can be realized at a time' (McHale: 106). The crux of the problem is clearly identified by the author/narrator when he says:

> That leaves me with two alternatives. I let the fight, [the struggle between the conflicting intentions of Charles and Sarah] proceed and take no more than a recording part in it; or I take both sides in it [….] As we near London, I think I see a solution; that is, I see that the dilemma is false. The only way I can take no part in the fight is to show two versions of it. That leaves me with only one problem: I cannot give both versions at once, yet whichever is the second will seem, so strong is the tyranny of the last chapter, the final, the real version (390).

Dramatising forking-path narration, however, does not quite solve the problem of the "end-weight principal", since it forces the reader to see them as mutually exclusive. *If one is reality the other cannot be*. If this mutual exclusiveness is taken literally, however, it means that only one ending is the real one, and that in choosing one we should act as if the other was not there, which is, of course, impossible because *both* are literally present in the novel and presented as equally real. The only answer to the conundrum, then, remains to regard the double ending as a special type of loophole and thus as an explicit occurrence of double-voiced discourse. According to Bakhtin,

> a loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words. If a word retains such a loophole this must inevitably be reflected in its structure. This potential other

> meaning, that is, the loophole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow. Judged by its meaning alone, the word with a loophole should be an ultimate word and does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final, period (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 233).

The idea that a word lives in a state of constant "penultimateness" is an interesting one in connection with the double ending because it emphasises the problems that present themselves when the reader is led to regard the endings as simultaneous and mutually exclusive, but nevertheless is unable to completely disregard the "other" ending. Each chapter does present itself as the ultimate one, but does so only conditionally, since the potential other meaning remains lurking in the background. This suggests an oscillating nature to the two endings where alternative meanings continually flicker and shift. They present themselves as *ambidextrous narratives*, not necessarily as 'self-erasing sequences' (McHale: 109). This conception of the double ending is perhaps best conveyed by a kind of visual metaphor representing the overlapping parts of the final chapters simultaneously.

'No. It is as I say. You have not only planted the dagger in my breast, you have delighted in twisting it.' She stood now staring at Charles, as if against her will, but hypnotized, the defiant criminal awaiting sentence. He pronounced it. 'A day will come when you shall be called to account for what you have done to me. And if there is justice in heaven – your punishment shall outlast eternity.'

Melodramatic words; yet words sometimes matter less than the depth of feeling behind them – and these came out of Charles's whole being and despair. What cried out behind them was not melodrama, but tragedy. For a long moment she continued to stare at him; something of the terrible outrage in his soul was reflected in her eyes. With an acute abruptness she lowered her head.

He hesitated one last second; his face was like the poised-crumbling walls of a dam, so vast was the weight of anathema pressing to roar down. But as suddenly as she had looked guilty, he ground his jaws shut, turned on his heel and marched towards the door… (433).

'No. It is as I say. You have not only planted the dagger in my breast, you have delighted in twisting it.' She stood now staring at Charles, as if against her will, but hypnotized, the defiant criminal awaiting sentence. He pronounced it. 'A day will come when you shall be called to account for what you have done to me. And if there is justice in heaven – your punishment shall outlast eternity!'

He hesitated one last second; his face was like the poised-crumbling walls of a dam, so vast was the weight of anathema pressing to roar down. But as suddenly as she had looked guilty, he ground his jaws shut, turned on his heel and marched towards the door… (442).

This kind of (trick) juxtaposition is interesting in that it stresses the "forking-path" element, the simultaneity of the endings, and makes it possible to view differences and similarities that are normally obscured by the turning of pages and the passage of (reading) time. At the same time it suggests that the endings are perhaps not just mutually exclusive but may be regarded as dialogically engaged; that is, a double voice split in two and represented contrapuntally.

If the two chapters are mutually exclusive indeed, with one seamlessly replacing the other, as is suggested by the author-persona's reversal of time (and emphasised by the fact that his 'timepiece' is 'an instrument from the bench of the greatest of watchmakers' (441)), it seems

strange that the overlapping sections – used expressly to represent their simultaneity – are not completely identical. In fact, Charles's vehemence when he pronounces his judgement on Sarah seems to have inexplicably grown in the second version. This is marked by the substitution of the (.) with an (!) at the end of Charles's 'sentence'. Furthermore, the deleted passage describing Charles's words and Sarah's reaction to them lingers in the word 'But'. In the second version of this episode, there is no sign that Sarah is penitent. One moment she is 'the defiant criminal awaiting sentence' the next she 'suddenly […] had looked guilty'. Sarah's reaction is omitted but it is still implicitly there. This suggests that the second version of the ending somehow presupposes the first even though this is clearly impossible by virtue of their simultaneity. The meaning of the first ending, indeed, continues to haunt the second like a shadow.

When the endings finally branch out with one leaving Charles and Sarah reconciled through their mutual child, Lalage; the other eternally separated with Charles on his way 'out again, upon the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea (445), the individual "voice" represented by each chapter seems to lose its double-voicing. In the process, however, the *novel itself becomes structurally double-voiced* as the double directed engagement with the Victorian and the modern is bifurcated into two separate entities: one Victorian, the other modern. This forces the reader to perceive and think through the exteriority or heterogeneity of one voice with regard to the other, including that of the novel itself, and thus to question the very concept of the ending rather than choosing one ending over the other. Seen in this way, the loophole becomes rather like the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), a passageway to an alternative reality – the reality of postmodernist fiction.

With the double ending, Fowles continues what Bakhtin identifies as the principle task of the polyphonic novel; that is, 'the task of coordinating and exposing languages to each other' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 365) and expands this conception of languages to incorporate "the language of the ending", the conventional ways in which writers of different periods have preferred to end their novels – whether it be the closed ending of Victorian convention or the inconclusive, open ending favoured by the modernists.

The word with a loophole works, then, by virtue of its "penultimateness", as an agent of *différance*. It continuously postpones and actively resists any finalising definitions and points specifically to the unstable and contradictory nature of language and narrative. As it has been throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, language becomes an object of intent scrutiny. In the closing pages of the novel, Charles is said to examine 'every word that had been spoken in that room' with the same acute attention he shows Lalage as he observes 'her face, her hands, her every inch' (437). Language continually seems to slip out from underneath the observer's gaze, to fold in upon itself and to gainsay everything that has come before. In this respect, the author/narrator's observation that 'language is like shot silk; so much depends on the angle at which it is held' (437) becomes an emblem of the continuous investigation of language and

literary conventions that takes place in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as well as the multitude of dialogic relationships that exist among all levels of this densely textured novel.

The loophole presents itself in conflation with the Bakhtinian concept of 'unfinalisability', suggesting that '*nothing conclusive has yet taken place, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future*' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 166). Far from achieving any finite resolution, the double ending produces a genuine polyphony of independent and unmerged voices.

Due to its polyphonic narrative mode, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* seems to reach uncontrollably beyond the limit of its pages; a sense that is perhaps best encapsulated in the etymological roots of the name Lalage – ''It is Greek. From *lalageo*, to babble like a brook'' (438).

Conclusion: In the silence of other voices

The reading of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* undertaken in this thesis must be seen predominantly as an attempt to identify and analyse the function of dialogism and polyphony in the creation of what Malcolm Bradbury has called 'a remarkably doubled work' (Bradbury, *Novel*: 358). It must also be seen, however, as a refusal to monologise Fowles's novel and a continuation of the urge to 'sustain and think through the radical exteriority or heterogeneity of one voice in relation to any other' (de Man, Dialogue: 109), we have identified as a principal concern in Fowles's simultaneous engagement with the Victorian age and postmodernism. In this respect, my study sets itself partly in opposition to a critic like David Lodge, who seems to deprive Fowles's novel of much of its subversive and formally regenerative power by reducing the significance of its multiple endings to a matter of mere choice. In this respect, 'the silence of other voices' does not refer specifically to Fowles, but must be taken as an (self-conscious) endeavour on my part to resist the monologising tendency inherent in the critical conclusion by counter-balancing it with an intertextual reference.[69]

The merits of approaching Fowles's novel from a Bakhtinian perspective are many. Firstly, the profoundly humanist conception of language and literature developed by Bakhtin is well suited to a writer who has described his novel *Daniel Martin* as 'a defence and illustration of an unfashionable philosophy, humanism'.[70] Secondly, the concepts of dialogism and polyphony provide a highly distinctive vocabulary for describing and analysing the use of double-voiced discourse in the novel. Thirdly, Bakhtinian thought permits us to address the challenge offered by shifting points of view without surrendering to the paradox of an absolute relativism. Finally, the wonderful responsiveness of Bakhtin's concepts in mapping out relations between thematic and structural levels within a narrative and its contexts make them invaluable tools in establishing how a given work is constructed and forms a kind of framework inside which dialogic relationships may be explored.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, dialogism functions as the means for Fowles's juxtaposition of multiple intentions, languages and contexts within a plurality of independent voices. In conjunction, polyphony serves as the vehicle for orchestrating these voices and for sustaining and dramatising heterogeneity. Thus dialogism and polyphony must be regarded as the very principles that enable Fowles to conduct his simultaneous construction and deconstruction of the literary conventions governing the Victorian novel, his investigation of the processes of narration and his engagement with postmodernist (in the guise of the *nouveau roman*) modes of viewing and representing the world. In this, Bakhtinian thought intersects with the poststructuralist concepts of intertextuality, deconstruction and difference that may be said to inform Fowles's construction of the novel. The interest in margins, the radical questioning and unsettling of dominant ideologies and the focus on inconsistencies and "fault lines" within various discourses that are taken as defining characteristics of poststructuralism are reflected

throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

In Fowles's novel, the conventions of Victorian fiction are deconstructed simultaneously by two paths. On the one hand, external deconstructive forces derive from the author/narrator's double-voiced discourse that gradually erodes the foundations of Victorian writing from a postmodern point of view, while, on the other, Sarah Woodruff functions as an element of *discursive otherness* within the image of Victorian society constructed by Fowles. As such, she represents an internal carnivalising, deconstructive force that challenges the dominant ideologies of Victorian life. The carnivalising, or deconstructive, force, however, is not directed exclusively at Victorianism. Throughout the novel, the author/narrator also continuously foregrounds his own part in the construction and challenges the authority of his own discourse. By creating a modern novel masquerading as a Victorian novel about the Victorian novel, the author/narrator self-consciously portrays this type of novel as an archetype, but by the same modes of double-voiced discourse that are used in the creation of this archetype and by linking the construction of archetypes with the theme of misreading, the validity of this archetype is undermined and exposed as fraught with contingency. Thus, by extension, the validity of authorial discourse is questioned and gradually subverted.

This argument leads us straight to the discussion of three major issues that have been identified as central preoccupations in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the main areas in which dialogism and polyphony come into play. 1) Fowles's simultaneous dialogic engagement with the Victorian and the postmodern, 2) the slippage in authorial control and its connection with the discussion of character independence and 3) the role of dialogism and polyphony in the development of the novel's major themes: existentialism, evolution and historical revisionism.

Throughout *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles dialogically engages the Victorian novel, as we have seen, but also postmodernist or poststructuralist modes of writing. The theories of *nouveau roman* expounded by Barthes and Robbe-Grillet are taken as the focal point of Fowles's critique of postmodernist literature. For all his ironic digs at the *nouveau roman*, however, Fowles is forced to ultimately concede the inescapable influence of this type of modern writing and try to assimilate its techniques into his own context. The result is a kind of marriage of opposites – a novel that presents itself as both conspicuously traditional and distinctly postmodern.

Fowles's acknowledgement of the impossibility of resurrecting nineteenth-century modes of writing without treating them in accordance with the literary fashions of his own time, links the investigation of the ideas of Victorianism and postmodernism with issues of authorial control. This study shows that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* turns increasingly polyphonic after the first major intervent-ion by the Author in chapter thirteen. This shift may be seen in the acts of dissention performed by the novel's characters as well as in the proliferation of alien voices in the form of hidden direct discourse, inserted genres (letters, diary entries, legal

documents), quotations from other writers etc. that inflect or interrupt the author/narrator's voice. In the growing polyphony, the authority of the author/narrator's position is gradually subverted. The slippage of authorial control is completed when the author/narrator is ultimately unable to control his own double and the author-persona seems to enter the novel as a character against the will of the Author. The slippage in authorial control, moreover, directly informs the continued development of polyphony. As the authority of the author/narrator wanes, alien voices are afforded a still greater share of autonomy. Polyphony in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* must thus be perceived as being in an evolutionary state; one that is written into being as the novel moves towards its conclusion. From initially being granted as a response by the Author to a dissenting act performed by Charles, character independence turns from a thematic pre-occupation to a structural necessity. Correspondingly, the investigation of the role of the Author in the construction of narrative gradually compromises his position in the novel's polyphonic structure.

The identification of the evolutionary aspect of polyphony in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, then, enables us to modulate into a final discussion of the role of dialogism and polyphony in the development of the novel's major themes of existentialism, evolution and historical revisionism. We have already intimated how evolution and autonomy are reflected in the novel's design. The freedom posited by Fowles as a fundamental condition of the existentialist conception of being is developed not only on a thematic level but steadily works its way into the polyphonic structure. Polyphony, then, simply functions as Fowles's means for allowing his characters an autonomous existence within the fictional world they inhabit. The Author's granting of this independence may even be said to reflect the existentialist choice by being presented as a necessity that may have far-reaching implications, not just for the characters to which this independence is granted but also for the Author himself. Relinquishing authorial control means that the authorial voice becomes just another voice in the plurality of voices seeking to assert themselves in the novel. Literary polyphony, then, serves as a vehicle for conducting the novel's extensive discussion of existentialism and the mode of writing that makes it possible to dramatise and explore the ramifications of existential freedom.

Similarly, the development of the theme of evolution cannot be situated strictly on the thematic level but branches out to narrative, structural and formal levels as well. Fowles's investigation of the form of the novel reflects *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s preoccupation with evolution as a method for advancing a species. The novel itself evolves from a Victorian stylisation to a full-blown postmodernist metafiction. In this sense, the Victorian novel may be seen to undergo a series of mutations in order to create a novel form that is better adapted to survive. Thematic and formal evolution, furthermore, is ultimately inherent to Fowles's critique of the *nouveau roman*, which he sees as an evolutionary dead end for the novel. Significantly, the evolutionary theme points to dialogism as an *a priori* quality of all language and polyphony

as a purely novelistic concept. The formal evolution of the novel is advanced by means of double-voiced discourse and as such leaves the dialogic nature of language unaffected whereas polyphony seems to be subordinated to the process of evolution. This conceptual distribution not only establishes the dialogical principle as a fundamental element in Fowles's construction of the novel, it also identifies the formal evolution of the novel as his principal concern in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Furthermore, evolution is foregrounded as the dominant metaphor for the process of narration.

Finally, dialogism and polyphony combined with intertextuality play a vital role in Fowles's revision of the Victorian period. The polyphonic design allows a multitude of heterogeneous voices (in the guise of intertextual references) to be incorporated into the novel where they form the historical context for the image of the Victorian age that is then challenged and subverted by the use of double-voiced discourse. Dialogism allows the simultaneous construction and deconstruction of Victorianism and foregrounds the radical provisionality of historical knowledge. Yet at the same time, it destabilises Fowles's authorial position and renders his own discourse prone to interruption as it serves to emphasise Bakhtin's claim that 'the word in language is half someone else's' (Bakhtin, Discourse: 293). This contention can be illustrated by the fact that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* begins and ends with a quote and thus essentially allows its first and final word to be uttered by another – a point that stresses its adherence to the dialogical principle and immersion in the world of heteroglossia, its dialogic relationship with surrounding, alien discourses and its position at the ground of intersection between a multitude of heterogeneous voices.

The conclusion drawn from this investigation must be that dialogism and polyphony permeate every fibre of Fowles's engagement with the Victorian and the postmodern in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. All levels, narrative, structural, formal and thematic within this densely textured novel must be seen as dialogically interrelated and all seem to listen attentively to changes and modulations in each other and react correspondingly. As such, Bakhtin's concepts serve as dynamic, highly responsive vehicles for the continuous interrogation of Victorianism and critique of postmodern modes of writing that forms the backbone of Fowles's novel. Inside the novel, dialogism and polyphony act as deconstructive forces not only vis-à-vis the Victorian novel and the *nouveau roman* but also in relation to Fowles's own authorial position. At the same time, however, Bakhtin's concepts work as a positive, constructive power in his attempt at a formal revitalisation of the novel genre; an attempt that draws much of its energy from a sophisticated use of double-voiced discourse and an elaborate polyphonic design. Dialogism and polyphony, then, may be seen as constitutive elements in the distinctive sense of "novelness" that permeates *The French Lieutenant's Woman* – a novel that testifies above all to the power and reach of Fowles's dialogic imagination.

Bibliography

Auster, Paul. *The New York Trilogy*. London, Faber and Faber, 1988.

Acheson, James. *John Fowles*. Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1998.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Michael Holquist (ed.). Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trs.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

— 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Michael Holquist (ed.). Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trs.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

— 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Michael Holquist (ed.). Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trs.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

— 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Michael Holquist (ed.). Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trs.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

— *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Caryl Emerson (ed. and tr.). Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

— *Rabelais and His World*. Hélène Iswolsky (tr.). Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1984.

Barth, John. 'The Literature of Exhaustion'. *Atlantic Monthly*: Vol. 220, Issue 2, 1967, p. 29-.

— 'The Literature of Replenishment'. *Atlantic Monthly*: Vol. 245, Issue 1, 1980, p. 65-.

Barthes, Roland. 'The Death of the Author' in Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Harlow, Longman, 1988.

Beckett, Samuel, *Nohow On: Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho*. New York, Grove Press, 1996.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. 2nd edition. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. 2nd edition. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Bowen, Deborah. 'The Riddler Riddled: Reading the Epigraphs in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'. *The Journal of Narrative Technique*: Vol. 25, Issue 1, Winter 1995, p. 67-.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern British Novel*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1994.

Bradbury, Malcolm; McFarlane, James (eds.). *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1991.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge, Ma, Harvard University Press, 1984.

Brontë, Charlotte. *Vilette*. London, Pan Books, 1973.

Burgess, Anthony. *A Clockwork Orange*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1996.

Byatt, A. S.. *Possession: A Romance*. London, Vintage, 1991.

Calvino, Italo. *Hvis en vinternat en rejsende*. Viborg, Tiderne Skifter, 1997.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. London, Minster Classic, 1968.

Cave, Nick. *And the Ass Saw the Angel*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Ross C. Murfin (ed.); 2nd edition, Boston, New York, Bedford Books, St. Martin's Press, 1996.

Currie, Mark. *Difference*. London, Routledge, 2004.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. London, Anchor Books, 2000.

Davidson, Donald. *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984.

Day, Aidan. *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998.

—— 'Parodying Postmodernism: Muriel Spark (*The Driver's Seat*) and Robbe-Grillet (*Jealousy*)'. Unpublished article, University of Aarhus, 2004.

de Man, Paul. 'Dialogue and Dialogism' in Morson and Emerson, *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges*. Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1989.

—— 'Semiology and Rhetoric' in de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979.

Derrida, Jacques. *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. Peggy Kamuf (ed.). Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

—— *Difference*. Søren Gosvig Olesen (tr.). Frederiksberg, Det lille Forlag, 2002.

—— 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Harlow, Longman, 1988.

Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1996.

—— *The Pickwick Papers*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986.

Eddins, Dwight. 'John Fowles: Existence as Authorship'. *Contemporary Literature*: Vol. 17, 1976. p. 204-.

Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. London, Vintage, 1995.

Field, Thalia. *Point and Line*. New York, New Directions, 2000.

Fothergill, Brian (ed.). *Essays by Divers Hands*. London, The Royal Society of Literature, New Series Vol. XLI, Boydell Press, 1979.

Fowles, John. *Daniel Martin*. London, Vintage, 1998**.**

—— *The Ebony Tower*. London, Vintage, 1996.

—— 'Foreword to the Poems' in Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings*. Jan Relf (ed.). London, Vintage, 1999.

—— *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. London, Vintage, 1996.

—— 'I Write Therefore I Am' in Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings*. Jan Relf

(ed.). London, Vintage, 1999.

— *A Maggot.* London, Vintage, 1996.

— *The Magus* (Revised edition, 1977). London, Vintage, 1997.

— *Mantissa.* London, Picador, 1993.

— 'Notes on an Unfinished Novel' in Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings.* Jan Relf (ed.). London, Vintage, 1999.

— 'An Unholy Inquisition' (Interview with Dianne Vipond) in Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings.* Jan Relf (ed.). London, Vintage, 1999.

— *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings.* Jan Relf (ed.). London, Vintage, 1999.

Gardner, Martin. *The Ambidextrous Universe.* London, Penguin, 1967.

Hansson, Heidi. 'The Double Voice of Metaphor: A.S. Byatt's *Morpho Eugenia*'. *Twentieth Century Literature*: Vol. 45, Issue 4, Winter 1999, p. 452-.

Hirschkop, Ken; Shepherd, David (eds.), *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory.* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989.

Hirschkop, Ken. 'Introduction' in Hirschkop and Shepherd (eds.), *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory.* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989.

Holmes, Frederick M. 'History, Fiction, and the Dialogic Imagination'. *Contemporary Literature*: Vol. 32, Issue 2, 1991, p. 229-.

Holquist, Michael. *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World.* 2nd edition. London, Routledge, 2002.

Houghton, Walter E. *The Victorian Frame of Mind.* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction.* London. Routledge, 1988.

— *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms.* London, Routledge, 1991.

Kristeva, Julia. 'Word, Dialogue, Novel' in Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader.* Toril Moy (ed.). Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Landrum, David. 'Rewriting Marx: Emancipation and Restoration in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'. *Twentieth Century Literature*; Spring 1996, Vol. 42, Issue 1, p. 103-.

Larsen, Steffen Hejlskov. *Dansk Lyrik 1955-1965: Modernismens Lyrikere.* Haslev, Gyldendal, 1970.

Locatelli, Carla. *Unwording the World: Samuel Beckett's Prose Works after the Nobel Prize.* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

Lodge, David. 'Ambiguously Ever After: Problematical Endings in the Novel' in Fothergill (ed.), *Essays by Divers Hands.* London, The Royal Society of Literature, New Series Vol. XLI, Boydell Press, 1979.

Lodge, David (ed.). *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader.* Harlow, Longman, 1988.

Loveday, Simon. *The Romances of John Fowles.* Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1985.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction.* London, Routledge, 2001.

Onega, Susana. 'Self, World, and Art in the Fiction of John Fowles'. *Twentieth Century Literature*: Hempstead, Spring 1996; Vol. 42, Issue 1, p. 29-.

Perec, George. *Livet: En Brugsanvisning.* København, Rosinante, 1999.

— *Ting: En historie fra tresserne.* Århus, Tiderne Skifter, 1999.

Punday, Daniel. 'Meaning in Postmodern Worlds: The Case of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'. *Semiotica*: Fall 1997, Vol. 115, Issue 3, pp. 313-.

Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49.* London, Vintage, 2000.

— *Gravity's Rainbow.* London, Vintage, 2000.

Rifbjerg, Klaus. 'Kanariefuglens begravelse' in Hejlskov Larsen (ed.), *Dansk lyrik 1955-1965: Modernismens lyrikere.* Haslev, Gyldendal, 1970.

Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *Jealousy.* London, John Calder, 1987.

— *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel.* London, Calder and Boyars, 1965.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. 'Allegories of Immersion: Virtual Narration in Postmodern Fiction'. *Style*: Dekalb, Summer 1995, Vol. 29, Issue 2, p. 262-.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics.* Wade Baskin (tr.). Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (eds.). London, Peter Owen, 1974.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet.* Harold Jenkins (ed.). (Arden edition) London, Routledge, 1990.

Shklovsky, Victor. 'Art as Technique' in Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader.* Harlow, Longman, 1988.

Susann, Jacqueline. *Valley of the Dolls.* London, Virago, 2003.

Tarbox, Katherine. *The Art of John Fowles.* Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1988.

— '*The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the Evolution of Narrative'. *Twentieth Century Literature*: Spring 1996, Vol. 42, Issue 1, p. 88-.

Tennyson, Alfred Lord. *Selected Poems.* London, Penguin, 1991.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle.* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today.* New York, Garland, 1999.

Vice, Sue. *Introducing Bakhtin.* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997.

Welsh, Irvine. *Trainspotting.* London, Minerva, 1994.

Wolfreys, Julian. *Deconstruction/Derrida.* New York, St. Martin's Press, 1998.

Notes

[1] Heidi Hansson, 'The Double Voice of Metaphor: A.S. Byatt's *Morpho Eugenia*' (*Twentieth Century Literature*: Winter 1999, Volume 45, Issue 4) p. 452.

[2] Frederick M. Holmes, 'History, Fiction, and the Dialogic Imagination' (*Contemporary Literature*: Vol. 32, Issue 2, 1991) pp. 229-243.

[3] Deborah Bowen, 'The Riddler Riddled: Reading the Epigraphs in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*' (*The Journal of Narrative Technique*: Vol. 25, Issue 1, Winter 1995, pp. 67-91.)

[4] Paul de Man, 'Semiology and Rhetoric' in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979.) p. 10. Henceforth (de Man, Semiology).

[5] Mark Currie, *Difference*. (London, Routledge, 2004) p. 45. Henceforth (Currie, *Dif.*).

[6] Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory*. (Harlow, Longman, 1988) pp. 109-10.

[7] In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin claims that the hero in the polyphonic novel generates discourse and later defines *discourse* as 'language in its concrete living totality'. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Caryl Emerson (ed. and tr.). Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984) pp. 78, 181. Henceforth (Bakhtin, *Problems*).

[8] 'The deconstruction is not something we have added to the text but it constituted the text in the first place.' (de Man, Semiology 17). '[…] we do not deconstruct a text; we show how the text deconstructs itself.' Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today* (New York, Garland, 1999) p. 259. Henceforth (Tyson).

[9] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (M. Holquist (ed.). C. Emerson and M. Holquist (trs.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981) p. 259. Henceforth (Bakhtin, Discourse).

[10] Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin*. (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997) pp. 11-13. Henceforth (Vice).

[11] Jacques Derrida, *Difference* (Søren Gosvig Olesen (tr.). Frederiksberg, Det lille Forlag, 2002.) p. 53-56. I refer to the Danish translation of Derrida's 'Différance' because it reproduces the original text in its entirety. An abbreviated English translation can be found in Derrida, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (Peggy Kamuf (ed.). Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991). Henceforth (Derrida, *Dif.*).

[12] *Skaz* is the Russian word for a 'technique or mode of narration that imitates the oral speech of an individualized narrator.' (Translator's note. Bakhtin, *Problems*: 8).

[13] 'Bakhtin did not write "essays." The formal structure and streamlining of the critical essay […] is simply not his mode. He is often at his most provocative in the tiny fragment, in his jottings for future projects not yet worked out or beyond hope of publication; on the other hand, his longer worked-out pieces are loosely structured, even luxuriously inefficient'. Caryl Emerson, 'Editor's Preface' in Bakhtin, *Problems*: p. xxxi.

[14] Bakhtin goes so far as to attempt to improve Tolstoy's short story "Three Deaths" by rewriting it polyphonically (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 72).

[15] The concept of defamiliarisation was introduced by Shklovsky in 1917. Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' in Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory*. (London, Longman, 1988) p. 16-30.

[16] Ken Hirschkop, 'Introduction' in Hirschkop and Shepherd (eds.), *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989) as quoted in Vice p. 45

[17] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (London, Minerva, 1994)

[18] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse' in Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (M. Holquist (ed.). C. Emerson and M. Holquist (trs.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981) p. 76. Henceforth (Bakhtin, Prehistory.).

[19] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (London, Routledge, 1991) p. 6. Henceforth (Hutcheon, *Parody*).

[20] See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (W. Baskin (tr.), C. Bally and A. Sechehaye (eds.). London, Peter Owen, 1974). Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today* and Julian Wolfreys, *Deconstruction/Derrida* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1998) provide thorough introductions to the origins and critical practises of poststructuralism.

[21] The rise of Bakhtin in western critical communities cannot be totally disengaged from poststructuralism since his theories were introduced in the west by poststructuralist thinkers like Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov. See Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984) and Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, Novel' in Julia Kristeva. *The Kristeva Reader* (Toril Moi (ed.). Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986)

[22] See e.g. Derrida's deconstruction of the opposition of nature and culture in the texts of Claude Lévi-Strauss's.

Derrida, 'Structure' in Lodge, *Modern*. pp. 112-122.

[23] An example of this kind of inversion taken from Danish literature is Klaus Rifbjerg's poem 'Kanariefuglens begravelse' (The Canary's Burial) in which white maggots are said to make the bird living again in a new and interesting way. The whiteness of the maggots, then, is associated simultaneously with death, decay, rebirth and life. Klaus Rifbjerg, 'Kanariefuglens begravelse' in Steffen Hjelskov Larsen, *Dansk lyrik 1955-1965: Modernismens lyrikere* (Haslev, Gyldendal, 1970) pp. 114-115.

[24] Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (2nd ed. London, Routledge, 2002) p. 18.

[25] Sergei Karcevskij, 'The asymmetric dualism of the linguistic sign' as quoted in Holquist, *Dialogism*. p. 26.

[26] John Fowles, *Daniel Martin* (London, Vintage, 1998) p. 100.

[27] John Barth, 'The Literature of Replenishment'. *Atlantic Monthly*: Vol. 245, Issue 1, 1980, p. 66. Henceforth (Barth, Replenishment).

[28] Malcolm Bradbury, James McFarlane, 'The Name and Nature of Modernism' in Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1991) p. 26. Emphasis omitted.

[29] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London, Routledge, 2001) p. 10. Henceforth (McHale).

[30] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London, Routledge, 1989) p. 3, 105. Henceforth (Hutcheon, *Poetics*).

[31] The notion of carnivalisation is formulated in different guises throughout Bakhtin's work but is addressed most extensively in his study *Rabelais and his World* (Hélène Iswolsky (tr.). (Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 1984). Although I have read Bakhtin's book on Rabelais, the points on carnivalisation in this thesis are derived mainly from the substantial sections of both *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and 'Discourse in the Novel' that are devoted to the subject.

[32] See Katherine Tarbox, '*The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the Evolution of Narrative'. (*Twentieth Century Literature*: Spring 1996, Vol. 42, Issue 1, pp. 88-103) and Daniel Punday, 'Meaning in Postmodern Worlds: The Case of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'. (*Semiotica*: Fall 1997, Vol. 115, Issue 3, pp. 313-43).

[33] 'The bedroom windows are closed. At this hour A… is not up yet.

She left very early this morning, in order to have enough time to do her shopping and be able to get back to the plantation the same night.' Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy* (London, John Calder, 1987) p. 85 as quoted in Aidan Day, 'Parodying Postmodernism: Muriel Spark (*The Driver's Seat*) and Robbe-Grillet (*Jealousy*) (Unpublished article, University of Aarhus, 2004) p. 2-3.

[34] John Barth, 'The Literature of Exhaustion' (*Atlantic Monthly*: Vol. 220, Issue 2, 1967) p. 30. Henceforth (Barth, Exhaustion).

[35] John Fowles, 'The Ebony Tower' in *The Ebony Tower* (London, Vintage, 1996) p. 23. Henceforth (Fowles, *Ebony*). See also Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1994) p. 361. Henceforth (Bradbury, *Novel*).

[36] 'We can […] conceive of the reading of plot as a form of desire that carries us forward, onward, through the text. Narratives both tell of desire – typically present some story of desire – and arouse and make use of desire as dynamic of signification'. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Ma, Harvard University Press, 1984) p. 37.

[37] John Fowles, 'Foreword to the Poems' in Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings* (Jan Relf (ed.) London, Vintage, 1999) p. 30.

[38] John Fowles, 'An Unholy Inquisition' in Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings* (Jan Relf (ed.) London, Vintage, 1999) p. 448.

[39] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Ross C Murfin (ed.); 2nd edition, Boston, New York, Bedford Books, St Martin's Press, 1996). Henceforth (Conrad).

[40] Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho* in *Nohow On: Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho* (New York, Grove Press, 1996). For further insights into the later texts of Samuel Beckett, see Carla Locatelli, *Unwording the World: Samuel Beckett's Prose Works after the Nobel Prize* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

[41] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel* (London, Calder and Boyars, 1965) pp. 54-55.

[42] John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* (London, Vintage, 1996) p. 97. Further references are to this edition and will be given as page numbers in the text.

[43] John Fowles, 'Notes on an Unfinished Novel' in Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings* (Jan Relf (ed.) London, Vintage, 1999) p. 17. Henceforth (Fowles, Notes).

[44] Paul de Man, 'Dialogue and Dialogism' in Morson and Emerson, *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1989) p. 109. Henceforth (de Man, Dialogue).

[45] The concept of the implied author was introduced by Wayne C. Booth in 1961. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric*

of Fiction. 2nd ed. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983)

46 Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (Harlow, Longman, 1988) pp. 167-172. Henceforth (Barthes).

47 The novel is played out as a conversation between a novelist, Miles Green, and his muse, Erato. After a long discussion of poststructuralist theories in which Green has made claims about the non-connectedness of author and text, he is still reluctant to relinquish his right of authorship. The discussion ends with the following exchange: 'Miles, now it's you who's not being very consistent. You've just told me there's no connection at all between author and text. So what's the matter?' 'Because I have a right to establish my own non-connection at all in my own personal way.' John Fowles, *Mantissa* (London, Picador, 1993) pp. 126-127.

48 Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984) p. 184 as quoted in Aidan Day, *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1998) p. 105.

49 Samuel Beckett, *Company* in *Nohow On: Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho* (New York, Grove Press, 1996).

50 John Fowles, *The Magus* (Revised edition 1977. London, Vintage, 1997) p. 162.

51 'This astonishing internal independence of Dostoevsky's characters […] is achieved by specific artistic means. It is above all due to the freedom and independence characters possess, in the very structure of the novel, vis-á-vis the author – or, more accurately, their freedom vis-à-vis the usual externalising and finalizing authorial definitions' (Bakhtin, *Problems*: 13).

52 The evolutionary aspect of narration in *FLW* is addressed in Katherine Tarbox, '*The French Lieutenant's Woman* and the Evolution of Narrative'.

53 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (2nd edition. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997)

54 One example of this mode of narration may be found in George Perec, *Things: A Story of the Sixties.*

55 This re-positioning resembles the 'inherent self-reflexivity' in the mode of 'virtual narration' described by Marie-Laure Ryan. Virtual narration occurs in the transition from one ontological layer to another in postmodernist fiction, or in instances of ekphrasis where a narrator enters the pictorial world and describes it from the inside. Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Allegories of Immersion: Virtual Narration in Postmodern Fiction' (*Style*: Dekalb, Summer 1995, Vol. 29, Issue 2, pp. 262-).

56 See Dwight Eddins, 'John Fowles: Existence as Authorship' (*Contemporary Literature*: Vol. 17, 1976) pp. 204-222.

57 Faced with the problems of constructing meaning from the overwhelming excess of endlessly shifting information that threatens to swamp her, Oedipa asks: '*Shall I project a world?'* I.e.: 'Can I only make sense of the world by constituting it myself?' Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (London, Vintage, 2000) p. 56.

58 See e.g. David Landrum, 'Rewriting Marx: Emancipation and Restoration in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*' (*Twentieth Century Literature*; Spring 1996, Vol. 42, Issue 1, p. 103-)

59 In this Charles is perhaps the most quintessentially Victorian. According to historian Walter E. Houghton, the Victorian was an age marked by the deep-seated anxiety of 'living in *an age of transition*' and coming to terms with John Stuart Mill's sense that '"mankind have outgrown old institutions and old doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones"'. Houghton describes the Victorian period as one that was predominantly optimistic in its outward appearance (something which is reflected in Charles and Dr Grogan's discussion of Darwin and their ensuing feeling of 'exalted superiority, intellectual distance above the rest of their fellow creatures (159)), but at the same time this 'great age of optimism was also an age of anxiety' and age in which 'the Victorian consciousness – and especially the subconsciousness – was haunted by fear and worry, by guilt and frustration and loneliness'. Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957) p. 1, 54.

60 A comprehensive introduction into late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature and art is provided in Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930.*

61 Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics' in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Michael Holquist (ed.). Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trs.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981) p. 163. Henceforth (Bakhtin, Chronotope).

62 Conchis: 'I conceived a new kind of drama. One in which the conventional separation between actors and audience was abolished. In which the conventional scenic geography, the notions of proscenium, scene, auditorium, were completely discarded. In which continuity of performance, either in time or in place, was ignored. And in which the action, the narrative was fluid, with only a point of departure and a fixed point of conclusion. Between those points the participants invent their own drama.' Fowles, *The Magus.* p. 404.

63 The final line of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* quotes the concluding verse from Matthew Arnold's poem

'To Marguerite' (1853). 'To Marguerite' is written as a sequel to another poem by Arnold called 'Isolation. To Marguerite', which even more specifically emphasises the isolation and loneliness of Charles's existence after he chooses Sarah.

[64] 'He was writing lists of words. He was writing lists of words that resisted arrangement into the sentences of literary criticism or theory. He had hopes – more intimations of imminence – of writing poems, but so far he had got no further than lists. These were, however, compulsive and desperately important.' A.S. Byatt, *Possession: A Romance* (London, Vintage, 1991) p. 431.

[65] Brian Caraher is professor of English literature at Queen's University in Belfast. The analogy between Fowles's epigraphs and palaeontology was made during the discussion of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in a seminar on 'Critical Fictions' I attended at Queen's in spring 2000. In connection with this thesis I emailed Dr Caraher asking for the source of this analogy, and got the following reply: 'I was simply extrapolating from what Fowles himself says about his epigraphs on the acknowledgements page of the novel. He also says something similar in an interview he gave about the nature of the book in his collection of essays and interviews called "Wormholes".' (Email from B. Caraher to M. Pedersen, 9 Sept. 2004.)

[66] See Bakhtin, Discourse pp. 321-22.

[67] David Lodge, 'Ambiguously Ever After: Problematical Endings in the Novel' in Brian Fothergill (ed.), *Essays by Divers Hands* (London, The Royal Society of Literature, New Series Vol. XLI, Boydell Press, 1979) p. 42-44. Henceforth (Lodge, Endings). The content of the essay was originally given in a paper before the Royal Society of Literature on the 19th of October 1979.

[68] The almost last lines of the novel read: 'Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprive from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life.' Charlotte Brontë, *Vilette* (London, Pan Books, 1973) p. 481.

[69] 'In the silence of other voices' is a chapter heading I have lifted from Fowles's novel, *Daniel Martin*. p. 610.

[70] Fowles as quoted on the inside cover of the Vintage edition of *Daniel Martin*.