

# Freedom in “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”

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**Abstract**—John Fowles (1926-2005), an outstanding English writer of 1960s, published “The French Lieutenant’s Woman” in 1969. “Freedom” is the motif of John Fowles’s fiction writing, one of his strategies, the important information that he wishes to disseminate to the readers who are expected to absorb, understand profoundly and comprehensively. As a postmodernist experimental writer, John Fowles’s works infuse a new current for both English and American literature. This paper tries to combine the postmodernist and existential critic method with the element of freedom in Fowles’s novel and writing process, although many researches and studies have been carried out by critics and scholars both home and abroad, the combination of postmodernism, existentialism and freedom element is a new perspective. Reading this paper, the readers are expected to gain a comprehensive knowledge of freedom, make their choice freely in their daily life as well as deepen their understanding of “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”.

**Index Terms**—John Fowles, freedom, postmodernism, metafiction, multiple ending

## I. INTRODUCTION

John Fowles was born on 31 March, 1926, in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, a suburb of London at the mouth of the Thames River. During the Second World War, the Fowles moved to southwest of England, living in the Village of Ipplepen, South Devon. It was at that time that young Fowles was attracted by the mysterious nature and fell in love with it. After the war, John Fowles entered into Oxford University, majoring in French and German. Therefore, he was deeply influenced by French literature and existentialism, respectively represented by Flaubert (1821-1880) and Sartre (1905-1980), Camus (1913-1960). John Fowles is an amateur naturalist, admiring universal love and individual freedom. Once he said that he advocated fraternity, especially individual freedom due to English, French and Greek culture. In 1966, he moved to Underhill Farm near Lyme Regis, Dorset, which became the background of his “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”. John Fowles and his wife, Elizabeth, often walked along the beach, roamed around the forests, enjoying the tranquility and freedom provided by nature. Here, we can learn the reason why John Fowles regards freedom as an important element in his writing, especially in “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”, where he expounds that “There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedom to exist”. (John Fowles, 1992, P82)

In the 1940s and 1950s, the English writers worshiped their predecessors of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is an extreme in order to protest the Modernism. Traditional realistic narrative techniques designed to produce an illusion of reality and the related willing suspension of disbelief were widely felt in the 1960s and 1970s to be not only inadequate but falsifying in presenting life. Meanwhile, after the Second World War, there were new literary current and various schools in both Europe and American. For example, “Nouveau Roman” budded in France. Many critics censured the postwar England literature for their conservative, parochial sight and lack of creation, innovation. John Barth was the first in 1967 to announce that the traditional novelistic resources have been exhausted. Read his important essay “The Literature of Exhaustion” and there will be no doubt that change and innovation was inevitable. Under this circumstance, many English writers including John Fowles, was influenced by the new current abroad and began with their experimental works. After the publication of his three novels, “The Collector”, “The Magus”, “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”, John Fowles received many reviews and criticism. Quite a few critics labeled him as the postmodernist novelist.

So, what is a postmodernist novel? It is a general term hard to define, mainly consisting of the novel of the absurd, metafiction, avant-gardism, black humor, the Beat Generation and Magic Realism. Here, metafiction undermines the authority of the author, for unexpected narrative shifts to advance a story in a unique way, for emotional distance, or to comment on the act of storytelling. It not only describes the plot and character, but explains how the novel is made. Take “The French Lieutenant’s Woman” as an example. John Fowles reproduces the Victorian novel by employing proper language, dialogues and style. While unabashedly copying the traditional writing, John Fowles ridicules and pokes fun at that and announces his novel a lie. In this sense, “The French Lieutenant’s Woman” is a typical postmodernist work.

The story took place in Lyme Regis, England, in 1867. Charles Smithson, a Victorian gentleman, and his fiancée Ernestina Freeman, a traditional Victorian lady, were walking along the Cobb, a breakwater jutting into Lyme Bay,

when they met a mysterious woman in black. This woman, Sarah Woodruff, was called by the residents of Lyme, “the French lieutenant’s woman”. Charles was a man of 32 years old, an amateur paleontologist and a Darwinist; Ernestina, a successful draper’s daughter, revealed to be a pretty but conventional young Victorian woman; Sarah was just Ernestina’s opposite, who was a penniless governess and an outcast, reputed to be pining for the French lieutenant who had jilted her. Due to several encounters, Charles was drawn by Sarah’s mysterious, melancholy, sexy, and wild quality. Thus, his passion towards her amounts to obsession. Charles was torn between his duty to Ernestina and his addiction to Sarah. One day Charles learnt that his aged uncle Robert was going to marry a widow young enough to produce him an heir. This marriage created the possibility of depriving Charles of inheriting the family estate, Winsyatt, and the baronetcy title. Therefore, Charles’s future father-in-law, Mr. Freeman pressured him to join his retail business, which was what Charles considered vulgar. Then comes the first ending of the story: Charles accepted his fate passively and submissively, married Ernestina and entered into the business field. However, in the second ending, things happen in quite another way. Submitting and following to his passion, Charles headed for the Endicott’s Family Hotel where Sarah inhabited at that time. He made love with her and found that she was actually a virgin. After that, Sarah disappeared; Charles broke up his engagement with Ernestina and began his two-year search for Sarah. Finally, it was through his former servant Sam that Sarah was found in London. As Sarah revealed their daughter, Lalage, the three were reunited and lived happily ever after. The last ending resumes from Charles turning angrily to leave. This time, Sarah did not reveal their daughter, but just stopped him, suggesting a Platonic friendship; however, Charles chose to reject Sarah, walking away alone in anguish and bitterness. The whole novel then comes to the end.

## II. METAFICTION

### A. *What Is Metafiction*

Postmodernism is characterized by contradiction, permutation, discontinuity, randomness, infinite regress, overobtrusive narrators, explicit dramatization of the reader, critical discussion of the form of narration, intertextuality, self-reflexive, parody, and soon. The common and frequent used techniques of postmodernism include irony, black humor, playfulness, intertextuality, and pastiche. Here, pastiche can be seen as a representation of the chaotic, pluralistic, or information-drenched aspects of postmodern society. It can be a combination of multiple genres to create a unique narrative or to comment on situations in postmodernity. Though pastiche commonly refers to the mixing of genres, many other elements are also included, for example, metafiction is common in the broader pastiche of the postmodern novel. Metafiction is essentially writing about writing or “foregrounding the apparatus”, as its typical of deconstructionist approaches, making the artificiality of art or the fictionality of fiction apparent to the reader and generally disregards the necessity for “willful suspension of disbelief”. That means that, according to Professor Chang Yaixin, metafiction is a form of writing about fiction in the form of fiction. It is a style of fictive narrative that tries to tell the readers that fiction is fiction and is not an illusion of reality as the realists have tried to deceive into believing. For metafiction writers, traditional realists try to make their fiction look like reality, while metafiction writers feel differently about the idea of authentic representation of reality. They hold that all writing is a fabricated text manipulated by the author in accordance with his own values, and subject to the reading of the readers who have access of the work, already heavily saturated with their backgrounds and cultures. Therefore, novels are no more to raise and meet the traditional expectations of traditional readers and critics, but to shock and subvert those presuppositions and envisagements based on the willing suspension of disbelief as traditional realism has so far succeeded in generating. In this connection, they tend to employ burlesque and anachronism as a means of subverting the readers’ sense of complacency. These two methods in metafiction are widely employed and we will deal with them in the next two chapters.

### B. *Metafiction Method in the Text*

Within the first twelve chapters, the story moved on naturally in the Victorian manner, when the author suddenly inserts his own opinion about modern writers and their authority, principles, and capacity. Here, readers are jotted ruthlessly from the story and made to face, confront the false, deceitful reality.

In Chapter Three, when giving description of Charles, John Fowles writes as thus, “Though Charles liked to think of himself as a scientific young man and would probably not have been too surprised had news reached him out of the future of the airplane, the jet engine, television, radar.....” Charles may not be surprised, but we readers are shocked by those objects belonging to 20<sup>th</sup> century.

After Charles encountered Sarah at Ware Commons, he did not go back straightly to Lyme Regis. Instead, he went to the Dairy and met Sarah once more. The impotent narrator says as thus “I ordered him to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy” (John Fowles, 1992, P81). And the author even gives his own reason for failing in controlling Charles’s behavior: but I “...that it might be more clever to have him stop and milk...and meet Sarah again. That is certainly one explanation of what happened; but I can only report—and I am the most reliable witness—that the idea seemed to me to come clearly from Charles, not myself.” (John Fowles, 1992, P81) Here, Charles became the decision-maker and has his own freedom of choices. The story moved forward partly depending on the character’s choice instead of the plan of the author.

After having an affair with Sarah who then disappeared, Charles decided to find out Sarah and boarded on a train. He

came across the disguised narrator in their shared train compartment. “The latecomer muttered a “Pardon me, sir” and made his way to the far end of the compartment. He sat, a man of forty or so, his top hat firmly square, hid hands in his knees regaining his breath.” (John Fowles, 1992, P317) No doubt, this middle-aged man is John Fowles himself. The author suddenly shows up in the story and becomes a character of it. It is a fantastic change from a narrator to a participating character. The author at that time did not what to do with Charles, and he asked “what the devil am I going to do with you?” (John Fowles, 1992, P317) Then, at the end of this chapter, Fowles tells his readers how story was continued: he took a florin from his purse and flicked it, which has terminated Charles’s fate.

Judging from the traits of the narratives, “The French Lieutenant’s Woman” is a metafiction. Here, we get the conclusion that John Fowles is a pioneer of metafiction writing in which he constantly and in time reveals and derides the falseness and deceiveness of his narrative. While showing his fictive method, Fowles excavates the inherent values of narrative, making literature turn into a game of dallying with readers as well as reality and literary rules. Through this method, John Fowles has succeeded in protesting, revolting reality and thus, gained sufficient freedom.

### III. BURLESQUE

#### A. *About Burlesque*

Burlesque or parody is a manner of writing where an effort is made to imitate original in order to poke fun at it or to reveal the discrepancy between the imitation and the original. Obviously, “The French Lieutenant’s Woman” is a burlesque of the traditional Victorian realistic narrative method. At the beginning, the readers may feel at ease to follow the author and try to find the real story. However, when the author feels it is time to jerk his readers back, he mercilessly tells the readers that his novel is no more than a game of words. For example, at the end of chapter 12 and in the whole chapter of 13, the author confesses that “who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come? I do not know. This story I am telling is all imagination.” (John Fowles, 1992, P80)

Fowles deploys burlesque and parody to reject the traditional referential of art so that they become self-referential of self-reflexive. John Fowles jumps freely between the proceeding attractive story and his rational comments, between the previous century and the modern time, between a third-person narrator and a character involved in the novel. In this sense, the author has the freedom of choosing material and events in his fiction, which is an essential trait of postmodernist writing.

#### B. *The Victorian Age in the Novel*

In the novel “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”, John Fowles makes a stunning yet admirable story in the method of Victorian realism. His language, dialogue, style and detail description, such as historical events, attire, decor, and furniture, convince us that the novel must be written by a Victorian writer. It is a vivid, graphic, and touching story took place one hundred years ago, about a triangle romance in England. The writer successfully employs the Victorian style and language from the height of a modern writer in 1960s. By using the conventions as a Victorian novelist might have, brief authorial comments, footnotes, essay materials and epigraphs foreshadowing the chapters they precede, John Fowles connects the past and the present. He compares the Victorian time and the modern time, in order to display the backwardness and hypocrisy of the former. On one hand, Fowles purposely make his narrator imitate the traditional realistic narrative, and on the other hand, he punctures and derides the falseness of this method. By burlesque, John Fowles display the Victorian time and two women characters to his readers. Among them, one was a conventional woman and the other was one who violated the conventions.

Now this paper will get a closer observation of the Victorian time described in “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”. The Victorian society was declining for the moral, religious, aristocratic traditions were fading away. The British Empire was losing its leading position in the world. While the bourgeoisie was ascending, the aristocracy was descending. Therefore, in order to keep the station in the society, the aristocrats had to form an alliance with the bourgeois, and the common form of the alliance was marriage as the betrothed Charles and Ernestina in the novel. According to Sarah, “... I live among people the world tells me are kind, pious, Christian people. And they seem to me crueler than the cruellest heathens, stupider than the stupidest animals.” (John Fowles, 1992, P116)

The society was declining and people’s religious belief is loosing and slackening. Usually, they did not believe in God, but would resort to Him when they shouldered the burden of sin and crime. Take Mrs. Poultney as an example. On one hand, she was a very rich widow and donated a small sum, but on the other hand, she hoped God would never find her spurious behavior and bless her to go to paradise after her death. Besides, she is fussy about everything, extremely strict and cruel to her staff. “If the mistress was defective in more mundane matters where her staff was concerned, she took exceedingly good care of their spiritual welfare. There was mandatory double visit to church on Sundays; and there was also a daily morning service...” (John Fowles, 1992, P50-P51) It seems that she adopts Sarah out of kindness and sympathy. As a matter of fact, she does that for sake of redeeming herself from the sin and crime that she has committed to the poor. In addition, she was vehemently eager to supervise and control Sarah’s behavior as well as her thoughts.

In terms of morality and ethic, there was a dismal and foul picture: “...the sanctity of marriage (and chastity before marriage) was proclaimed from every pulpit, in every newspaper editorial and public utterance; and where never—or hardly ever—have so many great public figures, from the future king down, led scandalous private loves... Where the

female body had never been so hidden from view; and where every sculptor was judged by his ability to carve naked women... and where the output of pornography has never been exceeded... Where it was universally maintained that women so not have orgasms; yet every prostitute was taught to simulate them..." (John Fowles, 1992, P211) The Victorians were no longer serious about their norm, belief, and values. While pretended to be a gentleman or a lady, they indulged in their private life that they themselves regarded vulgar, obscene.

In Victorian England, a woman should be a demure, elegant lady who is expected to be a future good mother as well as a good wife. Therefore, they suffocate the desire for sex and will never talk about it on formal, public occasion. They are "the female wounded in the battle for universal masculine purity". But, they will imagine the caress of the male or stealthily make love with their lovers. Ernestina even secretly admires her nude in the mirror in her bedroom. There were many recreational places where undone girls and women usually went to. And girls like Mary, although only nineteen years old, knows much about intercourse. E.g. "The hard—I would rather call it soft, but no matter—fact of Victorian rural England was that what a simpler age called "tasting before you buy"(premarital intercourse, in our current jargon) was the rule, not the exception." (John Fowles, 1992, P214) The Victorian women regard delicate, fragile, arched eyebrows as beautiful. If they are flattered by some gentlemen or shocked by some news, they will feign to faint.

A man should be a gallant and chivalric gentleman: to please, protect ladies, to control their temper and emotion, to be loyalty to their love. But the reality is that gentlemen are bored and annoyed by the shallow, pretentious ladies and they actually are not faithful to their love. They just have no other choice but endure the torture. Many a gentlemen will seek the prostitutes as a way of outlet. Here is the description in the novel "...An age where woman was sacred; and where you could buy a thirteen-year-old girl for a few pounds—a few shillings, if you wanted her for only an hour or two. Where more churches were built than in the whole previous history of the country; and where one in sixty houses in London was a brothel (the modern ratio would be nearer one in six thousand)". (John Fowles, 1992, P211)

Now, through John Fowles's burlesque of the previous age, we see that both men and women in the Victorian time had no freedom. Because of the hypocritical morality and practices, everyone should constrained, twisted their instinct and reasonable need.

### C. *Ernestina—Symbol of Victorian Time*

Apparently, Ernestina Freedom and Sarah Woodruff are respectively symbols of the two times.

Firstly, there is a detail analysis of Ernestina Freeman. She was a lady of Victorian, of declining Victorian, a product of that age, a spoiled daughter of a rich but contemptuous draper. She was the ideal, irresistible girl for a gentleman: young (only twenty-one years old), beautiful, tame, obedient, delicate. Ernestina's icy attitude and demeanor attracted Charles at the party where they met for the first time. Charles thought that he found the right girl and engaged with her within a short time. Ernestina tried her best to be an elegant lady; however, she was proved a selfish, shallow, secular girl.

As mentioned in the previous text, Ernestina desired for sex so anxious that she admired her own body in the mirror. Whenever the physical female implication of her body, sexual, menstrual, parturitional, tried to force an entry into her consciousness, she always said to herself "I must not". But, she would do it in her private room. "In her room that afternoon she unbuttoned her dress and stood before her mirror in her chemise and petticoats...she raised her arms and unloosed her hair, a thing she knew to be vaguely sinful, yet necessary...she suddenly stopped turning and admiring herself in profile..." (John Fowles, 1992, P29) As the other girls, she needed a husband (That was Charles). She felt there was a wolf of lust howling outside her heart.

Through contact with Sarah, Charles found he did not like Ernestina. "And yet once again it bore in upon him, as the concert, that there was something shallow in her—that her acuteness was largely constituted, intellectually as alphabetically, by a mere cuteness. Was there not, beneath the demure knowingness, something of the automaton about her, of one of those ingenious girl-machines from Hoffmann's Tales?" (John Fowles, 1992, P122) Ernestina's acuteness, intelligence, derived from her cuteness, physical beauty instead of her own minds and thoughts. She was only the rigid product of that age. She could not keep her air of a lady nor prevent from being selfish. After Charles told her that his uncle would marry a widow young enough to bear him a son as his heir, which meant that Charles would be deprived of the right to inherit the baronetcy title and the estate of Winsyatt, Ernestina became extremely angry, and cursed Charles's uncle. This was the behavior of unladylike, lacking of the imperturbability that fine aristocratic refusal to allow the setbacks of life ever to ruffle one's style.

"Ernestina and her like behaved always as if habited in glass: infinitely fragile, even when they threw books of poetry. They encouraged the mask, the safe distance..." (John Fowles, 1992, P119) Ernestina was fragile not only physically but mentally and emotionally. When Charles decided to broke up their engagement, she could not endure the pain and beseeched him to think twice. It seemed that she could not live without the comp any and protection of him. "Perhaps I am just a child. But under your love and protection...and your education... I believe I should become better. I learn to please you, I should learn to make you love me for what I had become." (John Fowles, 1992, P296) "Charles, I beg you, I beg you to wait a little." (John Fowles, 1992, P297) Ernestina orientated herself as the appendage, subsidiary of a man as if her life would mean nothing if Charles abandoned her. She did not live for herself, for her own freedom but the others' influence, protection, even control.

#### D. *Sarah—Symbol of the Modern Time*

Sarah Woodruff was exiled from normal Victorian society, but she exemplifies the growing breed of women gaining emancipation during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. She suffered male discrimination, education isolation from native class. Her ancestor were nobles, but in her father's generation, they declined to the under world. In order to gain dignity and nobility, her father sent her to school in hoping of producing an educated, well-bred lady. However, Sarah had been ever since thrown between the lower and the upper class; she was reluctant to go back to her former social station and at the same time she was refused by the upper class, for her education was relatively poor and she has no money. After her father's death, she became an orphan. She has to take the job as a humble governess. But Sarah had her own consciousness and self-awareness. In this novel, she was thoroughly a modern character, and John Fowles strengthens her contemporary quality, along with her mystery and undidability, by making her the only one whose mind he will not enter. In the Darwinian sense, she was the cultural "missing link" between the centuries—more modern than Victorian.

In the story, she has made three essential choices revealing her own definition of freedom: actively receiving the nickname of "the French Lieutenant's Woman" and the insult, bias, isolation of the local people in Lyme Regis; chasing after and imploring the love of Charles; refusing decisively the proposal of Charles.

##### 1. The First Choice

Sarah's infamy was widely spread among the local people. It was said that she once nursed a French lieutenant, who was spared in a shipwreck, and had affairs with that foreign man. But, she did not care it and kept roaming and tarrying near the sea. She was adopted by Mrs. Poulteney out of "charity", who is the most conventional and strictest, the most cunning and hypocritical mistress in the little town. Regardless the ban of her mistress, Sarah went to the forests "Ware Commons", which was the Eden for courting couples every summer. "It is sufficient to say that among the more respectable townsfolk one had only to speak of a boy or a girl as one of the Ware Commons kind to tar them for life. The boy must thenceforth be a satyr; and the girl, a hedge-prostitute." (John Fowles, 1992, P77) Therefore, in the eyes of the others, Sarah was a licentious and shameless woman. In fact, she was a woman born with sharp insight, loving poems and novels. Although she was proud of her own aloofness, she seriously remained her chasteness. Sarah knew exactly what she was doing and what she wanted.

"Why I sacrifice a woman's most precious possession for the transient gratification of a man I did not love. I did it so that I should never be the same again. I did it so that people should point at me, should say, there walks the French Lieutenant's Whore... What has kept me alive is my shame, my knowing that I am truly not like other women. I shall never have children, a husband, and those innocent happinesses they have.... I think I have a freedom they cannot understand. No insult, no blame, can touch me." (John Fowles, 1992, P142) Here, Sarah explains her philosophical reason to Charles for bearing the nickname and shame. She is not the conventional Victorian woman who toes the line. "Prostitute" or "whore" is an identity Sarah designs for herself. By use of this unique, circuitous, indirect method, she lets out her dissatisfied, resentful emotion resulting from the unfairness of the society. It is not only the silent protest to the secular environments, but the wise strategy to realize her freedom. Under the cover of the infamy, Sarah was able to be spared of the moral rules of that time, to shake off all kinds of bondages and pressures of the upper class, to become a total expatriate.

##### 2. The Second Choice

Sarah fell in love with Charles at the first sight and she began her painstaking pursue of love. At the very beginning, she presented herself as a figure from myth, standing motionless and staring at the sea. Charles, he found that "There was no artifice there, no hypocrisy, no hysteria, no mask; and above all, no sign of madness". Therefore, she was, to some extent, attractive to Charles and she aroused his curiosity. Then, Sarah arranged carefully every meeting with Charles. She learnt that Charles was an amateur paleontologist, interested in collecting fossils. So she wandered in the forests where Charles sought for his precious fossils. Sarah depended on her sexual magnetism and took advantage of Charles's sympathy. In their first encounter, Charles "inadvertently" saw her sleeping under a cliff, and he was addicted in watching her. "There was something intensely tender and yet sexual in the way she lay; it awakened a dim echo of Charles of a moment from his time in Paris." (John Fowles, 1992, P61) Charles had been to the continent and lived a rake life, so having intercourse with some young lady or prostitute was not uncommon. But, when he came back home and got engaged with Ernestina, he decided to be a "gentleman". However, now Sarah was irresistible from carnal respect. Presently, Charles regained his rightness and showed his fraternity. "...and overcome by an equally strange feeling—not sexual, but fraternal" (John Fowles, 1992, P62) Sarah kept silent and remained her mysterious characteristics. Later, while Charles dropped at the Dairy on the way home, Sarah appeared on purpose put of the trees above him and the host of the Dairy. She was successful, for Charles could never believe that Sarah was a whore.

In their second encounter, she still seemed very icy, but she slipped on her knees, showing her fragility. "She was totally like a wild animal, unable to look at him, trembling, dumb." Charles now is concerned about her safety and reputation. In addition, he admired, at least did not detest her intelligence and independence, because he was a Darwinism (this point will be discussed in the next chapter). He could not help thinking of Sarah or some emotion, some possibility she symbolized when he felt bored and frustrated by Ernestina.

At the third time, Sarah sought for Charles and got him into communication. She divulged part of her story and implored Charles another meeting to listen to her tragic story. Charles promised her although with reluctance. He

imagined himself a savor for the miserable, unfortunate of which Sarah was one.

In the following meeting, Charles was guided by Sarah onto a dell surrounded by dense thickets, where a make-up story as well as her reason to stay at Lyme as a whore was expounded. By that time, he could not resist or restrain any more. After Sarah was fired by Mrs. Poulteney, he was eager to find her. With the help of the address sent by some anonym, Charles met Sarah at the Endicott's Family Hotel. Sarah had prepared for his arrival, having feigned a sprained ankle so that the landlady sent Charles up to her room instead of calling her down. She was even wearing a newly bought shawl and nightgown for the occasion. Before he arrived, she had built a fresh mound in the coalgrate, and during their halting reunion, coals fell out and ignite the blanket around Sarah's legs. When Charles had smothered the fire and was replacing the blanket, she touched his hand. From that point on, nature took over Charles carried Sarah to bed. Until that moment, Charles realized he actually loved Sarah and he made up his mind to breach his engagement and propose Sarah for a life-long marriage.

Unlike Ernestina, Sarah is a bold, brave woman who follows her will and pursues her love openly, indomitably. Regardless the Victorian conventions, she gives herself to Charles out of pure love. Here, we see a modern woman enjoying freedom.

### 3. The Third Choice

Sarah's third choice may disappoint those who expect a traditional happy ending. On the contrary, she chose to refuse Charles's proposal in order to continue her state of freedom and independence. After two years, Charles's love had turned into bondage for Sarah. She could not bear the man-chauvinist family life in which Charles would protect her and their daughter Lalage. Through their contact, Sarah helped Charles to realize his own being, his self-identity, to pursue his love, to explore the true meaning of life and freedom. After that, she did not want Charles to interfere in her life, nor did she want to interfere in Charles's life. Therefore, she even did not reveal their daughter Lalage (following the third ending) in the hope of a total separation. Here, Sarah instructed Charles to understand the meaning and importance of freedom.

All that Sarah has done indicates that freedom is part of justice and equality of the society, is a process of protesting and resisting the unfairness and persecution. In a word, Sarah is an independent modern woman with super insight, discernment. She regards the modern maxim of "I possess this now, therefore I am happy." as her motto. Every minute for her is counted; every decision for her is choice at her own will; every step for her is happy.

## IV. ANACHRONISM

### A. *The Limitation of Freedom*

Here is a diagram advocated by American narratologist Seymour Chatman: Real author—Implied author—(Narrator)—(Narratee)—Implied reader—Real reader. In this diagram, since the real author and real reader are real people, represented by the implied author and implied reader respectively, they are actually excluded from the narrative structure. The real author is the person living his worldly life; the implied author is the person with a certain emotion, idea, and belief while writing his works. Moreover, the implied author is constructed by the reader's imagination and made present in the text by the very components of fiction itself. The implied reader is the ideal reader in the eyes of the implied author or the fore-constructed reader whose thought conforms with that of the implied author and who can totally understand the work. The narrator differs from the implied author who has no direct means of communicating. It is the narrator who enunciates the narrative and disseminates the information. The narrator participating in the story is the "homodiegetic narrator"; the narrator not participating in the story is "heterodiegetic narrator". The narratee is the person receiving the information of the narrator.

Here, we can learn that the novel is manipulated by the implied author, and his readers have only one access of reading and understanding the novel—that is from the view and voice of the narrator. In "The French Lieutenant's Woman", John Fowles, represented by the implied author, is a man in the 20<sup>th</sup> century who has witnessed the history of the new time. Besides, he owns the technique of anachronism in writing. Therefore, the novel readers see is a product out of the author's manipulation. The reader and the characters have no freedom in this sense, at least only having the relative freedom. It seems that anachronism has broke the continuity of reading as well as the traditional narrative view about time and space, which enables the readers take an active part in the writing process of the narrative during the reading time. But, the narrative and the effect are still controlled by the implied author. After all, anachronism is a new method in postmodern narrative composition and it breaks the enclosure pattern of time and space, providing the readers a broader space of thinking and meditating.

### B. *About Anachronism*

The postmodernist term—anachronism that is a chronological inconsistency in some arrangement, especially a juxtaposition of persons, events, objects, or customs from different periods of time. Often this item misplaced in time is an object, but it may be a verbal expression, a technology, a philosophical idea, a musical style, a material, a custom, or anything else associated with a particular period in time so that it is incorrect to place it outside its proper temporal domain. The narrator in the "The French Lieutenant's Woman" connects both centuries and constantly travels from one time to the other without any restrictions. The anachronism is embodied through installing, transplanting modern subjects into Victorian story. John Fowles gathers the story time and the narrative time in a entity, and alternatively

employs them according to his own idiosyncrasy. Therefore, the author gains the freedom of narrating, making his story overlapping and leaping.

Here are some examples:

Ernestina is introduced in Chapter 5, the narrator says that she “died on the day that Hitler invaded Poland” (John Fowles, 1992, P28) The reader know that the invasion took place in 1939, an element of the 20th century. When talking about the insight and discernment of Sarah’s, the narrator says, “she was born with a computer in her heart”. (John Fowles, 1992, P47) When narrating Sarah’s sleeping with Millie, the narrator says that: “I doubt if Mrs. Poultene had ever heard of the word lesbian.” (John Fowles, 1992, P128) The narrator proclaims that he has bought the Toby cup. “...the Toby was cracked, and was to be re-cracked in the course of time, as I can testify, having bought it myself a year or two ago for a good deal more than the three pennies Sarah was charged.” (John Fowles, 1992, P220) After their lovemaking, the narrator says Charles felt “like a city struck out of a quiet sky by an atom bomb”. (John Fowles, 1992, P275) Also, in chapter fifty-seven, when Mary, the ex-maid of Ernestina’s aunt, came into the spot, Fowles explains “...I am sure the young woman whom I should have liked to show pushing a perambulator (but can’t, since they do not come into use for another decade) had never heard of Catullus...”

The narrator knows clearly that some objects or scenes are impossible in the Victorian time, but he still insists their presentation at his free will. By taking the reader with present thought back to the 1860s, the narrator breaks the novel’s Victorian features and jounces the reader into viewing the action historically, by revealing his novel is just a fictive work. Thus, the readers should not regard the novel as the reality, but the fiction. Fowles’s narrator is part Fowles himself and part device. Since he is a modern novelist who slips his own created past, his time-linking effects appear deceptively anachronistic.

## V. MULTIPLE ENDINGS

### A. *About the Multiple Endings in the Novel*

Postmodernism is also featured by without the neatly tie-up endings or with multiple beginnings. Apparently, “The French Lieutenant’s Woman” is furnished with multiple endings. From its ancient beginning in magic, then religious, ritual and drama, fiction was characterized by closed endings: Victories, sacred marriages, births, and deaths. For centuries, fictions closed endings assured the accomplishment of divine justice. Even well into the Victorian Age, the novels’ closed ending remained a function of the writer’s divine intervention. The novelist in that epoch had no qualms about intervening in his story to affect the closed ending of his choice. To make his ending happen, they frequently relied upon the most improbable of coincidences. For instance, Lalage, the child of Charles and Sarah is such an improbable device to make the protagonists denounce their first decision.

Being no longer the fixer of the novel, Fowles gives his readers three endings for them to choose according to their own taste and conjecture. The first ending occurs in chapter 44 where Charles left Sarah, married Ernestina, and entered her father’s business. It epitomizes the rejection of freedom, the obedience to duty and Victorian ideology. But this false, traditional ending is rejected by the narrator in chapter 45. The second ending occurs in chapter 60. Having broken his engagement with Ernestina, Charles returned to Sarah and reunited with her. This ending represents Charles’s choice of freedom by uniting with Sarah, but Sarah herself refused to be inscribed, dominated by him. In other words, it is a kind of wish-fulfillment of Charles’s fantasies of a happy life with Sarah. The third ending, in chapter 61, embodies Sarah’s existential freedom: the two protagonists both rejected each other and Charles was left alone. It is in fact appropriate to the theme of freedom. Charles was left alone, but he was capable of change and could understand the implications of existentialism that Sarah tried to teach him.

The novel’s open ending is a form of freedom to the readers, a fact that undermines authority in the narrative. The readers are free of manipulation, in the sense that they can maneuver their own position and stance in the narrative. In “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”, the narrator treats his readers as intelligent, independent beings who deserve more than the manipulative illusion of reality provided by a traditional novel. In the novel, the first ending has been toppled by the narrator; however, the second and third are of equal possibility. The readers have the freedom of adding more possible endings as well as choose one according to their own experience. This kind technique of ending a novel breaks the omniscient, omnipotent role of the narrator, provides the readers with the right of decision-making, expands the textual space. Also, John Fowles stimulates his readers’ self-consciousness and invites them to compose the narrative with him. In this sense, readers are no longer passive consumers but co-authors with freedom.

The third ending is true to Fowles’s biological view, in conformed to his sense of mystery. This thoroughly contemporary ending is the one supported by the vast thematic network which has woven into the novel the concepts of man’s isolation and his survival through the centuries by evolving. Even we readers must choose whether to evolve: if one accepts the final ending, he has chosen evolution; if he takes the happy ending, he must take along with its Victorian intervening omnipotent, omniscient God, its biological, psychological improbability, and its heavy-handed rendering.

### B. *Existential Freedom and the Third Ending*

As having been referred in the introduction part, John Fowles is influenced by French existentialism that he has employ in his writings. From the year 1947 to 1950, the French existentialism was in vogue when John Fowles was in

Oxford University. The novelist was deeply influenced by that theory system, especially the theory of “freedom”, developed by Sartre. By combining the existentialism with his own unique understanding of freedom, Fowles inserts and saturates his thoughts into his works. When being interviewed, John Fowles declares that he has read almost all the works of Sartre and Camus.

Existentialism, which has gained momentum by invading virtually every form of human thought and expression, including the novel, theater, poetry, art, and theology, emerged in its contemporary form in Paris following the Second World War. In the sheer scope or its influence a far wider response than any other mode of philosophy in current times has been achieved by existentialism, and this influence does not appear to be waning. Rejecting systematic and schematic thought, existentialists concentrate their attention on human situation, in favor of a more spontaneous mode of expression in order to capture the authentic concerns of concrete existing individuals. They probe into the meaning of being through the deep recesses of man’s anxious and restless soul and their concern is about man’s active role in forging his own destiny and help cope with a given situation.

Individual responsibility, according to Sartre, is that man is what he makes of himself; he has no one to blame for what he is except himself. Freedom means that “there is nothing forcing me from behind to behave in any given way, nor is there a precise pattern luring me into the future”. There are no guidelines guaranteed to us in this world and no rule of general morality can show us what we ought to do—“I am the only thing that exists and I am totally free.” In addition, for Sartre, each agent is endowed with unlimited freedom. Freedom is not defined by an ability to act. Freedom is rather to be understood as characteristic of the nature of consciousness, i.e. as spontaneity.

As an existential writer, Fowles is concerned about how an individual under pressure keeps his own freedom, unique characteristics in order to materialize his self-identity. According to John Fowles, existentialism enables an individual to react, take actions against the odds, pressures, and ordeals around him. Fowles’s novels are all devoted in how to realize the existing, potential freedom, especially self-awareness and the spirit of suspecting. Frequently, Fowles emphasizes the importance of pursuing limited freedom in quandary, and the positive aspects, such as searching, exploring, and improving.

Sartre says that man first of all exists, confronts himself, emerges in the world and defines himself afterward. Both the main characters in “The French Lieutenant’s Woman”, Sarah and Charles, are created according to this theory. At the beginning, they had to remain their roles in the society, a prostitute and a gentleman. Sarah had to confront the censure, curse of the others; Charles had to face the infamy and mental torture of breaking the marriage. At the end, the two of them both rejected each other: Charles chose to live alone after his two-year searching for Sarah, for the meaning of freedom in the world, especially in the US; Sarah, though still mysterious, chose to live in the community of the Pre-Raphael as a modern woman dressed in fashionable clothes, to raise her daughter, Lalage, alone if there were such little girl. Here they defined themselves in accordance with the philosophy of existentialism, avoiding being the object of the others. Charles achieved freedom through the violation of his age, ancestry, class, and country. Sarah promoted freedom through her sexuality, femininity, and psychological impact upon Charles, accepted her sexuality, as we have learnt because it led him to self-realization and to achieving whole sight. Sexuality embodies freedom, particularly when Sarah did not demand marriage from Charles after their sexual intercourse and refused his proposal after they met two years later.

By putting his existential philosophy into the figure of Charles, Fowles tries to enlighten readers how to arise from the social norms and convention to obtain an existentially free and happy life. Charles declared himself a Darwinist, but he indeed did not understand the meaning of Darwin’s theory of evolution just as the Victorians around him. Instead, he was rescued by existentialism.

In the third ending, Charles was at the typical existential feeling of void, alienation, and isolation and he was totally free and responsible to decide where he was to go. By having Charles in “The French Lieutenant’s Woman” as a model for readers, Fowles enables readers gain an inspiration for their own life. Charles’s struggling to maintain his individuality and to pursue freedom, struggling to achieve a measure of self-realization amidst the undirected or misdirected masses, is an important unifying theme through out the entire novel. The choices Charles is facing, in a large extent, reflect the various choices that readers must face in their life. A different choice can make life all the difference, just as in Charles’s case.

In fact, the whole novel is trying to enlighten readers that human beings are free and should have the endurance to pursue their own freedom, no matter how hard it is to obtain; otherwise their life will be fossilized. This existential theme of life-long quest of freedom is flowing out through the novel. For John Fowles, existentialism “is not a philosophy, but a way of looking at, and utilizing other philosophies”.

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