

## **Chapter - 5**

### **Parody, Irony, and the Act of Subversion**

Parody and irony combine and work for subversion in the postmodern narrative. Both parody and irony become inseparable in the act of subversion and correspondingly perform the postmodern function. Postmodern parody does not limit itself to the cause of ridiculing or satirizing the past. It does not carry the serious purpose of correcting the society, nor does it display the trivial task of imitation. Postmodern parody along with irony continues the job of the postmodern spirit to question and subvert the metanarratives and fundamentals of the past and the present. It is this parody that allows postmodernism to be both conventional and radical, both and neither. The postmodern double-voicedness results from parodical inscriptions of the past, its conventions, norms, and manners, and questioning and subversion through irony.

The postmodernist writers employ this political double-voicedness in their fictions. Both form and content of the novel carry this postmodernist propaganda. In the task of postmodern zeal to question and subvert, parody becomes an essential tool, since it offers postmodern writers an opportunity to enter the arena it seeks to question. While questioning and subverting the realistic project, the postmodern writer employs realistic conventions within the framework and subverts the form both externally and internally. The scope of conventional parody used by the writers of the past was limited and constrained to local goals such as imitation, ridicule, and correction. Postmodern parody does neither of that. It is neither social nor political weapon of the writer to correct or ridicule the society. Postmodern parody, in its epistemological and ontological questioning, problematizes the entire notion of representation and the notion of reality. It does not provide, as it happens in the case of conventional parody, the solution or answers to the questions. It merely questions and subverts the very form and content it installs in the writing.

Parody entails a distant history, as it has been a popular form since the origin of literature. Writers like Aristophanes from the ancient Greek used parodical allusions in his comic plays. In the neo-classical era, Pope in his *The Rape of the Lock* and other works, utilized parody as a key strategy. Simon Dentith mentions in this regard, “Aristophanes’ plays themselves are full of parodic allusions, most notably to the plays of Euripides; but his comedy is truly a heteroglossic (multi-languaged) form, made up of the multiple voices that competed with each other in the bustling civic life of ancient Athens” (43). Parody is certainly not a new thing in literature. It has been popular in both the distant and the recent past. Parody has been present in one way or another in all the phases of the history of English literature.

Parody has been popular in all the major forms of literature, be it novel, poetry, or plays. Earlier parodies used to be in the form of poetry. As the other forms were developed, parody was chosen in them with equal success. During the rise of the novel form, Richardson’s *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* was parodied by Fielding in his work *Shamela*. Such parodies galore in the history of English Literature. Postmodern parodies are different in nature and scope. Their scope is not limited to ridicule and mock the previous style. Postmodern parody reviews the past and its styles ironically. An irony becomes a key weapon to carry out postmodern subversion. With the play of irony and parody, the postmodern parodical work becomes inherently political.

Postmodern writers from different cultures have utilized parodical frames to narrate their local stories. John Barth (*The Sot-Weed Factor*), E L Doctorow (*Ragtime*), John Fowles (*The French Lieutenant’s Woman*), David Lodge (*The British Museum is Falling Dawn*), Umberto Eco (*The Name of the Rose*), Italo Calvino (*If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller*), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight’s Children*), Robert Kroetsch (*The Studhorse Man*), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*), and many others from different cultural background utilize parody as

a key narrative strategy to present their stories. Despite having different cultural locations, these writers have a common characteristic of reusing the styles, manners, and content of the past. Many postmodern critics have identified the different usages of parody; the usage, unlike the conventional one, heavily relies on the tactic of the employment of 'double-code' in fiction. While referring to Byatt's *Possession: A Romance*, Simon Dentith narrates the parodical references to the past works:

The point of the novel, one might say, apart from the traditional novelistic pleasures of narrative excitement, subtleties of characterisation, and so on, is its juxtaposition of then and now. One important strand of contemporary culture, therefore, which we can call postmodernist in the restricted formal sense that Byatt herself uses, relies upon parody and its related modes to 'double-code' the present. The comparison may seem far-fetched, but we have noticed how, with comparable ironies and two-way traffic, the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century similarly used the cultural past to unlock the complexities of the present moment (170).

The inscription of the past styles and their ironical juxtaposition with the present makes the postmodern parody different from the conventional one. Postmodern employment of parody is based on the idea of subversion. The subversion is led through the play of irony and parody. Irony is essential as it marks the required critical distance with the past. It reiterates that the past must be visited, but critically. The present chapter discusses the employment of parody in postmodern fiction and the act of subversion led through the combined act of parody and irony. In order to explore the nature of postmodern parody, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is selected as a central postmodern book and other numerous postmodern books from various cultures are referred to recognize the widespread use of parody as one of the key

strategies in postmodern fiction. It is important to consider what Hutcheon asserts, “Within a pragmatic frame of reference, however, we can begin to account for the fact that parody involves more than just textual comparison; the entire enunciative context is involved in the production and reception of the kind of parody that uses irony as the major means of accentuating, even establishing, parodic contrast” (*A Theory of Parody* 34).

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles parodies the Victorian Era of nineteenth century England. The parodical task spans from literary works and its conventions, nonliterary works to the society of the Victorian Era. The novel begins with the poem “The Riddle” written by Thomas Hardy. The writer juxtaposes the theme and setting of the poem with the setting and events of the following chapter. The poem is about a solitary female figure standing in front of the sea and gazing over it. The setting in the chapter corresponds with the setting of the poem as in the chapter the writer describes the similar setting of the sea and presents a solitary female figure standing motionless in front of the sea.

The novel inscribes the third person omniscient narrative and undercuts the same in the first chapter. In other words, it parodically installs the realistic narrative conventions and subverts it with the suffused undertone of irony. The narrator describes the setting with both certainty and uncertainty. He says,

Primitive yet complex, elephantine but delicate; as full of subtle curves and volumes as a Henry More or a Michelangelo; and pure, clean, salt, a paragon of mass. I exaggerate? Perhaps, but I can be put to the test, for the Cobb has changed very little since the year of which I write; though the town of Lyme has, and the test is not fair if you look back towards land (9-10).

The certainty of realistic conventions of the Victorian Era and an ironical uncertainty that subverts these realistic conventions through parodical inversion are found in the novel. Hutcheon postulates that, “Parody, therefore, is a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion” (*A Theory of Parody* 6). In the novel, it is found that the writer both uses and abuses, installs and subverts the realistic conventions. The writer installs the unity of realistic conventions and subverts them on certain occasions. The wavering between the third person narrative and the second person narrative can be attributed to this phenomenon. It is this political double talk, as rightly suggested by Linda Hutcheon, which pervades throughout the novel. She rightly posits, “Double-directed irony seems to have been substituted for the traditional mockery or ridicule of the “target” text” (*A Theory of Parody* 32). Such ‘double-directed’ irony is visible in many postmodern fictions. *Possession: A Romance* is an example of parody that parodies the Victorian past, but with a different purpose. Unlike Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, in which direct quotations and allusions from the great writers of the Victorian Era are both ironized and juxtaposed with the present, Byatt in her *Possession: A Romance* invokes fictional authors who resemble the writers of the Victorian Era. For instance, Randolph Henry Ash, a fictional Victorian writer, whose works and life resemble either Robert Browning or Lord Tennyson. This can be seen in one of his poems:

In this dim place

The creeping Nidhogg, with his sooty scales

Gnaws at the great Tree’s root, and makes him nest,

Curled in the knotted maze on which he feeds

-R H Ash (Byatt 26).

It is construed that the style of the fictional poet matches with the Victorian poets. However, Byatt's parody of the Victorian Era is marked with different purposes as it is written in response to Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Despite having different purposes, the novels convey the same postmodern agenda of parody and subverts parodically the conventional canons of representation.

Antonia Byatt's novel *Possession* parodies and questions the authenticity by parodically putting different genres such as letters, poetry, and diary together and ironizing the entire notion of realistic conventions. Simon Dentith rightly posits, while referring to the work:

Antonia Byatt's novel *Possession*, self-consciously styled 'a romance', goes to extraordinary lengths to create a series of mock nineteenth century poems, letters and fairy stories, as well as more recognizably parodic recreations of contemporary literary criticism, to establish multiple interactions between the cultural concerns of the late twentieth century and those of a century earlier (165).

Just as Byatt creates mock nineteenth century poems, letters, and fairy stories, Fowles, towards the end, creates mock nineteenth century poems to narrate the story of Charles. In other words, Fowles and Byatt not only bring the past through the parodical inversions of the texts of the past, but also recreate them. The writers both parodically inscribe directly the style of the Victorian poetry and ironically subvert against its own grain. In one of the stanzas, Fowles presents the irony:

And there shall all his brothers be –

A paradise wrought upon these rocks

Of hate and vile inequity.

What matter if the mother mocks (341).

Fowles, similarly, includes a plethora of the textual elements of the Era. All the chapters in the novel have either quotations or textual elements from the Victorian Era. In the beginnings of all the chapters, these intertextual elements are put, and the following content or the thread of the story is juxtaposed against the intertextual elements. The ironical juxtaposition of the continuity or the thread of the story subverts the inherent qualities of the Victorian Era; the ironical representation of the parodical references of the era contradicts and negates the nostalgic viewpoint of the past.

The writer ironically presents the time of that period in which, statistically, the quantity of females is higher than males. He mentions the data from *Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age* of E. Royston Pike, "In the year (1851) there were some 8,155,000 females of the age of ten upwards in the British population, as compared with 7,600,000 males. Already it will be clear that if the accepted destiny of a Victorian girl was to become a wife and mother, it was unlikely that there would be enough men to go round" (11). This detail of the age is juxtaposed against the love story of Charles and Ernestina. Instead of describing a genuine love story, the writer narrates it with an ironical tone.

The novel parodies all the typicality and conventionality of the era, whether literary, non-literary, or social. An ironical parody becomes the only way left for us to visualize the past. During the walk Charles in the novel mentions, "These are the very steps that Jane Austen made Louisa Musgrove fall down in *Persuasion*" (13). This reference to the past suggests both a parodical reference to the work of art of the Victorian Era, and an ironic undertone suggests an irony within it from the context of their conversation.

This chain of ironical parody is seen in all the chapters. The writer ironically juxtaposes a quotation from G. M Young's *Portrait of an Age*: "Of all decades in our history, a wise man would choose the eighteen-fifties to be young in" (15) with the actual portrayal of both Charles and his uncle. Both Charles and his uncle are shown as opposite caricatures of the ideal vision laid down in the quotation. This ironization of the past through the textual inversions in which the text of the Victorian past appears in the original form, and the characters and events of the novel, both ironically and parodically defy the nostalgia and represent the postmodern spirit of subversion.

The portrayal of the main character Charles is filled with parodical as well as ironical notions pertaining to history. Charles does not share a common and popular relationship with that time, since he does not comply with the ideologies of that time such as "the Oxford Movement". Instead of following the movement, he eventually turns out to be 'a healthy agnostic' (18). Despite narrating the portrayal of Charles in third person narration, the narrator takes recourse to footnotes while narrating additional information. Such deviation from conventional narratorial practices is seen in many postmodern fictions. In his short stories, Borges uses footnotes to present additional information. This tendency typifies an ironical resistance to capture and present reality through the conventional means of narration. For example, Fowles presents the additional information on the word 'a healthy agnostic' in a footnote: "Though he would not have termed himself so, for the very simple reason that the word was not coined (by Huxley) until 1870; by which time it had become much needed" (18). Footnotes suggest the problem of representation in the fiction. Many postmodern writers apart from Fowles utilize footnotes as means of narration to represent the problem of narration. In *House of Leaves*, Mark Z. Danielewski narrates a considerable amount of stories in footnotes. In fact, the story runs both in



the footnotes and the main body of the fiction. Additionally, the writer incorporates bibliographic information, additional information about the novel, and certain specific details about the characters. In the first footnote, the writer states, “<sup>1</sup> A topic more carefully considered in Chapter IX” (3). Apart from footnotes, the novel also runs in appendixes and index. The writer parodically subverts the realistic claim of representation. We can identify a similar attempt to resist representations in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, in which Fowles narrates multiple historical documents through footnotes.

In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, the writer excavates the conventional, historical, textual tissues of the age, both literary and nonliterary texts. The writer juxtaposes and shows contradictions in the two representations: the conventional representation of the age and the parodied representation in the novel. The quotation from E. Royston Pike’s *Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age*, “Most British families of the middle and upper classes lives above their own cesspool...” (21) suggests both nostalgic and glorified version of the history of the Victorian Era. The writer, however, caricatures an opposite portrayal of Mrs. Poulteney in the novel. The ironic portrayal suggests moral turpitude in her behavior and beliefs. He contradicts the social conventionalities with parodied versions of the same historical period. The representation of the parodied version of the intellectual and social condition of the Era is a key focus of the writer.

Ernestina’s portrayal equally suggests the writer’s intentions to parody and subvert the notions of the Era. The writer describes:

Ernestina had exactly the right face for her age; that is, small-chinned, oval, delicate as a violet. You may see it still in the drawings of the great illustrators of the time – in Phiz’s work, in John Leech’s. Her grey eyes and the paleness of her skin only enhanced the

delicacy of the rest. At first meetings she could cast down her eyes very prettily, as if she might faint should any gentleman dare to address her” (26-7)

The description suggests both the beauty of Ernestina and an ironic tinge that spoils the tone of the narration leading it to a subversive one. He further narrates that:

An orthodox Victorian would perhaps have mistrusted that imperceptible hint of a Becky Sharp; but to a man like Charles she proved irresistible. She was so very nearly one of the prim little moppets, the Georginas, Victorians, Albertinas, Matildas and the rest who sat in their closely guarded dozens at every ball; yet not quite (27).

The quotation denotes the parody of Victorian tendencies typified in Ernestina. The exaggerated notions of the Victorian Era typified in the character portrayal suggest both parody and irony within it, and their simultaneous existence executes the act of subversion. The writer suggests exaggerating and hyperbolic notions in Aunt Tranter as well. He states, “Nobody could dislike Aunt Tranter; even to contemplate being angry with that innocently smiling and talking – especially talking –face was absurd” (27).

The parody is not limited to social conventions, since it includes the entire form of the novel in the regime of parody. The realistic conventions employed by Victorian writers are parodied and subverted by John Fowles. An omniscient narrative strategy that claims an absolute supremacy of authorial intention is parodied, ironized, and subverted. The writer juxtaposes authorial supremacy and control over the characters with authorial helplessness. The writer presents both certainty and uncertainty in the portrayal of the key characters as well as events in the novel. The parody of conventional authorial supremacy is seen in his statement: “She (Ernestina) was born in 1846. And she died on the day that Hitler invaded Poland” (28). The tendency to deconstruct

the authorial supremacy is one of the common phenomena of the postmodern fiction. The postmodern writers parody, just like Fowles does in this novel, their own intentions and positions. Calvino in his *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, parodies both the authorial supremacy and the multiple novelistic genres in a single novel. Direct references to the reader and authorial helplessness are found in both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. Hutcheon rightly mentions in this regard, "Calvino's overt manipulation of the readers (us and him) allegorically demonstrates the presence and power of the authorial *position*, though its very obviousness and our realization of the different readers involved work to undercut that power and call in into question" (*A Theory of Parody* 89). Unlike Calvino who parodies the novelistic form and its authenticity, Fowles focuses on the parodied version of the entire Victorian Era.

Intertextuality in the form of epigrams in the beginning of every chapter set the tone of the writing. The epigrams or 'textual tissues' drawn from the Victorian Era suggest the impending parody of the social and literary aspects of the Era. The writer himself acknowledges the correlation between the quotations and the thread of the storyline of the novel in footnotes. He mentions at one point in the novel, "The stanzas from *In Memoriam* I have quoted at the beginning of this chapter are very relevant here (29). The parodical reference to the past is well noted by several critics. Hutcheon posits, "Postmodernism is a fundamentally contradictory enterprise: its art forms (and its theory) at once use and abuse, install and then destabilize convention in parodic ways" (*A Theory of Parody* 23).

The writer both installs and subverts, and uses and abuses the conventions of the Victorian Era. During the portrayal of Mrs. Poultney the writer mentions that her eyes are not like Tennyson's, "homes of silent prayer" (30). The writer presents an inverted parody that is both conventional

and radical. Instead of following the conventional purpose of ridiculing the parodied work, the postmodern parody becomes the act of, “critical or ironic re-reading of the art of the past” (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* 23).

To parody the works of the Victorian Era, the writer juxtaposes the characters of the present novel, with the characters of different works of other Victorian writers. He invokes irony by exposing the ironic contradiction between the characters of this novel and other novels of the Victorian Era. The juxtaposition between Sam Weller of *Pickwick Papers* and the Cockney servant Sam of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* invokes irony. Both Sam Weller with Sam of this novel have been shown with errors in pronunciation, but for different purposes. Sam Weller's confusing the pronunciation of 'v' and 'w' is contrasted with Sam's wrong a's and h's. It is this play of parody and irony, which seeks to subvert the canons of the Era. The writer by juxtaposing Sam with Sam Weller parodies the popular character and ironizes its substantiality in the process. He narrates:

Of course to us any Cockney servant called Sam evokes immediately the important Weller; and it was certainly from that background that this Sam had emerged. But thirty years had passed since *Pickwick Papers* first coruscated into the world. Sam's love of the equine was not really very deep. He was more like some modern working-class man who thinks a keen knowledge of cars a sign of his social progress (39).

The quotations or epigrams mentioned in the beginning of the chapter either justify or contradict the narrative thread in the fiction. During the portrayal of Sam, the quotation taken from Karl Marx's *Capital* (1867) suggests the same economic exploitation among the workers, as mentioned in the book. The relationship between Sam and Charles, master and servant, is

suggestive of economic exploitation. The writer says, “Charles’s attitude may seem to add insult to the already gross enough injury of economic exploitation” (39).

The act of subversion is both subtle and direct. After parodying the customs of the era, the writer also takes recourse to commenting directly upon them. He posits:

Nothing is more incomprehensible to us than the methodicality of the Victorians; one sees it best (at its most ludicrous) in the advice so liberally handed out to travelers in the early editions of Baedeker. Where, one wonders, can any pleasure have been left? How, in the case of Charles, can he not have seen that light clothes would have been more comfortable? That a hat was not necessary? That stout nailed boots on a boulder strewn beach are as suitable as ice skates? (43)

It is clearly visible that the writer both installs the Victorian Period and subverts it both subtly and overtly. It can be construed that parody in postmodern culture enhances and encompasses wider roles; it is no more reduced to the conventional repetition practices or wit. In postmodern fiction parody becomes the mirror through which the past can be assessed or viewed ironically. The tryst with the parodical representation of the past, though it appears to have been acknowledging historical contributions, is filled with irony. In addition to this, the intermittent presence of footnotes negates the all-encompassing potentiality of realism to capture reality in the text. Footnotes ironically stand out and suggest an impossibility to capture reality in the present framework or narratology of fiction. Footnotes, in this novel, become an easy window for the writer to reflect his own work and add additional information self-referentially. While discussing about the customs and styles of the Victorian Era, the writer echoes the fiction and narrates:

I had better here, as a reminder that mid-Victorian (unlike modernism) agnosticism and atheism were related strictly to theological dogma, quote George Eliot's famous epigram: "God is inconceivable, immortality is inconceivable, but duty is peremptory and absolute." And all the more peremptory, one might add, in presence of such a terrible dual lapse of faith (43).

The writer openly rejects the notion of reality and other humanistic foundations. It becomes a common tendency among the postmodern writers to negate the realistic foundations by various means. Parody becomes an essential tool for the postmodernists such as Fowles, Marquez, Calvino, Kroetsch, Pynchon, and Eco to defy the realistic conventions. Just as Fowles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* parodies the realistic conventions, other postmodern writers, too, utilize parody to subvert the canons of the past. Postmodern writers contextualize the postmodern parody in their local and cultural cause. In *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs presents a representation of the postmodern culture and art of America. The writer both parodically contests the realistic conventions: linearity, causality, cohesiveness, and objectivism, and the popular world of pornographic literature. The writer questions the binaries of fact and fiction, and fantasy and dream by parodically inscribing them and ironically subverting them. He, further, parodies the notion of plot construction with a proper beginning, climax, and an end. His parodical attempt to narrate the story of William Lee turns into an ironic inversion in which the notion of plot is deconstructed, since the writer does not either begin the story nor he ends it as per the realistic conventions. The simple story with abrupt hallucinations and dream-like events complicate the flow of narration. Parodical inversions with the tinge of irony assume the role of subversiveness in the task of representation. This obsession to deconstruct representation through postmodern

parody is visible in major American postmodern writers. During one of the incidents, Burroughs narrates the parody of life filled with perpetual irony:

I was standing outside myself trying to stop those hangings with ghost fingers.... I am a ghost wanting what every ghost wants – a body – after the Long Time moving through odorless alleys of space where no life is only the colorless smell of death.... Nobody can breathe and smell it through pink convolutions of gristle laced with crystal snot, time shit and black blood filters of flesh (11).

Both Fowles and Burroughs reject the realistic conventions differently. While Fowles takes recourse to the Victorian Era, Burroughs targets the contemporary culture of America.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, parodical representations of the past keep lurking and executing the process of postmodern subversion. The dual play or the politics of irony and parody in the task of installing and subverting the historical canons become the center focus of the writer. He both installs Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and ironically subverts it when he posits, "Charles called himself a Darwinist, and yet he had not really understood Darwin. But then, nor had Darwin himself" (45).

He further mentions while referring to Linnaean's *Scala Naturae*, "He (Charles) knew that *nulla species nova* was rubbish; yet he saw in the strata an immensely reassuring orderliness in existence" (45). The writer ironizes the two greatest theorists by juxtaposing inherent contradictions among their contributions.

The portrayal of various characters is filled with Victorian traces that suggest marks of typical conventionalities of that age. Contrary to the portrayal of other characters, characterization of Sarah is devoid of such typicalities, and she becomes a misfit in the conventional society. The

depiction of her character is presented against the backdrop of Arnold's poem, "A Farewell". The opening lines, "...this heart, I know,/ To be long lov'd was never fram'd;/ But something in its depths doth glow/ Too strange, too untamed" (46), suggest the spirit of her character. While the portrayal of other characters is fused with the play of irony and parody in the game of subversion, her portrayal invokes postmodern radicalism.

This game of irony and parody is visible in every attempt made by the writer in both invoking Victorian tendencies and subverting them simultaneously. The mark of irony in the parodical representation of Victorian writers is visible when Mrs. Talbot with her exaggerated and ironical fear imagines Sarah's death just as presented in Mrs. Sherwood's edifying tales: "A pursued woman jumped from a cliff. Lightning flashed, revealing the cruel heads of her persecutors above; but worst of all was the shrieking horror on the doomed creature's pallid face and her cloak ripped upwards, vast, black, a falling raven's wing of terrible death" (47).

It is seen that the character of Sarah undercuts the spirit of the Victorian Era. Her portrayal negates all the customs, typical ideologies, social norms, and general intellect of the period. Her being a misfit and having unusual or contradictory talents is visible when the writer comments upon her that, "she was born with a computer in her heart. I say her heart, since the values she computed belong more there than in the mind. She could sense the pretensions of a hollow argument, a false scholarship, a biased logic when she came across them; but she also saw through people in subtler ways" (47). She is shown with postmodern spirit. Her misfit and an advanced intellect suggest a rare postmodernist personality juxtaposed against the conventional characters filled with hypocrisy. Sarah could, "saw them as they were and not as they tried to seem" (47). This juxtaposition becomes an essential aspect in this parodical representation of the Victorian Era. Hutcheon, in this regard, mentions, "In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John



Fowles juxtaposes the conventions of the Victorian and the modern novel. The theological and cultural assumptions of both ages –as manifest through their literary forms –are ironically compared by the reader through the medium of formal parody” (*A Theory of Parody* 31).

Her being ahead of time and typifying postmodernist spirit is narrated in the problem of making or being a choice for marriage. With her ability to judge the people around her with the same precision as that of Walter Scott and Jane Austen, she becomes a perfect misfit for marriage: “To the young men of the one she had left had become too select to marry; to those of the one she aspired to, she remained too banal” (48). Her installation as a character results into a direct subversion of the Victorian intellect.

Sarah represents both the feminist voice that questions the conventionalism of the Victorian society including the biased patriarchal system that reduces women’s role to household duties. In this context, parody becomes a subversive tool that is adapted by postmodern feminists such as Jeanette Winterson, Aritha van Herk, Angela Carter. Winterson in her *Written on the Body*, and *Sexing the Cherry* narrates the parody of the conventional patriarchal system. Instead of criticizing the history of the system, the writer presents a parodical inversion of the patriarchal system from the perspective its history. While deconstructing the patriarchal system, the writer also dismantles the realistic conventions of narration that claims to narrate history in its totality. She parodies both the patriarchal system and the realistic conventions, and reconstructs history from the voice of the margin and the other. Winterson in her *Written on the Body* narrates this subversive spirit:

My job was to go into the urinals wearing one of the Inge’s stockings over my head. That in itself might not have attracted much attention, men’s toilets are fairly liberal places, but then I had to warn the row of guys that they were in danger of having their balls blown

off unless they left at once. A typical occasion would be to find five of them, cocks in hand, staring at the brown-streaked porcelain as though it were the Holy Grail. Why do men like doing everything together? I said (quoting Inge), “This urinal is a symbol of patriarchy and must be destroyed.’ (22).

Just as Sarah with her postmodern intellect deconstructs the Victorian conventional system in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, the Dog Woman with her magical capabilities and narratorial play subverts the given system of the society of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in *Sexing the Cherry*.

In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, the parodical and ironical inversions of the past undercut both the form and content simultaneously. While juxtaposing postmodern Sarah with the conventional characters such as Mrs. Poulteney, the writer parodies the realistic conventions of representation. This venture of ‘double voicedness’ installs the Victorian realism and with the play of irony and parody subverts it. Unlike the realistic convention, the writer himself appears and disappears in the novel breaking the laws of realistic conventions that sticks to any one point of view: first person narrative or the third person narrative. In the novel, he frequently appears and addresses directly to the reader making the novel self-referential and rejecting the realistic conventions. Such ‘self-parody’, as called by Richard Poirier, is visible in major postmodern fictions.

John Barth’s works, for example, are typically known for parodical references to the past. John Barth in *Chimera* metafictionally parodies the wide range of mythical world. The writer, while parodying the mythical stories, appears frequently and interacts with both the readers and the characters. Both Fowles and Barth utilize ‘self-parody’ to subvert the notion of realistic notions of representation. One such instance in *Lost in the Funhouse* can be found:

The function of the *beginning* of a story is to introduce the principal characters, establish their initial relationships, set the scene for the main action, expose the background of the situation if necessary, plant motifs and foreshadowings where appropriate, and initiate the first complication or whatever of the "rising action." Actually, if one imagines a story called "The Funhouse," or "Lost in the Funhouse," the details of the drive to Ocean City don't seem especially relevant (62).

Barth, similarly, presents the parodical story in his *The Sot-Weed Factor*. Along with the parodical narration of the historical poet Ebenezer Cooke by presenting his fictionalized story, the writer parodies the narrative patterns of Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, and Lawrence Stern. Barth, in all of his works, presents parodical stories with the motive to ironically juxtapose with the present and subvert their glorified versions. In *Anxious Pleasures: A Novel After Kafka*, Lance Olsen narrates the parody of the truth claims in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. The writer parodies the style, narration pattern, and the implied truth claims of Kafka. Just like Kafka's central character in *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa, too, finds himself transformed into a giant insect. In order to deconstruct the singleness and universality of the truth of Kafka, the writer parodically presents multiple truths that thwart the possibility of singleness of the truth. Olsen writes to suggest this parodical task of telling and retelling, "short-circuiting the comfortable narratives produced by dominant cultures committed to seeing such stories told and retold until they begin to pass for something like truths about aesthetics and the human condition" (125).

The utilization of parody as a subversive tool is common among these writers, but their styles and purposes are different from each other. Fowles, Barth, and Lance Olsen excavate the textual tissues from the past that claim to present the truth in its singleness. Writers such as Barth and

Olsen, sometimes, attempt to parody any single text of the past to subvert the metanarrative of the truth, and writers such as Fowles target the entire era and parodically subvert the conventionality in both the art and society.

Fowles does not parody a single text of the Victorian Era, whereas Barth, despite including multiple textual allusions from innumerable sources, parody a specific story. In *The Dunyazadiad*, one of the parts of *Chimera*, the writer retells the story of Scheherazade. On the other hand, Fowles attempts to portray the entire Victorian Era with its social and literary conventions, and history. The subversive act of parody remains the same as both the writers question the realistic conventions of representation. The notion of 'self-parody' remains the common aspect in both the writers' works.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, he addresses the readers, "I risk making Sarah sound like a bigot. But she had no theology; as she saw through people, she saw through the follies, the vulgar stained glass, the narrow literalness of the Victorian church" and he further mentions her postmodern quality, "I cannot say what she might have been in our age; in a much earlier one I believe she would have been either a saint or an emperor's mistress" (52). This direct address to the reader and authorial comments parody and ironize the realist process of fiction making. In this play of irony and parody, the role of irony becomes crucial as it is this critical distance that seeks to dismantle and subvert the parodied past. In order to ironize the past, the writer juxtaposes and contradicts it with the present. And it is this irony that eschews nostalgic view point of the past visibly seen in the conventional review of the past. In the authorial comment addressing the reader, the writer presents this factor of irony as a weapon to subvert the Victorian ideology:

We could not expect him to see what we are only just beginning – and with so much more knowledge and the lessons of existentialist philosophy at our disposal – to realize ourselves: that the desire to hold and the desire to enjoy are mutually destructive. His statement to himself should have been, “I possess this now, therefore I am happy,” instead of what it so Victorian was: “I cannot possess this forever, and therefore am sad.” (60)

In the stated quotation, the ironical juxtaposition and contradiction of the Victorian past with the present world serve the purpose of critical and ironical distancing of the past. In order to parody the particular period of the history of English literature, the writer takes recourse to including endless works from various poets, novelists, and nonfiction writers.

The postmodernists do not question the existence of history, but its validity and availability in the present world. History, in the postmodern world, is reduced to mere texts, since we do not have any other access to it. In other words, the postmodernist questions not the existence, but the authenticity of history. Instead of glamorizing or viewing the past with nostalgia, the postmodern writers seek to parody it and subvert it with critical irony. Being ahistorical is no longer tenable for the postmodernist writers. This is the reason why most of the postmodern writers present history as a main base in their fictions. The difference is that the history narrated in the fictions no longer claim to be objective or authentic. The postmodern writers like Marquez, Doctorow, Calvino, Carter and Fowles narrate history in an ironized and parodied form. History ceases to be an authentic or objective material and becomes a narrative just like any other fiction. Doctorow in his *Ragtime* presents a parodied version of the American history. In his attempt to narrate history, he presents more than one version of the historical period and diminishes the difference between literary narratives and historical documents.

The parodical inscription of history and its ironical portrayal subvert both the finality and the objectivity of it. Just like Doctorow questions the final authenticity of history, D M Thomas in his *The White Hotel* widens the scope of parody in which he parodies the history of the holocaust, the process of narration in the fiction, and the credibility of the entire branch of psychoanalysis. With the elements of self-referentiality, which becomes a crucial element in the postmodern parody to subvert the realist conventions, the writer ironizes both history and the narrativity that is used to represent the history. The novel parodically inscribes the realist conventions and ironically subverts by bringing multiple genres such as letters and poetry together and by bringing multiple points of view in such a way that both the narrative process and the content it narrates are marked by critical irony. In one of the scenes of the holocaust towards the end, Thomas narrates that:

Everyone on the hillock was silent, crazed with fright. Liza found she could not take eyes off the scene which was being enacted in front of them. One group of the people after another came staggering out of the corridor, screaming, bleeding, each of them to be seized by a policeman, beaten again and stripped of clothes. The scene was repeated over and over again. Some were laughing hysterically. Some became old in minutes (242).

Similar account can be seen in even Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* that narrates the stories in prose poems that parodies both the prose and the poetry, since it is neither true poetry nor true prose. The novel is a parody that covers a wide range of areas such as the utopia of the faithful historical narration, the unity of a genre, stable representation through realistic conventions, and language as a stable source of presentation. The writer deconstructs through parody the entire branch of representation and the objective accounts of historical narration. Calvino narrates this ironical task of telling parodied versions, "In vain, great – hearted Kublai, shall I attempt to

describe Zeira, city of high bastions. I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcades' curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing" (10).

John Fowles in the present novel refers to historical figures and particular customs of the Victorian era not only to narrativize history but also to parody and ironize it in the act of subversion. While narrating 'a plutocratic stratification of society' the writer refers to Disraeli, a politician and writer, as a prototype of the phenomenon:

In London the beginnings of a plutocratic stratification of society had, by the mid-century, began. Nothing of course took the place of good blood; but it had become generally accepted that good money and good brains could produce artificially a passable enough facsimile of acceptable social standing. Disraeli was the type, not the exception, of his times. (67)

The narration and the incidents related to Ware Commons suggest both the fusing of the color of Victorian trends and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The writer juxtaposes the liberated carnival with the Victorian conventionalism. He presents both the medieval tradition and its ironical adaptation in the Victorian context. He shows an ironical stance of the Victorian people towards the liberated phenomenon. While presenting Ware Commons, he narrates, "Indeed, only a year before, a committee of ladies, generated by Mrs. Poulteney, had pressed the civic authorities to have the track gated, fenced and closed. But more democratic voices prevailed." (77) The writer ironizes both hypocrisy and conventional morality of that period. He further asserts, "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 satyr; and the girl, a hedge-prostitute." (77) The other such case of ironical

morality is found in Mrs. Poultenev who drinks opium at the pretext of considering it as laudanum. Despite being ‘an opium-addict’, she follows her addiction under a false pretension.

The writer both parodically and ironically suggests:

A shrewd, if blasphemous, doctor of the time called it Our-Lordanum, since many a nineteenth-century lady –and less, for the medicine was cheap enough (in the form of Geoffrey’s Cordial) to help all classes get through that black night of womankind –sipped it a good deal more frequently than Communion wine. (78)

The writer, in the act of subversion, both parodies and critically ironizes morality of the Victorian era.

The appearance of the writer to the forefront of the story while addressing the reader compiles the pressure of irony and parody in the presentation of the Victorian past. The writer plays with the conventional narrative while appearing both directly and indirectly in the novel. In the chapter 13, the writer comes out of the closet and tells directly to the reader about the postmodern authorial dilemma. The writer discusses the relationship of an author and characters of the fiction. While quoting an epigram from Tennyson’s *Maud*, “For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by the veil...”, he posits, “I do not know. This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind.” (80) He further negates the God-like stature of an author and maintains that an author may not know all: “He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word.” (80)

The writer parodically installs the realistic conventions and ironically subverts them by negating the realistic claims and authorial supremacy in it. He both narrates authorial freedom and



simultaneous helplessness in the postmodern world. He mentions an authorial freedom while referring to Sarah, “But I am a novelist, not a man in a garden –I can follow her where I like? But possibility is not permissibility.” (81) On the other hand, he narrates a curious helplessness in an ironical role of an author in the present context. He mentions his helpless while advocating freedom to the characters rather than making them puppets, “When Charles left Sarah on her cliff edge, I ordered him to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy.” (81) He further highlights that, “to be free myself, I must give him (Charles), and Tina, and Sarah, even the abominable Mrs. Poulteney, their freedom that allows other freedoms to exist. And I must conform to that definition” (82).

The narratorial parody extends to all the aspects of realistic conventions. The building of stable and reliable characters or the portrayal of believable characterization, and the complete control of an author over setting and characters are parodied in the text. The characters run on their own, defying the authorial intention. The entire process of character portrayal is both parodied and ironized. While parody allows the writer to flout the norms, irony becomes a natural act as the writer subverts the very canons it installs in the process. The parody and irony in the task of characterization are seen in the following quotation from the text:

Oh, but you say, come on –what I really mean is that the idea crossed my mind as I wrote that it might be more clever to have him stop and drink 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 come clearly from Charles, not myself. It is not only that he has begun to gain an autonomy; I must respect it, and disrespect all my quasi-divine plans for him, if I wish him to be real” (81-2).

It can be seen that the writer parodically inverts the realist tradition and ironically subverts it in this political act of double voicedness. The very statement that Charles does not abide by or does not follow authorial commands suggests an ironical stance taken against the conventional authorial position in the fiction. Just as Barthes has suggested the death of the author, dethroning the writer of an all-compassing or God-like stature in the fiction, a new postmodern stance has evolved. In the postmodern fiction, the author shows a renewed interest of including the reader in the act of both production and reception of an art. The reader becomes an official partner of what the happenings, and the author directly includes the reader in this entire process. Not only *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, but also some of the most popular postmodern texts such as *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* includes the reader in the process of both production and reception. It becomes a common tendency in postmodern texts to include and consider the reader as a direct character in either the fiction or an indirect recipient of the fiction. Hutcheon rightly mentions in this context:

Increasingly this paradox has itself become the focus of much postmodern art and theory: simultaneous with a general dethroning of suspect authority and of centered and totalizing thought, we are witnessing a renewed aesthetic and theoretical interest in the interactive powers involved in the production and reception of texts (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 77).

This inclusion of the reader in the reception and production of texts, and parodical inversions of both the past styles and literary content work together in the task of subversion. Hutcheon states, “What historiographic metafiction challenges is both any naïve realist concept of representation but also any equally naïve textualist or formalist assertions of the total separation of art from the

world” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 125). In the present work, it is seen that the writer inverts parodically both the content and the realistic style of the Victorian Era.

This parodical inversions coupled with permanent irony within them represent the postmodern spirit of both epistemological and ontological questionings. For example, history is neither neglected nor rejected. It is merely viewed ironically, and its unquestionable authenticity is questioned. Postmodern texts assume that our detachment from history is not possible, but to view history with nostalgia is not possible. In footnotes, Fowles refers that, “we sometimes forget that the passing of the last great Reform Bill (it became law that coming August) was engineered by the Father of Modern Conservatism and bitterly opposed by the Great Liberal” (87). In this quotation, the writer ironically narrates the incident of the past. The Reform Bill, passed by the conservative party and opposed by liberal party, becomes a subject of irony in this context.

Fowles, in the fiction, heavily includes quotations from literary and nonliterary works. An opening of each chapter is unmistakably marked by either epigrams or textual quotes from innumerable sources of the age. During the narration of the events, there are ample intertextual sources that either comply or contradict with the thread of narration. These parodical inversions of textual tissues or traces from the Victorian Era are found everywhere in the novel. It is seen that intertextuality becomes a lethal weapon used in the play of irony and parody. In the act of parodical inversions, intertextuality assuming the quality of recontextualization, juxtaposition, contradictions, and paradoxes, proves to be parodical in nature in this entire parody of the Victorian Era. It must be noted that it is the postmodern irony that keeps the nostalgic visit of the supposed glorious past away. The ‘double voicedness’ is seen when the writer narrates:

It is a best seller of the 1860s: the honorable Mrs. Caroline Norton's *The Lady of La Garaye*, of which *The Edinburgh Review*, no less, has pronounced: "The poem is a pure, tender, touching tale of pain, sorrow, love, duty, piety and death" –surely as pretty a string of key mid Victorian adjectives and nouns as one could ever hope to light on (and much too good for me to invent, let me add)" (95).

In the thread, it is clearly seen that the writer heaps praise on the work of the past, and it is followed by an ironical comment that creates a postmodern paradox of double voicedness or the politics of representation. In the same line of context, the writer points out valuable contributions of Mrs. Caroline Norton and juxtaposes them with the shallow mindsets of the fictional Victorian character Ernestina. The writer says"

Each time she read it (she was overtly reading it again and again now because it was Lent) she felt elevated and purified, a better young woman. I need only add here that she had never set foot in a hospital, or nursed a sick cottager, in her life. Her parents would not have allowed her to, of course; but she had never even thought of doing such a thing" (95).

The irony in the characterization of Ernestina is seen when she typifies shallow mentality in her acts. Such political 'double voicedness' is visible everywhere in the historical or literary references of the Victorian past. Historical characters appear in the novel only to be ironized. While referring directly to the reader, the writer mentions:

You may think that Mrs. Norton was a mere insipid poetastrix of the age. Insipid her verse is, as you will see in a minute; but she was far from insipid person. She was Sheridan's granddaughter for one thing; she had been, so it was rumored, Melbourne's

mistress –her husband had certainly believed the rumor strongly enough to bring an unsuccessful *crim. con.* action against the great statesman; and she was an ardent feminist –what we would call today a liberal (95).

In the above-mentioned case, history itself becomes a subject of the play of irony and parody. The politics of representation both uses and abuses history and its personages.

Intertextuality, whether literary or nonliterary, becomes a vehicle for the parodical representation of the Victorian Era. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the writer employs more than one way of including intertextuality in the parodical task. Intertextuality in the form of epigrams, quotations, and allusions are included in this project. It is certainly not an innocent inclusion of multiple texts and their contexts. At times, the text becomes a multi-text representing the Victorian Era at once. It must be added that allusions, quotations, and epigrams are not synonyms of parody. Hutcheon highlights that, “Unlike imitation, quotation, or even allusion, parody requires that critical ironic distance” (*A Theory of Parody* 34). These elements of intertextuality merely become a vehicle of parody in this fiction. There is a direct and distinctive relationship between these intertextual elements and the play of parody. Hutcheon, further, in her *Poetics of Postmodernism* mentions the relation of the texts and intertexts in the postmodern context:

But it seems to have found that it can no longer do so in any remotely innocent way, and so those un-innocent paradoxical historiographic metafiction situate themselves within historical discourse, while refusing to surrender their autonomy as fiction. And it is a kind of seriously ironic parody that often enables this contradictory doubleness: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the “world” and literature” (124).

The epigrams at the beginning of each chapter are suggestive of the narrative thread to be followed in it. In the chapter 18, Fowles quotes, “Who can wonder that the laws of society should at times be forgotten by those whom the eyes of society habitually overlooks, and whom the heart of society often appears to discard?” (111). This epigram is presented against the backdrop of painful injustice incurred against Sarah by the Victorian social norms. Many critics have argued that Sarah represents the postmodern spirit of the novel. Her suffering is an ironical stance against the shallow and hypocrite societal norms of the era. Sarah’s statement, “My only happiness is when I sleep. When I wake, the nightmare begins. I feel cast on a desert island, imprisoned, condemned, and I know not what crime it is for” (116) suggests this ironical stance against the Victorian ideals. Sarah represents the postmodern juxtaposition against the shallow and narrow conventionalism of the Victorian society. The writer narrates her postmodern stance during her conversation with Charles. Sarah questions, “Why am I born what I am? Why am I not born Miss Freeman?” (116). These questions represent her distinguished difference in the society and suggest complete rupture with the Victorian past. During her conversation, she presents her unusual and unconventional stance to Charles, “What has kept me alive is my shame, my knowing that I am truly not like other women”. She further says, “Sometimes I almost pity them. I think I have freedom they cannot understand. No insult, no blame, can touch me” (142).

The parodical references to the Victorian norms and the ironical juxtaposition with the postmodern portrayal of Sarah suggest postmodern play carried out by both irony and parody. The role of irony in the act of subversion cannot be overlooked or ignored; it is a lethal weapon for the subversive tactics in the postmodern fiction. It is rightly mentioned by Hutcheon that, “Irony appears to be the main rhetorical mechanism for activating the reader’s awareness of this

dramatization” in postmodern fiction (*A Theory of Parody* 31). The stretch of irony includes both religion and science of the era. The writer ironizes both the concept of genesis, which assumed that the world had been created at nine o’clock on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 4004 B.C. and ironical scientific discoveries, which rejected the genesis by alternative propositions of the creation of the world. Religion becomes one of the key areas for the postmodern writers to parody and subvert. The postmodern writers both parodically inscribe the religious notions and ironically question its supremacy in the postmodern world. Religion represents an unquestionable metanarrative and the postmodern writers pose ontological questions. For instance, Robert Kroetsch in *What the Crow Said*, D M Thomas in *The White Hotel*, and Alberto Eco in *The Name of the Rose* pose serious questions to this religious supremacy. Eco narrates a parodied version, “Over Christ’s head, in an arc divided into twelve panels, and under Christ’s feet, in an unbroken procession of figures, the peoples of the world were portrayed, destined to receive the Word” (405). Fowles, in the same line, parodically inscribes religion in the form of a hypocritical condition of the Victorian conventionalism.

Intertextual voices continue to recur in each chapter, the range of which is limitless. The historians, poets, novelists, critics, essayists, journalists, politicians, and other literary and non-literary writers have been included in the novel with their textual tissues. These epigrams or quotations are not merely used for decorative purpose, but they are drawn with specific purposes. The textual tissues become part of the novel as they lead the course of the novel. In chapter 21, Mathew Arnold’s poem “Parting” sets the tone of melancholia of Sarah. The pure and genuine sadness of Arnold are juxtaposed with the ironical melancholia of Sarah.

Forgive me! Forgive me!

Ah Marguerite, fain

Would these arms reach to clasp thee:—

But see! 'tis in vain.

In the void air towards thee

My strain'd arms are cast,

But a sea rolls between us—

Our different past. (144)

The poem's mood rightly coincides with Sarah's sadness, since both of them indicate the sadness resulting from 'different past'. Her refusal to comply with the conventional ideology of the Victorian society as well as her refusal to ignore or reject the past is seen, when she says, "If I leave here I leave my shame. Then I am lost" (146). But she does so with irony, since in her case there is not one instance when she revisits past with nostalgia. All her references to the past are filled with irony. The writer narrates aptly, "And in those wide eyes, so somber, sad and direct, was revealed an irony, a new dimension of herself—one little Paul and Virginia would have been quite familiar with in days gone by, but never till now bestowed on Lyme" (150). Despite having a scientific vocation, Charles proves to be fitting the Victorian era only. It is his Victorian vision that stalls his ability to comprehend Sarah. The remarkable difference between Charles and Sarah is mentioned:

A remarkable young woman, a remarkable young woman. And baffling. He decided that that was —had been, rather —her attraction: her unpredictability. He did not realize that she had two qualities as typical of the English as his own admixture of irony and convention. I speak of passion and imagination. The first quality Charles perhaps began dimly to



perceive; the second he did not. He could not, for those two qualities of Sarah's were banned by the epoch, equated in the first case with sensuality and in the second with the merely fanciful. This dismissive double equation was Charles's greatest defect –and here he stands truly for his age (153).

Victorian vision does not allow Charles to understand Sarah's 'admixture of irony and convention', and Sarah becomes an enigma to him. Charles does not comprehend this 'double voiced' postmodernity. His late realization of the wrong choice in Ernestina and pursuance of Sarah suggests his wavering position. Charles is puzzled by the unpredictability of Sarah and bored by the predictability of Ernestina. Ernestina's world is limited to the Victorian vision. The narrator ironizes her tendencies: ". . . she had been given no talent except that of conventional good taste . . . that is, she knew how to spend a great deal of money in dressmakers', milliners' and furniture shops. That was her province; and since it was her only real one, she did not like it encroached upon" (154).

Besides ironizing the conventionalism among the characters, the writer, too, ironizes the places like Winsyatt. The writer shows how such places brim with ironical notions and conventionalism. He states:

It was symbolic, that stable clock; though nothing –despite the telegram –was ever really urgent at Winsyatt, green todays flowed into green tomorrows, the only real hours were the solar hours, and though, except at haymaking and harvest, there were always too many hands for too little work, the sense of order was almost mechanical in its profundity . . . . Heaven –and Millie –knows there were rural injustices and poverties as vile as those taking place in Sheffield and Manchester; but they shunned the neighborhood of the great

house of England, perhaps for no better reason than that the owners liked well-tended peasants as much as well-tended fields and livestock (158).

The quotation suggests the Victorian state of Winsyatt, and the writer exposes or digs out the inherent irony within it.

Multiple intertexts from various literary and nonliterary sources, parodical inversions, multiple contexts narrated by the writer, additional information in the form of footnotes, and reader's participation in the production and reception create an environment of plurality and lead to the novel of Bakhtinian polyphony. All these result into multiple voices that conflict with each other. In general, postmodern novels have to be polyphonic nature, since they tend to be pluralistic. Unlike the realistic novels that offer one dominant authorial point of view, clear-cut conclusions, and objective representations, postmodern polyphonic novels tend to include multiplicity. With postmodern parody, plurality, and multiplicity become a routine stuff in any postmodern text. In *The British Museum is Falling Down*, David Lodge creates a similar plurality and multiplicity by parodically inverting multiple sources such as Kafka, Joyce, and others. Polyphonic culture becomes a natural ally in the postmodern context, since it dwells and emerges only in plurality. With parody, postmodern writers such as Calvino, Marquez, Morrison, and Pynchon create polyphonic nature in their fictions. The rejection of singleness and fixities in the fiction, naturally, leads to polyphony. In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon narrates a complex parody pertaining to the historical period around the Second World War. It can be seen in the very opening lines of the novel, wherein the writer parodies the horrors of the world war,

D D D D D D D

A SCREAMING COMES ACROSS THE SKY. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now. It is too late. The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theatre. There are no lights inside the cars. No light anywhere. Above him lift girders old as an iron queen, and glass somewhere far above that would let the light of day through. But it's night. He's afraid of the way the glass will fall—soon—it will be a spectacle: the fall of a crystal palace. But coming down in total blackout, without one glint of light, only great invisible crashing (1).

The parodical inversions, transgression of various binaries such as high and low art, sacred and profane, and fact and fiction postulate an environment conducive for Bakhtinian polyphony.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, there are multiple voices, and they continue to recur from multiple sources throughout the novel. The writer includes historical insights, literary and non-literary elements, multiple voices of the characters, multiple authorial points of view, and historical cases and figures to make the novel pluralistic. The task of parodying and ironizing the past and its conventions, the use and abuse of the past, and inscribing and subverting the canons of the past reinforce the environment for multiplicity. While parodying realistic conventions in chapter 13 and subverting them simultaneously, the writer incites multiple voices in the forms of realistic conventions: author's point of view, character's individual point of view, and the process of production and reception in which the reader participates in the novelistic activities blurring the clear cut lines between the artistic world and the world of the reader. In chapter 28, the writer, while discussing the case of Sarah's innocence and her psychological dilemma, includes the historical case of La Ronciere, and other historical cases pertaining to females with psychological disorders. The chapter is filled with multiple points of view such as author's points of view directly addressed to the reader within the main frame of the novel as well as specially

noted in footnotes, Dr. Grogan's limited Victorian point of view, and Charles's confused state of the mind as well as disillusioned point of view. The chapter is filled multiplicity in terms of multiple textual tissues, multiple historical figures, and their separate voices. The act of irony and parody in the process of subversion naturally results in a Bakhtinian polyphonic novel, wherein multiple voices, with their conflicting relationship, dialogize and create an atmosphere of what Bakhtin calls, 'heteroglossia'. Many critics including Hutcheon have acknowledged Bakhtinian polyphony as an essential postmodern narrative strategy. Hutcheon posits, "Because parody is so overtly inter-discursive and "two-voiced", it is not surprising that we have been witnessing lately a revalorizing of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, the formulator of literary polyphony and of dialogism, for whom parody is "an intentional dialogized hybrid" (*A Theory of Parody* 69). She further reiterates, "It is a dialogic, parodic reappropriation of the past. Postmodernist metafiction's parody and the ironic rhetorical strategies that it deploys are perhaps the clearest modern examples of the Bakhtinian "double-voiced" word" (*A Theory of Parody* 72).

The writer continues to create plurality, Bakhtinian polyphony, and the play of irony and parody. In this process, parodical representation of the Victorian society, culture, art, literature, and history is the central focus of the writer. The entire process of installing and subverting becomes an endless play throughout the novel. The writer himself acknowledges this process self-consciously in the novel:

In spite of Hegel, the Victorians were not a dialectically minded age; they did not think naturally in opposites, of positives and negatives as aspects of the same whole. Paradoxes troubled rather than pleased them. They were not the people for existentialist moments, but for chains of cause and effect; for positive all-explaining theories, carefully studied and studiously applied. They were busy erecting, of course; and we have been busy

demolishing for so long that now we have been busy demolishing for so long that now erection seems as ephemeral an activity as bubble-blowing (197).

The writer ironizes the Victorian philosophy of rationality and utilitarianism. Victorian thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Mathew Arnold, and John Ruskin promoted ideas centered on rationality and 'cause and effect'. The foundation principles of the doctrine of utilitarianism are based on moral rationality, which the writer seeks to parody and subvert by juxtaposing it with the modernist or postmodernist developments of existentialist thoughts. The utilitarian thinking is shown in the characters such as Mrs. Poulteney, Mr. Freeman, and Ernestina. Many a times the writer ironizes their thoughts and actions based on the philosophy of utilitarianism. The concept of charity endorsed by Mrs. Poulteney, practical wisdom of Mr. Freeman, and the Victorian ignorance in Ernestina are ironized and parodied throughout the novel. The middle class becomes both the clear victim and the representative of the ideological doctrine of utilitarianism. He ironizes, "We tend nowadays to forget that it has always been the great revolutionary class; we see much more the doughy aspect, the bourgeoisie as the heartfelt of reaction, the universal insult, forever selfish and conforming" (201). The writer exposes the charity principle, the wealth principle, and moral principles as results of the utilitarian thoughts. He clearly subverts utilitarianism endorsed by Bentham.

The Victorian society under the guidance of utilitarian philosophers and thinkers seem to be morally and ethically correct one. The writer takes a stand that exposes an inherent hypocrisy lying under the deeper layers of the society. He juxtaposes and contradicts with the Victorian thoughts with both historical findings and modernist/postmodernist conventions. He both subtly and directly negates Victorian societal norms. He narrates, "The Victorians chose to be serious about something we treat rather lightly, and the way they expressed their seriousness was not to

*talk openly* about sex, just as part of our way is the very reverse. But these “ways” of being serious are mere conventions. The fact behind them remains constant” (213). He ironizes moral principles and an apparent hypocrisy lying under their actions. On the one hand, the writer ironizes this moral hypocrisy in their refraining from talking sex openly, and other hand he exposes the realities:

What are we faced with in the nineteenth century? 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 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) (211).

The writers like Dickens and Hardy have not been able to present the Victorian society. The so-called realism and its objective narration of the society does not portray the correct picture of the society. Fowles ironizes their narrations:

Dickens’s working-class characters are all very funny (or very pathetic) and an incomparable range of grotesque, but for the cold reality we need to go elsewhere –to Mayhew, the great Commission Reports and the rest; and nowhere more than in this sexual aspects of their lives, which Dickens (who lacked a certain authenticity in his own) and his compeers so totally bowdlerized (214).

The writer ironizes both the realistic belief to capture the world as it is and the actual representations in the fictions. The writer while narrating these historical and narrative findings of the Victorian Era questions the supposed universal truths. Neither language nor the realistic narratives can capture history and literature. He opines that Hardy, while becoming a bit more

open to the discussion of sex, limits himself to, “his fanatical protection of the seal of his own and his immediate ancestor’s sex life” (215).

The writer parodies both the history and Hardy while narrating his case, the history of which is uncertain or unverifiable. The writer presents:

What is definitely known is that in 1867 Hardy, then twenty seven years old, returned to Dorset from his architectural studies in London and fell profoundly in love with his sixteen-year old cousin Tryphena. They became engaged. Five years later, and incomprehensibly, the engagement was broken. Though not absolutely proven, it now seems clear that the engagement was broken by the revelation to Hardy of a very sinister skeleton in the family cupboard: Tryphena was not his cousin, but his illegitimate half-sister’s illegitimate daughter. Countless poems of Hardy’s hint at it: “At the wicket gate,” “She did not turn,” “Her immortality” and many others; and that there were several recent illegitimacies on the maternal side in his family is proven (215-16).

The case of Hardy is curiously narrated, and the writer attacks both the historical representations and moral bankruptcy in the society, as there are plenty of illegitimacies in society under the hypocrite mask of morality. The narratives of Hardy and Dickens have been incapable to present the society and its true nature. The realistic claims of their fictions have been both parodied and subverted. The writer, in doing the task, frequently breaks the realistic conventions by directly addressing the reader and declaring the metafictional process of writing. The direct address to the reader and self-referentiality are parodical references to the ‘self’ of the novel form. Critics call it as self-parody in which the novel parodies its own act of construction. Hutcheon posits:

Parody is one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context-dependent nature of meaning, of the importance to signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance. But any discursive situation, not just a parodic one, includes an enunciating addresser and encoder as well as a receiver of the text (*A Theory of Parody* 85).

Fowles attempts to create a holistic image of the Victorian world with the parodical inversions of literary arena, social conventions, changing paradigms of the society, 'new recruits to the upper middle class', and historical revisions. The parodical inversions with ironical outlook and contradictions lay out the ground in the process of postmodern questioning and subversions. The postmodernists acknowledge the fact that the history must be visited but with irony, and its authenticity must be questioned by the way of narrating alternative versions and revisions. This epistemological and ontological questioning invokes irony as a natural mode of presentation. Ontological and epistemological questioning with regard to history is also seen *Ragtime* in which Doctorow deconstructs the authenticity of the existing historical documents. In his alternative versions of history, he presents the fictionalized versions of the life of historical figures such as Evelyn Nesbit, Morgan, Ford, Harry Houdini, Harry K. Thaw, and Stanford White. These historical figures are parodically narrativized in unique and peculiar ways. The phenomenon can be viewed in the subjective and fabricated narration of the relationship between Ford and Morgan. Despite Morgan's condescending approach towards Ford, they have been shown as friends spending time together. Morgan says, "I want to meet that tinkering fellow. What's his name. The motor mechanic. Ford" (144). Narrativization coupled with fictionalization and subjectivization distort and deconstruct history. It is construed that both Fowles and Doctorow carry out parodical inversions to narrate fictionalized and an ironized narration of the past.



In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, social, historical, and literary conventions are inscribed parodically and ironically subverted. He inscribes 'the new recruits to the upper middle class' such as Mr. Freeman, and ironically subverts their typicality. He typifies:

These new recruits to the upper middle class were in a tiresome position. If they sensed themselves recruits socially, they knew very well that they were powerful captains in their own world of commerce. Some chose another version of cryptic coloration and went in very comprehensively (like Mr. Jorrocks) for the pursuits, property and manners of the true country gentleman (222).

This parodical inscription of the newly recruits bears the marks of striking irony in them. While narrating the case of Mr. Freeman, he cites Mr. Jorrocks (Robert Smith Surtees), who was a novelist, editor, and a sporting writer in the Victorian period. He doubles the ironical impact by fusing both the fictional characters and historical figures in the parodical inscriptions. He further ironizes, “. . . in imitation of an earlier generation of Puritan profiteers, who had also preferred hunting sin to hunting the fox –he had become excessively earnest and Christian in his private life”, and doubles the irony by ironically comparing with the present, “Just as some tycoons of our own time go in for collecting art, covering excellent investment with a nice patina of philanthropy, Mr. Freeman contributed handsomely to the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and similar militant charities” (223). The parodical inversions suggest an inherent irony in the age-old phenomenon called philanthropy and gentlemanlike behaviour of the Victorian people such as Mr. Freeman.

Charles is neither Victorian nor completely postmodern, and he seems to be wavering in between the two poles. His portrayal, too, bears the marks of irony that follows his like a shadow throughout the novel. His predicament is visible during many incidents pertaining to his

relationship with Ernestina, his father-in-law, and Sarah. His Victorian ignorance puts him in ironical situations on various occasions. Having listened to Mr. Freeman's offer, he felt, "obscurely debased; a lion caged" (228). Charles is tempted by Mr. Freeman, "like Jesus of Nazareth tempted by Satan" (227). Charles understood the intentions of Mr. Freeman and, "sensed now what Mr. Freeman really thought of him: he was an idler. And what he proposed for him: that he should earn his wife's dowry" (228). Fowles rightly mentions that he lost his sense of irony and it virtually made him naked. This devoid of irony in his psyche results from obligatory acceptance of the Victorian convention or Victorian offer made by Mr. Freeman. The narration of Charles condition points out the conflict between the Victorian ideology and the postmodern contradiction. He narrates, "Lyme was a town of sharp eyes; and this was a city of the blind" (231). The writer ironizes both the dull life in the city of London and provincial life in Lyme.

With the play of parodical inversions and ironical insights, the writer subverts the shallow notions of progress. He inscribes Charles of three different generations to subvert the notion of progress. He says:

Perhaps you see very little link between the Charles of 1267 with all his newfangled French notions of chastity and chasing after Holy Grails, the Charles of 1867 with his loathing of trade, and the Charles of today, a computer scientist deaf to the screams of the tender humanists who begin to discern their own redundancy. But there is a link: they all rejected or reject the notion of *possession* as the purpose of life, whether it be of a woman's body, or of high profit at all costs, or of the right to dictate the speed of progress (233-4).

With the comparisons of all the three Charles, the writer intensifies the irony in the purpose of life.

Along with the social conventions, the writer equally subverts the artistic canons. In the novel, the writer gives a considerable amount of space to the footnotes. He deliberately provides additional information either in footnotes or in the form of epigrams fixed in the beginnings of each chapter. The novel, sometimes, runs on two levels and they have perennial connections with each other. The additional and supplementary information provided other than the conventional way proves to be substantial for the writer in the project of parodical and ironical inversions. These footnotes and epigrams both support the thread of the story and contradict it. This practice of 'double voicedness' continue in the novel.

This continuance of 'double voicedness' in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is not unusual, since it becomes a tool of subversiveness in postmodern fictions. Subversiveness becomes an essential spirit in postmodernism, and writers from different cultures and locations utilize it for their local purposes. In fact, it is also widely used by the feminists. The women writers such as Toni Morrison and Angela Carter utilize it to subvert the patriarchal system of the society. Angela Carter, in her *Nights at the Circus* deconstructs the entire system of mythology. Her inscription of the mythological traces and subversion of the same by revising them to reject the patriarchal system and to be suitable for the feminine world suggest this 'double voicedness'. Through parodical inversions, the writer exposes the inherent gender bias in the ancient mythological system, and by subverting them through ironical revisions of the fairy tales such as The Sleeping Beauty and Helen of Troy, the writer attempts to reconstruct or deconstruct the entire system of the patriarchal system. She narrates the condition of the character the Sleeping Beauty:

Her female flow grew less and less the time she slept, until at last it scarcely stained the rag and then dried up altogether but her hair kept on growing, until it was as long as she was herself. Fanny it was who undertook the task of combing it and brushing it for old Four-eyes (a woman with four eyes in the novel) was a tender woman with a loving heart. The Beauty's fingernails and toenails kept on growing too, and it was the Wiltshire Wonder's task to trim them, owing to the marvelous dexterity of her tiny fingers (63).

Both Fowles and Carter utilize parody for different purposes: Carter deconstructs the system of mythology, which is portrayed as biased against women, and Fowles deconstructs the conventionalism of the Victorian past.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the writer encompasses a wide range of areas. While parodying the Era, the writer attempts to include all the major aspects. He, in fact, includes the Victorian conventions, both public and private. The notion of pure love, which is a Victorian utopia, is subverted by contradicting it with an ironical lust of Charles. Fowles narrates Victorian conventions of love during the meeting between Charles and the prostitute: "And so they stayed in silence again. But such moments as these were very strange to a Victorian man; even between husband and wife the intimacy was largely governed by the iron laws of convention. Yet Charles was sitting at the fire of this woman he had not known existed an hour before, like . . ." (246).

Irony and Victorian conventions are the two phenomena, which are often juxtaposed. Victorian characters follow conventions meekly and unquestionably. Characters like Ernestina, Mr. Freeman, Mrs. Poulteney, and Dr. Grogan are representative of Victorian conventions. Fowles continues to reveal irony when he inscribes the characters performing the conventions. Both literary and social conventions are parodically inscribed and ironically subverted throughout the novel. The relationship between Charles and Ernestina is narrated in the following words: "One

lived by irony and sentiment, one observed convention. What might have been was one more subject for detached and ironic observation; as was might be. One surrendered, in other words; one learned to be what one was” (264). Charles lives with irony and sentiment, and Ernestina lives with observation of the conventions. Charles’s incapability to cope with the conventions is curious, since he does not find a suitable match in Ernestina, who is a replica of Victorian conventions.

One of the essential, realistic conventions is to present convincing, objective, and realistic end. Victorian writers tend to provide happy conclusions with moral and ethical justifications. Whether one peruses the stories of Dickens, Hardy, George Eliot, or Thackeray, the commonality that can be found in their works is a reliable and stable end. This stable and realistic end is completely missing in this novel. Fowles abruptly and metafictionally narrates multiple ends in the story. The phenomenon of presenting multiple stories defies the classic and realistic rules of realistic conventions. Instead of narrating one single end, the writer offers more than one end and tries to negate the realistic narrative conventions. The entire act of putting more than one end is suggestive of the parodic project that both inscribes and subverts the literary conventions pertaining to closure. The writer, clearly and ironically, subverts the convention of creating an end. The realistic ends portray the settlement of the main characters while ignoring the minor characters. This convention is clearly ironized by the writer when he proposes the first end in which he settles, though ironically, the main characters and metafictionally ignores the minor characters. He narrates the case of Ernestina and Charles: “Charles and Ernestina did not live happily ever after; but they lived together, though Charles finally survived her by a decade (and earnestly mourned her throughout it)” (264). Fowles attacks the Victorian term ‘happily lived ever after’, and despite inscribing the Victorian end, the ironical undertone subverts the

conventional meanings. He self-consciously propounds the Victorian tendency to ignore the minor characters. He narrates, “Sam and Marry –but who can be bothered with the biography of servants? They married, and bred, and died, in the monotonous fashion of their kind” (265).

The writer, defying the conventional Victorian end, plays with the reader by delaying or producing multiple endings. The writer addresses the reader: “And now, having brought this fiction to a thoroughly traditional ending, I had better explain that although all I have described in the last two chapters happened, it did not happen quite in the way you (the reader) may have been led to believe” (266). The writer, with the parodical and ironical inversions of the Victorian realistic conventions, questions the entire process of writing realistic narratives. The character portrayal, realistic point of view, and the position of an author in the fiction. The presentation of one and final version of reality is ironized. He invites the reader in this act of producing different versions of the same story. He tells the reader, “So let us kick Sam out of his hypothetical future and back into his Exeter present. He goes to his master’ compartment when the train stops” (267). The writer knows that Charles is not happy with the conventional ending in which he marries with Ernestina and becomes a part of an ironical ‘happy ending’ offered by the writer. He posits, “Above all he (Charles) felt himself coming to the end of a story; and to an end he did not like” (266). The writer takes the reader to another hypothetical journey towards a new and refined end. Many postmodern writers parody the process of ending the story. The end is always a matter of serious concern in the realist narrative, and the postmodernist writers parodically play with the end.

Jonathan Coe’s *What a Carve Up!* is one of the examples in which neither a simple beginning nor a simple end is found. The novel begins and ends with the same note. It ironizes the conventional narration pattern of the portrayal of family tree by a chart rather than

comprehensive narration. The novel opens abruptly, “Tragedy had struck the Winshaws twice before, but never on such a terrible scale” (1). The entire novelistic form and the idea of representation is parodied in the novel. Besides including multiple genres, the writer parodies the realistic convention of narrating a story with a proper beginning and an end. Simon Dentith suggests while referring to the work:

Now we can draw attention to the more profoundly destabilizing and metafictional role of parody in the novel: the whole book repeats the plot of the film *What a Carve Up!*, it ends and begins with the same sentence in a way which suggests the snakelike tongue-in-mouth circularity of fabulation, and it is uncertain whether there is any master discourse, or language of plain common sense, upon which readers can rely to order the multiple parodied jargons and dialects which constitute the novel (171).

Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller* is a similar example in which a similar postmodern parodical treatment with the end is found. The entire novel neither begins nor ends in a proper sense. It is a parodical play of representation, in which the process of narrating a realist or a modern story is parodied and ironized. The writer while parodying the end subverts the notion of closure. The beginning and the closure are always defied and what remains is the play that toys with the narrative convention of the end. He asks in *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller*, “Do you believe that every story must have a beginning and an end? In ancient times a story could end only in two ways: having passed all the tests, the hero and the heroine married, or else they died” (259). Along with Calvino, Barth, too, parodies the possibility of a probable ending in *Lost in the Funhouse*. He, while referring to the other texts, parodies the notion of fixed and final ending in the novel:

One possible ending would be to have Ambrose come across another lost person in the dark. They'd match their wits together against the funhouse, struggle like Ulysses past obstacle after obstacle, help and encourage each other. Or a girl. By the time they found the exit they'd be closest friends, sweethearts if it were a girl; they'd know each other's inmost souls, be bound together *by the cement of shared adventure*; then they'd emerge into the light and it would turn out that his friend was a Negro. A blind girl. President Roosevelt's son. Ambrose's former archenemy (69).

John Fowles applies similar postmodern treatment to the narration of the story and its end. The postmodern ending can only be described by its quality of an oxymoron or a binary: ending-unending. The end is neither complex nor simple, and in an attempt to produce the end, it creates plurality. He narrates the process that leads to various ends, "I was not cheating when I said that Charles had decided, in London that day after his escapade . . . . Where I have cheated was in analyzing the effect that three – word letter continued to have on him. It tormented him, it obsessed him, it confused him" (267). He further introduces and acknowledges postmodern oxymoron in Sarah. He narrates, "The more he thought about it the more Sarah-like that sending of the address – and nothing more – appeared. It was perfectly in key with all her behavior, and to be described only by oxy-moron; luring-receding, subtle-simple, proud-begging, defending-accusing" (267).

On the one hand, Sarah is presented with her postmodern pluralities, and on the other hand, Charles is shown with his Victorian problems of religious faith. Despite being scientific in his nature, with his knowledge of the latest scientific discoveries, he certainly senses the void in his heart. The writer narrates this Victorian complexity: "Deep in his heart Charles did not wish to be an agnostic. Because he had never needed faith, he had quite happily learned to do without it;



and his reason, his knowledge of Lyell and Darwin, had told him he was right to do without its dogma. Yet here he was, not weeping for Sarah, but for his own inability to speak to God” (282). Charles is the result of the confusion between the Victorian dogma and new scientific discoveries. The writer juxtaposes his ironical condition with the oxymoron-like situation of Sarah. Sarah’s deceptions to Charles or her tricking on Charles can be considered as a kind of postmodern metaphorical subversion of Victorian sensibilities.

The writer frequently ironizes the Victorian religious dogma. Most of the characters such as Mr. Freeman, Mrs. Poulteney, and even Charles during his confessional mode represent the Victorian dogma. The writer ironizes the famous phenomenon called ‘charity’. Charity becomes a vehicle for the Victorians to vent their guilty conscious. The writer ironizes, “Between the cruelties of our own age and our guilt we have erected a vast edifice of government-administered welfare and aid; charity is fully organized” (282).

The writer, while referring to the prevailing dogma, addresses Charles in an ironic tone. He parodically shows through the case of Charles that how the dogma wreaks havoc in his life, and to get rid of it, he has to make a brave choice. Fowles refers to Charles, “You know your choice. You stay in prison, what your time calls duty, honor, self-respect, and you are comfortably safe. Or you are free and crucified” (284). His ‘deepest yearnings’ are juxtaposed against the Victorian dogma. In other words, his desire to embrace postmodern Sarah meets the challenge in the Victorian Dogma. Fowles both parodically and ironically subverts the dogma. He portrays Charles’s condition, “He seemed as he stood there to see all his age, its tumultuous life, its iron certainties and rigid conventions, its repressed emotion and facetious humor, its cautious science and incautious religion, its corrupt politics and immutable castes, as the great hidden enemy of

all his deepest yearnings” (285). His victory on the obstacles is realized when he says, “*They do not know, they cannot judge*” (285).

An ironical representation of the Victorian mind is seen when the writer claims that the Victorians possessed two minds. While justifying the point the writer mentions the figures from various fields. He clearly indicates:

This – the fact that every Victorian had two minds – is the one piece of equipment we must always take with us on our travels back to the nineteenth century. It is a schizophrenia seen at its clearest, its most notorious, in the poets I have quoted from so often – in Tennyson, Clough, Arnold, Hardy; but scarcely less clearly in the extraordinary political veerings from Right to Left and back again of men like the younger Mill and Gladstone; in the ubiquitous neuroses and psychosomatic illnesses of intellectuals otherwise as different as Charles Kingsley and Darwin; in the execration at first poured on the Pre-Raphaelites, who tried – or seemed to be trying – to be one minded about both art and life; in the endless tug-of-war between Liberty and Restraint, Excess and Moderation, Propriety and Conviction, between the principled man’s cry for Universal and his terror of Universal Suffrage; transparent also in the mania for editing and revising, so that if we want to know the real Mill or the real Hardy we can learn far more from the deletions and alterations of their autobiographies than from the published versions . . . more from correspondence that somehow escaped burning, from private diaries, from the petty detritus of the concealment operation” (288-9).

The writer comments on his own parodical inversions carried out throughout the novel. By calling these eminent personalities from various fields as schizophrenia, the writer subverts the entire notion of realism. The word ‘schizophrenia’ represents the loss of contact with the real and

the writer doubles the impact by calling them both schizophrenic and double minded. The double-mindedness is categorized in the Victorian conflictual areas such as liberty and restraint, moderation and excess. The Victorian mind usually prefers the socially most acceptable such as restraint, and moderation. On the other hand, the postmodernism celebrates plurality disregarding the Victorian prejudices. The instances of realism being parodied and subverted are many in many other postmodern fictions. Julian Barnes writes a parody on the project of realism in *Flaubert's Parrot*, which is based on Gustave Flaubert. Flaubert was a prominent writer of realism and the parodical references to him suggest nothing but subversion of the realistic project. Fowles executes the same parodical quest for realism that leads to an ironical play of subversion.

The beginnings of all the chapters in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* suggest the writer's attempt to unmistakably parody the entire era. The juxtaposition of the Victorian art, history, and documents with the fiction becomes an important task for the writer. In chapter 54, the writer juxtaposes Charles's hazardous quest for Sarah with A. H. Clough's poem: "My wind is turned to bitter north/ That was so soft a south before . . . ." (312). In this context, Charles's turn in life is suggested as 'bitter north'. His search for Sarah becomes one of the most difficult times in his life, which was otherwise 'so soft a south before'.

The writer flouts all the norms and conventions of the realistic narratives. The practice of first inscribing the norms, ironizing, and subverting those remains constant in the novel. He becomes a character who directly encounters the fictional character. The meeting of the writer with Charles become a parodical task that rejects the realistic convention in which the author takes complete control over the characters. The writer ironizes the dominating and controlling task of the writer, and he narrates this phenomenon by ironizing the controlling gaze of the writer on the

characters. He states, "It is precisely, it has always seemed to me, the look an omnipotent god – if there were such an absurd thing – should be shown to have" (317). He narrates an ironical dilemma while he meets Charles. He asks, "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?" (317). He juxtaposes the freedom of the character and the Victorian need to have a closed ending. He says, "But the conventions of Victorian fiction allow, allowed no place for the open, the inconclusive ending; and I preached earlier of the freedom characters must be given" (317). He parodies the Victorian endings wherein fixed endings are assigned to the characters. Fowles metafictionally flouts the Victorian narrative conventions. He juxtaposes the postmodern deconstruction of the character portrayal with the Victorian problem of creating closed ends and making justifiable character portrayal. He acknowledges that there cannot be a single and final end to any story. The reality cannot be captured in the single end. He self-consciously admits this phenomenon while being a character in the novel. The solution to this problem, as opined by him, is this: ". . . I think I see a solution; that is, I see the dilemma is false. The only way I can take no part in the fight is to show two versions of it" (318).

The writer presents three versions of the same story. The first conventional ending, which has been discussed, and the other two endings follow Charles's exile and a long search for Sarah. Fowles takes a serious attempt to portray the Victorian life with the aid of other literary sources: poems, novels, and other non-literary documents. The intertextuality does not merely appear in the form of epigrams in the beginnings of the chapters, but also appear to in the main content of the story. To narrate the condition of Charles, Fowles inscribes few lines from Tennyson's *Maud*. The juxtaposition of the lines with Charles's search indicates both parodical and ironical inversions of the Victorian life. The act of juxtaposition is neither naïve nor an honest attempt to

portray reality. The act of juxtaposition represents a parodical attempt to subvert the Victorian art and its canons. The juxtaposition bears the marks of irony within them and it results into an act of postmodern subversion. Charles's sentimental search for Sarah is juxtaposed with the sentimentality of the poems of Tennyson and Arnold.

Towards the end of the novel, the writer includes real literary figures of the Victorian era as characters. The literary personages Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Christina Rossetti play a small part in the novel. In the task of subverting the objective history of the Victorian Era, he inscribes the literary and historical personages. Along with the Rossetti family, well known Victorian artists, the writer ironizes John Morey, political figure of that time. He ironically mentions the figure while referring to a historical event: "The horror evoked by his poetry (Dante Gabriel Rossetti) had been publicly expressed by John Morley, one of those worthies born to be spokesmen (i.e., empty facades) for their age" (349). The writer both inscribes the historical figure and subverts it by presenting his ironical status as 'empty facades'.

The remaining two ends – the reunion between Sarah and Charles, and a permanent separation of the main characters as Sarah chooses feminine sovereignty over marriage – suggest an impossibility to portray a simple and closed end. The writer rightly narrates Sarah as a New Woman, who defies all the conventional norms of the Victorian era. He narrates, "But this was someone in the full uniform of the New Woman, flagrantly rejecting all formal contemporary notions of female fashion" (347). Fowles parodies the notion of marriage and ironically represents the case through the mouthpiece of Sarah. In addition to typifying marriage as a conventional custom, the writer goes on to completely rejecting it altogether. Sarah mentions the reason behind rejecting Charles's marriage proposal, "I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage" (353).

Charles's ignorance and inability to comprehend Sarah is visible when he says, "You have not only planted the dagger in my breast, you have delighted in twisting it" (362).

It can be seen that postmodern fiction is inherently historical in nature, and it seeks to deconstruct history with no other means than parody. Major postmodern writers utilize parody to question and subvert metanarratives of both the past and the present. In some way, it becomes a popular among the writers of minors too. Ismael Reed, in his *Mumbo Jumbo*, restructures and fictionalizes the entire notion of history, and parodically subverts the historical metanarratives. Unlike the conventional parody, the postmodern parody is both serious and playful. The playfulness coupled with critical irony becomes a tool that subverts all the conventional metanarratives.

Parody, in the postmodern context, assumes new context. It becomes a general narrative tool for the postmodern writers. And it becomes more popular among the ex-centric writers who utilize the subversiveness of postmodern parody to deconstruct the binaries that is traditionally biased against them. Many postmodern writers parody the hegemony of modernism and question its assumed superiority. It is equally popular among the feminists who utilize postmodern parody to dismantle the metanarratives with relation to the male supremacy. Postmodern feminists such as Carter, Atwood, Morrison, and Aritha van Herk use parody as a subversive tool for the feminist cause. Angela Carter in her *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children* utilize parody to subvert the male centered society. She attacks the metanarratives that are biased against women, and presents alternative versions of the same historical period.

Postmodern parody, in the task of subverting metanarratives, occupies a vast scope; it is not surprising that it is a popular form among the feminists, black writers, post-colonial writers, and other writers from the common stream. The act of subversion of history through the 'double-

voiced' game of irony and parody becomes crucial for her narration. John Barth, on the other hand, utilizes parody for different purposes in his *Chimera*, *Sot-Weed Factor*, and *Lost in the Funhouse*. During one of the incidents of *Chimera*, Barth narrates paraodical references to the art of writing:

Artists have their tricks,' Sherry replied. We three said good night then, six goodnights in all. In the morning your brother went off to court, enchanted by Sherry's story. Daddy came to the palace for the thousandth time with a shroud under his arm, expecting to be told to cut his daughter's head off; in most other respects he's as good a vizier as he ever was, but three years of suspense have driven him crackers in this one particular -- and turned his hair white, I might add, and made him a widower (1).

Barth parodies the mythical world and retells the mythical stories while parodically subverting both the mythical world and the literary history associated with it. Leonard Cohen in his *Beautiful Losers* parodies the social dogma and transforms the entire social system into a typical carnivalesque world. Hutcheon posits that in *Beautiful Losers*, "the social and literary inversions are typically carnivalesque: the religion of the spirit gives way to the religion of the flesh, complete with its own saints (sexy movie stars) and sacred texts (pornography and sex manuals)" (*A Theory of Parody* 73). In *The Studhorse Man*, Kroetsch subverts the form of biography and the associated norms of authenticity, originality, and finality. In his parody of the biographical form, he subverts the notion of realism by ironically questioning the authenticity and the possibility of objective representation. He simultaneously subverts metanarratives associated with western civilization. Hutcheon suggests that, "the (celibate) relationship between the cowboy and his horse that is at the core of the heroic western is subverted in Robert Kroetsch's parody, in *The Studhorse Man*, by Hazard Lepage's obsession with equine fertility" (*A Theory of*

*Parody* 81). The element of postmodern parody in the fiction is also recognized by Aritha van Herk while introducing *The Studhorse Man*. She asserts, “The peregrinations of the sexual rogue are as much a part of Hazard’s journey as his occupation. The many beds that Hazard performs in suggest a panoply of myth and place, parody and hyperbole” (viii). She further highlights the presence of ironical past in Hazard, “These embedded layers of history and pastness decree Hazard’s impending erasure, and speak to a place that has virtually forgotten its origins as a remote Hudson’s Bay post. Demeter claims that Hazard wants to damn the past, but caught in his intractable journey he is unable to escape its pull” (xv).

Parody, with its renewed possibilities, allows the postmodern writers to explore pluralities, question the authenticity and finality, and subvert the metanarratives. Parody remains popular narrative strategy in postmodern culture. It is true that there is no way to assess the authenticity of the canons of both the past and present. The author presents the world with the vision filled with the game of parody and irony. Our postmodern culture allows no other scope to view the world except the vision offered by this parodic game wherein the ironic and critical distance decides the rules. Postmodern ambivalence, plurality, multiplicity, and contradiction find parody as a suitable narrative strategy to inscribe the form and then to subvert it simultaneously.



## Works Cited

- Barth, John. *Chimera*. New York: Random House, 1972. Print.
- . *Lost in Funhouse*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968. Print.
- Burroughs, William. *Naked Lunch*. 1959. New York: Grove Press, 1998. Print.
- Byatt, A. S. *Possession: A Romance*. New York: Random House, 1990. Print.
- Calvino, Italo. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. 1979. Trans. William Weaver. London: Vintage, 1998. Print.
- . *Invisible Cities*. 1972. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974. Print.
- Carter, Angela. *Nights at the Circus*. 1984. New York: Penguin Books, 1986. Print.
- Coe, Jonathan. *What a Carve Up!* London: Viking, 1994. Print.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000. Print.
- Dentith, Simon. *Parody*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Doctorow, E. L. *Ragtime*. 1975. New York: Random House, 2010. Print.
- Eco, Umberto *The Name of the Rose*. 1980. Fort Washington: Harvest Books, 1994. Print.
- Fowles, John. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Boston: Little, Brown and, 1969. Print.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988. Print.
- . *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-century Art Forms*. New York: Methuen, 1985. Print.
- Kroetsch, Robert. Introduction. *The Studhorse Man*. By Aritha van Herk. Alberta: U of Alberta P, 2004. i-xvi. Print.

Olsen, Lance. *Anxious Pleasures: A Novel after Kafka*. Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoad, 2007. Print.

Pynchon, Thomas. *Gravity's Rainbow*. 1973. New York: Penguin Books, 2006. Print.

Thomas, D. M. *The White Hotel*. 1981. New York: Penguin Books, 1993. Print.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Written on the Body*. 1992. New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.

