

Anglistik

Mitteilungen
des Deutschen
Anglistenverbandes

ISSN 0947-0034

13 · 1 · 2002



Herausgegeben von
RÜDIGER AHRENS
HEINZ ANTOR

Universitätsverlag
C. WINTER
Heidelberg



HERAUSGEBER

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. RÜDIGER AHRENS
Universität Würzburg
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Am Hubland, D-97074 Würzburg
Tel.: (0931) 888-5408, Fax: (0931) 888-5413
e-mail: ruediger.ahrens@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de

Prof. Dr. HEINZ ANTOR
Universität zu Köln
Englisches Seminar
Albertus-Magnus-Platz, D-50923 Köln
Tel.: (0221) 470-2819, Fax: (0221) 470-5109
e-mail: h.antor@uni-koeln.de

REDAKTION

Dr. MATTHIAS MERKL
Universität Würzburg
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Am Hubland, D-97074 Würzburg
e-mail: matthias.merkel@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de
PD Dr. KLAUS STIERSTORFER
Universität Düsseldorf
Anglistisches Institut 5
Phil. Fakultät
Universitätsstr. 1, D-40225 Düsseldorf
e-mail: stierstorfer@mail.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de

ZEITSCHRIFT ANGLISTIK

Die Zeitschrift *Anglistik* wird im Namen des Vorstandes des *Deutschen Anglistenverbandes* herausgegeben und erscheint halbjährlich (im März und September). Namentlich gekennzeichnete Artikel geben nicht in jedem Fall die Meinung des Vorstandes oder der Redaktion wieder.

Die Zeitschrift wird kostenfrei an alle Mitglieder des Verbandes abgegeben. Aufnahmeanträge für den *Deutschen Anglistenverband* sowie Adressenänderungen sind unmittelbar an den 1. Vorsitzenden zu richten. Der Jahresbeitrag beläuft sich z. Zt. auf EURO 45,-. Zahlung auf Kto-Nr. 60822, Sparkasse Paderborn (BLZ 47250101) durch Überweisung oder Bankeinzugsverfahren.

BEZUGSPREIS FÜR NICHTMITGLIEDER

Jahresabonnement für die Zeitschrift *Anglistik* (zwei Hefte) EURO 29,-; Einzelheft EURO 16,-. In diesen Preisen ist die gesetzliche Mehrwertsteuer enthalten. Porti werden zusätzlich in Rechnung gestellt. Abbestellungen nur mit dreimonatiger Kündigung bis zum Jahreschluss.

REDAKTIONSSCHLUSS

am 10. Januar bzw. am 10. Juli.

ZUSENDUNGEN

werden an den Beauftragten für Öffentlichkeitsarbeit oder die Redaktion erbeten. Die Manuskripte sollten möglichst auf Diskette (rtf-Datei) mit einem Ausdruck eingesandt und nach der neuesten Ausgabe des *MLA Handbook* eingerichtet werden. Für unverlangt eingesandte Bücher und Manuskripte wird keine Haftung übernommen. Rücksendung nur gegen beigefügtes Porto.

BOOK REVIEWS: Please submit inspection copies of books for review to the editor (»Herausgeber«).

ANZEIGENVERWALTUNG

durch die Redaktion; z. Zt. gilt die Preisliste 98.

LAYOUT UND SATZ

Bertram Richter, Dr. Matthias Merkl

VERLAG

Universitätsverlag C. Winter GmbH
Postfach 106 140
D-69051 Heidelberg.

DEUTSCHER
ANGLISTEN-
VERBAND



13. Jahrgang • Heft 1 • März 2002

DEUTSCHER ANGLISTENVERBAND

Der *Deutsche Anglistenverband* hat satzungsgemäß folgende Aufgaben: Er fördert das wissenschaftliche Fach Englische Philologie (Anglistik, Amerikanistik) an den Universitäten und anderen wissenschaftlichen Institutionen, indem er Kontakte innerhalb der deutschen und der internationalen Anglistik und Amerikanistik pflegt, fachliche Interessen seiner Mitglieder vertritt und wissenschaftliche Tagungen veranstaltet. Insbesondere nimmt er die allgemeinen Interessen wahr, die sich aus den gemeinsamen Lehr- und Forschungsaufgaben in diesem Bereich ergeben.

1. VORSITZENDER

Prof. Dr. Fritz-Wilhelm Neumann
Universität Erfurt
Philosophische Fakultät
Fachgruppe für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Nordhäuser Str. 63
D-99089 Erfurt

2. VORSITZENDER

Prof. Dr. Stephan Kohl
Universität Würzburg
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Am Hubland
D-97074 Würzburg

SCHATZMEISTER

Prof. Dr. Jochen Achilles
Universität Würzburg
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Am Hubland
D-97074 Würzburg

BEIRAT

Prof. Dr. Christoph Bode, Bamberg
Prof. Dr. Renate Brosch, Potsdam
Dr. Jana Gohrisch, HU Berlin
Prof. Dr. Friederike Klippel, München
PD Dr. Michael Meyer, Bayreuth
Prof. Dr. Martin Middeke, Augsburg
Prof. Dr. Lilo Moessner, Aachen
PD Dr. Klaus Stierstorfer, Düsseldorf/Würzburg

BEAUFTRAGTER FÜR ÖFFENTLICHKEITSARBEIT

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Rüdiger Ahrens
Universität Würzburg
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik
Am Hubland, D-97074 Würzburg
Tel.: (0931) 888-5408, Fax: (0931) 888-5413
e-mail: ruediger.ahrens@mail.uni-wuerzburg.de

Alle Rechte, auch das der Übersetzung in fremde Sprachen, vorbehalten. Photomechanische Wiedergabe nur mit ausdrücklicher Genehmigung durch den Verlag.
Printed in Germany. Imprimé en Allemagne.

JAMES R. AUBREY, Denver

Toward "parity of existence": Blending Cultures in (and out of) John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

"We tend nowadays to forget," John Fowles writes in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, that the middle class has been "the great revolutionary class."¹ Speaking amiably to his twentieth-century readers, the narrator acknowledges that his declaration will probably seem counter-intuitive, for "we" have learned to associate the phrase *revolutionary class* with Karl Marx and the proletariat – not with the middle class, which Marx held in contempt. However, Fowles has associated revolutions with the upper class in "our" minds earlier in the novel by pointing out that on the same afternoon that Marx in London was writing a work that would bear "red" fruit in 1917, the aristocratic Charles Smithson in Lyme Regis was having his first encounter with Sarah Woodruff, who would soon bring about a revolution in his personal life.² The possibility that Fowles wants to apply Marxian ideas of revolution to individuals, regardless of class, is indicated by his selection of a quotation from Marx as the epigraph to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: "Every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself."³ This hope for a psychological revolution in the minds of his characteristically middle-class audience has long been a preoccupation of John Fowles, who likes to invite readers to emancipate themselves from culturally-produced boundaries – including those of class – that reduce rather than enrich the experience of being human.

The French Lieutenant's Woman is not a manifesto, nor even polemical, but it does thematize the idea of revolution. Occasionally the novel directly recalls acts of revolution such as the Hyde Park riot of 1867,⁴ but more to Fowles' purpose is the structural device of a narrator who calls attention to the silent revolution that societies undergo constantly, as he compares England of 1967 to that of his story, set a century earlier. The true revolutionaries, the novel implies, are those who bring less-violent changes to the culture, one person at a time. Discussions of Darwin and evolution in the novel reinforce the idea that change is a gradual process in which to live is to struggle; to drift is to die, like the novel's symbolic ammonites. Another way in which *The French Lieutenant's Woman* thematizes revolution is by considering the status of novels, generally, which readers are given to understand are undergoing their own struggle to evolve. This evolution of form involves the mixing of literary culture with popular culture, achieved by blending the genres of intellectual novel and popular romance, and by referring to a wide range of cultural icons, as disparate as Henry James and Jacqueline Susann, for example, or *Sleeping Beauty* and the Virgin Mary.⁵ In such ways, in this novel and in other writings, Fowles reveals an impulse to occlude the boundaries and distinctions that commonly differentiate classes of reader, evidently with the hope of a collapsing of cultural hierarchies into a

1 John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Cape, 1969) 245.

2 Fowles 1969, 18.

3 Fowles 1969, 3.

4 Fowles 1969, 280.

5 Fowles 1969, 413–14, 94, 74, and 136, respectively.

more egalitarian cultural parity – what the narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* declares to be “nature’s profoundest secret,” that a Darwinian “parity of existence” belies the vertically-organized, hierarchically-ranked links of the Great Chain of Being.⁶ Analogously, the post-Victorian novel should reflect a horizontal, egalitarian social structure, where a character such as Sam Farrow can leave his employment as servant to an aristocrat in order to work instead as a reasonably well-paid, rising employee for a business entrepreneur such as Mr Freeman, “for choice,” as Sam declares with the motto he invents for the store.⁷ Such working-class aspirations are not being mocked in the novel; indeed, by its close Charles also has rejected his upper-class consciousness. Such examples of personal emancipation in the novel illustrate how to bring about quiet, middle-class revolutions.

Charles’ devolution in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, from prospective aristocrat to ordinary Englishman, recalls a 1962 essay by Fowles titled “On Being English, Not British,” in which he argues that Robin Hood is the prototypical Englishman, whose hiding in the woods is comparable to the tendency in English culture for one to adopt a public persona to disguise one’s true feelings.⁸ Perhaps Fowles was attracted to Robin Hood for his political attitudes as well, for Robin’s self-exile from Nottinghamshire society, according to many versions of the legend, required him to reject a titled position among the nobility.⁹ Similarly Charles Smithson, over the course of his narrative, both loses his prospective title and rejects his place in Victorian society for Sarah Woodruff. In these actions both Charles and Robin bear a character resemblance to John Fowles, who has used the phrase “revolted against” to describe his young-adult rejection of “all forms of public authority, [of] everything I had earlier been taught to believe in” at Bedford School, the exclusive boarding school he had attended from ages 13–18; on the other hand, Fowles locates his most positive formative experiences of adolescence in the wild countryside of Devonshire.¹⁰ Similarly resonant with Charles and Robin in their indifference to social position, Fowles seems to have taken satisfaction in having rejected a prestigious appointment to the faculty of Winchester School in favour of one to an obscure position teaching English as a foreign language on the Greek island of Spetses.¹¹ And again like the legendary figure who actively re-distributes wealth, Fowles has socialist political tendencies; even his decision to grow a beard in 1964 seems to have been a Robin Hood-like, non-verbal form of cultural deception, as Fowles once told an interviewer: “A beard increases class mobility – it helps the working people forget your public-school accent”¹² His skeptical, even oppositional sense of independence from institutions, his impulse to self-exile, his socialist politics

6 Fowles 1969, 233.

7 Fowles 1969, 404.

8 John Fowles, “On Being English but Not British,” *Texas Quarterly* 7 (1964): 154–62, 158.

9 Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 19.

10 James R. Baker, interview, *Paris Review* 111 (1980): 41–63, 44; Donald Hall, “John Fowles’s Gardens,” *Esquire* (October 1982): 90–102, 94–96.

11 John Higgins, “A Fresh Mind on Molière’s Odd Man Out,” *Times* (6 April 1981): 6.

12 In an interview Fowles once stated, “I would call myself a democratic socialist, of all political terms,” in Carlin Romano, “A Conversation with John Fowles,” *Boulevard* (Spring 1987): 37–52, 43; the remark on his beard was made to Douglas M. Davis, “He is like a Lion with Painted Nails,” *National Observer* (24 January 1966): 2.

– all put Fowles in league with Robin Hood and with being “English, not British,” as he describes himself in his essay. Thus it may be more than coincidental that in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* Charles Smithson has his own egalitarian insight into the parity of existence when he, too, like the classic self-exile of Nottingham Forest, is alone in the green woods of the Undercliff.¹³

Fowles’ attraction to the idea that the typical Englishman is by temperament in a kind of mental exile, at odds with society, ties in with a debate that was occurring in England in the early 1960s. In a famous lecture of 1959, later published as *The Two Cultures*, C. P. Snow argued that English society was becoming divided into two subcultures, of art and of science, whose members were so isolated from each other that they could not even communicate across the cultural boundaries.¹⁴ About Snow’s diagnosis, Fowles later would write, “Like many at the time I was torn, reproached, and confused by it.”¹⁵ It was the year after Snow’s lecture, in 1960, that Fowles “sat down to write” his first novel, *The Collector*, which seems in retrospect to have been partly a response to this ongoing debate about English culture.¹⁶ In the novel, Frederick Clegg, a lower middle-class collector of butterflies, can be seen to represent scientific ways of knowing; the woman he kidnaps, Miranda Grey, a student at the London’s Slade School of the arts, can be seen to represent artistic ways of knowing. Their mentalities align roughly with Snow’s two cultures. Miranda’s failure to escape from eventual death at Frederick’s hands suggests that Fowles, like Snow, may have expected the culture of science to prevail, but such an interpretation would ignore the way a reader can reconcile the two points of view in his or her imagination. It is true that Frederick and Miranda seem unable to communicate; even their attempt at sexual intercourse fails. Furthermore, their separate narratives are presented as separate parts of the novel. Such a structure mirrors the destructive cultural divide as presented by Snow and later described by Fowles, apprehensively: “its two constituents are so interwoven, so symbiotically one, that to separate them risks, as sometimes with Siamese twins, destroying both.”¹⁷ However, a reader of *The Collector* can integrate the two narratives of Frederick and Miranda by reading the whole novel and thus constituting a potential solution to the problem, a conceptual bridge between the cultures of science and art, unifying the intellectual and the sensational. The various sources of inspiration for the novel mirror England’s wide range of subcultures: a 1957 newspaper account of a man who kept a woman captive in his back-yard bomb shelter, an opera based on the Bluebeard story, and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.¹⁸ Part of Fowles’ accomplishment was to blend the intellectual and the sensational, to transform the disparate materials of low and high art into a novel accessible to an enlightened middle-class readership. Perhaps the reason why Fowles once expressed dismay that *The Collector* was being reviewed as crime fiction was that he liked to think of it as a contribution to an important intellectual debate, a novel that might enact in the reader a synthesis of the

13 Fowles 1969, 233.

14 C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, Stephan Collini, ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1998) 16.

15 John Fowles, *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings* (London: Cape, 1998) 343.

16 John Fowles, *The Collector* (London: Cape, 1963), and “Collector’s Item,” *New Edinburgh Review* 55 (1981): 7. That the debate continued for years is evident from Stephan Collini’s introduction to *The Two Cultures*, which reviews F. R. Leavis’ disdainful public response to Snow in 1962, xxxiii.

17 Fowles 1998, 345.

18 Fowles 1981.

two cultures – not unlike the newly accessible world inhabited by Charles at the close of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Fowles' 1965 novel, *The Magus*, also manifests a preoccupation with bridging a cultural divide.¹⁹ The protagonist, Nicholas, a former public school boy, must overcome his class prejudices and his juvenile sense of self-importance before he can appreciate Alison, the working-class girl who loves him more than he deserves. Again the characters can be seen as figures in an allegory of class blending. Nicholas is presented as a kind of everyman, someone in search of the meaning of life, and Alison takes on characteristics late in the novel of a spiritual guide on his journey, a kind of Jungian *anima* figure. The title character of *The Magus*, Maurice Conchis, has a surname that suggests his function as a guide for the conscious in the psychological allegory. His knowledge is sometimes esoteric, and Conchis teases Nicholas with enigmatic quotations from Modernists such as T. S. Eliot and George Seferis.²⁰ However, in addition to his adeptness with high culture, Conchis is also adept with popular culture. He brings out a murderer's confession for Nicholas to read, for example, and he refers to the popular classic *Robinson Crusoe*.²¹ Conchis claims to be a former psychoanalyst, but the epigraph to the first edition of the novel links Conchis with fortune-telling and popular psychology by associating him with the archetypal Magician of the Waite deck of Tarot cards. This epigraph was deleted in 1977 from the revised edition of *The Magus*, but it had originally served nicely to bring together the esoteric and the exoteric, the elite and the popular, the high and the low with a comprehensive view of culture such as the one Nicholas is acquiring. By the conclusion of the novel, as with *The Collector*, readers are invited to synthesize the class differences that have been represented within the narrative by imagining a union beyond the open ending of the two socially disparate characters.

It is Fowles' third novel, the 1969 *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, that provides the most revealing field on which to observe the playing out of conflicting attitudes toward culture and of revolutions within individuals. Over the course of the narrative, Sarah becomes emancipated as she leaves the oppressive society of Lyme Regis, moves to London, and becomes involved with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood – referred to earlier in the novel as "the revolutionary art movement of Charles' day."²² Charles likewise leaves Lyme – even leaves England for a time – to become emancipated from the conventional life of the Victorian gentleman. But just as important as the characters, for promoting its agenda of human emancipation through personal re-orientation, is the way that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* represents the cultural contexts in which the characters are embedded. One facet of Fowles' novels that makes them engaging to many readers is their use of details to represent the perceived world as culturally-rich. More so than most novelists, Fowles' writing is semiotically dense, with verbal details on most pages that ask a reader to be conversant with various aspects of British culture in order to construct an imagined understanding of a complex milieu. The opening paragraph of the novel, for example, requires the reader to picture a map of England; then, to understand where Lyme Regis is located, a reader must know that the outline of the largest of the British Isles

19 John Fowles, *The Magus: A Revised Version* (London: Cape, 1977). The first version was published in 1965 in Boston by Little, Brown.

20 Fowles 1977, 69, 114.

21 Fowles 1977, 96, 67.

22 Fowles 1969, 172.

is sometimes said to resemble a witch riding on a pig, with the tip of Cornwall as the hoof of the "outstretched south-western leg" from which Lyme Bay forms "that largest bite from the underside." The second paragraph is less demanding as it describes the Cobb of Lyme Regis as "a long claw of old gray wall that flexes itself against the sea," but the description that follows of Lyme's harbour as "a tiny Piraeus to a microscopic Athens" will be a useful cue only to the most geographically-sophisticated reader. In the next sentence a reader well versed in English history and European art will recognize the name Monmouth and will be "discriminating" enough to appreciate the Cobb not only as high art, "as full of subtle curves and volumes as a Henry Moore or a Michelangelo," but also as "a superb fragment of folk art."²³ This rich description provides more about the architectural feature than would be necessary merely to establish it as part of the physical setting because Fowles also wishes to introduce the reader to a verbal environment that is rich with cultural signs that represent various social levels and classes.

Characters likewise are described in more detail than is necessary to establish and differentiate them. Clothing, for example, helps to signify a character's attitudes to class as well as his or her social status and personality. In the description of Ernestina in the first chapter, the narrator calls attention to her style of dress as "the beginning of a revolt against the crinoline and the large bonnet," thus bringing into the narrative that theme of emancipation announced in the epigraph. Fowles takes pains to use details from the popular culture of the period, whose accuracy can be verified by reference to period documents such as *Punch*: Ernestina is said to be wearing one of those "impertinent little flat 'pork-pie' hats" and a "skirt of an almost daring narrowness – and shortness, since two white ankles could be seen."²⁴ This very style of dress was still remarkable enough in 1868, a year after Ernestina's fictional visit to Lyme, to provoke a *Punch* cartoonist to remind women "who affect the short skirt now in vogue" that it tends to reveal the shapes and conditions of their bodies (See Figure 1).²⁵ Although Ernestina may be in "revolt" against hoop skirts and large bonnets, she is not a revolutionary character in the usual sense of the word. Her hat is said to be of a style that ladies of Lyme Regis "would not dare to wear for at least another year," but that observation suggests that Ernestina's daring is more the result of Lyme society's tendency to fall behind the times than of her venturesome attitude. When in London, Ernestina is no doubt considered fashionable but probably is not considered a trend-setter, is perhaps thought to be more *au courant* than *avant garde*. Ernestina dresses with care, much as Charles in the same paragraph is said to have reduced his sideburns so as not to appear "vulgar – that is, risible to the foreigner."²⁶ Both Charles and Ernestina adjust their behaviour to conform to what people will think – in short, are middle class. However, as the narrator will later point out, that middle class is "the great revolutionary class," and the kind of changes to everyday life signaled by Ernestina's dress are perhaps as significant as any riots in Hyde Park.

23 Fowles 1969, 9.

24 Fowles 1969, 10–11.

25 D. M., *Punch, or the London Charivari* (13 June 1868) 256.

26 Fowles 1969, 11.



Figure 1. "The young lady was dressed in [...] a magenta skirt of almost daring narrowness – and shortness, since two white ankles could be seen beneath the rich green coat and above the black boots that delicately trod the revetment"²⁷

The truly revolutionary character in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is first described in the same chapter as an unidentified figure standing at the end of the Cobb: "Its clothes were black." Although black clothing can be significant within a fashion system, Sarah's unparticularized cloak is meant to signify nothing, so that she appears, as the narrator suggests, "a figure from myth."²⁸ Indeed, as one reads the novel, Sarah remains a blank in many ways, her consciousness never entered by the narrator and her identity associated with many women from literature, myth, and folklore but reducible to no one of them. In the penultimate chapter of the novel, however, when Charles finds her living in London with the Rossettis, Sarah's clothing becomes a sign of evolution and revolution. Her clothing does not surprise Charles so much for its unconventionality as for the way it contrasts with her previous dress, but it is something quite new, for her: Sarah has "blossomed, realized, winged from the black pupa"²⁹ of earlier chapters. The fictional year is 1869, but Sarah's style of dressing can be traced back at least to 1867 when, in *Punch*, a woman at home is depicted in an outfit that matches in almost every detail what Sarah is said to be wearing at the end of the novel:

Her skirt was of a rich dark blue and held at the waist by a crimson belt with a gilt star clasp; which also enclosed the pink-and-white striped silk blouse, long-

27 Fowles, 1969, 10. The illustration is from *Punch, or the London Charivari* (13 June 1868) 256.

28 Fowles 1969, 11.

29 Fowles 1969, 347.

sleeved, flowing, with a delicate small collar of white lace, to which a small cameo acted as tie. The hair was bound loosely back by a red ribbon. (See Figure 2)³⁰



Figure 2.³¹

The caption under the cartoon with the similarly-dressed woman ironically refers to the little girl perched on her head as a "new and becoming" headdress, but the wry humour depends for its effect on an incongruity between that headdress and the rest of her dress, which must have indeed been regarded as new and becoming. Even if the magazine was intending to mock the dress as well as the headdress, the woman's revolutionary clothing is remarkably unlike any other dress worn by a female in *Punch* illustrations from the late 1860s, and Fowles appears to have drawn on this very image in order to construct a verbal representation of Sarah that would be both true to period dress and new for that period. In any case, Sarah's comfortable-looking outfit serves to make her rather than Ernestina the fashion revolutionary of the novel and the herald of female emancipation.

Fowles does not rely on Sarah's clothing to speak for itself and for her changed attitude. Just before the author-narrator describes her dress, he observes, "this was someone in the full uniform of the New Woman, flagrantly rejecting all formal

30 Fowles 1969, 423; D. M., *Punch, or the London Charivari* (16 February 1867) 66.

31 The illustration is from *Punch* (16 February 1867) 66.

contemporary notions of female fashion."³² The phrase "New Woman," with its capital letters, invokes a label that originated about three decades later, in the mid-1890s, to describe a social phenomenon: the bold and independent-minded women. An issue of *Punch* from 1895 contains a satirical poem titled "The New Woman in Somerset," which imagines a farmer's wife who discovers at her door "one o' these yer cyclist folk" looking faint. Invited into the farmhouse, the bicyclist revives and begins to chatter bewilderingly "'Bout 't rights o' women, and tyrant men," of voting and speaking and standing for Parliament, until the wife feels driven to throw her guest out of the house.³³ Readers of *Punch* are to imagine this New Woman as a ridiculous urban type, but readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are to imagine Sarah as an admirable forerunner of such emancipated females later in the nineteenth century – or the twentieth. Fowles' seemingly anachronistic use of the phrase "New Woman" to describe Sarah in 1869 is characteristic of the author-narrator, who frequently makes such observations from his twentieth-century perspective.

Fowles may be further extending the association of Sarah with the New Woman when Charles likens Sarah to "many of the smart young women" that he has seen in the United States, who are said to dress in a fashion similar to hers. The narrator might be thinking, again anachronistically, of the American Gibson Girl, who became an American icon in the late 1890s and whose dress typically resembled what Sarah is wearing when Charles finds her ~~wearing~~ in London (See Figure 3).³⁴ The fact that American women were not yet dressing this way in the late 1860s is unimportant; like the reference to the New Woman that precedes it, the sensible dress fashions that Charles finds so "charming" link American women with the English New Woman, and link both with Sarah. In the mind of the reader, Sarah becomes associated with United States culture and with the idea of emancipation that has been raised in the previous chapter when Charles reflects, "What the experience of America [...] had given him [...] was a kind of faith in freedom."³⁵ Thus "New Woman" and "America" become terms in the novel whose association with the idea of freedom helps a reader to construct Sarah as an emancipatrix, an agent of social changes that include relaxation of class distinction and increased individual liberties.

Sarah's altered clothing manifests the inward changes she has undergone, from madwoman to New Woman, from pupa to butterfly, but her character asks to be read allegorically rather than realistically. Sometimes she seems to be the embodiment of mystery.³⁶ Sometimes the narrator invites comparisons of Sarah to some figure from myth such as Eve or Calypso.³⁷ As a realistic character, however, her motives usually seem impenetrable, and readers are never taken inside her consciousness. "Who is Sarah?" the novel asks at the end of Chapter 12.³⁸ There is a tantalizing hint late in the novel that she is to be seen not as a character in her own narrative but as an agent

32 Fowles 1969, 423.

33 "The New Woman in Somerset," *Punch, or the London Charivari* (16 November 1895) 229.

34 A representative example of similar clothing is on the female figure in "One Difficulty of the Game," from *Americans* (1900), reprinted in *The Gibson Girl and her America: The Best Drawings of Charles Dana Gibson*. (New York: Dover, 1969).

35 Fowles 1969, 416.

36 Fowles 1969, 356, for example, where Charles refers to Sarah as "mysterious" and as an "enigma."

37 Fowles 1969, 71, 140.

38 Fowles 1969, 96.

of evolutionary change in Charles' character, like the "gamma-ray particle" mentioned in the novel's last chapter, the "natural radiation" that "cooperates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive," according to the penultimate epigraph, from *The Ambidextrous Universe*.³⁹ Sarah's role in the novel has been to prompt a change in Charles so that he will evolve rather than live and die a member of that soon-to-be extinct species, the Victorian gentleman. And Sarah has a similar role to play in the lives of readers, whom she prompts to evolve into more sophisticated readers of novels.



Figure 3. "But this was someone in the full uniform of the New Woman [...]. In some incomprehensible way he had not returned to England but done a round voyage back to America. For just so did many of the smart young women over there dress during the day"⁴⁰

Female clothing is just one feature of the cultural context evoked by *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in the imagination of a reader, where it can interact with the narrative strands of the novel. For this interaction to occur, however, readers must also bring to the novel some previous cultural knowledge, from both popular and elite contexts. In order to understand the description of Mrs Poulteney as "an inhabitant of the Victorian valley of the dolls" in Chapter 12, for example, a reader need not have

39 Fowles 1969, 440.

40 Fowles, 1969, 423–24. The illustration is from Charles Dana Gibson's 1899 series "The Education of Mr Pipp," in *The Gibson Book* (New York: Scribner's, 1906).

read Jacqueline Susann's 1966 best-seller *The Valley of the Dolls*, but the force of the allusion will be lost upon those who have never heard of the novel or who are not, at least, aware that its characters ingest "dolls," popular slang in the 1960s for colourful capsules containing amphetamines or barbiturates and depended upon by some women much as Mrs Poulteney depends on laudanum.⁴¹ On the other hand, Fowles probably did not expect most of his readers to be able to guess who the film actress is who is said to be the servant girl Mary's descendant, "who is twenty-two years old this month I write in [and] much resembles her ancestor; and her face is known over the entire world, for she is one of the more celebrated younger English film actresses."⁴² Jacqueline Bisset fits the profile (born in Weybridge on 23 September 1945), but hardly any reader could be expected to bring this much knowledge of cinema to the novel, not even in 1969. This puzzle is meant to tease, then – not to be solved – but the implied reader must bring to this novel some awareness of contemporary popular culture.

The implied reader of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is also expected to be somewhat conversant with the history of élite culture. The revelation in Chapter 60 that Sarah has been living with Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti is meant to function as a startling revelation, but it will not be one for readers who have never heard of the Rossettis – and there must have been many among the novel's millions of purchasers.⁴³ Such readers are not among the author's intended audience or the novel's implied one; on the other hand, the very knowledgeable few who know that Rossetti liked to surround himself with beautiful models will experience an enhanced pleasure upon recognizing that Sarah has become one of them. The majority of readers, perhaps, those who recognize the Rossetti name but possess little particular knowledge, are given enough information about the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to understand – and thus begin to share – Charles' sense of shock at his discovery that Sarah is living at their somewhat notorious address. There are moments in the novel, however, when even readers conversant with high culture must feel challenged. The critic whom Charles recognizes at 16 Cheyne Walk is surely meant to be Ruskin, but is the man downstairs with the pen supposed to be George Meredith or William Michael Rossetti? Or someone else?⁴⁴ A moment even more likely to puzzle any reader, earlier in the novel, occurs with a quoted, parenthetical phrase in the last sentence of Chapter 35, which follows a description of Thomas Hardy meeting Tryphena Sparks, with "the face of a better educated though three years younger girl in the real world; who stands, inscrutable for eternity now, beside the pale young architect newly returned from his dreary five years in the capital and about to become ('Till the flame had eaten her breasts, and mouth and hair') the perfect emblem of his ages' greatest mystery."⁴⁵ The parenthetical quotation is not identified, and it seems to make little sense in this context; only a reader familiar with all of Hardy's poetry might recognize that the quotation is the tenth line of "The Photograph," a poem that

41 Fowles 1969, 94.

42 Fowles 1969, 78.

43 Fowles 1969, 435.

44 Fowles 1969, 421, 423. For a discussion of possible identifications of the characters in Chapter 60, see James R. Aubrey, "The Pre-Raphaelite 'pack of satyrs' in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*," *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 18.1 (Winter 1990/1991): 32–36.

45 Fowles 1969, 264. The evidently misplaced apostrophe in the word *age's* has been corrected in some US paperback editions.

describes a fire slowly consuming a picture of a woman's face, perhaps Tryphena's.⁴⁶ The phrase does have potential resonance, but for almost any reader it will seem an obscure fragment of meaning, a moment of Modernist difficulty in the novel. It is the mixture of such high culture with low, of the exclusive with the popular that might lead a historian of literature to locate Fowles' novels in a transitional zone between the Modern and the Postmodern.

Fowles' experiments with narration in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* constitute another way that his novel can be difficult. In addition to the author's interventions as narrator, he also intervenes as a character when travelling with Charles Smithson in a railway carriage, at first describing himself in third person as a bearded man who is staring at Charles, then as the first-person narrator himself, declaring, "I will keep up the pretense no longer [...] as I stare at Charles."⁴⁷ One aspect of this dropped pretense to be an ordinary passenger on the train is, of course, a deliberate disobeying of the convention that novelists and first-person narrators do not enter their novels as observed characters but only as observers, in order to help preserve the illusion of the characters' reality in the minds of readers.⁴⁸ Fowles means for readers to find this development odd, and some no doubt find it bewildering when in Chapter 61 the bearded narrator again enters the scene of events as a character, turns his watch back fifteen minutes, and proceeds to narrate an alternate sequence of events that pick up dialogue of the previous chapter.⁴⁹ The author-narrator-character has earlier taken pains, during his first appearance in Chapter 55, to create the illusion that it is the toss of a coin – not his own preference – that determines which of the last two endings will be placed first.⁵⁰ For a first-time reader to understand how these moments relate requires an extraordinary level of attention, but that attention can generate an extraordinary sense of involvement as a reader ponders the alternative endings.

The double ending of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the culmination of a sub-discourse in the novel, about the evolution of form in the novel as a genre. In the often-cited digression about novel writing in Chapter 13, the author-narrator confesses that some kind of cultural shift seems to be underway in the late 1960s:

This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind. If I have pretended until now to know my characters' minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing in (just as I have assumed some of the vocabulary and "voice" of) a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know all, yet he tries to

46 Thomas Hardy, "The Photograph," *Moments of Vision*, in Samuel Hynes, ed., *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy*, 5 vols. (1917; Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 2207–08.

47 Fowles 1969, 389.

48 Kurt Vonnegut uses this same device in his novel *Slaughterhouse Five*, also published in 1969, in Chapter 5, for a brief comic effect, as Billy Pilgrim encounters a character sitting in the latrine, sick, who is said just to have excreted his brains, at which point the narrator declares, "That was I. That was me. That was the author of this book." I am grateful to Rob Bowman for pointing out this parallel.

49 Fowles 1969, 433, 442. The alternate ending begins with the repetition of the earlier statement, "You have not only planted the dagger in my breast, you have delighted in twisting it." For a manifestation of the difficulty, see the confused description of the endings in Stephen H. Gale, *The Films of Harold Pinter* (Albany: State U of New York P, 2001) 70–71.

50 Fowles 1969, 390.

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."⁵¹

The word *modern* here evidently refers to the extreme form of illusion-breaking practiced in the novel writing of Alain Robbe-Grillet, whose concept of the *nouveau roman* was championed by Roland Barthes in the *nouvelle critique* of the 1960s. Illusion-breaking was not new, having been promoted by earlier Modernist writers such as Pirandello and Brecht – as readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are reminded by the reference to Brecht's "alienation effect" in the description of Sarah's very different, illusionistic style of reading from the Bible.⁵² Barthes had praised Robbe-Grillet's novels for their un-illusionistic features designed to "keep the reader from enjoying a 'rich,' 'profound,' 'secret,' in short, a signifying world."⁵³ Another way in which Barthes' *nouvelle critique* was new was in its focus on the response of the reader, expanding the importance of the reader's role in the critical process. Barthes' 1968 essay "The Death of the Author" describes conventional writing with a phrase that resembles Fowles' remark that "the novelist stands next to God," even as Barthes discounts that novelist: "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."⁵⁴ An equally important concept, which also may have influenced Fowles, is expressed succinctly at the end of the essay, where Barthes asserts that the death of the author is simultaneously the birth of the reader.⁵⁵ A similar reorientation of criticism toward the consumer of a text was being advanced about this time in the United States by Stanley Fish, whose 1967 book *Surprised by Sin* had focused attention on the responses of the reader in *Paradise Lost*. Fowles' similar insistence in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* that the reader accept a new level of responsibility for the direction of the plot was a part of this cultural trend of the late 1960s.

Thus when the narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* apologizes for not presenting "a novel in the modern sense of the word," he is referring only to the parts of the novel that are like a conventional Victorian story. The multiple endings and narrative intrusions, on the other hand, are quite modern; they exhibit an *avant-garde* sensibility that the narrator's homage to Barthes is meant to signal. The narrator's description of his novel as not "modern" should thus be read as an ironic pretense that he must resign himself to living in an age when he won't seem *avant-garde* enough because he is sometimes creating illusions and seeming to be omniscient. Fowles does not believe himself to be irrelevant, however, let alone "dead" as an author. In 1970, the year after *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was published, Fowles refused to align himself with J. Hillis Miller and the deconstructionist approach to literature that had generated a study of Thomas Hardy's fiction which, as Fowles observed, "virtually dismisses autobiographical data as irrelevant to the understanding of a writer; and here, I am afraid, is where the practicing novelist in his reviewer begins to take

51 Fowles 1969, 97.

52 Fowles 1969, 62.

53 Roland Barthes, "The Last Word on Robbe-Grillet?," in *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (1962; Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1972), 197–204, 199.

54 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image / Music / Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (1968; New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142–48, 146.

55 Barthes 1968, 148.

exception."⁵⁶ Fowles' homage to Barthes in Chapter 13 might even be an assertion that here, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, is a more practical kind of *nouveau roman*, aware of itself as fiction but not unreadably so – a hybrid of illusion and illusion-breaking.

Fowles' knowledge of Roland Barthes in the late 1960s probably extended beyond the novel's references to the *nouveau roman* and "The Death of the Author." Barthes' shift of critical attention from writer to reader had been anticipated in his work during the mid-1950s for *Les lettres nouvelles*, essays subsequently published in 1957 as *Mythologies*, a book that has become a seminal document in the Cultural Studies movement.⁵⁷ The novelty of Barthes' essays was their intellectual examination of everyday life in France, the submitting to ideological critique such everyday practices as watching wrestling to driving cars to looking at pictures of food. The lives and practices were, of course, those of "ordinary" people from the lower social classes who attend wrestling matches, go to movies, shop for soap powders, cook with margarine, buy toys, drive cars, use plastics – not just the educated élite. The essays account for culturally-produced attitudes of French consumers using techniques that previously had been reserved for the critique of high art, and this attention to the processes of mass consumption had the effect of blurring or even erasing the conventional boundaries between high and low culture. By shifting his focus to the audience rather than the object in these essays, Barthes was anticipating his 1968 displacement of the author by the reader – and Fowles' similar blurring of conventional boundaries between the literary and the popular in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Fowles did not necessarily have Barthes' *Mythologies* in mind when he referred to this "age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes," but he probably knew the work in French. As a former student of French at Oxford University and a lecturer at the University of Poitiers in 1950–51, Fowles had long been fluent in the language and was interested in French culture; so even though *Mythologies* was not translated into English until 1972, by Annette Lavers for Jonathan Cape, Fowles would have known what kinds of things Barthes had been writing as he composed *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in 1967–68.⁵⁸ Fowles certainly knew by 1974, when Cape published Fowles' *The Ebony Tower*, whose story "The Cloud" has a character named Catherine who has recently edited an English translation of *Mythologies*. Catherine describes one of Barthes' essays to Peter, a television producer, who asks what Barthes is saying, more generally, whereupon Catherine explains:

That there are all kinds of category of sign by which we communicate. And that one of the most suspect is language – principally for Barthes because it's been very badly corrupted and distorted by the capitalist power structure. But the same goes for many other nonverbal sign-systems we communicate by [...]. A sentence is what the speaker means it to mean. What he secretly means it to

56 John Fowles, "The Most Secretive of Victorian Writers, a Kind of Giant Mouse," review of *Distance and Desire*, by J. Hillis Miller, *New York Times Book Review* (21 June 1970): 4.

57 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (1957; New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

58 Susana Onega, "Fowles on Fowles," in *Form and Meaning in the Novels of John Fowles* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Press): 175–90, 183. Remarking on deconstruction and post-structuralism, Fowles observes: "Of course, it can be very elegantly expressed; especially Roland Barthes I think is a good writer, but I am really very doubtful whether all of that has had much influence on me." Despite the drift of his statement, Fowles would seem to be acknowledging *some* influence.

mean. Which may be quite the opposite. What he doesn't mean it to mean. What it means as evidence of his real nature. His history. His intelligence. His honesty. And so on.⁵⁹

Catherine is describing how Barthes deconstructs the texts of popular culture by the means Barthes elsewhere describes as a dismantling of hierarchy.⁶⁰ The process is similar to Fowles' dismantling of the pre-Darwinian hierarchy of being in favour of a parity of existence in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

There may be a further connection between Barthes and "The Cloud" and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. "The Cloud" may be an experiment with narrative in the mode of the *nouveau roman*, with its deliberate unreadability, a possibility that could account for the story's reputation as a challenge to readers. For example, critics cannot even agree on whether Catherine is alive or dead at the end, at which point she has disappeared from the story.⁶¹ Perhaps the references to *Hamlet* are meant to signal to readers that "neurotic" Catherine's story can be understood only with reference to "mad" Ophelia's story – as if "The Cloud" were an allegory of intertextuality that resonates with Barthes' and later deconstructionists' ideas about literature as a phenomenon of intertextuality without independent meaning. The further possibility that Catherine is not only a mere text but an unreadable one is reinforced by Fowles' use in the story of the Barthesian phrase "the death of fiction" along with two rather cryptic references to the possible death of Catherine.⁶² Fowles' point may be that traditional reading strategies simply will not work here. As Catherine earlier has declined to provide a conventional, Austen-like ending for her tale of the princess, told to the little girl named Emma, Fowles' readers perhaps should not expect such an ending for "The Cloud" – living as they do in the age of Robbe-Grillet and Barthes. Unlike Fowles' novels of the 1960s, the ending of "The Cloud" is not closed or open or multiple: the ending is absent. It may be appropriate that deconstruction, a difficult theory to understand, may have helped to produce a difficult story to appreciate. If *The French Lieutenant's Woman* had been similarly unreadable, it would not have been so popular, of course; but in that novel Fowles chose instead to write a more accessible narrative, accompanied by a Barthes-like demythologizing of Victorian cultural hierarchies but otherwise, indeed, not a novel in the modern sense of the word.

Fowles further explores cultural hierarchies and tensions in his 1977 novel *Daniel Martin*, whose title character feels pulled in various directions during his quest for what is called, in the opening words of the novel, "whole sight."⁶³ In Fowles' earlier novels partial sightedness is the problem of the male protagonists, but they are not aware of that fact. Daniel Martin is much more self-conscious and discusses his divided feelings about such issues as theatre and cinema, past and present, country and city, England and elsewhere. Indeed, like Fowles' 1962 essay, *Daniel Martin* is about what it means to be English, and Fowles explores the topic by giving Dan both

59 John Fowles, "The Cloud," in *The Ebony Tower* (London: Cape, 1974): 241–300, 269.

60 Barthes 1972, 99.

61 Clark Closser rehearses seven interpretations of Catherine's disappearance, besides his own, in "In the Sea of Life Enisled": Narrative Landscape and Catherine's Fate in John Fowles's 'The Cloud,'" in James R. Aubrey, ed., *John Fowles and Nature: Fourteen Perspectives on Landscape* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated UP, 1999): 60–68, 64.

62 Fowles 1974, 287, 296.

63 John Fowles, *Daniel Martin* (London: Cape, 1977), 7.

an English and an American girlfriend. Over the course of the novel, Dan reinvigorates his connections with Devon and his English roots, but his travels to Italy and Egypt and Syria as well as to the United States suggest that truly whole sight is intercultural and international – not merely transatlantic. Furthermore, whole sight does not exclude high or low culture: Dan's decision to become a novelist is not a rejection of screenwriting any more than it is of playwriting but is based on his discovery of how to value the past, not as a rejection of the present but as an enrichment of it, by means of a more comprehensive awareness. Thus the growth of Dan's personal relationship with Jane at the end is yet another illustration of what is called for in that epigraph from Marx in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: "a restoration of the human world and of human relationships."

In the 1982 novel *Mantissa*, Fowles juxtaposes disparate cultural forms for satirical purposes.⁶⁴ The targets of the satire are writers, in particular the novelist Miles Green, who meets Erato, the muse of lyric poetry and of its modern equivalent, prose fiction. Erato takes various shapes in this fantasy, set in a hospital, from white Doctor Delphie to black Nurse Cory, from a conventional-looking Greek girl in a toga with a lyre to an angry feminist in a tee shirt with a guitar, white hair and black lipstick. This last figure evokes the late-1970s working-class, punk-rock scene with sometimes female artists such as Chrissy Hynes; the other, intellectual extreme of the 1970s cultural scene is evoked by Dr Delphie, a Julia Kristeva-type intellectual who tells Miles to stop "pretending I haven't even heard of Tzvetan Todorov and hermeneutics and diegesis and deconstructivism."⁶⁵ *Mantissa* serves as a reminder of Fowles' awareness that, however private some aspects of the creative process may be, his inspiration takes its forms from the various levels of social context in which both he and his readers find themselves embedded.

Fowles' 1986 novel *A Maggot*, like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* almost two decades before, presents characters from a similar range of social statuses: a mysterious female who is a social outcast, a serving man, a nobleman's wayward son – all of whom find themselves caught up in life-changing events in the West Country of England.⁶⁶ *A Maggot* also takes place at a specified time in the past, in this case 1735. In the narrative, after some strange events occur at Stonehenge and on Exmoor – events that may involve an abduction by spaceship – the narrator explains that the character Rebecca, a former prostitute, went on to become the mother of Ann Lee, historical founder of the non-conformist, working-class religious sect that would become known as the Shakers. *A Maggot* examines not only what is historically true but also what is truth when documents lie. The novel raises such questions by putting a science fiction scenario into an eighteenth-century novel or, looked at another way, by writing a historical novel worthy of a tabloid newspaper. This blending of modes is reminiscent of *The Collector*, but *A Maggot* deliberately calls attention to its use of popular forms by reproducing facsimile pages from *The Gentleman's Magazine* of the mid-1730s. These excerpted pages help to create in the reader a sense of the time period, but they also remind readers that what they think they know about the period is based on documents as unreliable as the novel's various testimonials about the flying "maggot" or "floating lantern" of Exmoor that left the "turf burnt dark" outside

64 John Fowles, *Mantissa* (London: Cape, 1982).

65 Fowles 1982, 139.

66 John Fowles, *A Maggot* (London: Cape, 1985).

the entrance of the cave where it first landed.⁶⁷ Fowles was perhaps inspired to write this novel by the popular reports of crop circles in the early 1980s, including one from the *News of the World* that was mocked the next day in the *Times* of London, which included the typical UFO reports of burn marks and lights.⁶⁸ Fowles had previously shown some interest in the topic of visitors from outer space, in 1980, when he contributed an article to the *Telegraph Sunday Magazine* on the occasion of having published two books about Stonehenge. Fowles observes: "There is a possible design function of all ancient monuments which stand out conspicuously from natural landscape, and this is that from the beginning they were intended to catch the attention of eyes above." Fowles has in mind human projections of sky gods, but he goes on to acknowledge that archaeologists flinch at such a suggestion because "it issues an obvious invitation to one fiercely self-convinced section of the lunatic fringe, the believers in extra-terrestrial visitors."⁶⁹ Fowles does not let his own skepticism prevent him from imagining how members of this believing subculture think, and *A Maggot* is an experiment in such thinking. Perhaps every late-twentieth-century reader of English novels possesses a mentality shaped in some way by stories of invasions from outer space and of close encounters with alien beings. Such speculations are part of the weaving that is twentieth-century culture, but typical readers may not have wondered how such an experience might have been understood differently in the eighteenth century. *A Maggot* serves to remind them that they, like eighteenth-century characters, are constructing interpretations of unreliable evidence such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* in ways that are culturally determined – a point that Roland Barthes also makes in *Mythologies*.⁷⁰ As Fowles acknowledges in the novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is likewise woven from texts such as *The History of the Human Heart* and *Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age*.⁷¹ Readers are encouraged to recognize that any novel is a collection of cultural texts that, when deconstructed, leave behind little that is certain.

Fowles' intellectual skepticism has not led him to abandon his culture or to give up on life. *Lyme Worthies*, published in the year 2000, illustrates – literally – the egalitarian outlook Fowles had declared as long ago as 1964.⁷² In *The Aristos* a book of philosophical observations, Fowles takes pains to assure readers that the characteristics that differentiate *hoi aristoi*, or the few, from *hoi polloi*, or the many, are not inborn, absolute, or linked to one's social class: "We are all sometimes of the Many," he writes, and the difference between the many and the few "can only be based on intelligent and enacted goodness," by which Fowles hopes "to humanize the whole."⁷³ In *Lyme Worthies* Fowles acts on this belief. The book presents 44 portraits of residents of Lyme Regis, all painted in the same style by artist Gavin Bird. Fowles does not try to justify his decisions about whom to include as anything more than

67 Fowles 1985, 327, 359.

68 Alan Hamilton, "Down to Earth Approach to Alien Visitors," *Times* (3 October 1982): 2.

69 John Fowles, "Mystic Message," *Sunday Telegraph Magazine* (21 September 1980): 15–22, 18.

70 Barthes, "Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature," in *Mythologies*, 1972, 43–46.

71 Fowles 1969, 293, 5.

72 John Fowles, portraits by Gavin Bird, *Lyme Worthies* (Lyme Regis, United Kingdom: Lyme Regis Museum and the Dovecote Press, 2000).

73 John Fowles, *The Aristos* (1964; rev. ed. London: Cape, 1968), 212–14. The quoted material also appears in the 1964 edition.

"idiosyncratic," but many of the pictures indicate the nature of their subjects' involvement with the community. Some are leaders, including an ex-mayor and a former curator of the local museum, whereas others make their contributions to the town from more modest situations such as bookseller or gardener. The captions are as idiosyncratic as the introduction promises, and Fowles' justifications of their worthiness seem as inconsequential as "I remember a first walk with Jenny [Kidson] and being very impressed by seeing how many Lyme people she seemed to know. No mystery. She had previously worked for years in the local Woolworth's."⁷⁴ *Lyme Worthies* may be the product of Fowles' personal impulses, but those impulses clearly include a belief that local culture is "worthy" of documentation as a part of some larger culture, perhaps of Marx' "human world."

John Fowles is especially qualified to write about culture, its hierarchies and its discontents. He grew up in a middle-class family but went to a school for the privileged, attended Oxford but worked afterward for small salaries. He has lived on farms and in London. He has resided outside England for two periods of a year or more. His curiosity has made him a lifelong amateur scientist and historian as well as a sharp-eyed observer of his surroundings, both natural and cultural. However it may be that Fowles has acquired his formidable powers of critical insight, he manifests in his writing a sensitivity to class-based distinction and conflict, as well as a suspicion of institutional hierarchies that partly constitute society and the arts. Encouraging readers to situate themselves in the cultural middle, Fowles seems hopeful that verbal art can help to resolve cultural tensions by enabling readers to maintain their awareness of the intriguing behaviour on the social periphery while they develop a more comprehensive vision of the whole. All of Fowles' novels reveal an interest in such issues, but *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, especially, provides an explicit study of cultural change and a narrative invitation to readers to align themselves within their culture in ways that will advance their personal struggle for what the novel's humanist epigraph calls for: emancipation.

DANIELA CARPI, Verona

Hypertext and Mystery: A Re-reading of John Fowles' "The Enigma", *Mantissa* and *A Maggot*

This essay means to take into consideration the more experimental part of Fowles' novelistic production and to examine it from the point of view of the hypertextual techniques which have arisen in the new technological media. As hypertexts have changed the fruition of the written word by deeply involving the reader in their co-creation, so Fowles anticipates, in his structural experiments, the infinitization of reality and the opening up of the written space which is taking place in our latest years.

74 Fowles 2000, 59.