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Sveučilište u Zadru

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Diplomski sveučilišni studij Anglistike; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

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Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Matea Maraš,** ovime izjavljujem da je moj **diplomski** rad pod naslovom **Historiographic Metafiction in John Fowles's "The French Lieutenant's Woman", A.S. Byatt's "Possession" and Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children"** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

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1. Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century marked a significant shift not only in everyday life, but in literature as well, due to the consequences of the Second World War. Political, cultural and social changes were reflected in literature, and that is why, in Butler's words, "the instability of the fictional world in which we find ourselves" (69) has become the most important characteristic of postmodernist literature. As a result, readers have gained a new role. They are no longer passive participants in the reading process; on the contrary, they actively participate in the construction of the meaning of a text. Additionally, language is perceived as a means for constructing reality, which consequently influences new kinds of fiction based on the relationship between fact and fiction, such as French 'new novel', magic realism and historiographic metafiction. This led to the experimentation with narrative form and structure as authors have explicitly started to state the fictional status of the text by self-reflexive and self-conscious narrative techniques (Padley 125). These techniques fall into the category of metafiction - a form of writing that emphasizes the artificiality of a work by constantly reminding a reader about its fictiveness.

There is a specific subgenre of metafiction called historiographic metafiction, which questions the notion of history and argues that both history and narrative are human constructs, therefore, they are open to question. The author is regarded as a concept produced through previous works of art. Moreover, the past is seen as a provisional construct that contains multiple 'alternative worlds', which are as invented as the worlds of novels (Waugh 104-105). The most common characteristics of historiographic metafiction are parody, intertextuality and unreliable narrators, all of which will be analyzed in this diploma paper. Thus, the aim of my paper is to explain various elements of historiographic metafiction and demonstrate how these elements function in three selected British novels: John Fowles's *The*

French Lieutenant's Woman (1969), A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990), and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981). I will attempt to give a detailed study of literary and historical intertexts, analyse narrators and other aspects pertinent to historiographic metafiction in order to show how history and reality in the chosen texts are rewritten.

2. Postmodernism and Postmodern Theory

The term 'Postmodernism' can be defined as a new framework of ideas that started to emerge by the mid-1960s in Europe and in the United States (Butler 6). However, the term was firstly used by Arnold Toynbee in 1947 to portray a crisis of contemporary Western world, where traditional moral values and beliefs started to be doubted (Padley 177). Postmodernism is greatly influenced by circumstances that followed the Second World War, nuclear weapons and the Declaration of Human Rights (Elaati 1). This led to dissolution of Enlightenment's optimism and belief in reason and rationalism, which were replaced by scepticism and pessimism of the postwar period (Padley 178-179). Postmodernists do not believe that science led to human development, because its progress caused destruction during the war. Additionally, Postmodernism firstly emerged in the field of painting, architecture and engineering, and then in philosophy, art, literature and technology, later infiltrating into all disciplines (Elaati 2). It is characterized by "a sharp break with the previous traditions" (Butler 8), deep irrationalism and innovation, because postmodernists believe that reality is artificial construct produced by language.

Elaati distinguishes four perspectives that influenced Postmodernism: philosophical, historical, political ideological, and strategic (2). Philosophical perspective claims that Postmodernism represents vacuum that exists because of the absence of modernity. Historical perspective perceives postmodernism as the turn away from the modernity. Political

ideological perspective breaks the illusion of Western ideology, and strategic perspective regards a variety of ways of reading a certain text. It is a period where the work of academics prevails the work of artists. Postmodernists have a sceptical attitude towards any totalizing explanation, so even works of scientists and historians are observed as 'quasi narratives' – just another form of fiction (Butler 15). According to Elaati, this led to a reduction of the importance of accurate historical events and creation of new ideas that regarded the perception of time and space (3). That is why postmodernists claim that there is no one, absolute truth. Butler states that this notion that there is no one, absolute truth resulted in the 'death' of grand narratives (31), as every work becomes open for interpretation. In postmodernism, a word does not have only one meaning, instead, it depends on the social contexts that shape individuals.

So, who were the pioneers of Postmodernism theory? One of the most prominent literary theorists is Roland Barthes. He explores the importance of semiotic signs, as he perceives culture as "a world of shifting signs" that are open for interpretation. In his highly influential essay, "The Death of the Author", he argues that a writer is a linguistic construct, written by the language itself. He claims that authors only imitate previous forms, therefore they do not have any authority over their works. Additionally, he shifts focus from the author to the reader - the reader becomes the one who gives a meaning to a text, while the author depends on the reader's interpretation. Second representative is French intellectual Jean-Francois Lyotard, who, in his work *La condition postmoderne*, explains that metanarratives have lost their reliability because of the consequences of the Second World War. Moreover, he argues that the role of the metanarratives has to be questioned, and this questioning of metanarrative roles is, according to Butler, the most important job of contemporary artists (62). Lyotard argues that the truth does not exist, on the contrary, it depends on the language tricks that, consequently, depend on contexts. Another important name is Jean Baudrillard. He

explores notions of floating truth, hyperreality, mass media and overconsumption. He investigates how popular culture affects reality, that is, how consumption and mass media create numerous versions of reality. According to Padley, this resulted in a society without solid moral, social or cultural foundations (179).

Furthermore, Jacques Derrida, French linguistic philosopher and an advocate of deconstruction theory, claims that the truth depends on contexts and that literary work cannot be interpreted in just one way. Butler adds that Derrida's followers criticize those who believe that philosophy or science portray the world in realistic manner (17). He examines contradictions between binary oppositions that are part of Western philosophy, such as nature/culture, or speech/writing. Similarly, Michel Foucault investigates the relationship between discourse and power, and the way they affect everyday life in terms of social, economic, political and cultural forces. In his book *The Discourse of Language*, he argues that language is used to control human behaviour. Everything we know and learn is acquired through language, which he considers the product of a discourse. Butler adds that these discourses are used to exclude and control people and those who are excluded, eventually become deviant (45). Therefore, Foucault articulates that society should fight against this power of discourse, which he perceives as a threat to our individuality.

These postmodern theories seek to free humans from mythical illusion and Western thought (Elaati 5). Apart from this, the theories aim to create more liberal social climate based on freedom and democratization (Padley 179). Consequently, facts become relative because they depend on different situations and contexts, therefore the world cannot be strictly defined (Sheeba 182). These notions are reflected in literature as well. In order to demonstrate the instability that characterized the second half of the twentieth century, authors developed some of the most important postmodern techniques, such as the emphasis on the fictional status of

the text and self-reflexive narrative, which I will explain in more detail in the following chapter.

3. Metafiction

As well as Foucault, Scholes associates human behaviour with discourse too, that is, the way language is reflected in human activities. He claims that there is a connection between human behavioural patterns and forms of fiction, thus he defines four fictional categories: fiction of ideas, fiction of forms, fiction of essence and fiction of existence. The first category, fiction of ideas, or myth, concerns the mythical fiction that is found in folk tales and that stems from human needs and desires. Fiction of forms imitates other fiction by accepting the legacy of previous works of art, but it is also concerned with this process of imitation and seeks to explain it. For this reason, it is also known as 'romance' as it elaborates previous works, intertextuality and allusions. The third category is fiction of existence, or the novel, which imitates both previous works of art and human behaviour in order to represent reality. The final category is fiction of essence, or allegory, which moves from the behaviourism towards the achievement of ultimate and absolute values, characterized by an "act of faith" (Scholes 101-104). With this in mind, it seems that he explores how unconventional contemporary fiction is, in other words, the way metafictional writers experiment with various fictional forms. Landa adds that literature is in constant development, revoking and modifying genres and motifs from the past. According to him, all fiction is metafictional, or simply, it plays game with fiction (1-2).

Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as a form of writing that questions the relationship between fiction and reality by placing emphasis on its status as an artefact (2). Linda Hutcheon adds that it is a fiction about fiction, with a commentary on its own narrative

("Historiographic Metafiction" 1). Landa defines it as a way of reading and exploring meanings in literary works (2). Waugh claims that the term 'metafiction' was firstly used in an essay by American critic William H. Grass, and along with terms like 'metatheatre', 'metapolitics' and 'metarhetoric', focuses on how humans reflect and construct their experience of the world. Moreover, this interest in 'meta' levels of experience was a consequence of increased social and cultural development, which raised human self-consciousness. She adds that language is no longer seen as a passive system, but an independent system that produces its own meanings – a 'metalanguage' (2-3).

The term 'metalanguage' was coined by Danish linguist L. Hjelmslev in 1961, and can be defined as a language that refers to another language. Respectively, Ferdinand de Saussure pursued the difference between the signifier, the shape of a word on a page, and the signified, the notion that a certain word provokes. Thus, metalanguage is a signifier to another language, and other language is its signified. Waugh adds that this other language can be an everyday register used in discourse, or the language of the literary system (4). Therefore, language becomes a means by which historical truth is formed, thus making textual meaning ambiguous and less certain ("Three Approaches Toward Historiography" 6).

Waugh states that metafictional novels create the illusion of reality, and then break that illusion, by simultaneously creating fiction and making statement that it is an artefact (6). For this reason, Landa compares eighteenth and twentieth-century literature. In both centuries, authors play with conventions in a more straightforward manner and the work of art is considered an artificial construct. At the same time, he says that nineteenth-century literature strived to imitate the author's impression of life (3). Scholes adds that forms of fiction mirror the essence of a man, and they gradually change as human conditions change (101). Similarly, Waugh states that contemporary fiction shows dissatisfaction and breakdown of traditional values (6). Hutcheon argues that there has been a revival of novelistic tradition, which

reached its peak in metafiction. In her work "Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox", she reinvestigates two Aristotelian notions that he considered separated; mimesis and diegesis. Mimesis can be defined in two ways; an imitation of nature for achieving perfection, or representation of human actions, while diegesis can be defined as a narration about events. Therefore, she claims that the storytelling and the story told are two connected rather than split processes, and that metafiction is a mimesis of process that distances itself from psychology and consciousness (5).

The innovative factor here is the role of the reader, who concretizes the text and is actualized within the text itself. This new role of the reader Hutcheon calls the paradox of the reader; that is, the reader lives in the fictional world that they read, and simultaneously participates in the creation of a text. The text becomes both self-reflexive entity and it is aimed towards the reader, who she addresses as 'imaginative co-creator' ("Narcissistic Narrative" 7). The reader is drawn into the fictional world by the narrator, and acts as a witness to the novel's development ("Narcissistic Narrative" 9). Thus, the reader is no longer a consumer of the story, but rather constructs a new code ("Narcissistic Narrative" 14). Additionally, Wells differentiates between two types of addressing the reader: explicit and implicit (5). In the former type, the narrator directly addresses the reader, as in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* while in the latter one a certain character in the text can be 'a surrogate' to an actual reader, such as Padma in *Midnight's Children*, who acts as the audience to Saleem's narration, as we will see later in my analysis.

In the similar vein, Waugh explains two sides of metafiction, one that accepts the real world which does not depend on the language, and the other that implies that there is no "escape from the prisonhouse of the language" (53), as language has become the main instrument for constructing everyday life instead of reflecting it. As I have already explained, reality is seen as a construct examined by textual self-reference, and a novel is considered, in

Waugh's words, a "world of words" (57). Thus, the author is no longer seen in its traditional transcendental role, instead, metafictional writers regard that writing a novel is no different than constructing one's reality. Writing itself becomes the main focus of attention. Furthermore, Landa adds that imitation of writing becomes the focus of attention instead of imitation of reality (3). Such self-conscious writing and exploration of the form itself is achieved through the manipulation of forms, as the authority of written word started to be questioned. He considers novels that digress from, or mock contemporary novelistic conventions, 'anti-novels', because they are prone to contain various metafictional structures, and they make a novel a part the self-parodying genre (25).

Waugh continues that metafictional writers are self-consciously anxious to declare that the world they create in their novels is an alternative world to the one we live in (100), and characters in the novel, although not real persons, exist in this alternative world of the novel. In addition, metafictional novels can set these opposing alternative worlds against each other as authors insert themselves in the text, like in *Midnight's Children*, while characters can enter the real world of their authors, which we will see in my analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. This is the reason why the focus shifts to the conscious process of the construction of the world; namely the process of the creation of the fictive world through writing. During the reading process, this alternative world becomes as real as the world we live in. Waugh argues that this leads to the dichotomy of the postmodern fictional works, where all fiction exists on two levels (104). On the first level, fiction exists as words on the page, and on the other level, it exists in the consciousness of readers too. She also compares the process of constructing fictional texts to the process of creating historical texts. According to her, history itself can be perceived as a myriad of alternative worlds, which are as fictional as the worlds in the novels (104). There is a specific sub-genre of metafictional novels that

particularly deals with the notion of history as a provisional construct, which I will further explain in the next section.

3.1 Historiographic Metafiction

This subgenre of metafictional novels is called historiographic metafiction. In her work "Parody and the Intertextuality of History", Linda Hutcheon defines historiographic metafiction as a type of fiction within historical discourse that acknowledges itself as a fiction. There is a strong connection between postmodern fiction and history and she implies that literature and the world are two fictive realities. Historiographic metafiction is characterized by "seriously ironic parody" that contains both intertexts of history and of fiction, and affirms that both history and fiction are human constructs. Novels such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude, Ragtime, The Name of the Rose,* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* belong to this sub-genre of metafictional novels (3-4). In *The Politics of Postmodernism,* she claims that the main focus of postmodernist works, besides the parody of the past, are processes of its own production and reception (179). Additionally, she calls postmodernism "a fundamentally contradictory enterprise", because postmodern art forms use and abuse traditional literary conventions, as well as explicitly state their own provisional nature by critical and ironic re-reading of the previous works of art (180). In historiographic metafiction, the past is not ignored, but is given new life and meaning through memory that connects them (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 182).

Dominic Head states that in historiographic metafiction "the narrative structure of history is subjected to scrutiny", as emphasis is being placed on self-consciousness and textuality itself. The importance lies in the discursive context of language, rather than on the past object with which language is concerned (230). Such exploration of the relationship

between fiction and history has been predominant since the 1960s as historiography became institutionalized and established as an academic discipline. This led to the development of postmodern historiography that has been dealing with reconstruction of the past through the narrative. Additionally, there has been a sudden growth and interest in historical novels, especially novels that deal with the Victorian period of British history, such as John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and A.S. Byatt's *Possession* ("Three Approaches Toward Historiography" 1-2). Jukić claims that the Victorian legacy has become a rich source for historiographic metafiction writers and Victorian past is no longer perceived as a background story, but as a rich world on its own that is being explored to the full extent ("Variants of Victoriana" 70). Butler adds that history is just another kind of narrative that is both influenced by our desires and prejudices, as well as organized in the accordance to society from which it has emerged (73). This means that, unlike in modernist and realist novels, reality in postmodern novels is open to multiple interpretations and narrative manipulation.

Hutcheon argues that postmodernism does not deny modernism, as modernism preceded postmodernism, thus making it possible to emerge. She claims that postmodernism openly interprets and critically reviews modernism. Modernist writers tended to disregard the validity of the past, while postmodern writers try to be both historically aware and simultaneously revise tradition ("The Politics of Postmodernism" 193). Waugh suggests that metafictional texts uncover the illusion of historical writing through real people and events (106). Not only is history considered fictional, but it is also believed to be a set of alternative worlds. In terms of alternative worlds, Waugh further explains it with the example of Todorov's work on the 'fantastic' as a type of an alternative world. Todorov claims that "literary discourse cannot be true or false, it can only be valid in relation to its own premises". He adds that literature is not made out of reality, but of literature itself, and everything that is

perceived as new, is actually reconditioned from previous works (14-15), thus stressing the importance of intertextuality in general.

Moreover, he argues that although a fantastic world is a figment of imagination, it is influenced by the real world. This means that the aim of 'fantastic' is not to define reality outside fiction, but to call into question the line between the real and unreal (171), or in other words, to oppose two alternative worlds against each other. The first world, or, the outer frame, can for example, be a projection of the everyday world, and the second world can be a mental world of a protagonist. Therefore, he states that fantastic narration begins as a natural situation, which is subsequently transformed into unnatural story (174). One such example of a fantastic world is the world of one of the novels under discussion in this paper, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children.* Rushdie opposed two worlds in the novel; one is the everyday world, and the other one is a fantastic world that takes place inside the main protagonist's head. A.S. Byatt's *Possession* is another example of the existence of an alternative world. Although it is not fantastic world like Rushdie's, the second plot line is set in the Victorian era, thus representing another world within a novel.

Similarly, Ansgar Nünning differentiates between two types of historiographic metafiction: explicit and implicit (364). In explicit type, the narrator overtly discusses questions that regard reconstruction of the past – they become the theme of the narrative. Metafictional devices overtly thematise all the problems that arise in the attempt to construct the past. The main focus of explicitly written historiographic metafiction novels is a self-conscious exploration of the recording of history, as well as challenging reliability and objectivity of its sources. Meanwhile, in implicit type, the narrator integrates its metahistoriographic concerns in the novel's structure. He adds that novels written in an implicit manner of historiographic metafiction reveal insights of modern theories of history by their complex structure and narrative techniques (366). In both types, historiographic

metafiction is concerned with problems that regard reconstruction of historical events and the writing of history, while implementing some of the techniques that I will demonstrate in the following sections.

3.1.1 Parody

According to Hutcheon, one of the most important characteristics of historiographic metafiction is intertextual parody (4). Parody is used to suggest the presence of the past, which can only be found in the previous literary or historical texts. Past is only known through various texts that give evidence about events that occurred, therefore, there is a strong connection between history and literature. Just as fiction, history is highly textual too. It is not a representation of one and only truth, because historic texts stemmed from somebody's memories, reports, writings or archives. Hutcheon claims that parody restores history and memory, while questioning the authority of any historical text that gives evidence about past events, as well as any fictional text. In the novels that belong to historiographic metafiction, intertextual parody is twofold because both history and fiction are at the same time asserted and denied ("Historiographic Metafiction" 5).

In *Politics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon explains that the Greek prefix *para* means both 'counter' and 'against', as well as 'near' or 'beside'. It can imply both change and continuity, and consequently, parody can be observed as 'repetition with critical distance' (185-186). This means that parody does not merely imitate other authors, works or genres, but it also subjects them to careful examination. Moreover, postmodern parody is paradoxical; it is deconstructively critical, while at the same time, constructively creative (Gjurgjan 76). It is, as Hutcheon states, a paradoxical way of accepting and dealing with the past ("Historiographic Metafiction" 14). However, parody does not mean that the past is destroyed, instead, parody is used to both examine and preserve the past ("Historiographic

Metafiction" 6). Waugh considers parody a positive literary change. She sees metafiction as a response to a novel crisis, as parody offers a break from previous habitual conventions (64-65). According to her, parody is a form of criticism which renews the relationship between the form and what that form can express by disturbing balance of literary conventions that have become recurrent and repetitive (69).

In this case, parody takes a previous work of art as a starting point, then, it incorporates its metaphoric version into the current literary tradition, which then disorganizes both past and present texts. As a result, if the original text can be rearranged, so can be the present text. This can be illustrated by John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Fowles rewrote the Victorian realistic novel; he offered his own versions of many possible versions of the same story, while simultaneously parodying Victorian literary conventions, as we will see later in my analysis. We can argue that parody is much more than merely a joke; it is one of the central features of historiographic metafiction novels, as it connects previous literary traditions with the contemporary works of art.

3.1.2 Intertextuality

Another characteristic of historiographic metafiction is intertextuality. Hutcheon defines it as "a formal manifestation of both desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context". It aims to confront the past of literature and the past of historiography by first stating the allusion to another source, then overturning that power using parody (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 118). However, Gjurgjan argues that there is an important difference between intertextuality and allusion that should be taken into account. According to her, allusion is authorial implication to a certain text, while intertextuality signifies more complex process, which connects the text with cultural practices

(67), that is, the way a text is intertwined into a manifestation of a certain culture. She adds that intertextuality resulted from the Copernican overturn in traditional versus postmodern perception of the relationship between language and authorship. Traditional literary analysis perceives the author as the creative power that created certain text, while postmodern literary analysis focuses on the textuality rather than creativity and authorship of a certain text (68).

Thus, the focus should be on the textual productivity, rather than on the authors themselves. The focal point now becomes the relationship between the reader and the text, as opposed to the traditional relationship between the author and the text. Therefore, historiographic metafiction emphasizes the role of the reader, who becomes aware of these traces of previous literary and historical works in a text. Therefore, it can be argued that intertextuality is the basis of any subsequent work, as Umberto Eco has stated in *The Name of the Rose*: "often books speak of other books" (183). Butler adds that any type of text, from philosophy to the newspapers, involves intertextuality (31), hence, even the novel will mirror somebody's earlier ideas and thoughts. According to him, history is perceived as just another narrative that depends on previous myths, metaphors and stereotypes; just another way of putting things (33). He also states that the past is the story that historians try to tell us, based on the information gathered in the already existing texts (35), just as a novel is a story that a writer tries to tell us.

Taking all this into consideration, we can argue why intertextuality is rather complex process that does not simply include the analysis of allusions. With this in mind, Gjurgjan defined three types of intertextuality: subversive, adaptive and transpositional (70). Subversive intertextuality is the feature of the modernist avant-garde movement and its 'poetics of denial', where authors wanted to undermine ideas of canonical works of art, which represent a certain ideology. Adaptive intertextuality is a feature of postmodern works and it approaches canonical texts in a different manner; it does not try to antagonize them. As stated

above, postmodernist works focus on the relationship between a subject and the representation of reality, which depends on the contexts and personal experiences. The last type of intertextuality is transpositional intertextuality, which is especially important in the context of postcolonial studies. It explores how the meaning of a text is changed when a cultural text is implemented into a different context. Gjurgjan states that "no borrowing is innocent" (71), meaning that it affects both the text that borrows ideas, but also the original text. This new historical reading strives to demonstrate that a text cannot be separated from its context. That is why intertextuality aims to make readers aware of the relationship between a text and social and cultural contexts, which we will see in my analysis of *Possession.* In "Historiographic Metafiction" Hutcheon claims that everything from comic books, fairy tales, to almanacs is a rich source of intertextuality (16). She also argues that parodic intertextuality is not just another form of aesthetic introversion, but rather explores connections between the art and the world (25).

3.1.3 Unreliable Narration

Regarding narration, Hutcheon suggests that historiographic metafiction novels favour two types of narration: multiple points of view and explicitly controlling narrator. Both types deal with the traditional notion of subjectivity of the plot, that is why in both of these types the narrator does not give any assurance of knowing the past certainly (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 117-118). It is believed that the process of narrativization is a central form of human comprehension, thus narrative aims to translate 'knowing into telling' (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 121). Hayden White further explains this conversion of knowing into telling by saying that we may not understand specific thought patterns of another culture, but we are able to understand effortlessly a story that takes place in that another culture (5). As both

reality and knowledge are perceived to be artificial narratives constructed by men, the relationship between writing history and narrativization becomes problematic, and, according to Hutcheon, it becomes hard to differentiate the line where facts end and where fiction begins (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 93). Consequently, this leads to the belief that reality can only be known through cultural representation of it, that is, reality is semiotically transmitted through the process of narration sources (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 122).

This blurred line between events and facts is emphasized by the use of paratextual conventions of historiography added by the author, such as footnotes, illustrations, subtitles, or epigraphs, which are used to compromise the objectivity of historical sources (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 123). Novels abandon traditional figure of the author as a transcendental fabricator of the story. Therefore, the author, along with reality, is perceived as a concept produced through previous works of art. This is achieved by narrator's monologic discourses that affirm that a text as a construct (Waugh 16), as I will try to show in my analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Midnight's Children.* Furthermore, Waugh identifies other features typical of historiographic metafiction, such as complete breakdown of temporal and spatial organization of the narrative, characters' dehumanization, parodic doubles, self-reflexive images, discussions of the story within a story, and continuous undermining of specific fictional conventions (22). All of these features focus on the relationship between history and fiction, while questioning the authenticity of history. In the following chapters I will focus on specific features of historiographic metafiction, analysing different characteristics in each of the following novels: *The French Lieutenant's Woman, Possession* and *Midnight's Children*. I will try to demonstrate how these authors perceive the notion of the past, as well as the relationship between history and reality.

4. Parody of Victoriana in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

John Fowles's novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* published in 1969, is the first English postmodern novel that tackles the issues of Victorian legacy ("Variants of Victoriana" 69). Fletcher states that it is a key precursor of the later neo-Victorian novels, including A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (29). Bradbury claims that this novel both constructs and deconstructs not just any single Victorian novel, but the Victorian novel as the archetype, by investigating conventions, doubts and social constraints of that period (357). It is both homage and critique of the Victorian period. Holmes adds that the adjective 'Victorian' is in this case paradoxical, because the novel's modernity stems from the pastiche of old-fashioned forms (185).

The story begins in the late March of 1867 in Lyme Bay. Charles Smithson, an amateur palaeontologist and a supporter of Darwin's theory of evolution, and his fiancée, Ernestina Freeman, a prime example of a typical Victorian woman, are walking down the quay at Lyme Regis, when they stumble upon a mysterious woman staring out at the sea. This woman is Sarah Woodruff, a former governess, also known as "Tragedy" or "The French Lieutenant's Woman". She was allegedly abandoned by Varguennes, a French lieutenant, who she fell in love with after being his caretaker in her former employer's house. Promising to marry her, she gave herself to him, but later found out that he was married and that he just wanted to take advantage of her. This resulted in her meltdown and her social status as an outcast. She is now situated in Mrs. Poulteney's house, a religious woman who under false pretences of wanting to help Sarah, is actually afraid of hell, and thinks this deed will redeem her from her sins and grant her a place in heaven. Sarah and Charles gradually befriend and eventually fall in love. My analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* will focus on different 'writers' who create the novel and whose purpose is to satirize both the Victorian society and

literature. I will show how Sarah's character gains narrative freedom, and explain the meaning of multiple endings in light of historiographic metafiction.

To begin with, it is important to explain how several personae create the novel: Sarah, the impresario, the narrator, and Fowles himself, each of them obtaining the role of different historian. Hutcheon explains this relationship between four personae that create the novel by stating the presence of worlds within worlds: central world, outside world, and the world beyond them. The central world is the world of characters, therefore Sarah belongs to this world. Impresario, who occasionally enters this central world thus being a part of it too, is also the part of the outside world, which is the world of the narrator's voice. Lastly, there is a world beyond these two, which represents the author himself, a mastermind who connects previous worlds ("The Real Worlds" 82). In short, each universe has its own creator, Sarah, impresario and narrator, whereas outside, in the last of these worlds, stands Fowles.

The twentieth-century impresario, or "the local spy" (Fowles 2), accompanies characters and acts as a witness who has to accurately report back events to the narrator ("Three Approaches Towards Historiography" 9). He is able to locate himself in the Victorian age, acting as a character that appears on several occasions near the novel's end. First, the impresario shares the train compartment with Charles when he receives the message from his solicitor that Sarah has been located. Charles had a strange feeling about that man, as if he was spying on him, "as if he knew very well what sort of man this was" (Fowles 173). Following this, he is found in the second ending, observing across the street Charles and Sarah's encounter in the Rossetti's house. And finally, he is the one who turns the clock back, thus enabling narrator to deliver the third ending.

The narrator is the one who uses impresario's reports of the events to create narrative facts and he is the one who frequently intrudes the story, ironically comments the plot, reveals future events, corrects his previous judgements, etc., but he is not Fowles himself ("Three

Approaches Towards Historiography" 10). To be more precise, the narrator is Fowles's proxy, a surrogate, and we can argue that through him, Fowles communicates his own opinions and criticizes the Victorian era. Additionally, the narrator does not have full control over the characters he has created, what is more, he often states that they have disobeyed him and gained autonomy. Not only does the narrator assert his presence, but in Chapter 13, he also reveals the artificial nature of the whole novel and reminds readers that they are reading a fabricated story:

> 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 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. (Fowles 41)

This is a self-reflexive statement about the writing process itself, which breaks the illusion between fiction and reality and mocks Victorian literary conventions. It is also a parody of the omniscient narrators of the Victorian period, who were perceived as all-knowing gods. Here, the author is no longer seen as traditional, god-like figure, but as I have mentioned before, in metafictional works, the author is perceived as a linguistic construct, written by the language itself. The narrator states that because he lives "in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes", thereby indicating the second half of the twentieth century, he cannot write a traditional novel. In addition, this also shows author's limitation, as well the absence of one, absolute truth, which are features of historiographic metafiction too. Jukić calls Chapter 13 "the chapter of revelation", because the narrator reveals fictional nature of the novel, thus

showing that fiction is both free from its creator and grounded on previous texts ("Variants of Victoriana" 71).

Sarah, on the other hand, invents her past to parody the society of that time, taking advantage of both Charles and Mrs. Poulteney, exposing their hypocrisies. She is a historiographer of her own past, who choses Charles, a supporter of Darwin's theory of evolution, and Mrs. Poulteney, a rigid religious woman with very narrow beliefs, as readers of her historiography of the past, who later turn to be textual referents of her historiography of the present. By ironically selecting these two types of characters, she wants to show both her liberal ideology and portray Victorian society in satirical manner ("Sarah: The Historiographer of the Past" 212). Mrs. Poulteney's closed-minded attitudes affect her view of others, as she constantly judges and punishes people around her and habitually pries into other people's lives. The narrator even compares her to Gestapo, as she "could reduce the sturdiest girls to tears in the first five minutes" (Fowles 9). Despite claiming to have strong religious beliefs, she does not adhere to them, and that is why she can be perceived as a hypocritical character. We might argue that through her character, Fowles portrays the hypocrisy of the church and its corruptness too.

Charles, on the contrary, states that he does not care if others see him with "the scarlet woman of Lyme" (Fowles 52). However, his hypocrisy is seen on several occasions throughout the novel. For instance, when they meet and Sarah tells him her story, "Charles was horrified; he imagined what anyone who was secretly watching might think" (Fowles 61), fearing for his reputation and his social status. Just as Mrs. Poulteney, in reality, he does not hold on to his beliefs. At first glance, they are opposing characters, but, in fact, Sarah reveals that both of them are hypocrites who misrepresent themselves, and through their limitations Fowles satirizes Victorian society and their moral beliefs.

Additionally, Waugh states that Sarah portrays herself as a fallen woman to move away from conventional Victorian society, seeking freedom, just as Fowles seeks fictional freedom by manipulating fictional conventions of the Victorian period (125). She is a heroine, a seductress who is in fact a virgin, and who determines the course of the novel (126). Similarly, Christabel LaMotte, a female protagonist in *Possession,* never revealed that she was a virgin before she slept with Ash, the man she falls in love with, as we are going to see later in my analysis. Sarah chooses a tragic narrative, deliberately portraying herself as a sinner, as marginalized character, contradicting the codes of behaviour and showing that she is truly ahead of her time ("Sarah: The Historiographer of the Past" 212-213). Even her physical appearance stands out from the Victorian standards:

> … her hair had become loose and half covered her cheek (…) it had seemed to him a dark brown; now he saw that it had red tints, a rich warmth, and without the then indispensable gloss of feminine hair oil. The skin below seemed very brown, almost ruddy, in that light, as if the girl cared more for health than a fashionably pale and languid-cheeked complexion. A strong nose, heavy eyebrows ... the mouth he could not see. (Fowles 30)

She does not mind being called "Tragedy" or "The French Lieutenant's Woman" and she even calls herself "The French Lieutenant's Whore". She refuses to prove her chastity, on the contrary, she explicitly states her sin: "I did it so that people should point at me, should say, there walks the French Lieutenant's Whore—oh yes, let the word be said. So that they should know I have suffered (…) So I married shame" (Fowles 75). Lynch states that through Sarah's characterization, Fowles explores how both history and freedom interrelate (50), as this theme of individual's freedom from tight social constraints is often studied in his works.

According to Lynch, there are three types of freedom in the novel: social, existential and narrative. Social freedom regards choosing one's identity in multitude of social realities.

Existential freedom rejects relying on the community when forming one's identity. Narrative freedom is a freedom of characters from their authors, which can also represent a freedom from God (50-51). Zussman states that narrative freedom requires "selecting among the categories and actions we identify with but also selecting and transforming the meanings we ascribe to those identities and actions" (808). Therefore, he argues that narrative freedom is the act of self-expression, a way of claiming self-identity (809).

Applying these notions of freedom to Charles and Sarah, it can be seen that Sarah, despite her poor socialization (she was well-educated, but she never got along with other students, claiming that education was the second curse of her life), achieves social freedom. She chooses her own destiny that does not include marriage, focusing on her happiness and no longer suffering Victorian stereotypes: "I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage" (Fowles 193). She finds an alternative universe in a house of the founder of The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, an artistic movement which I will explain in more detail in my analysis of *Possession.* There, she can choose her identity, stating that "the persons I have met here have let me see a community of honourable endeavor, of noble purpose, I had not till now known existed in this world (…) I am happy, I am at last arrived, or so it seems to me, where I belong (Fowles 193). Nevertheless, what is more important, she achieves narrative freedom, that is, she tells her life story the way she wants to, and that is why Lynch calls her a "rebel against social constraints" (52). By achieving narrative freedom, Sarah reduces herself to a work of art and exposes her human complexity, which is the only path to her freedom in general (Lynch 63). Hutcheon states that Sarah represents freedom of imagination and individuality, which enables her not only to be a free woman, but also a fiction-maker, who fabricates her status as a fallen woman ("The Real Worlds" 86-87).

Her fake account about her past is, in fact, Fowles's parody of the conventional Victorian morality. She deliberately fakes the narrative to move away and rise above the hypocritical and prudish Victorian society, which, ultimately, in Holmes's words, enables her to "grow as a free individual" (195). Furthermore, she can be perceived as a writer who, in order to construct her future, modifies and fictionalizes her past. As a true historian, she has become a mediator between the past and the present, showing, in light of historiographic metafiction, that history depends on the narrative and on the historian's interpretation of that narrative to selected referents ("Sarah: The Historiographer of the Past" 215). Charles, on the other hand, never managed to elude the limitations imposed by society, despite his modern beliefs in evolution theory. As I have explained above, although he considers himself as a modern man, he is, in reality, stuck in traditional and stiff social system and struggles to stick to his beliefs. Fletcher states that Sarah embodies Charles's potential to gain freedom (40); a possibility to escape "the vast pressures of his age" (Fowles 126). Although he considers himself "not like the great majority of his peers and contemporaries" (Fowles 55),even the narrator states that "what he felt was really a very clear case of the anxiety of freedom—that is, the realization that one is free and the realization that being free is a situation of terror" (Fowles 145). Fletcher adds that their Victorianism is what contrasts them (40), as their differences lay in the fact that he has "two qualities as typical as of English (…) admixture of irony and convention", while she possesses "passion and imagination (…) banned by the epoch" (Fowles 80-81).

This existential concern with human freedom is further explored in the novel's multiple endings, which is considered Fowles's metafictional innovation. In the first ending, Charles and Ernestina are married, although not happily, he starts working for her father, and he never finds out anything about Sarah. In the second ending, Charles and Sarah sleep together, and seeing blood on his shirt, he realizes that she is a virgin, and that she lied about

her past. She disappears and after two years, he finds her in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's house, who is a founder of The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, where she lives with their daughter, Lalange. In the third ending, a mysterious man, situated outside the Rossetti's house and observing their encounter, states that he has turned back the time for fifteen minutes, the scene is the same, except in this version, Sarah rejects Charles and he furiously leaves the house.

First, I should note that there is a dispute whether there are two or three endings, because the first ending occurs in Charles's dream. However, most critics agree that the novel actually has three endings, including this imaginary one. Waugh, for instance, claims that by offering three endings, Fowles gives an alternative to Victorian morality and historical conventions, and shows that fiction is, much like life, unpredictable, and can offer endless possibilities (123). Furthermore, Scruggs adds that these multiple endings are Fowles's acknowledgment that reality is mysterious, and that the real truth cannot be uncovered (98).This parallel between the unpredictability of both fiction and life is asserted by the narrator too, who states that: "This is why we cannot plan. We know a world is an organism, not a machine. We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world" (Fowles 41).

As this is not a Victorian novel, it cannot have only one, happy ending. That is why the first, traditional Victorian ending, is the least favourable and dismissed by the narrator himself, because it is planned down to the last detail, until the death of Charles and Ernestina. The second one is more open compared to the first one; it implies that Sarah and Charles may end up together, but the reader can only guess. We can argue that this ending is, in a sense, unconvincing because throughout the whole novel Sarah fights against traditional social conventions, deliberately portraying herself as a fallen woman, only to accept the role of a wife and a mother in the end. In the same vain, Scruggs states that if Sarah ends up with Charles in the second ending, then this version can be perceived as a Victorian cliché – a

fallen woman saved by true love. In this version, the past is what defines Sarah, not the future (98). The third ending is a contemporary one. Scruggs describes it as less clichéd, more modern and existential (96). By manipulation of time in this ending, when impresario turns back the time, Fowles also drops the pretence of writing history, once again emphasizing that the text is a man-made and unnatural narrative. In this ending, Sarah rejects Charles and chooses freedom, aspiring to become independent woman.

Scruggs claims that the circularity of the third ending is also a new narrative form, as Charles and Sarah's roles have been switched (109). In the last scene, Charles, enraged that Sarah has rejected him, stares at the Thames, just as Sarah used to stare in the sea as social outcast. Although not in a sexual relationship with Rossetti, Sarah achieved stability, just as Charles had balanced relationship with Ernestina at the beginning of the novel. Charles, on the other hand, is miserable in the end, just as Sarah was at the beginning. Moreover, in this version, readers do not know what will happen to Sarah and Charles in the future. These two endings thus uphold Fowles and narrator's arguments about the unpredictability of both life and fiction. Furthermore, Holmes states that by providing multiple endings, Fowles compromises the reader's security by breaking the solidity of the narrative (187). He adds that the author also frees characters from the tyranny of the plot (190), thereby demonstrating his belief in the importance of freedom. Multiple endings also show the narrative's failure to represent the past truthfully because the past depends on the narrators, those who decide how to represent a certain story. Therefore, it can be argued that this novel questions the notion of one, true history, showing Fowles's clash with the claim that the past can be truthfully recovered. In the following chapter I will focus on another characteristic of historiographic metafiction – intertextuality, exploring different ways in which it can be achieved.

5. Intertextuality in A.S. Byatt's *Possession*

According to Tatjana Jukić, A.S. Byatt's novel *Possession* falls into the third stage of postmodernist novels that tackle Victorian legacy ("Variants of Victoriana" 74). The novel tells the story of Roland Michell and Maud Bailey, two twentieth-century literary researchers who investigate lives of two Victorian poets, Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte. Roland writes about Vico's influence on Ash, while Maud explores feminist features in Christabel's poetry. Roland discovers Ash's secret letter to an unknown woman and comes across the name of Christabel LaMotte. He and Maud visit late Christabel's house where they find hidden letters. The letters reveal Christabel and Ash's long correspondence and the two retrace their steps, compare their works, and find similar phrases and descriptions of nature in the works of both poets. They come across a journal that reveals that Christabel was pregnant with Ash and eventually gave her daughter to her sister, who raised her as her own. Maud finds out that she is a direct descendant of Christabel, as her daughter turns out to be her great-great-great grandmother.

Even before the text itself, the covers are the first intertextual element of this novel, suggesting the importance of intertextual bonds in the novel. The Vintage Books edition of the book features a painting by Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin* (see Appendix) on the front cover. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founded in 1848 by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was a group of artists who based their works on the imitation and mimesis, especially direct imitation of nature. They drew inspiration from the Early Italian Renaissance art, a period before Raphael (hence the name Pre-Raphaelite), while also claiming that medieval artists were more inclined to explore the world. Thus, their main themes were medieval ones, especially medieval romance. They were also technically

imperfect and highly dependent on history. Jukić states that their work broke a symbolic gate between the nineteenth and the twentieth century and consequently, shifted academic interest towards the Victorian legacy (*Zazor, nadzor, sviđanje* 15). Hence, in the context of this novel, the importance of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood lays in the fact that their work was based on the intertextuality of cultural legacy of the past, just as historiographic metafiction novels show a strong connection between postmodern fiction and history. The painting represents a scene from the Arthurian legend; it portrays Merlin, entrapped in the woods by mysterious sorceress Vivien. Merlin gives her the book with ancient spells and warns her that no one managed to decipher the spells. However, she tricks him and bewitches him into a state between life and death. Jukić claims that the painting is a perfect example of intertextual ties, as it is Burne-Jones's painting of Tenneyson's poem about Malory's versions of Arthurian legends (*Zazor, nadzor, sviđanje* 20).

Similar to Fowles's Sarah, Vivien has a long, auburn hair too, which symbolizes sensuality and magic. Vivien is fair-skinned and has pouty lips, which are typical symbols of sensuality and mystery. She appears almost as having hypnotic properties, seducing Merlin, just as Sarah seduced Charles. Jukić describes her as a sensual being between dreams and reality ("Priroda kao posjedovanje" 43). One might ask if it is far-fetched to compare a cover of one novel to the main protagonist of another novel? Jukić explains this as well, saying that as metafictional novels perceive a novel primarily as a human artefact, then the cover is a part of the artefact too ("Priroda kao posjedovanje" 44). Similarly, the covers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* portray a redheaded woman in nature, on the sea front, a woman that embodies Sarah. Thus, the importance of the cover of the novel lies in the fact that it represents the novel primarily as an artefact, a beautiful object, a human construct ("Priroda kao posjedovanje" 45).

The second borrowing that precedes the text itself is the novel's subtitle 'a romance'. As I have mentioned before, Scholes defines romance as fiction that imitates other fiction. The subtitle 'romance' also stands for a love story. That is why Fletcher argues that both of these interpretations are equally important and mutually dependant, as they are crucial for negotiation the meaning of the past (26). Jukić states that the title *Possession,* another example of intertext, loses its denotation, as it can be interpreted in various ways: as an ownership, mania, or obsession. Moreover, it possesses one archaic connotation too: a sexual intercourse and sexual desire. The title can even imply the possession of the past ("Priroda kao posjedovanje" 39-40), thus representing a myriad of complex intertextual relations that can be found throughout the text.

The story begins in September 1986, in the London Library, where Roland finds a draft of a letter to a certain woman inside Randolph Henry Ash's Victorian copy of Vico's historical texts. Vico's appearance at the beginning of a novel was not a coincidence; this way Byatt emphasized her neo-historic tendencies ("Variants of Victoriana" 74). Giambattista Vico was Italian philosopher who studied historical social history and advocated the creative power of language, which was not only used to represent reality, but also to influence and shape it. His work *The New Science* regards circular model of history, where each new generation is a reflection of a previous one, and according to him, it is the only way to preserve humanity (Wells 103).

Vico developed two crucial terms for understanding history as a means to preserve humanity, *corso* and *ricorso.* He defines *corso* as "an overall continuum" on which each generation occupies a certain space (Wells 109). According to Wells, *ricorso* represents a moment of retrospection, a repetition that takes places on a spiritual or intellectual level, whose goal is to save society and to stabilize culture by self-conscious cultural reflection. He also adds that these principles enable connection between the past and the present, and the

imitation of the past forms is the only way human kind can be preserved (111-112). In his view, every *ricorso* encompasses previous *corso* and tries to excel it, thus showing something new and diverse. Every historical era had reached its peak, and then started to decay. Then, it was followed by another era, which took its features and tried to modify them in order for society to continue to develop. Subsequently, the cycle, the new *ricorso,* repeats again. In the same way, each generation reflects generation that existed before and shares some of their features, but, alters their behaviour in order to grow.

Applying this to Byatt's novel, the main protagonists of *Possession,* Roland and Maud are mirrored in their predecessors, Christabel LaMotte and Randolph Henry Ash. At the beginning of the novel, both women are aloof towards their suitors, but as the story progresses they start to show affection. They share several characteristics; they have fair skin and fair hair, they are both atypical women, oriented towards their career, rather than raising family. They value their privacy and are reluctant to the idea of traditional role that women are supposed to obtain, showing, just like Sarah, feminist tendencies that can free them from social constraints. Furthermore, they are both associated with the colour green throughout the entire novel. They also have a very close female friend, and it is even suggested, but not explicitly stated, that they experimented with lesbianism. Apart from this, they also share a fear of sexuality, which disables them from enjoying life to the full extent. In fact, Christabel lost her virginity to Ash, just like Sarah did with Charles. Just like Charles, Ash found traces of blood the morning after.

Therefore, it can be seen that Christabel reflects her contemporary counterpart, Maud. However, Maud managed to overcome her fear of physical intimacy and to rise above the obstacles that Christabel never surmounted, thus supporting Vico's claims about repetitive model of history, which I have explained above. This strong connection between the present

and the past is also emphasized by the revelation that Maud is indeed related to Christabel, as Christabel and Ash had a daughter, who is in fact Maud's great-great-great grandmother.

Additionally, Roland and Randolph have certain characteristics in common too. They both have similar physique, dark hair, dark eyes and kind face. Their life was portrayed as monotonous before they met Christabel and Maud. They both show literary tendencies, Roland being literary scholar and Ash a writer. Also, they are both in an unhappy, loveless relationship with their partners, and find comfort, and in the end happiness, in another woman. Moreover, just as Ash was accompanied by Christabel on his expedition in 1859, Roland is joined by Maud on their investigation. Whereas Ash had to subdue his love for Christabel and in the end remained married to Ellen, Roland manages to free himself from his failed relationship and to find happiness with Maud. Therefore, despite Maud and Roland sharing certain features with Christabel and Ash, they have managed to transgress obstacles that their Victorian counterparts could not, showing that society indeed develops with each new generation.

Furthermore, Jukić claims that the description of nature can be considered as intertext borrowed from the Pre-Raphaelite paintings too ("Priroda kao posjedovanje" 43-44). Byatt's descriptions of nature are so rich and detailed, as if directly transferred from one of the paintings:

> LaMotte's description of the ferns and foliage is Pre-Raphaelite in its precision and delicacy—the "rounded" rocks are covered with a pelt mosses, worts, mints and maidenhair ferns. The fountain does not "spring" but "bubbles and seeps" up into the "still and secret" pool, with its "low mossy stone" surrounded by "peaks and freshenings" of "running and closing" waters. (Byatt 267)

Not only does Byatt describe every plant in precise detail, but she also compares Christabel's descriptions to the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, thus stating the importance of this artistic movement and its influence in the novel, since their work was based on realistic portrayal of nature. Following the role of nature as intertext itself, and similar to Fowles's protagonists Sarah and Charles, Christabel and Ash's secret love encounters take place in nature too, far away from the city, more specifically in a secluded outpost near the sea. Additionally, Roland and Maud's romance evolves in nature as well, while they follow the traces to discover illicit relationship between two Victorian poets. Roland's degrading relationship with Val is set in urban environment, just as the relationship between Charles and Ernestina, or even between Ash's wife Ellen and Ash. Jukić states that this obvious city versus nature parallelism in both novels is another example of intertextual connections. She suggests that there is a strong similarity between citations in both novels, as almost identical terminology can be found in vivid and detailed descriptions of nature, as well as intertextual references to other Renaissance artists ("Priroda kao posjedovanje" 45-47), which makes *The French Lieutenant's Woman* strong intertextual referent in Byatt's novel:

> The Boggle Hole is a cove tucked beneath cliffs, where a beck runs down across sand to the sea (…) The high hedges were thick with dog-roses, mostly a clear pink, sometimes white, with yellow-gold centres dusty with yellow pollen. These roses were intricately and thickly entwined with rampant wild honeysuckle, trailing and weaving creamy flowers among the pink and gold… The warm air brought the smell of the flowers in great gusts and lingering intense canopies. Both had expected one or two flowers at most, late modern survivors of thickets seen by Shakespeare or painted by Morris. But here was abundance, here was growth, here were banks of gleaming scented life. (Byatt 292)

> The Undercliff—for this land is really the mile-long slope caused by the erosion of the ancient vertical cliff face—is very steep (…) its wild arbutus and ilex and other trees rarely seen growing in England; its enormous ashes and beeches; its green Brazilian chasms (…)The ground about him was studded gold and pale yellow with celandines and primroses and banked by the bridal white of densely blossoming sloe; where jubilantly green-tipped elders shaded the mossy banks of the little brook he had drunk from were clusters of moschatel and woodsorrel, most delicate of English spring flowers (…) Only one art has ever caught such scenes—that of the Renaissance; it is the ground that Botticelli's figures walk on, the air that includes Ronsard's songs. (Fowles 29)

Not only do both novels abound with similar intertextual references, but also the character of Ash is based on Fowles's Charles. Both men are engaged in classification of paleontological findings, which requires them to be in nature. Jukić adds that such amateur paleontological work functions as a disguise for both men to evade imposed social expectations, as well as to be with the woman they love ("Priroda kao posjedovanje" 51). They perceive nature not only as an escape from urban and social limitations, but in Roland's case, it is also an escape from reality and from his miserable relationship with Val, as he leaves their apartment on various occasions to retrace the steps of Christabel and Ash. Furthermore, nature in both novels signifies an escape into mythical and unknown. Noorbakhsh and Amjad add that nature is here the force that transforms dull and dry contemporary existence into a passionate world similar to the one of Victorian poets, and precisely the investigation of the past is what makes Roland and Maud's life more vivid and makes them feel alive ("Three Approaches Toward Historiography" 20). It also influences the novel's ending, as the storm, a natural force, prevents Mortimer Cropper from stealing the letters from the grave, and consequently, allows Maud to discover her real ancestry.

Other interesting examples of intertextuality are references to various fables and fairy tales that can be traced within the novel. Christabel LaMotte wrote epic poem "The Fairy Melusine", which is a French fairy story about half-woman, half-snake that dates back to the twelfth century. It is an example of the 'story within the story', a metafictional device where a character in the novel writes another story, in this case, a poem (Kieda 39). The story is about Albanian king Elinas and his wife Presine. She left his husband for breaking his promise, and when their daughters turned against their father, she transformed one of her daughters, Melusine, into a serpent. As she transforms into a snake every Saturday, later when she marries she conditions her husband not to view her on Saturday. He violates his promise too, and Melusine flies away as a winged serpent. Not only does the original story influence Christabel's poem, thus acting as intertextual reference, but also this betrayal of women on the behalf of men, and violating women's privacy, is mirrored in Christabel's character too. That is why we can perceive it as a more implicit intertextual reference. As she states on several occasions, she wants to maintain her privacy as well as her freedom, which are violated by unplanned love, pregnancy and motherhood in the end (Kieda 28).

Kieda also states that the serpent is considered an androgynous being as it resembles both male and female (14). She explains that the bottom side of the serpent, in the shape of a phallus, represents masculinity, while the top part represents feminine side (16-17). A serpent is portrayed as "a complete being, capable of generating life (…) on her own, without need for external help" (Byatt 267). Christabel, being a poetess in a rigid Victorian society, is aware of the scepticism about females in general, and their struggle in intellectual field. She desires that women's writing stops being subverted and described as "excellently done – for a woman" (Byatt 197). She wants women to become self-sufficient and complete beings, and that is why she chooses this symbolism of a serpent as "a complete being". Not only does Christabel write about Melusine, but she also perceives herself as Melusine, a woman who

leaves her husband and raises her children by herself, just like Christabel: “I have been Melusina these thirty years (…) a sorcière, a spinster in a fairy tale… (Byatt 544). By transforming Christabel into Melusine, we can argue that Byatt reveals and criticizes female struggle for intellectual activity in the Victorian era, where women were supposed to take on the role of a mother and wife only.

A similar example of marginalization of women, portrayed using almost the same phrase, can be seen when Ellen Ash, another woman who mirrors a fairy tale character, plays chess with her male friend. He comments that she “played very well for a lady” (Byatt 247). She later reflects on their game of chess, thinking “that in chess the female may make the large runs and cross freely in all ways—in life it is much otherwise” (Byatt 248), which, we might argue, neatly summarizes the position of woman in the Victorian era. It should be noted that Byatt created her character solely through one of the metafictional devices – journaling. Shiffman claims that using a journal as a literary form, Byatt lays bare the genre as a textual construct, or in other words, a diary becomes “fiction in her creation of a fictional diary”. She also argues that this way boundaries between the author and the diarist become blurred, as the diary is no longer a private entity, but a public one (95). Ellen’s journals are in possession of Beatrice Nest, another literary scholar, who gives them to Maud to help her with the investigation.

The journals reveal that she and Ash never consummated their marriage. Such fear of sexuality led to depression, headaches and migraines because she thought that she disappointed Ash. Similarly, both Christabel and Sarah are haunted by this fear of sexuality, which was prominent in Victorian era. It was believed that sexual desire was reserved only for men, while women were thought not to have sexual urges, and sexuality was not something that was discussed. As I have said before, both Christabel and Sarah were in fact virgins, they never gave themselves to a man because they were, just like Ellen Ash, afraid to lose their

sexual purity. As a result, Ellen was taking opium and laid in bed "motionlessly" (Byatt 251), comparing herself to Snow White: "I lay suspended almost as Snow White lay maybe, in the glass casket, alive but out of the weather, breathing but motionless" (Byatt 252). This is exactly how she feels, alive, but almost as paralysed or frozen. She thinks she is not good enough because she is not a mother. Just as Sarah and Christabel, Ellen is limited by society too. Although she has shown literary tendencies, they never managed to thrive in the era where women were expected to be domestic figures. Despite being a secondary character, she is very important, because her legacy – the journal, is what helps Roland and Maud in their investigation.

On the subject of Snow White, Byatt associates one more female character with her – Maud Bailey. Maud has "clear, milky skin" (Byatt 44), and her complexion is as fair as Snow White's. She also feels entrapped in her workplace, which is "a skeletal affair in a glass box, with brilliant doors opening in glass and tubular walls" (Byatt 49). With this constant comparison to the glass coffin, she feels like there is some kind of barrier between her and the life outside; she felt like she "was inside, and the outside was alive and separate" (Byatt 151). Just like her Victorian counterparts Christabel and Ellen, she is trapped by her fear of sexuality, autonomy and intellectual inaction. Although she belongs to the late twentieth century society, her character shows that women still struggle in a predominantly male world. She feels that she is obliged to choose between family life and career. She chooses the latter, accepting the belief that family life and career are mutually exclusive, and that her choice means isolation and solitude.

She can be thus also compared to Hans Christian Andersen's Snow Queen, a cold-hearted and powerful female protagonist. At the beginning of the novel, Roland perceives her as beautiful and intelligent, but cold. Additionally, the character of Snow Queen can also represent a belief that each person is shaped by their life circumstances, which consequently,

influence their behaviour. As I have explained before, Maud's behaviour is influenced by the belief that she cannot achieve true happiness, which is why she gives the impression of being aloof, and ultimately, she adopts that mode of behaviour. Additionally, Snow Queen is atypical female fairy tale protagonist, not a damsel in distress. On the contrary, she is the one who saves a male protagonist, just like Maud helps Roland in their investigation. According to Kieda, Snow Queen is a metaphor for her rebellion, as she chooses not to meet social expectations, and thus prefers her solitude and loneliness (55).

The third fairy tale reference in the novel is "The Glass Coffin" by the Grimm Brothers, a story about a tailor who saves a trapped maiden in an enchanted forest and later marries her. The crucial difference between Christabel and the Grimm Brothers' version is the fact that passive female protagonist in the Grimm's version is given agency in Byatt's version (Kieda 44). The maiden can choose whether to marry the tailor or not, which was not the case in Grimm's version. The tailor even states that she does not have to feel obliged to marry him just because he saved her. Another innovative feature in Christabel's version is that she once again inverts typical male and female behaviour. In the end, the maiden is hunting, while the tailor stays at home and makes clothes. This again shows how Christabel was ahead of her time by choosing themes with atypical female roles, where women are those who are is charge. Therefore, it can be argued that each story fights against the lack of female autonomy, which stemmed from gender biases and social constraints. Not only can each character be mirrored in their fairy tale parallels, but also Christabel, just as Fowles's Sarah, is portrayed as a mysterious woman ahead of her time, who seeks liberation from gender biases of Victorian period and fights for individual freedom.

This parallel between fairy tales and novel's character is interesting because it shows how both fairy tales and real life are full of gender stereotypes. In fairy tales, a female character always has to make a choice, to be a damsel in distress who needs to be saved by a

man, or to choose between family and freedom, because it is believed that one excludes the other. Female characters are typically portrayed as weak, dependent and submissive. By comparing her characters to the fairy tale ones, Byatt conveys that women experience similar struggle in real life. What is different is the fact that her characters try to fight those expectations. Even though Victorian women Ellen and Christabel did not eventually achieve what they wanted, they showed resilience towards social expectations in regards to the role of women. Although Maud thinks that solitude is her only choice, she falls in love with Roland eventually. However, this is by no means a traditional love story, as there is no happily ever after. The novel does not end with marriage or with traditional submissive female role. Maud manages to achieve the balance between love and career, and Byatt here shows that these two notions are not mutually exclusive, that women do not have to give up anything in order to achieve their full potential. With this analysis, my aim has been to show the way intertextuality makes readers aware of the relationship between a text and social and cultural contexts, while simultaneously connecting the past with the present.

6. Unreliable Narrator in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

In the last section of my paper I will analyse Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*, and focus on Saleem as a self-reflexive narrator. I will analyse techniques he uses to present his version of India's history as examples of historiographic metafiction, because his account shows that there is more than just one true version of history, and that history depends on the way others perceive and remember it. Salem Sinai, an unreliable narrator in Rushdie's novel, tells his life story to Padma as he fears he might die. He was born at midnight, August 15, 1947, the date that also represents India's independence from Britain's rule. However, his

story begins thirty two years prior to his birth, following his grandfather, Aadam Aziz, and how he met his future wife, Saleem's grandmother, Naseem. One of their daughters, Mumatz, married Ahmed Sinai and visited a fortune-teller after discovering she was pregnant.

The fortune-teller told her an odd prophecy, saying that her son would not be older nor younger than his country, that there would be two heads, but she would only see one. At the stroke of midnight, Amina gave birth to her son. A midwife, Mary Pereira, however, swapped the nametags of the two babies born at the exact same moment, Saleem and Shiva, changing destinies of those two boys, making them sworn enemies. Afterwards, she felt guilty and decided to become Saleem's nanny. He, along with the rest of the children born in the first hour of India's independence, has magical powers, which vary depending on how close to midnight they were born. Furthermore, he discovers that he has telepathic powers, and that he can hear thoughts of the rest of the midnight children.

In regards to unnatural narrative in metafictional contexts, Buchholz states that there are three subcategories of narrative in the novel - unnatural forms of narration, unnatural minds and unnatural storyworlds (333), which I will try explain in this chapter. She defines all three terms, stating that unnatural narration involves "physically, logically, mnemonically, or psychologically impossible enunciations" (336). Unnatural mind regards the extent to which Saleem's mind is represented and how it distances the reader from reality (340-341), while unnatural storyworld represents a cognitive world constructed by the recipient in the process of experiencing a certain text (344). In this case, unnatural narration regards Saleem's non-linear narrative and events that are full of mistakes, which he shapes according to his own wishes. Unnatural mind considers the way he represents his telepathic powers, which he uses to communicate with the rest of the midnight's children, as well as to read minds of other people. Lastly, unnatural storyworld represents magical world within the real world that

Rushdie created, that involves both unnatural narration and unnatural mind, where characters have magical powers and influence the destiny of the whole country.

Oza claims that Saleem tells the story in an autobiographical way, which gives him the freedom to remember and show his life in a selective manner, choosing not only the order of the events, but also the events themselves (5): "in autobiography, as in all literature, what actually happened is less important than what the author can manage to persuade his audience to believe" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 138). For this reason, Saleem can be compared to the narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* who also states that he is writing an autobiography: "so perhaps I am writing a transposed autobiography (...) Perhaps it is only a game" (41). Both of these narrators often interrupt the story, comment on the events, but also state that they cannot give an accurate account of the events. Hutcheon thus claims that Saleem, as a controlling narrator, wants to "reduce history to autobiography", connecting his personal experience with public history (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 161-162). Dhar considers him a historian inside the novel too (99), as Saleem states that "everything that happened, happened because of me" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 67). This is illustrated at the beginning of the novel, where he immediately intertwines his destiny to India's history, while determining both the space and time of his story:

> I was born in the city of Bombay… once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more… On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact (…) at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world (…) because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children,* 1).

Kern states that this opening announces Saleem's narrative strategy; a mixture of fairy tales, myths and real historical events that influenced India's independence (16). He constantly reveals fictive nature of the novel and questions how the memory of history influences the way it can be retold, and consequently, reshaped. As he fears he might die, he wants to reveal the stories he kept for himself, just as Scheherazade did in *One Thousand and One Nights*. He compares himself to Scheherazade because they are both storytellers who create fantastic stories in order to save their lives, while keeping their readers in suspense: "I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning-yes, meaning-something (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 1), willing to put out of its misery a narrative which I left yesterday hanging in mid-air-just as Scheherazade (…) used to do it night after night" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 9). However, they are also afraid of the time running out, which will inevitably lead to their death. However, unlike Scheherazade, time makes Saleem rush with his story, and consequently, he makes mistakes.

The story is narrated in the first person singular, which makes Saleem an active participant in the story's development, but which also announces subjectivity of his narration. Additionally, his magic powers make him the omniscient narrator and enable him to comment on political and historical events of that time. Furthermore, the powers also connect him to various different characters, and place him in the middle of socio-political events of the time. Vukasović adds that he decides to rewrite several important historical events, such as Amritsar massacre, elections, the Sino-Indian war, the Indo-Pakistani wars, the period of India Ghandi's Emergency, etc., from a different point of view, in order to show how the line between history and fiction can be blurred and questioned (37). However, he decides not to mention certain events, or even to falsely represent some of them, to show that one, accurate historical truth does not exist.

For example, in the course of the novel, he becomes aware that he has made a mistake about the time of Gandhi's death, but refuses to correct it, stating that "in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 84). By this statement, Saleem rejects accurate version of history, thus emphasizing the instability of both history and memory and in light of historiographic metafiction, stresses the power of the unreliable narrator to create an alternative world. This fake account of Gandhi's death also acknowledges fictive nature of the novel, as Saleem only discovers his mistake while re-reading what he has written so far, and then decides to leave the mistake. Saleem, who both creates and simultaneously exists in his storyworld, is able to change the original storyworld, and create "alternative possible pasts" by manipulating his own story (Buchholz 348). He also states that he faked Shiva's death too, because he "fell victim to the temptation of every autobiographer, to the illusion that since the past exists only in one's memories and the words which strive vainly to encapsulate them, it is possible to create past events simply by saying they occurred" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 226).

Another example of tailoring the story to suit his own purposes is the fact that he mispresented the elections of 1957, but again, he does not correct his mistake and blames his memory, stating "but although I have racked my brains, my memory refuses, stubbornly, to alter the sequence of events" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 114). Such play with various historical data asserts Hutcheon's claims that historiographic metafiction "plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record" (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 114), and that both history and fiction are men-made narratives. As a consequence, it casts doubt on the authenticity of his story. As I have previously said, his fear of the time passing by is what drives his narration and makes him rush, and consequently, becomes the reason he makes mistakes on various occasions in the novel.

Speaking of the fantastic as an alternative world, all the children born in the first hour of India's independence possess magical powers, therefore, they are an alternative world within the novel; another feature of historiographic metafiction. This alternative world takes place inside Saleem's head and it simultaneously exists with the real world. For Saleem, this alternative world is as real as the real world, "especially in a country which is itself a sort of dream" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children,* 60). Unnatural storyworld that Saleem as the omniscient narrator has created in his head regards his telepathic powers through which he communicates with one thousand and one midnight's children in their Midnight's Children Conference, but which also enable him to tune in everybody's head:

> Because the feeling had come upon me that I was somehow creating a world; that the thoughts I jumped inside were mine, that the bodies I occupied acted at my command; that, as current affairs, arts, sports, the whole rich variety of a first-class radio station poured into me, I was somehow making them happen… which is to say, I had entered into the illusion of the artist, and thought of the multitudinous realities of the land as the raw unshaped material of my gift. 'I can find out any damn thing!' I triumphed, 'There isn't a thing I cannot know! (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 88)

Moreover, he uses the metaphor of the radio to explain how he manages to filter out the noise: "I was a radio receiver, and could turn the volume down or up; I could select individual voices" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 83). Buchholz states that this metaphor of the radio is also an example of Saleem's unnatural mind through which he created alternative world (341), because he tries to describe something magical through something ordinary and something that others can easily comprehend. As previously mentioned, the process of narrativization is a central form of human comprehension because it translates knowing into telling. Midnight's children also act as a metaphor for all possibilities that stand before such heterogeneous and multicultural nation (Shamshayooadeh 104). There are, along with Saleem,

one thousand and one midnight children, “the children of time (…) fathered by history” (Rushie, *Midnight’s Children* 60), each with different magical powers, different background, abilities and physical appearance.

Another metaphor that Saleem as a self-conscious narrator uses to explore fictive nature of history and the way it can be preserved through memory are the processes of ‘chutnification’ and ‘pickling’ of the past (Oza 5), as each chapter is compared to a pickle jar that stands on the shelf. Saleem states that there is a “symbolic value of the pickling process”, as “every pickle-jar (…) contains, therefore, the most exalted of possibilities; the feasibility of chutnification of history (…) in words and pickles, I have immortalized my memories” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 234-235). Oza explains that both ‘chutnification’, or “the process of selective memory documentation”, and ‘pickling’ are indigenous metaphors used for preserving history, but they also question the authenticity of the events in the novel, just as the process of pickling modifies original shape or size of a substance (7). Furthermore, chutney jars constantly blend together and create something new and diverse, just as our memory can vary, thus affecting our view of the past events. Using these two metaphors, we can argue that Rushdie demonstrates the reliability of our memory, which is not constant, but is, in fact, very subjective. As Saleem grows older, his memories, through which he has created his identity, change. He realizes that he cannot rely on his memories, which he explicitly states in the novel:

> 'I told you the truth,' I say yet again, 'Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own.’ (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 108).

His memory worsens as the novel progresses, at one point he admits that he cannot remember for sure what happened, and culminates near the end when he states the following: “I'm tearing myself apart, can't even agree with myself, talking arguing like a wild fellow, cracking up, memory going, yes, memory plunging into chasms and being swallowed by the dark, only fragments remain, none of it makes sense any more!” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 215). Buchholz states that with aforementioned fragmentation metaphors, Rushdie shows how memory actually works and how human mind preserves it (343), and as a result, readers perceive history as artificial construct, just another possible version that depends on individual’s perception of events.

As a self-reflexive narrator, Saleem often states that he is writing this story and emphasizes the fact that he is manipulating the plot:

> Because I am rushing ahead at breakneck speed; errors are possible, and overstatements, and jarring alterations in tone; I'm racing the cracks, but I remain conscious that errors have already been made, and that, as my decay accelerates (my writing speed is having trouble keeping up), the risk of unreliability grows… (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 138).

The indicative mood, that is, the present simple, but especially the present progressive, further reminds the reader about story’s fictional nature as well as emphasizes his ongoing process of writing (Chaabane 855). Here, just as in the Chapter 13 in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman,* present progressive has dual purpose. Firstly, it is used to break the illusion of reality that the narrator has previously created, which is one of the main features of metafictional works. Saleem stops the narration to explicitly state that he is creating this fiction, thus emphasizing the novel’s status as an artefact. Present progressive is also used to stress that the action takes place now, therefore implying that the narrator cannot know the future. This also breaks the illusion of the omniscient narrator, and in a way, humanizes him. As a consequence, the

narrator, just like Fowles's narrator, can no longer be seen as an all-knowing figure, but somebody who is prone to make mistakes and whose previous actions should be questioned. Moreover, the citation above also contains several nouns with negative overtone, for example 'decay' or 'unreliability', as well as plurals such as 'errors', 'overstatements', or 'cracks', which effectively contribute to this notion of being an unreliable narrator whom readers should not trust. His unreliable account, in light of metafiction, firstly creates the illusion of reality, then it breaks it, and consequently, opens the novel for interpretation and narrative manipulation.

On the subject of narrative, apart from the narrator's intrusions and self-reflexivity, the novel abounds with meta-narrative comments. Through meta-narrative comments Saleem reflects on what he has previously said, as well as interrupts the flow of the story. The comments address readers, as well as his secondary narratee, Padma, who often disagrees with his account, and forces him to get back to the linear narration:

> But here is Padma at my elbow, bullying me back into the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next: 'At this rate,' Padma complains, 'you'll be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth.' (…) 'You better get a move on or you'll die before you get yourself born.' (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 16)

Shamshayooadeh states that Padma's role is to emphasize and relativize the narration, as well as to contour the narrative (205), as she becomes more and more frustrated by his deviations from the linear narrative. Just like the narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* who can be perceived as Fowles's surrogate, Padma can function as a surrogate for a reader because Saleem primarily reads his story, the story that readers read, to her. She states her confusion about the plot and shows frustration when he abandons linear narration, "'Enough,' Padma sulks. 'I don't want to listen.'"(Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 60), thus mirroring readers' reactions to his non-linear narrative and juxtaposed events, thinking that Saleem just rambles

and repeats himself. Buchholz adds that as the story progresses, the act of reading his story to Padma and writing to the reader become inseparable actions (339), and his conversations with Padma become intertwined with his writing:

> Fresh snail-tracks on Padma's cheeks. Obliged to attempt some sort of 'There, there', I resort to movie-trailers. (…) 'Stop, stop,' I exhort my mournfully squatting audience, I'm not finished yet! (…) Padma sniffs; wipes away mollusc-slime, dries eyes; breathes in deeply (…) (While Padma, to calm herself, holds her breath, I permit myself to insert a Bombay-talkie-style close-up-a calendar ruffled by a breeze) (…) but now Padma's lips are parting (…) Padma has regained her self-control. 'Okay, okay,' she expostulates (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 176).

Saleem simultaneously writes the story and describes Padma's reactions to his story, adding in brackets that while she calms down he will continue his narration, but then she interrupts him and urges him to start all over again, affecting his process of narration. It can be argued that his commentary on Padma's reactions and further explanations in brackets for readers point out the fictive nature of the novel as well. What is more, the novel is interspersed with additional explanations in brackets, which also break the flow of the narrative as a coherent unit. In brackets, he provides additional information, describes both past events and the ones that have not yet happened. Furthermore, while Padma wants him to carry on with the linear narration, he refuses to comply, stating that "Nevertheless, whether she is listening or not, I have things to record" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 60). We can also argue that Padma is Rushdie's surrogate as well. Being Saleem's opposite, she rarely believes his stories and doubts them, so we can say that Rushdie's reactions are actually mirrored in hers. It is also significant that at the novel's end, Rushdie inverted typical male and female roles. Padma is the one who proposes to Saleem, which contradicts the tradition where men are the ones who propose to women. Thus, we can compare her to Sarah and

Christabel, because Padma is the one in control in the end, while Saleem is left wondering what the future holds. Additionally, the novel's ending is similar to the ending of *Possession*. Although we have a glimpse of romance, a happy ending, we do not know what will actually happen, especially because Saleem insinuates his death.

With all this in mind, we might argue that with his unreliable narrator, Rushdie articulates that there is no one, certain version of historical events, and that our memories are partial, not consistent. Additionally, by Saleem's unnatural mind and his manipulation of the historical events, Rushdie articulates such artificial representation of the narrative and, in light of historiographic metafiction, shows that history cannot be accurately retold. Apart from this, we can say that Rushdie seems to indicate that history is made of memory, therefore, it is biased and unreliable. Interestingly, several years before publishing *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie revisited Bombay and the house where he grew up. He was overwhelmed as his memories came flooding back. This is when he realized that he wanted to restore the past, to retrieve both his city and his history. He decided he was going to write a novel "of memory and about memory", to provide his own version of India, an imaginary homeland of his mind ("Imaginary Homelands" 9-10), which, in the end, we can say he successfully accomplished.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this diploma paper has been to explore elements of historiographic metafiction in the selected novels. As it can be seen, the novels under discussion here question the reliability of historical narratives, thus my aim has also been to explore different approaches to this postmodern literary genre. Each novel sees the past from a different perspective, and shows how the present can depend and rely on it. They also demonstrate how

language functions as the means for constructing past events, and a tool for our comprehension of historical events. In light of historiographic metafiction, these novels lay bare the process of the construction of the past.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* I have focused on the parody of Victorian conventions, not just social, but literary as well. I explained how four different personae create the novel, each persona being a historiographer in their own right and undermining traditional god-like figure of the author. The analysis shows how Sarah, one of the protagonists, managed to achieve narrative freedom by fabricating her past. Moreover, three endings make this novel even more interesting, each ending representing one reality, one possibility, one past; denying the notion that there is only one, absolute truth. In *Possession,* I have concentrated on strong intertextual bonds that are interwoven throughout the whole novel. Starting from the covers, which feature a Pre-Raphaelite painting, subsequently following the symbolism of nature as the intertext itself, I end my analysis with the comparison of female characters with fairy tales and fairy tale characters.

On the other hand, the analysis of *Midnight's Children* involves Saleem as a self-reflexive and unreliable narrator, who interconnects his destiny to India's independence, and who claims that he is responsible for the entire India's past. I have explored multiple techniques Saleem used in his narrative, such as metaphors of chutnification and pickling, various linguistic tools that shift focus from the past to the present, while revealing the novel's artificiality, as well as his self-reflexive comments throughout the whole novel. Here I have attempted to demonstrate how history depends on human perception, and, consequently, influences our memory.

While I have explored different historiographic metafiction features in each novel, I have also tried to point to similarities among them. By comparing the novels, we can observe that both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Possession* are neo-Victorian novels that

criticize the Victorian period. In both novels, one of the main protagonists is a woman ahead of her time, who struggles with, and rebels against imposed social conventions. Christabel and Sarah, two Victorian protagonists, are portrayed as mysterious women who aspire to achieve self-sufficiency in an era where such reasoning is unconventional. They both seduce, then reject the man they love. Furthermore, they are both feminist characters who want to free themselves from social constraints of the Victorian era. Eventually, they both have an illegitimate child and choose to live their lives as free women.

Although both novels blur the distinction between fiction and historiography, there are certain differences between them. Regarding the notion of historical understanding, each of these two novels deals with it differently. By providing three endings, Fowles denies the existence of absolute truth, showing that past cannot be successfully retrieved. He claims that there is no one, accurate version of past events because the past depends on the narratives of historiographers, who consequently choose how to represent a certain event. Therefore, he states that there is a myriad of possibilities to choose from, which is why the past is, according to him, uncertain. Conversely, Byatt does not deny the past completely, nor considers the narrative entirely unreliable and fabricated entity. She agrees that the past depends on historiographers, but unlike Fowles, she claims that the past can be partially restored by painstaking research, which she shows in her novel. Maud and Roland's quest indeed reconstructed, until then, a clandestine love affair between Ash and Christabel, thus substantiating her claim about the partial restoration of the past. On the other hand, Rushdie demonstrates that history cannot be accurate because it is influenced by our memory, which affects our perspective, and it is therefore subjective.

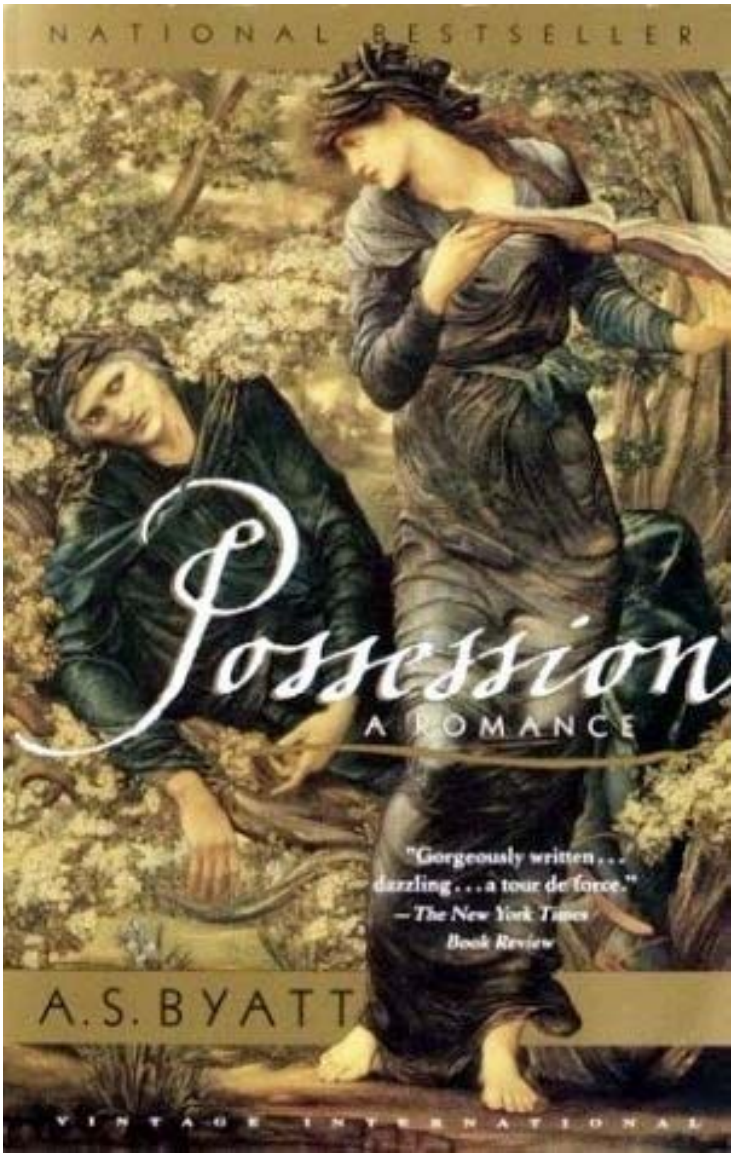
Although thematically different, *Midnight's Children* shares similarities with *Possession* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* Firstly, just as Sarah, Saleem is a marginalized character who feels alienated from society in general. Saleem was also rejected

by others, first by his parents when they did not trust him when he claimed having magical powers, then by his father after he had found out that Saleem was not his biological son, and finally by other midnight's children. All three novels perceive history as fiction; Sarah fabricated her past in order to have freedom and control over her destiny, just like Saleem, who controls not just his, but destinies of others too. Maud and Roland revealed a secret love affair between Christabel and Ash by means of old letters and journals, which also supports the claim that history is yet another narrative. Moreover, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Midnight's Children* have intrusive narrators, who on various occasions comment the plot and draw the reader in the fictional world of the novel, and consequently, affirm that the text is an artefact. In spite of being intrusive narrators, they do not give any assurance of knowing the past nor the future accurately, and make the reader aware of it.

Therefore, we can argue that all three authors draw comparisons between writing a work of fiction and writing a historical account. As we know, history has always aroused curiosity, particularly its validity of the facts. Moreover, the authors articulate that both history and literature do not regard the present nor the past accurately. In other words, they suggest that both the past and the present are reinvented and subjective, thus raising readers' awareness about the plurality of truths. Therefore, the novels explored here in light of historiographic metafiction show that the past is given a new meaning through memory and narrativization and consequently pose the following question: can we truly know the past?

8. Appendix

A.S. Byatt *Possession* - front cover of the Vintage Books edition, a painting by British Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin*



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HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN JOHN FOWLES'S *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*, A.S. BYATT'S *POSSESSION* AND SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN*: Summary and key words

This paper examines three principal characteristics of historiographic metafiction - parody, intertextuality and unreliable narrator in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* A.S. Byatt's *Possession* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. In John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* the focus is on the parody of Victorian social and literary conventions. In the analysis of A.S. Byatt's *Possession* the emphasis is put on intertextuality and the way it makes readers aware of the relationship between a text and social and cultural contexts. Analysing Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* the paper focuses on the unreliable narrator and the techniques Rushdie uses in order to show that there is more than one version of history. The paper argues that writing history is similar to writing literature as both processes are artificial constructs.

Key words: historiographic metafiction, parody, intertextuality, unreliable narrator

HISTORIOGRAFSKA METAFIKCIJA U *ŽENSKOJ FRANCUSKOG PORUČNIKA* JOHNA FOWLESA, *ZAPOSJEDANJU* A.S. BYATT I *DJECI PONOĆI* SALMANA RUSHDIEA: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Ovaj diplomski rad istražuje tri glavne karakteristike historiografske metafikcije - parodiju, intertekstualnost i nepouzdanog pripovjedača u *Ženskoj francuskog poručnika* Johna Fowlesa, *Zaposjedanju* A.S. Byatt i *Djeci ponoći* Salmana Rushdiea. U *Ženskoj francuskog poručnika* Johna Fowlesa fokus je na parodiji viktorijanskih društvenih i književnih konvencija. U analizi romana *Zaposjedanje* autorice A.S. Byatt naglasak je stavljen na intertekstualnost, te kako ona ukazuje čitateljima da postoji veza između teksta te društvenog i kulturnog konteksta. Analiza *Djece ponoći* Salmana Rushdiea usmjerena je na nepouzdanog pripovjedača te metode koje Rushdie koristi kako bi pokazao da ne postoji samo jedna verzija povijesti. U radu se tvrdi da je pisanje povijesti slično pisanju književnih djela, budući da su oba procesa umjetne tvorevine.

Ključne riječi: historiografska metafikcija, parodija, intertekstualnost, nepouzdani pripovjedač