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THE POST-POSTMODERN AESTHETICS
OF JOHN FOWLES

BY
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INTRODUCTION

To consider the relationship between postmodernism and John Fowles is a task unfortunately complicated by an inadequately defined central term. Charles Russell states that

...postmodernism is not tied solely to a single artist or movement, but defines a broad cultural phenomenon evident in the visual arts, literature, music and dance of Europe and the United States, as well as in their philosophy, criticism, linguistics, communications theory, anthropology, and the social sciences--these all generally under the particular influence of structuralism.

More specifically, David Lodge calls postmodernism "an écriture, in Barthes's sense of the word--a mode of writing shared by a significant number of writers in a given period--most plausibly in the French nouveau roman and in American fiction of the last ten or fifteen years." The extreme version of postmodernism, and consequently the one that has received the most attention, is a style of writing that Ronald Sukenick describes as the Bossa Nova:

Needless to say the Bossa Nova has no plot, no story, no character, no chronological sequence, no verisimilitude, no imitation, no allegory, no symbolism, no subject matter, no "meaning." It resists interpretation: as with Kafka's fiction, you can explain it and explain it, but it won't go away. The Bossa Nova is non-representational--it represents itself. Its main qualities are abstraction, improvisation and opacity.

If we were to accept the Bossa Nova as our definition of postmodernism, John Fowles would be among its most vehement opponents and there would be no significant relationship between them to examine. His usually "tidy narrative structures, well-rounded characters, consistent point of view, lucid prose and accurate descriptions of time and place" would
be rejected categorically by the revolutionary faction of postmodern theorists. Instead we must keep in mind the caution of John Barth, a leading American postmodernist writer, who explains that features commonly associated with the term postmodernism such as "Disjunction, simultaneity, irrationalism, anti-illusionism, self-reflexiveness, medium-as-message, political olympianism, and a moral pluralism approaching moral entropy--these are not the whole story either." Barth has admitted that "a principal activity of postmodernist critics...writing in postmodernist journals or speaking at postmodernist symposia, consists in disagreeing about what postmodernism is or ought to be, and thus about who should be admitted to the club--or clubbed into admission, depending on the critic's view of the phenomenon and of particular writers." There is a division in postmodernism which accounts for much of the disagreement about what the term means. Both David Lodge and Gerald Graff refer to two modes of postmodernism. For Lodge, they are "the radically nonrealistic fictional modes of metafiction (which destroys illusion by exposing its own structural principles) and mythopoeia (which sacrifices illusion to imagination)." Graff suggests that postmodernism has two strategies for eliminating literature's referential functions. "One is to say that literature is not about reality but about itself. Another is to say that 'reality' itself is indistinguishable from literature. One can arrange prominent literary theories on a spectrum between these complementary positions, the formalist (or 'estheticist') view and the visionary view." In the visionary view, "'reality' itself possesses order and meaning only insofar as these qualities are
imposed on it by the human imagination."^8

It is possible then to see the two aims of postmodernism as deconstructing (taking the reader backstage to show him that a work of literature is after all only a structure of words on pages) and recreating (suggesting that the imagination's power of creation can elevate the work to more than the sum of its parts).

Barth includes John Fowles in his 1980 list of writers who are currently considered to be club members, and if we look at "the whole story," we will see that Fowles shares what really is the core of postmodernist concerns—a fascination with the relationship between art and life and the act of fiction-making. In spite of his acceptance of realistic representation as a form of expression, Fowles does not rush "back into the arms of nineteenth-century middle class realism as if the first half of the twentieth century hadn't happened,"^9 but neither does he empathize with contemporary acrobatic, technical gyrations signifying silence and/or apocalypse.

It seems more accurate to consider Fowles to be a post-postmodernist whose writing includes the rejection of conventions dependent on a certain reality and the modernists' withdrawal into the self. He incorporates these traits into a kind of rehabilitated, updated humanism that, as the expression of a maturing postmodernism, attempts to explore and fill the gap between fiction and "real life," to thrive on the tension, to accept mystery as synthesis, and to envision the world holistically. The intention of this paper is to consider Fowles' aesthetic response to some of the characteristics
which have become associated with the admittedly still-foggy term, *postmodernism*, drawing for examples from Fowles' three major novels, *The Magus*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Daniel Martin*, and from his more direct evaluations of art in "The Ebony Tower" and his "self-portrait in ideas," *The Aristos*.

The large aspects of postmodernism to be considered in relationship to Fowles are the rejection and simultaneous extension of modernism, the discrediting of scientific, representative realism, the search for synthesis, the possibilities and failures of language and finally, an emerging humanism. Commentary and theories of postmodernism are taken from many sources, including Ronald Sukenick, Raymond Federman and John Barth, who can speak as both writers and theorists; George Steiner, Leslie Fiedler, Susan Sontag, Jerome Klinkowitz and Ihab Hassan, all of whom have contributed to the still-developing body of postmodern thought.

Because a thesis is by definition a proposition to be argued, I feel some obligation to make a strong assertion--either John Fowles is a postmodernist writer, or John Fowles is not a postmodernist writer. What is immediately "problematic" about such an either/or proposition is that each side can be argued convincingly by a careful process of selection of examples to support the prospective cases (and omission of those which refute them). I cannot easily dismiss the wisdom of Northrop Frye's statement that, "They think of ideas as weapons; they seek the irrefutable argument, which keeps eluding them because all arguments are theses, and all theses are half-truths implying their own
The most honest, if less bold and less anxious-to-label approach is to state and demonstrate that the writing of John Fowles shows evidence of postmodernist influence and makes uses of many of the literary devices and attitudes which have been associated with postmodernism. In comparing the aesthetics of Fowles and postmodernism, I hope to answer Fowles' question, "To what extent am I being a coward by writing inside the old tradition? To what extent am I being panicked into avant-gardism?" ("Notes," p. 90) To begin, it is necessary to consider the relationship between modernism and postmodernism.
CHAPTER 1
MODERNISM RECONSIDERED

Like the postmodernists, Fowles has found it necessary to discredit as the sole center of truth, both objective reality based on only a scientific definition of the world and forwarded by writers of representation and mimesis, and the excessive worship of subjective reality seen in romanticism and modernism. David Lodge writes of postmodern "semiotic formalism" that "it also denies the epistemological validity of empiricism and the concept of the unique autonomous self-conscious individual, on both of which the novel has usually been seen as founded." The postmodern relationship to modernism, however, is especially complex since it involves both an extension of some aspects of modernism and a rejection and even parody of others.

Before lighting out for these specific territories; however, I want to point out again that in many cases the views considered most postmodern concerning the extension of modernism are often the ones which are most extreme, most shocking, new and revolutionary. As is to be expected when any apparently novel approach to aesthetics develops, critics and pseudo-critics are anxious to have a command at the front and labels are scattered like shot from a sawed-off 10-gauge. The leading edge of any movement (perhaps necessarily) is composed of the over-zealous, and postmodernism is no exception. But as the noise of the initial blast dissipates, the voices of the softer-spoken moderates can be heard stating the same aesthetic concerns in less defensive terms. Thus, we are now faced with an unformed mass of decidedly "postmodern" characteristics, some of which seem to contradict.
or supercede others. For example, to one critic postmodernism may mean the physical-spatial confusion of words on a page, and to another it may mean a more subtle indication (perhaps by contrast) to the reader of the difficulties inherent in language. There is a huge range of means to express postmodern concerns. When Fowles attacks some of the qualities which have come to be called postmodern; therefore, he is not rejecting postmodern concerns but rather specific postmodern means which seem to him radical and impractical and, in several cases, simply unartistic.

To begin to understand postmodernism, then, it is necessary to establish the distinctions between postmodernism and modernism. David Antin says, "Clearly the sense that such a thing as a postmodern sensibility exists and should be defined is wrapped up with the conviction that what we have called 'modern' for so long is thoroughly over." 13 David Lodge says that postmodernism is a "certain kind of contemporary avant-garde art . . . [which] continues the modernist critique of traditional mimetic art, and shares the modernist commitment to innovation, but pursues these aims by methods of its own. It tries to go beyond modernism, or around it, or underneath it, and is often as critical of modernism as it is of antimodernism." 14 Additionally, from postmodern critic Leslie Fiedler we hear that

We are living, have been living for two decades--and have become acutely conscious of the fact since 1955--through the death throes of Modernism and the birth pangs of Post-Modernism. The kind of literature which had arrogated to itself the name Modern (with the presumption that it represented the ultimate advance in sensibility and form, that beyond it
newness was not possible), and whose moment of triumph lasted from a point just before World War I until just after World War II, is dead, i.e., belongs to history not actuality.

With the advent of something that belonged neither completely to modernism nor completely to realism, came the academic thrust to determine its ancestry, its roots, in the belief that knowing where it came from would help to show where post-modernism was headed, and for what reasons. Thus, the psychoanalysis of postmodernism dutifully was begun. Barth summarizes:

Anticipations of the "postmodernist literary aesthetic" have duly been traced through the great modernists of the first half of the twentieth century--T.S. Eliot, William Faulkner, André Gide, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein, Miguel Unamuno, Virginia Woolf--through their nineteenth-century predecessors--Alfred Jarry, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and E.T.A. Hoffmann--back to Laurence Sterne's *Tristam Shandy* (1767) and Miguel Cervante's *Don Quixote* (1615).

It is commonplace, Barth says, that "the rigidities and other limitations of nineteenth-century bourgeois realism, in the light of the turn-of-the-century theories and discoveries in physics, psychology, anthropology and technology, prompted or fueled the great adversary reaction called modernist art," a swinging of the pendulum back to the subjectivity of Romanticism. Just as modernism follows upon the breakdown of Romanticism's "effort to maintain a transcendent perspective," postmodernism follows upon the breakdown of modernism's deification of language and the artist.

A review of the characteristics usually asso-
associated with modernism reveals the enormous debt postmodernism owes to that earlier movement. Barth refers to Gerald Graff's catalogue of modernist traits which includes:

- the radical disruption of the linear flow of narrative;
- the frustration of conventional expectations concerning unity and coherence of plot and character and the cause-and-effect "development" thereof;
- the deployment of ironic and ambiguous juxtapositions to call into question the moral and philosophical "meaning" of literary action;
- the adoption of a tone of epistemological self-mockery aimed at the naive pretensions of bourgeois rationality;
- the opposition of inward consciousness to rational, public, objective discourse;
- and an inclination to subjective distortion to point up the evanescence of the objective social world of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. 19

Irving Howe indicates the closeness between modernism and postmodernism when he tells us that modernism approaches the limits of solipsism and that modernist sensibility has to do with apocalypse. 20 Most perceptive is his statement that "modernism can fall upon days of exhaustion, when it appears to be marking time and waiting for new avenues of release." 21 Contemporary avant-garde art ranges from Joyce and Yeats down to Robbe-Grillet, Cage and Merce Cunningham, according to Hayden White, who also links modernists and postmodernists, saying that they are comfortable with, or at least can live with, "a language of linear disjunctions rather than narrative sequences, of depersonalized space, and of definalized culminations without any need for mythic certitude that has always attended the the flowering of such a consciousness in the past." 22

Just as it is not easy to separate postmodern-
ism from modernism, it is difficult to say how much of Fowles's writing could be described more accurately as modernist rather than postmodernist. Any writer who can remark that "Being an artist is first discovering the self and then stating the self in self-chosen terms" (Aristos, p.156)\(^\text{23}\) is bound to have some ties to the modernist aesthetics. Malcolm Bradbury writes that "Fowles presumes, and in this he resembles predecessors rather than contemporaries, that the aesthetic exists inside the problem rather than at the abstract level where the writer performs his arabesques of complication and coherence and resolution."\(^\text{24}\)

In The Magus, Fowles' blend of art and life, the masques presented for Nicholas do seem to have a modernist flavor. Nicholas, after seeing a dramatization of Apollo-Artemis-Diana and man, says his mind conjured vague memories of Oscar Wilde. Echoing this, William Palmer tells us that life learns to imitate art in The Magus. "Each scene in Conchis's masque functions as an analogue for imitation in Nicholas's own action later in the novel."\(^\text{25}\)

Daniel Martin, too represents Fowles' dilemma when he says, "My contemporaries were all brought up in some degree of the nineteenth century, since the twentieth did not begin till 1945. That is why we are on the rack, forced into one of the longest and most abrupt cultural stretches in the history of mankind." (DM, p.86)\(^\text{26}\)

What could be more modernist-sounding than Fowles' apparent narcissism in his essay "Seeing Nature Whole," in which he refers to "the deepest benefit of any art, be it of making or knowing or of experiencing: which is self-expression and self-discovery," or "what is irreplaceable in any object
of art is never, in the final analysis, its technique or craft, but the personality of the artist, the expression of his or her unique and individual feeling." ("Seeing Nature Whole," p.55) 27

But this is not the whole story; Postmodernism is not only modernism extended, and Fowles is neither wholly modernist nor wholly postmodernist. To approach an understanding of the nature of the relationships, it is helpful to determine what qualities make postmodernism significantly different from modernism. Again, Gerald Graff clearly assesses the essentials:

Perceiving that the modernist's seriousness rest on admittedly arbitrary foundations, the postmodern writer treats this seriousness as an object of parody. Whereas modernists turned to art, defined as the imposition of human order upon inhuman chaos—as an antidote for what Eliot called the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history"—postmodernists conclude that, under such conceptions of art and history, art provides no more consolation than any other discredited cultural institution. Postmodernism signifies that the nightmare of history, as modernist esthetic and philosophical traditions have defined history, has overtaken modernism itself. If history lacks value, pattern, and rationally intelligible meaning, then no exertions of the shaping, ordering imagination can be anything but a refuge from truth. 28

Just as there is no question that modernism gave birth to postmodernism, there also is no way to ignore postmodernism's ungrateful abuse of its parent. Fiedler, in an essay of the death of avant-garde, delivers a hard blow, writing that "Certainly the devices which once characterized such art
(the fractured narrative line, stream-of-consciousness, insistent symbolism, ironic allusion) seem today more banal than the well-made plot, the set description, the heavy-handed morality that they were meant to displace." Wallace Martin says what postmodernism shows us "is not that 'the center cannot hold' but that there never was a center, except in Yeats's system, and never a still point, except in Eliot's imagination." Russell challenges the modernist faith in the individual artist, saying, "The heroic, if melodramatic, image of the artist, writer, or philosopher struggling to create a realm of personal or collective significance in the face of a world perceived as essentially meaningless both sums up the modernist ethic and aesthetic and ironi-

It is the parody of modernism, then, as well as of realism, that defines postmodernism. It is modernism that can no longer take itself seriously. Howe writes, "there are works in which the outer mannerisms and traits of the modern are faithfully echoed or mimicked but the animating spirit has disappeared; is that not a useful shorthand for describing much of the 'advanced' writing of the years after the Second World War." Fowles, too, expresses doubt of modernist seriousness, telling us that Daniel Martin "felt a more general irritation against their [his younger, modernist self and friends] history, their type in time. They took themselves, or their would-be moral selves, so seriously. It had indeed been summed up by the mirrors in his student room: the overwhelming
narcissism of all their generation . . . all the liberal scruples, the concern with living right and doing right, were not based on external principles, but self-obsession." (DM, p. 593)

In addition to its ridicule of the high seriousness of modernist as well as pre-modernist art, postmodernism relies upon other devices to define itself in relationship to modernism, some extending to an extreme aspects previously considered modern, and others directing counterattacks on modernist principles. The defining features which I want to discuss next—the attack on language, self-reflexiveness, and medium-as-message all are reactions, extending and/or attacking modernist aesthetics. Also, a discussion of postmodernism's peculiar relationship to modernism as it pertains to the aesthetic theory of John Fowles would not be complete without a thorough consideration of the role played by still another complex "ism"—existentialism.

Since language represented for modernism a transcendental tool, it offers one of the easiest targets for postmodernist assault. If only literature could escape from its prison cell of language, the postmodernists frequently sigh, there would be a true liberation of the art. "But surely literature is constantly straining to escape from this finite quality, surely literature is constantly struggling to say something it does not know how to say, something that cannot be said, something it does not know, something that cannot be known?" Italo Calvino writes. "The whole struggle of literature is in fact an effort to escape from the confines of language." 33 Robert
Scholes, too, expresses the frustration of the loss of faith in language. Everything used to be simple, he says, when fiction was about life and criticism was about fiction. But now we have learned "that language is tautological, if it is not nonsense, and to the extent that it is about anything, it is about itself." Indeed, I referred earlier to George Steiner's view that all evidence suggests to us that mathematics probably gives us "an image of the perceptible world truer to fact than can be derived from any structure of verbal assertion." Furthermore, Steiner writes about "certain Oriental metaphysics" such as Buddhism and Taoism which indicate that

The highest, purest reach of the contemplative act is that which has learned to leave language behind it. . . . It is only by breaking through the walls of language that visionary observance can enter the world of total and immediate understanding. Where such understanding is attained, the truth need no longer suffer the impurities and fragmentation that speech necessarily entails. It need not conform to the naive logic and linear conceptions of time implicit in syntax.

Like the convention of representation and mimesis, language is ultimately tied to Western thought and philosophy since Aristotle. This association leads some postmodernists to hint at the politically repressive nature of language, since it corresponds to that Western tradition, Jochen Gerz says in "Toward a Language of Doing," "in making of the external world a reflection of itself. That is to say that the external world is such as it is 'said' to be. In replacing it with its own interpretation and in forwarding the interests
of its own interpretation with the individual, our language mechanically assures the domination of representation over life. 

Graff, too points out that, for the radical postmodernists, the belief in a correspondence between language and external reality implies that "any time we acknowledge that an external reality exists and can be shared through common forms of language, whether we know it or not we are encouraging passive adjustment to the status quo." 

Consequently the only use of language that is free is that which points to itself as only one of many systems of meaning and modes of discourse. This is true since "meaning," as the structuralists have demonstrated and Russell tells us, "is always a question of relationships: of words within sentences; of sentences within texts; of texts within discourse and its contexts." 

"All that is possible," he says, "it seems, is to make what is transparent opaque and visible, and in the process, discover the complex nature of our use and enclosure in the languages of our society." 

Fowles is linked to radical postmodernist aesthetics in this regard by at least one critic, Peter Wolfe, who has said:

Braced by his studies in Zen, Fowles may be nearing the point where meaning and enactment fuse. If this happens, his commitment to life will express itself privately. He will have outgrown his need to write. Perhaps his small output of books indicates this auctorial silence as his aim; a major character in The Magus says that there are times when silence is a poem. 

While I suspect that Fowles would object to having his writing grouped with that of those who paradoxically seek silence as their ultimate fulfillment
as writers, it is true, nevertheless, that he expresses a deep concern with the limitations inherent in the process of creating worlds with words. Like the most revolutionary of postmodernists, he acknowledges the disturbing fact that "One cannot describe reality; only give metaphors that indicate it. All human modes of description (photographic, mathematical, and the rest, as well as literary) are metaphorical." ("Notes" p.89) Especially symptomatic of postmodernism is his realization of a desire to get over, around, under or through the barrier that language presents to separate us from the external world. Immediacy is what our age craves, he tells us, and language will not permit it. "We want nothing to stand between the object or experience now and the mind and senses now. We want the thing in itself." (Aristos, p.91)

This concern with the problematic nature of language is reflected in the experience of his central characters. Nicholas Urfe, for example, tells Conchis that when he was at Oxford he was taught "to assume that if words can't explain, nothing else is likely to." (Magus, p.107) Later describing his experience during hypnosis, he becomes the channel for Fowles to tell us:

I was having feelings that no language based on concrete physical objects, on actual feeling, can describe. I think I was aware of the metaphoricality of what I felt. I knew words were like chains, they held me back; and like walls with holes in them. Reality kept rushing through; and yet I could not get out to fully exist in it. This is interpreting what I struggled to remember feeling; the act of description taints the description. (Magus, p.239)

There is the undeniable realization that words are imprisoning, that they isolate one from the truth
of his environment, at best providing a system of meaning. Daniel Martin feels the impotence of words in his relationship with Jane. He says, "For once again, as in the distant past, they had begun not to have to communicate by words." (DM, p.499) Listening to music reminds him of its "deep intimation of other languages, meaning-systems, besides that of words; and fused his belief that it was words, linguistic modes, that mainly stood between Jane and himself. Behind what they said lay on both sides an identity, a syncretism, a same key, a thousand things beyond verbalization." (DM, p.561) Part of the problem, Fowles says, is the rigidity that language imposes on the world. "Naming things is always implicitly categorizing and therefore collecting them, attempting to own them ..." ("Seeing Nature Whole," p.51) as Charles collects and labels his precious fossils in The French Lieutenant's Woman.

An understandable reaction to the apparent betrayal by language is the postmodernists' preoccupation with self-relexiveness in their work; that is, writing is about writing. Barth explains how one writer, Borges, successfully uses this technique. "His artistic victory, if you like, is that he confronts an intellectual dead-end and employs it against itself to accomplish new human work. . . . In homelier terms, it's a matter of every moment throwing out the bath water without for a moment losing the baby." 43 Russell adds that "art which self-consciously established itself in opposition to cultural meaning systems could ultimately end by only referring to itself." 44 Like Sarah in The French Lieutenant's Woman, this postmodern fiction is characterized by "a sense of self-irony." (FLW,
To the extent that his writing is about the process of writing, then, Fowles again can be linked with the postmodernists. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is self-reflexive in Fowles' use of the author/narrator's interruptions of the narrative to discuss with the reader various devices involved in the creative process and in the actual writing of fiction. *The Magus*, too, is a dramatization of the process of creating, examining especially the extent to which a novelist (or a fiction-maker like Conchis) plays God in his manipulation of characters and events. According to one unfavorable review of the book by Bergonzi (as quoted by Peter Wolfe), "The whole novel is not much more than a highly inventive series of fantastic or cruel episodes. The novel is vitiated by its basic pointlessness, its inability to relate to anything except itself."

While in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the author/narrator directs the reader's attention to the process of creating fiction, in *The Magus*, an analogy (Conchis as the fiction-maker, playing the godgame) serves to force the reader to recognize that writing is about writing, or that his creations are about creating.

Perhaps more than either *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or *The Magus*, *Daniel Martin* is about writing. Here the reader meets a scriptwriter who is writing about writing about his life in the form of a possible novel inside an actual novel—a situation in which the scriptwriter is author, narrator and protagonist. Like *The Magus*, it is about distinguishing the fiction from the reality. "Above all he had to distinguish his real self from his putative..."
fictional one; and though his training in an adamantly third-person art and angle of vision might seem to facilitate such auto-surgery, he felt deeply unsure of it."(DM,p.414)

In the beginning, Dan's young movie-star lover tells him to write a novel, and she begins one for him, using the character named Simon Wolfe. "But you can't use your own name in a novel. Anyway, it's so square. Who'd ever go for a character called Daniel Martin?"(DM,p.18) The reader smiles. Later Jenny sends him passages which she critiques. "I've just re-read that last paragraph and it's too based on that first meeting. I make him too stony, too static."(DM,p.32) The reader is obliged to evaluate the development of her character-sketch. Then briefly, the reader meets Daniel as author. "The tiny first seed of what this book is trying to be dropped into my mind that day: a longing for a medium that would tally better with this real structure of my racial being and mind... something dense, interweaving, treating time as horizontal, like a skyline; not cramped, linear and progressive." (DM,p.332) Character Dan tells his daughter Caro he is thinking of taking a year off and going to Thorncombe--possibly to try writing a novel. Once at Thorncombe with Jane, his one true love, the novel becomes a discussion of novel-writing--a discussion of itself. Daniel asks Jane if the novel isn't a form of self-indulgence, counting as "ego-perpetuating bourgeois decadence," to which she replies, "I should have thought that depends on the end-product." (DM,p.390) The ultimate comment on the state in which literature finds itself also is questioned by Fowles through Daniel, who wonders,"It's whether I could rival the
supreme honesty of a novel I saw in California recently. It was called The Life and Times of Jonathan Doe. . . . It consisted of a title page and two hundred blank sheets. All rather nicely bound." (DM, p. 390)

As the reader nears the end of Daniel's story, he is presented with Daniel the author writing about Daniel the character's fears of becoming Daniel the author:

He suddenly saw the proposed novel as a pipe dream, one more yearning for the impossible.

The terror of the task: that making of a world, alone, unguided, now mocked, like some distant mountain peak, mediocrity in his dressing-gown. He could never do it. Never mind that what he felt by all novelists, all artists, at the beginning of creation—that indeed not feeling the terror was the worst possible augury for the enterprise. . . . (DM, p. 552)

But of course the reader knows, since he is reading the novel, that somehow Daniel (and Fowles) managed to pull it off after all—a novel about writing a novel.

To find other indications of self-reflexiveness in Fowles, one only needs to look for the most appropriate image of self-reflexiveness—the mirror. Ricardou refers to its use in "New Fiction":

That which is commonly unique (a character, an event) suffers the dislocation of contradictory variants; that which is ordinarily diverse (several characters, several events) sustains the assimilation of strange resemblances. The fiction excludes perfect singularity as well as absolute plurality. In other words, it is ubiquitously invested with mirrors. Deforming mirrors to dislocate the unique; "forming" mirrors to assimilate the diverse.

The novel is thus no longer a mirror
taken out for a walk; it is the result of internal mirrors ubiquitously at work within the fiction itself. It is no longer representation, but self-representation.\textsuperscript{47}

Although Fowles does not use the mirror to the extent which Ricardou would probably recommend, he is described by Palmer as "a novelist writing into a mirror so that each of his works reflects back upon his own mind and vision."\textsuperscript{48} and Fowles himself writes in \textit{The Aristos} that the pleasure that the artist gets from creating is "the expression of self; by seeing the self, and all the selves of the whole self, in the mirror of what the self has created." (\textit{Aristos}, p.154)

Mirrors are everywhere in Fowles' fiction. Places are mirrors as in \textit{The Magus}: "Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn:" (\textit{Magus}, p.99) And in "The Ebony Tower": "Coët had been a mirror, and the existence he was returning to sat mercilessly reflected and dissected in its surface. . . ." (\textit{ET}, p.101)\textsuperscript{49} In \textit{The French Lieutenant's Woman}, Charles, who like fiction is in all ways undergoing self-examination, is staring repeatedly at himself in the mirror. Consider the following few examples:

\begin{itemize}
  \item "Back in his rooms at the White Lion after lunch Charles stared at his face in the mirror." He feels "a general sentiment of dislocated purpose." (\textit{FLW}, p.15)
  \item Charles interrogates "his good-looking face in the mirror." (\textit{FLW}, p.27)
  \item "He spun around and clutched his temples; then went into his bedroom and peered at his face in the mirror." (\textit{FLW}, p.167)
  \item "He still felt, as he had told Sarah, a stranger to himself; but now it was with a
kind of awed pleasure that he stared at his face in the mirror." (FLW, p.291)

-- "He caught sight of himself in a mirror; and the man in the mirror, Charles in another world, seemed the truer self. The one in the room was what she said, and imposter, an observed other." (FLW, p.299)

In Daniel Martin it is Daniel who is undergoing self-examination as well as the novel form itself. Daniel makes fun of his younger modernist self whose room at Oxford "had at least fifteen mirrors on its walls" revealing "a highly evolved (if not painfully out-of-hand) narcissism." (DM, p.52) The room, and Daniel had been lampooned in an undergraduate magazine in which "Daniel was dubbed Mr. Specula Speculans, 'who died of shock on accidently looking into a mirror without its glass and thereby discovering a true figure of his talents in place of the exquisite lineaments of his face.'" (DM, p.52) Fowles came closer to telling the reader what he means by his use of mirrors when an older Daniel reflects, "Perhaps that ancient gibe about him, Mr. Specula Speculans, had not been quite fair: a love of mirrors may appear to be only too literally prima facie evidence of narcissism, but it can also be symbolic of an attempt to see oneself as others see one--to escape the first person, and become one's own third." (DM, p.62) In this endeavor, Daniel feels attracted to the company of women. "He was arguably not even looking for women in all this, but collecting mirrors still; surfaces before which he could make himself naked--or at any rate more naked than he could before other men--and see himself reflected." (DM, p.239) Fowles connects this directly to art when he writes for Daniel, "As every Marxist critic has pointed out, this withdraw-
al from outer fact into inner fantasy is anti-social and inherently selfish. Every artist lives in an equivalent of my old Oxford room, with its countless mirrors. . . ." (DM, pp. 274-75)

But is this right?, Fowles asks. Is it the place of art (literature in particular) to be entirely self-examining, any more than it is right for a person to be entirely self-absorbed? Some of the work of more radical postmodernists such as Thomas Pynchon of V. and Richard Brautigan of Trout Fishing in America suggest that literature has nowhere to go but to turn inward upon itself and examine the art of fiction-making, its surfaces and its medium. That Fowles is self-examining, that he is concerned with the art of fiction-making in his writing, places him among postmodernists. But there is a difference. Although he shares these concerns, he rejects the view that the medium is the message or that the surface is superior to content. It is this idea that medium is message that Fowles finds most objectionable of the postmodern aesthetic theory.

Hassan writes, for example, that in eschewing ideology, protest and analysis, postmodernism "cultivates a certain flatness" and Sontag supports this view, explaining that, "Ideally, it is possible to elude the interpreters in another way, by making works of art whose surface is so unified and clean, whose momentum is so rapid, whose address is so direct that the work can be . . . just what it is." Addressing his fellow postmodernists, similarly, Sukenick says, " . . . we should direct our attention to the surface of a work, and such techniques as graphics and typographical variations, in calling the reader's attention to
the technological reality of the book, are useful in keeping his mind on that surface instead of undermining it with profundities. The truth of the page is on top of it, not underneath or over at the library."\(^52\) In this type of fiction, the medium becomes dominant over the story. Kostelanetz says, "A passion for the medium itself and visions of its possible uses are by now the primary reasons for creating fictions; everything else, such as narrative, for instance, is inevitably secondary."\(^53\)

Fowles believes this is going to far. Yes, he would say, it is necessary to present the reader with the problems a writer faces in creating fictions, in order to demonstrate that they are fictions after all, but it is not mandatory that he accept the unconditional sacrifice of message to medium. It is his very direct criticism of this technique which separates him most from radical postmodern aesthetics. In The Aristos, for example, he worries about "the emergence of style as the principal gauge of artists' worth. Content has never seemed less important; and we may see the history of the arts since the Renaissance (the last period in which content was at least conceded equal status) as the slow but now almost total triumph of the means of expression over the thing expressed." (Aristos, p.192) Furthermore, he says, "We thus arrive at a situation in which all experiment is considered admirable (and the discovery of new techniques and materials is an act of genius itself, regardless of the fact that all true genius has been driven to such discoveries by the need to express some new content) and all craftsmanship 'academic' and more or less despicable." (Aristos, p.201) In "Seeing Nature Whole" he echoes his own
earlier view in saying, "Obscurity, the opportu-

nity a work of art gives for professional ex-

plainers to show their skill, has become almost an 
aesthetic virtue..."(Seeing Nature Whole", p.56)

Fowles equates this current fascination with 
medium and surface with eighteenth-century rococo:

... the style was characterized by 
great facility, a desire to charm the 
bored and jaded palate, to amuse by dec-
oration rather than by content--indeed 
serious content was eschewed. We see 
all these old tricks writ new in our 
modern arts, with their brilliantly point-
less dialogues, their vivid descriptions 
of things not worth describing, their 
elegant vacuity, their fascination with 
the synthetic and their distaste for the 
natural. (Aristos, p.200)

If these seem to be harsh words from a man who shares 
many of the fundamental concerns of the writers he 
attacks, consider this even bolder attack:

It is this unnatural role that accounts 
for a particularly common manifestation 
of guilty conscience among many so-called 
avant-garde artists; the attempt to suppress 
the creator from the creation, to reduce 
the artefact to the status of a game with 
as few rules as possible. Paintings where 
the colours and the shapes and the textures 
are a matter of hazard; music where the 
amount of improvisation demanded of the 
players reduces the composer to a cipher; 

novels and poems where the arrangement of 
words or pages is purely fortuitous. The 
scientific basis for this aleatory art is 
perhaps the famous, and famously misunder-
stood, principle of indeterminacy; and it 
also springs from a totally mistaken notion 
that the absence of an intervening, in our 
everyday sense of intervening, God means 
that existence is meaningless. Such art 
is, though apparently self-effacing, 
absurdly arrogant. (Aristos, p.195)

Fowles repeats his concern in Daniel Martin, 
in his struggle with the search for what is legiti-
mate art. He questions the new view which holds
that "The artist was not in pursuit of unfair political or economic power, but simply of his freedom to create--and the question was really whether that freedom is compatible with such deference to a received idea of the age: that only a tragic, absurdist, black-comic view (with even the agnosticism of the 'open' ending suspect) of human destiny could be counted truly representative and 'serious.' (DM,p.403)

Like Fowles, Daniel also worries about the effect this prevailing view of art has had on him, and on two whole generations. In discussing "the selfish present" he says people have gone "from brain-washed patriots to a population of inturned selves" and that

All that my generation and the one it sired have ever cared a damn about is personal destiny; all other destinies have become blinds. This may be good, I no longer know; but the enormous superstructure of hypocrisy and the clouds of double-talk emitted in the (still incomplete) process must make us stink in the nostrils of history. (DM,p.157)

Fowles summons the wisdom of Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks in the opening of Daniel Martin for a partial explanation. "'The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears.'" (DM,n.pag.)

His most direct confrontation with both representative art and the excesses of modernism which some postmodernists carry to its furthest extremes is in one of Fowles' short stories, "The Ebony Tower." The old-fashioned realism and attitudes of an aging painter, Henry Breasley, are pitted against the new theories and devices of a
young art critic and painter of abstracts, David Williams, who is visiting the old man to research a review of his work. Fowles is hard on Williams and the art he represents, but at the same time he shows Breasley to be a bit foolish too. The two artists (Breasley usually drunk) engage in debates about the function of art, mediated by Diane alias "the Mouse," one of the two young women living with the ex-patriot Breasley at his estate in France. Williams is described as "a fully abstract artist in the common sense of the adjective (a color painter, in the current jargon) . . . . His paintings had a technical precision, a sound architectonic quality inherited from his parents' predilections, and a marked subtlety of tone. To put it crudely, they went well on walls that had to be lived with." ("E.T.",p.14) Breasley, at the other extreme, calls Picasso "pick-arsehole" ("E.T.", p.25) and claims that "the bloody bomb" would be better than "Jackson Bollock." ("E.T.",p.44) Fowles is making fun of Breasley, not siding with him, on this issue since in The Aristos he describes his own view of Picasso as one of "two of the greatest and certainly the most characteristic, Geniuses of our age."(Aristos,p.203) (The other is Stravinsky.) Williams tries unsuccessfully to persuade Breasley at first that, "Abstract painting is no longer avant-garde. And isn't the best propaganda for humanism based on the freedom to create as you like?"("E.T.",p.40)

What Fowles hates most about form-over-content art is that it is riskless, and safe. In its total rejection of realism it refuses all challenge, all comparison. At the end of "The Ebony Tower" Williams recognizes that, as crazy as old Breasley
is, he is closer to the truth about art than he, Williams, will ever be:

He had a dreadful vision of being in a dead-end born into a period of art history future ages would dismiss as a desert. . . . Art had always gone in waves. Who knew if the late twentieth century might not be one of its most cavernous troughs? He knew the old man's answer: it was. Or it was unless you fought bloody tooth and fucking nail against some of its most cherished values and supposed victories.

Perhaps abstraction, the very word, gave the game away. You did not want how you lived to be reflected in your painting; or because it was so compromised, so settled-for-the-safe, you could only try to camouflage its hollow reality under craftsmanship and good taste. Geometry. Safety hid nothingness. . . . It was not just his own brand of abstraction that was at fault, but the whole headlong postwar chain, abstract expressionism, neoprimitivism, Op Art and pop art, conceptualism, photorealism . . . il faut couper la racine, all right. But such rootlessness, orbiting in frozen outer space, cannot have been meant. They were like lemmings, at the mercy of a suicidal drive, seeking Lebensraum in an arctic sea, in a bottomless night, blind to everything but their own illusion. ("E.T.", pp. 102-103)

What Fowles is saying in "The Ebony Tower" is very simple—he will not go along with the postwar need to throw away all that has preceded it in art; but at the same time, he agrees with the postmodernists that there is much in strict realism that is no longer relevant to a postwar world.

What Fowles wants is a middle road, he wants the best of both and rejects what he feels is the worst of both. He fully intends to fight "bloody tooth and fucking nail" against some of the postwar "cherished values and supposed victories," and he
complains that too many artists, in their emphasis on unique style at the expense of content, are implying that aesthetics is an either/or selection. "Genius will satisfy both requirements." (Aristos, p. 50)

Perhaps an examination of Fowles' brand of existentialism and the relationship between existentialism and postmodernism can explain some of Fowles' antagonism towards art that has turned completely inward. Admittedly "existentialism" is almost as difficult a term to work with as "postmodernism," and I do not intend to tackle any sort of definition of existentialism but rather to examine Fowles' aesthetics in connection with such already-established existential themes as absurdity, choice, freedom and accompanying terror, the role of morality, and the emphasis on the present tense, the now, the process in order to understand what Fowles shares with postmodernists in this regard, and how he differs.

Existentialism has been connected directly to modernism in the past. Howe explains that "The idea of art as a sanctuary from the emptying-out of life is intrinsic to modernism: It is an idea strong in Nietzsche, for whom the death of God is neither novelty nor scandal but simply a given fact. The resulting disvaluation of values and the sense of bleakness which follows, Nietzsche calls nihilism." In modernism, sincerity takes the place of objectivity in a search for the authentic response. "Sincerity of feeling and exact faithfulness of language—which often means a language of fragments, violence, and exasperation—becomes a ruling passion." The problem of course for the postmodernists is that this refuge in sincere
art and strength in language simply does not work. It is no more right than any other theory. Martin explains:

The postmodern poet cannot accept as a starting point the elaborate synthesis of self, reality and language in the works of his predecessors. They seem curiously detached from reality itself. They are self-contained, neither affecting nor affected by the outer world. The postmodern poet is here conceived as one who, recognizing the self as inescapable and reality as independent of his will, does not attempt to subsume them in a poetically constituted unity. Recreating moments of consciousness, he exemplifies the process of existence in the structure of his art without attempting to state its meaning.\textsuperscript{56}

The postmodernist, Martin says, is like Narcissus trying to escape his own reflection by plunging into the water. "Every interpretation of reality becomes subject to reinterpretation."\textsuperscript{57}

Hassan writes that "both existentialism and Aliterature reveal a certain rage for concreteness. If the writers of the period share any tendencies, they are these: a phenomenological awareness of existence, a sense of its contingency, a feeling of particularity, discreteness and discontinuity in words and things."\textsuperscript{58}

Barth connects existential views to postmodern writing in discussing Borges and Beckett, saying that the link is their concern with "felt ultimacies" and that their work "in separate ways reflects and deals with ultimacy, both technically and thematically."\textsuperscript{59} Lodge also refers to Beckett as a link, when he writes:

It would be quite false to suggest that all postmodernist writers share
Beckett's particular philosophical preoccupations and obsessions. But the general idea of the world resisting the compulsive attempts of the human consciousness to interpret it, of the human predicament being in some sense "absurd," does underlie a good deal of postmodernist writing.

The important distinction, according to Hassan is that "With few exceptions--Nausea, The Stranger, and The Fall, perhaps--Existentialism tends to express radical thought in conventional literary forms. Its ambitions are Promethean, didactic, or political; its judgment weighs on the language of art. . . By contrast the literature that follows seems neutral, self-effasive." In spite of the difference Hassan mentions, it seems fair to say nevertheless that postmodernism owes a great deal to existentialism in its probing of the nature of an inherently insignificant world and a nihilistic response. Consider, for example, the inquiry of Todd Andrews in Barth's The Floating Opera:

I Nothing has intrinsic value.
II The reasons for which people attribute value to things are always ultimately irrational.
III There is, therefore, no ultimate "reason" for valuing anything.
IV Living is action. There's no final reason for action.
V There's no final reason for living (or for suicide).

Fowles gives full recognition to his own existential influences: his writing holds to existentialism (especially that of the French existentialists) as a philosophical base whereas postmodernists are less sure that any base is possible. Existentialism seems to give the ideal answer to twentieth-century uncertainty for Fowles, since it is "a theory of relativity among theories of absolute
truth." (Aristos, p.123) His existentialism is a hangover from modernist longings for authenticity and sincerity, and writing, he tells us, is part of his existentialist view of life. 63 In an interview Fowles says;

I think existentialism is going to infiltrate all our arts because its ideas are slowly affecting society as a whole. . . . Your life is harried by constant anxieties, fears of things, nauseas, hatreds of things. Life is a battle to keep balance on a tightrope. To live authentically is not giving in to the anxieties, not running from the nauseas, but solving them in some way. This giving of a solution is the wonderful thing about existentialism, and why I believe it will take the place of the old, dogmatic religions. It allows you to face reality and act creatively in terms of your own powers and your own situation. It's the great individualist philosophy, the twentieth-century individual's answer to the evil pressures of both capitalism and communism.

"Fowles is aware," Palmer writes, "of what can be called the existential imperative: modern man's attempt to establish a personal identity in a world hostile to the individual self." 65 Fowles himself openly admits to existential themes in all his novels. "My two previous novels [The Collector and The Magus] were both based on more or less disguised existential premises. I want this one [The French Lieutenant's Woman] to be no exception; and so I am trying to show an existential awareness before it was chronologically possible." ("Notes", p.90)

The Victorian age provides a perfect contrasting context in which to place a developing existential character since as Fowles tells us in The French Lieutenant's Woman.
In spite of Hegel, the Victorians were not a dialectically minded age; they did not think naturally in opposites, of positive and negative as aspects of the same whole. Paradoxes troubled rather than pleased them. They were not the people for existential moments, but for chains of cause and effect; for positive all-explaining theories, carefully studied and studiously applied. (FLW, p. 197)

Sarah is Fowles' existential woman before her time and Charles is a Victorian gentleman who is faced with existential questions for the first time. He is attracted to and confused by those qualities of Sarah which set her apart from the rest of the age. Fowles establishes this in the opening scene, where "Just such a man, an existentialist before his time, walks down the quay and sees that mysterious back, feminine, silent, also existentialist, turned to the horizon." ("Notes," p.90) Charles, in his initial role, is shown to have adjusted to his situation by practicing a version of Darwin's "cryptic coloration, survival by learning to blend with one's surroundings--with the unquestioned assumptions of one's age or social caste."...Very few Victorians chose to question the virtue of such cryptic coloration; but there was that in Sarah's look which did. Though direct, it was a timid look. Yet behind it lay a very modern phrase: Come clean, Charles, come clean." (FLW, pp.118-19)

One of the essential ingredients of existentialism is its emphasis on decision-making--on choice--in the face of uncertainty. Postmodernist writing reflects this quality too, as David Lodge notices. "The difficulty for the reader of postmodernist writing is not so much a matter of
obscurity (which might be cleared up) as of uncertainty, which is endemic, and manifests itself on the level of narrative rather than style. Stern in *Liberations* speaks of the inevitability of making choices when faced with this uncertainty:

> . . . the issue of choices: of the will when the back is to the wall, at the moment when the mystery of the body—its pleasure, pain and survival—is heightened to an absolute value. Choice under such circumstances takes on shades that neither psychiatrist nor clergymen can handle. When total control touches our rockbottom choices: life, death (and, of course, this has taken place not only in concentration camps), then a qualitative change has taken place—and perhaps a revolution in our sense of our own humanity is in the making or should be.

Often the form that the concern with choice takes is that of an effort on the part of the writer to indicate the necessity of the reader's taking an active role in the creation of the work, and thus being obliged to make choices which will affect the outcome of the work. Federman suggests that "All the rules and principles of printing and bookmaking must be forced to change as a result of the changes in the writing (or the telling) of a story in order to give the reader a sense of free participation in the writing/reading process, in order to give the reader an element of choice (active choice) in the ordering of the discourse and the discovery of its meaning."

According to Graff, this particular emphasis on choice in postmodernist writing is based on the notion that societies do not abide by rules which are, by some preestablished standard, normative. "Rather, societies choose to regard certain
rules as normative, and these rules then become established as such. This reasoning refers normative judgments to what we now call an 'existential' act of choice." The problem with this type of thinking, Graff asserts, is that "it begs the question of how this choice is made. On what basis does society choose? . . . The notion that choices determine norms rather than obey them does away with the idea that there are certain norms that ought to be chosen by societies and thus precipitates a radical cultural relativism." 69 The postmodernists argue that "if you are looking for some kind of objective validity in your interpretations, you are probably longing nostalgically for a theocratic authority to relieve you of the anxiety of choice." 70 However, forcing all choices upon the reader is impossible since, in spite of the fact that a text necessarily must be interpreted by the reader, "it is misleading to suppose that this activity of construction depends on the reader's choice, for it is itself controlled by the text." 71

Whatever the sociological origins of the fascination with choice, it is clear that Fowles, as an existentialist, is impressed by its implications. Wolfe writes, "Fowles's existentialism, like most other kinds, inheres in choice--the ability to make unscientific judgments and to know right from wrong." 72 Fowles' own remark in The Aristos that "We build towards nothing; we build," (Aristos, p.19) indicates that the predicament of man is that he is a creator who must create, never knowing why, in the midst of vast uncertainty about reality and existence. Religion cannot help him choose since " ... permanent com-
mitment to religious or political dogma (so-called Catholic and Communist existentialism) is fundamentally unexistentialist; an existentialist has by his belief to judge every situation on its merits, to assess his motives anew before every situation, and only then to choose."

(Aristos, p.122)

The anxiety of course is that one can never know for sure whether he has made the right choice; and any choice means a sacrifice of some other possible option. It is a kind of death, a limitation, to choose. Fowles says in an essay, "But even the most 'unreadable' woods and forests are in fact subtler than any conceivable fiction, which can never represent the actual multiplicity of choice of paths in a wood, but only one particular path through it. .. . Behind every path and every form of expression one does finally choose lie the ghosts of all those that one did not." ("Seeing Nature Whole,"p.62) In "The Ebony Tower" Diane tells David, "Just the thought of leaving my little forest womb. Somehow here, everything remains possible. I'm just scared of making a decision: Either way." ("E.T."p.84)

Already mentioned as a strong statement of existentialism, The French Lieutenant's Woman is permeated by the importance of choice. Sarah is an existential woman by choice, even though she would not know the meaning of the word "existential." Rackham writes that Sarah, "... in the best existential manner, has created a new self by her own choice, an authentic self, one outside the recognition of decent people and freed from their petty morals and conventions." The most remarkable thing about her is that she chose to follow
the French Lieutenant and she chose to lead people to believe that she is a defiled woman. She recognizes that choices are things which define her, and her situation as an outcast is not an unfortunate accident. She tells Charles (falsely) that "I gave myself to him... So I am a doubly dishonored woman. By circumstance. And by choice." (FLW, p.142)

Charles, too, is forced to make a choice that will define his life. He does not realize the full implications of the choices he makes but he begins to understand that he must make the choices anyway; Sarah presents him with the necessity. Her words and actions torment him:

But above all it seemed to set Charles a choice; and while one part of him hated having to choose, we come near the secret of his state on that journey west when we know that another part of him felt intolerably excited by the proximity of the moment of choice. He had not the benefit of existentialist terminology; but 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. (FLW, p.267)

Also in The French Lieutenant's Woman, the reader involvement with the narrative is an example of Fowles' interest in the implications of choice and the role it plays in fiction-making. The offer of three endings, from which the reader can choose one to suit, is characteristic of the meeting of postmodernism and existentialism in Fowles' fiction.

The Magus, too, is a fictional experimentation in the existential act of choice. Ralph Berets refers to "the central purpose of the whole masque" in The Magus as Conchis's illustrating for Nicholas
"that man's whole struggle is concerned with the annunciation of personal freedom and individual choice even in the face of death." As a young man and mayor of an island village, Conchis is put in the position of being able to save seventy nine villagers if he murders two guerrillas. The German colonel tells him that the villagers will be sent to a labour camp rather than shot if Conchis will "carry out in front of them the execution of the two murderers." (Magus, p.428) He is given thirty seconds to make his decision. Conchis stares at one of the guerrillas and realizes, "He was the final right to deny. To be free to choose. . . . He was something that passed beyond morality but sprang out of the very essence of things—that comprehended all, the freedom to do all, and stood against only one thing—the prohibition not to do all.'" Conchis tells Nicholas that at that moment he saw that he was the only person left in the square who had the freedom left to choose, "and that annunciation and defense of that freedom was more important than common sense, self-preservation, yes, than my own life, than the lives of the eighty hostages." (Magus, p.434)

Nicholas must reinact the confrontation with choice many time in The Magus. One instance, for example, occurs when he is placed into a masque in which he is the judge of all the characters who have deceived him. Lily, who has led him falsely to believe that she loves him, is handcuffed to a flogging frame and Nicholas is given a whip to pass judgment. He chooses not to use the whip.

If so much depends on choice, then it is implicit according to Fowles' existentialism, that all choice is free choice, that every individual
is completely and unconditionally free—a situation which, in its implication of a godless world, is ultimately terrifying. Postmodern writers, influenced by this thought, are much involved with this idea of freedom and all its consequences. The interest is revealed in frequent themes of death and nihilism and in the very postmodern move toward silence. Hassan writes, "Silence de-realizes the world. It encourages the metamorphosis of appearance and reality, the perpetual fusion and confusion of idealities, till nothing—or so it seems—remains."75

Fowles writes little about death and his work does not focus on nihilism76 as a theme. Instead, he recognizes the terror that man feels when faced with a loss of meaning and stresses the importance of freedom. He observes that, "We all live in two worlds: the old comfortable man-centered world of absolutes and the harsh real world of relatives. The latter, the relativity reality, terrifies us; and isolates and dwarfs us all." (Aristos,p.39) He suspects that what he calls "the nemo," "the state of being nobody—'nobodiness,'" (Aristos,p.47) is responsible for much of man's terror. "The nemo is a man's sense of his own futility and emphemerality; of his relativity, his comparativeness; of his virtual nothingness." (Aristos,p.49) The fact is, Fowles says, "We shall never know finally why we are; why anything is, or needs to be. All our science, all our art, the whole vast edifice of matter, has its foundations in this meaninglessness; and the only assumptions we can make about it are that it is both necessary and sympathetic to the continuing existence of matter." (Aristos,p.26)
What makes Fowles similar to postmodernists in his existentialism is the fact that, as Rackham notes, "Fowles insists upon an existential world, and yet paradoxically the most obvious theme throughout his work, whether spoken or unspoken, is that existentialism is no more a key to this world than Freudianism or Marxism. Any formal philosophical construct or intellectualized approach is misleading because it is always an abstraction." What Fowles says is that since existentialism refers to the acceptance of the condition that we do not know the meaning of life, or if there is any meaning at all, it is the only honest philosophy. After all, he believes, it is foolish to accept by some arbitrary leap of faith a particular explanation of existence:

Because (it is said) by an empirical human definition of what constitutes knowing I cannot know anything finally, I must leap to some state that does permit me to know anything finally—a state of certainty "above" or "beyond" attainment by empirical or rational means. But this is as if, finding myself in doubt and in darkness, I should decide, instead of cautiously feeling my way forward, to leap; not only to leap, to leap desperately; and not only to leap desperately, but into the darkest part of the surrounding darkness. (Aristos, p. 104)

Perhaps we really are better off not knowing, Fowles says, since the question of existence seems to give us energy, to give us life. He believes that this great mystery is what gives meaning to us and that even "If there had been a creator, his second act would have been to disappear" (Aristos, p.19) so as not to deprive us of the freedom. In other words, "the function of death is to put tension into life." (Aristos, p.31) and, "We go on living,
in the final analysis, because we do not know why we are here to live. Unknowing, or hazard, is as vital to man as water." (Aristos, p.27) The real terror is not in the nothingness but in man's unnecessary fear of it. Freedom becomes a necessary condition which must be preserved at all costs.

In The Magus, for example, Nicholas appears to Conchis who is manipulating the masques: "'I'd enjoy it all more if I knew what it meant.'" Conchis replies sagely, "'My dear Nicholas, man has been saying what you have just said for the last ten thousand years. And the one common feature of all the gods he has said it to is that not one of them has ever returned an answer.'" (Magus, p.185) Julie, too, tells Nick, "'I think God must be very intelligent to be so much more intelligent than I am. To give me no clues. No certainties. No sights. No reasons. No motives. If I prayed, I'd ask God never to reveal Himself to me. Because if He did I should know that He was not God. But a liar.'" (Magus, p.296)

There is a tale of a young Prince in The Magus which Berets convincingly interprets as a suggestion by Fowles "that when confronted by the reality of death as the only truth, man will choose illusion if for no other reason than to postpone the inevitable. The Prince of the tale, like Nicholas in the novel, chooses to believe in the imaginary constructs of his century's myths, rather than confront the reality which he is supposedly seeking. The reality, if it is to be faced, leads only to the conclusion that death negates all of the illusions that man imposes on his experiences to make them meaningful." 78

Conchis and his crew carry out the what Fowles
has deemed the proper role of God by leaving Nicholas in the end of The Magus; they leave him wondering whether or not they ever existed. "It was logical, the perfect climax to the godgame. They had absconded, and we were alone. I was so sure, and yet . . . after so much, how could I be perfectly sure? How could they be so cold, so inhuman—so incurious. So load the dice and yet leave the game?" (Magus, p. 655) Nicholas is a free man.

In The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles is even more explicit in his view of freedom since he can speak directly to the reader:

In other words, to be free myself, I must give him [Charles], and Tina, and Sarah, even the abominable Mrs. Poulteney, their freedom as well. There is only one good definition of God; the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist.

. . . The novelist is still a god, since he creates (and not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely); what has changed is that we are no longer the gods of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing; but in the new theological image, with freedom our first principle, not authority. (FLW, p. 82)

Fowles, like the postmodern writers, would like to free the story and its characters from the author-god but he knows that it is impossible to create a work and then say that it is entirely created by the reader. Since the author presents the text, like it or not he contributes to its interpretation.

Sarah, as the embodiment of existentialism for Fowles, represents to Charles "the pure essence of cruel but necessary (if we are to survive—and yes, still today) freedom." (FLW, p. 287) In
his confusion, Charles visits a church where he enters into a sort of dialogue "between his better and his worse self—or perhaps between him and that spread eagled figure in the shadows at the church's end" and he is told "You know your choice. You stay in prison, what your time calls duty, honor, self-respect, and you are comfortably safe. Or you are free and crucified." (FLW, pp.282-84) Sarah demands her freedom and she gives Charles his in the ending preferred by Fowles.

If the age of Charles in Britain with its rigid conventions is unfree, the society that best represents freedom for Fowles is America:

> What the experience of America, perhaps in particular the America of that time, had given him—or given him back—was a kind of faith in freedom; the determination he saw around him, however unhappy its immediate consequences, to master a national destiny had a liberating rather than a depressing effect. (FLW, p.341)

Sarah reminds Charles of American women when he finds her in London. She comes out to meet him dressed "in the full uniform of the New Woman, flagrantly rejecting all formal contemporary notions of female fashion." It is this "electric and bohemian apparition" that makes Charles think of America.

Fowles continues his campaign for freedom in Daniel Martin, in which we find the repeated theme of a godless world and the spirit of Beckett. Anthony tells Dan that "One of my students a year or two ago informed me that the twentieth century was like realizing we're all actors in a bad comedy at precisely the same moment as we realize that no one wrote it, no one is watching it, and that the only other theater
in town is the graveyard" \( (DM, p. 181) \) This is precisely the situation in which Nicholas finds himself at the end of *The Magus*.

Daniel also feels a sense of loneliness and thinks of Beckett when he sees an old man, "a nocturnal tramp," wandering along the street below his window:

> There was something obscurely comic about him . . . and something Victorian, anachronistic, almost timeless. He was both very real and, under the street-lights, on the empty stage of the night, theatrical. Beckett again, and waiting for Godot. \( (DM, p. 229) \)

The same timelessness is evoked again when Dan and Jane are in Palmyra at the Hotel Zenobia. "The whole room was like a stage set eternally without a playwright." \( (DM, p. 584) \) Later, as they sit on the couch in the main room waiting for dinner, a room in which there is "a great silence, a formidable aura of waiting," Jane comments that it reminds her of "'one of those time-warp plays.'" \( (DM, p. 585) \)

One aspect of freedom that Fowles covers more in *Daniel Martin* than in his other novels is the question of individual freedom versus the communal welfare of the society:

> His was the most familiar of all twentieth-century dilemmas, of course: that of the man required to pay in terms of personal freedom for the contempt he felt at the abuse of social freedom--and unable to do it. It was like being caught between two absurd propositions: between "Better dead than Red" and "Any freedom is better than no freedom"; between the sickness of fear and the sickness of compromise. One feels a pervasive cancer at the heart of one's world; but still prefers it to the surgical intervention that
must extirpate the attacked central organ, freedom, as well as the cancer. (DM, p. 261)

During their visit to Egypt, Dan and Jane meet a German professor with whom Dan has a discussion on the social consequences of freedom. The Professor says a German cannot imagine freedom without rules. "'It is in our philosophers. In Kant, in Marx. In Bach. Goethe. For us, all freedom is no freedom.'" Dan replies that his type of freedom, though, is mostly an illusion.

The Professor says, "'That is the true curtain between East and West. In my opinion. We sacrifice some of our freedom to have order—our leaders would claim social justice, equality, all the rest. While you sacrifice some of your order to have freedom. What you call natural justice, the individual rights of man.'" (DM, pp. 522-23)

In spite of all intelligently presented opinions to the contrary, Dan clings to his special conviction—"that freedom, especially the freedom to know oneself, was the driving force of human evolution; whatever else the sacrifice, it must not be of complexity of feeling; and its expression, since that was where, in social terms, the fundamental magic (or chink in the door) of mutation inside the nucleic-acid helix took place." (DM, p. 526)

However: individual, however, self-fulfilling, and self-nourishing freedom may be; Fowles is the first to say, 'love is a way to achieve it. Daniel realizes that: 'Love might be a prison; but it was also a profound freedom.' (DM, p. 572) Love can provide an answer to the despair of a godless existence.
In addition to his interest in choice and freedom, Fowles also shows an existentialist concern with morality. In a godless world, is there any such thing as morality? Nietzsche answers this question, Howe says, by declaring that once man ceases to believe in God and immortality, he becomes fully responsible for everything alive. "And thus for Nietzsche, as later for the existentialists, a confrontation with the nihilist void becomes the major premise of human recovery." 

Some postmodernists, too, have found a way to incorporate morality into their view of life and art, without compromising their rejection of traditional art. Sontag says that there is an historic "Western confusion about the relation between art and morality, the aesthetic and the ethical." She believes that art can be connected to morality not in the sense of having a moral lesson to teach but by saying that "The moral pleasure in art as well as the moral service that art performs, consists in the intelligent gratification of consciousness." In other words, she explains, art performs the moral task of nourishing our capacity for moral choice "because the qualities which are intrinsic to the aesthetic experience (disinterestedness, contemplativeness, attentiveness, the awakening of the feeling) and to the aesthetic object (grace, intelligence, expressiveness, energy, sensuousness) are also fundamental constituents of a moral response to life." It is no longer necessary she believes, to observe any contrast "between unintelligible, morally neutral science and technology, on the one hand, and morally committed, human-scale art on the other."
Fowles' commitment to existentialist tenets allows him to follow in Nietzsche's path, insisting that because life has no meaning that we can discern does not prevent us from making choices between good and evil. Our judgments of right and wrong, Fowles believes, "are absolutely and evolutionally meaningless;" \textit{(Aristos, p.77)} nevertheless, we are compelled to judge. Furthermore, he supports strongly the inclusion of some moral content in a work of literature. In this regard he betrays again the radical postmodernists. In \textit{The Aristos}, he complains that too often today the artists pursue the right form of moral expression rather than the moral itself:

It is true that the best right expression of the moral best serves the moral; the style is the thought. But an excessive pre-occupation with the style of the thought tends to produce a devaluation of the thought: just as many priests became so pre-occupied with ritual and the presentation of doctrine that they forgot the true nature of the priesthood, so have many artists become so blind to all but the requirements of style that they have lost all sight of or pay no more than lip service to, any human moral content. \textit{(Aristos, pp.196-197)}

In \textit{The Magus}, the necessity of choosing some human moral content for oneself is part of Nicholas's discovery.

There were minutes of silence then and in them I thought about the only truth that mattered, the only morality that mattered, the only sin, the only crime. . . . History has superceded the ten commandments of The Bible; for me they never had any real meaning. . . . But sitting in that bedroom, staring at the glow of the fire on the jamb of the door through to the sitting-room, I knew that at last I began to feel the force of this super-commandment, summary of them all; somewhere I knew I had to
choose it, and every day afresh, even
though I went on failing to keep it...

. . . Adulthood was like a mountain, and
I stood at the foot of this cliff of ice,
the impossible and unclimbable: Thou
shall not inflict unnecessary pain.
(Magus, p.641)

Fowles continues his existentialist moralizing
in The French Lieutenant's Woman, letting his
readers see that choosing right from wrong becomes
even more important when there is no set of god-
given rules to follow. Darwinism for example,
rather than freeing man from moral imperatives,
"let open the floodgate to something far more
serious than the undermining of the Biblical
account of the origins of man; its deepest impli-
cations lay in the direction of determinism and
behaviorism, that is, towards philosophies that
reduce morality to a hypocrisy and duty to a straw
hat in a hurricane." (FLW,p.99) In other words,
the overly scientific can be more dangerous to
man than the overly religious.

Like Nicholas in The Magus, Charles in The
French Lieutenant's Woman must learn a lesson in
morality. He is forced by Dr. Grogan to ask
himself what right he has to hurt innocent people
in his pursuit of self-knowledge. Grogan cautions
Charles, who seems to be trying too hard to be
one of the scientific and rational elect:

But I beg you to remember one
thing, Smithson. All through human
history the elect have made their cases
for election. But Time allows only
one plea. . . . It is this. That the
elect, whatever the particular grounds
they advance for their cause, have intro-
duced a finer and fairer morality into
this dark world. If they fail that
test, then they become no more than
despots, sultans, mere seekers after
their own baser desires. . . . If you
become a better and a more generous
human being, you may be forgiven. But if you become more selfish ... you are doubly damned. (FLW, p.311)

Another characteristic of existentialism common to postmodernism and Fowles is the emphasis on the present, the here and now, on the process rather than the finished product. For postmodernists, this concern often appears in their writing as an emphasis on the process of writing. Sollers explains, "The essential question today is no longer the writer and the work (still less the 'work of art') but instead writing and reading."

Russell confirms this, saying that "postmodern art engages the reader and audience in the processes of signification that shape the experience of art." Furthermore, "Rather than as a 'work' of art, postmodern art offers itself as a process of working—a dynamic of speaker and context struggling to situate themselves in an historical continuity." 85 Fowles devotes a special section in The Aristos to what he calls "The Importance of the Now," stating flatly that "Everything finally is means, nothing is end." (Aristos, p.183) He believes that man must accept this view and become mean-oriented if he is to survive. The problem is that, "We lack trust in the present, the moment, this actual seeing, because our culture tells us to trust only the reported back, the publicly framed, the edited, the thing set in the clearly artistic or the clearly scientific angle of perspective: ("Seeing Nature Whole,"p. 56)

Once again, Sarah in The French Lieutenant's Woman is Fowles' existentialist example of the importance of the present tense; and Charles is
attracted to her because she represents potential and possibility, rather than "a fixed voyage to a known place." (FLW, p.107) He realizes that "... she was merely the symbol around which had accreted all his lost possibilities, his extinct freedoms, his never-to-be-taken journeys.... There was no doubt. He was one of life's victims, one more ammonite caught in the vast movements of history, stranded now for eternity, a potential turned to a fossil." (FLW, p.262)

Charles, as a developing existentialist fighting to avoid becoming as rigid as one of the fossils he collects, goes to Exeter in search of Sarah. He is asked by the curate there if he will be staying long. Charles replies, with a double meaning that he doesn't fully appreciate, "Alas, no. I am simply en passage." (FLW, p.287) The twentieth-century reader, of course, can understand the greater significance of Charles' remark.

I have already discussed the emphasis on the present tense in Daniel Martin, but there is a more general sense of the present which Fowles also stresses. Daniel, like Charles, is trying to come to terms with his past, and his future. As author, he gives the reader an image of his life as a young man, still filled with possibilities. "Without past or future, purged of tenses; collecting this day, pregnant with being. Unharvested, yet one with the land; and that was why he had been so afraid. It wasn't death, the agony in the mower's blades, the scream and red stumps... but dying, dying before the other wheat was ripe." (DM, p.11) Grown up, he puzzles over the observation that, "what we once were is now severed in a very special way from the present--reduced to an object, an artifice, an antique, a flashback...
something discontinuous, and disconnected from present being." (DM, p. 87)

A special place for Daniel is Tsankawi in the Southwest United States. He reflects upon the former inhabitants of Tsankawi and their understanding of the present:

It was a longing accented by something I knew of the men who had once lived at Tsankawi; of their inability to think of time except in the present, of the past and future except in terms of the present—not-here, thereby creating a kind of equivalency of memories and feeling, a totality of consciousness that fragmented man has completely lost. (DM, p. 331)

The emphasis which Fowles and the postmodernists place on the processes of living and writing is a reflection of the influence of existentialist thought upon their twentieth-century lives. Existentialist thought is at least in part an expression of a loss of faith in an all-knowing science to tell us the truth about our world. It is understandable, then, that in addition to parodying modernism's approach, postmodernists and Fowles continue modernism's attacks upon scientifically verifiable reality.
Perhaps because it is now the dominant pole, Fowles tells us, the placing of one's faith in a scientifically-determined, objectively verifiable reality has come under the strongest attack by postmodernists who have as one of their aims the discrediting of the traditional, mimetic style of writing. Gerald Graff, for one, assures us that "Anti-mimetic theories derive from an understandable but distorted reaction to the loss of the sense of reality." Furthermore, he says, 

Increasingly, the critical perspective expresses itself through a style of argument that has come to be known as "demystifying." In the tradition of the great nineteenth-century unmaskers of myth--Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Darwin, and so on--contemporary demystifying seeks to disclose once and for all the artificial and thus alterable nature of the beliefs and usages that have for so long been regarded as part of the laws of nature. As now practised, however, demystifying consists in an assault not only on certain conceptions of reality but on the idea that there is any such thing as a knowable reality independent of ideology and myth. 87 Fowles matches Graff's description in writing that "To claim of something that it belongs to a special category of absolute truth or reality is to pronounce its death sentence: There is no absolute truth or reality."(Aristos,p.107) He finds it difficult to understand the popular need for such absolute certainty and the consequent one-sided clinging to science, which rejects so much of life. "Almost all the richness of our personal existence derives from the synthetic and eternally present 'confused' consciousness of both internal and external reality, and not least because we know it
is beyond the analytical, or destructive, capacity of science." ("Seeing Nature Whole," p. 53)

In Daniel Martin, Dan is saddened by a couple's reaction to their inability to have children. The husband, Mitchell, is confident that science will solve their problem. "And Dan was left with this sad little faith in technology as the key to the best of all possible worlds. That celebrated and pernicious myth seemed to underlie all his companion's attitudes." (DM, p. 506) Dan also reflects upon the anti-poetic attitudes of his best friend at Oxford, remembering one of Anthony's epigrams:

The metaphor is the curse of Western civilization. It has been no good pointing out that all language, even the most logical and philosophical, is metaphorical in origin; it was the rhetorical use of metaphor that was evil . . . he even tried to condemn Shakespeare once for having written Hamlet instead of clinically forestalling Freud by three hundred years. (DM, p. 339)

Charles is the would-be scientist who plays the fool for Fowles in The French Lieutenant's Woman. He is quite proud to be a Darwinian, thinking himself to be very up with the times, and Fowles lets Charles incriminate himself as the essence of scientific egotism, on several occasions. Charles begins lightly, as he and Ernestina walk together discussing their lives, teasing her, and mocking himself, "And you forget that I'm a scientist. I have written a monograph, so I must be." (FLW, p. 12) Before undergoing his confrontation with an emerging existential awareness, Charles is a literal and metaphorical collector of fossils who places great
faith in the Linnaean system. The author/narrator comments that the keystone of this system is

... nulla species nova: a new species cannot enter the world. This principle explains the Linnaean obsession with classifying and naming, with fossilizing the existent. We can see it now as a foredoomed attempt to stabilize and fix what is in reality a continuous flux, and it seems highly appropriate that Linnaeus himself finally went mad; he knew he was in a labyrinth, but not that it was one whose walls and passages were eternally changing. (FLW, p.45)

The scientist himself is a fossil, says Fowles; he is "the Charles of today, a computer scientist deaf to the screams of the tender humanists who begin to discern their own redundancy... The scientist is but one more form; and will be succeeded." (FLW, pp.233-34)

In The Magus, Nicholas Urfe suffers from the irrepressible desire to explain everything rationally, and to doubt anything that cannot be explained rationally. He does not know when he first arrives that he will become "quite literally bewitched by Bourani." (Magus, p.242) Conchis says that Nicholas represents his age:

Your first reaction is the characteristic one of your contrasuggestible century: to disbelieve, to disprove. I see this very clearly underneath your politeness. You are like a porcupine. When that animal has its spines erect, it cannot eat. If you do not eat you will starve. And your prickles will die with the rest of your body. (Magus, p.105)

Nicholas resists. "But a strong feeling persisted," he tells us, "when I swung my feet off the ground and lay back, that something was trying to slip between me and reality." (Magus, p. 120) Later he remarks of Conchis's motives, "I hadn't played
chess for years; but I remembered that the better you got the more it became a game of false sacrifices. He was assaying not my powers of belief, but my powers of unbelief." (Magus, p.227) Conchis confronts him. "Verification is the only scientific criterion of reality. That does not mean that there may not be realities that are unverifiable." (Magus, p.235) He tries to reach Nicholas by explaining his own past experience:

"There had always been a conflict in me between mystery and meaning. I had pursued the latter, worshipped the latter as a doctor. As a socialist and rationalist. But then I saw that the attempt to scientize reality, to name it and categorize it and vivisect it out of existence, was like trying to remove the air from the atmosphere. In the creating of the vacuum it was the experimenter who died, because he was inside the vacuum." (Magus, p.410)

Part of the postmodernist rejection of premodernist mimesis is in premodernism's preoccupation with meaning, the content, the subject matter of art, to the exclusion of, or at least the suppression of, the means of creating. Postmodernists have rebelled against the notion that a work of art is a sort of puzzle to be interpreted and especially against the idea that there is always one correct and therefore best interpretation of any particular work. The rejection of a right meaning of course is derived from the rejection of absolute, objective reality. "Objective analysis," Graff says, "is repudiated not only because it is reactionary but because it is impossible." He suggests that actually the problem is "the fundamental one posed long ago by Kant: reality is not simply something we discover, something that waits for us to read its label, but something we ourselves
bring into being by an active process of interpretation."

Susan Sontag is probably postmodernism's most outspoken critic of the need to analyze and find the right meaning of a work of art. In Against Interpretation she states that "to interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world—in order to set up a shadow world of 'meanings.'" She voices the postmodernists' urge to experience the world directly, immediately, rather than by a secondhand translation. The problem, she believes, is that mimetic theory forces art to justify itself, and has separated us, as audiences, perhaps for thousands of years, from the direct experience of art:

The fact is, all Western consciousness of and reflection upon art have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation. It is through this theory that art as such—above and beyond given works of art—becomes problematic, in need of defense. And it is the defense of art which gives birth to the odd vision by which something we have learned to call "form" is separated off from something we have learned to call "content" and to the well-intentioned move which makes content essential and form accessory. This exclusive emphasis on content, Sontag maintains, is itself a stylistic convention that "is today mainly a hindrance, a nuisance, a subtle or not so subtle philistinism." David Lodge seconds Sontag's view, claiming that the realistic novel, "which works by concealing the art by which it is produced, and invites discussion in terms of content rather than form, ethics and thematics rather than poetics and aesthetics,"
has been the main obstacle to the development of a poetics or aesthetics of fiction.

These opinions reflect postmodernism at its most combative, and in this specific area of form versus content, Fowles is inclined to defend the novel's traditional emphasis on meaning, but not to imply by his support of content that there is only one possible right interpretation of the work, or that an analytical approach to literature is desirable. In the foreword to *The Magus*, he writes that "Novels, even much more lucidly conceived and controlled ones than this, are not like crossword puzzles, with one unique set of correct answers behind the clues. . . ." (*Magus*, p.9) And he mocks David Williams in "The Ebony Tower" who recognizes "the absurd way he always reviewed his own work in his imagination as he painted it," trying to fit "the demands of his own critical-verbal vocabulary." ("ET"p.100)

Still, the artist must not lose touch with all content. Fowles complains that, "the pseudo-technological artist is like an angler who thinks the essential is to be able to handle a rod and bait a hook; but the true essential is to know a river to fish in. The thing comes first, then its expression; and today we are faced with an army of cleverly-trained expressers all in pursuit of something to express. . . ." (*Aristos*, p.155) In "Notes on Writing a Novel" he says no less than that the most succinct summary of what he believes is the phrase "'Ideas are the only motherland.'" (*Notes* p.96) and in an interview he once remarked that "The novel is simply, for me, a way of expressing my view of life." It would seem at first glance that Fowles qualifies as a reactionary when these comments
are placed next to Sontag's ban on interpretation and meaning. The difference, however, is not great. Fowles is taking this middle road, rejecting the preoccupation with interpretation seen in critics who are obsessed with singling out the meaning of a text, and rejecting as well the artists who become so thoroughly consumed by their avoidance of traditional forms of expression that they find it necessary to throw out the thing to be expressed in their haste to be rid of conventions.

Part of the distinction involves the problem inherent in our lack of a clear definition of postmodernism. As the writers involved have developed, no new descriptive terms have arisen to characterize the changes. Again it is necessary to assert that if Fowles is to be associated with postmodernism, it is with a maturing postmodernism which no longer feels the defensive, adolescent urge not only to start over but to erase everything that has preceded it. Fowles shares with postmodernism a desire to attack many of the forms of representation and mimesis that he feels are no longer significant to the human condition, but he feels no obligation to jettison the entire body of art, good with bad, to make room for something else. The concept of the death of literature, for example, is a postmodern extreme with which Fowles does not concur. Leslie Fiedler, a leading proponent of this view, claims that death is necessary if rebirth is to occur:

But no one has even the hope of being reborn unless he knows first that he is dead—dead, to be sure, for someone else; but the writer exists as a writer precisely for someone else. More specifically, no novelist can be reborn until he knows that insofar as he remains a novelist in the traditional sense, he is dead; since the
traditional novel is dead--not dying, but dead.95

It is interesting to observe here that John Barth, whose essay, "The Literature of Exhaustion," was taken by many to be a leading formal recognition of the death of literature, found it necessary to clarify (and perhaps modify) his position in a later essay, "The Replenishment of Literature" in which he says his earlier essay was about "used-upness," of forms of art "at least in the minds of significant numbers of artists in particular times and places."

Unfortunately, he says, "a great many people... mistook me to mean that literature, at least fiction is kaput; that it has all been done already; that there is nothing left for contemporary writers but to parody and travesty our great predecessors in our exhausted medium--exactly what some critics deplore as postmodernism."96 Gerald Graff clarifies the issue somewhat by suggesting that

What is taking place, these critics [Leslie Fiedler, Susan Sontag, George Steiner, Richard Poirier, Ihab Hassan] suggest, is the death of our traditional Western concept of art and literature, a concept which defined "high culture" as our most valuable repository of moral and spiritual wisdom.97

Fowles, who would agree that certain conventions of literature no longer have any relevance to late twentieth-century life, would also deny that the novel, and literature, are dead. In "Notes on Writing a Novel" he observes wryly that, "If the novel is dead, the corpse still remains oddly fertile," and that

One has the choice of two views: either that the novel, along with the printed-word culture in general, is moribund or that there is something sadly shallow and blinded in our age. I know which view I hold; and the people who
astound me are the ones who are sure that the first view is true. ("Notes", p.97)

When Conchis, who is himself compared to Death in *The Magus*, (Magus,p.91) tells Nick that the novel is dead as an art form, (Magus,p.65) Nick tells him that was a joke when he was at Oxford. "'If you didn't know what to say at a party, you used to ask a question like that.'" "'Like what?'" "'Do you think the novel is exhausted as an art form? No serious answer was expected.'" (Magus,p.96)

Many postmodernist writers, in tying the novel to realism, are saying in effect that realism is no longer viable as an art form. Röbert Scholes writes that "it is because reality can no longer be recorded that realism is dead. All writing, all composition, is construction. We do not imitate the world, we construct versions of it. There is no mimesis, only poesis. No recording, only constructing." To avoid confusion, it is important to define the realism against which so much of postmodernist writing rebels. According to Lodge's working definition, realism in literature can be thought of as "the representation of experience in a manner which approximates closely to descriptions of similar experience in nonliterary texts of the same culture." It is understandable, in light of this definition, that postmodernists call this variety non-fiction. Richard Kostelanetz explains that "specificity signals the end of art and the beginning of journalism, history, sociology, or some other form of non-fiction; fiction at its best is neither factual nor familiar but feigned." Fowles, too admits that this specificity characteristic of "almost all our art before the Impressionists--or their St. John the Baptist, William Turner--betrays our love of clearly defined boundaries, unique identities,
of the individual thing released from the confusion of background." ("Seeing Nature Whole," p.50)

Fowles notes that this representational purpose in art dominated until the Renaissance and that what he refers to as "inner-feeling" art has been dominant only during the last century. One obvious reason for the change, he believes, is the development of better means of exact representation. Art cannot compete with still photography or films for accuracy of details. (Aristos, p.191) This realization forced artists to seek new styles and techniques of writing, and then to create theories of aesthetics to explain them. Postmodernists often seem especially bitter towards all conventional literary approaches and defensive of their own novelty. Jerome Klinkowitz, for example, writes, "Our persistent old-fashioned story-tellers would make us believe as fact that life has leading characters, plots, morals to be pointed, lessons to be learned, and most of all beginnings, middles, and ends." 101 We as readers are being lied to, he implies, and we ought not to tolerate these arrogant reality claims. Jacques Ricardou goes so far as to say that the representative efforts ideal is to deceive the reader, that it aims at "a maximum dissimulation of the narration so that the fiction, with its illusionist resemblance, may be confused with that which it pretends to reflect...." 102 These commentators lead us to believe that representational, realistic writing is dishonest and even subversive, that it pretends to be something (reality) that it is not and seeks to trick the reader into believing its pretense. For these postmodernists, Graff says, "The very notions of understanding, definition, explanation and 'point of view' have come to seem suspect. They imply rigidity, an inability
Fowles does not express similar reservations about realism, or about descriptions faithful to a shared view of external reality. His own style is in fact most often realistic in this sense, and several of his statements concerning art could bring a hasty reader to the conclusion that Fowles is something of an old-fashioned storyteller himself rather than a post-postmodern humanist. He has said, for example, "For me, the obligation is to present my characters realistically. They must be credible human beings even if the story, no matter how bizarre, no matter what symbolisms are involved, has to be possible." In another statement he tells us that he admires William Golding's writing very much but that Golding has one consistent fault: "he doesn't treat his characters realistically enough in the extreme situations he invents. . . . The same thing mars Kafka. . . . Believability must dominate even the most outlandish situation." These statements alone would seem to be enough to cause Fowles to be banned for life from postmodernist club meetings. Some of his remarks about novel writing, too, seem dangerously conventional. Consider, for example, "Novel dialogue is a form of shorthand, an impression of what people actually say; and besides that, it has to perform other functions--to keep the narrative moving (which real conversation rarely does), to reveal character (real conversation often hides it), and so on." ("Notes"p.89) While he does not pretend that real life has beginnings, middles and ends, he does seem to approve of the disguises of realism in literature. This apparent heretic sanction of traditional realistic method is tempered, though, by Fowles' comment in "Seeing Nature Whole" that, "Art has no
special obligation to be realistic and naturalistic, indeed any obligation at all except to say what the artist wants or chooses to say." ("Seeing Nature Whole,"p.65) Looking at the whole story, then, we see that Fowles is consistent in his view that it is possible to salvage what is best in traditional literature and at the same time reject the rigidity of convention. He doesn't write as though the first half of the twentieth century hadn't happened but he also doesn't write as though the entire body of pre-modernist literature hadn't happened.

There is no question, however, that he shares the frustration of postmodernists who are trying to shock audiences of art into relinquishing their hold on conventional single-minded appreciation and evaluation of art. Charles Russell explains that the audience for postmodernism is asked to focus on how a shared experiential reality common to artist and audience "is dependent upon the conventions of aesthetic and social discourse to be understood." Fowles agrees that it is time to recognize that

We are taught as children to think about great art (and indeed many other things, such as religion) in the objective way, as if every actual experience of a great painting should produce the same effect on us. We see the results of this in any famous art gallery during the holiday season: the gaping, wooden-faced crowds who stare at great art and cannot understand why they are not having great-art reactions, because they have been so conditioned that they cannot accept that in actuality a Coca-Cola advertisement may be more beautiful than the sublimest Michelangelo. (Aristos,p.89)

In The Magus, Nicholas, like the wooden-faced crowds, is afraid to let go of his set of expectations of reality, and he tells us that ". . . my fear came from a knowledge that anything might happen. That there were no limits in this masque, no normal social
laws or conventions." (Magus, p.199) Later, Madame de Seitas tells him:

Nicholas, if one is trying to reproduce, however partially, something of the mysterious purposes that govern existence, then one also has to go beyond some of the conventions man has invented to keep those purposes at bay. That doesn't mean that in our ordinary lives we think such conventions should be swept away. Far from it. They are necessary fictions. But in the godgame we start from the premise that in reality all is fiction, yet no single fiction is necessary. (Magus, p.627)

One of the conventions that Fowles questions is that of regarding art with a maximum of seriousness and respect. Again in The Magus, when Nicholas suggests to Conchis that the "struggle through hundreds of pages of fabrication" could be just for fun, Conchis replies, "'Fun!' He pounced on the word. 'Words are for truth. For facts. Not fiction.'"

Nicholas, embodying in part the struggle between traditional, serious-minded art and the possibilities of art, discovers the futility of any claim of high seriousness when he is put into a bizarre trial:

I kept repeating the same phrase to myself: keep dignity, keep dignity, keep dignity. I knew I must look ridiculous with the black cyclops eye on my forehead and the white ribbons and rosettes. But I somehow had to contrive not to be ridiculous. (Magus, pp.498-99)

In The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles' opposition to convention for convention's sake takes shape in his parody of a period of history that has come to represent the triumph of convention over life—the Victorian Age. "It was simple," Fowles says: "one lived by irony and sentiment, one observed convention. (FLW, p.264) William Palmer writes that "In The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles defeats the 'catatonia of convention'--convention as a restrict-
tion upon human relationships, but more important, convention as a restriction upon art." Charles Smithson faces a formidable opponent in the Victorian Age. He senses its efforts to fossilize him in the role of a gentleman, and he was unhappy; alien and unhappy; he felt that the enormous apparatus rank required a gentleman to erect around himself was like the massive armor that had been the death warrant of so many ancient saurian species. His step slowed at this image of a superceded monster." (FLW,p.230)

Charles is exposed to the possibility of living without the strangling restrictions of his age when he meets Sarah Woodruff, who is "proof, already suspected but not faced, of an intelligence beyond convention." (FLW,p.116) He becomes obsessed with the possibilities that Sarah represents, and it is through her that he begins to see the foolishness, the stiffness of his culture. "Watching the little doctor's mischievous eyes and Aunt Tranter's jolliness he had a wave of corollary nausea for his own time: its stifling propriety, its worship not only of the literal machine in transport and manufacturing but of the far more terrible machine now erecting a social convention." (FLW,p.122)

Poor Charles' own convention-conditioned self tells him that it is only Sarah's unpredictability which attracts him. He does not understand that the qualities which appeal to him most are her passion and her imagination. "He could not," the author/narrator tells us, "for these two qualities of Sarah's were banned by the epoch, equated in the first case with sensuality and in the second with the merely fanciful. This dismissive double equation was Charles' greatest defect--and here he stands truly for his age." (FLW,p.153)
Fowles and the postmodernists believe passion, imagination and unpredictability are the qualities which literature must develop more fully if it is to be significant to twentieth-century readers faced with lives of hazard and uncertainty. A mistake that writers so often make is abolishing the principle of randomness. In Daniel Martin we read of this kind of writer:

He calculates, plans, strives where the great question-mark is indifferent and leaves all to hazard; and his final, revised product is in intention as rigid and pre-conceived as a piece of machinery or an architect-designed building. (DM, p. 271)

In Egypt, Daniel says that this is the detraction of Egyptian art—that it cannot be romanticized:

It reeked from the calculated precision, the formal, statuesque coolness of their paintings and sculpture. They had somehow banned personal sensibility, affection for life, all impulsive exuberance, all spontaneous exaggeration and abstraction. They had used art, instead of letting art use them; already Stalin and Zhðanov came. (DM, p. 503)

What is happening, or has happened, in the realm of aesthetics is a loss of any absolute definition of art, of standards by which to judge a work as art or non-art. Ihab Hassan observes that "The line between art and non-art shifts, fades, hardens suddenly when least we expect it. What do we mean by art?" Louis Mink suggests further that "the significance of the shift from 'What is beauty?' to 'What is art?' is it makes the central concept of aesthetics dialectical for the first time. To put it another way, it hands over to artists the right to make any answer false." At any rate, the question "What is art?" has become the heart and soul of postmodernism and Fowles shares the obsession with that enigma. In Fowles' novels, the
question most often becomes, what is the relationship of art to life? What is fact and what is fiction?

His partial answer is that "Some such process of retreat from the normal world—however much the theme and surface is to be of the normal world—is inherent in any kind of artistic creation, let alone that specific kind of writing that deals in imaginary situations and characters." ("Seeing Nature Whole," p.67) His own writing, according to Peter Wolfe, "shares with good poetry...its ability to blur frontiers between illusion and reality and between physical and mental experiences. It does not pretend to know where mind ends and body begins." 110

In The Magus especially, as in Thomas Pynchon's V., reality and fictions mix until the protagonist, Nicholas, and the reader are thoroughly frustrated in their search for the true story and are left bewildered and unsure about what is real and what is not. As Jeffry Rackham explains, "Every act of sincerity eventually seems a lie, every distortion begins to seem real—but what is real and what is truth, and who can be trusted to actually be what they seem?" 111

Art is everywhere in The Magus, establishing from the beginning a blurring of the distinction between reality and fiction. Palmer remarks that "The style of The Magus is generated out of specific kinds of similes and metaphors. The narrator's similes are almost exclusively drawn from the world of art..." 112 Conchis is a Picasso (Magus, p.139) and a Rembrandt (Magus, p.141) who leads Nicholas into a room at Bourani where "Books lined three walls. At one end there was a green-glazed tile stove under a mantelpiece on which stood two bronzes, both modern. Above them was a life-size reproduction of a Modigliani. ... I belatedly
realized I was not looking at a reproduction." (Magus, p.92) There is a bronze by Rodin and one by Giacometti, (Magus, p.93) and as Nick looked over his shoulder he saw "Fra Angelico's famous 'Annunciation'; and at once knew why the colonnade outside had seemed so familiar." (Magus, p.94) At one point Nicholas remarks that light striking the faces of the characters is "strangely, Caravaggio fashion, against the surrounding darkness." (Magus, p.107) Lily is "a Botticelli beauty" (Magus, p.115) and "like a Renoir." (Magus, p.194)

In the midst of this heavy atmosphere of art, Nicholas is exposed to a series of masques, episodes in which he cannot distinguish the reality from the art. He says, "The incidents seemed designed to deceive all the senses." (Magus, pp.143-44) He reads "the posthumous confessions and letters and prayers of Robert Foulkes, vicar of Stanton Lacy in Shropshire, and has a vision (or is it real?) of Robert Foulkes standing across from him in the woods. Conchis tells him stories about his past, and Nicholas begins to meet and experience figures and events from Conchis' past--directly, realistically. He sees dramas from myth and that appear to be real and he relives Conchis' war experience accompanied by the music of "Tipperary" and "an atrocious stench that infested the windless air, a nauseating compound of decomposing flesh and excrement. . . . Soon it was as if I had imagined everything." (Magus, p.133)

One explanation given for the series of fictions to which Nicholas is subjected is that Conchis is a producer of a new kind of theatre, "meta theater," the intention of which is "to bring together the worlds of art and life."
Julie in an apparently sincere (to Nick) revelation of her true self, she tells Nick that Conchis had carefully staged all the events:

"In one way it was to be a fantastic extension of the Stanislavski method. Improvising realities more real than reality. You were to be like a man following a mysterious voice, several voices, through a forest of alternative possibilities—-who wouldn't even know themselves . . . since they were us . . . what their alternatives really meant. Another parallel was a play, but without a writer or an audience. Only actors." (Magus, p.338)

Conchis seems to confirm this story when he announces to Nicholas that the game is over, that Julie and her twin sister June are accompanying him to Paris. Soon after their apparent departure, however, Julie appears to lead him to an underground room, where he is trapped and again robbed of his sense of reality. Furious with Conchis, he struggles to comprehend rationally what is happening to him:

His "theatre without an audience" made no sense, it couldn't be the explanation. . . . Perhaps what he was doing did spring in part from some theory of the theater, but he had said it himself: The masque is only a metaphor. So? Some incomprehensible new philosophy: metaphorism? . . . I thought and thought, and thought again, and arrived at last at nothing but more doubt. (Magus, p.458)

The second fiction which pretends to offer an explanation to Nicholas is that he is part of an experiment in psychiatry. He is told at first that Lily/Julie is schizophrenic, that Conchis is treating her for this condition, and that Nicholas must not believe what she tells him. Later it becomes clear that if there is anyone being psychiatrically examined it is Nicholas, not Lily/
Julie. June tells him that Conchis is "the French equivalent of an emeritus professor of psychiatry from Sorbonne," (Magus, p.475) and that she is a reader of psychology at London University. The subject, though, is the same one examined by the metatheater. "'Maurice's lifelong special field has been the nature of the delusional symptoms of insanity. . . . Psychiatry is getting more and more interested in the other side of the coin—why some people are sane, why they won't accept delusions and fantasies as real.'" (Magus, p.477) This fiction, too, is demonstrated to be distorted when later Nicholas is given a trial over which to preside. There he is told that June/Rose is a costume designer, that her sister Lily/Julie is really Dr. Vanessa Maxwell, and that they and the others are among an international group of psychologists participating in the experiment. By this time, Nicholas and the reader have lost all sense of what is real. The world is filled with clues, Fowles indicates, but pursuing them does not lead to any one, certain truth. Nicholas becomes obsessed with following clues, only to be repeatedly frustrated by their inability to indicate reality. He tries to check Julie's story, writing letters to her mother, her banker and her headmaster but even though he receives replies he admits to himself, "... there remained the possibility that they were all three deceiving me. But how could I believe that now? All those kisses, franknesses, caresses, that token coupling in the night water . . . no girl could pretend to want and enjoy such things unless she was a prostitute. It was unthinkable." (Magus, p.386) This is, of course, exactly what Fowles and the postmodernists seek to break down—the attitude that conceives of things as "unthinkable."
Finally, Nicholas begins to feel defeated. He tells us that "I was tired, tired, tired of deception; tired of being deceived, tired of deceiving others; and most tired of all of being self-tricked, of being endlessly at the mercy of my own loins; the craving for the best, that made the very worst of me." (Magus, p. 400)

The French Lieutenant's Woman does not mix illusion and reality as directly as The Magus; however, the world of art and the subject of life's intimate relationship with art is the focus for Fowles in this novel as well. From the beginning a setting of art is established in Fowles' description of Lyme Regis as "a superb fragment of folk art. Primitive yet complex, elephantine but delicate, as full of subtle curves and volumes as a Henry Moore or a Michelangelo. . . . " (FLW, p. 9) The author/narrator also confides to the reader that his work is very much influenced by that of an earlier writer—"the great novelist who towers over this part of England of which I write." (FLW, p. 215) He is speaking of Thomas Hardy, who in 1862 fell in love with a young cousin and became engaged. Five years later the engagement was broken. The fictional story of Charles and Ernestina is under the shadow of that real event. Fiction and non-fiction again blend when the author/narrator substitutes for description of the bordello which Charles visits a description from a pornographic work of 1749 called The History of the Human Heart. The subject of fictification is also a prominent part of Sarah's role in the novel. Charles is shocked to discover when they make love that Sarah is a virgin, because it means that her entire past which has made her an outcast of the community is based on a lie, on a story which she has invented.
The author/narrator, too, lectures the reader on the folly of clinging to conventional distinctions between the real and the fabricated:

But this is preposterous? A character is either "real" or "imaginary"? If you think that, hypocrite lecteur, I can only smile. You do not even think of your own past as quite real; you dress it up, you gild it or blacken it, censor it, tinker with it . . . fictionalize it, in a word, and put it away on a shelf--your book, your romanced autobiography. We are all in flight from the real reality. That is a basic definition of Homo Sapiens. (FLW, p. 82)

Daniel Martin, like Fowles' earlier novels, also is about life and art. In its story (history?) of a writer (a scriptwriter who is becoming a novelist), the subject of literature affects the lives of all the characters. Jane complains to Dan that everything they have done has been "'Inside something which is . . . literary? Like the Abbaie de Thélème. Not anything real at all.'" (DM, p. 281) Jenny, Daniel's young actress-girlfriend tells Dan that she is going to write her version of his life, and names her protagonist Simon Wolfe. Throughout Daniel's novel he receives her "contributions." Dan's whole life has been directed by fictions, by the art of fabrication. His existence at Oxford with Nell, Jane and Anthony was an unreal one; and his friendship with them was cut off because of a play that he wrote--a play that in anger mixed fact with fiction. When his daughter Caroline asks him why writers are bad at relationships he tells her honestly that it is "Because we can always imagine better ones. With much less effort. And the imaginary ones grow much more satisfying than the real ones." (DM, p. 267) His life and his under-
standing of other lives is inextricable from his relationship to art. Art is a comfort to him. After seeing Jenny for the last time, he enters a public gallery and confronts the Rembrandt self-portrait there:

The sad, proud old man stared eternally out of his canvas, out of the entire knowledge of his own genius and of the inadequacy of genius before human reality. Dan stared back. . . .

Dan felt dwarfed, in his century, his personal being, his own art. The great picture seemed to denounce, almost to repel. Yet it lived, it was timeless, it spoke very directly, said all he had never managed to say and would never manage to say. (DM, p. 628)

In its campaign to strip convention-ridden literature of its reputation for credibility, post-modernism has devised means of mixing up those conventions by using language in ways that break all the rules. One of those techniques is the confusion of point of view, a deliberate attempt on the part of the author to present the reader with more than one perspective in order to question the authority of the author himself. Fowles asks the question in *The Aristos*, again using the polar metaphor, "Where then is the ultimate pole? Where is the 'I' that permits me to make these descriptions? Which claims that everything, both in and outside me, is other?" (*Aristos*, p. 85) This is a milder version of Richard Pearce's view that it is possible to go beyond Descartes, whose doubting ended with the affirmation of a doubter to the extreme doubt of one's own voice, stretching the line of Descartes to the breaking point and destroying "not only the Cartesian enterprises and the strategy that gave rise to classical physics, perspective painting,
and the novel, but the very essence of the narrative."\textsuperscript{114}

Tampering with the narrative is the postmodernists' sharpest tool in chopping away at traditional roots of the novel, which has counted the independent narrator's view as one of its most distinguishing features. The narrator's view, according to Pearce, "follows from his choosing a detached and fixed vantage, even when he narrows his focus to the mind of a central intelligence, and from his enclosing the subject within the frame of his visual imagination. It is in this sense that the whole of reality depends on the mental processes of a solitary man."\textsuperscript{115} Pearce explains that the frame has been responsible for giving the narrator's picture its clarity:

\begin{quote}
And yet, in order to evoke an illusion of objective reality, the frame, as an idealized or esthetic limit, was suppressed. . . . As realism in the arts and sciences developed, more and more details were included within the frame and more skill was manifested in their representation, and the message was always that the creation was real and full.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

This approach to writing can blossom into a bold attack on the conventional right of the author to rule what he has created. Instead, the burden of creation is transferred to the reader, as Raymond Federman notes in his introduction to \textit{Surfiction: Fiction Now . . . and Tomorrow}:

\begin{quote}
In other words, no longer being manipulated by an authorial point of view, the reader will be the one who extracts, invents, creates a meaning and an order for the people in the fiction. . . . The writer will no longer be considered a prophet, a philosopher, or even a sociologist who predicts, teaches or reveals absolute truths. . . . \textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}
The French Lieutenant's Woman experiments in this realm of author-free characters. In it Fowles confesses to his readers that he cannot control his characters any more than the reader controls his children, colleagues, friends, or even himself. (FLW, p. 80)

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. (FLW, p. 80)

The life of the characters, the reader is told, depends upon their ability to disobey the author. Fowles claims that "When Charles left Sarah on her cliff edge, I ordered him to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy." (FLW, p. 81) He occasionally claims not to know what actions his characters have taken. "Whether they met that next morning, in spite of Charles's express prohibition, I do not know." (FLW, p. 110)

The reader is forced even to accept the author/narrator as a character in the fiction. To further complicate the issue of narration, Fowles tells us in "Notes on Writing a Novel": "In other words, the 'I' who will make first-person commentaries here and there in my story, and on one occasion will even attempt to enter it, will not necessarily be my real 'I' in 1967; but much more just another character, though in a different category from the
purely fictional ones." ("Notes",p.92) Fowles enters his story as a character on two separate occasions. In the first, he is presented to us as a massively bearded man of forty or so who shares a train compartment with Charles. He strikes the narrator as "not quite a gentleman...[perhaps] a successful lay preacher--one of the bullying tabernacle kind, a would-be Spurgeon, converting souls by scorching them with the cheap rhetoric of eternal damnation." (FLW, p.316) This figure, "prophet-bearded," begins to stare at Charles and the narrator confides to the reader that he recognizes the look on the man's face:

It is precisely it has always seemed to me, the look an omnipotent god--if there were such an absurd thing--should be shown to have. Not at all what we thing of as a divine look; but one of a distinctly mean and dubious (as the theoreticians of the nouveau roman have pointed out) moral quality.

Then suddenly the narrator breaks the illusion of character and tells the reader, "I will keep up the pretense no longer. Now the question I am asking, as I stare at Charles, is not quite the same as the two above [Now could I use you? Now what could I do with you?] But rather, what the devil am I going to do with you." (FLW, p.316)

In that swift transition Fowles has become a conglomerate author-narrator-character who is at the same time in two worlds--Victorian and twentieth century--sharing the possibilities and problems of his creation with the reader. He enters the story a second time as a seemingly insignificant bystander in Chapter 61. This time the author tells the reader that he didn't want to introduce him but that he is the kind of man "for whom the first is the
only pronoun, who in short has first things on the
brain, and since I am the kind of man who refuses
to intervene in nature (even the worst), he has
got himself in . . . but rest assured that this
personage is, in spite of appearances, a very minor
figure—as minimal, in fact, as a gamma-ray particle."
(FLW, p. 361)

Fowles' aim it seems is to bring about a
liberation of himself and his characters from tra-
ditional, expected roles and, as Palmer points out,
"he attempts to free the reader from the tradition-
al role of passive, uninvolved observer of the
action that takes place in an unreal, fictional
world." However effectively Fowles' experiments
succeed in accomplishing this liberation, it is
with some reservation that he accepts praise for
his accomplishment. He is the first to recognize
the egotism of authorship, saying that in his novels
he is the producer, director and all the actors.
"there is a vanity about it, a wish to play the
god game, which all the random and author-removing
devices of avant-garde technique cannot hide."
("Notes", p. 92) In "Notes on Writing a Novel" he
confesses that he has "always liked the ironic
voice that the line of great nineteenth-century
novelists . . . all used so naturally . . . irony
needs the assumption of superiority in the novelist.
Such an assumption must be anathema to a democratic,
egalitarian century like our own. We suspect
people who pretend to be omniscient; and that is
why so many of us twentieth-century novelists feel
driven into first-person narration." ("Notes",
p. 90) There is a touch of regret in Fowles that
makes the reader wonder whether he would not have
preferred to live and write in the age of the great nineteenth-century realists. His age—the time of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes and the atom bomb—oblige him to open his writing to avant-garde influences if only to be relevant as a late twentieth-century artist. He responds bravely to the challenge of postmodernism, but not without a slight sense of loss.

In addition to the device of entering his own story, interrupting his own story to discuss the nature of fiction-writing with the reader, Fowles shows a special interest in the powerful device of manipulating tenses to complicate the reader's sense of the proper place in time of the narrator and characters. *Daniel Martin* is Fowles' experimental work in this regard. In it the reader is given several points of view: that of the narrator Daniel who is telling the story of his past in both the first person and the third, that of Daniel at various ages in the first person, and that of Jenny, who offers her contributions in letters, also mixing indiscriminately the first and third persons.

From Jenny, for example, Daniel receives letters which read like this excerpt:

> All this was summed up on that weird last evening (the second-sight thing was nonsense, but it was so strange, Dan, I *did* feel something was going to happen to us) when you, I mean he, talked of chasms. And I told him he meant barricades. (*DM*, p.34)

The narrator Daniel gives the readers lines such as, "But by then, the spring, Dan had written his fourth or fifth play, I forget now," (*DM*, p.108) and, "Though the ninety-nine year lease I bought of the Notting Hill flat was probably the best
business deal I ever did, unaided, in my life, Dan and Nell began having doubts as soon as they moved in." (DM,p.140) Daniel as narrator shares with the reader his thought process in remembering the past. In reminiscing about an affair with an actress on the set he says, "I mustn't dismiss this too lightly; the cynicism came late. Dan left the flat feeling stunned with self-shock; and I remember he had a miserable afternoon." (DM,p.138) Sometimes he gives us a picture of himself as a child, in the present tense. "I draggle kicking down the back lane to Fishacre, sent out by Aunt Millie to tell Father the carpenter from Totnes has come. . . ." (DM,p.87)

By using this confusion of tenses, Fowles manages to keep the reader constantly aware that he is watching the process of fictionalizing a life. He is not permitted to be in the story with Dan the character but must remain outside of it with Dan the narrator-author, who is in the process (has been in the process since Oxford days) of writing himself. He tells us that:

I was writing myself, making myself the chief character in a play, so that I was not only the written personage, the character and its actor, but also the person who sits in the back of the stalls admiring what he has written. (DM,p.69)

The reader of Daniel Martin must sit with the "I" in the back of the stalls.

The problem most of us encounter in life, Fowles suggests, is the difficulty of living in the first person present tense. Instead, we fictionalize ourselves and our lives, past and present, in the third person as Daniel does. Dan comments about a conversation, "They were both carefully objective,
and he talked about himself as he talks here, in the third person; a rather blind and willful young man, still in full flight from his adolescence." (DM,p.491) He knows intuitively that one must live in the first person to experience life directly, immediately, without the separation and distancing of the third person. When he makes love with Jane, "It came to him, immediately afterward, when he was still lying half across her, that the failure could have been put in terms of grammatical person. It had happened in the third, when he had craved the first and second." (DM,p.599) Fowles seems to say that fictionalizing one's past is probably inevitable but fictionalizing one's present is a bad habit. When Dan tells Jenny about his experience with two girls named Miriam and Marjory, she accuses him of making them up. He replies,

"'One day I shall make you up.'"

"'What makes you think you're not doing that already?'"

"'Against the rules.'"

"'What rules?'"

"'Of the present tense.'" (DM,p.252)

Daniel claims that all writers, "even the humblest dialogue-fixers and life inventors . . . live not life but other lives; drive not down the freeways of determined fact, but drift and scholar-gipsy through the landscapes of the hypothetical, through all the pasts and futures of each present." (DM, p.208)

Still another of Fowles' postmodern attempts to interfere with the conventional relationship between the reader and the fiction is his experiment in endings. Lodge writes of postmodernism that, "Instead of the closed ending of the traditional novel, in which mystery is explained and fortunes
are settled, and instead of the open ending of the modernist novel, . . . we get the multiple ending, the false ending, the mock ending or parody ending."119 The French Lieutenant's Woman offers the reader three endings, one a parody and the final two supposedly (but not really) equal, intended to force the reader to make a choice and thus take an active part in the creation of the novel. Palmer compares Fowles' multiple endings to Lawrence Sterne's blank page in Tristam Shandy on which the reader is supposed to write a description of the Widow Wadman.120 Brantlinger remarks that Fowles' multiple endings are "a bad Victorian habit which he turns to experimental use."121

Fowles' first ending parodies the typical endings found in Victorian literature. Palmer assures us that "If Fowles were intent only upon imitating the Victorian novel, Charles most plausibly might live out Chapter Forty-four's ending. . . . Victorian novels traditionally conclude with scenes such as those in Chapter Forty-four."102 In this moralizing ending, Charles suddenly tells Ernestina that he has a confession to make concerning "that miserable female at Marlborough House." (FLW, p.264) Fowles then neatly sums up the outcomes of each of his characters, cleanly bringing his novel to an apparently conventional close, telling the reader that he does not know what became of Sarah, that Charles and Ernestina did not live happily ever after but lived together. "Sam and Mary--but who can be bothered with the biography of servants? . . . married, and bred, and died, in the monotonous fashion of their kind." (FLW, p.265) Fowles continues his humorous parody, telling us that Mrs. Poulteney was rejected at the Heavenly Gates and "was most distinctly heard to say, 'Lady Cotton is behind this'; and then she fell, flouncing and bannerin
ballooning, like a shot crow, down to where her real master waited." (FLW,p.266)

This first ending is abruptly rejected by the author/narrator who tells the reader, "And now, having brought this fiction to a thoroughly traditional ending, I had better explain that although all I have described in the last two chapters happened, it did not happen quite in the way you may have been led to believe." (FLW,p.266) This first ending, he tells the reader, is only what Charles imagined might happen. Thus the reader is denied the satisfaction of a tidy ending and forced again to see the work as crafted fiction.

Fowles then tells the reader that actually Charles goes to Exeter to see Sarah, makes love to her and discovers that she is a virgin. Overcome by his feelings for her he dutifully leaves to inform Ernestina that he is breaking their engagement. She dutifully faints from the shock and Charles returns to Exeter to find that Sarah has left for London, leaving no forwarding address. Charles takes the next train to London to search for her. At this point Fowles tells the reader he would like to end Charles' career on the train, "leaving him for eternity on his way to London. But the conventions of Victorian fiction allow, allowed no place for the open, the inconclusive ending; and I preached earlier of the freedom characters must be given." (FLW,p.317) He then discusses the difficulty of ending the story without seeming to "fix the fight" and decides the only way to be fair is to show both sides, two versions of the outcome; to insure his impartiality he flips a coin to decide which ending to present first.
In the first, Charles goes abroad and twenty months later is told that Sarah has been located. He finds her in the household of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelite artists. She tells him she does not wish to marry. He is shown a child and suddenly understands all. He asks Sarah, "Shall I ever understand your parables?" (FLW, p.358) They embrace and we assume they live happily ever after.

Palmer rightly says that this ending can be eliminated for the same reasons that Fowles eliminated Chapter Forty-four's Victorian ending.

This ending in which Charles, Sarah, and the child Lalage, are united and live happily ever after is just as sentimental as the previous Victorian ending. . . . This ending denies both Charles and Sarah the power of choice and refuses to acknowledge the obstacles to their union built by their clashing egos. This ending is presented because Fowles does not want to deprive his mid-twentieth-century readers of their freedom of choice.

In the final ending, just after the author withdraws from the narrative, Sarah refuses to marry Charles and he sees in her expression that she cannot sacrifice her integrity for him and that she has manipulated him. He leaves, feeling reborn. Charles walks along the embankment, a new man who has begun to realize that, "life . . . is not a symbol, is not one riddle and one failure to guess it, is not to inhabit one face alone or to be given up after one losing throw of the dice; but is to be, however, inadequately, emptily, hopelessly into the city's iron heart, endured. Borrowing from Mathew Arnold, Fowles writes, "And out again, upon the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea." (FLW, p.366) In spite of the fact that Fowles seems to
offer the reader two choices, then, it is obvious which one he prefers. As Laughlin says, "We must accept the final scene involving dismissal and separation as the real one." 124

Turning conventions against themselves, as in the use of multiple endings, or the overall parody of Victorian literature that *The French Lieutenant's Woman* accomplishes, is one of the best ways in the late twentieth century for a writer to overcome the "used-upness" in literature to which Barth refers. It is a technique commonly found in the fiction of post-war novelists who, according to Graff, "found difficulty adjusting their perspectives to a society which did not fit inherited categories of explanation. They were thrown back on willed mythologies which they themselves could hardly take seriously very long, and soon began to parody." 125

In its ironic tone and humorous approach to the language and daily habits of the Victorians, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* succeeds in questioning the rules of that age as applied to literature. Brantlinger explains that "Fowles goes crab-backwards to join the avant-garde, imitating George Eliot as a way to emulate Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes." 126 The novel is packed with details and realistic description of the Victorian era to provide an air of authenticity, but, as Palmer recognizes, "The novel's scholarliness is an essential part of the irony and, quite often, an object of the satire." 127 Consider, for example, Fowles' reference to a bestseller of the 1860s about which *The Edinburgh Review* said, "'The poem is a pure, tender, touching tale of pain, sorrow, love, duty, piety and death.'" The author/narrator then comments, "surely as pretty a string of key mid-
Victorian adjectives and nouns as one could ever hope to light on (and much too good for me to invent, let me add)." (FLW,p.95) Wolfe notices that Fowles "will deliberately pit his enameled prose with wordiness and awkward phraseology. Its overblown sentiment and melodrama often make The French Lieutenant's Woman sound more like the florid rhetoric of Victorian magazine fiction than the solid, supple prose of serious fiction." Indeed, each chapter is headed by a epigraph, à la George Eliot, Sarah is referred to as "poor Tragedy," and the reader is treated to an elevation of style that includes sentences like, "Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?" (FLW, p.80) Mrs. Poulteney is the personification of Victorian hypocrisy and stuffiness—a caricature. Charles, too, is in part a victim of the idiosyncrasies of his age, burdened especially with the powerful weight of duty. "Of course he had duty to back him up; husbands were expected to do such things, therefore he must do them—just as he must wear heavy flannel and nailed boots to go walking in the country."(FLW,p.94)

As I have mentioned already, Fowles himself tells us his novel is under the shadow of Thomas Hardy. Palmer suggests that The French Lieutenant's Woman is actually based on Hardy's A Pair of Blue Eyes and Dickens' Pickwick Papers. Palmer and DeVitis, in a co-authored article, state that "various aspects of A Pair of Blue Eyes, published in 1873, contributed to the plot events, the individual characterizations as well as character relationships, the significant image patterns, and even to the existentialist theme of Fowles' novel."
This kind of borrowing from past conventions of literature is (again, according to Palmer) in a sense, "the most creative kind of literary criticism. It personifies the past of the novel as genre while simultaneously probing the modern atrophy of the genre. It examines the style and tradition of the genre's past, not in imitation of that past, but rather as a means of breaking the bonds of tradition.\textsuperscript{130}

Perhaps the strongest attack on conventional means of representation of reality is the postmodernists' questioning of the traditional portrayal and truth of perception of time and history, claiming that our whole understanding of the world is rooted in historical assumptions. Ehrmann, for example, writes:

The "meaning of history" (and of literature) is therefore only a myth to which we have clung--perhaps out of our weakness and cowardice or of some visceral desire to believe that life has a foundation that could justify it, out of some obscure need to orient ourselves and thereby attempt to protect ourselves from what society calls madness. . . . Thus history and literature have no existence in and of themselves. It is we who constitute them as the object of our understanding. And this object, the fruit of our invention, constitutes us as subjects--being both acting and acted upon, dominating and dominated.\textsuperscript{131}

It follows, say the revolutionary postmodernists, that one of the tasks of writing ought to be to
expose this falsity of our belief in history by creating worlds to which the reader's sense of time as horizontal is interrupted and frustrated. Kostelanetz says that the innovations in style, language and structure of new fiction promote the "deliberate frustration of the bourgeois habit of continual reading."\textsuperscript{132} and Raymond Federman suggests that one of the significant aspects of new fiction in the future "will be its semblance of disorder and deliberate incoherency. . . . it will be deliberately illogical, irrational, unrealistic, nonsequitor and incoherent."\textsuperscript{133} Sukenick believes that the architectonic novel will be the common form of new fiction since "the spatialization of form serves as an alternative to the old novel's sequential organization in plot and narrative."\textsuperscript{134} Communication will be by means of pattern on the pages rather than by sequence.

Once again, in comparison to these revolutionary postmodernists (who, we must remember, do not represent the whole story of postmodernism), Fowles is a moderate. He accepts the premise that our perceptions of time as linear and sequential may be illusory, but does not conclude that writing therefore must destroy the reader's sense of time by jolting him into a world that is only a spatial pattern. Why not both?, he asks once again,
easing the reader into an awareness of the problematic nature of time and history.

Fowles tells us that Charles, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, "had a far more profound and genuine intuition of the great human illusion about time, which is that its reality is like that of a road --on which one can constantly see where one was and where one probably will be--instead of the truth: that time is a room, a now so close to us that we regularly fail to see it." *(FLW, p. 252)* He also speculates in *The Aristos* that since in both "the creator and the spectator, art is the attempt to transcend time . . . it is no coincidence that our current preoccupation with art comes at the same time as our new realization of the shortness of our duration in infinity." *(Aristos, p. 189)* But Fowles takes into consideration the needs of the reader and the force of his attachment to historical assumptions. This consideration brings him to the "strong belief that history is horizontal in terms of the ratio between understanding and available knowledge and (far more important) horizontal in terms of the happiness the individual gets from being alive." *("Notes" p. 92)*

What Fowles recommends is a rehabilitation of the classical view of art as a union of the particular and the universal. "All art both generalizes
and particularizes; that is, tries to flower in all time but is rooted in one time." (Aristos, p. 188) This is not as old-fashioned a remark as it might at first appear to be when it is seen in the context of the aggregate of Fowles' aesthetics. Closer to the issue is his observation that, "How we see a natural object depends on us—whether we see it vertically, in this one moment, now, or horizontally, in all its past; or both together; and so in art we try to say both in one state-
ment," (Aristos, p. 188)

In keeping with these ideas, Fowles never fully abandons the horizontal course of events in his novels. His synthetic treatment of time is best exemplified in The French Lieutenant's Woman, in which he attempts both to pacify the reader's traditional need to be able to distinguish the flow of events chronologically and to interrupt without destroying this sense of history, to indicate that the course of events is after all only the creation of an author who lives in the time of Robbe-Grillet, but who can become a character in Victorian England if he chooses. In effect, the author/narrator holds the modern reader's hand and takes him on a journey to a version of the nineteenth century. The author/narrator is a magician with a time machine; the
reader is being taken on a guided tour, but not
for a moment allowed to forget that his origin and
vantage point is the post-war twentieth century.
In this way the blending of history is less
threatening, and the reader can better comprehend
the significance of a disruption in the flow of
the narrative. The point still is made that
history is a human illusion and the reality of our
versions of time is questioned, albeit less harshly
than Federman or Sukenick would require according
to the demands of their "new fiction." In The
French Lieutenant's Woman, for example, the reader
is told that Mr. Freeman, Ernestina's father, was
a forerunner of the modern rich commuter and
"where his modern homologue goes in for golf, or
roses, or gin and adultery, Mr. Freeman went in
for earnestness." (FLW, p. 222) Ernestina is
described as having "that imperceptible hint of a
Becky Sharp"; (FLW, p. 27) Sam Weller was "more
like some modern working class man who thinks a
keen knowledge of cars a sign of his social progress
and . . . he had a very sharp sense of clothes
style--quite as sharp as a 'mod' of the late
1960s. . . ." (FLW, p. 39) The author/narrator
shares with the reader such information as, "Mary's
great-great-granddaughter, who is twenty-two years
old this month I write in, much resembles her
ancestor; and her face is known over the entire world, for she is one of the more celebrated younger English film actresses." (FLW, p. 65)

Elsewhere there are references to the Gestapo (FLW, p. 23) and the airplane, jet engine, television and radar (FLW, p. 16) which Wolfe says "shatter the novel's Victorian patina and repose. They also jounce the reader into viewing the action historically. Fowles also writes himself into the fiction, further confusing the rules of author, narrator and character when, as he gives the reader a picture of Sarah opening a packaged Toby jug which she had just purchased for ninepence in an old china shop, he tells the reader that "the Toby was cracked, and was to be recracked in the course of time, as I can testify, having bought it myself a year or two ago for a good deal more than the three pennies Sarah was charged." (FLW, p. 220)

Fowles' unique manipulating of time establishes an unusual relationship between the reader and the narrator and between the reader and the characters. Palmer writes that Fowles envisions "how the living participation of the reader in the writing of the novel and in the lives of the novel's characters can lend much greater vitality to the novel as a living art form." It is the
living participation of the reader and the peculiar relationship between him and the author/narrator that gives the novel its postmodern flavor. The reader is allowed a story with which he can become involved, and he is allowed a moral or universal theme of mankind, but what he must accept with these things is a full experience of the work as a fiction-making process. He is taken backstage, where the author/narrator shares with him the special and often unromantic difficulties of writing. "I am overdoing the exclamation marks," (FLW, p. 167) the writer tells him.

It is this special relationship between the narrator and reader that allows the reader to have the unusual privilege of being on the inside and outside of the Victorian age. The narrator can provide historical detail and background and can suggest to the reader that history of the age has been distorted by a general acceptance of the Charles Dickens version of the Victorians and by the fact that "the vast majority of witnesses and reporters, in every age, belong to the educated class" and therefore our history is a "middle-class view of the middle-class ethos." (FLW, p. 214)

Charles, the narrator says, may be amusing at times but the reader is cautioned not to dismiss
his state of mind "as a mere conditioning of futile snobbery. See him for what he is: a man struggling to overcome history. And even though he does not realize it." (FLW, p. 234) The implication is that all of us, like Charles, are struggling to overcome history. But even Charles would have been astounded, we are told, at the twentieth-century "sense that, not a disinterested love of science, and certainly not wisdom, is why we devote such a huge proportion of the ingenuity and income of our societies to finding faster ways of doing things--as if the final aim of mankind was to grow closer not to a perfect humanity, but to a perfect lightning flash." (FLW, p. 16)
CHAPTER 3

APOLLO AND DIONYSUS

There is a familiar schizophrenia called by many names in literature, a duality over which writers have traditionally chosen up subjective and objective reality teams, usually according to how art and science are getting along in any given decade. Some have favored classical symmetry, realistic narrative and representation which can turn to the scientific method for verification; others have made homes among the various mysticisms, romanticisms, transcendentalisms, stream-of-consciousness and non-representational art, discovering alternate realities in dreams, drugs and other objectively unverifiable experiences. The debate in its multiple masks has placed society against the individual, the head against the heart and order against chaos, to name but a few.

Nietzsche's thesis in *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872)

...is that there are two forces in the human mind, or two kinds of mentality, the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian is closely responsive to nature, instinctive, irrational, passionate, primitive and tragic. It is 'folk wisdom'. It expresses itself in and creates 'myth.' It creates music and lyric poetry, which are instinctive forms of art. The Apollonian is a reflection of life through thought, transforming life into a dream of lucid, harmonious form and beauty. It is the "art impulse" and creates the pantheon of gods on Olympus,
as well as the structured art of drama and sculpture. The Dionysian is fundamental truth, ever-present in the mind, but not as conscious thought, for it is instinctive; man 'as nature.' The Apollonian illusion, however, is necessary so that man can continue to live in the face of the tragic truth of life, which is suffering and death.  

This is very similar to Camus's definition of the absurd, which Naomi Lebowitz Gordon tells us is
"'the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart.'"  

John Fowles speculates in *The Aristos* that, "There has never been peace since between Dionysus and Apollo, and there never will be." *(Aristos, p. 115)*

David Lodge explains the basis of the conflict in art:

The fundamental principle of one side is that art imitates life, and is therefore in the last analysis answerable to it: art must tell the truth about life and contribute to making it better, or at least more bearable. That is the classic definition and justification of art. . . . It dominated Western aesthetics from the time of Plato and Aristotle until the beginning of the nineteenth century when it began to be challenged by Romantic theories of the imagination; and by the end of the century it had been turned on its head. 'Life imitates art,' Oscar Wilde declared, meaning . . . that we compose the reality we perceive by mental structures that are cultural not natural in origin, and that it is art which is most likely to change and renew those structures when they become tired and mechanical."
In recent years, this conflict has assumed the form of representational art versus nonrepresentational or illustrative art. In their essay, "The Problem of Reality: Illustration and Representation," Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg state that, "the images in a narrative may strike us as an attempt to create a replica of actuality just as the images in certain painting or works of sculpture may, or they may strike us as an attempt merely to remind us of an aspect of reality rather than convey a total and convincing impression of the real world to us, as certain kinds of visual art do." Philip Stevick interprets the discussion of Scholes and Kellogg as an examination of two opposed ways of approaching the problem of life and art:

The first position [illustrative] takes art, including the art of fiction, to be a made thing, subject to its own laws answerable only to the imagination of the artist, autotelic or having no purpose beyond its own existence, a self-contained, self-sufficient formal complex. . . . The opposite position [representational] takes art to be, in Arnold's phrase, a criticism of life, a position which implies that art is answerable to experience, and far from being its own purpose, an active force in the life of its culture.

Volumes of speculation have been compiled concerning the possible stimuli for the shifts in emphasis from one pole to the other. George
Steiner suggests for example that it is "the extension of mathematics over great areas of thought and action"\textsuperscript{142} which has brought about the division of Western consciousness. One of the most interesting recent considerations of the origin of this duality in literature is derived by Lodge from Roman Jakobson's distinction between metaphor and metonymy in an essay, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances." Jakobson presents evidence from the study of severe speech disability to demonstrate that metaphor and metonymy are polar opposites corresponding to the two operations of language use--selection and combination. Lodge explains that prose tends toward the metonymic pole, while poetry tends toward the metaphoric pole. Also, writing that can be called Romantic or Symbolist is metaphoric, and realist writing is metonymic.

The history of modern English literature \ldots can be seen as an oscillation in the practice of writing between polarized clusters of attitudes and techniques: modernist, symbolist or mythopoetic, writerly and metaphoric on the one hand; antimodernist, realistic, readerly and metonymic on the other. What looks like innovation--a new mode of writing foregrounding itself against the received mode when the latter becomes stale and exhausted--is therefore also in some sense a reversion to the principles and procedures of an earlier phase.\textsuperscript{148}
Naturalism, for example, is metonymic; modernism is metaphoric and postmodernism (and Fowles' writing) is an awareness of this unresolved polarity and an attempt to be both for readers in the second half of the twentieth century.

Fowles worries that, in their fanatic swings on the pendulum, writers lose their necessarily all-encompassing perspective. "Everything, in short, has become far too polarized into extremes of scientism and sentimentalism; the middle way is blocked." He recognizes that the scientific thrust cannot be stopped, but feels that the scientific pole need not be dominant. "The scientist turns his back on the as yet, and perhaps eternally, unverifiable; and someone must face it." (Aristos, p. 151) Like Steiner, he refers to the importance of the mathematical symbol to a scientific age. To the scientist, it is man's most precise tool. Literature, though, is not restricted by the same needs. "Science is, legitimately, precision at all cost," Fowles writes, but "poetry, is legitimately, inclusion at all cost." (Aristos, p. 207) There is room for both in the world. In Fowles' most recent novel, Daniel Martin, a German professor/guide in Egypt explains an ancient Egyptian belief to Daniel and
Jane:

"Each has his own ka. So to say, it was a man's ideal image of his own life. . . . You understand it best by contrast with ba. That was not attached to the body. It was individual. . . . But we may say that ka and ba are ways of seeing man first as an individual . . . and then as one." He pointed to one side with his stick as they slowly walked. "As the artist does." He pointed to the other. "As the scientist. As a unique experience. As a processus. . . . Speaking for myself, [and for Fowles] I do not know which way is better. I think the ancients were wise. They knew neither was sufficient in itself. You understand?" (DM, p. 513)

In this way the view of life which takes in both poles realizes the source of life's energy—opposition. Fowles believes that "individuals, nations, and ideas are far more dependent for strength, energy and fuel on their opposites, enemies and contraries than surface appearances suggest." (Aristos, pp. 10-11) Peter Wolfe writes that for Fowles, "the pull of opposites is the mainspring of all creativeness, making for a singing, rippling tension rather than a stasis." 145

In other words, the proper course of art, to have relevance for life, is to develop a both/and rather than an either/or approach to this apparent schism in consciousness. Nicholas Urfe in The Magus calls the struggle for supremacy between the two pathetic; "like two little boys caught fighting
at the time of an atomic explosion. We were
equally tired, in mid-century, of cold sanity and
hot blasphemy; of the over-cerebral and of the
over-faecal; the way out lay somewhere else."

(Magus, p. 190)

The way out, Fowles seems to say, is not to
eliminate possibilities. His own writing expres-
ses this sense of merger in its blend of the
traditional and the contemporary. William Palmer
remarks,

As a contemporary writer, John
Fowles is an anomaly, almost a lit-
erary contradiction. He is both a
traditional writer and an innovative
metafictionist. He draws upon past
literature but changes the direction
of the tradition in which he writes.
He simultaneously accepts and rejects
the literary past, while at the same
time he questions contemporary avant-
garde attempts to redefine the novel
genre.146

In The Aristos, Fowles says,

Neither the scientifically nor the
artistically expressed reality is the
most real reality. The "real" reality
is a meaningless particularity, a
total incoherence, a ubiquitous isola-
tion, a universal disconnection. It is
a sheet of blank paper; we do not call
the drawings or equations we make on
the paper the paper. Our interpretations
of reality are not "the" reality, any
more than the blankness of the paper
is the drawing. Our drawings, our equa-
tions, are ultimately pseudo-realities,
but those are the only realities that
concern us because they are the only
realities that can concern us.
(Aristos, p. 154)
In The Magus Conchis (pronounced with a soft "ch") is intended by Fowles "to exhibit a series of masks representing human notions of God, from the supernatural to the jargon-ridden scientific; that is, a series of human illusions about something that does not exist in fact, absolute knowledge and absolute power. The destruction of such illusions seems to be still an eminently humanist aim." (Magus, p. 10) Charles Smithson in The French Lieutenant's Woman has a sudden insight, "a flash of black lightning" in which he questions his scientific certainty and realizes that, "All those painted screens erected by man to shut out reality--history, religion, duty, social position, all were illusions, mere opium fantasies." (FLW, p. 165) In other words, neither of the two has a right to claim reality, since the only reality is that we do not know with any kind of certainty, objective or subjective, what is "real."
Thus far, I have talked about some major characteristics of postmodernism and the expression of the acceptance or denial of them in the writings of John Fowles. I have looked especially at the fact that, for Fowles and postmodernists, neither conventional representational art nor modernist, art-as-refuge theories provide satisfaction for the postwar, late twentieth-century reader. I have suggested that the fact that Fowles and postmodernists criticize both the all-science and all-art ways of viewing the world does not mean they have not formed any solutions themselves. In this chapter on synthesis, I will discuss some of the proposed means of reconciliation between the two. There is no question that for postmodernists and John Fowles, an all-encompassing synthesis is the goal toward which their writing strains. Barth, for example, writes, "The proper program for postmodernism is neither a mere extension of the modernist program . . . nor a mere intensification of certain aspects of modernism, nor on the contrary a wholesale subversion or repudication of either modernism or what I'm calling premodernism--'traditional' bourgeois realism." Instead, he suggests that "A worthy
program for postmodernist fiction, I believe, is the synthesis or transcension of these antitheses, which may be summed up as premodernist and modernist modes of writing. Lodge says the problem is especially difficult to solve since the two concepts are "equally plausible yet mutually contradictory. . . . In dialectical terms we observe the clash of thesis and antithesis with little prospect of a synthesis. Since art is supremely the province of forms, and since literature is an art of language, I believe such a synthesis can only be found in linguistic form.

Thus we have the basis for the postmodernist technique of deconstructing texts to expose the act of creating and the process of reading that actually takes place in the language transaction among writers, reader and text. The reader becomes of supreme concern to the postmodernist who recognizes as Sontag does that "the knowledge we gain through art is an experience of the form or style of knowing something, rather than knowledge of something (like a fact or a moral judgement) in itself." The hope of these writers is that a reevaluation of the opposition in the light of new information about language can lead to something all-encompassing. Referring to the postmodernists, White explains,
The avant-garde is not simply opposing traditional forms, whether the emphasis is placed on the word traditional or on the word forms. The avant-gardists themselves say they represent, not a revision of the old—and they insist that they will not be assimilated to it—but a radically new kind of cultural and social experience, one that permits them to believe that the gap between the possible and the real, the gap where fiction has thrived heretofore, can at last be closed.151

To Fowles, man's greatest problem is to overcome the complexities of the modern world. Nicholas, in The Magus represents the dilemma which faces us all in this age:

For weeks I had a sense of being taken apart, disconnected from a previous self—or the linked structure of ideas and conscious feeling that constitute self; and now it was like lying on the workshop bench, a litter of parts, the engineer gone . . . and not being quite sure how one put oneself together again. (Magus, pp. 386-87)

The aim is to bring about the kind of totality of response to the world such as is experienced by the German professor in Daniel Martin while he was working in ancient tomb-chambers. He describes the feeling to Dan:

"For a little interval time does not seem to exist. One is neither the original painter nor one's own self, a modern archaeologist. If one is anything—I speak metaphorically, forgive me, I lack words to express it any other way, one is the painting. One exists, but is somehow not in time."
In a greater reality, behind the illusion we call time. One was always there. There is no past or future."
(DM, p. 525)

Perhaps the single most popular form of synthesis advocated by postmodernists is individual myth. Since our old myths no longer seem to work to make us comfortable in our world, we need to recreate them. After all, Howe explains, myth functions "as a means for establishing ties with primal sources of experience in a world deadened by 'functional rationality'." For a more complete look at what myth does for us, we can turn to Joseph Campbell in Myths, Dreams and Religion. He says myths perform four functions:

1) Reconciling consciousness with the preconditions of its own existence.
2) Formulating and rendering an image of the universe, a cosmological image in keeping with the science of the time and of such kind that, within its range, all things should be recognized as parts of a single great holy picture.
3) Validating and maintaining some specific social order.
4) Shaping individuals to the aims and ideals of their various social groups.

Hassan, too, points to myth as a means of reconciliation. "Yet something tells us that dream looks back to myth and forward to prophecy, sharing with both certain forms and wisdom. There are also in science certain forms that will dream us onward and extend our senses to the limits of
the invisible universe." And Calvino says:

Myth is the hidden part of every story, the underground past, the zone still unexplored because there are still no words to take us there. . . . Myth feeds on silence as much as on the spoken word; a myth makes its presence felt in an ordinary story, in commonplace words; it is like the linguistic void which sucks words into its whirlpool and give shape to the fable.

Fowles expresses a deep, continuing interest in the powerful effects of myths. A novel may even begin with "mythopoeic stills" which may be "the door into a new world." ("Notes", p. 88) There is no way of knowing exactly how deeply our myths affect us. Nicholas in The Magus says, "Once more I was a man in a myth, incapable of understanding it, but somehow aware that understanding it meant it must continue, however sinister its peripateia." (Magus, p. 381)

Again it is Sarah in The French Lieutenant's Woman who is the agent of myth. She evokes an image of an ideal world for Charles, who remarks that "It was not strange because it was more real, but because it was less real; a mythical world where naked beauty mattered far more than naked truth." (FLW, pp. 143-44) She also reminds Charles of a siren, calling forth all kinds of mythical associations:

Perhaps he had too fixed an idea of what a siren looked like and the circum-
stances in which she appeared—long tresses, a chaste alabaster nudity, a mermaid's tail, matched by Odysseus with a face acceptable in the best clubs. There were no Doric temples in the Undercliff; but here was a Calypso. (FLW, p. 117)

Jane is the repository of myth in Daniel Martin. Thinking of her, Daniel realizes that

Behind all that lay an essence of what he had come to terms with, and let himself be judged by. He began to see the ghost of a central character, a theme, of a thing in the mind that might once more make reality the metaphor and itself the reality . . . a more difficult truth about the invention of myths than he had the courage to tell Caro. (DM, p. 269)

One of the most commonly called-upon classical myths which can be adapted by the postmodernists to our age is the classical labyrinth of Theseus and the legendary Minotaur. Barth explains:

A labyrinth, after all, is a place in which, ideally, all the possibilities of choice (of direction, in this case) are embodied, and—barring special dispensation like Theseus'—must be exhausted before one reaches the heart. Where, mind, the Minotaur waits with two final possibilities: defeat and death, or victory and freedom. Somehow, we have seen, the postmodernists have found a way to merge these two final possibilities, into the defeat and death of rigid, traditional conventions in literature and the resulting victory and freedom of new fiction.

Lodge places Fowles in postmodern company in this myth by writing, "We shall never be able to
Nicholas is indeed like Theseus in a labyrinth in which he and the reader struggle. Berets agrees, saying that "the reader uncovers a labyrinth similar to that constructed by Daedalus, the eternal artificer who, like Fowles, keeps manipulating the configuration so that we, like the Minotaur, remain forever trapped in the maze of his creative fiction/life." Nicholas also must learn to act like both Daedalus and the Minotaur.

Berets says:

First, he must try to understand and attempt to solve his own predicament, while later he is asked to view the whole experience as if he, himself, were the creator and manipulator of his environment. The objective of this novel is then not to reorient man so that he will be more able to cope with his feelings of alienation and impotence, but to construct an individual myth that will consequently enable an "elect" individual to impose a meaningful pattern on his existence.

Nicholas himself feels a strong kinship with Theseus, and other figures from classical mythology. He has the feeling of actually having entered a myth:

... a knowledge of what it was like physically, moment by moment, to have been young and ancient, a Ulysses on his way to meet Circe, a Theseus on
his journey to Crete, an Oedipus still searching for his destiny. I could not describe it. It was not in the least a literary feeling, but an intensely mysterious present and concrete feeling of excitement, of being in a situation where anything might happen. As if the world had suddenly, during those last three days been reinvented, and for me alone. (Magus, p. 157)

Elsewhere in The Magus, Nicholas again feels a connection to Theseus, and he says, "I had a return of that headlong, fabulous and ancient sense of having entered a legendary maze; of being infinitely privileged. There was no one in the world I wanted to change places with, now that I had found my Ariadne, and held her by the hand." (Magus, p. 210) And again, "My heart was beating faster than it should. It was partly at the thought of meeting Julie, partly at something far more mysterious, the sense that I was now deep in the strangest maze in Europe. Now I really was Theseus; somewhere in the darkness Ariadne waited; and perhaps the Minotaur." (Magus, p. 313) And once more, "There returned that old excitement—let it all come, even the black Minotaur, so long as it came; so long as I might reach the centre, and have the final prize I coveted." (Magus, p. 322) The novel suggests finally though that there is no Minotaur and the myth explodes.
In addition to the regeneration of possibilities in classical myth, Fowles relies heavily on two sources of myth which have served a mythical function since the origin of man—women and nature. Both embody for Fowles the timelessness essential to myth. Of the first he says, "My female characters tend to dominate the male. I see man as a kind of artifice, and woman as a kind of reality. The one is cold idea; the other is warm fact." ("Notes", p. 94) In The Aristos he writes, "Adam is stasis, or conservation; Eve is kinesis, or progress. . . . Even societies are those in which the woman and the mother, female gods, encourage innovation and experiment, and fresh definitions, aims, modes of feeling. The Renaissance and our own are typical such ages." (Aristos, pp. 165-66)

I have already described the existential significance Fowles grants Sarah in The French Lieutenant's Woman. Again and again, Fowles associates her with a mythical power of nature as well. "There was a wildness about her. Not the wildness of lunacy or hysteria—but that same wildness Charles had sensed in the wren's singing . . . a wildness of innocence, almost an eagerness." (FLW, p. 197) At the outset of the story she is described as a figure at the end of the quay
staring out to sea, "a figure from myth." (FLW, p. 11) Also, Fowles writes that she had little power of analysis and a weakness in mathematics; her intelligence was of a rare kind that our modern tests would fail to detect. "She had some sort of psychological equivalent of the experienced horse dealer's skill--the ability to know almost at first glance the good horse from the bad one; or as if, jumping a century, she was born with a computer in her heart. I say her heart, since the values she computed belong more there than in the mind." (FLW, p. 47) Here again we see the effort at synthesis, the reassociation of head and heart, which Fowles seems to believe can be taught by women who often have this awareness in an intuitive, mythical way. This idea also is mentioned in The Magus. Conchis tells Nicholas:

That is the great distinction between the sexes. Man sees objects, women see the relationship between objects. Whether the objects need each other, love, each other, match each other. . . . War is a psychosis caused by an inability to see relationships. Our relationship with our fellow men. Our relationship with our economic and historical situation. And above all our relationship to nothingness. To death. (Magus, p. 413)

To Daniel Martin, as in The French Lieutenant's Woman and The Magus, it is a woman, Jane, who is a catalyst for a man's growth and development of
understanding. "Beneath all her faults, her wrong dogmas, her self-obsessions, her evasions, there lay, as there always had lain—in some analogue of that vague entity the Marxists call totality, full consciousness of both essence and phenomenon—a profound, and profoundly unintellectual, sense of natural orientation . . . that mysterious sense he had always thought of as right feeling." (DM, p. 609)

Even more interesting than one woman to Fowles are the mythical possibilities of two women. In "The Ebony Tower," for example, David Williams finds the old painter, Breasley, living with two young women who are close friends. In one scene set deep in the forest in France, Breasley sleeps on the bank while Daniel joins the girls for a swim. The description has a sensuous, timeless quality. In a very similar scene in The Magus, Nicholas goes for a swim with identical twins, June and Julie. He describes the scene, "We were alone in the world, in the cool blue water, three heads; and again I felt a near-absolute happiness, a being poised, not sure how all this would turn out, but also not wanting to know, totally identified with the moment: with Greece, this lost place, these two real-life nymphs. The water, the nature, the sexuality-bare
breasts of June."  *(Magus, pp. 348-49)*

In *Daniel Martin*, Dan also has a relationship with two sisters--actually a relationship with two sisters within a relationship with two sisters. At Oxford he finds that although he plans to marry one sister, Nell, he is in love with the other sister, Jane. "She and her sister have a nickname all through the men's colleges. They are known as the Heavenly Twins, although they are not twins, but a year, both in age and study, and in many other things, apart." *(DM, p. 21)* He marries Nell and soon is divorced. Years later, in middle age, he is reunited with Jane.

Dan's other relationship with two sisters is introduced to the reader as "My other two sisters: a fable," *(DM, p. 240)* in which he describes his meeting and seven- or eight-week friendship with two young women, Miriam and her younger sister Marjory.

Our relationship could never have lasted much longer than it did. But I remember it now as a glimpse of an ideal world, perhaps even of a future: not in some odious male chauvinist sense, the access of two bodies, the indulging in the old harem fantasy, but the suppuration, the vile selfishness of romantic love. *(DM p. 251)*

Closely connected to Fowles' mythical treatment of women is his also mythical association with nature. In "Seeing Nature Whole," he confides
"Again and again in recent years I have told visiting literary academics that the key to my fiction, for what it is worth, lies in my relationship with nature. . . ." ("Seeing Nature Whole," p. 51) Perhaps Palmer comes closest to understanding Fowles' meaning; he writes that:

Art never exists in isolation or in total originality. Each new art work exists as part of genre. The work partakes of the past even as it defines the present and prophesies the future. But the genre is organic, always in process. New branches develop but they always grow out of what came before, like a tree with its roots firmly embedded in the humus of the past growing taller and fuller each year. This organicism is Fowles' strength as he moves from the genre of traditional fiction to his own branch of metafiction.160

Nature is a powerful source of myth in all of Fowles' novels. In both *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, for example, the settings are linked directly with the Garden of Eden (*FLW*, p. 59); (*Magus* p. 356) and such a connection is strongly suggested by the descriptions in "The Ebony Tower." As David Williams watches the Mouse and the Freak swim naked in a forest pond he thinks to himself, "Another echo, this time of Gauguin; brown breasts and the garden of Eden. Strange, how Coët and its way of life seemed to compose itself so naturally into such moments,
into the faintly mythic and timeless, the un-temporary." ("ET," p. 55) The distinguishing feature of Phraxos, the Greek island on which Conchis' estate is located apart from the village, is silence. "It was the world before the machine, almost before man, and what small events happened . . . took on an unaccountable significance, as if they were isolated, framed, magnified by solitude." (Magus, p. 51)

The Undercliff in The French Lieutenant's Woman holds all the mythical charm and magnetism of wild, untamed nature apart from rigid Victorian society. Appropriately, Charles and Sarah meet there secretly. The description of the Undercliff is seductive:

Its botanical strangeness--its wild arbutus and ilex and other trees rarely seen growing in England; its enormous ashes and beeches; its green Brazilian chasms choked with ivy and the liana of wild clematis. . . . In summer it is the nearest this country can offer to a tropical jungle. It has also, like all land that has never been worked or lived on by man its mysteries, its shadows, its dangers--only too literal ones geologically, since there are crevices and sudden falls that can bring disaster, and in places where a man with a broken leg could shout all week and not be heard. (FLW, p. 59)

In this place, Sarah is at home and one day Charles is startled to stumble upon her sleeping there. Awakened suddenly, she seems to him to be
"totally like a wild animal, unable to look at him, trembling, dumb." (FLW, p. 98) Later Fowles gives the reader an even more mythical description of this wild place:

On the slopes above his path the trunks of the ashes and sycamores, a honey gold in the oblique sunlight, erected their dewy green vaults of young leaves; there was something mysteriously religious about them, but of a religion before religion, a druid balm, a green sweetness over all. . . . A fox crossed his path and strangely for a moment shared, as if Charles was the intruder; and then a little later, with an uncanny similarity, with the same divine assumption of possession, a roe deer looked up from its browsing. . . . There is a painting by Pisanello in the National Gallery that catches exactly such a moment: St. Hubert in an early Renaissance forest, confronted by birds and beasts. The saint is shocked, almost as if the victim of a practical joke, all his arrogance dowsed by a sudden drench of Nature's profoundest secret: the universal parity of existence. (FLW, p. 191)

In Daniel Martin, nature as myth, as timelessness, is expressed in Fowles' descriptions of the Nile River. Looking at it from his window, Daniel thinks of it as "endless, indifferent, like time itself." (DM, p. 473) Its waters seem to reach not only into the heart of Africa, but also into time. It functions as both mythical and existential image for Fowles:

The river moved and the river stayed, depending on whether one saw it with the eye or the mind; it was the Heraclitean
same and not the same. It was the river of existence, and it reminded Dan of those magnificent opening verses in Ecclesiastes, of which most people remember only the phrase "Van­ ity of vanities," but which had always, perhaps revealingly, seems to him--it had been a favorite lesson choice of his father's--unintentionally comfort­ ing. The earth abideth forever; and there is no new thing under the sun. They both noted these biblical echoes, how often they had sudden memories of the misunderstood yet haunting imageries of their childhood. They decided it was because the river, like the bible, was a great poem, and rich in still rel­ evant metaphors. (DM, p. 493)

When Daniel contemplates the metaphysical attraction of the Nile he is overwhelmed by its history. "The memory of its hundreds of genera­tions, its countless races--all that had eternally vanished beneath its silt--sobered and dwarfed, cut the individual down to less than the tiniest granule of sand in the endless desert that haunted the skyline behind the cultivated valley. (DM, p. 494) Just as the Undercliff nourishes the relationship between Charles and Sarah, the Nile nurtures the renewal of love between Dan and Jane. Separated there from the rest of the world in Kitchener's Island Dan feels as though he is in "a green place out of time, a womb, where all had seemed potential, something in the future as well as between Jane and himself melting. . . ."

(DM, p. 573)
A second possibility for synthesis which the postmodernists offer is a dose of magic and mystery. Following closely on the heels of myth, this renewed faith in magic as a healer of a very ill state of the arts is echoed in Fowles' writings. Leslie Fiedler, taking a stance at the extreme edge of postmodern theory, says that, to flourish, the novel must "surrender the kind of 'realism' and analysis it once thought its special province in quest of the marvelous and magical it began by disavowing." In order to "close the gap," Fiedler says, "literature becomes again prophetic and universal—a continuing revelation appropriate to a permanent religious revolution, whose function is precisely to transform the secular crowd into a sacred community: one with each other, and equally at home in the world of technology and the realm of wonder." What Fielder proposes is not unlike what Howe describes as symbolism at its most extreme, (revealing postmodernism's roots in modernism) which "would metamorphose itself into the purity of magic—magic that, at its purest, is religion without cost. . . . The poet does not transmit as much as he engages in a revelation. And thereby the Symbolist poet tends to become a magus, calling his own reality into existence and making poetry into what Baudelaire called 'suggestive
Like Fiedler, Ihab Hassan is optimistic that renewed belief in magic and mystery ultimately can save postmodernism from self-destruction:

I can only hope that after self-parody, self-subversion, and self-transcendence, after the pride and revulsion of anti-art, will have gone their way, art may move toward a redeemed imagination, commensurate with the full mystery of human consciousness. Neither more nor less. Our revels then will have ended. Everyone then his own magician, and no man a magician alone.164

In another article he writes, "I hope the result will be something rich and strange."165

Fowles shares the postmodernist's belief in the reconciling powers of magic and mystery, recognizing that such qualities have a long history in art which should not be denied. He believes, for instance, that "the first function of art and stylization was probably magic: to distance reality at the same time as it was invoked." (Aristos, p. 190) In keeping with its origin, then, art should not permit science to absorb it. "This scientization of art, as characteristic of our age, is absurd. Science has shaken off the fetters of art, and now fetters art. Above all it scientizes the inmost characteristic of art--mystery. For what good science tries to eliminate, good art seek to provoke--mystery, which is
lethal to the one, and vital to the other."

(Aristos, p. 153) Like Hassan, he says that the existential individual must discover "that the true destiny of man is to become a magician himself." (Aristos, p. 213)

If nature can furnish myth, it can also satisfy the demand for magic and mystery, Fowles suggests:

... the metaphorical forest is constant suspense, stage awaiting actors--heroes, maidens, dragons, mysterious castles at every step. It may be useless as a literal setting in an age that has lost all belief in maidens, dragons, and magical castles, but I think we have only superficially abandoned the basic recipe (danger, eroticism, search) first discovered by those early medieval writers. ("Seeing Nature Whole", p. 63)

I have already discussed the ways in which Nicholas in *The Magus* is frustrated in his attempts to analyze his situation; to rationally dissect the masque is futile. The intent of the masque is to force him to become receptive to the mystery in life. Berets observes that by the end of the novel, "Nicholas begins to accept the idea that perpetuating mystery is the primary impetus leading him to the future. ... What he learns to accept is the multiplicity of the universe, rather than its dualistic either/or posture with which he entered his trip of discovery."166 An either/or view of life simply is not a full one; and it will
not work anymore to explain the world. Berets sees Fowles' point clearly:

Nicholas starts out with the view that either life is all hazard and chance and consequently there is no meaning, or later that all effects must be preceded by a deducible cause, attainable to man's rational faculties. The novel, however, clearly demonstrates that neither of these options views life from the correct vantage point. Instead, the novel suggests that these views are interdependent and that it is the mystery of irresolution that provides the basic energy of existence. The implications are that without this perpetual search and denial of a fixed pattern, life would not be worth living.167

The text of The Magus provides abundant support for Berets' interpretation. At the very outset, for example, Nicholas says, for all of us, "I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and although I couldn't have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery." (Magus, p. 19) He is "fascinated and irritated" (Magus, p. 192) by the masque Conchis presents and he wants desperately to understand it rationally. When Lily tells him that she is Astarte, mother of mystery, Nicholas replies that he is an atheist. She tells him she will have to teach him faith. Nicholas asks, "'In mystification?" She replies, "'Among other things.'" (Magus, p. 206) Above all, magic and mystery depend on the imagination.
Lily asks Nicholas, "'Why must you always know where you are? Have you never heard of imagination?'
*(Magus, p. 197)*

The fairy tale of "The Prince and the Magician" in *The Magus* is another example of Fowles' interest in the perpetuation of mystery and magic as a kind of synthesis. In it, the Prince, whose father had told him that princesses, islands and God do not exist, runs away and sees islands, princesses and a man who says he is God. He returns and tells his father, who says the man who claimed he is God is a magician. That man tells the Prince that in fact, his father is a magician. The father admits it. The Prince, thoroughly confused, says, "'I must know the real truth, the truth beyond magic.'" The Prince, now full of sadness, says he will kill himself, and the King by magic causes death to appear and beckon to him. The Prince remembers the beautiful but unreal islands and princesses and says, "'Very well, I can bear it,'" and his father reassures him, "'You see, my son, you too now begin to be a magician.'
*(Magus, p. 552)* In other words, Fowles says, we cannot know what is the real truth beyond magic, or even if there is any real truth. But faced with the truth of our own deaths, we can bear that mystery, with the aid of our imaginations.
Imagination is stressed in *Daniel Martin*, and Fowles worries through Daniel that "Somewhere the cinema, like television, was atrophying a vital psychic function: the ability to imagine for oneself." *(DM, p. 274)* Dan, like Nicholas, begins to discover how much man's survival depends upon his recovery of imagination as a tool. He notes to himself, "*If a life is largely made of retreats from reality, its relation must be of retreats from the imagined.*" He continues to turn this idea over in his mind:

The irony is that all artists, at least in the process of creation, are much more "divine" than any first cause one might arrive at, theologically or scientifically, on the evidence. They are not of course genetically, environmentally or technically free; imprisoned inside whatever gifts they have, whatever past and present experience; nonetheless, even that limited freedom is far greater, because of the immense forest constituted by the imagined, because of the permission Western society grants them to roam in it, than any other form of human being, except perhaps the mystic and the madman, can attain. That is the one reality, and it is largely unconnected with the reception the public accords the eventual product of the retreat. *(DM, p. 276)*

The German professor, already mentioned as a synthesizing force in *Daniel Martin*, tells Daniel that "'Time is the source of all human illusion.'" Dan asks, "'Which we're condemned to?'" The professor replies, "'In our bodies. But I think we can try with the imagination.'" *(DM, p. 515)*
The success of the imagination and vision and its superiority to scientific study in the realm of art also is expressed in "The Ebony Tower," in which David Williams, the young theory-trained artist, reflects bitterly about Breasley's success, "One had acquired the best equipment one could afford--and one looked up. There on the summit stood a smirking old satyr in carpet slippers, delightedly damning all common sense and calculation." ("ET", p. 50) Diane shares his sense of frustration. "You've spent three years getting all the right attitudes to painting. Knowing even less what you're doing at the end than you did at the beginning. Then you meet this ridiculous old ragbag of all the wrong attitudes. And he's there. All your clever little triumphs and progresses are suddenly cut down to scale." ("ET", p. 59) What the ridiculous old ragbag knows that the younger artist still must learn is the need to become one's own magician through the power of the imagination.

Paradoxically, a third solution to the dialectical crisis depends upon language, one of the aspects of literature most vigorously discredited by postmodernists. Although it is not reliable for truth, they believe, language can offer great powers of synthesis as the voice of myth, magic,
mystery and imagination. Graff notes De Man's distinction here in saying that language is "divided into two opposing and incommensurable camps--De Man divides it into language that de-constructs itself by calling attention to its own fictiveness and undecidability and language that presumes a naive confidence in its ontological authority. This antithesis is in turn supported by a metaphysics which holds that language cannot possibly transcend its fictive self-enclosure."168 The failings of language have led some disillusioned writers to move towards silence. Others, though, have expressed the belief that freeing language from the responsibility of truthful representation is a liberation of language for new fiction. Martin writes that

To preserve poetry it is necessary to preserve language from complacency, mendacity and indifference. By exposing the contradictions that lie just below the conventional surface of linguistic usage, the poet safeguards meaning and the possibility of creation.169

Barth expresses great confidence in the possibilities of language. He reassures writers that "The number of splendid sayable things--metaphors for the dawn or the sea, for example--is doubtless finite; it is also doubtless very large, perhaps virtually infinite."170 All that is required of the writer (and the reader as well) is to summon
the magical powers of creation resting in his imagination. Fowles' response, as might be expected, is a positive acceptance of a still-potent language. Wolfe even says that "Fowles views art as the best kind of human communication; literature, because of the subtlety and inclusiveness of language, he views as the premier art form." The source of language's strength as an art is in metaphor. For this reason, Fowles writes in *The Aristos*, a stylistic distortion of reality is often much more effective than a straightforward description. "Fifty-breasted fertility goddesses are clearly not failures to portray realistically, but visual translations of feeling. The parallel in language is the development of metaphor and all that goes beyond the strict needs of communication."

(Aristos, p. 191) All of art, after all, is nothing other than a variety of languages, Fowles says, some of which function better in certain situations than others:

The "languages" of the other arts are all languages of the mind minus words. Music is the language of aural sensation; painting, of visual; sculpture, of plastic-visual. They are all language substitutes of one kind or another, though in certain fields and situations these language substitutes are far more effective in communicating than verbal language proper. Visual art can convey appearance better than words but as soon as it tries to convey what lies behind visual appearance, words
are increasingly likely to be of more use and value. (Aristos, p. 204)

Significantly, Fowles writes that "The word is inherent in every artistic situation, if for no other reason than that we can analyze our feelings about the other arts only in words. This is because the word is man's most precise and inclusive tool; and poetry is the using of this most precise and inclusive tool memorably." (Aristos, p. 206) That statement might provoke some disagreement from radical postmodernists who seek to escape any attempt to translate art into written theory. They stress the immediate, non-verbal encounter with the art. However, Fowles is consistent in his acceptance of the frame of language, and his emphasis is on the possibilities of metaphor which allow language to be inclusive and liberating, rather than imprisoning. Because our approach to language has been formal and rigid and dominated by rules does not mean that language is restrictive, but that we need to reexamine our use of it. Charles in The French Lieutenant's Woman realizes in a moment of clarity the difference between him and Sarah:

He saw, too, what had always been dissonant between them: the formality of his language... and the directness of hers. Two languages, betraying on the one side a hollowness, a foolish
constraint—but she had just said it, an artificiality of conception—and on the other a substance and purity of thought and judgment; the difference between a simple colophon, say, and some page decorated by Noel Humphreys, all scrollwork, elaboration, rococo horror of void. (FLW, p. 351)

While Fowles calls the word the most precise of man's tools in The Aristos, in Daniel Martin he calls it "the most imprecise of signs." (DM, p. 87) This is because, as he has indicated, the metaphor as expression can work so well to convey the essence of the thought or feeling. There is no contradiction here, since what Fowles is saying is that imprecise signs can be very precise tools. About the imprecision of the word he says, "Only a science-obsessed age could fail to comprehend that this is its great virtue, not its defect." (DM, p. 87) Explaining his own moderate position against the background of extremists in the debate about language, he writes:

But just as in physics we begin to realize the extent of our knowledge—what we can know and what we can never know—so in art we have reached the extremes in techniques. We have used words in all the extreme ways, sounds in all the extreme ways, shapes and colours in all the extreme ways; all that remains is to use them within the extreme ways already developed. We have reached the end of our fields. Now we must come back, and discover other occupations than reaching the ends of fields. (Aristos, pp. 202-203)

What Fowles is complaining about is the feeling among many writers that, in order to be
creative, their work must do something new; for literature this means an obligation on the part of the writer somehow to use language in new ways. The emphasis on newness is intended to act as a synthesis of technology and art. Sukenick, for example, says, "We badly need a new way of thinking about novels that acknowledges their technological reality." And now we see the proliferation of works about their surfaces, their own technology. Kostelanetz also stresses newness: "even the most innovative fictions embody at least one element of the classic literary art," he admits, "whether that be heightened language, the semblance of narrative, credible detail, or developed characterizations; but it is highly unlikely, though not impossible, that a story containing all of these elements will be unquestionably new." 

Sontag even suggests that the opposition is only an illusion in a time of profound and bewildering historical change and that the emphasis in newness is a result of the fact that we are developing an entirely new, synthesizing sensibility:

What we are witnessing is not so much a conflict of cultures as the creation of new (potentially unitary) kind of sensibility. . . . What we are getting at is not the demise of art, but a transformation of the function of art. Art, which arose in human society as a magical-religious operation, and passed over into
a technique for depicting and commenting on secular reality, has in our time arrogated to serving a secularized religious function, nor merely secular or profane. . . . Art today is a new kind of instrument, an instrument for modifying consciousness and organizing new modes of sensibility.174

To Fowles, the preoccupation with newness, even if it is the representation of a new sensibility, is unacceptable. He criticizes an essay by Robbe-Grillet, Pour un nouveau roman (1963) on this very point:

The fallacy of one of his conclusions—we must discover a new form to write in if the novel is to survive—is obvious. It reduces the purpose of the novel to the discovery of new forms: whereas its other purposes—to entertain, to satirize, to describe new sensibilities, to record life, to improve life, and so on—are clearly just as viable and important. But his obsessive pleading for new form places a kind of stress on every passage one writes today. ("Notes", p. 90)

What requires more genius than novelty and fashion is the successful challenging of the old traditions in art. To risk comparison by facing convention is more of an accomplishment than declaring convention dead and buried. Too many current artists are like Charles, Fowles regrets to say:

Laziness was, I am afraid, Charles's distinguishing trait. . . . But how could one write history with Macaulay so close behind? Fiction or poetry, in the midst of the greatest galaxy of talent in the history of English literature? How could one be a creative scientist, with
Lyell and Darwin still alive? Be a statesman, with Disraeli and Gladstone polarizing all the available space? You will see that Charles set his sights high. Intelligent idlers always have, in order to justify their idleness to their intelligence. (FLW, p. 19)

Fowles is implying that the writers who insist that a work must be new in order to be creative are afraid that their own work might not measure up to the greatness of their predecessors. The easy way out is to jettison the work of the predecessors. In "The Ebony Tower," Fowles asserts that the representational artist, or any artist who uses conventional methods of expression, takes a greater risk than all others, since his work risks comparison to all that has come before it:

As with so much of Breasley's work there was an obvious previous iconography—in this case, Uccello's Night Hunt and its spawn down through the centuries; which was in turn a challenged comparison, a deliberate risk. . . just as the Spanish drawings had defied the great shadow of Goya by accepting its presence, even using and parodying it, so the memory of the Ashmolean Uccello somehow deepened and buttressed the painting before which David sat . . . behind the modernity of so many of the surface elements there stood both a homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition. ("ET", p. 17)

There is a fourth means of synthesis which, like the synthesis offered by language, consists of creating a new attitude to a given situation. The fact that it is difficult, if not impossible
finally, to determine what is reality and what is fiction is unnerving in one view since it under­
mines the rational framework of our lives; the postmodernist method of synthesis, however, sug­
gests that it is possible to view the mixture of fiction and objective fact as a blessing in dis­
guise, since all things imaginable become possible. Living itself becomes a creative process; life a work of art. Thus the blend of fact and fiction is desirable.

Stern observes that "the differences between fact and invention seem to be blurring. . . . Facts are much too unstable and mysterious today. They don't have the density they had some years back. And the imagination is so dense and so real today--and not just via drugs--that a mix is taking place."175 Hassan, referring to R. Buck­
minster Fuller and John McHale in The Future of The Future, says this need not be cause for alarm but rather cause for celebration. "The mythical world of recurrence, the historical world of continuity, prove inadequate temporal models of the world we are creating. There are those who believe that the future can now be anything we want to make it."176

Fiction, in order to exemplify the changes in consciousness characteristic of this age which
craves both/and rather than either/or, should have "one foot in fantasy, one is objective reality." Barth says. He supports writing that provides a "synthesis of straitforwardness and artifice, realism and magic and myth, political passion and nonpolitical artistry, characterization and caricature, humor and terror. . . ." Fowles' novels demonstrate the extent to which lives can be fictionalized, staged and produced, in effect, invented. In The Magus, life is shown to be "a new art form in which the telescoping of various illusions facilitates a recognition of personal values." Conchis tells Nicholas that he does not object to the principles of fiction but only to the fact that, in print, they remain only principles. He plans to use the principles in life, creating more with people than with words, in the same way that Fowles creates with characters. He tells Nicholas that he has envisioned a new kind of theater:

"One in which the conventional separation between actors and audience was abolished. In which the scenic geography, the notions of proscenium, stage, auditorium, were completely discarded. In which continuity of performance, either in time or place, was ignored. And in which the action, the narrative was fluid, with only a point of departure and a fixed point of conclusion. Between those points the participants invent their own drama." His mesmeric
eyes pinned mine. "You will find that Artaud and Pirandello and Brecht were all thinking, in their different ways, along similar lines. But they had neither the money nor the will—and doubtless, not the time—to think as far as I did. The element they could not bring themselves to discard was the audience. (Magus, p. 404)

This "meta-theatre" analogue for life is of course all improvised. June tells Nicholas, "'If you like, the rat is given a kind of parity with the experimenter. It also can dictate the walls of the maze. As you have, perhaps without fully realizing it.'" (Magus, p. 478)

The French Lieutenant's Woman, too, is in part a discussion of the extent to which we make art out of our lives. The author/narrator tells the reader:

I said earlier that we are all poets, though not many of us write poetry; and so are we all novelists, that is, we have a habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves, although perhaps today we incline more to put ourselves into a film. We screen our minds' hypotheses about how we might behave, about what might happen to us; and these novelistic or cinematic hypotheses often have very much more effect on how we actually do behave, when the real future becomes the present, than we generally allow. (FLW, p. 266)

Sarah believes that as an artist creating her life, she must be willing to shape it and judge it. She tries to explain to Charles her reason for leaving him as an artistic necessity. "'I have since seen artists destroy work that might to
the amateur seem perfectly good. I remonstrated once. I was told that if an artist is not his own sternest judge he is not fit to be an artist. I believe that is right. I believe I was right to destroy what had begun between us." (FLW, p. 351) When Charles complains that she ought not to "answer him with observations, however apposite, on art," she replies (speaking for Fowles, too), "'They were intended to apply to life as well.'" (FLW, p. 352)

The whole of Daniel Martin obviously is about fictionalizing one's life; it is an autobiographical novel of Daniel the scriptwriter. One passage, in particular, though, is notable for what Fowles suggests in it. He offers an artist-figure as a guide to life, linking him to Christ. After leaving Jenny, Daniel confronts a Rembrandt self-portrait and as he moves away he sees that, "... Rembrandt's eyes still seemed to follow Dan over the young head implacably; as many years before, when he was their age, his father had once unwittingly terrified him by insisting that Christ's eyes followed ... wherever you went, whatever you did, they watched." (DM, p. 629) the same way, Fowles implies, the spirit of art hovers over everything we do.
All the aforementioned means to achieve synthesis become, for Fowles, parts of an ultimate goal of wholeness in literature, a wholeness and fullness harkening back to realism at its best. He says in an interview, "We need a return to the great tradition of the English novel--realism. English is a naturally empirical language; I suppose that's why realism haunts all our arts." He does not mean by this that writing today should try to imitate realistic writing of the past, but that contemporary writers ought to take a lesson from realism in which reality is injected with a sense of mystery and magic. He offers an example:

The apple of my own unlearned Gothic eye, Pisanello, is a case in point. European art has no finer realist draughtsman of natural forms... his imagined world was based firmly on clinical exact observation. Yet you can search the paintings and the great murals at Verona and Mantua in vain for a real countryside. It is as if a trained biologist drew each detail; and a blind mystic dreamed the whole. ("Other Edens," p. 524)

Solotaroff, on close examination of Fowles' lack of formal experimentation relative to that of other current writers, concludes that his apparent preference for realism is no less than an attempt "to create a revolution in the consciousness of his time..." New consciousness does not necessarily require new forms in literature any more
than it does in any other field of writing. . . . And while it is true that new literary forms can provoke new consciousness, I think that it tends more often to work the other way around. In any case, modernism, which has tended to identify originality and individuality with formal innovation exclusively, has left the writers who still subscribe to it increasingly high and dry, i.e. rarefied and empty.182

Fowles is striving to achieve an incorporation in his novels, which he feels is similar to that achieved by the best realists. Palmer believes that he reaches his goal. "By stylistic mastery and experimental inventiveness Fowles creates worlds which can be mystical, mythical or starkly real; or, as is most often the case, all three simultaneously."183

In The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles' belief in all-inclusiveness is expressed in his desire for a renewal of the superiority of the general over the specific. He writes, "... but think of Darwin, of The Voyage of the Beagle, The Origin of Species is a triumph of generalization, not specialization; and even if you could prove to me that the latter would have been better for Charles the ungifted scientist, I should still maintain the former was better for Charles the human being. It is not that amateurs can afford to dabble everywhere; they ought to dabble everywhere, and damn the scientific prigs who try to
shut them up in some narrow oubliette." (FLW, p. 45) As he watches over a conversation between Charles and Dr. Grogan, Fowles as narrator complains, "What doctor today knows the classics? What amateur can talk comprehensibly to scientists? These two men's was a world without the tyranny of specialization; and I would not have you--nor would Dr. Grogan, as you will see--confuse progress with happiness."

(FLW, p. 123)

Wholeness is a theme stressed in Daniel Martin, too. In the last scene of the novel, Dan tells Jane that he has found a last sentence for the novel that he will never write. Dan, the author, then tells the reader that Daniel's "ill-concealed ghost has made that impossible last his own impossible first." (DM, p. 629) The first sentence of Daniel Martin is: "Whole sight; or all the rest is desolation." (DM, p. 3)

Wholeness for Daniel is provided by Jane and by his writing; these two elements of his life are the dualities which are synthesized by his individual vision. About Jane he says, "But I knew something in Jane's presence satisfied some deep need in me of recurrent structure in both real and imagined events; indeed married the real and imagined; justified both." (DM, p. 396) About
his writing he explains:

He had never been a literary experimenter, an avantgardist; but he would not have been a writer if ordinary expectation, life as it is, had satisfied his deeper psychological bent. And now--this seemed very near the heart of it to him--he felt that life itself had backed his view: had broken codes he might have flinched at breaking if he had been inventing the situation, had performed a kind of magic not with causality, but the timing, precipitation and conjunction of the results of causality. It was like an unsettling of fixed statistical probability, a release from mire, a liberation, a yes from the heart of reality to the supposed artifice of art. (DM, p. 207)
Throughout this discussion I have referred to two types of postmodernism— one I have called revolutionary, radical and extreme, and the other mature and moderate. The former tends to reject all past conventions in art, often associating them with oppression, conformity and reactionary politics, and to reject any semblance of intentional, meaningful coherence in a work, emphasizing instead the work's surface and pattern in an effort to undermine the concept of representation of some universally shared objective reality. The latter, emerging from the revolutionary whirlpool, seeks a synthesis in fiction between objective reality and fantasy which gives equal time and space to both, suggesting simply that it is time to do some spring cleaning in aesthetics and to throw out those mildewed concepts which cannot be meaningful to a postwar world. Unlike the radical postmodernists, they are interested in fiction as a distinctly human activity, the purpose of which is to nurture human existence, which, they believe, is badly in need of a dose of myth and mystery and wonder.

What we are seeing in this maturing postmodernism is literature, pressed through the strainer of revolutionary, apocalyptic postmodernism, emerging
as post-postmodern humanism. It is to this new humanism that John Fowles belongs. Humanism, like postmodernism and existentialism, is a term which has come to mean many different things to different people. Warren Allen Smith in an article, "Are You a Humanist? Some Authors Answer," isolates seven varieties: 1) General Humanism denoting devotion to the humanities or to human interests; 2) Ancient Humanism including the philosophies of Protagoras, Socrates, Democritus, Epicurus, Lucretius, Pericles and Aristotle; 3) Classical Humanism referring to the ancient views brought back during the Renaissance by such men as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Erasmus, Montaigne, More and Bacon; also the "neoclassical" revival of humanism by Brownell, Babbitt, More and T. S. Eliot; 4) Theistic Humanism of Jacques Maritain, Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, who emphasize human values and man's capability of working out his salvation with his God; 5) Atheistic Humanism of the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre; 6) Communistic Humanism signifying the philosophic beliefs of Lenin, Stalin and other modern communists; 7) Naturalistic Humanism which includes "an eclectic set of beliefs born of the modern scientific age and centered upon a faith in the supreme value and self-perfectability of human personality; differs from theistic humanism by its
rejection of any form of supernaturalism, from atheistic humanism by its optimism and relative agnosticism rather than absolute atheism, and from communistic humanism by its opposition to any belief not founded upon the freedom and significance of the individual. 184

The humanism of Fowles and that of the mature postmodernists is really none of the above. It is most opposed to the traditional concept of humanism—the classical and neo-classical humanism—which focuses on the nobility and elevation of man, maintaining a standard of high seriousness and truth to the universal law of reason. Irving Babbitt, for example, in On Being Creative and Other Essays defends what he calls "a positive and critical humanism."185 To him, "the avoidance of excess"186 and "control of the appetite by reason"187 have been the proper aims of the humanist since the time of the ancient Greeks.

The driving towards a complete breakdown of systems of belief, the expose of language, the nihilism and self-destructiveness of much of radical postmodern aesthetics had as its goal the hastened death of literature, in order that a reincarnation of literature might occur. Visionary, chaotic collages reminiscent of modernism appeared to indicate the extreme range of possibilities. Faced with this apparently uncompromising assault
on their world view and indeed on the sanctity of history itself, outraged old-guard humanists such as Babbitt understandably were certain that post-modernist culture threatened to lead to no less than the destruction of civilization. Babbitt says "... the whole modern experiment is in danger of assuming the aspect of a return to chaos." 188 The old guard saw what Daniel Stern says is our age's answer to Thomas Aquinas's definition of beauty as wholeness, harmony and radiance: "Our wholeness was fragmented at Hiroshima. Our vision of harmony died in a gas chamber at Auschwitz. And our sense of radiance, whose source was the notion of a God shining with love has been obscured by a black cloud of doubt." 189 What could these humanists think, after all, when "The surface of the external world, so laboriously charted over the last three thousand years, suddenly explodes; perception loses its power as a restraint on imagination; the fictive sense dissolves--and modern man teters on the verge of the abyss of subjective longing. . . ." 190 Hayden White summarizes the fears of the old-guard humanists (using as examples three critics, Popper, Auerbach and Gombrich):

They were inclined to see the recognized pioneers of contemporary art and thought, from Picasso to Rauschenberg, Schoenberg to Cage, Artaud to Resnais,
Joyce to Nathalie Sarraute, Yeats to Ginsberg, Freud to N. O. Brown, and Max Weber to Marcuse, as repudiating the very principle that has made progress in society, art, and thought possible in modern civilization. The new avant-garde represents to them an attack upon the world view which produced a culture that was both scientific (hence orderly) and humanistic (hence liberating). . . .

To them, realism in thought and art is indicative of an open society and the increasing control by man of his physical and cultural world. Therefore, the attack on realism by avant-garde artists, from modernists to postmodernists, has been interpreted by the old humanists to be "either insane in its motivation or criminal in its intent." 192

To the postmodernists, however, the old-guard humanists are already dinosaurs, since their views have lost all credibility in the light of developments during the first half of the twentieth century. Rather than adapting to change, they have allowed themselves to become fossilized, and are in much the same position, Steiner says, of "those tenacious, aggrieved spirits who continued to envision the earth as a flat table after it had been circumnavigated, or who persisted in believing in occult propulsive energies after Newton had formulated the laws of motion and inertia. 193
The time has come for the old guard to step out of its prison into the realm of possibilities. They need not be disturbed, for example, to hear Sontag say that "A great work of art is never simply (or even mainly) a vehicle of ideas or of moral sentiments. It is, first of all, an object modifying our consciousness and sensibility, changing the composition, however slightly, of the humus that nourishes all specific ideas and sentiments." Sontag is reassuring. "Outraged humanists, please note. There is no need for alarm. A work of art does not cease being a moment in the conscience of mankind, when moral conscience is understood as only one of the functions of consciousness." Naomi Lebowitz Gordon in Humanism and the Absurd in the Modern Novel explains. "It is easy to underrate the flexibility of humanism. But humanism, as it can work with any shape of history, can work with forms favored by the contemporary sensibility--confession, satanic debate, and parody--and can turn them to its own uses." Gordon emphasizes "That literature, like all our institutions and rationalizations, is counterfeit is no matter for despair. On the contrary, this recog-
nition of absurdity helps the humanist to remain merely human since he is aware of the lies of life and his own pretense." In other words, there is room for everyone, and the view of man ought to be an inclusive and fluid one, rather than exclusive and rigidly defined.

The most important aspect of the new world view is that it must be fundamentally a human perspective. In Liberations, Hassan declares that "A post-humanism is in the making," and that the humanities now face a challenge. "Humanists must enter the sphere of active symbols now surrounding the earth and bring to it what they know of language and the sovereign imagination. Humanists must enter the future. They must also dream."

The proper course for writers also is to humanize what has seemed to be anti-human, for example, urban landscapes and technology. Traditionally the humanities have viewed technology and urbanization as the enemy; now, Michael Wolff suggests that the humanities ought to "try to provide some humane equivalent to the technology of material urbanization. Applied science has created the means of modernization; but there is no applied humanities to enable people to take advantage of these means without the accompanying 'dehumanization.'"
Postmodern art is best prepared to accomplish this reconciliation, Stern says, because it is aimed at "the time of the technological man--the man who is at home with doomsday--because he understands Doomsday Machines. He is post-humanist." He has been well-prepared by the predecessors of postmodernism, the writers who founded the Modern movement. "Cautionary and moral beneath their magnificent aesthetic experiments, their job was to remind us when we were made; that is, when we were jeopardizing our essential humanity. This was a humanist vision, a humanist action. And their art, so apparently revolutionary and incomprehensible at the time, is now seen to be profoundly humanistic in texture." It is apparent that humanism has survived and actually has been rehabilitated by the exposure to postmodernism. Understanding this new humanism of a reincarnated literature strained through revolutionary aesthetics, we can see clearly now that Fowles is a postmodernist-influenced new humanist, and not an old-fashioned, reactionary realist. His attempts to bring about a synthesis through acceptance of mystery of the schism in consciousness is ultimately a humanist goal.

Traditional humanism, Fowles says, "is a philosophy of the law, of what can be rationally
established. It has two great faults. One lies in its inherent contempt for the mysterious, the irrational and the emotional. The other is that humanism is of its nature tolerant: but tolerance is the observer's virtue, not the governor's." (Aristos, p. 113) Clearly, a new humanism is called for.

To extract the human element from art is to deny that art's specific value for man is that it is the "richest, most complex and most easily comprehensible, medium of communication between human beings." (Aristos, p. 184) Scientific mathematical art, for example, is inhuman. To Breasley, in "The Ebony Tower", anyone who paints "obstructs" is following in the "Footsteps of Pythagoras" and what's worse, that kind of artist is out to destroy the human body altogether in what he views as the greatest of betrayals. As Diane explains to Williams "'Henry feels that full abstraction represents a flight from human and social responsibility.'" ("ET", p. 39) Breasley draws an analogy for emphasis: "'Good wines, know what they do? Piss on them. Piss in the vat. . . . Fit ten Englishmen into a Frenchman's little finger. . . . Not oil. Pigment. All Shit. If it's any good. Merde. Human excrement. Excrementum. That which grows out. That's your fundamental.
Not your goddam prissy little bits of abstract good taste.'" ("ET", p. 41)

One of the most powerful expressions of humanism is love in Fowles' writing. Art is connected ultimately with love, and love is a form of communication. Breasley says, "'Don't hate, can't love. Can't love, can't paint. . . . Bloody geometry. No good.'" ("ET", p. 43) Diane interprets, "'Art is a form of speech. Speech must be based on human needs, not abstract theories of grammar. Or anything but the spoken word. The real word.'" ("ET", p. 20)

In Fowles' three major novels, The Magus, The French Lieutenant's Woman and Daniel Martin, we have already seen that love is a humanizing, synthesizing force between Nicholas and Alison, Charles and Sarah, and Daniel and Jane. Fowles wonders in The Magus why people have grown so afraid of love. "In our age it is not sex that raises its ugly head, but love." (Magus, p. 34) The ending to that book is a request in Latin: "cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet." (Magus, p. 656) (He who has never loved, let him love tomorrow; and he who has loved, let him love tomorrow.)

The publisher's notes on the book jacket of Daniel Martin advertise it as a novel "intended as
a defense and illustration of an unfashionable philosophy, humanism." (DM, jacket) It might be argued that Fowles' version of humanism is perhaps the expression of the newest fashion, post-post-modernist humanism. The question that Daniel must answer in the novel, that every individual must try to answer, is asked in a passage Fowles includes from Lukacs: "... is man the helpless victim of transcendental and inexplicable forces, or is he a member of a human community in which he can play a part, however small, towards its modification or reform?" (DM, p. 500) It is obvious which view Fowles prefers. Facing the self-portrait of Rembrandt whose eyes follow him like the eyes in a portrait of Christ, Daniel receives Fowles' message. "Dan began at last to detect it behind the surface of the painting; behind the sternness lay the declaration of the true marriage in the mind of mankind is allowed, the ultimate citadel of humanism. No true compassion without will, no true will without compassion." (DM, p. 629)

Before all else, Fowles says, literature must speak to the universal condition of human beings or, as John Barth says, "to speak eloquently and memorably to our still-human hearts and conditions as the great artists have always done." For
this reason Fowles is opposed to the fiction of some current American authors which breeds "a sort of rococo cleverness which may be interesting to literary cliques and other stratospheric elements of the literary world, but which basically says nothing about the human condition, which teaches nothing, which does not touch people's hearts. I believe in the heart." The final synthesis, the ultimate reconciliation of the two cultures can be achieved only in the spirit of humanism, in the light of its significance to the human experience. Our goal, Fowles believes, is "To accept one's limited freedom, to accept one's isolation, to accept this responsibility, to learn one's particular powers, and then with them to humanize the whole: that is the best for this situation."

(Aristos, p. 214)
Endnotes


6 Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 65.


9 Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 70.


12 Lodge, p. 62.


14 Lodge, p. 220.

16Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 66.

17Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 69.


19Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 68.


21Howe, p. 13.


26John Fowles, Daniel Martin (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 86. All subsequent references are to this edition.


28Graff, p. 55.


31 Russell, p. 5.
32 Howe, p. 22.
35 George Steiner, "The Retreat from the Word," Kenyon Review, XXIII No. 2 (Spring 1961), 193.
36 Steiner, p. 187.
38 Graff, pp. 88-89.
40 Russell, p. 15.
44 Russell, p. 6.
46 Wolfe, p. 83.
48 Palmer, p. 3.


52 Sukenick, p. 45.


54 Howe, p. 38.

55 Howe, p. 19.

56 Martin, pp. 422-23.

57 Martin, p. 424.

58 Hassan, The Dismemberment of Orpheus, p. 140.


60 Lodge, p. 225.

61 Hassan, The Dismemberment of Orpheus, p. 160.


64 Newquist, p. 224.

65 Palmer, p. 3.

66 Lodge, p. 226.


Graff, pp. 37-38.

Graff, p. 81.

Graff, p. 188.

Wolfe, p. 43.


For a description of nihilism see Howe, p. 37.

Rackham, p. 102.

Berets, p. 93.

Howe, p. 38.


Russell, pp. 15-16.

Graff, p. 9.

Graff, p. 27.

Graff, p. 79.

Graff, p. 194.


Sontag, "Against Interpretation," p. 4.

Sontag, "Against Interpretation," p. 5.

Lodge, p. 52.

Newquist, p. 222.


Graff, p. 31.

Scholes, p. 236.

Lodge, p. 25.


Ricardou, p. 131.

Graff, p. 8.

Newquist, p. 223.

Newquist, p. 223.
106 Russell, p. 3.
107 Palmer, p. 76.
110 Wolfe, p. 83.
111 Rackham, p. 96.
112 Palmer, p. 56.
113 Palmer, p. 64.
115 Pearce, p. 47.
116 Pearce, p. 51.
118 Palmer, p. 70.
119 Lodge, p. 226.
120 Palmer, p. 76.
122 Palmer, p. 110.
123 Palmer, pp. 110-111.
125 Graff, p. 221.
126 Brantlinger, p. 339.
127 Palmer, p. 5.
128 Wolfe, p. 134.
130 Palmer, p. 65.
133 Federman, p. 13.
134 Sukenick, p. 38.
135 Wolfe, p. 135.
136 Palmer, p. 68.
139 Lodge, p. 70.
142 Steiner, p. 192.
143 Lodge, p. 220
146 Palmer, p. 3-4.
147 Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 69.
148 Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 70.
149 Lodge, p. 71.
151 White, p. 59.
152 Howe, p. 23.
155 Calvino, p. 77.
156 Barth, The Literature of Exhaustion," p. 34.
157 Lodge, p. 226.
158 Berets, pp. 89.
159 Berets, pp. 89-90.
160 Palmer, pp. 2-3.
161 Fiedler, "Cross the Border--Close the Gap," p. 480.
162 Fiedler, "Cross the Border--Close the Gap," p. 485.
163 Howe, pp. 27-28.
164 Hassan, The Dismemberment of Orpheus, p. 258.
166 Berets, p. 94.
167 Berets, p. 96.
168 Graff, p. 96.
169 Martin, p. 435.
171 Wolfe, p. 23.
172 Sukenick, p. 39.
175 Stern, p. 33.
176 Hassan, The Dismemberment of Orpheus, p. 247.
177 Barth, "The Literature of Replenishment," p. 70.
179 Rackham, p. 94.
180 Newquist, p. 220.
182 Solotaroff, p. 3.
183 Palmer, p. 1.

Babbitt, p. xiv

Babbitt, p. xv.


Stern, p. 27.

White, p. 64.

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Steiner, p. 193.


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