One of the best metafictional examples of extended thematized allegory of the shared creative process involved in writing and reading is to be found in John Fowles's novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman. This novel is worth closer investigation here because it also brings to the fore many of the other motifs and devices of the overt kind of diegetic narcissism that has been the topic of discussion in the last chapter. For this reason, it stands almost as a model. It also clearly demonstrates the distinguishing differences (thanks to the thematized role of the reader) between modern metafiction and earlier forms of novelistic self-consciousness.

Overwhelmed by the self-aware Chapter Thirteen of the novel, the reviewers, while labouring the obvious Victorian parody, the motif of existential freedom, and the theme of social evolution, denounced the self-conscious coyness of Fowles himself, whom they apparently took to be the narrator of the novel- an error about which college freshmen are constantly being warned. That the narrator is not Fowles is what makes an otherwise commonplace literary device both interesting and problematic. Here we are dealing with a number of worlds within worlds. The core or most traditional novelistic universe is that of the characters. Outside and including that is a world in which exist the man in the train, the impresario-in other words, the narrator's personae who enter, at times, the core world. Outside that is the diegetic world of the narrator's voice. But beyond even that stands John Fowles- the man who masterminds both the creation of the Chinese-box structure
and the tensions which exist between these worlds and which are functional within the novel as a whole. In each universe, there is a \textit{mise en abyme} of a creator figure- Sarah, the personae, the narrator- and outside the last of these worlds stands the author, \textit{outside} it. Realism, as the novel reveals and as the narrator suggests in Chapter Thirteen, has once more been redefined- with the aid of the \textit{nouveau roman}- and the allegorical structure of this novel and its preoccupation with imaginative process belie the narrator’s modest opinion that this cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word.

One of the thematized concerns of the novel that is openly theorizes upon in Chapter Thirteen is the problem of the real versus the imaginary. The narrator realizes that, like Sarah and himself, the reader constantly fictionalizes his own life, that the act of making fictions is a natural and “vital” human function. All novelists, we are told, also “\textit{wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is.}” The narrator continues: “We know a world is an organism, not a machine. We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live.” The Romantic awkwardness of this formulation can perhaps be avoided by translation into more formalistic terms: There is a certain inner logic, or motivation, which comes with the process of creating the novelistic universe and which makes imperious demands upon the novelist, forcing him to abandon any plans conceived before putting pen to paper.

The narrator hastens to assure his reader that he is not being unduly artificial or coy, for the act of creating a self-contained world analogous to our own is a very natural act- for each of us. He writer: “I have disgracefully broken the illusion? No” (p.97). Yet one could reply, yes, only to establish a new illusion in which he is a part- a wider heterocosm. When he remarks, “My characters still exist, and in a reality no less, or no more, real than the one I have just broken,” then one could just as easily claim that his new reality is the reader’s new illusion. For the reader, fiction \textit{is} “woven into all”; on another level he is, however, drawn into the reality of the creative process, while remaining distanced from the illusion of the product created, the character’s world.

Despite his intentions in the chapter- to unfold Sarah’s true state of mind- the narrator finds that “possibility is not permissibility,” that his character refuses to allow him his creator’s liberty, \textit{and} that he is morally as well as aesthetically bound to obey her. Fowles’s narrator here is in a tradition of earlier self-conscious writers- Unamuno, Pirandello, Gide- who rejected the theological and artistic implica-

\footnote{1 \textit{The French Lieutenant’s Woman} (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969), p.96, his italics. All further page references will be in parentheses within the text. Note that spellings are Americanized in this edition.}
tions of the novelistic illusion: first, that the novelist is a god who- like God- creates what and how he pleases, since art imitates life and its myriad possibilities; and secondly, that the reader is reading a verisimilar "slice of life" to which, paradoxically, he need not seriously respond, since it is "only a novel," only entertainment, only fictive. In traditional product mimesis, art has its significance in the fact that it mirrors the real. However, a dichotomy exists, since this very mirroring is once removed from reality and is therefore inferior to it. In one sense, then, the moral stress of much mimesis or realism is only ostensible. Fowles, in breaking down this dichotomy, works to establish a different moral and human connection between art and life for the novel genre.

What is of interest is the way in which Fowles effects this new and broader reconciliation. Most of the reviewers and critics of the novel have dwelt lovingly on the Victorian parodic elements -which, it must be allowed, are dutifully pointed out by the modern narrator himself. Fowles's debts to Scott, George Eliot, Thackeray, Arnold, Dickens, Froude, and Hardy are perhaps more or less evident; but his narrator too hides nothing, mentioning Cervantes, Proust, Brecht, Komsard, Flaubert, Milton, Radclyffe Hall, Catullus, Jane Austen, Arnold, Goethe, Dana, Tennyson, Hardy, Dickens- and so on. If he can be accused of playing literary games, the reader is at least carefully taught the rules. Even the characters' thought patterns provide a *mise en abyme* of the novelist's creative process. As Charles looks at Sarah: "it was suddenly, out of nowhere, that Emma Bovary's name sprang into his mind." "Such allusions are comprehensions: and temptations" (p. 120), adds the wary narrator.

Such intertextuality has a function within the novel similar to that of the Victorian parody as a whole. Fowles's use of this parody establishes, as the Russian formalists agreed, a new seriousness, a new code with which he attempts to deal with the ambiguities of both fiction and reality. Out of a temporally and philosophically superseded literary mode comes the illumination of a new form which goes one better than the ideal of Conrad and Ford: not only will Fowles make the reader "see," but he will reveal to him the mechanisms of vision-creating. He will let him see through the spectacles of books in order to let him see more and see differently. Historically, Fowles has no choice; he writes after the *nouveau roman*. While retaining all the moral and social concerns of James and the English novel tradition, he knows that a new, equally "vital" form must emerge from its antiquated conventions. If he self-consciously imitates George Eliot, it is as a way to Roland Barthes.

At various times, Fowles has compared his (and not his narrator's) handling of the parodic material to Stravinsky's eighteenth-century reworkings, to the use of Velasquez made by Picasso and Francis
Bacon, to Prokofiev's "Classical Symphony." His earlier works reveal the same functional role of parody. In The Collector, it is the fiction of Fowles's own generation of "angry young men" and The Tempest as well which are played upon parodically. The Magus is constructed upon the forms of the Bildungsroman, the gothic tale, the masque, psycho-drama, and fantasy (such as Le Grand Meaulnes). He admits to earlier unpublished efforts in the modes of Gide, Flaubert, Lawrence, Defoe, Hemmingway, Chandler, and Hammett. A more recent work, The Ebony Tower, confirms both the literary and broader human functions of parody. The old artist of the title story manages to "buttress" and "deepen" his art through parody. His visitor, a younger painter, sees that "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," and that this is precisely what his own abstract modern art lacks. None of Fowles's novels lacks such support.

Obviously this parodic rehandling functions thematically and structurally on a purely introverted aesthetic level within The French Lieutenant's Woman. However, it also has an extramural role, directing the reader to the moral and social concerns of the novel-concerns which critics seem to have felt were somehow independent of these "coy" self-reflective modalities. The theme of the changes over a century of social evolution would be blatant and unsubtle, if Fowles were claiming that modern man is freer and better than the Victorians whose style he is parodying. The narrator certainly makes the reader aware of the temporal telescoping, but he is not telling him that change is improvement or even that he is so very different from the Victorians. "I suspect," writes the narrator in a related context, "we are in reality dealing with a human constant: the difference is a vocabulary, a degree of metaphor" (p. 268). It is not the fact of temporal telescoping, then, that is significant, but the function of it. This is the point at which literary parody takes on moral and social dimensions; the reader of this novel is never allowed to abstain from judging and questioning himself by condemning or writing off the novel's world as "just" Victorian (as well as "just" fiction). The real and the imaginary, the present and the past, merge for the reader.

This moral function is directly related to the structural and thematic use made in the text of the concept of existential freedom. In his first two novels, Fowles mocks the existentialist pretensions of G. P. and Nicholas Urfe, while presenting aesthetic metaphors or allegories of existential freedom within the novels' fictions. In The French Lieutenant's

Woman it is the ironic, parodic function of the modern narrator to suggest that existentialism is the only view possible for a modern individualist who will see Sarah as Sarah, and not as the French Lieutenant's Whore. In The Aristos, Fowles's remarks suggest that existentialism is, for him, a philosophical counterpart to his own novelistic use of parody: "Existentialism is not a philosophy, but a way of looking at, and utilizing, other philosophies. It is a theory of relativity among theories of absolute truth." Fowles was attracted to the English Victorian age, he claims, not because of its differences from the present, but because it too was "highly existentialist, in many of its personal dilemmas." He did not choose it to make trite and obvious moral statements about the superiority of modern existentialism. It is a vehicle rather for both the aesthetic and moral preoccupations of the novel.

When Ian Adam notes that Sarah is not a fully developed character and then asserts: "The quarrel becomes not one with an existentialist heroine but with her existence. My final reservation about an important novel is aesthetic rather than moral"—he is attempting to separate the inseparable. In the face of Mrs. Poultenay's servant Millie and her "ten miserable siblings," the narrator has come to loathe the dishonest paintings of the "contented country laborer and his brood" by George Morland and Birket Foster. "Each age," claims the narrator, "each guilty age, builds high walls round its Versailles; and personally I hate those walls most when they are made by literature and art" (p. 158). The bowdlerized fiction of the time is therefore abandoned for the "cold reality" of the Commission Reports. The narrator chooses to blur the distinctions between real and fictional in order to stress the necessary link between moral and creative honesty and freedom.

In The Aristos, Fowles claims that freedom is inherent in the best art, as it is in the best science. Both are essentially demolishers of tyranny and dogma (10:181); this is a positive stating of Marx's social and linguistic observation that forms the epigraph to Chapter Thirty: "But the more these conscious illusions of the ruling classes are shown to be false and the less they satisfy common sense, the more dogmatically they are asserted and the more deceitful, moralizing and spiritual becomes the language of established society" (p. 243). There is an obvious connection between the desire for power over someone and a lack of freedom—be it from a Marxist, existentialist, or aesthetic perspective. Marx provides the epigraph to the entire novel: "Every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relations to man himself."

4 (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), 6: 105. Other section references will be in parentheses in the text.
5 "Notes on Writing a Novel," p. 90.
In the core universe it is the ironically named Mr. Freeman and his daughter who pose the greatest threats to Charles's freedom, asking him to pay the price of "the best of his past self to enter their bourgeois world. Charles perceives the need to "reject the notion of possession as the purpose of life" (p. 295), yet in his attempt to release himself from the constraints of his age, to become a free outcast like Sarah, Charles must face another reality. He wants to possess Sarah sexually. That he does so only physically and not in any more significant way, and that he does not see that sexual possession is as potentially negative and freedom-denying as any other act of possession, is made clear at the end of the novel. But even after the seduction scene, Sarah's "You cannot marry me" means "you may not," a refusal Charles is not capable of even imagining—as witnessed by his letter to her about "our future" (p. 370, his italics). Sarah chooses the freedom of fantasy over the bondage of marriage: "I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage" (p. 450).

It is one of Sarah's moral functions in the novel to teach Charles this lesson. She sends him her Exeter address and he sees at once that he must make a choice: "He had not the benefit of existentialist terminology; but what he felt was really a very clear case of the anxiety of freedom" (pp. 340-41). After the seduction, Charles believes that the "false version of her betrayal by Varguennes, her other devices, were but stratagems to unblind him" (p. 368), but he does not recall that Sarah's fictional identity was created before his arrival in Lyme and therefore had another function for Sarah herself, as free woman and as fiction-maker.

That the narrator should characterize her by "passion and imagination" (p. 189) reveals his intuition of the strong ties between the moral or sexual and the artistic. The Victorians saw passion, the reader is told, as a censurable sensuality, imagination as the merely fanciful. Much of the core universe of the novel is about passion and morality; much of the self-conscious storytelling of the wider world is here concerned with imaginative process as a serious and natural human faculty. Imagination and its articulation in verbal fiction constitute profoundly necessary acts for Fowles, and therein lies the importance of language as man's most precise, inclusive, and most evolved human tool, shared by literature and life, art and society. The existential theme of freedom takes shape on the aesthetic level; the only boundaries to a novel are words. Anything that language can do, the novel can do. Fowles feels that the novel is the ultimate free literary form: "This is its downfall and its glory; and explains why [it has] been so often used to establish freedom in other fields, social and political."8

7 See The Aristos, 7: 163; 177; 178; 180; 198, and The Ebony Tower, pp. 186, 277-80.
8 "Notes on Writing a Novel," p. 92.
In a short piece, "Is the Novel Dead?" Fowles contrasts this imaginative freedom of the writing and reading of words to the tyranny of the film-maker's imagination upon that of his passive viewer. Television's threat is not directed towards fiction, he feels, but towards something much more essential to human development and contentment—"the right, the power and the need to exercise the individual imagination" of both writer and reader. This recalls Sarah's alleged moral purpose in her fiction-making. She freely creates an identity, telling Charles that she has lost her virginity, in order to be different: "I did it so that people should point at me, should say, there walks the French Lieutenant's Whore—oh, yes, let the word be said. So that they should know I have suffered, and suffer, as others suffer in every town and village in this land" (pp. 174-75). Charles is quite right in saying: "you cannot tell me it is your duty to offend society" (p. 181), but not for the reasons he presumes. Sarah's identity as the fallen woman is a fiction, yet it may perhaps even attain the status of social reminder, a result more morally commendable at least than the separation of art and reality effected by Victorian painters.

However, the implications of the fiction-making process are "vital" and moral in a more subtle way. "I said earlier," recalls the narrator, "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" (p. 339). In positing the relationship between fiction-shaping and reality in these terms, the narrator hearkens back to a kind of classical aesthetics. In the Poetics, Aristotle saw art as forming, guiding, and developing the concrete into a unified meaning and completeness. Art as mimesis had a cultural and moral function—to shape and form man. As in this novel, moral worth is inseparable from action and events, our own fictionalized ones or those in art. The diegetic narrative act, which Aristotle saw as mimetic as well, is a moral act and it is as such that it is overtly thematized in Fowles's novel.

The laying bare of the mechanism of fiction-making—the element of the trickster, the charlatan, the magus—has always existed in the novelist's role. And the narrator here reveals it most fully, jumping easily in one page over twenty months in time (as does Stendhal), having his characters share time and space with historical realities (as does Scott), footnoting his use of certain epigraphs, clarifying points by quotation of further documentary evidence, and so on. What is interesting is that by using these conventional novelistic devices which are usually employed to authenticate the core universe, the narrator manages to achieve opposite results, validating instead his wider universe. The voice of the narrator is not an exterior authenticating authorial one; it is the voice of a character.

9 Books 1 (Autumn 1970), 2-5
In *The Magus*, Nicholas Urfe realizes that he has created an imaginary god-like novelist to order his own life, to turn it into a fiction in which he is a character. Charles, on the other hand, here tries to be that god himself, to control, to possess. His various fantasies turn out to be unrelated to his reality, however, and it is only in the church in Exeter that he has a “glimpse of another world: a new reality, a new causality, a new creation” (p. 365). But this new fictive universe is again one in which Charles feels the need to be in control, ushering Sarah to Winsyatt, around Europe, and so on. The narrator is always especially careful to separate the unlikely nature of the content, from the valid process, of Charles’s fantasizing.

It is not until the end of the novel that Charles perceives that fiction-making is a freedom-inducing act, not an act of possession, of planning, of control, as it is here. Giving himself up to thought of his future with Sarah, Charles here dreams of his wedding trip: “Moonlight, the distant sound below of some singing gypsies, such grateful tender eyes… and in some jasmine-scented room they would like awake, in each other’s arms, infinitely alone, exiled, yet fused in that loneliness, inseparable in that exile” (p. 400). The descent into romantic cliché tonally underlines the narrator’s- and soon Sarah’s- rejection of a fiction that does not respect the integrity of the protagonist. Sarah rightly refuses and fears the demands of his love upon her freedom, demands she senses without having ever received Charles’s revealing letter.

This freedom and integrity is ultimately also what the narrator’s dandified impresario persona denies. From his vantage point outside his persona’s “heterocosm,” the narrator does not like this character, for “he very evidently regards the world as his to possess and to use as he likes” (p. 462). This is not to say that the narrator condemns himself for being a creator, although any creator who does not respect the inner logic and motivation of his characters is, as has been noted, morally suspect. In the first “on stage” appearance of his persona on the train, the narrator describes this figure’s look as being that of some omnipotent god: “Not at all what we think 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 “ (p. 405). By creating for his prying persona, in Unamuno fashion, this inner but other world somewhere between his own and his characters, the narrator breaks through the illusion of mimetic mirroring by decompartmentalizing what was traditionally considered to be a simple relationship of author to reality. *Neither* of these two particular entities appears in the complex Chinese-box structure of the novel.

The arbitrary persona gives way to the narrator who recognizes the aesthetic demand for a sense of unity of interconnection within the novel world. He must respect the literary integrity of his characters, as
an allegory of his respect for that of other human, non-fictional beings. Charles, when playing fiction-maker himself, "became increasingly unsure of the frontier between the real Sarah and the Sarah he had created in so many such dreams" (p. 428). Indeed, the "real" Sarah is the greatest fiction-maker of the novel, creating her own identity, an identity which, suitably, is not complete in any of Charles's versions: "the one Eve personified, all mystery and love and profundity, and the other a half-scheming, half-crazed governess from an obscure seaside town. He even saw himself coming upon her again-and seeing nothing in her but his own folly and delusion" (p. 429). She is a little of each, and more; she is No One's Woman.

Fiction-making as a potential mode of control, of freedom-denying, is indeed linked in the core world to sexual possession and even love. However, it is also connected to a broader social concern. This is clear in the epigraph to Chapter Thirty-seven-Marx's comment about the bourgeoisie's forcing all nations to adopt its mode of production and thereby to become bourgeois as well: "In a word, it creates a world after its own image" (p. 280), like an omnipotent creator. In rejecting the Freemans' bourgeois values, Charles chooses first his gentlemanly liberty and later the greater freedom which Sarah forces him to face.

Earlier, when Charles had stood at the window of Grogan's office, looking out into the night where Sarah was, he "felt himself in suspension between the two worlds, the warm, neat civilization behind his back, the cool, dark mystery outside" (p. 151). Charles is indeed suspended between two worlds-Ernestina's and Sarah's—both of which are potentially worlds within himself as well. He first hears Sarah's tale from his fiancee and responds: "I wish you hadn't told me the sordid facts. That's the trouble with provincial life. Everyone knows everyone and there is no mystery. No romance." Tina rightly mocks him, "the scientist, the despiser of novels" (p. 10). The irony is that to the end no one will know Sarah and that to label, to know the "facts," is not at all to destroy the mystery.

At the start, though, Charles had looked to the malleable young Tina for a cure to his restless boredom. Unable to indulge his "Byronic ennui," he had reverted to convention, since in essence he shared his wife-to-be's world view: "Life was the correct apparatus; it was heresy to think otherwise" (p. 78). Sarah, of course, is that heretic in this society. Charles's early response to her is ironic: "here, if only some free man had the wit to see it, is a remarkable woman" (p. 182). In fact, the "free man" here is doubly ironic. Charles is engaged (his intended meaning) but he is also not free existentially at this stage. Secondly, Ernestina Freeman and her father would not have "the wit" to see it, although Charles still does.

It takes Sarah's speaking eyes to make him perceive in his fiancée a certain shallowness, a cuteness he took for acuteness. Tina, in fact,
gives the novel its title: "They call her the French Lieutenant's . . . Woman" (p. 9), but it is Sarah who demands that "Whore" be used, for she is free of the frivolity, the prudery, and even most of the feminine vanity of Ernestina. The latter is presented as almost a Victorian cliche; she would like children but "the payment she vaguely divined she would have to make for them seemed excessive" (p. 29). Sarah, however, suspects that there is more to sex than a "bestial version of Duty," but the Victorian Charles still presumes her disgust after his seduction. "There is great irony in Charles's earlier response to Sarah upon hearing her story: "He was at one and the same time Varguennes enjoying her and the man who sprang forward and struck him down; just as Sarah was to him both an innocent victim and a wild, abandoned woman" (p. 176). That Charles is her Varguennes is underlined by Sarah's writing to him in French (p. 208).

Yet Sarah has something beyond her sexual power to separate her from other women. Charles is surprised by her directness of look, of thought, and of language: "less an equality than a proximity, a proximity like a nakedness, an intimacy of thought and feeling hitherto unimaginable to him in the context of a relationship with a woman" (p. 182). Sarah leads him to believe that she is indeed the French Lieutenant's Whore, an identity the reader and Charles both later discover to be fictional. However, this role does allow her a means of self-definition: "If I leave here I leave my shame. Then I am lost" (p. 180). When Charles assures her that she has done her penance and is forgiven, she voices the fear implicit above: "And may be forgotten." It is only at the end of the book that Charles tells her he will never forget her; again it is through her fiction-making that she has effected this permanence. After Charles has seduced her, she admits to wishing it so and, indeed, long imagining such an event (p. 352). Now that she knows that he once loved her, she implies, she can live on with rich food for more imaginings, with none of the constrictions Charles's love would impose upon her. To Charles's vanity and resentment at being the dupe of her imagination, she replies: "Today I have thought of my own happiness" (p. 356). It is only after her disappearance that Charles begins to see that beneath "all her stories and deceptions she had a candor . . . an honesty" (p. 417). The sexual conflict here is not just a narrative cliché; it is closely related to power and fantasy.

Despite appearances, it is Sarah who is the named protagonist of the novel, the veiled Isis, the dark Maker of the epigraph to the theoretical thirteenth chapter. She acts out, on the level of the fiction, an allegory of the narrator-novelist's freedom of creation of the novel itself. Why choose a female for this role? Perhaps because in the novel the narrator, who continually forces the reader to unite the moral and the artistic in a contemplation of the meaning of freedom, is writing of an age in which "there was an enormous progress and liberation in every
other field of human activity; and nothing but tyranny in the most personal and fundamental" (p. 267) and woman was the victim. In The Aristos, Fowles himself presents woman as a symbol of the challenge of the Fall, of the belief that humanity can develop by consciousness and imagination to achieve new powers (4: 24).

Sarah is the narrating novelist's surrogate within the core fictional world. Like him, she has existence only within that fictive universe; the narrator is not Fowles himself, and Sarah too can be known by no outside structure ("outside" here being the Victorian world of the core), for she creates her own story, her own identity. There is no doubt that Sarah "lies" in order to bring Charles to a realization of the "truth," just as the novelist was traditionally condemned for creating lies in making fictions for his readers. At the start Charles looks at Sarah's "unforgettable" face and sees "no artifice there, no hypocrisy, no hysteria, no mask" (p. 10), just as up to Chapter Thirteen, despite several hints to the contrary, the reader is almost convinced of the narrator's typical Victorian conventionality, almost unaware of the modern mask. As Sarah frees Charles from illusion by fiction-making, so the narrator frees the reader from his illusions about fiction-making.

At times, Sarah is not unlike the narrator's impresario persona. She is a consummate actress, carefully setting the scene for her revelations to Charles (p. 123), pricking her finger on a hawthorn (p. 180) for sympathy and Hardy-esque symbolism. The narrator had earlier explained that in order for him to be free himself, he must grant each of his characters his freedom: "There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist" (p. 97). This is the meaning of power and of the god-game. The novelist is a creating god-figure, but freedom, not authority, dominates his image. It is this freedom that Sarah too has, and in order to retain it, she too must give her creature his freedom. Her freedom lies in her existence in another world, as an imaginative construct, a fiction of her own making: "I think I have a freedom [other women] cannot understand. No insult, no blame, can touch me. Because I have set myself beyond the pale. I am nothing, I am hardly human any more" (p. 175).

Like the narrator, Sarah too pretends not to know things she has really plotted very carefully. When Charles comes to her room Exeter she stammers: "Forgive me. 1 . . . I did not expect" (p. 346). Yet the reader has seen her plan the seduction -the fragile white nightgown, the green shawl to set off her hair (pp. 277-78) --and he has now to see it all work: Charles is excited by the fragility of her gown, amazed at the beauty of her hair against the green of the shawl, and weakened by concern for her "injured" ankle. She is a fine impresario for her own show.

Yet the qualities which allow her to be so are qualities that the reader comes to associate in the novel with the artist and his art: "that fused
rare power that was her essence—understanding and emotion" (p. 58) and an "instinctual profundity of insight" (p. 53). It is not surprising that, like the parodic novelist whose surrogate she is, Sarah sees the world through books. Given her education and situation, she has read more than most women. Novels and poems "served as a substitute for experience. Without realizing it she judged people as much by the standards of Walter Scott and Jane Austen as by any empirically arrived at; seeing those around her— as fictional characters, and making poetic judgements on them" (p. 53). It is only at the end of the novel, as Charles realizes, that she can fully articulate her intuition. Her time in the Rossetti house "deepened her clarity of insight; had now anchored her, where before had been a far less secure mooring, to her basic conception of life and her role in it" (p. 451)—that is, the role of creating fictions and thereby granting freedom.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood plays an interesting role in several of the novel's universes. For the narrator, they stand out, against the backdrop of that schizophrenia of the Victorian mind, as those "who tried— or seemed to be trying— to be one-minded about both art and life" (pp. 368-69). The narrator has attacked the claustrophobic and unrealistic (and therefore immoral) art of the period: "Hide reality, shut out nature. The revolutionary art movement of Charles's day was of course the Pre-Raphaelite: they at least were making an attempt to admit nature and sexuality" (p. 176). This they did, but they also possessed two other qualities which would render them attractive to the narrator and to his creator. First, they were seriously dedicated to the artistic life and saw one of their responsibilities as artists as being the duty to paint contemporary life and its problems—social and moral; witness Ford Madox Brown's "Work" and Rossetti's "Found." Fowles's own use of Marxist epigraphs suggests a similar concern. Secondly, the Pre-Raphaelites often paradoxically chose their subjects from the past to do this, as do Fowles and his narrator, and were themselves inspired by literature.

Sarah's world is like that of the Brotherhood, for she shocks social propriety as much as does the "celebrated, the notorious" Rossetti. She tries to reassure Charles of her innocent status in the artist's house by mentioning the name of another inhabitant—likely Swinburne. Although Charles suspects her of a certain naiveté with regard to her fellow housemates, he fails to see why she is at home here. He does not know of the Pre-Raphaelites' respect—not to say idolatrous admiration—for their models: Rossetti and Lizzy Siddal, Morris and Jane Burden, later Rossetti and Jane (then Jane Morris). In fact, the descriptions of Sarah in the novel resemble those of the paintings of Jane—the hair, the mouth, the voluptuousness combined with the dreamy, the intense with the languid. Jane Burden, like Sarah, was of a lower class as well.
The other marginally Pre-Raphaelite figure who enters the novel is Ruskin, whom Charles glimpses ("the famous lecturer and critic...widely respected and admired"), but whose presence in the Rossetti "den of iniquity" he cannot comprehend. It is Sarah, the artist surrogate, who makes the connection with Ruskin: "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. There was a falsehood in it, a --" (p. 448). Here she uses Ruskin's term "inconsistency of conception": "the natural had been adulterated by the artificial, the pure by the impure." Sarah attributes the negative part to herself, to her fictions, but Charles now sees that it is he and his language that are guilty of artificiality, of betraying "a hollowness, a foolish restraint." But even now he has riot perceived Sarah's role: "you cannot answer me with observations, however apposite, on art." Sarah rightly replies, as would the narrator, that they were intended to apply to life as well (p. 449).

Charles suspects that Sarah is manipulating him, feigning contentment, suffering still, "and that was the mystery she was truly and finally afraid he might discover" (p. 453). This is likely true; Sarah told Charles after her seduction that she had that day thought only of her own happiness, but should they meet again, as now, she would think only of his. If she is to give Charles his freedom, it will be at her own expense: "something of the terrible outrage in his soul was reflected in her eyes" (p. 454, my italics). In those eyes he sees "a spirit prepared to sacrifice everything but itself- ready to surrender truth, feeling, perhaps even all womanly modesty in order to save its own integrity" (p. 465). Sarah is free and will force Charles to be so, to react against her fiction-making, to refuse to let her possess him.

Why must he leave? Why are there two endings? In life there are infinite possibilities, yet this is not life, but fiction, and the novelistic universe has its own logic and inner coherence which "fix the fight" for the reader. This is not a Victorian novel and cannot have a conventional closed ending. The flipping of a coin or the turning back of a clock do not have any final effect on the reader, who is still prey to that "tyranny of the last chapter" (p. 406), however it was chosen. Were Charles the protagonist (and of a Victorian novel), the first ending would be possible, but even then violence would needs be done to the text. Since Sarah is the named protagonist, the painful freedom-granting second ending of a modern novel is the only probable one.

Fowles, as well as Sarah and the narrator, has fixed the fight for both Charles and the reader long before this final scene. The reader, like Charles, has been manipulated, controlled within the coherent world of the text. Early in the novel, Sarah warns Charles: "What has kept me alive is my shame, my knowing that I am truly not like other women. I
shall never have children, a husband, and those innocent happinesses they have" (p. 175). Instead she chooses fantasy, freedom, and her integrity. After her seduction she tells Charles that he cannot marry her, that is, she will not let him. She begs him to leave her-unlike Ernestina-because she loves him enough to bring him and leave him to his own painful freedom. He says to himself in the church after the seduction: "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" (p. 362). He then has a vision of Sarah, not as his wife, significantly, but as someone to uncrucify him, to allow him to be free and happy. But he learns that he must make the liberating move, and that freedom is painful.

Perhaps the best indication of the textual impossibility of the first ending is the existence of the very similar scene between Charles and the red-haired prostitute Sarah, and her daughter. It is true that in both cases he amuses the child with his watch and chain, but despite the glaring ironic similarity of situation, the language of the earlier scene denies any link to this Victorian conventional ending. With the first girl's child, Charles has an intuition about lift, about time as "here and now," rather than as a road going forward to the future and back to the past. Making this existential realization, he feels his sense of irony return as "a kind of faith in himself." He feels "suddenly able to face his future, which was only a form of that terrible emptiness. Whatever happened to him such moments would recur; must be found, and could be found" (p. 320). Indeed they are found -in the second ending where Charles at last has "an atom of faith in himself, a true uniqueness" (p. 467) in his empty future.

He sees now that Sarah is not the Sphinx, that she cannot choose for him, that life too "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. And out again, upon the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea" (p. 467). The echoing of Charles's favourite poem, Arnold's "To Marguerite," in the last line reaffirms his realization that his freedom is both necessary and inevitable, no matter how much he might wish the contrary ("Oh might our marges meet again!" wrote the poet). For this desire is rendered vain in Arnold's poem by "A God," and in Fowles's novel by three gods- Sarah, the narrating novelist, and Fowles -whose worlds each logically allow only this ending, both in structural, artistic terms and in thematic, moral ones. As is usually the case in metafiction, what first appear as allegory, mise en abyme, parody-that is, as signs of self-conscious literary introversion-function as the means by which new extramural connections are forged between art and life. Self-reflective fiction, even in its most overt diegetic form, does not mean the death of the novel as a mimetic genre, but perhaps rather its salvation.