Chapter 5

Affordance of text

Affordance of the text is identified as the cognitive perception of the reader. The affordance and the meaning are two unique ideas that converge in the postmodernist text. Affordance is connected with an action. It is associated with the person who acts and the individual who receives the action. In the case of postmodern novel, it includes the dynamic cooperation between the text (which is a cognitive action of the writer) and the reader. The affordance is identified with the cognitive elucidation and comprehension of the text. In Fowles’s novels the level of granularity of a sign that has been chosen during the creation of the form, prompts the affordance of the content. This affordance of the content is linguistically validated through various postmodern language theories.

The perception and approach to language changed considerably after Derrida. Language emerged as a revolutionary medium that transforms and reconstructs. Derrida’s understanding of language is crucial in understanding the changes that were discussed in earlier chapters. The self-reflexivity and intertextuality explored in earlier chapters are due to much debated understanding of Derridian concepts which has endowed language with the quality of defer'ance.

In Jacques Derrida’s, *Dissemination*, language is termed as the self-presentation of meaning, “logocentrism”. On the other hand he considered writing to be a secondary substitute, a representation of speech, Writing thus becomes an inadequate activity.
The writer jeopardizes his idea on paper, by distancing it from himself, allowing it to mutate into something that can be read by somebody far away, even after the author’s metaphorical and literal death. The concept of death, separation, and difference challenges the absolute presence of meaning thereby it opens meaning to all types of fabrication which the immediacy of the speech prevents (Derrida 7). Derrida in his discussion on the same topic prefers writing to speech and confers language with an inherent quality of lag. This lag he terms as defer/ance. This concept of defer/ance plays a crucial role in disengaging the form of novel by opening it to different levels of reading. Derridian concept opens different levels of signification in each reading thereby making reading an active process of constructing meaning.

Interestingly Mark Krupnick asks in his text *Displacement: Derrida and After*, “Is there no way back to “sensible” language as Jane Austen, say, would have understood the word?”(Krupnick 21). The concept of defer/ance has changed reading as an act, opening up different texts into the novel. It becomes a space for culture, philosophy, history to interact. Novel becomes a situated site for reconstructing meaning. Postmodern novels explore the wider possibilities of writing as a process which creates a powerful space for ideologies to validate their transmission of knowledge which makes the text and the narration political. However political commentary is common feature of fiction and it is to be noted that in postmodern novels it does not reflect reality but constructs modified realities and hence the difference.
Derrida explores language principally as a reader who persistently reflects on and innovatively devices the act of reading. Reading becomes a powerful political act equivalent to writing. The signification process of meaning making primarily disengages the form from its stereotypical frame to address the plethora of cultural changes induced by postmodernism. Therefore examining the specific reading strategies he has worked out will be helpful in understanding how a postmodern text disengages (Krupnick, Mark, 21-25).

David Fishelov remarks that deciphering of the meaning of the text is an interaction between the signification of the specific text and the reader’s semantic field, based on the expectation of the genre (Fishelov). True to this notion Fowles also innovates a play of the text with generic conventions. He uses generic traditions to create an unanticipated genre. This challenges the reader’s ability to decipher meaning from the text.

This is illustrated in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* to parody the naturalistic nature of Victorian tragedy. This attempt to parody complicates the interpretation of the reader. The plot of the novel is multi layered; critiquing both the Victorian society and Victorian literary tradition. It also provides the archetype of the man rescuing the damsel in distress. But the various techniques that shape the narrative, nullifies the legitimacy of the archetype.

It is to be noted that these interpretations might not be evident to the casual reader. This is because the postmodern reader constructs meaning according to his prior understanding. This dependency of knowledge also creates a level of indeterminacy in the interpretation of the text. In postmodern condition there is no
singularity in signification, since everything is incoherent. Indeterminacy is the essence of postmodern writing and reading technique. The subjectivity in the construction of the meaning, leads to a constant dereference of form and the signification conveyed by the novel.

Postmodern novels are recognized for its plurality and language game. Indeterminacy in language is an important factor that creates this multiplicity of signification in the text. Postmodernism challenges the determinacy of rationalism inherent in Modernism, through indeterminacy as a tool. Postmodern novelists reject objectivity in meaning since they embrace disharmony and discordance in their texts. Postmodernism rejects the pursuit for absolute. Indeterminacy is a powerful language tool that postmodern writer employs to reject this absolute essence and objectivity.

Ihab Hassan in his essay *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern, Theory and Culture*, elucidates on various concepts of indeterminacy. He discusses the concepts of ambiguity, discontinuity, and pluralism (Tong).

Indeterminacy in postmodern literature lies in the notions of authors, reading, genre, theme, language etc. Postmodern writers refute the concept of theme in their novels, in light of the fact that there is no significance, focus, or quintessence in the postmodern novels.

Postmodern writers create an arbitrariness and collage in their texts. Moreover traditional novels stressed on the author’s dominance in the novel and distanced the readers to passive absorption of creativity. However this centrality of the author was irreversibly lost with Roland Barthes’s declaration of *Death of*
the Author. Postmodern fiction is a text that is to be constructed by the readers. Due to this fact, Postmodern theory refutes the monopoly of the author and proclaims his death. The characters in postmodern novels are also symbols of indeterminacy.

The character depended on morality and responsibility in conventional novels. In modern novels they showed psychic development, cognizance and attention to the complexities of the world, which resulted in techniques like stream of consciousness. The Postmodern novel deconstructs the modern inward structure of character. Moreover with the disintegration of totalizing notion of “reality” and meaning, the modern concept of identity and validity of character were unstructured. This unstructuring of modern concepts, lead to the indeterminacy in characters, which creates incoherence in the plot. Postmodern writers abandon logic to randomness thereby rearranging historical time, present time and future time. This distortion of time, invested in the plot, the possibility to evolve and mutate. Traditional elements of plot like outset, climax and denouement is abandoned in a postmodern text.

Yet another powerful tool of the postmodern novelist is the specific domain of language use. Language was viewed as a capable method for managing every human activity. Creativity was a movement towards semantic capacity to speak to the dynamic universe of the person. Thus language becomes a game where the author refashions the form of the tradition to create new signification.

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, language is a game. He compares language to a maze, surrounded by a multitude of borough. The text contains
loosely connected paragraphs that travel over a wide field of thoughts that crisscross in every direction. Thus any text carries many unanswered questions, implicit hints, imaginary dialogues, images, metaphors and epigrams. Thus a text cannot be limited to a singularity of interpretation or understanding. Its meaning is essentially dependent on its context. It is constantly redefined in the play of signified. Thus, every sentence generates multiple interpretations, depending on the number of contexts in which it is applied. Postmodern novels thus are a site of reconstruction of meaning (Al-Hikmat 47-62).

The chapter explores the use of this indeterminacy in meaning in Fowles’s text, which disengages the form of the text opening it to rewriting.

Since postmodern novelist rejects coherence, indeterminacy is also seen in the plot. The plot is incoherent and thus rejects a close structure and coherent meaning. Character development and resolution of the conflict, imperative to realist novels are rejected due to the indeterminacy of the plot.

Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein elaborates on the Indeterminacy in the language, thus: the “use of language … within a separate and apparently self-contained system complete with its own rules” (Wittgenstein 5). Thus the use of language is analogous to a game. With this notion of language as a game, postmodernists dispel reality. The novel becomes a construct, a chaotic realm with words. On a semantic level the title of the novel *A Maggot* is polysemic, though the word signifies a larval stage of a winged creature” (Fowles: *A Maggot* 5) that exists by consuming that which is dead. It also signifies a “whim or a quirk” (Fowles: *A Maggot* 5). Moreover Fowles also claims that it signifies dance tunes.
of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However Fowles calls his novel thus “it is a maggot” as he challenges the traditional novel and its convention through his text (Fowles: *A Maggot* 6). Nevertheless as the reader explores the text, the meaning of the word keeps deferring, through Rebecca the word gains religious connotation and likewise through the intertext of science fiction as discussed earlier the word also signifies a space craft. The word maggot suggests metamorphosis, and decay, similarly the text has an inherent potential to reform and reconstruct with each reading. The indeterminacy of the word further complicates the interpretation.

In postmodern writing the focus is on the ontological duality of metaphor of the word “Maggot.” Fowles carefully places an indefinite article “a” in the title *A Maggot*, this grammatically also compliments the defer'ance of its meaning. It participates in two frames of reference, the literal and the metaphorical. Fowles by provoking the metaphor’s inherent ontological tensions creates an indefinite lag in the construction of the meaning. The metaphor vacillates between a literal function and a metaphorical function (McHale 134).

In *A Maggot*, indeterminacy is seen in characterization, plot, narration and language. This indeterminacy in language is reflected as a premise for the open denouement in the novel. For instance Rebecca Lee is aware that her religious and political conflict with conventional authority is in part a clash of “languages”. This is illustrated in the following exchange that takes place between her and Ayscough, after she has affirmed that Bartholomew was transported from the cavern to the heaven in a “maggot”:
Q. Can you deny that he may have left some otherwise than in your engine?

A. I cannot, in thy alphabet; in mine I can, and do.

Q. You say, he was brought to your June Eternal?

A. Not brought, he is returned. (Fowles: *A Maggot* 385)

Here Rebecca Lee reflects that their different vocabularies and ways of speaking create conflicting truth. The missing young man is “returned” or “brought” to June Eternal is ambiguous. This ambiguity is accounted to the difference in their process of signification. The literal meaning of the word is contradictory hence it creates conflicting interpretation for the reader. This is further complicated by Fowles by finely balancing the narrative. He gives all voices equal importance creating an endless possibility of interpretation in the text. Thus the truth behind the missing Bartholomew is mystified in the text. The first story by John objectifies Rebecca’s sexuality and tags her as a witch, whereas the second story by Rebecca exalts her into divinity. Ayscough later accounts to this contradicting signification and difference in perspective is due to their gender.

Yet another instance of indeterminacy is seen in the subversion of the narratorial power. Fowles undermines the omniscient narrator by taking his power away from him for instance the “Q” and “A” technique that the text comprises of is in present tense rather than the past, this implies that his characters’ future is unknown to the narrator himself or he does not comprehend it just like the reader. This freedom of characters also complicates the plot and creates plurality of possibilities outside the authorial control.
The dialogues are uniquely constructed in the novel. They are direct in nature throughout the novel, for instance the conversation between Ayscough and Jones:

Q. Saw you no horse, no attendant?
A. No, sir. She alone.
Q. In what manner stood she?
A. As one who awaits, sir.
Q. She did not speak?
A. Not that I spied.
Q. How far apart were they?
A. It might be thirty, forty paces, sir.
Q. Was she fair in appearance?
A. I could not tell, sir. (Fowles: *A Maggot* 223)

Here the question “How far apart were they?” is directly connected to the context. It is difficult to interpret it without the given context in which it is located. This type of dialogue is identical to the script of a drama. Here the “Q”, question and “A”, answer display a directness of address. This immediacy of address is not seen in the narratorial conventions of the novel. The relevance of this technique is due to the fact that it engages the reader to sense the power of language. Discourse helps the reader to explore the significance of the role of context in the text, instead of anticipating a singularity of interpretation from the storyteller. Thereby dialogues are used as an effective tool by Fowles to open the text to varied conflicting interpretations (Turki 309).
This difference in the applied use of language and the inability to translate its semantic load is frequently used in the novel. This difference in language is employed by Fowles to demark their class distinction. For instance the language of Jones is completely different from the barrister Henry Ayscough. He is rebuked by Henry for speaking a vulgar tongue in his testimony, “And enough of thy barbarous gibberish” (Fowles: *A Maggot* 213). Thus creating a heteroglossia in novel brings out diverse classes of eighteenth century. This heteroglossia with the historic referentially problematizes the singularity of meaning in the novel (Shabir).

Roland Barthes’s *The Death of the Author* emphasizes on role of the reader in constructing the novel, thereby undermining the role of the author. Postmodern novelist, does not hold autonomy in the construction of an absolute meaning of their novel, instead they leave it to their readers imagination. Therefore the text is open to interpretation hence indeterminate. The meaning of novel depends on the semantics of the readers’ understanding.

Indeterminacy is also seen in the character since the author has no control over them or their existence. They remain as vague figures left to the readers’ understanding. Characters portrayed by postmodernists are symbols that lack singularity of signification, due to their inability to deduce the absolute self which is constructed through language. Similarly Rebecca is also characterized through a pastiche of political and apolitical text. Here Rebecca in the exposition is depicted as a noble woman and later identified as a prostitute. Nevertheless her manner and demeanour as testified by the inn keeper does not suit that of a prostitute. This is
further reinforced by erotic scenes between her and Mr. Bartholomew (Fowles: A Maggot 55). Furthermore she is compared to the Eve, as a fallen women and later in the Epilogue; she is connected to the Shaker movement and is also associated with Ann Lee. The historical inaccuracy of the Epilogue and the conflicting aspects of her characterization, make her open to different levels of interpretation as she becomes a trace of multiple texts that intersects in constructing her identity. This includes the conventional heroines of Umberto Eco’s historical detective novel, The Name of Rose. This vagueness in her characterization further open ends the resolution.

Postmodern novelist, does not hold autonomy in construction of an absolute meaning of their novel, instead they leave it to their readers imagination. Therefore the text is open to interpretation and hence indeterminate. The meaning of novel depends on the semantics of the readers understanding. The open-ended denouement of the novel points towards three possibilities of solutions about the enigmatic happenings in the cave. Though a detective novel derives its tension from the resolution of the mystery, Fowles leaves this resolution to be constructed by its reader. He therefore as discussed earlier does not give dominance to any narrative, including that of Asycough. Instead by colouring language with gender and class distinction he complicates the process of interpretation. Among the many possibilities of the denouement are three, the first one that we derive from the duke’s son, Mr. Bartholomew, Dick and Rebecca take part in a satanic ritual in a cave beneath Devon moors, which result in Mr. Bartholomew’s vanishing and the death of Dick.
Second conclusion is Rebecca’s version, in which the three are led into the cave where they find a maggot, where she dreams of Heaven, which she terms as June Eternal. Here Mr. Bartholomew metamorphosed into God’s son, becoming herself as the counterpart of the Holy Ghost. However this is further problematized by the characterisation of Dick as non-human in the exposition of the novel, thus creating a possibility of an alien abduction, bringing it to the edge of science fiction.

The third solution explains the disappearance of Mr. Bartholomew as a murder. However, the hypothesis of the suicide cannot be totally discarded from the variety of personal interpretations of the facts. Nevertheless none of these interpretations accept sufficient corroboration to become authoritative thereby complicating the interpretation of the novel in plurality (Shabir). The resolution of the novel thus creates an indefinite signification process according to the reader’s reality. Thus characters become indeterminate signs in the novel. Rebecca is a mystery that Ayscough is unable to resolve. He attributes his inability to define or deny her. This is mainly due to his inability to understand her process of signification. Hence neither she is portrayed as deceitful nor as virtuous. Her objectification as a woman is also contested in terms of the power endowed in her.

For instance when John makes her an evil sign, she contests it with her divinity. Similarly, Rebecca resists this attempt to shape her identity by Ayscough during the trial. When she is questioned, about her relationship with Dick, she refuses to give out any detail. Moreover she makes him aware that his reality is
relative and that it does not stand true, this resistance to be defined in seen in the below extract.

Q. Did Dick come privately to you?
A. Yes.

Q. And you lay with him?
A. Yes.

Q. Were you not tired by then of his attentions?
A. I accepted them as before, tho’ not as harlot.

Q. Out of pity, you would say?
A. Yes.

Q. Did he not arouse thy womanly lust?
A. That is not thy business. (Fowles: A Maggot 331)

In refuting his definition, she not only complicates the relationship between Dick and her, but also pushes the investigation into uncertain grounds. She cleverly empowers herself by challenging Ashough’s patriarchal tendency to define her as the other. Here she points towards the relativity of constructing one’s reality. The reality as a construct of the phallocentric society is implied through her statement. Thus her character boomerangs resisting any attempt to be shaped in an absolute due to the contradictions of the various discourses and their relativity in defining her. The complication lies in the fact the discourses are contradictory. Thus the feminine itself remain in the text as a deferred sign that has multiple significations. Here Rebecca, challenges the metanarrative construct of the feminine. She exposes the relativity of signification that the patriarchy has
structured from time immemorial. Thus she becomes a site of resistance. Barthes discusses that the signifier unites in the site of reception. In postmodern texts the hesitation to unify mostly is due to the conflicting texts that construct a sign. The sign has traces of its past and the presence of its present, with the implied future in its receiver or reader, who may not be a part of the author’s milieu. Hence the plausibility of its signification is indefinite.

Similarly *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* also features multiple endings. In Victorian novels denouement was under the sole control of the omnipotent author’s divine intervention. Fowles provides his readers three denouement to select according to their cultural semantics. The first denouement in chapter 44, depicts Charles separation from Sarah, to marry Ernestina, and entering her father’s business. This denouement completely abides by the Victorian ideology. In any case this realist conclusion is overruled by the narrator in chapter 45. The second resolution happens in chapter 60. Having broken his engagement with Ernestina, Charles rejoins with Sarah. This resolution encapsulates Charles’ decision to be free. Similar to this, Sarah herself challenges to be commanded by him.

This is in line with the narrator’s discussion of characters freedom as expressed in chapter 55, which is an attempt as per the narrator’s subversion of Victorian novelistic conventions. The third denouement in chapter 61 exemplifies Sarah’s existential freedom. Both Sarah and Charles reject each other. The novel’s hesitation of giving the conventional closure allows the reader to draw his or her own interpretation of the text. The reader is endowed with the freedom of adding
more possible denouement or to choose one according to their own cultural experience (Theory and Practice in Language Studies).

The characters of the novel are also built around this concept of indeterminacy. For instance the novel opens with the epigraph, “The Riddle” by Hardy. The poem depicts a woman who is “prospect-impressed”. The word “prospect” (Fowles: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* 10) is actually used in the chapter, defining the view of Lyme Regis. Thus the poem draws a connection with the setting of the novel. The word prospect could also be related to Sarah’s intention in the text, especially when it is proved that she has been dishonest with Charles in claiming herself as fallen. Sarah’s willful attempt to outcast herself from the society is an open challenge to the rigidity of the society.

Besides this, it also refers to Sarah, as she stands “motionless” against the wind. Though at this point she is referred to, using the pronoun “it” (Fowles: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* 11). The evocation of the figure at the end of the text is not only confusing for the “telescopist” (Fowles: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* 10) but also confusing for the reader. Since the chapter opens with Hardy’s poem, the reader anticipates that she is the object of the narrator’s attention in the novel. Moreover the title “The Riddle” (Fowles: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* 9) conflicts with the realistic setting depicted in the chapter. However the readers, who are familiar to Thomas Hardy, identify the similarity in techniques that Fowles employs as Hardy also infuses supernatural elements in his naturalist fiction. Furthermore this also could mean the mysterious woman like
Tess of the d’Urbervilles is a fallen woman. Fowles uses the pastiche of a Victorian landscape and literature that results in an ambiguous reading.

The reader realizes in the course of the novel that Sarah is not a fallen woman, just like Charles the reader is caught in a deferring process of interpretation. Charles’s inability to see through Sarah is much similar to that of the reader. In the last chapter Charles reflects about Sarah thus: “Sarah may in some ways seem to fit the role of Sphinx, is not a symbol, is not one riddle and ones failure to guess it, is not to inhabit one face alone or to be given up …but to be… endured” (Fowles: The French Lieutenant’s Woman 445). Fowles characterizes Sarah as a sign that keeps deferring. Thus Fowles effectively creates Sarah as an indeterminate signifier complicating any attempt to define her. This attempt of Fowles to defy absolute essence or truth is a marked postmodern trait.

Fowles in his novel Daniel Martin accounts, that his inability to define woman is due to his inability to penetrate her head (Fowles: Daniel Martin 437). Here Fowles points towards the difference in signification in men and women. The postmodernist sympathy towards feminist elements is visible here. Fowles thus gives equal importance to both male and feminist perspectives, thus authenticating a plurality of signification.

In Daniel Martin the struggle is between two mediums of signification that is cinema and novel. Dan’s struggle to write a novel is because of his inability to see objectively. He indulges in a narcissism that denies him to resolve the true essence of his existence. Much similar to the dialogues in A Maggot, novel denies
the immediacy that a cinema provides. Hence differing any attempt to capture the true essence in him.

In conversation with Jenny, Dan seeks her opinion on how to construct his novel. She answers: “All you have to do is put down exactly what we’ve just said” He replies that: “That’s the last Chapter. What I’ve become” (Fowles: Daniel Martin 22).

Here Fowles directly seeks his reader’s involvement in the construction of his novel. The lack of plot in the novel with the metafictional attributes complicates the readers’s understanding. The question arises, what does the novel signify? Is it about the Dan or about practices involved in writing a novel?

Unlike the, The French Lieutenant’s Woman and A Maggot, Fowles provides a modernist resolution to the novel. The novel resolves with the implication that the last sentence of the text is the beginning of Dan’s new novel, thus implying a cyclic nature of structure. However this also implies that the novel that was read is the novel that Dan intends to write, hence justifying the autobiographical tone.

Thus an informed reader’s process of signification while reading the text, remains deferent from an uninformed reader’s act of reading. The autobiographical tone that Fowles strikes in the novel complicates the act of reading and interpretation of the text; this is due to an uninformed reader’s lack of recognition of the metafictional devices. The text explodes in different levels of signification which hesitates to resolve. Thus as the narrator suggests, the novel
lies in future that can never be read in a conventional sense, as it is continuously constructed.

This indeterminacy in interpretation is directly implied in the text through Dan’s conversation:

The least thinking reader will have noted a third solution, but it had not occurred to the writer-to-be until this moment ... To hell with cultural fashion; to hell with élitist guilt; to hell with existentialist nausea; and above all, to hell with the imagined that does not say, not only in, but behind the images, the real. (Fowles: Daniel Martin 431)

Here Dan hints towards the unprivileged author, who is not in control of the interpretation of the text. The ideological explosion of the era and focus of individual experience empowers the reader to come up with a solution that the writer may not be aware of.

This is further illustrated when Dan undermines the role of the author and his freedom. He comments:

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 such freedom was compatible with such deference to a received idea of the age. (Fowles: Daniel Martin 429)

Here Dan comments on the search for authorial power which he is denied in postmodern condition. The reader is endowed with power to reconstruct the context with his or her experience. The instance of inability of language to signify
an absolute replete in the text, for instance, Dan states that his need for Jane
cannot be expressed, in his verbal capacity (Fowles: *Daniel Martin* 642).
This constraint he experiences is due to his awareness of the deference of the
verbal expression. The immediacy of the context in a verbal expression restricts it
to the present context.

Dan’s inability to deduce himself into the novel is also due to
postmodern characteristic of the novel. Dan states that everyone is in an “awful
give away of trying to be meaningful” (Fowles: *Daniel Martin* 44). Language is
our tool to construct “self”:

The function of our peculiar imagination …individual gift for
metaphor; allowing hypotheses about ourselves and our pasts and
futures, almost as much reality as the true events and destines…we
paint an ideal, or a dream, self on the glass and then wallow in the
discrepancy… (Fowles: *Daniel Martin* 83)

Thus the image of self is dodged and redefined through one’s experience.
Thus Dan is unable to define himself. The reader is caught in this process of
redefinition with Dan, as he is structured loosely by Fowles. The postmodern
tendency of the language to defer indefinitely is explicitly commented by Fowles
through Dan.

Daniel Martin is an overtly self-reflexive text that discusses the process of
writing a novel and constrains in structuring a novel. Dan’s inability to write a
novel in traditional parameter of realist fiction is a parody of the creative
expression in postmodern condition in itself. The metaphorical expression of
fiction is in a continuous process of signification in the reader. The metaphorical structure of reference complicates the language to an abstraction of an idealist absolute that Dan is in an attempt to create. The elusiveness and indirection of the written word engages it in a continuous signification.

Yet another reason for complication in the reading of the text is due to the ambiguity in the distinction between the narrator Dan and Fowles. The first person “I” used, denote both Fowles and Dan. This ambiguity at semantic level is discussed by Dan the narrator in detail in the novel:

The word and therefore, the novel triumphs over the cinema is, ironically, in its absence of mimetic accuracy, its comparative imprecision: Images are inherently fascistic because they overstamp the truth… The word is the most imprecise of signs. Only a science obsessed age could fail to comprehend that this is its great virtue, not its defect. (Fowles: *Daniel Martin* 92)

The word according to the narrator does not possess an innate accuracy of mimetic function. However the image has an innate accuracy, which contextualizes the meaning to the present. Thus novel like Fowles rightly calls it as journey of a book. It is in a never ending journey of being constructed and rewritten with the experience of each reader (McHale 142).

Indeterminacy is also seen in the theme of the text; unlike realist novelist postmodern text rejects themes in their texts, because there is no singular meaning. The novelist voices all ideas and topics equally creating a balanced collage.
John Fowles’s novels address a number of themes. However his novels are fashioned like puzzles, in which one mystery leads into another. An absolute domination of a theme is incessantly postponed. Fowles persistently presents some idea to his reader however he maintains a self-contradictory balance in their exploration (Bawer).

*The French Lieutenant’s Woman* is set in Victorian period however the setting functions to enhance the parody of the Victorian literature in the text. The theme of country life that is captured by Fowles merely points towards the decline of Victorian rigidity and emergence of a new era, thus one leads to the other. However this indeterminacy is again dependent on the understanding of the reader. Similarly the protagonist Charles Smithson’s occupation as an archaeologist and his preoccupation with unravelling is juxtaposed with his attempt to unravel or decode Sarah. The referential nature of the theme here, unravelling the unknown, in literal sense and metaphorically complicates the determinacy of the signification.

Sarah herself introduces the theme of the feminine enigma. This is connected to the author’s inability to read a woman as a man and also his inability to structure a closed text, with singularity of signification.

Conventional theme like deception is also introduced by the author through Sarah. However this is further complicated by the multiple resolutions, leaving the reader questioning the same, as Sarah is seen as an epitome of perfection, in the last chapter with Rossetti. In addition Fowles questions the moralistic yardstick used to define her, this further hints towards the patriarchal Victorian society.
Fowles’s take on fallen women is also an intriguing theme in the text, but this is again unresolved. The text also replete in the theme of death, for instance Sarah explains her existence with Mrs. Poulteney, as a kind of suicide, which she intentionally undergoes to evade literally killing herself. The metaphor of death that underlies the plot is parallel to the death of the author in the text. Just like Sarah, who restrains herself to her existence with Mrs. Poulteney, who is a symbol of Victorian degeneration, Fowles working within the Victorian conventions to subvert them, creates a new form.

Existentialism is yet another theme that the novel, revolves around.

Charles the Victorian man emerges into an existential being towards the resolution however even this is debatable due to the multiplicity of resolutions that the novel provides. The novel also gives an indication of Fowles’s concept of woman; however the theme of gender equality is also questioned by the multiple resolutions. Fowles does not challenge the patriarchy openly; his feminist stance is a subtle one, which is cleverly embedded in the text. The first resolution, in which Sarah successfully seduces Charles, is one among them. Later her representation in a conventional manner undermines this theme of sexual equality in the novel. Thus the theme in The French Lieutenant’s Woman explodes from one to the other due to its referentialty.

Similarly in Daniel Martin, the protagonist’s preoccupation with “self” is closely related to the theme of imagination. This further leads to the theme of indeterminacy in language, which prevents Dan to project himself. The debate between cinema and novel is yet another theme that the novel revolves around.
This theme of privileging the novel over cinema is metaphorical, as it refers to the process of writing Dan is involved in. All the above themes fluctuate in the text, without giving predominance to any.

Dan’s writer’s block is yet another theme that oscillates in the novel however this is again metaphorical in nature to his journey in self-identification. The novel focuses on language as a tool to construct the self, but it also contradicts itself in juxtaposing Dan’s inability to create an absolute signification. This hints towards constrain of language or word as an imperfect sign. Dan’s inability to deduce himself is paralleled in Jane. Through Jane, themes like communism and artifice are also explored. This extreme ideology in her fluctuates in the novel in the process of character development.

Dan’s directionless relationship is yet another theme in the novel. Fowles creates an ambiguity in their relationship which further complicates the signification of the same. The novel also brings out existentialism as a theme however this is juxtaposed against his narcissism. Both the ideologies are equally voiced in the text. The novel fluctuates between the two without giving each other any predominance. The novel also expounds in literary climate of the era and the cultural exhaustion. All these themes are involuntarily connected to Dan’s exploration of himself or in Fowles’s term the journey of the book; thereby they are metaphorical in essence.

These themes due to their metaphorical nature are not singular in their signification. It surfaces according to the readers’ understanding. Moreover the readers’ understanding and experience with the text also plays a key role in the
process of signification of all these themes. The literary referentiality of the themes also remains ambiguous to an uninformed reader, complicating the process of interpretation.

This indeterminacy of themes is also seen in *A Maggot*, which is set in eighteenth-century England. Fowles’s craft attains perfection as he succeeds in creating dramatic pictures from the words on page. The two vital methodologies that surface in the novel are indeterminacy and the avoidance of the expected closures. In this manner subverts the current dictum of the success of the novel, as observing the unity of order.

The novel is structured like a traditional detective novel in its exposition, and progresses further to reveal an unresolvable plot. The theme of sexuality is closely related to this unresolvable plot. The text however does not privilege any gender; instead both the genders are equally voiced. This creates a complexity in deciphering the themes in the novel.

The novel also deals with historical ideas like Protestantism and other religious fragments. These ideas are cleverly embedded in the text by Fowles. The corruption of the Protestant church is suggested in the Rebecca’s origin however this is also contradicted by John’s declaration of Rebecca as a witch and a prostitute. Later this idea is further contested in the novel through Rebecca’s vision of feminine trinity and the epilogue that reinstates her as the mother of the divinity.

Through Rebecca’s character Fowles also explores ideas like morality and existentialism. This is further associated with sexuality and its objectification.
Similarly Rebecca’s sexuality also foils Mr. Bartholomew’s homosexuality and
the asexuality of Dick. All these ideas are contested in the final resolution of the
novel, through the heteroglossia of voices in the novel.

The concept of indeterminacy thus provokes us to consider the act of
interpretation. The act of interpretation is dependent on age and culture of the
reader. In realist novels this was considered as a natural process, in which the
reader directly relates to the author’s signification. This understating of reading
and interpretation has been revolutionized by the postmodern concept of
Indeterminacy.

Fowles’s novels stand apart with multiplicity of text that constructs
it. The reader experiences his novel as a sequence of linguistic units, with
syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, and grammatical dimensions. The fragmented
nature of the readers’ experience is due to Fowles’s attempt to continuously
disrupt the act of reading. Fowles achieves this by juxtaposing contradictory texts.
His use of historiographic metafiction and intertextuality that was studied in
pervious chapters justifies this argument. Fowles’s text fundamentally generates
indefinite signification due his specific use of sign. Fowles intentionally employs
imperfect “sign” in his novels, to create a constant deference of signification.
This deference of meaning in the text also results in the constant mutation of form.
The text refutes an absolute allegiance to any form due to its inability to stabilize.
Thus it can be concluded that the paradigm shift in our understanding of sign and
the process of signification plays a major role in disengaging the form of the
novel. Fowles’s clever manipulation of language becomes a key element that unstructures or disengages his novel.