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**JOHN FOWLES AS AN EXISTENTIALIST WRITER AND  
REALIST LITERARY TRENDS AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL  
APPROACHES**

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**Abstract:** The current article focuses on John Fowles and his literature from philosophical and psychological points of view. The author provides some thoughts and reviews of literary critics on Fowles's works, and provides examples of existentialist ideas giving the titles of his most prominent works. John Fowles is claimed to be the most outstanding representative of 20th century existentialist and realist movements in literature. Philosophical problems posed in a work of art are solved not philosophically, but artistically, therefore, philosophical novels are characterized by allegory, a variety of allusions, rich symbolism, attempts to solve eternal questions.

**Key words:** Existentialism, Philosophy, Criticism, Social- Psychological, Realism, Literary Trends, Novel.

**摘要：**本文从哲学和心理学的角度关注约翰·福尔斯及其文学作品。作者提供了一些文学评论家对福尔斯作品的看法和评论，并提供了存在主义思想的例子，为他最杰出的作品命名。约翰·福尔斯被认为是 20 世纪文学中存在主义和现实主义运动最杰出的代表。艺术作品中的哲学问题不是从哲学上解决的，而是从艺术上解决的，因此，哲学小说的特点是寓言化、典故多样、象征意义丰富、试图解决永恒的问题。

**关键词：**存在主义、哲学、批评、社会心理、现实主义、文学思潮、小说。

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## INTRODUCTION

The period of English literature in the second half of the 20th century is generally characterized by a postmodern orientation of the literary and artistic process. It is with the artistic system of postmodernism that the work of the famous English novelist J. Fowles (1926 - 2005) is most often correlated. A strategy used in many postmodernist novels as a means of foregrounding the existence of a multiplicity of worlds projected by the text and of the permeable membrane which (barely) separates them is the well-known device of the concentric frames or embedded narratives. Although this strategy is not in itself disruptive, being used by many realist and modernist novels alike, in contemporary fiction, and in John Fowles's writing, it acquires a subversive quality through the slippages among and transgressions of diegetic levels it allows. In this work, an attempt is made to consider the specific features of modeling artistic reality in his early novels "The Collector" and "Magus" through the prism of intersection in the artistic space of these works of elements of the baroque and postmodernism itself, which, in our opinion, significantly enriches and deepens the perception of the texts of the English writer.

Philosophical problems posed in a work of art are solved not philosophically, but artistically, therefore, philosophical novels are characterized by allegory, a variety of allusions, rich symbolism, attempts to solve eternal questions. English philosophical novels are united by the spiritual quest of authors influenced by the philosophy of existentialism. To understand the specifics of the English philosophical novel, it is necessary to analyze the peculiarities of the work of writers working in this direction.

The key features of Fowles' creativity as a writer-philosopher boil down to the fact that he comes up with complex plot twists, which he successfully connects with situations that are common in the modern world. The originality of the plot is determined by the novelist's intention to combine an unusual situation and realistically presented characters.

The author is convinced that it is necessary to show reality with all the flaws that are present in it, instead of trying to disguise them [9]. Based on the foregoing, we can conclude that for authors who create in the path of a philosophical novel, a number of common features are characteristic. The writers are united by a pessimistic vision of the world, the theme of captivity, revealed directly or allegorically, the rearrangement of the emphasis from the appearance of the characters to their inner world, expressed in the psychological aspects of the personality, for example, in behavior or reaction to a certain situation. As for existentialism, he described it as an attempt to combat the dangerous sense of 'nemo' that is nothingness or emptiness in us. According to Fowles, the central proposition of existentialism is reflected in the phrase existence precedes essence

that is an independent acting of individual and responsible conscious being (existence) and not a stereotype, labels, roles, definitions, or other preconceived categories the individual fits (essence).

Fowles further explained his notion of existentialism as personal acceptance of one's good or bad actions and using them for the improvement of his future actions. Miranda is a portrayal of such acceptance but we do not know, except for her diary notes, whether she would change her life in real, for her life is ended prematurely.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

As a rule, the problem of attributing a writer to the school, creative association, and artistic system cannot be resolved unambiguously. Any correlation of a separate artistic world to a class, category, system, method presupposes a certain degree of assumption. But of particular interest are those authors who, with a high degree of probability and for fairly good reason, can be ranked immediately among two or more artistic systems.

Fowles argued that the novel survived and would live, and the offensive of the mass media could not shake his position. For Fowles, a novel is a way of transferring human experience inaccessible to other forms of art, and the process of reading is a unique form of co-creation. To downplay the significance of the novel, according to Fowles, means to abandon the right, which is extremely essential for human development and the most important for human happiness - "from right, from power, from the need to use individual imagination." Fowles' work cannot be imagined without considering his connections with existentialism. However, in the assessment of the latter, significant reservations are required. First, over time, the nature of these influences changes - Fowles' views are "sociologized", he moves from a subtle analysis of the "human lot" to problems of social practice and even politics of the Western world. Secondly, if existentialism created an experimental artistic system, Fowles puts forward the thesis, unexpected for many Western critics of his work: "We need to return to the great tradition of the English novel - to realism." When asked about his idea of the ideal novel, Fowles calls Flaubert's "Simple Heart" and "Madame Bovary", admires the simplicity and clarity of Dafoe's prose. Fowles attributes not only Kafka to the sources of his first experimental novels, but also Alain Fournier's version of the realistic novel of upbringing, *The Big Moll*. The writer is grateful to the realists F.S. Fitzgerald, G. Green, I. Waugh for the lessons of skill, M. Drabble and D. Storey attract him from his English contemporaries. "I am becoming increasingly hostile to people who are obsessed with style and literary technique. I think we're back to content. Style is an important task for a writer, but it is not his only task. I do not respect an artist who

achieves perfection of form and neglects the humanistic content. This is why I get tired of parables. My desire to be more realistic is not so much a matter of style as the need to be less artificial," Fowles wrote in 1971. A distinctive feature of Fowles' work is his postmodern unpredictability, coupled with baroque proteism, despite the persistence of the basic thematic and structural principles of his works. "We writers simply have to constantly feel that we are changing, that everything around us also changes over time." [3; 571]. Each of his works has an internal, although sometimes deeply hidden, connection with the previous ones and is subordinated to the general logic of the development of his work; each subsequent text sheds new light on what he previously wrote. The existential worldview complex and the reflection of the realities of the world according to the laws of humanism represent a complex unity in J. Fowles's prose, which is quite typical for many major artists of the modern West. The origins of the ideological, aesthetic and artistic complex of views characteristic of the writer can be found in the novel *The Collector* (1963). This crime novel is the second-most-written, but the first-most-published work, in which the views of the early Fowles were fully manifested. So, for example, the significance and true purpose of the author's idea of the first novel "The Collector" is revealed more fully and clearly only after the publication of "The Magus".

It is appropriate here to quote the words of the American critic B.N. Olshena: "Fowles' work is especially characterized by two unusual in combination, but pronounced properties. On the one hand, there is a huge stylistic and genre originality, on the other, the repetition of certain themes and concepts, certain experiences that are fundamental to human existence, views and perceptions. One expresses the artist's need to constantly challenge, grow and experiment, while the other seems to be a manifestation of the moralist's need to judge and teach" [7; 7]. Defining the creative method of John Fowles, even of the early period of his work (1960s - 1970s), is quite difficult, although the tendencies that unite his legacy and postmodernism are manifested in many ways. So, the novels of J. Fowles, as well as the work of postmodernists (W.Eco, P. Ackroyd, J. Barnes, P. Ransmire) in general, characterizes special attention to the very process of creativity, the disclosure of its mechanisms. This leads to the fact that the author invades the narrative, explains his intentions, discusses the specifics of the perception of the world and its artistic reflection. Often this process becomes self-contained - the story itself begins to speak. Thus, the text, as it were, closes in on itself. The theoretical study of the fabric of the postmodern text is extremely difficult, and here we should not forget that John Fowles himself was wary of the philosophy of postmodernism: "Deconstructivism repulses me" [2; 46]. Contemporary scholar Jan Relph testifies that Fowles now and then claims to be

completely bewildered by the intellectual games of literary theorists; for example, in the article "France of a Modern Writer" he complains: "I have read, however, not all of what Derrida, Lacan, Barthes and their Copeg masters write, and I found myself completely bewildered, and rather disappointed, than enlightened "[4; eleven].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The question of Fowles' belonging to postmodernism does not lend itself to an unambiguous interpretation, ". The actual time, now, only very rarely seems to us real and important. As for me, I usually feel scattered, scattered in many, ridiculously countless places at the same time. I must seem difficult to communicate and too vague. I myself do not always have a clear idea of where I am and where I am going "[3; 121]. Speaking about postmodernism, Fowles does not accept its "extremes", but considers it possible to use his intellectual tools, freely operating with spontaneous writing with the nuances of Derrida's grammatology and "no Bartu" mythology. At the same time, the author of the novels "The Collector" and "The Magus" believes that the main thing is not in the possession of technology, but in the writer's ideological attitudes. Fowles subordinates all graceful literary moves to this goal in a complex game with the reader: "I must use the novel as a means of expressing my views" [2; 51]. He embodies his creative thought in a number of novel forms: a sociophilosophical novel, an upbringing novel, a parable novel, a sensational novel, a psychological thriller, and a neo-Gothic novel. Often, Fowles' novels are a kind of fusion of all the above types of the novel genre, which allows one to talk about a specific "Fowlesmetatext". The very term "metatext" very accurately conveys the peculiarity of the image of the world being built by Fowles, reflecting, at least, a dialogue between the artistic systems of postmodernism and baroque. The three conceptual constituents of metatext are Author, Text, and Reader. The English postmodern text of John Fowles can be read at several intersecting levels, but the cases of meetings and interaction of the texts of his heroes with the author's text are important for us. The heroes of J. Fowles's works are modern people who are determined by their attitude to their life path, during which they, as a rule, are no longer able to fully identify themselves with any particular cell of society. "His own, which is now recognized as one of the worlds, and not as the World. As a consequence, own. behavior is understood as a "role" from which you can move away in your consciousness and which can be "played out" under manipulative control "[1; 278]. Overcoming isolation between different strata within society and between different societies contributes to the awareness of any reality as a "language game", which leads to a meta-position and theatrical

behavior carried out from it.

Modern civilization gives a person more and more reasons and opportunities to consciously act as an "actor". Modern literature exposes the problem of the relationship between the face and the mask, in Fowles's novels there is also an indefinite face of "playing God." The author himself appears as a kind of god outside his creation.

## CONCLUSION

If the assessment of a literary text from the point of view of the genre is largely determined by the author's ability to work with the appropriate genre conventions, then for a novel imitation of any model can be simply disastrous, since the main task of the novelist is to faithfully convey a human experience that has no analogues.

Imitation becomes possible only as an element of the literary game with the reader, irony, as was the case, in particular, in the novels of Fowles "The Collector" and "The Magus", and is characteristic of the works of postmodernism in general. The apparent formlessness of the novel, as opposed to, say, a tragedy or a comedy, is explained by this very fact.

Fowles' perception of the world is based on the metaphorical triad "Mannature-art" as the embodiment of beauty. The writer supports the concept of harmony and moderation, believing that in the world as a whole and in each of us there is a place for both the beautiful and the ugly, while, despite all the pessimism of reality, the beautiful is never completely absorbed, but does not exist apart from ugly. In people and characters, the author appreciates the ability to make a choice and be responsible for it, not to be afraid of change and not to cool down spiritually, since these qualities make them truly wonderful. Most researchers believe that the defining feature of J. Fowles's works is the presence in them of a pronounced philosophical tendency: the ratio of the categories of freedom and necessity, philosophical and aesthetic problems of creativity, the ratio of ethical and aesthetic in the life and work of an artist, analysis of the categories of truth. Fowles himself claims that he is very clearly aware of his concepts both in the field of philosophy and in the field of aesthetics. Reflecting on the essence of the novel form, Fowles again returns to the humanistic problem of freedom so important to him. For him, a novel is "an amazing freedom of choice. It will exist for as long as writers strive for freedom. I think it will take along time. Just how long mankind will live".

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