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FORM AND IDEA
IN THE FICTION AND NON-FICTION
OF JOHN FOWLES

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Chapter One

Introduction

"The novel is dead," claims Maurice Conchis in The Magus, "as dead as alchemy." Fowlesian irony indeed, for John Fowles's Magus not only lives in the very medium he condemns, but is himself responsible for the fiction of Bourani. Like the alchemist, the Magus represents mystery, change and growth, and for Fowles--the Archmagus--it is these concerns that energise his work. But Fowles, like Conchis, has a fascination with facts; while his fiction includes two of the most famous British novels of the nineteen-sixties, The Magus (1966) and The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969), Fowles is careful to describe himself as a writer, rather than as a novelist. His work includes essays, introductions and appendices to other writers' work, book reviews and translations; like Conchis, too, his interests are eclectic and reflect his wide range of knowledge and experience.

Fowles's considerable critical and popular acclaim, however, has been directed at his fiction; his novels have been staged, filmed, and translated into a number of languages. Academic attention to his fiction is increasing, and critical articles are appearing in journals in an ever-increasing number. Yet the connection that Fowles himself makes between fiction and non-fiction--both his own and other writers'--has been strangely neglected by his readers. In his Afterword to Alain Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes,¹ a novel which has profoundly influenced him, Fowles directly relates the "true" experience of the writer to his fiction. He quotes the French writer as saying, "My task

is to tell my own stories, only my own, with my own memories, to write nothing but poetic autobiography; to create a world, to interest people in very personal memories--for all that, the memories that make my deepest being what it is" (223). Fowles believes that Alain-Fournier's life (itself "almost like another novel",) is the key to Le Grand Meaulnes; not only is the school and its environs autobiographical, but Alain Fournier was haunted by his own meeting with the girl "Yvonne de Galais"--Yvonne de Quievrecourt in reality--the memory of whom was to last the writer the rest of his life.

Fowles thus proposes that the source of Fournier's novel is unmistakably autobiographical. In his diary of June 17, 1905, Fournier tries to describe his first meeting with Yvonne; the parallels with his prose version of eight years later are evident. Waiting near her house, for instance, Fournier notes in his diary that he was "seemingly enveloped in her lace, her boa, her dress, and as she passes very close to me I say, 'You are beautiful.' And then she is gone . . . I say half aloud to myself: my destiny, all my destiny, all my destiny . . ." (Afterword 214). It need hardly be pointed out that Augustin Meaulnes uses the same words when he sees Yvonne de Galais. Like Meaulnes, too, Fournier was to meet the girl for a second time. Three months after this meeting, in July 1913, Le Grand Meaulnes was published.

To Fowles, then, Alain-Fournier succeeded admirably in creating his "poetic autobiography". "Like adolescence itself," concludes Fowles, "this poignant and unique masterpiece of alchemized memory is to be lived and felt" (223). Fowles is fascinated by the writer himself; indeed, the man behind the pen is a frequent Fowlesian concern. For Fowles, then, as Peter Wolfe suggests, "the biographical reading of literature tells most about the composition and formation of an author's mind" (47). Fowles's interest in authors' biographies is one of the

more consistent features of his writing; in Ourika, which Fowles translated from the French and published in a limited, autographed edition in 1977, he examines in some detail the life and circumstances of the author of the novel, Claire de Durfort.

In 1779, Claire de Durfort was born Claire-Louise-Rose Bonne de Coetnempren de Kersaint, only daughter of Admiral Guy de Kersaint. De Kersaint was guillotined in 1793; Claire spent some time with her Martinique-born mother in the West Indies before they settled in London in 1796. Though Claire married Amedee de Durfort in 1797, heir to the duchy of Duras, it was in 1808 that she met the person whom Fowles, in the Epilogue to Ourika, calls "the real man in her life. . . . This was Chateaubriand, then aged forty, and without rival the current personification of the European Zeitgeist" (53).

Fowles describes this relationship as "one of those physically unconsummated but intellectually passionate liaisons for which [the French] race has such a special genius" (53). When Chateaubriand's attention turned to Madame Jeanne de Recamier, however, Claire's turned to novels, her first--Ourika--published anonymously in 1824. It is this novel which Fowles terms "a minor masterpiece" (Prologue to Ourika 7).

Ourika is the story of a black Senegalese girl saved from slavery as an infant and reared by "Mme la Marechale de B." in the aristocratic luxury of pre-revolutionary France. The happiness of Ourika, the African girl, turns to bitterness and despair when she realises her essential isolation from French society as a result of her race. Unable to mention or fulfil her love for Charles, the younger son of her benefactress, she falls ill upon his marriage to a beautiful young French heiress. After much distress, she enters a convent where she tells her story to a young doctor who attends her in her final illness.

Fowles makes explicit his concern for the relationship between the author and the work when he says, "So much for the bare facts of Claire's life. Let me try to relate some of them to Ourika" (55). Fowles suggests, for instance, that "one reason Claire was able to enter a black mind was that she saw in that situation a symbolic correlative of whatever in her own psychology and beliefs had always prevented her from entering into a full relationship with Chateaubriand" (56-7). It is, however, the incongruity of Claire de Durfort's perception of the social inequalities and conflicts--not only of 1824, remarkably, but of all times--which most interests Fowles.

Claire's pro-royalist and anti-progressive credentials are impeccable--and perhaps understandable. We know how her own father died; we know her mother-in-law [Louise-Henriette nee de Noailles] experienced and recorded some of the grimmest days of the Terror; we can understand the enormous deadweight of the Duras connection with its long history of military blind devotion to reaction and monarchy; we remember [the chateau] Usse, like something out of a medieval fairy tale--or a socialist's nightmare. (59)

Despite these "impeccable credentials", Claire de Durfort's judgement of her society is unmistakably critical. Perhaps there is some echo in Fowles's rejection of the ethos of his own middle-class background; but while Claire's answer to the problems of the early nineteenth century, like that of Ourika, lay finally in the consolation of religion, Fowles's answer one century later lies somewhere in the individualistic, existential school of the twentieth century.

In his epitaph to Claire de Durfort in his Memoires d'outre-tombe, Chateaubriand called her "that warm-hearted woman, so noble-spirited, of an intelligence that united something of the intellectual force of Mme de Stael with the elegance of Mme de Lafayette" (Epilogue to Ourika 55). And Fowles pays tribute to Claire's essential individualism in the final paragraph of his Epilogue to Ourika:

There are a number of striking epigrams buried in [Ourika's] text, and this is one I have always especially cherished: L'opinion est une patrie. Shared views of life are a motherland. Mankind has only one true frontier, that of our common humanity--be it black, brown or white in face. This is the subversive proposition at the heart of Ourika; and therefore, strange though it may seem, at the heart of the unlikely woman who dared to think black in the whitest of all white worlds. (64)

There are other examples of Fowles's concern with biographical detail; his essays accompanying Mehalah, After London and The Hound of the Baskervilles, for instance, evince this same concern for the man behind the text. It is hardly surprising, then, that Fowles's own personal history and interests have been related to his work; in most critical works of any length, Fowles's biographical details are regarded as significant in the discussion and analysis of his works. In fact, Fowles seems to support such effort. Born on March 31, 1926 into what Robert Huffaker calls "the conformism and pretense-to-respectability which dominated Leigh-on-Sea, with its unimaginative rows of houses" (21), Fowles writes in World Authors, 1950-1970, that "[the] rows of respectable little houses inhabited by respectable little people had an early depressive effect on me, and I believe that they partly caused my intense and continuing dislike of mankind en masse" (Huffaker 22). His poetry, too, reflects the monotony of this middle-class conformity.

For Fowles, it is essential for the individual to maintain the integrity and courage necessary to preserve a sense of individuality. This focus on individualism is central to Fowles's work. As Barry Olshen points out in his book entitled John Fowles, "The individual struggling to maintain his individuality, struggling to achieve a measure of self-realization amidst the undirected or misdirected masses, is an important unifying theme throughout [Fowles's] entire corpus" (3). This insistence upon individualism, however, is evidenced not only in

Fowles's own fictional characters, but also in his admiration of other writers who display the brand of the individual.

This may help to account for Fowles's interest in writing essays on various fictional works, which are then published as introductions or afterwords. The idiosyncrasies, even eccentricities, displayed by such writers as Sabine Baring-Gould or Richard Jefferies seem to meet with Fowles's approval; it is interesting, too, that these are writers of the Victorian age, a period which Fowles explores in The French Lieutenant's Woman. It is against this background of Victorian conformity and "pretense-to-respectability" that these writers stand out. Perhaps the most eminent (to Fowles) Victorian is Thomas Hardy himself, a writer (and man) with whom Fowles is frequently concerned. In The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles calls him "this great novelist who towers over this part of England of which I write" (235), and believes that Hardy embodies the great tension of the age:

[The] tension, then--between lust and renunciation, undying recollection and undying repression, lyrical surrender and tragic duty, between the sordid facts and their noble use--energizes and explains one of the age's greatest writers; and beyond him, structures the whole age itself. (236)

Fowles sees such heroines as Sue Bridehead and Tess Durbeyfield as manifestations of Hardy's own personal relationships; like Alain-Fournier, it seems, Hardy is writing "nothing but poetic autobiography." Elsewhere in The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles suggests that

if we want to know the real Mill or the real Hardy, we can learn more from the deletions and alterations of their biographies than from the published versions . . . more from correspondence that somehow escaped burning, from private diaries, from the petty detritus of the concealment operation. (319)

Fowles acknowledges, too, the influence which Hardy has on his own novels. In his essay "Hardy and the Hag", Fowles explores in some detail Hardy's personal relationships and their influence on Hardy's work; when discussing what seems to be a paradoxical point, Fowles "can only call on [his own] personal experience" (35) to provide further explication. Fowles's analysis of this sort of influence, as a result, provides a commentary on his fictional work. Like the narrator in The French Lieutenant's Woman, who makes his presence known to the reader and who comments on character, plot, and setting, Fowles's non-fictional works can also be regarded as providing a commentary on his fiction.

But the relationship between Fowles's fiction and non-fiction has been little explored by Fowles's critics. While most writing on Fowles's fiction has admittedly made some reference to The Aristos, Fowles's earliest non-fictional work, there has been less attention given to his later, and often more explicitly related, works such as Shipwreck, The Tree, Islands, and The Enigma of Stonehenge.⁴ In Islands, for instance, Fowles writes:

I have always thought of my own novels as islands, or as islanded. I remember being forcibly struck, on my very first visit to the Scillies, by the structural and emotional correspondences between visiting the different islands and any fictional text: the alternation of duller passages . . . and the separate island quality of other key events and confrontations--an insight, the notion of islands in the sea of story, that I could not forsake now even if I tried. This capacity to enisle is one I always look for in other novelists; or perhaps I should say that none I admire lacks it. . . . The island remains where the magic (one's arrival at some truth or development one could not have logically predicted or expected) takes place; and it rises strangely, out of nothingness, out of the onward dogwatches, mere journeying transit, in the writing. (30)

Though Fowles makes such tantalising statements as these, few critics have been as eager to follow that "clue" as they have been to find the

centre of the labyrinth on Phraxos. Yet Fowles himself has emphasised that his novels form only part of his creative expression. He condemns the pressure

put upon all of us, but particularly on anyone who comes into public notice . . . of labelling a person by what he gets money and fame for--by what other people most want to use him as. To call a man a plumber is to describe one aspect of him, but it is also to obscure a number of others. I am a writer; I want no more specific prison than that I express myself in printed words. (Aristos 7)

In this brief statement, not only is Fowles rejecting the view which takes only his fiction into account, but he is also emphasising the dislike he has of labelling, of putting things into categories, of collecting rather than creating.

The novel is, in fact, but one of the forms which Fowles's fictional work takes. Fowles has written a volume of poetry and a volume of short stories; he himself has described The Collector as a parable. But his novels also seem to defy categorisation into sub-genres--The French Lieutenant's Woman, for instance, continues to provoke dispute as to its status as historical novel. In addition, Fowles uses his novels to write about novels. In both The Magus and The French Lieutenant's Woman, the narrators (in the guise of Conchis in the former) comment on the state of the novel, and in Mantissa, the creative process and the fictiveness of the novel are emphasised. This latter concern is increasingly felt by the modern novelist; as Malcolm Bradbury points out,

The novelist today may feel himself under a growing need to present his fiction as fictive--because of the problems of presenting the structure of a novel as authoritative or somehow co-equal with life are intensified and obscured where there are no communal myths or ethics; because in an age of prolix contingencies the novelist is hard put to it to give them in any necessary order. This self-consciousness he may represent by manifesting the unreality or the oddity of his

own role as narrator; or he may delegate the function by creating the figure of a substitute artist who raises the problem. (264)

In The French Lieutenant's Woman, for instance, Fowles acknowledges "the oddity of his role as narrator" in three ways. Firstly, in the now famous thirteenth chapter, Fowles reminds the reader of the fictiveness of his fiction, though insisting on the reality of the artist's created world. "I have broken the illusion?" questions the narrator. "No. My characters still exist, and in a reality no less, or no more, real than the one I have just broken. Fiction is woven into all, as a Greek observed some two and a half thousand years ago. I find this new reality (or unreality) more valid," he concludes (86-7). Secondly, the narrator himself appears in the novel, once as the bearded man who travels with Charles on the train, and who wonders "What the devil am I going to do with you?" (348), and then as the successful impresario, who has "got himself in as he really is" (394), and who turns back his Breguet watch by a quarter of an hour. It is this figure who best exemplifies Fowles's description of "all novelists" in the Afterword to Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle's Hound of the Baskervilles. The novelist, he suggests, is "a dealer in plausible hypotheses, a confidence trickster-- though out for your belief and attention rather than your money". (186). Finally, the narrator does not limit his story-telling to the Charles-Sarah-Ernestina triangle; instead, he suspends the action at will, in order to interpolate commentaries on various social practices of the time. The French Lieutenant's Woman is a novel, yes, but it also contains non-fictional elements, which both provide the reader with background information and comment on the fiction itself.

The relationship between Fowles's non-fiction and fiction is not only that of one commenting on the other. In addition, there is a

thematic link between works, suggesting Fowles's exploration of his ideas in different ways. Many of the central ideas which run through Fowles's works (both fiction and non-fiction) are made explicit in The Aristos, that "pensée-like collection of pithy definitions of man's social and metaphysical condition" (Binns 326). Fowles's concerns, which he lists and discusses in The Aristos, have undoubtedly been more effectively explored elsewhere in his work, and the harsh treatment The Aristos has received from many critics is perhaps warranted. The concept of hazard, for instance, is an important element in Fowles's works; the reader becomes aware of the necessity for hazard as Nicholas Urfe bites into Conchis's macabre "molar". The testimony to the vagaries of hazard which is Shipwreck, too, deals far more cogently with this concept than does The Aristos, which rather enigmatically informs the reader, for instance, that hazard "has conditioned us to live in hazard" (17).

But as The Aristos (with all its blemishes) has its place in the Fowles corpus, so has Fowles's translation of Perrault's Cinderella. Published in 1974, Fowles's Cinderella may seem a strange bedfellow with some of his other works, but this work illustrates the necessity to regard Fowles's work in its entirety. For Cinderella does, on reflection, fit admirably alongside other works. There is, for example, Fowles's interest in French literature, evidenced by his Afterword to Le Grand Meaulnes and his translation of "Eliduc" in The Ebony Tower. With some knowledge of his personal background, this picture becomes clearer: Fowles read French and German literature at New College, Oxford. Secondly, Fowles's view that the female is the bearer of mystery is evident throughout his work--as Nicholas describes it, of "that one great power of female dark mystery and beauty" (Magus 242). Cinderella is an archetypal female-figure, for it is not until the

prince has found her that he becomes whole. The "rightness" of the ending is significant; as Diane Wolkstein has pointed out,

the necessity of self-control and obedience to man and nature's laws is often taught [in the fairy-tale]. But not without reward, and a joyful, sensual reward--for the end is the perfect fit. In Cinderella, the shoe is right for the foot; the woman is right for the man; and all the joys that go with that are implicit. (41)

As Daniel Martin realises, the male is incomplete until he is joined with the female--preferably in marriage, which Fowles regards as "the noblest relationship" (Aristos 166).

Fowles's perception of female qualities is made clear in both his non-fiction and fiction. In his essay "Notes on an Unfinished Novel", Fowles writes: "My female characters tend to dominate the male. I see man as a kind of artifice, and woman as a kind of reality. The one is cold idea, the other is warm fact. Daedalus faces Venus, and Venus must win" (146). Men, unfertilised by the female principle, are unable to get beyond the surface of things: the purely male world is one of abstraction and lack of clairvoyant imagination. In The Magus, Conchis affirms this central concern. He tells Nicholas, "Men see objects, women see the relationship between objects. Whether the objects need each other, love each other, match each other. It is an extra dimension of feeling we men are without" (413). The sensual relation between sexes is but one aspect. In companionship with women, men find understanding and creative stimulus. As Virginia Woolf said in A Room of One's Own, "the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; . . . it transmits emotion without impediment; . . . it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided" (147-8). The feminist point of view, for Fowles, is essentially "a civilizing one" (Islands 58).

Further, the mystery of the woman is incorporated into the mystery of existence itself: the things which man will never know nor should he want to know. "Mystery is energy", says Fowles in The Aristos; "[once] a mystery is explained, it ceases to be a source of energy" (27). Like Charles Smithson who searches for Sarah, the prince must search for the mysterious woman who has so entranced him, but it is the woman who must allow herself to be found.

The mystery of Cinderella's fairy godmother is essentially that of the Magus. She is explicitly associated with life and nature:

Cinderella went to the vegetable garden and found the best pumpkin she could, and brought it to her Fairy Godmother. The old lady scooped all the inside out, leaving only the skin, and then tapped it with her magic wand. And there stood a magnificent golden coach! Then the Fairy Godmother went and looked in her mouse-trap, which was like a tiny cage, and found six mice scrambling about inside. She made Cinderella open the mouse-trap door and tapped each mouse on the head as it ran out. In a flash each mouse became a splendid grey horse--though rather a mousy grey, of course. (10)

This association with life and growth suggests the fertility of the Earth Mother; as Astarte, mother of mystery, this figure is reincarnated in Lily de Seitas in The Magus. Cinderella is like other Fowlesian characters in her isolation from family and society alike; there is an element of hazard in her reintegration into society, and the establishing of meaningful relationships takes place largely as a result of the Magus-figure's intervention. Finally, while the story ends with that classic assurance of happiness so foreign to Fowles's earlier works, this is a fairy-tale, and like the prince in Fowles's own fairy-tale ("The Prince and the Magician"), Cinderella's knowledge that "there is no truth beyond magic" (Magus 552) is assured.

But it is perhaps Fowles's relationship with nature that most profoundly underlies the overarching unity of his works. Robert

Huffaker, one of the only critics who has recognised this relationship, regards Fowles's wild garden in Lyme Regis as

the sort of private "domaine," "sacred combe," or "bonne vaux" so prominent in his fiction--and so obviously necessary to his life. Fowles's entire world view is fundamentally a biological one, though neither rigidly scientific nor effusively romantic; and such a place of retreat, green and secluded, is an essential part of it. (15)

As Huffaker points out, "biology concerns life as it is"; it is this "realistic consciousness" (15) of the present which energises not only Fowles's art, but also his life. In an essay published in 1978, Fowles pays tribute to both the naturalist Kenneth Allsop and to the ecologically unique island Steepleholme, maintained as an island nature reserve by the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust.

In [this] book the island's varied ecology is explained in the context of its unusual history. It does nothing to lessen the romantic appeal of the island to submit its life to examination and research. If anything, it is only on such a precisely defined piece of land, brought into a sense of proportion by its isolation, that we can begin to understand the complex inter-relationships that shape nature everywhere. Knowledge does not reduce romance, but replaces the illusion with the stimulus of constant change and discovery. To understand and appreciate is only the first stage. In these sad times a love of nature . . . is empty if it is not also a will to safeguard and protect it. ("The Man and the Island" 22)

The necessity to act on knowledge, rather than merely acquire it, is an important requirement for Fowles's fictional characters, too; Miranda's tragedy, for instance, is that she dies before she can act on her newly-acquired self-knowledge. To understand and appreciate is only the first stage; it is not enough to enjoy "objects as objects", to enjoy "the beauty of the leaf and the beauty of the leaf on the wind." For Fowles, "this perfecting of the aesthetic sense and this clarifying of the inner metaphor in each, cannot be taken as a way of life. It may be, almost

certainly is, a constituent of the good life; but it is not the good life" (Aristos 107).

Fowles believes that man's engagement with and active response to his surroundings lead to greater self-definition. Continually self-defining, Fowles writes in a letter to Robert Huffaker:

My philosophy of life--rather a grand phrase for what is more intuition than anything else--is much more biological than existentialist . . . Most writing about me overlooks the fact that my major private interest in life is natural history, especially in its behaviouristic aspects. I really do take an ethologist's, or birdwatcher's, view of the human condition (also a Zen view, but that opens another road). (Huffaker 17)

He is an unusual birdwatcher, however, who does not attempt to classify his quarry. This is the Zen aspect of his "philosophy of life"; unlike behavioural psychology "with its penchant for categorizing, explaining, predicting, and manipulating" (Huffaker 17), Zen distrusts the labelling and classifying of things. In Fowles's article "Weeds, Bugs, Americans", he writes, "As soon as we have a thing named, says Zen, we start forgetting about its real nature. So labels, especially labels for common human problems, tend to become convenient excuses for letting the problems take care of themselves" (86). As Huffaker suggests, "Zen values actions which are natural, free, spontaneous, and aware. It sees reality in the fundamental elements of existence--particularly in biological truths. . . . The biological perspective central to Fowles's art is the more complete for being tempered with Zen awareness" (18). But for Fowles, perhaps, the most important aspect of nature is the ultimate unknowability of the "real nature" of natural things:

I think I cannot be understood properly if this attachment to nature, and to natural history, and its disciplines, from the scientific to the "Zen" aesthetic/poetic, is not taken into account. Behaviourisms in birds, insects and plants have always fascinated me; and especially the components of hazard and mystery that any honest (and even fully scientific)

observer must admit they possess. I enjoy most what I do not understand in nature, both human and non-human. (Huffaker 17-18)

Fowles's writing teems with natural life--birds, butterflies, flowers, lush foliage--all redolent with the mystery and promise of life. Some of Fowles's characters respond to nature, others are unaware of its reality. Most often, it is the women who are closest to nature, while the men appear sterile and destructive, lacking self-knowledge.

This: and the real trees, the two children by the water, the silent girl in the sun, turned on her stomach now, primed little white-and-indigo buttocks. The trees and scrub and surfacing boulders, the silent cliffs above, scorched lifeless planet, windless sun, the day going stale like the ends of the loaves from the lunch, but somehow opaque and static; all the fault of the men's voices, the endless futile and unhygienic scratching-at-sores of *soi-disant* serious men's voices. Only women knew now. Even the *vapid* girl knew only the sun on her back, the grass and earth below her. Bel knew only herself and her sleeping child's head and her other child's small movements below by the river . . . ("The Cloud" 270)

"Naturalism," as Huffaker points out, "is inherent in the motives of Fowles's characters, who respond to the most basic of biological impulses: sexual longing; hunger for security, creativity, and approbation; anxiety over losing identity and missing opportunity; and curiosity about natural mysteries" (18).

The natural world is always important in Fowles's fiction. In The Magus, for instance, the beauty of the Greek landscape, where "lizards [flash] up the pine-trunks like living emerald necklaces" and there are "bushes with flowers like dandelions dipped in sky, a wild, lambent blue" (67), emphasises Nicholas's perception of his own emptiness. Like some richly colourful tapestry, too, the natural beauty of Phraxos forms a backdrop to Conchis's stage. Sarah Woodruff, whose natural habitat seems to be the rampantly fertile Undercliff, breathes new life into the bustard-shooting Charles, a man preoccupied with the

petrified past. It is fitting, too, that Sarah is finally associated with the Pre-Raphaelite painters, artists who were concerned with the minutiae of natural life. In another novel, the lush island and stark desert are contrasted, and provide the setting for Daniel Martin's exploration into his own heart of darkness.

The same concern with nature is evident in such non-fiction works as his Introduction and Appendix to Mehalah, in which Fowles attributes Sabine Baring-Gould's misanthropic tone to his unhappy experience as vicar of East Mersea. The Essex marshlands, which so affected Baring-Gould, are vividly described by Fowles.

The vast God-denying skies, the endless grey horizon, the icy north-easterlies, all these belong more to the Arctic tundra of Northern Norway. The whole area is set to the key of winter--it is for the dour, the taciturn, the obstinate, the solitary musselpicker, the wildfowler, the anachronisms in our age. I spent my boyhood very near it, and I know it well. It is not English, though it lies so close to the termite heart of England; but spiteful, anti-human, a Beckett nightmare waiting for the world to grow desolate again, and ominously in harmony with the recent grey blocks of the nuclear reactor at Bradwell. One cannot think comedy for long here; nothing will finally turn out well. And it is this bleak wasteland, not Elijah Rebow, that is the real villain of Sabine Baring-Gould's savage and remarkable novel Mehalah. (vii)

The harshness of nature influences not only the fictional characters but the writer himself; for Fowles, Baring-Gould's biography throws some light into the gloom of his fiction. The idea of hostile nature as the real villain is explored again by Fowles in his Foreword and Afterword to The Hound of the Baskervilles. Fowles suggests that "the real black hound is the Moor itself; that is, untamed nature, the inhuman hostility at the heart of such landscapes. . . . The Hound is the primeval force behind Moriarty; not just one form that evil takes, but the very soul of the thing" (11). The spectral hounds of legend are less potent than man's primeval fear of the swirling mists of Dartmoor, of the

inhospitable natural world.

This central concern with nature lies at the heart of the Fowles corpus. Fowles thinks of his writing in terms of birth and growth; like the growth of a plant, an image or idea grows into a novel. "Once the seed germinates," Fowles writes, "reason and knowledge, culture and all the rest have to start to grow it" ("Notes" 138). But a seed may give rise to more than one shoot; the outwardly different expressions of a single idea, Fowles's non-fiction and fiction, seem to have a curious identity of intent, a kind of joint root-system. It is this fertile growth which underlies the organic nature of Fowles's work. In his essay "The Man and the Island", for instance, he describes the slow, lingering death of a swift who has swallowed a fish hook, near the town of La Rochefoucauld in France.

Out of nowhere the thought of Ken [Allsop] drifted into my mind: how I would have to tell him about this when we returned home, how he was one person who would feel that same acute distress that we did. A week later, in another part of France, I picked up an English newspaper and for the first time learnt that at that precise hour of that same May day during which I had watched the swift in its last lonely agony, Ken also had been dying in his Dorset mill. (14)

The death of the naturalist occurs simultaneously with the death of a bird, for ultimately the bird caught on the fish-hook merely dramatises the horror of any natural life destroyed by man's acquisitiveness or simple carelessness.

There is a similar significant contemporaneity in the fire at Givray-le-Duc and the pillar of fire which Henrik Nygaard sees (Magus 310). Conchis, like Fowles, is a keen amateur ornithologist, and it is in pursuit of this interest that he encounters Henrik Nygaard. The destruction of De Deukans's collections occurs simultaneously with the epiphanous moment which Conchis experiences, the realisation that

"[t]hat great passive monster, reality, was no longer dead, easy to handle [but instead] full of a mysterious vigour, new forms, new possibilities" (Magus 309). The collector dies in Fowles's novel; all too often, however, it is nature which is threatened with destruction in Fowles's non-fiction.

But Fowles condemns the orthodox naturalist who, like the collector, "[treats] nature as some sort of intellectual puzzle, or game, in which being able to name names and explain behaviours--to identify and to understand machinery--[constitutes] all the pleasure and the prizes" (Tree, unpaginated). He advocates, instead, an approach which regards nature as a total experience. Perhaps Fowles's readers should take note. With his explicit linking of art and nature, it is predictable that Fowles should eschew that approach to his work which emphasises "literary influences and theories of fiction, [and] all the rest of that purely intellectual midden which faculty hens and cocks so like scratching over." It is his relationship with nature, his abhorrence of naming and collecting, which underlies his reluctance to be labelled himself, for while literary theories and theories of fiction are "part of the truth," as Fowles allows, "they are no more the whole truth than that the tree we see above the ground is the whole tree" (Tree).

Like nature, then, Fowles's art should be seen in its entirety, rather than isolating and labelling certain facets of that art. In Fowles's own words, "art and nature are siblings, branches of the one tree; and nowhere more than in the continuing inexplicability of many of their processes, and above all those of creation and of effect on their respective audiences" (Tree). Indeed, this statement encapsulates a number of Fowles's major concerns, explored to some degree in each one of his works: his emphasis on the relationship between art and nature;

the recognition of process rather than product; the mystery inherent in art and life.

That further mystery, the "inexplicability" of art's effect on its audience, is also explored by Fowles. Art, like nature, provides the stimulus for self-definition; the individual who does not respond to art (or nature) lacks the potential for existential authenticity. Fowles's fiction is peopled by such individuals, who serve as warning enough. In Frederick Clegg, the protagonist of The Collector, the full horror of such a divorce from art and nature is made dramatically clear.

Chapter Two

The Aristos and the Collector : Authentic and Inauthentic Existence

Fowles's first novel, The Collector, was published in 1963 amid generally favourable critical acclaim. A reviewer in The Times Literary Supplement of the same year, who describes it as "a first novel of much talent and horror, and consequently interesting promise", regards it too as "a novel that is trying to make a serious moral statement and making it seriously and well" (353). Just a year later, Jack de Bellis places Fowles in the company of Mary McCarthy and John Updike when he includes The Collector as one of the recent novels "organized to a great extent around the conflict between the desire for love and the necessity of self-knowledge" (531).¹

While it is in The Collector that Fowles's abhorrence of labelling and collecting is most chillingly evident, Fowles's primary concern in this novel is the predicament of the creative individual threatened by the unthinking crowd. The novel tells the story of Frederick Clegg, an unattractive and uneducated young British clerk with a passion for lepidoptery, who kidnaps a young artist when he wins the pools. He keeps Miranda, his captive fantasy, in the cellar of a small house in the country, where she finally dies of pneumonia. In William J. Palmer's words, "Miranda is a budding artist, opening herself to art and life and just learning of passion and self-expression and freedom, when she is netted by the collector photographer Clegg, a closed being unable to feel, neurotically self-conscious yet terrified of self-definition or self-expression" (32).

It is this encounter between Miranda and Clegg which forms the basis of the novel. The story of Miranda's imprisonment is told in four parts, with Clegg's narrative both opening and closing the novel, while Miranda's account is presented in the form of a diary kept during her imprisonment. Not only does she record her captivity in this way, but she also uses the diary to explore the values of her society and her personal relationships (notably that with the charismatic artist George Paston) prior to her meeting with Clegg.

But there is another conflict around which The Collector is organised. In an interview which took place a few months after the appearance of the novel, Fowles confirmed the novel's "serious moral purpose" when he commented that he was alarmed to find British "intellectual" periodicals treating the novel as mere crime fiction, and explained that "it was really a serious novel dealing with important philosophical questions about authentic and inauthentic existence" (Bagchee 219). Fowles has always sought to emphasise the serious intent of his writing; the publication of The Aristos in 1964, and subsequent revisions, should probably be seen as Fowles's most single-minded attempt to destroy his image as popular entertainer.

The relationship between The Aristos and The Collector is a close one. In the former, however, the aristos--the creative individual--remains essentially conceptual, while in the latter, the aristos is shown to be suffocated by the conformism of society. Of course, Fowles also uses The Aristos as a vehicle for explicit comment. In the preface to The Aristos, Fowles points out that "[his] purpose in The Collector was to attempt to analyse, through a parable, some of the results of [the] confrontation [between the Many and the Few]" (10). Ronald Binns, in his important article on Fowles as "radical romancer", recognises the parabolic quality of Fowles's work:

While maintaining the element of exotic distance which inheres in the romance form, Fowles permits his works to function as parables of human character which he regards as of immediate relevance to contemporary English social realities. English society becomes a mythic battleground . . . in which solitary individuals engage in a conflict for moral and imaginative survival against 'the great universal stodge' (Collector, p. 206) of social conformity. (320)

This, then, is the central conflict of The Collector: the individual struggling to survive the pressures of conformity. If this novel, like a parable, is designed "to inculcate a single truth or answer a single question" (Marshall 1153), then this single question must be that implicitly underlying The Aristos: the results of the confrontation between the Many and the Few.

Frederick Clegg is immediately recognisable as a member of the Many, or the hoi polloi, as Fowles calls "an unthinking, conforming mass" (Aristos 9). Clegg's conformity, though perverted, epitomises the need for stasis amongst his class; essentially reactionary, the hoi polloi resist any change which may require individual thought and thus threaten the collective, rigidly maintained value system. Miranda's narrative emphasises Clegg's bland sameness and passivity: "If I said Michelangelo's David was a frying-pan he'd say, 'I see'", she writes (157). Her awareness of her own superiority to Clegg at first takes the form of contempt; his lack of taste in furnishing the house, for instance, betrays his class's predilection for what Miranda describes as "[a] mix-up of furniture styles, bits of suburban fuss" (134-5). Clegg's lack of growth and commitment leads Miranda to describe him as "an empty space disguised as a human" (234) and "a sea of cotton wool" (145), the latter image suggesting his smothering predictability. Clegg, then, is the antithesis of the aristos, of the outstanding individual, not because of his materially deprived background, but because he succumbs to the pressures to conform

exerted so ruthlessly and relentlessly by his society.

But it is Clegg's one passion--collecting butterflies--which identifies most clearly his membership of the Many. Not for Clegg is the interest in the single or the unique; instead, he seeks fulfilment in the collection of carefully labelled, identified creatures. In "Weeds, Bugs, Americans", Fowles calls collecting "a narcissistic and parasitical" hobby (99), a means for the otherwise ineffectual to exhibit power. Miranda recognises this aspect of their relationship:

I could scream abuse at him all day long; he wouldn't mind at all. It's me he wants, my look [sic], my outside; not my emotions or my mind or my soul or even my body. Not anything human.

He's a collector. That's the great dead thing in him.
(171-2)

A number of critics have dealt with the figure of the Collector, recognising its (almost allegorical) significance in Fowles' work. Palmer's comments are perhaps representative of most:

[The image of the Collector] represents all the forces in contemporary society that take away individual freedom or stifle self-expression, that force conformity by placing people and things in arbitrary categories and grouping them under general headings such as 'enemy' or 'subversive', and that shrink life up into the safe, closed enclaves of connoisseurs who muster under the coats of arms of their exclusive clubs, societies, and organizations. Clegg is but the extreme representation of the modern cultural diseases of conformity and exclusiveness, which are always a threat to those who try to reach the limits of the art of life.
(36)

Clegg as Collector: the parallels between Clegg's butterflies and Miranda are apparent. Miranda has a clear perception of her situation as objet d'art in Clegg's collection, and recognises the potentially lethal effect of "the great universal stodge" (217), of which Clegg is so able a representative.

I know what I am to him. A butterfly he has always wanted to catch. I remember . . . G.P. saying that collectors were the worst animals of all. He meant art collectors, of course. I didn't really understand . . . But of course, he is right. They're anti-life, anti-art, anti-everything. (132)

It is this anti-life quality of the collector which is echoed in Miranda's accusation that Clegg displays the smothering apathy of his class. "Everything free and decent in life," she tells Clegg, "is being locked away in filthy little cellars by beastly people who don't care" (143).

Clegg's interest in photography, itself "anti-art", is also a kind of collecting, and as such, is criticized by Fowles. When Clegg ties Miranda to the bed and strips her, the photographs he takes succeed in dehumanising her; the "best ones," Clegg reflects, "were with her face cut off" (122). For Fowles, Palmer suggests, pornography "is an existential crime, and when Clegg cuts off Miranda's head in his photographs he might as well be decapitating her with an ax. He is hacking away her identity and humanity, destroying the art of her life" (43). Clegg's "rape" of Miranda with the camera is, of course, his violent reaction to Miranda's attempt at seduction. Her behaviour at this climactic point changes his perception of her as dream maiden: "I never respected her again" (113), Clegg says curtly.

Miranda perceives that Clegg's limited potential for human relationships is connected with his passion for collecting. His concern for external form rather than internal meaning, and his escape into a fantasy world of dream girls and fairytale endings, has some similarity with the futile, almost escapist religion of the lama which Fowles criticises in The Aristos.

He enjoys form rather than content; style rather than meaning; vogue rather than social significance;

fastidiousness rather than strength. . . . He becomes a connoisseur, a collector . . . and all . . . of his humanity becomes atrophied and drops away. (106)

Thus, "out of [the] desire to escape from the reality of life and existence into the closed but controllable world of fantasy spring forth the Cleggs of our age, gleefully flourishing their killing bottles and filling the sunless, underground rooms" (Palmer 36). In one of the most chilling premonitions of the coming darkness, Miranda writes

I am one in a row of specimens. It's when I try to flutter out of line that he hates me. I'm meant to be dead, pinned, always the same, always beautiful. He knows that part of my beauty is being alive, but it's the dead me he wants. He wants me living-but-dead. I felt it strongly today. That my being alive and changing and having a separate mind and having moods and all that was becoming a nuisance.

He is solid; immovable, iron-willed. He showed me one day what he called his killing-bottle. I'm imprisoned in it. Fluttering against the glass. Because I can see through it I still think I can escape. I have hope. But it's all an illusion.

A thick round wall of glass. (215)

In a final and ironic reiteration of this position, she dies from pneumonia, from an inability to breathe the stifling air of the cellar, just as the butterflies are suffocated in a killing-bottle.

Secure in the immobility of his butterflies, Clegg seeks the same quality in his collection of young women. In considering his next "specimen", for instance, he emphasises the need for tractability:

She isn't as pretty as Miranda, of course, in fact she's only an ordinary common shop-girl, but that was my mistake before, aiming too high, I ought to have seen that I could never get what I wanted from someone like Miranda, with all her la-di-da ideas and clever tricks. I ought to have got someone who would respect me more. Someone ordinary I could teach. (287)

Clegg learns to categorize people as he does with butterflies, but by

this very act of classification, he is denying the individuality of each person. Indeed, Clegg's bid for possession of Miranda reveals his ignorance of her real nature. It is her diary, like a self-portrait, that finally reveals Miranda to him; Clegg's anger at her "deception" ("She never loved me," he says) is the anger of the collector whose neatly-arranged categories somehow betray him.

For Fowles, "[seeing] and enjoying nature is infinitely more important than knowing how to name and analyze it" ("Weeds, Bugs, Americans" 99). He continues, "The individual increasingly lets society and its label-words usurp his own role and responsibility" (102). In The Tree, Fowles makes his position even more clear.

I am a heretic about Linnaeus, and find nothing less strange, or more poetically just, than that he should have gone mad at the end of his life. . . . A great deal of science is devoted . . . to providing specific labels, explaining specific mechanisms and ecologies, in short for sorting and tidying what seems in the mass indistinguishable from one another. Even the simplest knowledge of the names and habits of flowers or trees starts this distinguishing or individuating process. . . . Already it destroys or curtails certain possibilities of seeing, apprehending and experiencing. And that is the bitter fruit from the tree of Uppsalan knowledge. (n. pag.)

It is this responsibility to decide for oneself, to avoid stereotyping and labelling, which distinguishes the aristos: "[h]e knows everything is relative, nothing is absolute. He sees one world with many situations; not one situation. For him, no judgement stands . . ." (Aristos 201).

But Clegg is less a monster than "an insipid lifeless product of the welfare state, lacking any potential for moral or imaginative resurrection from an empty and furtive life" (Binns 322). In the preface to The Aristos, Fowles suggests that though Clegg's actions are morally unacceptable, "his evil was largely, perhaps wholly, the

result of a bad education, a mean environment, being orphaned: all factors over which he had no control. In short, I tried to establish the virtual innocence of the Many" (10). Indeed, Fowles "forces us to appreciate [Clegg's] innocence . . . through his stilted and clichéd rhetoric we come to recognise that he is as much a prisoner as the girl he has kidnapped, imprisoned in a narrow, myopic sensibility to the extent that she is truly damned" (Binns 322). While Fowles does emphasise the balance in each individual between potential good and evil--"the dividing line between the Few and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals" (Aristos 9)--Clegg is the product of such environmental deprivation and repression that he is unlikely ever to display the qualities of the Few. Like Hades in his circumscribed moral darkness, Clegg is doomed to dwell beyond the Stygian divide, possessively guarding his Persephone from light and life.

The mythic resonance of The Collector is clear. Clegg's first description of Miranda is almost reverential; to the unsophisticated young clerk there is something almost other-worldly about her:

Seeing her always made me feel like I was catching a rarity, going up to it very careful, heart-in-mouth as they say. A Pale Clouded Yellow, for instance. I always thought of her like that, I mean words like elusive and sporadic, and very refined--not like the other ones, even the pretty ones. More for the real connoisseur. (6)

As a Collector, he is capable only of seeing people as objects, as specimens for his collection. He regards his single sexual encounter with a whore as "filthy" and "horrible"; he describes the whore herself as "a specimen you'd turn away from, out collecting" (12). Clegg collects because he is unable to love or create; the drive for possession is a substitute for his impotency and his lack of

imagination. The foundation for Clegg's admiration of Miranda is based largely on her unattainability, for he perceives Miranda as untouchable, perfect. In Clegg, then, Fowles creates a character who regards women sharply and simplistically as whore or princesse jointaine, as common specimen or rare find. Once again, this reflects the mentality of the Collector; as Dwight Eddins in his remarkable article states:

The Collector, as Fowles envisages him, imposes a static system of images on the world and then proceeds to live inside that system, denying the existential implications of contingency. The system is the result of accretion--a cumulative calcifying of social and political attitudes, aesthetic constructs, emotional responses, and (most insidiously) self-image. (205-6)

Clegg's shock and horror when Miranda exposes herself to him reflects this static system. Ironically, Clegg complains that "she had killed all the romance, she had made herself like any other woman" (114). To Clegg, finally, Miranda has forever left the company of the beatific Pale Clouded Yellows.

On one level, Barry N. Olshen suggests,

Clegg and Miranda are embodiments of social tendencies or psychological types irrespective of class, state, and other such particularities. In terms of socio-political types, these polar figures represent the freedom-loving individuals (the existentialists, as Fowles develops the notion in The Aristos . . .) and the would-be or actual tyrants (the fascists, who provide the real ideological contrast to the existentialists). (John Fowles 27-8)

In contrast to Clegg, then, Miranda represents the principle of what Fowles has called the aristos. The idea of the aristoi--the "moral and intellectual elite" (Aristos 9)--informs much of Fowles's fiction; not necessarily of noble birth, the aristoi are instead those individuals who are highly gifted artistically, morally or

intellectually. It is in Miranda's diary that the character of George Paston, or G.P. as she calls him, begins to develop. An artist, a type of Magus-figure, Paston is the forerunner of Conchis and Henry Breasley, an older man who possesses knowledge which is made available to the chosen few. In The Collector (as in The Magus and The French Lieutenant's Woman), as Binns suggests in "Radical Romancer",

a philosophical mentor appears who attempts to guide the enlightened protagonist towards initiation (or "election") into "the Few", the minority of existentially-conscious individuals whose moral integrity and critical awareness of the charade of received ideas is essential to human evolution at a moral and intellectual level. (324)

It is Paston in this novel who exhibits (some of) the characteristics of the aristos, rather than Miranda herself, though Miranda moves towards this ideal during the period of her captivity. In a list she makes of the ways in which G.P. has altered her, for instance, Miranda concludes with the question of nationalism. "If you are a real artist," she maintains, Paston's influence being the obvious source of her ideas, "[y]ou hate the political business of nationality. You hate everything, in politics and art and everything else, that is not genuine and deep and necessary" (153-4). In The Aristos, Fowles suggests that "[n]ationalism is a cheap instinct and a dangerous tool" (140), and the creative individual

will avoid membership. There can be no organization to which he fully belongs; no country, no class, no church, no political party. He needs no uniform, no symbols; his ideas are his uniform, his actions are his symbols, because above all he tries to be a free force in a world of tied forces. (201)

George Paston is explicitly identified as one of the Few, as an aristos. Frances Cruikshank, for instance, a friend of Paston's, describes him as "one of the few" (164), and Miranda later regards

herself in this category:

[T]his is what I feel these days. That I belong to a sort of band of people who have to stand against all the rest. I don't know who they are -- famous men, dead and living, who've fought for the right things and created and painted in the right way, and unfamous people I know who don't lie about things, who try not to be lazy, who try to be human and intelligent. Yes, people like G.P., for all his faults. His Fault.

They're not even good people. They have weak moments. Sex moments and drink moments. They have holidays in the Ivory Tower. But a part of them is one with the band.

The Few. (219-20)

"When Miranda talks about the Few," Fowles has said, "these are the kind of people I mean her to mean; pre-eminently creators, not simply highly intelligent or well-informed people; nor people who are simply skilled with words" (Huffaker 90). Despite Paston's arrogance and cynicism, he is the spokesman for many of Fowles's own ideas. Paston's ideas of art, morality and life, for instance, accord with those which Fowles himself has made explicit in The Aristos.

But Paston is also a collector; though more beneficently than Clegg, he too "collects" Miranda. As Eddins points out, "[Collection] in the form of eidetic crystallization must occur in the very nature of things" (210). Eddins believes, however, that the life-denying aspects of collecting are minimised when a creative dialectic is set up, such as that which exists between Miranda and Paston in their respective roles as existential anima and animus: "Inspired by the changing images and the impetus that stem from the anima, the existential animus would attempt to keep from imposing forms that stifle, while the anima, seeking realization in form would strive to avoid sterile entrapment" (210).

With creativity the primary quality of the aristos, it is significant that Fowles has created artists as representatives of the

Few, for "[i]ncreasingly art has to express what the nonscientific intellectual elite of the world think and feel; it is for the top of the pyramid, the literate few" (Aristos 187). Miranda has almost attained the top of the pyramid when she dies, for while her imprisonment is a traumatic, bruising experience, her knowledge of herself and her world increases considerably. While her initial reaction to her captivity is to escape her circumstances, Miranda increasingly realises that she must cope with the situation by confronting it within herself. After two months of introspection in her cellar, she admits her ignorance, the first and most important step to the achievement of self-knowledge.

I haven't begun to know how to handle my life--or anyone else's.

It's like the day you realize dolls are dolls. I pick up my old self and I see it's silly. A toy I've played with too often. It's a little sad, like an old golliwog at the bottom of the cupboard.

Innocent and used-up and proud and silly. (257)

Self-definition is the first step along the path towards existential authenticity. But Miranda's maturation is finally futile, for her growing understanding of what her existential choice means occurs in a situation of very limited actual choice.

Miranda, suggests Palmer, is "an embryonic artist, an emerging butterfly, while Clegg is anti-artistic and subconsciously intent upon perverting the art and beauty of life" (30). Palmer continues,

First she tries to draw Clegg into the world of art . . . and then, in the seduction scene, which is a beautiful composition of light and shadow, she tries to draw him into the world of life. No matter how hard she tries, however, he always closes and double-locks the door between himself and any kind of human relationship with her. He is incapable of participating in emotional, aesthetic experience just as he is incapable of participating in sexual, life experience. Clegg's necrophiliac psyche, obsessed with burying the living and preserving the dead, always remains encapsulated in its world

of death and never ventures out into the world of life and art. (33-4)

Olshen, too, has noted Clegg's necrophiliac psyche, which, according to Erich Fromm in his Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, is attracted "to all that is unalive, sick or mechanical. . . . [Such an individual] seemingly possesses the capacity to transform all that he touches into something dead" (John Fowles 28).

The Collector, as Binns has suggested, is an existential parable, which "[delineates] Clegg's being and Miranda's becoming" (322-3). In contrast to Clegg, then, Miranda constitutes what Fromm calls the "biophilic" type: "I love honesty and freedom and giving. I love making. I love doing. I love being to the full, I love everything which is not sitting and watching and copying and dead at heart" (218). The relationship between art and life, between creativity and authenticity, is clear. Miranda is determined to use her life creatively; associated, perhaps, with her "biophilic" role, Miranda describes her growth during her captivity--stimulated by Paston--using images of vitality and regeneration in nature.

Everything's changing. I keep on thinking of him: of things he said and I said, and how we neither of us really understood what the other meant. No, he understood, I think. He counts possibilities so much faster than I can. I'm growing up so quickly down here. Like a mushroom. (166)

He so often seems young in a way I can't explain. Perhaps it's that he's made me look at myself and see that what I believe is old and stuffy. People who teach you cram old ideas, old views, old ways, into you. Like covering plants with layer after layer of old earth; it's no wonder the poor things so rarely come up fresh and green.

But G.P. has. I didn't recognize it as fresh-green-shootiness for a long time. But now I do. (171)

The realisation of the change in herself affects Miranda deeply. Her original, rather condescending, theory that she "[has] to unmartyr

[Clegg]" (130), for instance, has been replaced with the conviction that "[in] this situation, [she's] a representative. A martyr. Imprisoned, unable to grow" (215-6). It is her captivity by the suffocating Clegg, the denial of her freedom, and the intense introspection it has occasioned in her, which has led to her own development.

A strange thought: I would not want this not to have happened. Because if I escape I shall be a completely different and I think better person. Because if I don't escape, if something dreadful happened, I shall still know that the person I was and would have stayed if this hadn't happened was not the person I now want to be.

It's like firing a pot. You have to risk the cracking and the warping. (261).

Furthermore, part of Miranda's self-knowledge involves the realisation that she too has played the Collector in the past. She feels both older and younger now: "older because I have learnt . . . younger because a lot of me consisted of things older people had taught me. All the mud of their stale ideas on the shoe of me" (258). Before Miranda achieves existential authenticity, she must strip herself of preconceived ideas.

Her growing perception about herself is reflected in her final perception of God in absentia: "It's as if the lights have fused. I'm here in the black truth. God is impotent. He can't love us. He hates us because he can't love us" (264). This final perception is the culmination of Miranda's doubt, present from the start; finally, she rejects the concept of a benevolent God entirely.

I don't think I believe in God any more. It is not only me, I think of all the millions who must have lived like this in the war. The Anne Franks. . . What I feel I know now is that God doesn't intervene. He lets us suffer. If you pray for liberty then you may get relief just because you pray, or because things happen anyhow which bring you liberty. But God can't hear. There's nothing human like hearing or seeing or pitying or helping about him. I mean perhaps God has created the world and the fundamental laws of matter and

evolution. But he can't care about the individuals. He's planned it so some individuals are happy, some sad, some lucky, some not. Who is sad, who is not, he doesn't know, and he doesn't care. So he doesn't exist, really.

These last few days I've felt Godless. I've felt cleaner, less muddled, less blind. I still believe in a God. But he's so remote, so cold, so mathematical. I see that we have to live as if there is no God. Prayer and worship and singing hymns--all silly and useless . . . I see you have to break principles sometimes to survive. It's no good trusting vaguely in your luck, in Providence or God's being kind to you. You have to act and fight for yourself.

The sky is absolutely empty. Beautifully pure and empty.

As if the architects and builders would live in all the houses they built! Or could live in them all. It's obvious, it stares you in the face. There must be a God and he can't know anything about us. (233-4)

With the onset of her fatal illness, her rejection is even more emphatic. "I hate God," she says. "I hate whatever made this world, I hate whatever made the human race, made men like [Clegg] possible and situations like this possible. If there is a God he's a great loathsome spider in the darkness. He cannot be good" (264).

Ironically, Clegg assumes the role of God, for the only freedom which Miranda is allowed is that which Clegg allows her. In Fowles's catalogue of forms ascribed to God, Clegg epitomises "an active god [made] of [his] own worse nature; a god who is sadistically cruel or profoundly absurd; a god who absconds; a black exploiter of the defenceless individual" (Aristos 16). This darkness is, in Clegg, his moral darkness, echoed in his affinity with the photographic dark room, his prowling around London's parks in the dark, and his capture of Miranda in the fog (Wolfe 74).

In The Aristos, Fowles deliberates on the question of the existence or non-existence of God at some length.

'God' is a situation. Not a power, or a being, or an influence. Not a 'he' or a 'she', but an 'it'. Not entity or non-entity, but the situation in which there can be both entity and non-entity. . . .

'God' is not; but its not-being is universally present,

and universally affects. It cannot exist in any sense meaningful to material organisms; but that does not mean that this situation is meaningless to such organisms. . . .

The whole is intrinsically a situation in which the principles and the events are all, and the individual thing is nothing. 'God' must be totally sympathetic to the whole. But it expresses sympathy by not being and by its total unknowability. It is wu wei and wu ming, without action and without name. (22-3)

No one will save us but ourselves; and the final proof of the sympathy in 'God' lies in the fact that we are--or can by exercise become--free to choose courses of action and so at least combat some of the hostile results of the general indifference of the process to the individual. (25)

For Fowles, "the only numinous act is the individual's making enough sense of his own existence to use it lovingly--a resolution process very like an author's devising a fictional world" (Huffaker 89).

Existential authenticity, for Fowles, is inescapably linked with the creative process.

Lacking the essential creativity, Clegg's existence remains inauthentic; the only change he experiences is that made possible by his acquisition of money. This, Fowles maintains in The Aristos, is the means whereby twentieth-century man attempts to gain control of his own freedom. Ultimately, money is power: for Clegg, gauche, shy, awkward, heaven-on-earth seems attainable through the collection of Miranda Grey, made possible through his money. The rich man is this age's "mythical happy man"; as Fowles suggests in The Aristos,

Each age has its mythical happy man: the one with wisdom, with genius, with saintliness, with beauty, with whatever is rare and the Many are not able to possess. The twentieth century's happy man is the man with money. Since our belief in a rewarding afterlife has decayed more quickly than our capacity to create a rewarding present life has grown, there was never a fiercer desire to touch the paragon. (42)

In Clegg's words, "When you don't have money, you always think things will be very different after" (10). But Clegg soon realises that the

acquisition of money does not enrich the poverty of the soul. What liberation is afforded Clegg by the money only intensifies the narcissism evident in himself, and eventually, with Clegg unable to distinguish between illusion and reality, it leads to the destruction of another--Miranda. Fowles regards money, then, not as a medium of exchange, but as "the human answer to the inhuman hazard that dominates existence. Money is the makeshift human lottery that half compensates those who were unsuccessful [with such qualities as genius, intellect, health, wisdom, strength of will and body, good looks] in the first cosmic lottery" (Aristos 120). But Clegg misuses this compensation. Though it gives him a chance to improve himself, to become something worthwhile, he dreams only of Miranda's love, and uses the money to a perverted and tragic end.

Miranda, in contrast, has been fortunate in the prenatal lottery. Born into a wealthy family, possessing intelligence, wholeness, and attractiveness, she has less to cripple her than Clegg has. But her good fortune is precisely that. As Fowles points out in the preface to The Aristos,

Miranda . . . had very little more control than Clegg over what she was: she had well-to-do parents, good educational opportunity, inherited aptitude and intelligence. That does not mean that she was perfect. Far from it--she was arrogant in her ideas, a prig, a liberal-humanist snob, like so many university students. (10)

Despite Paston's (and Fowles's) criticism of Miranda, it is Paston who first recognises the nascent quality of the aristos in Miranda. She has "the great inner secret," he tells her, "like Sheraton joinery. You won't fall apart" (185). In an interview with Roy Newquist, Fowles said that Miranda "is an existentialist heroine although she doesn't know it. She's groping for her own authenticity. Her tragedy

is that she will never live to achieve it. Her triumph is that one day she would have done so" (Conradi 38). As he again emphasises in the preface to The Aristos, "had she not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately needs" (10).

It is with her growing self-knowledge that Miranda realises her bond of common humanity with Clegg: "I had a feeling I've had once or twice before, of the most peculiar closeness to him--not love or attraction or sympathy in any way. But linked destiny. Like being shipwrecked on an island--a raft--together. In every way not wanting to be together. But together" (199). Like all Fowles' protagonists capable of some awareness, Miranda exists en passage, attempting to create some form from the chaos. In The Aristos, Fowles talks about "the wreck and the raft", suggesting that this is part of the human condition.

Humanity on its raft. The raft on its endless ocean. From his present dissatisfaction man reasons that there was some catastrophic wreck in the past, before which he was happy; some golden age, some Garden of Eden. He also reasons that somewhere ahead lies on a promised land, a land without conflict. Meanwhile, he is miserably en passage; this myth lies deeper than religious faith. (15)

Man is an everlack, an infinite withoutness, afloat on an apparently endless ocean of apparently endless indifference to individual things. (18)

Miranda and Clegg may indeed be part of a common humanity, "fellow members of the human race; not rivals" (Aristos 121), but as representatives of the Few and the Many respectively, they are separated by more than mere class distinction.

Much of the tragedy of The Collector lies in the lack of communication between the two central characters. Fowles's skill in this novel is exhibited most clearly in his narrative technique, in

his portrayal of this distinction between characters through their language. Because each character tells his own story, Fowles achieves a double perspective on the action; in addition, each narration reveals a great deal about its respective "author". Clegg's impoverished language, on the one hand, is full of euphemism and generalisation, and his narrative is a masterpiece of self-deception and camouflage. Clegg describes anything sexual, for instance, in an anguished verbal labyrinth:

Well of course with Aunt Annie and Mabel out of the way I bought all the books I wanted, some of them I didn't know such things existed, as a matter of fact I was disgusted, I thought here I am stuck in a hotel room with this stuff and it's a lot different from what I used to dream of about Miranda and me.
(14)

Clegg's alienation from language contrasts with Miranda's engagement with words, with her attempt to use language both as a creative medium and as an exploratory tool. Fowles, in The Aristos, mentions three reasons why the artist creates: "His simplest purpose is to describe the outer world; his next is to express his feelings about that outer world, and his last is to express his feelings about himself" (179). Miranda's journal fulfils all three purposes. Her descriptions of the outer world are luminous, her language "like daubs of paint on a sketchpad" (Wolfe 78). Though Miranda has difficulty painting during her captivity, she has little difficulty describing the scenes she would like to paint, all redolent with freedom, with light, with life.

I want to paint like Berthe Morisot, I don't mean with her colours or forms or anything physical, but with her simplicity and light. I don't want to be clever or great or 'significant' or given all that clumsy masculine analysis. I want to paint sunlight on children's faces, or flowers in a hedge or a street after April rain.
The essences. Not the things themselves.
Swimmings of light on the smallest things. (140)

I think of paintings I shall do.

Last night I thought of one, it was a sort of butter-yellow (farm-butter-yellow) field rising to a white luminous sky and the sun just rising. A strange rose-pink, I knew it exactly, full of hushed stillness, the beginning of things, lark-song without larks. (258)

I long to paint and paint other things. Fields, southern houses, landscapes, vast wide-open things in vast wide-open light.

It's what I've been doing today. Moods of light recalled from Spain. Ochre walls burnt white in the sunlight. The walls of Avila. Cordoba courtyards. I don't try to reproduce the place, but the light of the place. (260)

These descriptions are eloquent portrayals of Miranda's feelings--in the shadowy existence of the underworld, Miranda dreams of the life and the light above the ground. Significantly, of course, these dreams of creation are uniquely hers; with her growing self-definition, Miranda is no longer dependant on others' ideas. Paston's criticism of her flagrant plagiarism (168) is no longer applicable.

But it is "the word" which is "man's most precise and inclusive tool" (Aristos 195), for even that "salvage and deformed slave" on Prospero's isle responded to visual beauty with pleasure. The debt which The Collector owes Shakespeare's Tempest--Fowles's favourite play--is considerable. Most apparently, Fowles's Miranda thinks of Clegg as 'Caliban', the half-human offspring of the witch Sycorax, though he has told her that his name is Ferdinand; Clegg, of course, represents the evil which Miranda names "the Calibanity" of England, that "great universal stodge" which martyrs "every vital and creative and good person" (217). Perhaps most significantly, however, as Frank Kermode has said of The Tempest: "Learning is a major theme in the play; we learn that Miranda is capable of it and Caliban not" (1). It is the ability to learn which Fowles finally demands of his characters; those who cannot or will not learn are doomed.

But most critics have agreed that, in The Collector, there is no Prospero: G.P., who has some of the credentials, is unknown to Clegg and has little to do with the course of events. Olshen proposes that "[t]he magician figure, who can harness the positive forces of the universe and control the beastly and violent impulses of men, is conspicuously absent . . . (unless G.P. is interpreted as playing this role in Miranda's psyche, in which case he is ultimately impotent in the confrontation with Caliban)" (John Fowles 26). It must be remembered, however, that even on the charmed isle, Prospero's Art does not save all, for Antonio's final silence is usually interpreted as his rejection of Prospero's circle of virtu. "Prospero", says Kermode, "must acknowledge another thing of darkness." Yet "[a] world without Antonio is a world without freedom; Prospero's shipwreck cannot restore him if he desires not to be restored, to life. The gods chalk out a tragicomic way, but enforce only disaster. The rest is voluntary" (lxii). While Fowles would perhaps substitute 'hazard' for 'the gods', the intention is the same: "Freedom of will is the highest human good" (Aristos 25).

In the preface to The Aristos, Fowles states explicitly that "[his] chief concern . . . is to preserve the freedom of the individual against all those pressures-to-conform that threaten our century" (7). This is the dominant concern which runs throughout The Collector, and indeed throughout Fowles's work. Elsewhere, Fowles himself has said in an interview, "I think the common man is the curse of civilization, not its crowning glory. And he needs education, not adulation. The boy in The Collector stands for the Many; the girl for the Few" (Wolfe 54). Fowles, however, does not advocate either condemnation or criticism, for membership of the Few does not confer superiority. It is the duty of the aristos, himself in the best possible situation, to educate and assist the hoi polloi in their

struggle towards a more meaningful existence. In the preface to The Aristos, he makes clear the Few's responsibility to the Many.

The actual evil in Clegg overcame the potential good in Miranda. I did not mean by this that I view the future with a black pessimism; nor that a precious elite is threatened by the barbarian hordes. I meant simply that unless we face up to this unnecessarily brutal conflict (based largely on an unnecessary envy on the one hand and an unnecessary contempt on the other) between the biological Few and the biological Many; unless we admit that we are not, and never will be, born equal, though we are all born with equal human rights; unless the Many can be educated out of their false assumption of inferiority and the Few out of their equally false assumption that biological superiority is a state of existence instead of what it really is, a state of responsibility--then we shall never arrive at a more just and happier world. (10)

In The Aristos, Fowles attempts to "suppress all rhetoric, all persuasion through style" (13), by writing in the form of notes. But in both the gothic horror of The Collector and the neutral tone of The Aristos, Fowles's intention is the same. In Fowles's own words, "Heraclitos first saw the predicament that fascinates me: the intelligent trapped in the world of the stupid" (Huffaker 90).

Perhaps the final irony, then, is the fact that it is only to the attitude of the Few which Fowles appeals. While it is undoubtedly incorrect to label Fowles' works as "those of a class snob", Karen M. Lever's (largely disparaging) article does point out that

None of his novels is written for a general audience. The only possible exception, The Collector, must be ruled out--although it is less packed with esoterica and formally simpler than the others, its analysis of working-class norms and tastes is offensive to readers from that class. Fowles writes to be read by an elite. . . . (95-6)

It is her last comment which has the ring of truth. The Collector is an existentialist parable, and "[the] rhetorical appeal of a parable is directed primarily toward an elite, in that a final core of

its truth is known only to an inner circle, however simple its narrative may appear on the surface" (Fletcher 133). Like Prospero who tells the courtiers that Caliban is his burden--"this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1.275-6)--the Few must take the responsibility for the Many. In the words of Fowles,

[I]f one word could sum up all that is wrong with our world, it is surely inequality. It was inequality, not Lee Harvey Oswald, that killed President Kennedy. Hazard, the great factor we shall never be able to control, will always infest life with inequality. And it seems madness that man himself should continue blindly to propagate this vicious virus in our world instead of trying to limit it. (Preface to The Aristos 11)

The individuals whose creative spirits survive and rise above the Calibanity of the hoi polloi are, indeed, the architects of the brave new world.

Chapter Three

The Magus: A Self-Portrait in Fiction

The creativity of the aristos is manifested not only in Fowles's fictional characters, but in the spirit of the writer himself. Fowles's notion that novels are "fundamentally a kind of game, an artifice that allows the writer to play hide-and-seek with the reader" (Wade 716) is most clearly demonstrated in The Magus, a novel which Fowles published in 1966, and the novel which has been most responsible for his reputation as a master of the esoteric. Although Fowles first began writing The Magus in the late 1950s, he did not publish it until three years after the success of The Collector in 1963 had given him "some literary confidence" (5). But as Fowles said in an interview with Sally Beauman,

[Publication] is the death point . . . The beautiful part is over. Once the book is handed over, once it's set, then you are locked out from your own text. The joy is in the gathering of the invention, when you have the molten metal, the liquid bronze . . . when your material seems to have a life of its own. (151)

That life, for Fowles, must never have seemed to die in The Magus, for in 1977 he published a revised version of the novel: "this endlessly tortured and recast cripple" (Magus 5). As he said in a letter to Robert Huffaker in 1975, "Some of [the novel] was flagrantly botched up, and the whole enterprise a malign triumph of content over form, or of narrative over decent strands of carpentry. I never sat down in that book without feeling its legs creak loudly and threaten to collapse" (Huffaker 44). In the foreword to the revised edition, Fowles describes

it as "a stylistic revision", and notes that he has "taken this unusual course not least because . . . the book has aroused more interest than anything else I have written" (5).¹

The Magus has certainly aroused interest in Fowles's reviewers. Eliot Fremont-Smith, for instance, describes the novel as "a stunner, magnificent in ambition, supple and gorgeous in execution" (45), and both an anonymous critic in the Minnesota Review and Joseph Epstein compare the novel to the better work of Nabokov. Brian Moore, however, criticises the over-manipulative environment of "the world of vulgar trickery" (12), while the reviewer for The Times Literary Supplement finds the plot difficult to believe: "coils tighten, idiocy deepens and exasperation exacerbates while no commonplace curiosa are left unturned --not tortures or Nazis or voyeurism or Old Religions or exotically decored negro-pinko copulation", and concludes that "in total The Magus is a silly book and an unhealthy one" ("No Wise" 381).

But Fowles doubts that it is "the more sternly adult reviewers" who are the true audience of The Magus, for he believes that "it must always substantially remain a novel of adolescence" (Foreword 9). A novel of adolescence must be a novel of learning: in Fowlesian terms, the individual must learn about himself before he can begin to achieve existential authenticity. Like Miranda, Nicholas Urfe undergoes a unique learning experience, and achieves some measure of self-knowledge. Unlike Miranda, however, he is given the opportunity to act on that knowledge, and to make certain choices based on his newly-acquired moral sensibility.

Nicholas, the protagonist of The Magus, is an Oxford graduate, "poetically pseudo-suicidal, monstrously manipulative of women, void of both human knowledge and introspective vision" (McDaniel 247). When he is appointed to teach English at the Lord Byron School on the Greek

island of Phraxos, he leaves behind him Alison Kelly, the latest in a string of casual affairs. The Byronic parallel suggested extends to what Peter Wolfe describes as "the contrast between art and morality and between intellectual detachment and emotional involvement"; in addition, Greece increases Nicholas's "escapist tendency of forsaking the moral for the aesthetic sphere" (89). Nicholas's increasing involvement with the wealthy Conchis and the extraordinary events which take place at Bourani further estrange him from Alison, until not even her reported suicide can affect his obsession with Bourani and its mysterious guests.

If The Aristos is seen as Fowles' "self-portrait in ideas", as indicated by the work's earlier subtitle, then, suggests Barry Olshen, "The Magus may be viewed as a self-portrait in fiction" (John Fowles 32). As Fowles admits, the "island of Phraxos (the 'fenced' island) was the real Greek island of Spetsai, where I taught in 1951 and 1952 at a private boarding-school . . ." (7). Most significantly, perhaps, he describes how the island inspired his writing.

Away from its inhabited corner Spetsai was truly haunted, though by subtler--and more beautiful--ghosts than those I have created. Its pine-forest silences were uncanny, unlike those I have experienced anywhere else; like an eternally blank page waiting for a note or a word. They gave the most curious sense of timelessness and of incipient myth. In no place was it less likely that something would happen; yet somehow happening lay always poised. The genius loci was very similar indeed to that of Mallarme's finest poems of the unseen flight, of words defeated before the inexpressible. (8)

Nicholas also perceives this tabula rasa of the island of the self, "as potential as a clean canvas, a site for myths" (63).

In 1978, Fowles co-published a book entitled Islands, in which he explores his fascination with islands both real and imaginary. In his essay which accompanies Fay Godwin's photographs, he refers once again to Spetsai:

True islands always play the sirens' . . . trick: they lure by challenging, by daring. . . . The Greek island I lived on in the early 1950s was just such a place. Like Crusoe, I never knew who I really was, what I lacked (what the psychoanalytical theorists of artistic making call the "creative gap"), until I had wandered in its solitudes and emptinesses. (11).

Nicholas, too, compares himself to Crusoe as he wanders in the solitudes of Phraxos; the realisation that his poems are "undergraduate pieces, without rhythm, without structure, their banalities of perception clumsily concealed under an impasto of lush rhetoric" (58) leads to despair and attempted suicide. The realisation of his own inauthenticity prevents Nicholas's death, a perception that heralds his growth towards self-knowledge.

All the time I felt I was being watched, that I was not alone, that I was putting on an act for the benefit of someone, that this action could be done only if it was spontaneous, pure--and moral. Because more and more it crept through my mind with the chill spring night that I was trying to commit not a moral action, but a fundamentally aesthetic one; to do something that would end my life sensationally, significantly, consistently. It was a Mercutio death I was looking for, not a real one. A death to be remembered, not the true death of a true suicide, the death obliterate. (62)

For Fowles, obviously, the "intensely false" individual must acknowledge, as Nicholas does, that he is "in existentialist terms, inauthentic" (62) before the exploration and discovery of the self can begin. As Nicholas says, "The pattern of destiny seemed clear: down and down, and down. But then the mysteries began" (63).

Like Great Expectations, a "novel of adolescence" which has influenced Fowles, Nicholas's story is told in retrospect. Like Pip, Nicholas is both protagonist and narrator, and as Peter Conradi suggests, "first-person narrative inducts us directly into both the hero's bad faith and an imaginative understanding of his consequent

reform" (44). In many ways, too, this obsession and resultant "education" of Nicholas reflects that of Augustin Meaulnes, in Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes (translated as The Wanderer). Fowles acknowledges that Le Grand Meaulnes, another "novel of adolescence", has had considerable influence on his writing--perhaps too considerable, for in the revision of The Magus, as he admits, "I suppressed a number of too overt references" (6). Like Meaulnes, Nicholas prefers the dreamlike to the real; both protagonists equate the desirable with the unattainable, a position not dissimilar to that held by Clegg. Unlike Meaulnes, however, the older Nicholas does recognise this immature confusion between the ethical and the aesthetic, the conflict which Robert Scholes believes to be at the heart of the novel, and which Huffaker calls "Conchis's central parable" (69):

By this sinister elision, this slipping from true remorse, the belief that the suffering we have precipitated ought to ennoble us, or at least make us less ignoble from then on, to disguised self-forgiveness, the belief that suffering in some way ennoble life, so that the precipitation of pain comes, by such a cockeyed algebra, to equal the ennoblement, or at any rate the enrichment, of life, by this characteristic twentieth-century retreat from content into form, from meaning into appearance, from ethics into aesthetics, from aqua into unda, I dulled the pain of that accusing death . . . (401-2)

The ability to learn and to arrive at a moral standpoint is crucial to Fowles: in both The Collector and The Magus, Fowles's protagonists are put through a "heuristic mill" (10). Though Nicholas's inability to establish a human relationship with women is reminiscent of Clegg, he is finally--unlike Clegg--able to learn and to reform his collector-consciousness.

The "self-portrait in fiction", then, is not limited to Fowles's admitted fascination with islands and the influence that his own Greek island had upon him. The Magus is concerned with the search for self-

knowledge, the quest for existential authenticity. It is a self-portrait of the author, yes, but it is also a portrait of the self, of its growth and maturity. The pattern of experience is significant in the protagonist's development, and is reflected in his growing awareness of his real nature.

It is on the estate of Bourani--an island within an island--that Nicholas begins the mythic and yet still intensely personalized quest for self-knowledge and understanding.² Fowles has made the symbolic nature of the island clear:

It is this aspect of islands that particularly interests me: how deeply they can haunt and form the personal as well as the public imagination. This power comes primarily, I believe, from a vague yet immediate sense of identity. In terms of consciousness, and self-consciousness, every individual human is an island, in spite of Donne's famous preaching to the contrary. It is the boundedness of the smaller island, encompassable in a glance, walkable in one day, that relates it to the human body closer than any other geographical conformation of land. It is also the contrast between what can be seen at once and what remains, beyond the shore that faces us, hidden. Even to ourselves we are the same, half superficial and obvious, and half concealed, labyrinthine, fascinating to explore. Then there is the enisling sea, our evolutionary amniotic fluid, the element in which we too were once enwombed, from which our own antediluvian line rose into the light and air. There is the marked individuality of islands, which we should like to think corresponds with our own; their obstinate separatedness of character, even when they lie in archipelagos. (Islands 12)

Nicholas Urfe begins exploring the island as a release from the "claustrophobic ambience of the Lord Byron School" (50). He is soon aware of "a metaphysical sense of being marooned" (58) and his "total enislement from all else" (239). To Nicholas's thus facetious "No man is an island", Conchis replies:

Pah. Rubbish. Every one of us is an island. If it were not so we should go mad at once. Between these islands are ships, aeroplanes, telephones, wireless--whatever you will. But they remain islands. Islands that can sink or disappear

for ever. You are an island that has not sunk. (146)

William J. Palmer has recognised this idea which runs throughout Fowles's work; he suggests that

the image of the boundaried island of the self is . . . repeated as [an] objective correlative for the themes of isolation and introspection. . . . The metaphor of the island, on the surface isolated from the other islands of the world but below the surface, in the real self, connected to the rest of the world, defines again the theme of individual man's need for self-exploration followed by self-expression in the outer world of others. (93)

Like Miranda in her cellar, Nicholas must achieve selfhood through exploration of the island of the self. He must come to terms with the existential necessity for both freedom of choice and commitment to that choice, to some course of action meaningful to the individual. Freedom, finally, means some genuine sense of personal responsibility, for this is "the only truth that mattered . . . : Thou shalt not inflict unnecessary pain" (641).

This is the lesson which Augustin Meaulnes must learn. There exists, of course, a close relationship between the haunted island of Phraxos and the mysterious wooded De Galais estate which obsesses Augustin Meaulnes for so many years, and which certainly continues to obsess Fowles. In his Afterword to Alain-Fournier's novel, Fowles points to the "kind of archetypal landscape or emotional perspective" achieved in Le Grand Meaulnes; "[phrases] like the domaine perdu (the lost domain) and the pays sans nom (. . . let's say 'the landscape without a name')," he suggests, "have achieved almost Jungian status in the Western unconscious" (209).

Like the lost domain, indeed like the cellar in The Collector, the island of Phraxos assumes a mythic significance. In another "novel of adolescence" which has influenced Fowles, Richard Jefferies's

Bevis, the eponymous hero explores a mysterious lake and its lush surrounds. Bevis discovers an island where he lives Crusoe-like; his world is one strangely free of the restraints of the adult world. A mood of expectancy prevails in Bevis which is echoed in The Magus, and Bevis's influence is clearly felt in Nicholas's exploration of the estate of Bourani (and the 'state' of Conchis). Fowles has acknowledged his own interest in "the dramatic psychosexual implications of isolating extreme situations" ("I Write Therefore I Am"), and indeed, islands "are also secret places, where the unconscious grows conscious, where possibilities mushroom, where imagination never rests" (Islands 28):

The sea and its islands thus become the domain of what cannot be controlled by wisdom and reason; the laboratory where the guinea-pig Odysseus must run through the mazes; where the great ally of reason, the conscious, gives way to the rule of the unconscious and the libido, that eternal and oceanic unsettler of domestic peace and established order. (Islands 59)

The obvious pun on Conchis's name--"a lovely pun on his psychic powers of enlightenment" (Fleishman 306)--emphasises this point; on the island, Nicholas is the guinea-pig, and must make his own way through the mazes of experience and choice in order to become self-acting.

While the "islands" of Fay Godwin's photographs are the Scillies, Fowles points out that his accompanying text "is much more about the Scillies of a novelist's mind; and beyond them, about the mysteries, symbolic and real, of all similarly situated small islands; about their silences, their otherness, the magi and their mazes, their eternal waiting for a foot to land" (Islands 2). Fowles's fascination with those first islands "of a novelist's mind" in the Odyssey is apparent; he acknowledges his debt to Homer when he says that The Magus was "written, like all stories of its kind, under the vast aegis of the Odyssey" (Islands 73). Like the rocks of Corfu, which strip the

skin of Odysseus from his body, Conchis strips Nicholas of his illusions. As Fowles says, "Islands strip and dissolve the crud of our pretensions and cultural accretions, the Odyssean mask of victim we all wear: I am this because life has made me like this, not because I really want to be like this" (Islands 105).

It was James Joyce who recognized in what Fowles calls "the greatest novel, and greatest homage to the Odyssey, of our own century" (Islands 73) that the only answer to the mysteries of life lies in the journeying itself towards death. This is the land where people know nothing of the sea, which Odysseus had to find before he could end his journey, and the land for which Leopold Bloom is so loath to depart. As Fowles suggests,

That is Odysseus: the voyage in the mind. The real Ulysses is whoever wrote the Odyssey, is Joyce, is every artist who sets off into the unknown of his own unconscious and knows he must run the gauntlet of the island reefs, the monsters, the sirens, the Calypsos and the Circes, with only a very dim faith that an Athene is somewhere there to help and a wise Penelope waiting at the end. (Islands 74)

The lines of poetry from Ezra Pound's forty-seventh Canto, marked in a book which Nicholas finds on an apparently deserted beach, emphasise the protagonist's lack of self-knowledge: "Yet must thou sail after knowledge / Knowing less than drugged beasts." According to Avrom Fleishman, "the advice is that of Pound's Tiresias, who challenges Odysseus's state of bondage to Circe, sex, and present pleasures; it is an injunction to deny oneself in order to find oneself, to lift the veil of illusion and see what is there, to become fully a man in raising oneself above the animal" (304).

Since 'Bourani' means 'skull', Nicholas's journey is indeed a journey into the depths of self-consciousness, an attempt "to lift the veil of illusion". He must discover the island of the Self, with

Conchis as the navigator of this inward voyage. A self-styled cynic, Nicholas is suffering from a state of what Fowles in The Aristos calls "nobodiness": the nemo, or the state of being nobody, which Fowles believes is the fourth element in the human psyche. "The nemo," suggests Fowles, "is a man's sense of his own futility and ephemerality; of his relativity, his comparativeness; of his virtual nothingness" (Aristos 47-8). In order to counter the nemo, one can clash with or conform to society: "I can counter my nemo by conflicting; by adopting my own special style of life. I build up an elaborate unique persona, I defy the mass. I am the bohemian, the dandy, the outsider, the hippy" (Aristos 49).

A member of the small club at Oxford called Les Hommes Revoltes-- "Most of us, true to the eternal dandyism of Oxford, simply wanted to look different"--(17), Nicholas tells how the group

argued about being and nothingness and called a certain kind of inconsequential behaviour 'existentialist'. Less enlightened people would have called it capricious or just plain selfish; but we didn't understand that the heroes, or anti-heroes, of the French existentialist novels were not supposed to be realistic. We tried to imitate them, mistaking metaphorical descriptions of complex modes of feeling for straightforward descriptions of behaviour. (17)

Fowles is doing more than describing the facile behaviour of the immature Nicholas. It is an early warning that the reader of The Magus be well advised to heed: the novel itself should not be mistaken for "a straightforward description of behaviour". Fowles lures the reader with a deceptive sense of reality: the detachment of the narrator, for instance, contributes to this effect, as does perhaps the autobiographical element. But the wary reader is soon aware that the realism with which Nicholas's experiences on the island is described is at odds with the artifice of Bourani. The masque-like tableaux which

Nicholas experiences, for instance, are explicitly dramatic, indeed theatrical, in their presentation:

Beyond, in the weaker original beam, Apollo stood impassively, surveying, a pale marmoreal shadow, like some divine umpire, president of the arena. The goddess began to walk, a striding huntress walk, her silver bow held in one hand by her side, towards him. They stood facing us for a moment, then each raised a free hand, the palm bent back, in a kind of final tableau, a grave salutation. It was another effective gesture. It had a fleeting, but genuine, dignity, the farewell of immortals. But then the remaining light went out. I could still just distinguish the two pale shadows, turning away now with the rather mundane haste of actors eager to get off stage while the lights are down.
(183)

By demystifying the tableau, Conchis (and Fowles) attempts to show the ultimate absence of gods, the "mythic equivalents of stage-managers for human life" (Fleishman 308). But while Nicholas is conscious from the start of the "artificiality" of these tableaux, the sense of mystery does not abate. The Magus, as Olshen suggests, "concentrates on the illumination of the possibilities, not the limitations of human nature" (John Fowles 33); at the centre of this illumination is the figure of the Magus.

It is, of course, Conchis who manages "the godgame", an alternative title for the novel "whose rejection [Fowles] still sometimes [regrets]" (10). The godgame, suggests Fleishman, "rests on the notion that a man can teach another man to be free by playing god to him and then revealing that he is not a god, that there is no god and that each man must be his own god" (300). Maurice Conchis is a version of the aristos, a man of excellence: wealthy, educated, a discerning patron of the arts, his life becomes the illustration of existential authenticity. Moreover, there is a physical intensity and wholeness to Conchis of which Nicholas is aware on their first meeting.

He was obviously a man who rarely smiled. There was something mask-like, emotion-purged, about his face. Deep furrows ran from beside his nose to the corners of his mouth; they suggested experience, command, impatience with fools. (79)

He had a bizarre family resemblance to Picasso; saurian as well as simian, decades of living in the sun, the quintessential Mediterranean man, who had discarded everything that lay between him and his vitality. A monkey-glander, essence of queen bees; and intense by choice and exercise as much as by nature. (81)

The "Mediterranean man" is "the man of singular competence, power, and freedom [which] is, of course, a Greek ideal, and in The Magus the enactment of an educational process (paideia) takes place in the isles of Greece, under the aegis of a Greek who embodies many of the ideals he inculcates" (Fleishman 299). Conchis uses the terms "hazard" and "elect": following Fowles's definitions in The Aristos, Nicholas is one of the elect, one chosen by hazard to be one of the Few. He must recognize "the point of fulcrum", the moment when the individual must accept himself as he is, and act upon that knowledge. As Conchis explains to Nicholas, "It is not any more what you will become. It is what you are and always will be" (109).

In the epigraph to the first edition of The Magus, taken from Arthur Edward Waite's The Key to the Tarot, the Magus is defined as a "Magician, or Juggler, the caster of the dice and mountebank in the world of vulgar trickery". Olshen suggests that "the Tarot provides Fowles not with a system of belief, but rather with a fund of ready-made symbols and a framework with which to personify and dramatize the various aspects and stages of the process of individuation" ("John Fowles' The Magus" 922). The Fool, or the unnumbered card which begins the Major Arcana--a group of twenty-two cards in the Tarot--

is the principal figure in the Tarot, for he is the persona who must travel the circuit of cards through a calibrated progression out of ignorance and frivolity into enlightenment . . . [Each] card represents a stage in the

journey of an individual as he progresses through the experiences which will lead him to spiritual enlightenment. (McDaniel 250)

Nicholas is explicitly identified with the Fool in his poem: "From this skull-rock strange golden roots throw / Ikons and incidents; the man in the mask / Manipulates. I am the fool that falls / And never learns to wait and watch, / Icarus eternally damned, the dupe of time" (95). The "skull-rock" is of course Bourani, and the "man in the mask" Conchis--although everyone wears a mask: as Conchis tells Nicholas, "You have much to learn. You are as far from your true self as that Egyptian mask our American friend wore is from his true face" (405). Nicholas, "the fool", must learn to "wait and watch" in the salle d'attente, in the mysteries that surround him.

As Conchis reveals more of his life, such as in the central Givray le Duc and Seidevarre incidents, Nicholas is drawn deeper into the labyrinth.³ De Deukans and Henrik Nygaard illustrate the contrast between the Collector and the Magus. De Deukans has devoted his entire life to the "collecting of collections" (177); despite Conchis's criticism that "all collecting . . . extinguishes the moral instinct" (178), though, De Deukans is not an unsympathetic character. He leaves Conchis with an existential question: "Ultram bibis? Aquam an undam? Which are you drinking? The water or the wave?" (188), and Conchis, eschewing the spirit of the collector, passes it on to Nicholas. Henrik Nygaard, on the other hand, epitomises the man to whom mystery is an essential part of life. Faced with the supreme faith of Henrik, Conchis realises that until this moment

my whole approach was scientific, medical, classifying. I was conditioned by a kind of ornithological approach to man. I thought in terms of species, behaviours, observations. . . . I knew the man out there on the point was having an experience beyond the scope of all my science and all my

reason, and I knew that my science and reason would always be defective until they could comprehend what was happening in Henrik's mind. (308)

Conchis realises that he, too, has been a collector; he explains to Nicholas how life-destroying such a consciousness can be.

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

The Magus is an embodiment of creation, freedom, life; the Collector represents sterility, bondage, and death.

The middle section of The Magus depicts Nicholas's journey into an underworld; Conradi calls it a "katabasis, or literary descent", and describes it as "a flamboyantly improbable psychodrama" (42).

Improbable, yes, but then Fowles does intend this "psychodrama" to be a symbolic descent. In The Magus, Nicholas is not alone in his experience of the mysteries. As Roberta Rubenstein points out,

the mystery is enlarged to include the reader: Nicholas's skepticism at what is happening to him, his constant attempts to de-mystify the unusual incidents by explaining them, and his relation to Conchis (the magus/magician) parallels the reader's attitude towards the events described, his attempt to make sense of them, and his relation to Fowles (the magus/author). Though the narrative is told from Nicholas' point of view, he discloses only the information he knows at any given time, so the reader cannot get much ahead of Nicholas in deciphering the meaning of the strange experiences. Fowles handles this aspect of the narrative consummately: each time the reader thinks he has outguessed Nicholas in understanding what is happening, Fowles turns another corner, and the reader finds himself as mystified as Nicholas is. (330)

So the "skull-rock" is the mind, too, the place of journey into the Self, while the "man in the mask" is also the "man in the masque":

Conchis, Nicholas, the reader himself. Like Nicholas, the reader is both observer and participant, drawn in by Fowles's narrative skill, yet distanced by the mysteries. As Conchis tells Nicholas, "We are all actors here, my friend. None of us is what we really are. We all lie some of the time, and some of us all the time" (404). Like Prospero in Shakespeare's "island play" The Tempest, the magus 4 orchestrates a masque which incorporates the world-as-stage motif. "The masque is a metaphor", says Conchis (458); "[t]he reader," suggests Rubenstein, "like Nicholas, eventually realizes that it is a metaphor for reality itself, as Fowles--the artist/magus--sees it" (332).

The "manipulation" of Nicholas by Conchis's "Earl of Leicester's troupe" (371) reaches a climax in the final stage of the disintoxication: the trial. The bizarre figures who judge and are judged by him represent, according to Robert L. Nadeau, "simply another effort by Conchis to convince this representative Western intellectual that abstract forms of valuation are only metaphors for a process that cannot ultimately be known or defined." Nadeau continues,

The costumed figures who initially appear in the underground cistern decorated with religious or occult symbols were all perceived historically as representatives of supranatural forces which direct and control the lives of individuals. The group of internationally known psychologists that appears from under these costumes is simply a more recent version of the same. This class of shamans, gurus, high priests and priestesses claims to have arrived "scientifically" at an understanding of the "laws" governing and determining behaviour. Nicholas realises, however, upon hearing the clinical report on his psychoanalytic history and characterological disorders, that they too are merely providing metaphoric descriptions of a process that remains mysterious because all change is indeterminate in character. (273)

Nicholas is invited to judge his judges, and to punish the woman who has most humiliated him. He discovers, however, that his freedom lies "in

not striking"; he discovers, too, that "there are strange times for the calling in of old debts; and even stranger prices to pay" (518). He is aware that he has "entered some deeper, wiser esoteric society". Like Miranda who learns that art is a stimulus towards self-definition, Nicholas feels himself under their gaze "almost physically dwindling; as one dwindles before certain works of art, certain truths, seeing one's smallness, narrow-mindedness, insufficiency in their dimension and value" (519).

But, for Fowles, it is the application of self-knowledge in the outer world which is most important; not only must Nicholas recognise the conflict between authentic and aesthetic action, but he must also act morally on such insight. "The Fool," suggests Olshen in his article, "is ignorant until he learns of the potential which is man's, and impotent until he can act on this knowledge. When he knows, he gains self-mastery; when he acts, he becomes master of his world. This is the destiny of the elect" (923). Miranda's tragedy is based on this distinction; her death obviates any possible moral conduct in the outer world. Unlike Nicholas, Miranda does not return home, and the pattern of education is thus incomplete.

Nicholas's gradual realisation of his own immaturity in the final section of the novel is accompanied by a growing patience, an increasing ability to remain in doubt and to wait. His relationships with his "sluttish, battered, chain-smoking" (576) landlady Kemp and the "Beckett-like thing" (634) Jojo are an important facet of his maturing--the orphan become part of a family, however odd that family might be. "The most common refuge against the nemo," suggests Fowles, "is the marriage, the family, the home. Children, the long-walk of the blood, are the real life-insurance" (Aristos 52). Lily de Seitas, too, is associated with the strong bonds of the family; Nicholas feels

"something discreetly maternal" in her. She gives him a Bow plate chosen by Alison and herself, which seems to epitomise a new reality for Nicholas: "I unwrapped it, and stared down at a naively drawn Chinaman and his wife, their two children between them, eternal ceramic fossils, in the centre. For some reason I thought of peasants travelling steerage, the swell, the night wind" (624). The family transcends time; the stability of relationships combats the nemo in the individual. The peasant family of the plate serves to emphasise the unreality of Nicholas's relationship with "Julie Holmes". As Lily de Seitas puts it, Nicholas's feelings for Julie are like those of "an unscrupulous collector [falling] in love with a painting" (601).

There is a similar sense of unreality in Meaulnes's love for Yvonne de Galais in Le Grand Meaulnes; his relationship with Valentine Blondeau, on the other hand, has little of that ethereality. Indeed, Seurel believes that "[b]efore his great adventure, Meaulnes the hunter and peasant must have hoped to share his life with just this kind of woman" (197). Like Alison, Valentine is an earthy, sexual woman, but-- for both Nicholas and Meaulnes--their very accessibility serves merely to emphasise the mystery of the princesse lointaine. Yet both "Julie Holmes" and Yvonne die, figuratively or literally, and it is Alison and Valentine who survive to achieve probable contentment in marriage.

Valentine possesses that realism which is apparent in Alison, and which is at odds with the artifice of Bourani. Like the inconspicuous white flower named for sanity (Alyssum: "without madness"), Alison has neither the romance of the rose nor the exoticism of the lily. But according to Lily de Seitas, "Alison [possesses] the one great quality [the female] sex has to contribute to life":

Love may really be more a capacity for love in oneself than anything very lovable in the other person. I believe Alison

has a very rare capacity for attachment and devotion. . . .
 And all I have done is to persuade her that she must not
 underestimate, as I believe she has all her life till now,
 what she has to give. (601)

When Alison finally returns to Nicholas, it is as a representative of
 Reality, containing within her the mystery which Nicholas now
 understands and finally recognises as an essential part of life.

All the time I had expected some spectacular re-entry, some
 mysterious call, a metaphorical, perhaps even literal,
 descent into a modern Tartarus. And yet, as I stared at
 her, unable to speak, at her refusal to return my look, I
 understood that this was the only possible way of return;
 her rising into this most banal of scenes, this most banal
 of London, this reality as plain and dull as wheat. Since
 she was cast as Reality, she had come in her own, yet in
 some way heightened, stranger, still with the aura of
 another world; from, but not of, the crowd behind her.
 (647)

She was mysterious, almost a new woman; one had to go
 back several steps, and start again; and know the place for
the first time. As if what had once been free in her, as
accessible as a pot of salt on the table, was now held in a
 phial, sacrosanct. (650)

And Nicholas learns the "final truth", that there are "no watching
 eyes. . . . The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre. . . .
 Perhaps it had all been to bring me to this, to give me my last lesson
 and final ordeal . . . the task, as in L'Astree, of turning lions and
 unicorns and magi and other mythical monsters into stone statues"
 (655). The godgame is ended; the gods have absconded.

Like the prince in the fable, Nicholas has begun to be a
 magician; he knows that "[t]here is no truth beyond magic" (552). He
 has learned not to seek "the agent": Fowles criticises man for seeking
 "an agent for this being in a blind wind, this being on a raft; the
 mysterious power, the causator, the god, the face behind the
 mysterious mask of being and not being" (Aristos 16). The mystery
 must remain, for, as Conchis says, "mystery has energy. It pours

energy into whoever seeks an answer to it. If you disclose the solution to the mystery you are simply depriving the other seekers . . . of an important source of energy" (235).

Fowles uses the concept of "mystery" in this work in two ways: the mystery of the unknown in the sacred sense, often conceptualized through myth, and the mystery of the unknown in the profane sense, such as in the "mystery" story. Fowles, the arch-magus, declines to "disclose the solution to the mystery" of The Magus; the ending does not provide the answers, for, as Conchis says, "An answer is always a form of death" (626). "[G]ood art seeks to provoke . . . mystery" (Aristos 145): it seeks to provoke a richer life, where the individual moves towards self-definition and towards greater moral responsibility.

In addition, Fowles attempts to explore the fiction of reality in this novel. Lily de Seitas, both female (thus one of the more perceptive characters of the novel) and magus tells Nicholas that

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

The world should be seen, suggests Michael Boccia, "as a place where there is no single truth" (241); in the world of The Magus, Nicholas and the reader must accept that the state of uncertainty is part of man's lot. As Keats said in that now famous letter to Tom and George Keats in 1817, "[A]t once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously--I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of

being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (587). There are mysteries that will always remain. "The task of education," according to Fowles, "is to show the mysteries solved; but also to show where mystery has not been, and will not be, solved--and in the most familiar objects and events. There is mystery enough at noon; no need to multiply the midnight rites" (Aristos 96).

In his Introduction to Richard Jefferies' After London, Fowles comments on the ending to Jefferies' novel. He could be talking about his own Magus.

The inconclusive ending of After London has also been much criticized. Yet it seems to me entirely consistent with the underlying purpose of the novel. Firmly announcing the future will turn out well, or the reverse, may numb man's age-old terror of not knowing, and help hide his increasing lack of what Keats called negative capability; but it is not in harmony with reality. In effect Jefferies took the hardest option. The search in man for greater self-knowledge is a dangerous voyage, but far better than not to voyage at all--and even though, of its nature, destination can never lie in one place or episode . . . or static Utopia. There are no happy ends in time, or evolution. The journey can never be an arrival, only an onwardness. (xx)

The lines from T.S. Eliot, which form a motif in The Magus, emphasise this onwardness: "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time." Shakespeare, Fowles suggests, achieves this supremely in The Tempest.

The Tempest floats free in a way that no other of that formidable chain of masterpieces of the seventeenth-century years of Shakespeare's life quite manages. They are for the world at large. It is for each; and that is why Shakespeare made his over-riding metaphors the island and the sailor stranded in a place that he cannot fully understand . . . that both bewitches and is intensely cruel, that can hold both Calibans and Ariels, Antonios and Mirandas, that can be only too savagely 'real' and yet still an insubstantial pageant. (Islands 84)

Fowles posits that "Prospero really stands for Shakespeare's own power to create magical islands of the mind" (Islands 100). The final speech, suggests Fowles, is Shakespeare's recognition that

the power to affect, and effect, by imaginative means is strictly dependent on precisely that same active energy of imagination in the audience that lay behind the creation. The "spell" is their literalness, or blindness. What makes the island "bare", the ending "despair", is the putting of art in the "bands" of parenthesis, the treatment of it merely as ingenious maze, external form, surface of text and image, entertainment. (Islands 101)

It is a warning, too, that The Magus should not be treated as an "ingenious maze". The journey to the centre of the self continues; "the maze has no centre. An ending is no more than a point in sequence, a snip of the cutting shears" (645). The characters are frozen in a final tableau.

She is silent, she will never speak, never forgive, never reach a hand, never leave this frozen present tense. All waits, suspended. Suspend the autumn trees, the autumn sky, anonymous people. A blackbird, poor fool, sings out of season from the willows by the lake. A flight of pigeons over the houses; fragments of freedom, hazard, an anagram made flesh. And somewhere the stinging smell of burning leaves. (656)

In one of the most perceptive commentaries on this ending, Ronald Binns writes,

Charged with elegiac overtones, yet not completely void of hope (in view of the optimistic Latin verse which follows and ends the novel), this . . . conclusion sharply reminds us of the fictiveness of Alison and Nicholas. Like the figures on Keats's Grecian Urn they are frozen for all time . . . and we, the readers, reminded that the narrative, too, is a masque, a construct, are liberated from it, back into our own realities. (82)

But the readers should also be liberated by the narrative; for Fowles, the ability to learn through fiction is essential.

The timelessness of the figures on the Grecian Urn is echoed in the song of the nightingale. Like Clegg's butterflies, each bird is one of a species, yet each an individual. "[The] nightingale sings to me," says Fowles, "as it sang to my grandfather, and his grandfather; and to Homer's grandfather; it is the same nightingale and not the same nightingale. It is now and it is ever." Unlike Clegg, however, the creative individual may learn by this balance between generalization and particularization: "[t]hrough the voice I hear--and Keats heard--this passing night I enter reality two ways; and at the centre meet my richer self" (Aristos 178). It is for the reader to assess the significance of Fowles's Magus; perhaps to ask, like Keats at the end of the nightingale's song, "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? / Fled is that music--Do I wake or sleep?"

Chapter Four

The French Lieutenant's Woman: Woman as Mystery

"As with The Collector and The Magus, Fowles has titled [The French Lieutenant's Woman] after the character manifesting the most power in it. Sarah is as much the mover of the action here as Clegg is in The Collector and Conchis in The Magus" (Olshen, John Fowles 87). The French Lieutenant's Woman is about Sarah Woodruff, and what she represents in a confined society. Like Henrik Nygaard who reveals to Conchis that "[t]hat great passive monster, reality, was no longer dead, easy to handle" (Magus 309), Sarah assails the rigid collector-consciousness of Victorian society, and stimulates growth and self-definition in the person of Charles Smithson.

Sarah Woodruff is perhaps Fowles's most enigmatic character--the lonely figure at the end of the quay who turns her back on the hypocrisies of the Victorian world. She has attained selfhood: "in her own freedom she knows how to encourage the grasping of freedom by others" (Palmer 75). In many ways, Sarah is the archetypal Fowlesian woman; in The Aristos, Fowles describes cultures in terms of the male or female principle to which they conform.

Adam is stasis, or conservatism; Eve is kinesis, or progress. Adam societies are ones in which the man and the father, male gods, exact strict obedience to established institutions and norms of behaviour, as during a majority of the periods of history in our era. The Victorian is a typical such period. Eve societies are those in which the woman and the mother, female gods, encourage innovation and experiment, and fresh definitions, aims, modes of feeling. (157)

Sarah represents, very clearly, the innovatory and the experimental.

The sense that Charles has of escape from Victorian sexual convention, most evident in his meetings with Sarah in the Eden-like fertility of Ware Common, prefigures his growing understanding not only of Sarah's motivation, but also of his own selfhood. The hidebound Victorian conventions are rendered less powerful in the isolated growth of the Undercliff; it is here "in those brief poised seconds above the waiting sea, in that luminous evening silence broken only by the waves' quiet wash, [that] the whole Victorian Age was lost" (66).

Through Sarah's portrayal as both magus and existential centre, Fowles's view of woman is clearly demonstrated. She epitomises the mystery of women--mystery, according to Fowles, is the "ultimate" tension "between what we know and what we know we will never know" (Aristos 95). In addition, it is in the figure of Sarah that Fowles's fascination with other individualistic fictional (and non-fictional) women--Mehalah, Ourika, and the creator of Ourika--is realised.

Fowles takes up these views in his commentaries on such works. His love for nature and his belief in the redemptive qualities of the natural world are closely connected with the island imagery so prevalent throughout his work. Related to those islands, perhaps, the dour surroundings of the Essex marshlands are central to the tragic story of Sabine Baring-Gould's Mehalah; as Fowles has suggested, they are probably the real villain of the plot. Mehalah Sharland and her mother live on the island of Mersea; like Phraxos (although admittedly less colourful), the island represents more than mere locale. Elijah Rebow's struggle for Mehalah is at first a struggle for possession of their island home. But islands are eternally separate, and Rebow, like Clegg, must learn that he cannot win love by simply possessing the beloved. As Fowles warns throughout his work, the desire to possess, to collect, is essentially a destructive one; since this is a novel admired by Fowles,

it is predictable that this urge to collect will lead to destruction.¹

While Mehalah's fierce independence and her struggle to remain faithful to George de Witt provide the foundation for the tragedy, the primary concern of the novel is the developing relationship between Mehalah and Rebow. Gradually, Rebow becomes a more sympathetic figure; as Fowles says,

There remains a blindness, spiritual and literal, in him; but as great a one arises in the 'angel' Mehalah. Rebow is driving by all the wrong means at a great right; and she has been doing exactly the reverse. As he tells her, only she could have saved him from himself, and only he could have satisfied her. . . . The moral of the book is clear: selfish man and resentful woman must end in tragedy. If humanity is to survive and improve, blind will must learn to live with blind pride. (xii)

While his feelings are still characterised by his desire to possess, Mehalah's total rejection of his (misguided) love is seen by Fowles as blind pride. The echoes of Nicholas Urfe are clear. Mehalah's commitment to stay with her now blind husband, yet only to remain at "the post of duty, not of love" (262) is doomed to disaster.

This conflict between duty and love is at the heart of The French Lieutenant's Woman; it is only when the characters see duty as the social construct that it is that they are offered some kind of salvation. Charles loses Sarah in Exeter because his sense of duty, rather than his emotional position, dictates his choice. The tragedy of Mehalah, of course,² is that she, like Charles, understands her own feelings too late. As a result, it is only in death that Mehalah and Rebow achieve a tragic but true unity.

Rebow uses the analogy of clockwork dolls to describe the world of conventions, which both he and Mehalah defy. Rebow and Mehalah are unlike those who spin and twirl in a set pattern for as long as hazard (or God, as Rebow believes) decrees, for "as He was making the dolls

that were to twirl and pirouette His breath got into some, and they are different from the rest. . . . They go where they list, and do what they will, they follow the impulse of the breath of God within, and not the wires that fasten them to the social mechanism" (281). Rebow believes that he and Mehalah "have the breath of God. . . . The laws of the land and of religion are the slits in the board on which the dolls dance, and they only move along these slits; but you and I, and such as have free souls, go anywhere, and do anything" (281). It is this sense of freedom, this understanding of the social mechanism, which Fowles admires, and which energises Sarah Woodruff.

The glory of marriage with the ideal partner is put forth by Rebow:

Ghosts are those that have married the wrong ones, wandering and waiting, and seeking for their right mates. Do you hear the piping and the crying at the windows of a winter night? That is the ghosts looking in and sobbing because they are out in the cold shivering till they meet their mates. But when they meet, then that is heaven. (173)

Both Rebow and Mehalah are elect; "Rebow knows it when he pours out his version of the Platonic doctrine of the ideal partner", suggests Fowles (xii). Similarly, Sarah and Charles are elect. Unlike Mehalah, however, Sarah finally perceives that her fulfilment comes not with marriage, but with the sacrifice of everything that may threaten her freedom.

Characteristically, Fowles's fascination with Mehalah extends beyond the eponymous heroine to the writer behind the pen, Sabine Baring-Gould. The brief description Fowles gives of Baring-Gould in his introduction to the novel confirms his delight in the Victorian eccentric:

In the course of his ninety years he published 159 books (like T.S. Eliot, he always wrote standing) of all kinds--poetry, theology, church history, biography, travel, folklore

(especially of the lurid and macabre kind--one catching title is The Book of the Werewolves) and a plump covey of novels. He was an important pioneer archaeologist of Dartmoor; an anthropologist; a patron of religious painting. His name is second only to that of Cecil Sharp as a collector of English folk-song; and he also wrote what is probably the best-known of all English hymns--Onward, Christian Soldiers. (ix)

Like Claire de Durfort, Baring-Gould's life could be the subject of another fiction. As Fowles makes clear in The French Lieutenant's Woman, it is the unusual individual who defies or challenges the established order of the Victorian era, or indeed of any era, who fascinates him.

Fowles's Introduction, Glossary and Appendix to Mehalah were first published in 1969, the same year in which he published The French Lieutenant's Woman. Not only does this convergence of dates suggest the close relationship between Baring-Gould's and Fowles's novels, but Fowles's description of Mehalah places the two heroines in unmistakable association.

Mehalah herself stands for the 'new woman' of the Late Victorian period. She has strong Pre-Raphaelite undertones, and strong sociological ones, for she is metaphorically trying to break from the tight stays . . . of masculine wishful thinking about woman's humble role in life. There is, as with so many of Rossetti's female faces, a distinctly masculine cast about her. She rows like a man, she goes armed with a pistol, she is quite capable of tossing a rival . . . over a ship's side into the mud or--as the vitriolic climax to the violence in the book shows--of defending herself against rape. This was the new taste of the time--we see it in Swinburne, in countless others. The demure moppets of the 1850s and 60s were fast going out of fashion. (xi)

Ernestina Freeman is "so very nearly one of the prim little moppets" (27). But Mehalah's masculine appearance and her lack of fashionable dress are echoed in Fowles's Sarah, who is also "a stranger to the crinoline" (13): "[her] eyes could not conceal an intelligence, an independence of spirit; there was also a silent contradiction of any

sympathy; a determination to be what she was. Delicate, fragile, arched eyebrows were then the fashion, but Sarah's were strong . . . and gave her a faintly tomboyish air on occasion" (105). Barry N. Olshen notes: "Fowles mentioned [in a recent letter] that Sarah was intended physically to recall Elizabeth Siddal, the favourite model of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" (John Fowles 126). It is not coincidental, then, that she is explicitly associated with the Pre-Raphaelites at the end of the novel. Sarah's sense of maleness becomes more explicit; Charles feels that Sarah's rejection of his counsel at Ware Common is an indication that he is "trite, a mere mouther of convention. There was something male about her . . . [he] felt himself like an old woman" (157). The role definition that exists in *Lyme Regis* loses its rigidity in the natural world.

But there is more than the resemblance between the figures of Mehalah and Sarah, and the desire for independence in a society characterised by "iron certainties and rigid conventions" (315), that connects The French Lieutenant's Woman and Mehalah. The latter is apparently set soon after the French Revolution, but apart from Mehalah's scarlet cap and the pressgangs, "everything else in the book is of the 1870s" (Introduction to Mehalah xi). This historical perspective is reflected in Fowles's novel, for apart from the costumes and the social conventions, much of his book is of the 1960s, rather than the 1870s.

One of the most interesting aspects of this relationship is shown by Fowles's concern with language. Fowles defends the "over-dramatic linguistic and dramatic palette employed by so many of the later Victorian novelists"; he begs for a sympathy for the "prose equivalent" of "the glowing tones of Victorian colour painting" (Introduction xiv). Furthermore, he suggests, the twentieth-century warmth for Art Nouveau

and the Pre-Raphaelites should be accompanied by an understanding of the language as "a phenomenon of the period" (xiv). Yet Fowles, as a twentieth-century writer, is aware of the problems inherent in his using that vividly coloured linguistic palette. In his essay composed during the writing of The French Lieutenant's Woman (and in the same year, of course, as his connection with Mehalah), Fowles notes the difficulties of "voice" in his novel: "by voice," he says, "I mean the overall impression one has of the creator behind what he creates" ("Notes on an Unfinished Novel" 141).

[The] genuine dialogue of 1867 (in so far as it can be heard in the books of the time) is far too close to our own to sound convincingly old. It very often fails to agree with our psychological picture of the Victorians--it is not stiff enough, not euphemistic enough, and so on; and here at once I have to start cheating and pick out the more formal and archaic (even for 1867) elements of spoken speech. It is this kind of 'cheating', which is intrinsic to the novel, that takes the time. (139)

Fowles's use of the word "cheating" is significant. As Frederick M. Holmes observes,

By making the reader sensitive to the work as a fabrication composed of words rather than as a transparent window to a real-seeming human drama, the novel's literary self-consciousness enables him to see that the apparently solid, historically accurate evocation of the Victorian age is as much a product of our collective imagination as it is of fact. (187)

But Fowles does not only puncture twentieth-century illusions by deliberately shattering the "realism" of his novel. His interest in Sabine Baring-Gould, the individual who defies categorisation, succeeds too in dissolving many of those same illusions, and succeeds in challenging popularly held misconceptions of the Victorian age.

Some years after the publication of The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles translated Claire de Durfort's Ourika from the French, and

published it in 1977. In his foreword, Fowles acknowledges the influence of Ourika on The French Lieutenant's Woman:

I chose the name of the hero in my own novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman, quite freely--or so I thought at the time. It came as a shock, months after my typescript had gone to the printers, to pick up Ourika one day and to recall that Charles was the name of the principal male figure there also. That set me thinking. And though I could have sworn I had never had the African figure of Ourika herself in mind during the writing of The French Lieutenant's Woman, I am now certain in retrospect that she was very active in my unconscious. (7)

Like his own story of Sarah, Fowles regards Ourika as "the case history of an outsider, of the eternal etranger in human society" (9). Ourika and Sarah have similar attitudes towards their societies, which are unable to cope with the unconventional. Both women refuse to accept the social status quo; both women are prepared for social roles which their societies do not permit. Ourika is raised in the aristocratic milieu of pre-revolutionary France, but because she is black, is unable to marry the son of her benefactress. Sarah's education has led to a similar dislocation; as Olshen says of Sarah, "She has been given the trappings of a lady without the social standing; she has been forced out of her own class without being raised to the next" (John Fowles 74).

The frustration which underlies so much of Sarah's behaviour--frustration principally with the closed, male-centred society of Victorian England--is present, too, in Ourika. But Ourika's frustration and despair with her situation in the petrified Ancien Regime results in her retreat to the cloisters; unable to cope with her impossible love for Charles de B., she becomes a nun and serves God in an equally closed society. This solution, "characteristic of dominant classes all through the ages, but especially characteristic of the Restoration, with its motto of 'Throne and Altar'" (Epilogue to Ourika 62), is seen as "consoling" and thus inauthentic by Fowles; it is not one which he could

envisage for his characters. Sarah's frustration with her society, in contrast, stimulates her growth, her turning towards a freer and more open world which she eventually seems to find in the artistic milieu of the Rossettis. Whereas Ourika sheds her bright, fashionable clothes for the darkness of the habit, Sarah's transformation is reversed: she sheds the worn, dark clothes for the bright colours of the New Woman. Ourika's frustration incarcerates her; Sarah emerges from "a living memorial to the drowned, a figure from myth" (9), and becomes an individual "blossomed, realized, winged from the black pupa" (379).³

Although Fowles has said that Ourika "was very active in [his] unconscious" during the writing of The French Lieutenant's Woman (Foreword to Ourika 7), it is perhaps less the fictional character than the woman behind the character--Claire de Durfort--who energises Fowles's creation. Claire's alliance with Chateaubriand has the same air of notoriety as has Sarah's with the French lieutenant and finally with Rossetti; both women dare to behave in contradiction of their society's norms. While Ourika seeks refuge from the mandates of her society in the church, a refuge which Fowles describes as "a sheepfold" (62), Sarah, like Claire, "has a position socially undefined but somehow mandated by the world of art to which she now belongs" (66). Sarah, too, is last seen with her child; with Charles in the second ending, the three of them form a proto-family. Unlike Claire, Ourika is never seen in this way, and her retreat only serves to emphasise the impossibility of her entering into this kind of relationship.

In both novels, however, "[t]he crux of the problem lies in the rejecting culture, not the outsider; in the culture that will not concede equality and fraternity, even when its ethos and its behaviours are possessed in every external manner by the would-be candidate for entry" (Afterword to Ourika 58). Of course, Sarah's insistence on her

role as outcast highlights her position in Victorian society, but it also serves to emphasise the intolerance of that same society.

Sarah's odd (to the Victorian eye) appearance sets her apart; Fowles describes the persistent visual image which gave birth to the character: "A woman stands at the end of a deserted quay and stares out to sea" ("Notes" 136). This initial visual stimulus is significant to Fowles; the extraordinarily powerful visual emphasis might also explain why it is this of all Fowles's novels that has been most successfully filmed. In the foreword to Pinter's screenplay, Fowles compares the film director to the author:

[For] true cinema, cinema conceived and executed by artists as an art, or at least as a craft by sincere craftsmen, I have always had the greatest liking and respect. I have never had any belief in the notion that the cinema is 'killing' the novel. . . . The two ways of telling stories are much nearer sisters than anything else. A good director is always partly a novelist, and vice versa. . . . Quite apart from avowedly auteur cinema, the shared need to narrate, to create new worlds of character and atmosphere, to play the godgame, brings us incomparably closer than any other artists in different arts. It is the techniques that are so different, not the final aims. . . . (xiii)

Fowles's attitude at this time might be explained by his enthusiasm for the film, with Pinter as scriptwriter and Karel Reisz as director.

Years before Reisz's production, however, Fowles regarded the "loneliness of the long-distance writer" rather more favourably than the "team effort" of the crew filming The Magus. Fowles was unhappy with previous films made of his novels--The Magus and The Collector--and this is perhaps why, eleven years before Reisz's production, Fowles notes

In my novels I am the producer, director, and all the actors; I photograph it. . . . There is a vanity about it, a wish to play the godgame, which all the random and author-removing devices of avant-garde technique cannot hide. But there must be a virtue, in an age that is out to exterminate both the individual and the enduring, in the individual's attempt to endure by his own efforts alone. ("Notes" 144)

Fowles's interest in the individual underlies his perception; the individual who achieves self-definition through his creative efforts is a characteristic Fowlesian concern.

In his novels, Fowles makes his role as producer explicit. Like Conchis who openly plays the godgame in The Magus, Fowles makes his artifice quite overt in The French Lieutenant's Woman. The theatricality of Fowles as Magus reaches a climax in this novel; the reader is reminded of Thackeray, who as "Manager of the Performance" sets up his Puppets, with "the whole accompanied by appropriate scenery and brilliantly illuminated with the Author's own candles" (Vanity Fair 7). Indeed, The French Lieutenant's Woman has been labelled a "Victorian" or "historical" novel by many of Fowles's critics: Roger Sale in the Hudson Review, for instance, says that the novel "tries to be both a Victorian novel and a commentary on Victorian life" (716).

But Fowles does not view this work as a historical novel, "a genre in which [he has] very little interest" ("Notes" 136). Fowles makes it clear that his characters are not content, like those of Thackeray or Fielding, to remain in the Manager's control. As William Palmer suggests,

[A]lmost in answer to Conchis, he is writing something more real than a historical novel. . . . Fowles attempts two kinds of liberation: First, he tries to free both himself and his characters from the tyrannizing roles of the traditional novelist-god/character relationship; and then, he attempts to free the reader from the traditional role of passive, uninvolved observer of the action that takes place in an unreal, fictional world. (70)

When Sarah first tells Charles Smithson of her "affair" with Varguennes,

the openness of Sarah's confession--both so open in itself and in the open sunlight--seemed less to present a sharper reality than to offer a glimpse of an ideal world. It was not strange because it was more real, but because it was less real; a mythical world where naked beauty mattered far more than naked truth. (154)

Perhaps the openness of the narrator's "confession" in Chapter Thirteen has, too, the effect of heightening the reader's sense of reality; implicit in the insistence that this is a novel, that this is fiction, is the claim for naked truth. As the narrator points out,

You may think novelists always have fixed plans to which they work, so that the future predicted by Chapter One is always inexorably the actuality of Chapter Thirteen. But novelists write for different reasons . . . Only one same reason is shared by all of us: we wish to create worlds, as real as, but other than the world that is. Or was. (86)

In addition to creating a world which the reader experiences as real because its fictiveness is exposed, Fowles also documents the actual world that was. He devotes an entire chapter to an essay on the ills and essential hypocrisies of Victorian society, "where there was an enormous progress and liberation in every other field of human activity; and nothing but tyranny in the most personal and fundamental" (232).

The counterpointing of fictional and historical worlds serves to validate the former while energising the latter. Fowles's emphasis throughout this novel is on the personal nature of history, as Marx defined it: "History is nothing but the actions of men in pursuit of their ends" (280). The question asked of Mary, the maidservant: "What can an innocent country virgin know of sin?" (230), for instance, is followed by a description of the sexual practices (and malpractices) of the Victorian Age, in which such an impeccable source as the "Children's Employment Commission Report" of 1867 is acknowledged as a reference. Moving from the initial stimulus of Fowles's fictional world, then, the reader is presented with documented footnotes detailing such aspects as the state of contraception at this time; the narrator further discusses the general sublimation of and corresponding preoccupation with sex.

But Fowles is not content with such general details. He moves from his fictional world to historical records to, finally, a discussion of that eminent Victorian, Thomas Hardy. His interest in Hardy has led to the publication of reviews, articles, and most recently, an introduction to a full-length book on Hardy's England.⁴ Robert Huffaker has recognised the importance which Hardy has for Fowles; he suggests that "Hardy, who admired Darwin enough to attend his funeral, broods over this entire novel, and his own image of 'purblind doomsters' governing man's destiny is similar to Fowles's 'hazard-given abilities'" (114). In The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles illustrates the Victorian sexual ethos with details of Hardy's life. Fowles finds "not the least interesting thing" about Hardy "his fanatical protection of the seal of his own and his immediate ancestor's sex life" (235). Fowles is fascinated by the shadowy relationship between the writer and his "cousin" Tryphena; while (and perhaps because) their love was never consummated, Fowles suggests that the discovery of their true relationship energised much of Hardy's work.

This tension, then--between lust and renunciation, undying recollection and undying repression, lyrical surrender and tragic duty, between the sordid facts and their noble use--energizes and explains one of the age's greatest writers; and beyond him, structures the whole age itself. (236)

History is individualised. Fowles's "digression", as he calls it, relates Hardy's biographical details to his fictional world; he concludes his chapter by suggesting a fictional meeting between Mary and Tryphena, the latter about to become "the perfect emblem of [Hardy's] ages' [sic] greatest mystery" (237).

Fowles's concern for the man behind the pen is demonstrated once again in his introduction to Thomas Hardy's England, published in 1984.

Fowles emphasises the inseparability of the writer's past and his work:

[W]riters cannot cut the umbilical cord [from the past] so easily; they have to lead split lives--authentic and inauthentic ones, in the later vocabulary of existentialism. Yet the deep sense of loss this self-exile engenders, the guilt, the sense of the wasteful futility of human history, is a very valuable thing for a writer, since it is also a deep source of energy in creation. All novelists are in a sense undertakers or morticians, concerned to give the past a decent, or at least a thorough, burial. We are all reporters at a wake of that kind. (14)

Despite his concern with Hardy's life, there is little of the voyeur in Fowles. Like Charles, who achieves self-knowledge through learning about Sarah, Fowles's interest in other writers' biographies seems to lead to greater self-awareness, to increase his own self-consciousness as a modern writer.

Fowles defends his largely biographical approach to Hardy's writing. He maintains that "we English have been so successful at the novel . . . very much because of [the] tension between private reality and public pretence" ("Hardy and the Hag" 28); he emphasises that he has "long felt that the academic world spends far too much time on the written text and far too little on the benign psychosis of the writing experience; on particular product rather than general process" (29). Fowles refers to his own personal experience while examining Hardy's The Well-Beloved, not to suggest "invidious comparisons", but rather "to try to explain a little the view from the inside: some of the natural, and unnatural, history of my peculiar sub-species [that of the writer]" (29).

Hardy's influence is evident in Fowles's work. That "most Hardy-esque of all narrative devices: the tryst" (36) is, for instance, used by Fowles to considerable effect in The French Lieutenant's Woman. The isolated meetings of Charles and Sarah in the Undercliff are moments

of freedom, of pagan nature, in a world circumscribed by social convention. Fowles describes the tryst in Hardy's work as "not the embodiment of a transient hope in the outward narrative so much as a straight desire for transience, since gaining briefly to lose eternally is the chief fuel of the imagination in Hardy himself" (37). In Fowles's novel, too, Charles's trysts with Sarah are moments of intimacy, poignant in their very transience.

It is through these trysts, however, that Charles begins to realise his static position in a changing world, his being encased in the apparatus of a gentleman "like the massive armour that had been the death warrant of so many ancient saurian species" (253). His rebellion against his age's "macabre desire to go backwards into the future, mesmerized eyes on one's dead fathers instead of on one's unborn sons" (316) is symptomatic of the change wrought in Charles by his relationship with Sarah; by looking into the future rather than by conforming with the past, Charles chooses Sarah, the existential centre of the novel.

"Sarah . . . symbolizes for Charles all the possibilities which will remain unrealized in marriage to Ernestina" (Olshen, John Fowles 78). While Ernestina has an "imperceptible hint of a Becky Sharp" (27), she "and her like behaved always as if habited in glass: infinitely fragile. . . . They encouraged the mask, the safe distance" (127). But Fowles does not fall into the trap of alienating the reader from Ernestina: her moral standards are high, and she behaves with moving honesty and integrity when Charles breaks their engagement.

I know to you I have never been anything more than a pretty little . . . article of drawing-room furniture. I know I am innocent. I know I am spoilt. I know I am not unusual. I am not a Helen of Troy or a Cleopatra. . . . Perhaps I am just a child. But under your love and protection . . . and your education . . . I believed I should become better. I should

learn to please you, I should learn to make you love me for what I had become. . . . I did not choose you because I was so innocent I could not make comparisons. But because you seemed more generous, wiser, more experienced. . . . [You] have little faith in yourself. I have felt that. You believe yourself a failure, you think yourself despised . . . that is what I wished to make my real bridal present to you. Faith in yourself. (327)

Sarah, however, does not seek to be taught by Charles. Sarah's selfhood is unwavering; Charles must choose between "the blond, daylight civilized female and the dark, dangerous, powerfully erotic female whose love promises to destroy him but also to redeem him, to resurrect his truest self" (Oates 1). Charles, like Nicholas Urfe, must be stripped of illusion before he can learn that self-knowledge is a prerequisite for faith in oneself.

The importance of choice is emphasised by Fowles himself, when he addresses the reader: "But I hope you will believe that Sarah on his arm in the Uffizi did stand, however banally, for the pure essence of cruel but necessary (if we are to survive--and yes, still today) freedom" (317). Sarah Woodruff is a Victorian anomaly--a woman motivated by her sex. She embarks deliberately on a role, a performance, in order to live freely in a society which she has analysed and understood. Sarah is an embodiment of life "as Marx defined it--the actions of men (and of women) in pursuit of their ends" (398).

Some terrible perversion of human sexual destiny had begun; he was no more than a footsoldier, a pawn in a far vaster battle; and like all battles it was not about love, but about possession and territory. He saw deeper: it was not that she hated man, not that she materially despised him more than other men, but that her manoeuvres were simply part of her armoury, mere instruments to a greater end. (387)

Charles realises finally that "[f]rom the first she had manipulated him. She would do so to the end" (397).

But while Charles does "at last begin to grasp her mystery" (387),

Sarah remains an enigma, a sphinx-like figure who can never be completely known. The narrator's question which ends Chapter Twelve, "Who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does he come?" (84), can never be answered in full. Unlike Mrs Poulteney, for instance, who is knowable even down to her subconscious, Sarah retains her mystery to the end. "Mystery is a principle of survival for her," suggests Peter Wolfe. He continues,

Being and knowing exist inversely for her. She insists that she is not to be understood, even by herself; happiness for her depends upon total opaqueness. To define the heart's impulses too closely is to kill them; the truths that guide her life lose their force when held up to the light. (153)

"[A]s the essence of Sarah is mystery, the whole truth cannot be told. No one but an omniscient narrator is qualified to tell it, and no such being exists in The French Lieutenant's Woman" (Olshen, John Fowles 73).

In addition, an omniscient narrator is needed in order to decree the final fate of the characters.⁵ Since there is no prevailing omniscient narrator, there can be no decisive conclusion. Thackeray claimed that he designed the ending of Vanity Fair to be true to life in a letter to Robert Bell, who had reviewed the novel in Fraser's. Thackeray declared, "I want to leave everybody dissatisfied and unhappy at the end of the story--we ought all to be with our own and all other stories" (Tillotson 174). Fowles's narrator likewise reminds the reader of "our own and all other stories": "You do not even think of your own past as quite real; you dress it up, gild it or blacken it, censor it, tinker with it . . . fictionalize it, in a word, and put it away on a shelf--your book, your romanced autobiography" (87); the suggestion that Thackeray's Fair continues (despite certain characters being shut up in the Manager's box) which concludes the play of Vanity Fair is echoed in

The French Lieutenant's Woman.

Since Fowles is concerned with the question of choice, and since Sarah epitomises the existential dilemma, it is only fitting that the novel presents the reader with his own choice of endings. In the first ending which Fowles offers, Sarah is relegated to some unknown future, banished in the same proprietary fashion as Mrs Poulteney is banished to the nether regions. "What happened to Sarah," the narrator allows, "I do not know--whatever it was, she never troubled Charles again in person, however long she may have lingered in his memory. This is what most often happens. People sink out of sight, drown in the shadows of closer things" (292). But this "traditional ending" (295), with the marriage of Charles and Ernestina, is qualified by the narrator; while it happened, it only happened in Charles's imagination. The narrator, Conchis-like, combines the imaginary and the real; like Nicholas in the mazes of Bourani, the reader must continually re-evaluate the cast of characters, and re-orientate his perspective.

Of course, since the entire novel is only (and openly) happening in the impresario-novelist's imagination, the reader must choose whether to choose any ending at all. The second ending, however, is tempting. The sense of dismay the reader feels in the first ending may be largely attributed to the disappearance of Sarah; her sudden obedience to the whims of the narrator is quite at odds with her previous character. Sarah represents mystery, the unknown and the unknowable: with her disappearance in the first ending, the novelist is pandering to a convention--that of neatly solving all mysteries--which he has been at pains to avoid. Most important, however, it deprives Charles of choice.

And the 'I', that entity who found such slickly specious reasons for consigning Sarah to the shadows of oblivion, was not myself; it was merely the personification of a certain massive indifference in things--too hostile for Charles to

think of as 'God'--that had set its malevolent inertia on the Ernestina side of the scales; that seemed an inexorable onward direction as fixed as that of the train which drew Charles along. (295-6)

That "massive indifference" consigns Charles to existential inauthenticity, for existentialism is "inherently hostile" to all "that does not permit the individual to choose" (Aristos 116).

But the second ending, tempting though a traditional romantic resolution may be, is almost as contrived as the first.

At last she looked up at him. Her eyes were full of tears, and her look unbearably naked. Such looks we have all once or twice in our lives received and shared; they are those in which worlds melt, pasts dissolve, moments when we know, in the resolution of profoundest need, that the rock of ages can never be anything else but love, here, now, in these two hands' joining, in this blind silence in which one head comes to rest beneath the other. . . . (393)

True, Sarah remains in Charles's life, but her mystery does not. Sarah's force lies in questioning, not in resolution; in "substance and purity of thought and judgment" (384) rather than in "blind silence". In both the first and second endings, the essence of Sarah--her mystery--is dissipated.

There is, finally, no real choice for the reader to make; no alternative but the final ending. From the existential void, Charles has emerged with the self-knowledge and self-awareness that is typical of the existential consciousness. With increased self-sufficiency, he is able to see Sarah more clearly; interestingly, in this last chapter Sarah's feelings are knowable--in a limited way--for the first time.

He sought her eyes for some evidence of her real intentions, and found only 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. And there, in that possible eventual sacrifice, he was for a moment tempted. He could see a fear behind the now clear knowledge that she had made a false move; and that to accept

her offer of a Platonic--and even if one day more intimate, never consecrated--friendship would be to hurt her most. (397)

Like Nicholas with the cat-o'-nine-tails, Charles must make another choice, and like Nicholas, must forgive his own hurt. This is part of "his own true superiority to her . . . an ability to give that was also an inability to compromise" (397). Huffaker suggests that this "uncompromising capacity to give is also the true superiority of the Victorian age to our own" (114).

The reader knows no more of Sarah. The white net curtain which falls back into place conceals her future; she is no more, finally, than a "shadow behind a light" (398). For Charles, however, the future has been "made present" (397): he feels himself reborn. As Fowles suggests, Sarah's authenticity is due to her acting what she knows; Charles, finally, has achieved this, has at last "found an atom of faith in himself, a true uniqueness, on which to build" (399).

The end, then, is a beginning. Geoffrey Tillotson quotes Edwin Muir on "the end of some of the best novels of the twentieth century": "We feel that there is something of the greatest importance to say, and that the ending is really a sort of beginning. . . . [We] live by an unfinished conception of life, exist in a circle which is never closed" (174). While less open-ended than The French Lieutenant's Woman, the tragic conclusion of Baring-Gould's Mehalah suggests too the "circle which is never closed".

The water boiled up, through the plughole, and the boat sank deeper. Life was beginning to return to Mehalah but she neither saw nor knew aught. Her eyes were open and turned seaward, to the far away horizon, and Elijah relaxed his hold one instant.

"Elijah!" she suddenly exclaimed, "How cold!"

"Glory! Glory! It is fire! We are one!"

The bells pealed over the rolling sea--no boat was on it, only a sea-mew skimming and crying. (306)

Nature abides; Fowles's "river of life, of mysterious laws and mysterious choice" still flows.

Fowles ends his novel with the final line of Matthew Arnold's "To Marguerite", a poem which echoes Fowles's perception of individual enislement, and which Fowles calls "the noblest . . . of the whole Victorian era" (365). Charles has learned, in Arnold's words, that "we mortal millions live alone"; that the human condition is one of essential isolation. His final realisation is that

[life] 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. (399)

Charles experiences the "fragments of freedom, hazard" (Magus 656) which Nicholas finally perceives. The gods have absconded: the impresario-magus has disappeared, the open landau some miles away by now. His theatre, like that of Conchis, is empty. There remains only the stinging smell of burning leaves and the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

Chapter Five

The Ebony Tower, and the Celtic Dream-Temple

In 1974, five years after the success of The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles published his volume of novellas entitled The Ebony Tower. He describes this volume as a "collection of stories" (119); in fact, it consists of four "stories" ("The Ebony Tower", "Poor Koko", "The Enigma", "The Cloud"), one translation ("Eliduc", from the Old French), and an essay accompanying the latter entitled "A Personal Note". Fowles points out that the working title was Variations, "by which I meant to suggest variations both on certain themes in previous books of mine and in methods of narrative presentation" ("A Personal Note" 119). While this title was rejected by the publishers, Fowles owns that he has "kept the illusion". If, as Kerry McSweeney has suggested, "all of Fowles's novels and stories are . . . concerned with the imagination and its productions" ("John Fowles's Variations" 305), then The Ebony Tower is central to the Fowles corpus.

Each one of the stories is concerned in some way with the relationship between art and life, and the function of the creative individual. In Robert Huffaker's words, "Like man's life, his art can be, among other things, a refuge, a mask, an obsession, a delusion, a profession, a social barrier, a selfish device, a reflection of thought, a style of civilization, an enlightenment, and a fulfilling act of natural creativity" (116). The relationship that exists between "aesthetic sensibility" and "human behaviour" is thematically central to Fowles's fiction; as Huffaker suggests, this relationship is explored in

The Ebony Tower "in several variations" (116).

But there is another thread which runs through The Ebony Tower: that of the enigma. The stories centre on the enigmatic, the mysterious, underlining Fowles's claim to thematic and narrative variation. Unknowing, he writes elsewhere, "is as vital to man as is water" (Aristos 26).

Of course, both of these concerns--narrative variation and mystery --are crucial to much of Fowles's non-fiction. The Enigma of Stonehenge, co-published with Barry Brukoff in 1980, is similar in form to Shipwreck, Islands, The Tree, and Thomas Hardy's England, in all of which Fowles's texts accompany photographs taken by the Gibsons of Scilly, Fay Godwin, Frank Horvat and Hermann Lea respectively. If Islands reflects Fowles's interest in the sea and its islands, The Tree his interest in forests and nature, and Thomas Hardy's England his interest in the man and his times, then The Enigma of Stonehenge reflects Fowles's interest in art, and the relationship that exists between man and whatever form his creative expression may take.¹

The very title of this work suggests Fowles's interest in the unsolved mysteries which surround Stonehenge. More than the physical monument, however, fascinates Fowles, for there is the "other and equally real Stonehenge", "the dream-temple and polyvalent symbol of the scholars, poets and artists" (The Enigma of Stonehenge 88), which lies in old prints and books. This aspect, Fowles suggests, "must attract any writer or artist to Stonehenge, the extraordinary power it has always held over the English imagination" (8).

It is not quite like any other ancient monument in these islands, or anywhere else in the world, and that is not because of its physical self and archaeological features, though they are remarkable enough, but because of its power to challenge the imagination of its beholders. Still today it is not what we know of Stonehenge that haunts us, but what we do

not and shall never know. It is like some very ancient and corrupt text, of which one can decipher just enough to be sure it is very important, but never enough to establish exactly what it is saying. (9)

To solve the mystery is to dissipate the energy that mystery generates. Like Fowles's own texts, meaning is withheld; mystery is preserved.

There is another "ancient text" of importance to Fowles, underlying the third variation "of a more straightforward kind" evident in The Ebony Tower. According to Fowles, "the source of its mood, as also partly of its theme and setting, is so remote and forgotten--though I believe seminal in the history of fiction--that I should like to resurrect a fragment of it" ("A Personal Note" 119). That fragment is the Celtic romance "Eliduc", attributed to Marie de France.

A tale of chivalry and courtly love, "Eliduc" relates how the knight Eliduc is unjustly expelled from the King of Brittany's court. Leaving his wife Guildeluec behind, he travels to England, where he becomes the King of Exeter's favourite. The king has a daughter Guilliadun, who falls in love with Eliduc. Although he soon returns her love, "there had been no madness between them--nothing improper, theirs was no casual affaire" (135). When he is begged to return to Brittany by his former lord, Eliduc takes her with him.

But on the voyage home, Guilliadun learns for the first time of Eliduc's wife, and falls into a deathlike sleep. Thinking she is lost forever, Eliduc lays her body in a hermit's chapel in the forest. He continues to visit her regularly, despite having returned to his wife. Guildeluec, however, notices his preoccupation, and follows him to the forest one day, where she discovers the beautiful Guilliadun. A weasel, whose mate has been killed by Guildeluec's servant, places a red flower in its dead mate's mouth, and the animal is instantly revived. Guildeluec places the same red flower in Guilliadun's mouth, thus awakening the

latter. Eliduc's wife nobly establishes and enters a nunnery, and Guilliadun and Eliduc are married. After many years of happiness together, Eliduc and Guilliadun retire, too, to the religious life.

"Art and religion are the two great mirrors of any civilization" (Stonehenge 18); "Eliduc" is set against the system of amour courtois, "a desperately needed attempt to bring more civilization (more female intelligence) into a brutal society" (124). As Fowles continues,

The mania for chivalry, courtly love, mystic and crusading Christianity, the Camelot syndrome, all these we are aware of. . . . But I believe that we also owe--emotionally and imaginatively, at least--the very essence of what we have meant ever since by the fictional, the novel and all its children, to this strange northern invasion of the early medieval mind. (120)

C. S. Lewis proposes the same idea in The Allegory of Love, and in addition, links the system of courtly love with the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century:

[T]he most momentous and the most revolutionary elements in [the sentiment of courtly love] have made the background of European literature for eight hundred years. French poets, in the eleventh century, discovered or invented, or were the first to express, that romantic species of passion which English poets were still writing about in the nineteenth. (4)

But whereas the medieval system of amour courtois sought to limit passionate excess, or desmesure, the extreme Romantic glorified it in his emphasis on the imaginative rather than on rational thought. The introversion which resulted from this preoccupation with the self was symbolised by the tour d'ivoire, the life divorced from the outside world.

Like the monoliths of Stonehenge, the ivory tower is a construct of man. Fowles, however, suggests that twentieth-century man has swung away from the emotional excess of Romanticism, which he describes

elsewhere as "its more bardlike and ruin-besotted aspect" (Stonehenge 9). In reaction to the essentially Romantic extremes of fascism and Nazism, modern man has taken refuge in equally destructive (to Fowles) abstract ideas and cold logic. The ebony tower is the polar opposite of the ivory tower; the dark and deathlike chill suggested by the ebony tower represents modern man's flight towards abstraction, his elevation of abstract ideas above human feeling.

Fowles's concern in his fiction is always existential. In an interview with James Campbell, he said

I'm interested in the side of existentialism which deals with freedom: the business of whether we do have freedom, whether we do have free will, to what extent you can change your life, choose yourself, and all the rest of it. Most of my major characters have been involved in this Sartrean concept of authenticity and inauthenticity. (Campbell 466)

The two basic themes in Fowles's work which are correlated to each other, according to William J. Palmer, are the "aesthetic theme, which analyzes the relationship between art and life, [and] the existential theme, which dramatizes the struggles of individuals to define themselves and to make moral decisions about the conduct of their lives in worlds which discourage self-expression and deny existential freedom" (78).

This relationship is examined in the title story of The Ebony Tower, in which David Williams, a young abstract artist, teacher and minor critic, has been commissioned to write the introduction to a book on Henry Breasley, an English painter living in exile in France. Visual art predominates in this story: not only are all the characters artists of some kind, but the setting itself seems to realise art of the past. David's first glimpse of the two girls, for instance, is strongly reminiscent of a Degas painting:

In mid-lawn there was a catalpa pruned into a huge green mushroom; in its shade sat, as if posed, conversing, a garden table and three wicker chairs. Beyond, in a close pool of heat, two naked girls lay side by side on the grass. The further, half-hidden, was on her back, as if asleep. The nearer was on her stomach, chin propped on her hands, reading a book. She wore a wide-brimmed straw hat, its crown loosely sashed with some deep red material. . . . For a few brief seconds he registered the warm tones of the two indolent female figures, the catalpa-shade green and the grass green, the intense carmine of the hat-sash, the pink wall beyond with its ancient espalier fruit-trees. (12)

Later, during the picnic by the river, Gauguin and Manet: "Another echo, this time of Gauguin; brown breasts and the garden of Eden" (62); and Manet's startling and provocative Dejeuner sur L'herbe is explicitly evoked (55, 63).

Peter Conradi suggests, "Where The Magus was persistently concerned at a subtextual level with art (and Urfe was a failed artist, Conchis a quasi-artist), it is of the first importance that Williams and Breasley, the postulant and magus of 'The Ebony Tower', are practitioners . . ." (79). Like Meaulnes and Nicholas Urfe, David feels that he has entered a lost domain. Like Bourani, the estate is secluded, though entry is deceptively easy. Other echoes of The Magus are heard; with Fowlesian irony, David notices one of the other characters reading a book called The Magus: "He guessed at astrology, she would be into all that nonsense" (65). A harsh comment, perhaps, but one expanded later by Fowles. In an interview with Robert Robinson in 1974, Fowles directly associates The Magus with "The Ebony Tower": "In a way I wanted to demystify The Magus which I think was altogether too full of mystery. This is a kind of realistic version of The Magus" (584).

But the enigmas remain. Like the forest of Coetminais, Breasley has "his antique mysteries" (59); the sense of insularity in the aptly (though somewhat ironically) named Coetminais, the 'Forest of the Monks', is amplified by the unconventional relationship which the aging

Breasley enjoys with the two girls, Diana and Anne (nicknamed the Mouse and the Freak). The mystery inherent in the quintessential Fowlesian woman is clearly present in Diana, the direct successor to Sarah Woodruff: "There was something preternaturally grave about her, almost Victorian, despite the galabiya" (14). Like Sarah, Diana is explicitly associated with the Pre-Raphaelites (37); Breasley compares Diana to Elizabeth Siddal, which makes him "that ghastly little Italian fudger" (25). Like Sarah in Mrs Poulteney's sitting-room, Diana "sat in white elegance and listened, but as if her mind were somewhere else--in a Millais set-piece, perhaps" (27). Like all of Fowles's temptresses, she represents timelessness, mystery, the unknowable.

During the first meal which David has at Coetminais, Breasley attacks the modern school of abstract art to which David belongs. Breasley describes abstraction as the "[g]reatest betrayal in the history of art" (45), a flight from human responsibility. His own painting has an emotional engagement:

It was a forest setting again, but with a central clearing, much more peopled than usual, less of the sub-aqueous feeling, under a first-class blue, almost a black, that managed to suggest both night and day, both heat and storm, a looming threat over the human component. (29)

That "looming threat over the human component" is abstraction. Diana articulates Breasley's belief that "[i]deas are inherently dangerous because they deny human facts" (50): "[a]bstraction depends upon a totalitarian aesthetics; it represents the triumph of cold technique over matter, a surrender of feeling to scientific rationality and organization" (Conradi 80). For Breasley, the ebony tower has supplanted the ivory tower; logic and abstract ideas have taken the place of extreme feeling; abstraction has triumphed over romanticism. Later, David perceives "the enigma, to one who still lived the titanic

battlefield of early twentieth-century art, of all this reduction of passionate theory and revolutionary practice to a technique of mass education" (83).

Breasley's painting springs from a deeply personal source, emphasising the emotional commitment implicit in his art.

This new painting, it seemed, had sprung from a very dim recollection of early childhood; of a visit to a fair he was no longer sure where, he had been five or six, had been longing for the treat, had taken an intense pleasure in it, could still recall this overwhelming wanting --the memory seemed dense with desire--to experience each tent and stall, see everything, taste everything. And then a thunderstorm . . . But the story explained the strange inwardness, the lit oblivion of the central scene of the painting. The metaphysical parallels, small planets of light in infinite nights and all the rest, had remained perhaps a fraction too obvious. It was all a shade too darkly Olympian; put in words, something of a pessimistic truism about the human condition. But the tone, the mood, the force of the statement carried conviction . . . (31).

"So many childhood memories [are] as much fiction as fact" (Stonehenge 5). The fictionalisation of one's past is recognised elsewhere by Fowles: "you dress [your own past] up, you gild it or blacken it, censor it, tinker with it . . . fictionalize it, in a word" (The French Lieutenant's Woman 87). To deny one's past is to invalidate one's present; this, Breasley believes, is symptomatic of the abstract artist.

David recognises Breasley's "umbilical cord to the past" (110). Like those of the narrative, according to Fowles, Breasley's artistic roots go back to the Celtic source: "'Celtic' had been a word frequently used [to describe his work], with the recurrence of the forest motif, the enigmatic figures and confrontations" (19). For Fowles, while the Celtic "was not one of the most endearing cultures the world has known",

It must be added that they seem to have shared something of the Red Indian genius for living in psychological harmony with nature; and no novelist can do anything but fall to his or her knees before another of their gifts. The Celts are among the

finest story-tellers and myth-makers of all human history.
 (Stonehenge 107)

The epigram to the title story is indeed from a Celtic source, Chretien de Troyes's Yvain, which tells of the knight's struggle "through many treacherous trails / And many a peril and many a trial" to reach "the path". Like the archetypal knight, David must undergo both peril and trial before he can reach the path to truth, or in twentieth century terms, existential authenticity. The Fowlesian pattern is clear in this novella: without self-knowledge, there can be no true moral action; existential authenticity depends on the individual realizing "the need he has to learn to choose and control his own life" (Aristos 116).

David's crisis is precipitated by his relationship with Diana, the princesse lointaine. Torn between duty to his absent wife and desire for Diana, he--like Charles Smithson--hesitates at the moment of choice, and is lost. "He watched her go into her room, the door close; and he was left with all the agonized and agonizing deflation of a man who has come to a momentous decision, only to have it cursorily dismissed. . . . For the first time in his life he knew more than the fact of being: but the passion to exist" (103). The realisation of "the eternally missed chance" (107) haunts David; "[h]e had failed in both the contemporary and medieval sense; as someone who wanted sex, as someone who renounced it" (108).

But David has learned from this moral dilemma. It is finally not "the adventure of the body" that is important, but "the far greater existential chance" (110). David realises the lack of freedom, the "surface liberties" (11), of both his life and contemporary art.

Turning away from nature and reality had atrociously distorted the relationship between painter and audience; now one painted for intellects and theories. Not people; and worst of all, not for oneself. . . . [S]uch rootlessness, orbiting in frozen

outer space, cannot have been meant. They were like lemmings, at the mercy of a suicidal drive, seeking Lebensraum in an arctic sea; in a bottomless night, blind to everything but their own illusion.

The ebony tower. (111-2)

Most important, he has perceived his own nature, learned the human fact: "what he was born, still was, and always would be: a decent man and eternal also-ran" (113). His final failure is not sexual, but existential. The individual must choose in order to be authentic: it is David's failure to make a conscious choice, his being influenced by social convention--as he is in his painting--that makes him an "eternal also-ran". The conscious choice of an affair with Diana would not have been immoral, Carol M. Barnum suggests: "What gives it a moral aspect is that, in acquiescing to his feelings, David would be admitting to that side of himself which has lain dormant in his marriage with Beth; in releasing his emotions, he could get in touch with the wellsprings of his creativity, which could then be reflected in his art" (146). The Magus and The French Lieutenant's Woman, Barry Olshen suggests, "end with their protagonist's awareness of expanded horizons and new directions because they stress the translation of important perceptions into freely chosen acts. The point seems to be that without action, the insights are lost and the transformation of personality not possible" (John Fowles 98-9).

Reunited with his wife, David has "a numbed sense of something beginning to slip inexorably away" (115). Like Nicholas, David experiences a sense of shock as he disengages himself from the lost domain, but whereas the "frozen present tense" of the "burning leaves" and the song of the blackbird in The Magus expresses the "limitless possibility of the future" (Barnum 147), the "relentless face of the present tense" (114) in the person of Beth is limiting, deathlike.

Unlike Nicholas, who recognises that the once apparently familiar Alison is the possessor of mystery, David "surrenders . . . to abstraction" (115) in the form of his marriage with Beth.

The parallels between "Eliduc" and "The Ebony Tower" are clear. "[T]he putative common origin [of the two] is in courtly romance, with its twin pulls of sexual passion and social duty" (Conradi 84). Specific romance allusions, as McSweeney points out, are "much less important . . . than the palpable aura of mystery, strangeness, and ordeal imparted by romance motifs" ("John Fowles's Variations" 321-2). Like the relationship between Breasley's late paintings and medieval Celtic literature, the links are "pervasive in the mood if tenuous in the actual symbolism" (58). Both David and Eliduc leave their wives at home; both men are attracted by another woman. But whereas Eliduc is unable to leave Guilliadun behind when he returns home, David departs from Diana, never (presumably) to see her again. The weasel which appears in each story, too, suggests that while Eliduc's emotional betrayal of his wife may be atoned for, David's indecisiveness and inaction may not: the weasel revives its mate in the former story, while the weasel which David kills, with the "trickle of blood, like a red flower" (108) from its mouth, is a sad travesty of its ancestor. Eliduc surrenders to emotion; David to abstraction. For Fowles, however, as Huffaker points out, the truth lies in neither of these extremes, but rather

in the balance of counterpoles, and his naturalistic view, which depends upon the living reality, would place that reality near the balancing point. . . . But living reality is never the elusive balance itself, but rather cycles of counteraction between opposites. With Fowles's belief in hazard and mystery, fixing absolute equilibrium is impossible and illusory; Fowles's reality is the quest itself--man's search for balance somewhere amid nature's extremes, through her vast forests, which conceal both dangers and delights. (118)

For Fowles, as for Breasley, "the Celtic green source [is] still viable" (77).

Like David, the nameless narrator of "Poor Koko" is forced to re-evaluate the medium of his art, in terms of the crisis he undergoes. The narrator and protagonist of this story is an elderly, bookish (though "a certain sense of self-humour, an irony makes the word . . . a little unjust" (148)) writer and critic, whose "most successful pot-boiler" to date has been The Dwarf in Literature (149). He is engaged on "a definitive biography and critical account of Thomas Love Peacock" (149), one of Fowles's own favourite writers. Like Peacock, and indeed, like Fowles, the narrator dislikes "all that was not humane, intelligent and balanced" (149-50); with the construction of a skyscraper (which has few of these qualities) opposite his London flat, he decides to spend some time in a North Dorset cottage owned by friends. His distaste for the modern and drab is shared by Fowles, who describes the "wired-off" and commercialised Stonehenge as "depressing" and "unhappily reminiscent of an underground bunker" (Stonehenge 6).

While it is tempting to equate the nameless narrator with Fowles on the basis of their shared interests, and to regard this story as a thinly-disguised autobiographical account, two points rule this out. Firstly, the narrator's attitude to nature is very much at variance with that of Fowles ("I am not a country-lover," the narrator claims, "having always much preferred nature in art to nature in actuality" (150)), and secondly, his merely "lukewarm regard" (150) for Thomas Hardy is not shared by Fowles.

During the narrator's first night in the cottage, he is awakened by a burglar. The ensuing discussion between the oddly matched pair is both intriguing and bizarre; the narrator describes it as "[an] obscene simulacrum of a quiet chat between chance-met strangers" (158). The

narrator believes that young people have, in their desire for a classless society, rejected "respect for language and intellectual honesty" (159); the burglar believes that the narrator doesn't "listen hard enough" (172). Unable to communicate with the elderly narrator, the young man resorts to action. The final indignity comes after he has been tied up, when the young man burns all the notes, reference cards and drafts of the narrator's book. But all this, as the narrator points out, is little more "than a preamble" (180).

It is the mysterious behaviour of the burglar, the burning of the books, that most puzzles the narrator: the "enigma" being "the fact that his unforgivable act was preceded by a surprisingly mild, almost kind, course of behaviour" (180). Using the analogy of opposing football teams, the narrator finally suggests that the battle which he experienced was not one between class or generation, but rather between those who "live by words" (185) and those who do not. The language of the young burglar

is fundamentally expressive of doubt and fear, of so to speak hopeless parole in search of lost langue. The underlying mistrust is of language itself. It is not so much that such people doubt what they think and believe, but they doubt profoundly their ability to say it. The mannerism is a symptom of a cultural breakdown. It means 'I cannot, or I probably cannot, communicate with you'. And that, not the social or economic, is the true under-privilege. (184-5)

"[T]he fatal clash between us was of one who trusts and reveres language and one who suspects and resents it" (185). The narrator repeatedly refers to this command of language as magic: "I presented," he admits, "a closed shop, a select club, an introverted secret society; and that is what he felt he had to destroy" (186).

"Poor Koko" means inadequate filial behaviour. The narrator has learned this about himself: language has been retained, withheld, rather

than passed on. "[T]he word is man's most precise and inclusive tool" (Aristos 195); it has been degraded by "today's linguistic excesses: the tendency to relinquish precision of language, to rely upon euphemisms, to let jargon stand in place of sense"--all "another symptom of abstraction" (Huffaker 123). Fowles stresses the importance of the literary heritage in "A Personal Note"; in "Poor Koko", he portrays man cut off from the heritage of language.

While every story in The Ebony Tower is concerned in some way with mystery and the unknown, "The Enigma" makes this concern explicit. The detective story is traditionally concerned with the solving of mysteries; Fowles believes, however, that mystery is an energising force, a concept crucial to "The Enigma". The appeal which the 4
 detective story has, Fowles suggests, is part of a wider fascination:

We know from not too dissimilar phenomena, like the Yeti, the Loch Ness Monster, the Bermuda Triangle, the U.F.O. 'sightings', that something in the human mind craves these blank spaces, and theories about them, however nonsensical, however rationally and statistically improbable; which is in part, of course, because they can never be quite totally disproved. (Stonehenge 110)

With Fowlesian irony, the opening paragraph of the story--a dry statement of statistical probabilities, reminiscent of those historical "facts" of The French Lieutenant's Woman--appears to contradict any sense of mystery. What follows in the story, the tone seems to imply, is merely an aberration, an occurrence notable mainly for its statistical improbability.

Initially, the enigma of the title refers to the mysterious disappearance of one John Marcus Fielding, M.P., director of companies, landowner, master of foxhounds, and apparently happily married man with two daughters and a son. Soon, however, the enigmas multiply: the mystery of John Marcus Fielding lies not only in his disappearance, but

in his character. The sympathetic young policeman assigned to the case, Michael Jennings, is unable to penetrate the public facade of John Marcus Fielding. Like all good fictional detectives, he makes a list of possible solutions to the mystery; its very length and diversity are indicative of the lack of any real knowledge of the missing man. Barnum's description of David Williams applies equally to Michael Jennings: "His desire to 'demystify' mystery is typical of Fowles's protagonists and highlights one of the reasons why they need to take the mythic journey: to enable them to accept mystery in the sacred sense without reducing it to rational deduction" (141).

When Michael meets Isobel Dodgson, Fielding's son's ex-girlfriend, he is struck by "an immediate impression of someone alive, where everyone else had been dead, or playing dead; of someone who lived in the present, not the past" (222). Like Charles on the Cobb who sees "no artifice . . ., no hypocrisy, no hysteria, no mask" (13) in Sarah's face, this moment of recognition is typically Fowlesian. Whereas Michael's interviews with the other characters have been conducted inside buildings, he and Isobel walk on the Heath, a symbolic return to the Ware Common-like freedom of nature. There is an echo of Sarah in Isobel; both women represent reality, while embodying ineffable mystery. The Fowlesian woman challenges the established, the ordinary:

She nodded; and he thought, how simple it is, or can be . . . when they don't beat about the bush, say what they actually think and know, actually live today instead of fifty years ago; and actually state things he had felt but somehow not managed to say to himself. He had grown not to like . . . that way of life. Just that one became brainwashed, lazy, one swallowed the Sunday colour-supplement view of values, the assumptions of one's seniors, one's profession, one forgot there are people with fresh minds and independence who see through all that and are not afraid. . . . (224)

The "Sunday colour-supplement view of values" is very much that of Clegg in The Collector. Michael, in contrast, stands outside the hoi-polloi mentality; his perception of Isobel's intelligence and independence echoes Charles's final understanding of Sarah. Like Sarah, too, "[s]omething about her possessed something that he lacked: a potential that lay like unsown ground, waiting for just this unlikely corn-goddess; a direction he could follow, if she would only show it" (233). Isobel is "one of those frail vessels in which are carried through the pages of John Fowles's fiction the seeds of mystery, imagination, and existential growth" (McSweeney, "Variations" 317). The fertility that is always latent in Sarah is present in Isobel, and as Demeter, the corn-goddess, the latter is explicitly linked with the natural world.

Isobel Dodgson is a writer; like her famous namesake, she is associated with children's stories. Life and art are intertwined; over tea with Michael, Isobel proposes a "fictional" solution to the mysterious disappearance of Fielding: "Let's pretend everything to do with the Fieldings, even you and me sitting here now, is in a novel. A detective story. Yes? Somewhere there's someone writing us, we're not real. He or she decides who we are, what we do, all about us" (234). Isobel's parable recalls the independent life which the characters in The French Lieutenant's Woman apparently achieve; of course, she and Michael are equally products of Fowles's fiction. But the "writer" of this particular "story", she suggests, would have to "face up to [the fact that his] main character has walked out on him. So all he's left with is the character's determination to have it that way. High and dry. Without a decent ending" (236).

The sergeant smiled down. "Except writers can write it any way they like."

"You mean detective stories have to end with everything explained? Part of the rules?"

"The unreality."
 "Then if our story disobeys the unreal literary rules, that might mean it's actually truer to life?" (236)

The author against whom Fielding has rebelled, she suggests, is the system which has mapped out and planned his life.

"We may take money, contemporary admiration, a thousand things as a substitute; but even today the age-old real currency, the pure gold among the lesser coinage of rewards for existing, remains immortality-- or, since physical immortality remains a dream, providing evidence that one has existed" (Stonehenge 53). People will forget Fielding's existence as attested to by his scrapbook; the only thing which people never forget is the unsolved mystery. For Fowles, "if we question deep enough there comes a point where answers, if answers could be given, would kill" (Aristos 27). If Fielding is to survive in the memories of others, his disappearance must never be explained: "Sheer nature is made up of brief being and infinite oblivion; and only artifice, or anti-nature, can signal escape from that process" (Stonehenge 52).

Ironically, and sadly, Fielding's desire for durability can only be fulfilled by his mysterious disappearance.

[L]ike everyone else, though for a different reason, [Michael] now saw it didn't really matter. The act was done; taking it to bits discovering how it had been done in detail, was not the point. The point was a living face with brown eyes, half challenging and half teasing; not committing a crime against that. (242)

Like a work of art, the act cannot be dismantled. "All knowledge kills possibility. . . . Choosing not to know, in an increasingly 'known', structured, ordained, predictable world, becomes almost a freedom, a last refuge of the self" (Stonehenge 125).

Finally, of course, Fowles is not concerned about the compartmentalised John Marcus Fielding who disappears. The human fact,

the relationship between Michael and Isobel, is more significant than the unsolved mystery; as Fowles elegantly concludes, "The tender pragmatism of flesh have poetries no enigma, human or divine, can diminish or demean--indeed, it can only cause them, and then walk out" (244). This enigma is the author of yet another story--that of Michael and Isobel.

The narrator who so tactfully disappears at the end of "The Enigma" remains determinedly remote in the final story in the collection, "The Cloud": "So many things clashed, or were not what one might have expected. If one had been there, of course" (248). The relationships between the characters are never fully explained; only through the shifting filter of consciousness in the narrative are the characters revealed in any depth. "The basic clash in 'The Cloud'," suggests Olshen, "is between the rippling surface illusions and the dark and deep undercurrent of emotional realities" (John Fowles 105); for Huffaker, the central conflict is that "between the brutalizing masculine ego and the civilizing female intelligence" (128-9).

Yet though the narrator is nameless and formless, the emotional reactions scattered through the story are most often those of Catherine, the enigmatic character who is oddly at the heart of the story: "Catherine lies silent behind her dark glasses, like a lizard; sun-ridden, stony, self-absorbed; much more like the day than its people" (250). The epigraph to the story is taken from Ophelia's mad scene: "O, you must wear your rue with a difference"; Catherine's lover has died, probably by his own hand, as the allusions to Hamlet suggest. While the day is filtered largely through her consciousness, she remains coolly remote, from both the reader and the other characters. "The most frightening is not wanting love from anyone, or ever again. Even if he returned . . ." (256). Like Sarah Woodruff, Catherine is set apart by

her sensitivity, her grief, her perception of reality beyond any of the other characters.

So now everything became little islands, without communication, without further islands to which this that one was on was a stepping stone, a point with point, a necessary stage. Little islands set in their own limitless sea, one crossed them in a minute, in five at most, then it was a different island but the same: the same voices, the same masks, the same emptiness behind the words. Only the moods and settings changed a little; but nothing else. And the fear was both of being left behind and of going on: of the islands past and the islands ahead. (256)

It is significant, of course, given Fowles's emphasis on the family, that the "first truly acceptable island of the day" is "En famille. Where the children reign" (258).

Her alienation from the present is translated, for Catherine, into a consciousness of the fictionality of her own existence, "as in a novel by an author one no longer admires, in an art that has become obsolete" (291). Like the princesse lointaine secluded in her inviolable tower, she is alienated from the reality of the present. Such absorption in the past is negative for Fowles. As he warns in The Enigma of Stonehenge, "All pasts are like poems; one can derive a thousand things, but not live in them" (17).

The Celtic source is implicit in this story. The landscape--like that surrounding Coetminais--is lush and opulent, "so leafy, so liquid" (247), with an abundance of water.

Early Celtic religion was very much a polytheistic one, a matter of countless sacred places and animals; they had an especial veneration for water, remembrance of which runs in the still Celtic names of many European and British rivers and the countless 'holy' wells. Their two principal deities seem to have been a triadic mother- goddess--white virgin, red wife, black crone, as in Minoan Crete and Ancient Greece--and a warrior sun-god (corresponding to Apollo) called Lugh. (Stonehenge 108)

The three women in "The Cloud" are characteristic of the Fowlesian spectrum, and imaginatively, represent the triple aspect of the Celtic goddess: Sally, the "plaything in plastic playlets" (251), innocent in love if not in sex; Catherine, the enigmatic and distant figure, abounding in mystery and preoccupied by death; and Annabel, the earth mother, fertile and placid, the "red wife" of the Celts.

Bel is thirty-one, four years older than her sister, a prettier woman, plumper and rounder-faced, pale face and fox-red hair, more Irish, dry grey-green Irish eyes. . . . In her old straw-hat and her loose-sleeved cream dress she looks a little of the matron, the eccentric, the latterday lady of letters; always in shadow, her freckled skin is allergic to the sun. That calculated insouciance in her clothes, yet always a sort of haphazard elegance, a difference that every woman who comes to know her well ends by envying . . . even loathing; not fair, to be so often more rememberable than the fashion-conscious. (254)

If Catherine is the slightly formless centre of the narrative, it is Annabel who is at the centre of the group, and who is most attuned to nature. Her delight in the wild orchids, for instance, suggests her closeness to natural things, and it is Bel who notices birds: she breaks into Paul's rather abstract monologue in order to call attention to the song of an oriole.

Catherine is aware that "[o]nly women knew now. Even the vapid girl knew only the sun on her back, the grass and earth below her. Bel knew only herself and her sleeping child's head and her other child's small movements below by the river; what she gave . . . was indulgence, from her role as the quiet hub" (270). Like Virginia Woolf's Mrs Ramsay in To the Lighthouse, Bel in her pivotal role has the ability to manage others emotionally; what Catherine admits to envying is the fulfilment in Bel of her evolutionary maternal position. When Catherine leaves the group, the narrative is filtered through Bel's consciousness:

Bel believes in nature, in peace, drift, illogically in both the inevitable and a beneficent order of things; not in anything so masculine and specific as a god, but much more in some dim equivalent of herself watching gently and idiosyncratically behind all the science and the philosophy and the cleverness. Simple, poised, flowing like the river; the pool, not the leap . . . ruffled or ruffling on occasion only to prove that life is not, or need not be . . . and how nice a fabric would be of those leaves, green petals of Victorian words, how little changed, only the uses of words and even then only as the years changed the beechleaves, not at all really. (288)

"How all coheres" (288). Mrs Ramsay again. Bel's concerns are domestic, nurturing. She is Juno (258), the queen, the special protector of marriage and women, "a subtle cow" (258). "Motherhood," says Fowles in The Aristos, "is the most fundamental of all trainings in tolerance; and tolerance . . . is the most fundamental of all human wisdoms" (158).

When the narrative is filtered through Peter, he is revealed as the antithesis of Bel. His perception of people as instruments suggests his inauthenticity. "One didn't really care what people thought, cutting through other people's crap was what one was about; getting things done, flannelling here, riding roughshod there; having the game played by one's own quick rules" (290). He adheres to the intellectual, rather than the empathetic or the emotional: "[t]he intellect is always for greater complexity, increased distance, irony, objectivity, futurity; all its energies are essentially games-playing ones, to do with testing, solving, outmanoeuvring, finally winning" (Stonehenge 111).

Peter has little of Bel's or Paul's parental ability; he is divorced, and is an unsatisfactory father to his child. His relationship with Sally is inconsequential and shallow; he is the epitome of the male biological principle criticised repeatedly by Fowles.

To the Adam in man, woman is no more than a rapable receptacle. This male association of femininity with rapability extends far beyond the female body. Progress and innovation are rapable; anything not based on brute power is rapable. All progressive philosophies are feminist. Adam is a princeling in a mountain castle; raids and fortifications, his own power and his own prestige, obsess him. (158)

The abstract is his refuge; even the closeness of sexual contact is reduced to "a good quick ram" (289).

In contrast to the fecundity of Bel, Peter is cast as the figure of destruction. The fragment of the poem written by Catherine's dead lover evokes the Celtic myth and the tension between love and death: "The erotic sun. Male sun. Apollo, and one is death" (290). Catherine's suppressed desire for emotional connection ("Surprise me, prove I'm wrong, string the islands together again?" (257)) is now linked, Hamlet-like, with thoughts of death:

[H]e is there, also waiting, every moment now. That is why one can't stand other people now, they obscure him, they don't understand how beautiful he is, now he has taken on the mask; so far from skeleton. But smiling, alive, almost fleshed; just as intelligent, beckoning. The other side. Peace, black peace. (291)

Raymond J. Wilson has discussed the relationship between "The Cloud" and T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" in considerable detail; he notes that, like Eliot's work, "the central 'hideous sign' of "The Cloud" is an act of loveless sex" (310).

Unlike Isobel Dodgson, who is able to participate wholly in an act of love, and who embodies the present so vividly, Catherine is threatened by time--"all the futures, all the pasts, being yesterday and tomorrow; which left today like a fragile grain between two implacable, immense millstones" (291). Feeling "erotic and self-defiled" (291), the grotesque sexual coupling with Peter is an act of self-destruction; the relationship between love and death made flesh. "He has, will always

have, the idea that it was something beyond him" (297), the lover "beckoning" from the other side, perhaps. Peter's comment to Sally about necrophilia is brutally, uncomfortably, apt.

If, as Fowles has stated, the stories in The Ebony Tower are variations of the Celtic romance, then "The Cloud" is the most ironically profound. Fowles describes "that haunting central motif of so many of the greatest Celtic legends" (Stonehenge 109):

the trio of trusting king, torn queen, adulterous knight. Because almost all our versions come from feudal times, we tend to see it as a vehicle for the conflict between sexual passion and social duty, between faith and treachery, Christian guilt and pagan innocence, and all the rest. But it also has curious echoes of a widespread feature of primitive fertility religion: the real or symbolic mating of a potent young man and a female representative of the earth-goddess, sometimes associated with the subsequent ritual sacrifice of one or both. (Stonehenge 109)

A hoopoe swoops, an ant dies, there is providence in the fall of the smallest. The strangely threatening cloud is ominous, suggesting--as Fowles has said elsewhere--"a precariousness in the natural order" (Stonehenge 74)--and darkness displaces the living. "Like the deathlike Ebony Tower, and the lowering thunderheads in Henry Breasley's Kermesse, the dark cloud menaces all that is wordless, inhuman and frozen like Catherine in the relentless present tense" (Huffaker 130). The absence of Catherine is unexplained, but like the cloud in the clear sky, her suicide, the "subsequent ritual sacrifice", is suggested. Like the princess in the forest, fearing contact with others, Catherine has, perhaps, chosen the ultimate retreat from life: "The princess calls, but there is no one, now, to hear her" (304).

The sense of loss which pervades "The Cloud" reflects, in many ways, man's fear of his own mortality. John Marcus Fielding confronts this fear and disappears to ensure his immortality; the creative

individual--which Fielding is not--lives on in his art. Stonehenge epitomises this need in man. "Though we can't read it in words, a first declaration was made: man grew ambitious, and impatient with his ephemerality. Stonehenge is not simply a memorial to its Bronze Age builders; it is a memorial to a dream, and a dream still dreamt by each. Something of me shall survive" (Stonehenge 53).

The final chapter of The Enigma of Stonehenge evidences Fowles's admiration for that supreme artist, William Blake. Fowles notes how Blake associated the Druids, the high priests of the Celts, with "that abomination Priesthood" (123); in "Jerusalem", England-Britannia laments the death of Albion, or primal nature: ". . . I have Murdered Albion! Ah! / In Stone-henge & on London Stone & in the Oak Groves of Malden / I have Slain him in my Sleep with the knife of the Druid". Blake's "profound and magnificent hatred of [the] tendency in man to imprison himself, to build walls of ritual and tradition, theory and creed, around his soul" (Stonehenge 123) is shared by Fowles. The contribution which science has made to this enclosing, this narrowing of the boundaries of imaginative freedom, is explored by Fowles in The Aristos, and he repeats the warning in Stonehenge:

That science is the dominant system in terms of what now goes on at the site [of Stonehenge], as it is over so much of the rest of our lives, is inevitable; and only a fool would argue that this should not be so in terms of conservation and excavation. But the danger comes when it attempts to dictate our personal experience and perception of the whole, for this is the essence of what Blake feared in Druidism: not just knowing for oneself, but knowing for everybody else as well. (124)

"For what good science tries to eliminate, good art seeks to provoke--mystery, which is lethal to the one, and vital to the other" (Aristos 145).

The mysteries, the enigmas, of The Ebony Tower are crucial elements of Fowles's art. Like Breasley's paintings, the collection of stories embody "the recurrence of the forest motif, the enigmatic figures and confrontations" (19); like the Celtic romance, there is

[a] preoccupation with love and adventure and the magical, the importance of the once endless forest . . . as the matrix for all these goings-on; the breaking-out of the closed formal garden of other . . . art, the extraordinary yearning symbolized in these wandering horsemen and lost damsels and dragons and wizards . . . (58)

Inherently opposed to the sterility of the ebony tower, Fowles's art springs from the myths which underlie the Celtic dream-temple. The attraction of Stonehenge, for Fowles, is that which is shared by "the greatest works of art": "Its great present virtue is precisely that something so concrete, so sui generis, so individualized, should still evoke so much imprecision of feeling and thought" (Stonehenge 125). In many ways, this describes the imaginatively demanding fiction of John Fowles, and is exemplified by his next novel, Daniel Martin.

Chapter Six

Daniel Martin : A Yes from the Heart of Reality

More overtly than any of his previous novels, Daniel Martin presents Fowles's inherently positive world view. Daniel Martin is, essentially, a novel of affirmation. When events take an unexpected turn in the novel, the protagonist feels that

life itself had backed his view: had broken codes he might have flinched at breaking if he had been inventing the situation, had performed a kind of magic not with causality, but the timing, precipitation and conjunction of the results of causality. It was like an unsettling of fixed statistical probability, a release from mire, a liberation, a yes from the heart of reality to the supposed artifice of art. (224)

Published in 1977, Daniel Martin is a fusion of the issues which Fowles has displayed in his earlier work. As in his previous novels, Fowles is centrally concerned with the "supposed artifice of art". Fowles's concern with the novel as a narrative form, his thematic emphasis on nature, art, and the primacy of feeling (especially as evidenced by women) are united in Daniel Martin. Elements explored in other novels are also apparent: the injustice of a biologically-determined class structure and the responsibility of the aristos toward the hoi-polloi explored in The Collector, the importance of choice and the necessity for morally valid action stressed in The Magus, the past and its influence on the present which is central to The French Lieutenant's Woman, and the shifting moods, tenses, and narrative voice--united by the Celtic source--presented in The Ebony Tower. As Kerry McSweeney has suggested, Fowles is "more an unfolding than a

growing artist; each new work is a recapitulation as well as an extension of what has gone before and contributes to a cumulative richness still too little understood . . ." ("Withering into the truth" 31).

In a letter to Robert Huffaker in 1977, Fowles describes Daniel Martin as "fundamentally intended as a defence of the institution of humanism (for all its wants and weaknesses) and of the novel as a humanistic enterprise" (35). The novel attempts to show man as potentially progressive, able to understand and accept his responsibilities toward others. The first sentence of the novel (which is also Daniel's "impossible last") makes it clear that the quest is for "whole sight". As Patricia J. Boomsma suggests, the individual must reject "the objective watching of life from an outside perspective as well as the egoistic centering of life on self, to affirm the participation of self in the world" (325).

Daniel Martin, the protagonist and sometime narrator, is a middle-aged English screenwriter living in self-imposed exile in Hollywood. Though the narrative is not chronologically ordered, Daniel's life unfolds from his pastoral childhood in Devon. The opening chapter of the novel, with its fluid stylistic movement between past, present and future tenses, describes the time of harvest, and suggests the existence of a temporal unity which Daniel has yet to discover in his quest for wholeness:

Bindweed ran up the stems of the corn; seeding thistles, red poppies; and lower, the little cornfield violets called heart's-ease; with blue speedwell eyes and scarlet pimpernel, shepherd's glass, herb of the second sight. The field's name was the Old Batch--batch from bake, some ancient farm's own annual bread was grown there. The sky's proleptic name was California; the imperial static blue of August. (8)

Both forward and backward looking, it is finally timeless: "And the day will endure like this, under the perfect azure sky, stooking and stooking the wheat" (9). Celtic echoes are clearly discernible--"[w]e are watching a rite older than Camelot" (Wolfe 171).

Memory, the past, are central to Daniel Martin, as indeed they are to Fowles. Daniel's childhood in Devon springs directly from Fowles's own childhood:

We . . . spent [the Second World War] in a cottage of the Devonshire village I fictionalized in Daniel Martin. Despite the external horrors and deprivations of the time, they were for me fertile and green-golden years. I learnt nature for the first time in a true countryside among true countrymen, and from then on I was irredeemably lost as a townsman. (Tree n. pa.)

That Daniel is an autobiographical projection of Fowles himself is apparent. Like Daniel, Fowles collects picture postcards of Edwardian actresses: Daniel has "a pinned-up collection of pre-1914 music-hall and musical-comedy star postcards" (57). There is another echo. Fowles says of his own father,

[His tiny orchard of apple and pear trees offered a sanctuary] . . . in no sense, in that minute garden, a physical sanctuary, but a kind of a poetic one, however banal the surroundings: a place he could control, that was different from all around it, not least in its huge annual yield of fruit. It stood in effect as the very antithesis of a battlefield, including the metaphorical one of wild nature The trees were in fact his truest philosophy, and his love of actual philosophy, the world of abstract ideas, was essentially . . . no more than a facet of his hatred of natural disorder. (Tree n. pa.)

Daniel's father has, too, "a mania for gardening. Though he would potter about on our occasional picnics and botanize with me, he did not really approve of wild plants and nature. He drew some analogy between horticulture and God watching over a world; in nature things happened behind your back, could not be supervised and controlled" (86-7). For

Fowles, of course, as for Daniel, the order of nature lies in its disorder, its appeal in the very lack of human control.

Like Fowles, too, Daniel reads for his degree at Oxford. The latter's years at the university are central to the narrative and, indeed, to Daniel's life; it is to Oxford, a dying friend, and his past that he returns in the "present" tense of the novel. Daniel's relationship with Anthony is partly that of father and son: "he was a kind of father substitute" (76); the differences in their attitudes towards nature epitomise, too, the underlying differences in their characters.

The thrill for me was finding the rare ones [orchids]--and first (and last, alas) Monkeys near Goring, a solitary Fly under a sunshot whitebeam at the edge of a Chiltern beechwood. His [Anthony's] heaven was a wet meadow full of dull old Dactylorchids: counting and measuring and noting down the degree of hybridization. I wanted to find the flowers, he wanted to establish some new sub-species. I lived (and hid) poetic moments; he lived Druce and Godfrey. My solitary boyhood had forced me to take refuge in nature as a poem, a myth, a catalysis, the only theatre I was allowed to know; it was nine parts emotion and sublimation, but it acquired an aura, a mystery, a magic in the anthropological sense. (76)

Not only are the echoes of Fowles's relationship with his own father clear, but Daniel's search for orchids becomes a motif in the novel, representing his search for authenticity and genuine feeling.

But, in typical Fowlesian fashion, the multilayered nature of the narrative goes beyond the biographical echoes. "Writing one's life into a novel is part of what this book is about, and, by revealing his own narrator searching for a suitable persona behind which to disguise autobiography, Fowles hints at the sort of narrative role he has assumed for himself" (Huffaker 36). Not only does Daniel represent a fictionalized Fowles, but Daniel in turn fictionalizes himself as Simon Wolfe, whose initial and surname may be rearranged to spell "Fowles".

When Daniel finally admits his growing commitment to the idea of his proposed novel, he realises the value of "Simon Wolfe": "He didn't like the name and knew he would never use it, but this instinctive rejection gave it a useful kind of otherness, an objectivity, when it came to distinguishing between his actual self and a hypothetical fictional projection of himself" (427). Daniel is, quite overtly, Fowles's "fictional projection of himself".

With Fowlesian irony, the characters think of their own existence as fictional, further blurring the distinction between "fiction" and "reality". "This is the first chapter," says one of the characters in the second chapter of Daniel Martin. The rest of the novel, she suggests to Daniel, will be "Like a door in a wall", and through it, "Your story. Your real history of you" (22). But as Fowles has said in The French Lieutenant's Woman, the individual's "real history" is a fiction: "You do not even think of your own past as quite real; you . . . fictionalize it, in a word, and put it away on a shelf--your book, your romanced autobiography" (87). With the unexpected call from Oxford, "unbelievably, as in a fiction, the door in the wall opens" (24). The ironies deepen; the curtain rises as it does on Bourani, and the journey to self-knowledge begins.

By emphasising the fictionality of his fiction from the inside, using the characters themselves, Fowles achieves a realism which his earlier works presaged. Daniel must come to terms with his past; by regarding his past as fiction, Daniel joins the Fowlesian hero who moves towards self-knowledge through art. The theatre of Conchis, Sarah's fictitious past, the paintings by Henry Breasley, Isobel's detective story--all are instrumental in furthering understanding and self-definition within the protagonists. Daniel perceives the heuristic purpose of the novel:

In his already rather low valuation of the novel . . . he reserved an especially, and symptomatically, dark corner for first-person narration; and the closer the narrative I approximated to what one could deduce of the authorial I, the more murky this corner grew. The truth was that the objectivity of the camera corresponded to some deep psychological need in him; much more to that than to the fundamental principle of aesthetic (and even quasi-moral) good taste that he sometimes pretended lay behind his instinct here.

What did dimly occur to him . . . was that perhaps this flinching from the I inherent in any honest recapitulation of his life was no more than a fear of judgement . . . (68)

Having achieved this insight, the third-person narrative at this moment becomes unselfconsciously first-person. Daniel must learn that he cannot know himself by external observation, by looking at himself in mirrors: "participation in self, rather than observing self, is a necessary prerequisite for participation in the world" (Boomsma 330) and, of course, for whole sight. Ironically, though Daniel sees his screenwriting career as merely another opportunity "to wear a mask and invent a character . . . once more to write myself" (78), it is in the novel itself that Daniel is really "invented" as a character.

The shift between first- and third-person narrative is, of course, more than a stylistic whim: far from alienating or distancing the reader, the "external" and "internal" views of the protagonist increase the reader's understanding of, and perhaps identification with, Daniel Martin. Like Daniel, the intelligent individual has both an internal and external perception of himself; in addition, the writer / protagonist dichotomy is diminished, in keeping with the structural intention of the novel. In a detailed analysis of the novel's first chapter, Simon Loveday suggests that the fluid use of "I" and "he" defines an "observing, reflective self" and an "observed, pre-reflective self" (202), a distinction which is crucial to Daniel's progression toward wholeness, or, in Loveday's words, "continuity of self" (204).

There is a fusion of Fowles as writer, Fowles as individual (the autobiographical coincidence is surely anything but that), Daniel as character, and Daniel as writer. The freedom which Fowles claims to allow his characters is embodied in Daniel; Daniel's thoughts after Anthony's death mirror those previously expressed by the narrator of The French Lieutenant's Woman:

The one principle the ordinary writer tries to abolish from his work, at least in the finished text, is precisely that of randomness. He calculates, plans, strives where the great question-mark is indifferent and leaves all to hazard; and his final, revised product is in intention as rigid as pre-conceived as a piece of machinery or an architect-designed building. Nor is he creating ex nihilo, but out of pre-existent memory-stores and experience; so he is re-arranging or inferring, even when he writes about what has never happened or what will or can never happen.

Much more significant is the desire to create imaginary worlds other than the world that is the case--a further matter in which the God of the theologians seems personally not interested. (290)

The narrator of The French Lieutenant's Woman suggests that only one reason for writing is shared by all writers: "we wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is" (86; emphasis in original).

There are more echoes of this novel, with its emphasis on the influence which the past has on the future. Charles Smithson's perception that time "is a room, a now so close to us that we regularly fail to see it" (278) in this same novel, is shared by Daniel, who sees the "real structure of [his] racial being and mind . . . something dense, interweaving, treating time as horizontal, like a skyline; not cramped, linear and progressive" (353). The realisation and acceptance that the past penetrates and defines the present is an important step in Daniel's movement toward "whole sight".

In addition, "racial being and mind" is an important issue for Fowles in Daniel Martin.

[The] desire, or need [to create imaginary worlds], has always been strongly linked, at least in my own experience, with the notion of retreat, in both the religious and military sense; of the secret place that is also a redoubt. And for me it is here that the Robin Hood--or greenwood--myth changes from merely symbolising folk-aspiration in social terms to enshrining a dominant mental characteristic, an essential behaviour, an archetypal movement . . . of the English imagination. (290)

In an interview with Mel Gussow, Fowles said that Daniel Martin attempts to explore "Englishness--what it is like to be English in the late 20th century" (3). The linking of Robin Hood with the English (as distinct from British) character has been explored elsewhere by Fowles. In an article entitled "On Being English but Not British", Fowles discusses the central English myth of Robin Hood, "which epitomizes the English predisposition for seclusion, the behavior pattern in which the true self is revealed only in private (in the greenwood, as it were) and allowed to emerge in broad daylight (under the scrutiny of the Sheriff of Nottingham) only in disguise" (Olshen and Olshen 4). Daniel signifies, in many ways, the quintessence of Englishness as Fowles sees it. The "heart of Englishness," Daniel suggests, is

being happier at being unhappy than doing something constructive about it. We boast of our genius for compromise, which is really a refusal to choose; and that in turn contains a large part of cowardice, apathy, selfish laziness--but it is also, I grow increasingly certain of this as I grow older, a function of our peculiar imagination, of our racial and individual gift for metaphor; for allowing hypotheses about ourselves, and our pasts and futures, almost as much reality as the true events and destinies. Other races look at themselves in the mirror, and either live with the reflection or do something practical to improve it. We paint an ideal, or a dream, self on the glass and then wallow in the discrepancy. Nothing distinguishes us more clearly from the Americans, nothing characterizes better the very different ways we use our shared language--the way they use it as a tool, even when they are being poetic, and the way we treat it

as a poem, even when we are using it as a tool. (78-9)

While freedom is desired by both the English and the Americans, a distinction exists between the manifestations of this desire. The American belief, Daniel suggests, is that "[o]ne can choose oneself and will oneself" (79); it is this belief, he continues, which has led to gross injustice within that society. While the American system deals with economic injustice, it fails to acknowledge the genetic injustice of life: "Their system dealt with [the old European economic injustice] by assuming an equal dispensation of energy, talent and good luck to all men; and now they are smashed hard on the reef of the far deeper injustice" (79). This "deeper injustice" is, of course, the one with which Fowles is concerned in The Collector and The Aristos: though "we are all born with equal human rights . . . we are not, and never will be, born [biologically] equal" (Preface to The Aristos 10).

All this was of course also the English assumption in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But we have long abandoned it. Injustice and inequality are in the nature of things, like Virgil's tears, and we have extrapolated freedom from all living reality. It is a thing in the mind, a Utopia we secretly retreat to from our daily ordinary world; just as I have always lived far more in the mind at Thorncombe than in reality. That is what permits in England our extraordinary tolerance of national decay, of muddling through; our socializing conservatism and our conservative socialism. Our society, and its actual state, is nothing; merely the dead real world, not the living imaginary one; and that is why we have evolved a language that always means more than it says, both emotionally and imaginatively. With the Americans it is the reverse: they mean and feel far less than have the habit of saying. . . .

I am trying to exculpate myself, not explain cultures. My attitude to nature, my past, Thorncombe, must be partly a product of my own history and genetic make-up; it is also because I am English. (79-80)

Daniel realises that he "was much more profoundly English than Jenny realized; because it was less the outward manifestations that gave the game away than [his] peculiarly structured imagination, so dependent on

undisclosed memories, undisclosed real feelings" (353).

The confluence of Fowles and Daniel is apparent. In The Tree, Fowles expands on the greenwood myth.

One of the oldest and most diffused bodies of myth and folklore has accreted round the idea of the man in the trees. In all his manifestations, as dryad, as stag-headed Herme, as outlaw, he possesses the characteristic of elusiveness, a power of "melting" into the trees, and I am certain the attraction of the myth is so profound and universal because it is constantly "played" inside every individual consciousness.

This notion of the green man--or green woman, as W.H. Hudson made her--seen as emblem of the close connection between the actuality of present consciousness (not least in its habitual flight into a mental greenwood) and what seems to me lost by science in man's attitude to nature--that is, the "wild" side of his own, his inner feeling as opposed to the outer, fact-bound, conforming face imposed by fashion--helped me question my old pseudo-scientist self. (n. pa.)

The "scientific" approach to nature in Daniel Martin is displayed by Anthony, while Daniel responds in a more intuitive, inner way. The primacy of feeling, of engagement with his natural surroundings, is a prerequisite for authenticity in the Fowlesian protagonist; in Daniel Martin, the very variety of settings presented emphasises the characters' differing responses to their environments.

The six principle settings in the novel may be divided into three "groups", each suggesting the dichotomy of reason and feeling: Oxford-Thorncombe, Los Angeles-Tsankawi, and Cairo-Kitchener's Island. Each "group" represents aspects of England, America and Egypt, but while the former place in each group is a largely knowable location, the latter is imbued with mystery. It is in the latter places that the movement towards self-knowledge becomes most apparent; each latter place signals an epiphany of some kind.

With its echoes of the Undercliff, Thorncombe is perhaps the most transparently Fowlesian setting. Fowles's comments in The Tree (and elsewhere) on his love for wild nature are close to the feelings

experienced by Daniel. It is at Thorncombe that Daniel

came to the most important decision in his life. It did not arrive--nor do most such decisions in reality--as light came on the road to Damascus, in one blinding certainty; but far more as a tentative hypothesis, a seed, a chink in the door; still to be doubted, neglected, forgotten through most of the future of these pages. . . .

To hell with cultural fashion; to hell with elitist 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. (431-2)

Daniel rejects the notion that he is inauthentic because he is fortunate; "[s]tinging from the existentialist challenge, Fowles probes in Daniel Martin the mystery of self-recognition, reminding us that existentialist choice does not always mean a decision not to be" (Wymard 285).

Thorncombe, like the Devon of Fowles's boyhood, is a manifestation of "la bonne vaux: the valley of abundance, the sacred combe . . . a place outside the normal world, intensely private and enclosed, intensely green and fertile, numinous, haunted and haunting, dominated by a sense of magic that is also a sense of a mysterious yet profound parity in all existence" (292). Huffaker has pointed out that Daniel Martin is Fowles's most naturalistic novel, and certainly Daniel is the protagonist who responds most consciously to the "natural forces which partly determine his fate" (18). There is a direct association with the Robin Hood myth, that the real lies in the solitude of the greenwood. As Fowles emphasises,

If I cherish trees beyond all personal . . . need and liking of them, it is because of this, their natural correspondence with the greener, more mysterious processes of mind--and because they also seem to me the best, most revealing messengers to us from all nature, the nearest its heart. (Tree n. pa.)

Of course, la bonne vaux is also an expression of the lost domain in Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes, an important Fowlesian preoccupation. Fowles's admission to Huffaker that "I find it difficult to think fictionally except in terms of quest, solitude, sexuality, the mania for freedom" (26) underlies both his attachment to Fournier's work and the continuing emphases of his own.

In contrast to Thorncombe, Oxford represents reason and the intellect, a commitment to the mind rather than to totality of feeling. While Fowles does not deny the necessity of rational thought and abstract ideas, he does emphasise the importance of their being accompanied by feeling and intuition: "the old green freedom", rather than the "[encapsulation] in book-knowledge" ("The Ebony Tower" 110). Oxford stands for the known, the understood. Ironically, the one mystery which Daniel encounters at Oxford is the dead woman in the reeds: the mystery is not life, but this particular death. Anthony embodies much that is characteristic of Oxford: in comparison with Daniel, he has "a much more fastidious and incisive intellect, with a psyche far more certain of both external and internal values, far less easily corrupted by new ideas and the ephemeral. In a way, Anthony was Oxford; Dan was merely a visitor" (60-1). Later, Daniel identifies Oxford with England itself.

A car passed, then two students on bicycles, in the mist-filled street below; the roofs of Oxford, a city that seemed several centuries behind California. . . . He felt psychologically stifled; the claustrophobia of academic life, of the something beneath all its sophistications, its brains, that remained eternally adolescent, as chlorotic as a plant denied sufficient light--and privileged, unhardened by the realities of the world outside. That also stood for the whole of England. (191)

Daniel senses a lack of vitality in Oxford. As Henry Breasley might put it, Oxford is "the triumph of the eunuch".

The mystical attraction which the site of Tsankawi has for Daniel is related to his feeling for Thorncombe: "my real need for the place," he acknowledges, "came from the depths of my unconscious, and only secondarily from the various conscious reasons I found" (346). Both are places where unity and harmony prevail in the natural surroundings; Daniel is enchanted by the timelessness of Tsankawi.

[T]he more apparent absurdity of comparing a Devon farm and a place like Tsankawi is not quite so silly as it must seem. In some way, the mesa transcended all place and frontier; it had the haunting and mysterious personal familiarity I mentioned just now, but a simpler human familiarity as well, belonging not just to some obscure and forgotten Indian tribe, but to all similar moments of supreme harmony in human culture; to certain buildings, paintings, musics, passages of great poetry. It validated, that was it; it was enough to explain all the rest, the blindness of evolution, its appalling wastage, indifference, cruelty, futility. There was a sense in which it was a secret place, a literal retreat, an analogue of what had always obsessed my mind; but it also stood in triumphant opposition, and this was what finally, for me, distinguished Tsankawi from other sites: in them there was a sadness, the vanished past, the cultural loss; but Tsankawi defeated time, all deaths. Its deserted silence was like a sustained high note, unconquerable. (346-7)

Daniel is able to react positively to the desolation of Tsankawi, as he is able to affirm life and love in the face of the existentialist void. Like la bonne vaux, Tsankawi is a "secret place"; like Stonehenge, in the words of Siegfried Sassoon, "It is the roofless past" (Enigma of Stonehenge 127).

Tsankawi affirms; Hollywood negates. In the large city, away from the green source, the modern void looms. Daniel perceives an underlying similarity between Los Angeles and Cairo:

The whole city [Cairo] reminded him faintly of Los Angeles; perhaps it was the air and the temperature, the teem of it, the same stress, behind all the human and architectural differences. All cities grew one. Cairo was simpler denser, older, more human. The medieval injustices and inequalities still existed, and everywhere; in the West they had simply been pushed out of sight. Here they remained open. (489)

Daniel's reaction is essentially--for Fowles--an English one. As Fowles says in "On Being English but Not British", the "quintessence" of being English is the "purging and often puritanical obsession with justice" (155).

In Oxford, words are revered; in Los Angeles, misused; in lower Egypt, finally unnecessary. The timelessness of the Nile has a Heraclitean quality: "The river moved and the river stayed, depending on whether one saw it with the eye or the mind" (524). In his notes inspired by Heraclitus, Fowles has written "How we see a natural object depends on us--whether we see it vertically, in this one moment, now, or horizontally, in all its past (Aristos 178). For Fowles (and Daniel), of course, nature abides: "behind surfaces and plumages there was no new thing under the sun" (540).

Nature, in the Fowlesian cosmos, opens the door to wider knowledge --in particular, self-knowledge. It is his interest in birds which prompts Daniel's conversation with Herr Professor Otto Kirnberger, the magus-figure in Daniel Martin. Like Conchis, Kirnberger has experienced dislocation in time; while examining a wall-painting, he felt that "One exists, but it is somehow not in time. In a greater reality, behind the illusion we call time" (557). The artist and the artefact exist outside of time: "[t]he older an artefact the nearer it is to the timeless" (Aristos 176). The historical past is limited in the Western consciousness; Daniel realises how little he understands his own history. As James Gindin suggests, "History is always both a projection of the self, as the only way to know and feel anything, and a recognition of otherness, of difference" (242).

Kitchener's Island is, again, a Fowlesian place of lush vegetation and fertile growth: "a tropical bonne vaux" (569). There exists "a profound and liquid, green and eternal peace" (569); it "also remained

English in some mysterious way, behind the exotic plams and trees and flowers; green, a place to dream in" (589). Once again, it provokes self-examination. Daniel realises that he

was approaching a fork, the kind of situation some modern novelists met by writing both roads. For days now he had been split, internally if not outwardly, between a known past and an unknown future. That was where his disturbing feeling of not being his own master, of being a character in someone else's play, came from. The past wrote him; and hatred of change, of burning boats. (576)

In Beirut, Daniel's newly-gained perspective seems "attached . . . to Kitchener's Island: a green place out of time, a womb, where all had seemed potential, something in the future as well as between Jane and himself melting" (609). The emphasis which Fowles places on the Island's greenness is significant: this has always been, in Fowlesian terms, the prerequisite for the individual's growth, a greenness, a closeness to nature, a receptiveness to the source. As Fowles says, the most important element in the "green density" of the Devon countryside is the potential for "isolated discovery and experience" (Tree n. pa.)

As in Fowles's previous fiction, it is the female characters who most often display this potential. More obviously in Daniel Martin, perhaps, Jenny and Jane, Caroline and Nell, emphasise and embody the present-past tension which is so crucial to Daniel. Jane is, in many ways, the Fowlesian woman, or more accurately, the woman whose authenticity is seen to increase with her maturity. The young Jane has "a sort of pensive inwardness" (60); Daniel envies "her young womanhood, which he felt allowed her both a more natural and a more mature attitude" (61).

But the young Jane at Oxford is far removed from Sarah or the Alison at the end of The Magus: while there exists the potential for meaningful growth (lacking in Nell and perhaps, too, in Caroline), there

is a basic lack of confidence in the choices which she makes. The pivotal incident in Daniel's relationship with Jane--the single "infidelity"--determines not only their relationship in years to come, but affects each of their marriages. The single sexual encounter is a frequent Fowlesian device: Miranda's tragic (though unsuccessful) seduction of Clegg; Lily-Julie's capitulation to Nicholas before his "arrest" and trial; the explosive ninety seconds shared by Charles and Sarah; the impersonal and dehumanising encounter between Peter and Catherine in "The Cloud"; the "tender pragmatism of flesh" in "The Enigma"--all are instrumental in changing the characters' lives.

But although Jane is aware of right feeling, she becomes attached to Catholic and, later, Marxist dogma, and "relies too little on her own insights, which makes her view of the world and other people too rigid" (Boomsma 326). To Daniel, Jane is "like an old enigma in his life, and she had to be solved; tamed and transcribed" (430). Like Nicholas and Charles, only as Daniel moves increasingly to self-knowledge does he learn to value the mystery inherent in Jane. In Egypt, Daniel realises that "these two terms, ka and ba, applied also to [his and Jane's] relationship. He was the first, Jane the second; a would-be ambition, a would-be selflessness; and equally insufficient" (545). The impetus towards self-examination which nature provides is present, too, in Jane, "this obscure ex-sister-in-law". She

was someone whose spirit remained not quite like that of any other woman he had ever known; . . . there are some people one can't dismiss, place, reify . . . who set riddles one ignores at one's cost; who, like nature itself, are catalytic, inherently and unconsciously dissolvent of time and all the naturalist tries to put between himself and his total reality. (440-1)

In Palmyra, Daniel finally understands that Jane's "sense of natural orientation" is "so easily distorted, shaken out of true by mind,

emotion, circumstance, environment" (646-7), and that she has depended on established dogma for support. Daniel must move away from dependence on self; Jane from dependence on external structures.

Jenny McNeil is Jane in embryo: even her name suggests the link. Jane "disturbed images, changed voices, recast scenes; as Jenny did also, in her different way--more artificially, calculatedly, aggressively, and as a kind of intimate extension of her professional determination not to be typecast" (441). But Jenny is the ideal, rather than the real--Julie-Lily, rather than Alison. In order for Daniel to accept the influence which his past has on his future, he must come to terms with all that his past contains. Jane, Thorncombe, la bonne vauz --all are aspects of Daniel's past, "his lost domaine, his other world" (447). While criticising Jane's and Anthony's inhabiting the past, and their "bizarre" petrification of values, Daniel recognises that "a more subjective side of me had been moved by Anthony and resurrected from behind the hardening years--a kind of greenness, but with the good as well as the bad aspects of that metaphor, what we had lost as well as what we had gained" (199-200). Daniel's re-learning Jane is equally a re-evaluation of and a coming to terms with his past. Jenny forces Daniel to live in the present: "The past becomes like an infidelity, something one has no right to remember or refer to" (575). With Jane, Daniel feels able to remember and finally accept his past, an important aspect of self-definition and morally valid behaviour.

Daniel Martin is unusual in the Fowles corpus in that the male and female protagonists are mature characters, much older than Nicholas, Charles or Frederick Clegg, for instance. But Fowles is adamant that adults may also grow, develop, learn. Richard Jefferies, one of the writers who Fowles most admires, has been criticised for "a kind of disbelief that adults are capable of growth or understanding"

(Introduction to After London xiii). But Fowles attempts to account for Felix, the protagonist of After London and an older Bevis; and in doing so, to explain Jefferies's attitude (and his own, perhaps) more clearly.

Jefferies is saying that age petrifies; adulthood is imprisoned in being, only youth can escape to becoming. It is his answer to the fault so many critics (not least his contemporaries) have found in him: the lack of psychological movement in adult characters, when Jefferies the observer trumps Jefferies the restless mystic. Here energy, courage, and will are all attached to a kind of perverse innocence in man. This may make a twentieth-century cynic sneer. But we now know a great deal more, in practical terms, about the problems of steering advanced societies towards sanity; and among other things that high intelligence and scientific reason, pundits and professors, seem for some mysterious reason to hamper as much as they help. . . . Jefferies would say it is because they have lost all soul-life, all pagan greenness, all the Felix in themselves. Felix may be an outward child, but his underlying psychic energy, or elan, is vital to the species. (xviii)

Both Daniel and Jane possess this "pagan greenness" in the heart of their selves, this ability to become rather than to be. Their growing relationship actually signals a deeper growth within each individual; "[t]heir marriage overcomes both Dan's selfishness and Jane's dogmatism by affirming human love and need. . . . Part of true freedom is breaking out of isolation and into unity, here with another person" (Boomsma 334).

After Daniel has met Jenny, the princesse lointaine, for the last time, he wanders into an art gallery where he finds the late Rembrandt self-portrait. The portrait "lived, it was timeless, it spoke very directly, said all he had never managed to say and would never manage to say" (667). Yet in the moment he perceives this, Daniel realises too that he will share this thought with Jane, knowing she will understand. Marriage, for Fowles, is the "noblest relationship . . . Its nobility resides in its altruism, the desire to serve another beyond all the pleasures of the relationship; and in its refusal ever to regard the

other as a thing, an object, a utilizability" (Aristos 166). The "whole sight" which Daniel and Jane have achieved makes this ideal possible; Daniel experiences "a kind of vertigo [at] the distances he had to return" (667), but there is little doubt that he will journey successfully.

He could see only one consolation in those remorseless and aloof Dutch eyes. It is not finally a matter of skill, of knowledge, of intellect; of good luck or bad, but choosing and learning to feel. Dan began at last to detect it behind the surface of the painting; behind the sternness lay the declaration of the one true marriage in the mind mankind is allowed, the ultimate citadel of humanism. No true compassion without will, no true will without compassion. (667)

One of Fowles's aims in Daniel Martin has been to defend the institution of humanism; his protagonist has finally learned to choose and feel. "And as he has always done with orchids," suggests Huffaker, "Dan will look for human reality, not merely at it" (43).

Daniel Martin is, then, a novel of affirmation: Daniel and Jane's relationship affirms life and unity, in their choice of "whole sight". In addition, as Huffaker points out, Daniel "reconciles several long-standing alienations: from nature, . . . from his past, from his Englishness, and from artistic freedom" (38). The necessity for individual choice is affirmed; for the individual who possesses self-knowledge, guilt or "existential nausea" are not the only authentic options.

In an article comparing Daniel Martin and John Irving's The World According to Garp, Eleanor B. Wymard stresses "the generous perspective of the comic vision". Both writers, she believes, "achieve a deep level of human insight by focusing on a large region of experience which we all recognize. Irving and Fowles accept and affirm, despite their moments of deep-felt terror, the unexpected joys as well as the terrible

vicissitudes of everyday living" (284). For Daniel Martin, Wymard concludes,

comedy is the natural expression of an artist committed to the reality that a character in crises has the freedom to experience not only despair but also new strength. . . . [The] comic rhythm [does not] nullify the terror of living or blot out of consciousness the fact of dying. Although Fowles and Irving do not step beyond the fact of physical death, each challenges readers to a sacred appreciation of this time and space. As antidotes to existentialist nausea, Daniel Martin and The World According to Garp allow hope, indeed, that the comic spirit need not die of irrelevancy. (286)

Chapter Seven

Mantissa : Plaiting the Real and the Imagined

If Daniel Martin is a novel which suggests that Fowles's world-view is an affirmative one, then Mantissa goes one step further--into the realms of comedy. In Daniel Martin, Fowles demonstrates his awareness of the dangers of humour in the midst of twentieth-century despair; the protagonist of Mantissa (who is also a writer) warns that "[t]here may be a place for humour in ordinary life, but there is none whatever for it in serious modern fiction. . . . [I]f I ever let that sort of thing creep into my published texts, my reputation would turn to ashes overnight" (116). In typical fashion, Fowles has taken this risk, and challenged the critics once again.

Underlying the comedy, however, are the more serious concerns characteristic of Fowles. The epigrams from Descartes and Marivaux which precede the novel are both concerned with the existence or being of the individual, the idea that "the soul . . . is entirely distinct from the body, is even easier to know than the body, and furthermore would not stop being what it is, even if the body did not exist" (5). Not only, then, does Fowles characteristically question the nature of the modern novel, but also the nature of being. This collocation is perhaps to be expected from Fowles, given his persistent preoccupation with the relationship between art and life.

Indeed, Mantissa--published in 1982--brings together many of Fowles's abiding ideas which he has previously explored in both his fiction and non-fiction. That the Fowlesian corpus is unified by idea

rather than form is evident: while Mantissa is formally distinct from Fowles's other works in many ways, it does offer a summing-up of his concerns to date.

Unlike Fowles's previous novels, with the significant exception of The Collector, Mantissa is spatially circumscribed. Here is no protagonist in search of himself, symbolically travelling from place to place; instead, in Miles Green, Fowles presents his most static and his most unsympathetic protagonist since Frederick Clegg. Miles Green is a writer who, in an apparent moment of amnesia, engages with the externalised products of his own imagination. The multi-layered irony is clear: in Fowles's novel, his protagonist realises the imaginative stimuli which are apparently present in the process of creation itself. The central reified figure is Erato, the muse of love poetry. The muse appears in numerous forms, sometimes established by the writer and sometimes by herself. The entire novel, then, revolves around the encounter between the muse made flesh (who continually denies or is denied her own reality) and the writer.

I only seem real [says the muse] because it is your nauseating notion that the actually totally unreal character I'm supposed to be impersonating should do so. In fact a real me in this situation would avoid all reference to the matter, especially as she would never have got herself into the situation in the first place. If she had any choice. Which she doesn't. As she isn't real. . . . (86)

The inviolability of the soul is an underlying concept in Mantissa, for it is the soul of Miles Green and the spirit of Erato who people the novel.

Not only does the opening paragraph emphasise the imaginative rather than the physical, but it also recapitulates concerns characteristic of Fowles's work. The unnamed, unidentified character's perception in this paragraph is extensive, yet the "godlike"

consciousness which the unknown being possesses is not that of the omniscient God. In The Collector, Miranda grapples with the concept of 'God', which Fowles defines elsewhere as a situation rather than a power or a being:

Existence is ultimately or potentially knowable; 'God' is infinitely unknowable. . . . The whole is intrinsically a situation in which the principles and the events are all, and the individual thing is nothing. Since it is thus completely indifferent to the individual thing, 'God' must be totally sympathetic to the whole. But it expresses its sympathy by not being and by its total unknowability. (Aristos 23)

"It was conscious of a luminous and infinite haze, as if it were floating, godlike, alpha and omega, over a sea of vapour and looking down" (9). "It" is both "alpha and omega", the beginning and the end, just as this particular sentence appears in the first and last paragraphs of Mantissa. In addition, the phrase "alpha and omega" signals the invocation of Greek myth, as well as emphasising the importance which words have for the characters--and writer--of the novel. The Miltonic echoes in "the swift fatality of a fall" are certainly intentional, suggesting the loss of divinity, as "the murmurs focussed to voices, the shadows to faces". The unfamiliarity of the situation is compared to "some obscure foreign film", and is reminiscent of Daniel Martin's sense of rootlessness in the artificiality of Hollywood. Images "like so many pond amoebae" recall Fowles the amateur naturalist, "obviously busy, but purposeless". The last two sentences in this opening paragraph are dense with allusions to Fowlesian concerns:

These collocations of shapes and feelings, of associated morphs and phonemes, returned like the algebraic formulae of schooldays, lodged in the mind by ancient rote, though what the formulae now applied to, why they existed, was entirely

forgotten. It was conscious, evidently; but bereft of pronoun, all that distinguishes person from person; and bereft of time, all that distinguishes present from past and future.
(9)

Fowles's concern with language, with the combination of discrete parts into one coherent whole, is manifested in his work. In this novel, the experiencing character exists, but without name or term to define itself; the process of self-definition, of self-discovery, is taken to its extreme. This character has no sense of self on which to build; this voyage of discovery is literally one from a heart of darkness.

The lack of temporal distinction evokes what Daniel Martin explored in the text: time defines consciousness, alters memory. The action in Mantissa takes place in a curiously unmeasurable way; the device which Fowles employs to emphasise the hiatus in time is the "absurdly fussy and over-ornamented Swiss cuckoo-clock" (16), which no longer strikes. To Miles, it stands "for something he feared . . . an anomaly, an incongruous reminder of all he could not remember" (16), epitomising the demands of the temporal on the individual. This encounter is outside of time, unbound by the circumscriptions which are part of temporal awareness. The multiple-layered, horizontal nature of time which Fowles outlined in The French Lieutenant's Woman is apparent in Mantissa, too. The muse herself is timeless, but Miles criticises Erato's rosebuds which form part of her classical attire as being "from the hybrid tea Ophelia [which] wasn't bred till 1923" (59).

Erato's response is to accuse Miles of pedantry. In his protagonist, Fowles has created a figure who embodies the masculine follies; as Miles himself perceives, the male "I" is characterised by a "sense of belowness, impotence, foolishness" (10). In contrast, Erato represents the eternal Fowlesian woman. The epigraph to Part One, which Fowles borrows from Lempriere, describes the muses as "generally

represented as young, beautiful, modest virgins . . . fond of solitude, [who] commonly appeared in different attire, according to the arts and sciences over which they presided" (7). The different and quite contradictory personae which Alison and Sarah assume for their own purposes in The Magus and The French Lieutenant's Woman respectively are here taken to their extremes: Erato literally metamorphoses, assuming the roles of psycho-therapist, nurse, punk rocker, and classical muse, either at the behest of Miles or seemingly at will.

These quite extraordinary forms which Erato assumes are an integral part of Fowles's comic spirit. The professional veneer of Dr A. Delfie (the pun intended is obvious) is emphasised by the white coat which she wears, but the suggestion of virginal purity conveyed by the colour white is soon dispelled by her methods of treatment. Nurse Cory (another form of Terpsichore, perhaps) is her alter ego: there is little of the tormented, vulnerable Ourika in this black woman. Both Dr Delfie and Nurse Cory have been "created" by Miles, and appear to fulfil perennial male fantasies.

It is precisely this sexist manipulation of the female characters which enrages Erato, who appears in her next manifestation as a late twentieth-century punk rocker. With "maenadic fury", she dispels Dr Delfie and Nurse Cory, "leaving nothing but a flutter of falling white typescript" (52). Her next transformation is no less dramatic.

Her right hand begins to pick at a scale, a remote one, the Lydian mode. The transition is melting rather than instantaneous, yet extraordinary. The hair starts to soften and lengthen, to suffuse with colour; the hideous make-up drains from the face, the colour from the clothes; and the very clothes themselves begin to dissolve and modulate into a tunic of pure white samite. . . . The now dark hair is bound up, in Grecian style. Round her forehead appears a small chaplet of pinkish-cream rosebuds among myrtle-leaves; and the guitar has become a nine-stringed lyre--on which, metamorphosis concluded, she now plays the same remote Lydian scale in reverse.

It is the same face, but it seems younger, as if she has lost five years, a honeyed golden warmth now in all the skin, enhanced by the clinging white fabric. And as for the overall effect: faces that launched a thousand ships are nothing. This one would make celestial motion itself stop, and look back. She lets the lyre fall; and lets him stare, openmouthed, at unmistakable and immemorial divinity. (58-9)

Sarah's reappearance as the New Woman of the 1870s has the same effect on Charles. Both women are the same, and yet not the same, and the changes in their appearance signal altered perceptions. Erato metamorphoses from militant punk to immortal vision; it is in this classical guise that Erato remains for most of the encounter.

But this is no classical interlude. The relationship between Miles and Erato is frankly sexual and frequently tense, suggesting too, perhaps, the creative process as Fowles would have it. The sexual emphasis is a metaphor for the creative process, procreation a metaphor for creativity. Just as the muse couples with various lovers, creating works of art, so letters couple to create words, and words combine to form sentences. As Miles rather inelegantly puts it, "I realize that the thing in the meadow on Parnassus is only a metaphor, a symbol for the alphabetical conjunctions that make words, and so on" (180).

Fowles is, in fact, writing a novel about how a novel is written. In a lengthy diatribe in reaction to a plot suggested by Erato, Miles details the demands placed on the modern novelist (117-19). Since Fowles's work has always challenged such critical assertions as these, a doubly ironic Fowlesian glee lies behind Miles's self-satisfied exposition.

Serious modern fiction [he begins] has only one subject: the difficulty of writing serious modern fiction. First, it has fully accepted that it is only fiction, can only be fiction, will never be anything but fiction, and therefore has no business at all tampering with real life or reality. (117)

But as William J. Palmer has suggested, two basic themes are mutually complementary in each of Fowles's novels: "The aesthetic theme, which analyzes the relationship between art and life, [and] the existential theme, which dramatizes the struggles of individuals to define themselves and to make moral decisions about the conduct of their lives" (78). Fowles's belief in the heuristic power of the novel is well evidenced by, for instance, The Magus, in which both protagonist and reader are invited to learn through Conchis's and Fowles's art respectively. Like Nicholas, the reader is offered an experience through art which may lead to his greater moral authenticity.

Second [Miles continues]. The natural consequence of this is that writing about fiction has become a far more important matter than writing fiction itself. It's one of the best ways you can tell the true novelist nowadays. He's not going to waste his time over the messy garage-mechanic drudge of assembling stories and characters on paper. (117-18)

Since the assemblage of "stories and characters" is one of Fowles's strongest concerns, Miles's point-of-view can hardly be said to be shared by Fowles. As Fowles indicates in "Notes on an Unfinished Novel", "Characters (and even situations) are like children or lovers, they need constant caressing, concern, listening to, watching, admiring" (137). In the words of Thomas Docherty, "Humanity and morality are important to Fowles, and he refuses the retreat into the formal mythoi of his novels, emphasizing instead the content and human character rather than the medium of the artifice" (118). "Ultimately," as Palmer suggests, "all meaning in fiction must acknowledge its dependence upon the literal--the plots, the images, the lives of intensely realized characters in a physical world" (78).

Third, and most important [says Miles]. At the creative level there is in any case no connection whatever between author and text. They are two entirely separate things.

Nothing, but nothing, is to be inferred or deduced from one to the other, and in either direction. The deconstructivists have proved that beyond a shadow of doubt. The author's role is purely fortuitous and agential. He has no more significant a status than the bookshop assistant or the librarian who hands the text qua object to the reader. . . .

Our one priority now is mode of discourse, function of discourse, status of discourse. Its metaphoricality, its disconnectedness, its totally ateleological self-containedness. (118-19)

Erato's reaction--misleadingly accepting and demure--signals the irony. The often explicit connections between Fowles the man and his writing are too numerous to disregard; as James R. Baker has suggested, "We now realize that all of [Fowles's] novels are, in part, self-portraits--portraits of a thinker and an evolving artist who refuses to hide behind the facade of perfected styles and structures" (164).

This refusal has often been met by general critical disapproval; the disapproval with which Fowles regards most critics in turn is well evidenced in his work. In "The Tree", for instance, Fowles directs some acerbity towards obscurity, "the opportunity a work of art gives for professional explainers to show their skills" (n. pa.); in Mantissa, his views are even more caustic. "[The critics] adore downbeat endings," says Erato. "It shows how brave they are leading upbeat lives themselves" (98). And as Miles rather irritably points out to Erato, "First of all you tell me I'm hopelessly wild and inaccurate. Then you reveal you haven't read a bloody line. You know something? You ought to take up reviewing" (179).

Fowles believes that critics destroy the mystery which is an integral part of both art and nature, and which can only be experienced through direct contact by the individual himself.

[W]e become so patterned and persuaded by the tone of the more serious reviewing of art in our magazines and newspapers that we no longer notice their overwhelmingly scientific tone, or the paradox of this knowing-naming technique being applied to

a non-scientific object--one whose production the artist himself cannot fully explain, and one whose effect the vast majority of the non-reviewing audience do not attempt to explain.

The professional critic . . . would no doubt say this is mere ignorance, that both artists and audiences have to be taught to understand themselves and the object that links them, to make the relationship articulate and fully conscious; defoliate the wicked green man, hunt him out of his trees. . . . [T]he danger, in both art and nature, is that all emphasis is placed on the created, not the creation. (Tree n.pa.)

In a review of Morris Fraser's The Death of Narcissus published in 1977, Fowles applauds Fraser's concern for the personality behind the pen.¹ Fowles repeats his contention that "we now need more understanding of the general psychopathology of the novelist . . . that is, less attention to text, and far more to the process" (221). In Mantissa, the process of creation is made explicit--but represented by a novelist, rather than a critic.

As Fowles pointed out in The Aristos, however, to label him a novelist is to succumb to the collector consciousness. He is a writer, whose work is both reflective and reflexive--and above all, ironic. Only a few pages from the end of Mantissa, Fowles provides the definition of "mantissa" in a footnote: "An addition of comparatively small importance, especially to a literary effort or discourse" (185). The footnote purports to refer to Miles's thought:

With women one always ends in a bog of reality, alias words. From time to time one even asks oneself if they have not invented literature just to get their own back, deliberately to confuse and to distract their masculine betters; to make them waste their vital intellectual aspirations and juices on mantissae and trivia, mere shadows on walls. (184-5)

But since Fowles has called his novel Mantissa, is he suggesting that his own work is "trivial", "an addition of comparatively little importance"? Or has he, like Miles, "something curiously like a smile playing round his lips" (185)? Given the footnote, it is only too easy

to picture Fowles--the arch-magus--chuckling in the background.

But Fowles does not merely conjure up his own presence. Indeed, though "within" rather than external to the text, the presence of other onlookers has been apparent before. At the end of Part III, when the cuckoo-clock has struck and Erato and Miles have abandoned their quarrel, the "grey and quilted walls" (152) gradually become transparent, and through them various misty figures are now perceptible. While Miles and Erato remain blissfully unaware of the onlookers, their coupling is observed, "as the dispossessed contemplate the possessed; or the starving, at a restaurant window, the fed and feeding. The only thing private, still left sacrosanct, is the word. Not that words are now being sounded inside that room, but only broken fragments of the alphabet" (153). Given the metaphorical linkage of procreation and artistic creation integral to Mantissa, these sad people standing outside the room represent, perhaps, those lacking the creativity essential for authentic existence, who feed off the creations of others --voyeurs rather than participants. The figure of Clegg, the Collector, is reincarnated in the "implacable and formidable figure of the bespectacled staff sister" (153):

On every side the serried faces; but around her, an emptiness, as a drop of antiseptic in a culture dish will distance an otherwise spreading bacillus. No eyes seem more magnetized by what is being enacted. They watch with an intensity that glistens. Only once do they shift their gaze, to deliver malign and lightning glances at the walls of mute faces to left and right and opposite. So might an avaricious theatre manager size his house, or a brothel madam her night's clientele. She sees, as she threatened; but inside a mind that can only see, and never feel. (153-4)

When Miles and Erato are still, she is left alone: "weaker souls may fade away, but she, she shall never fail in her duty to snoop, to judge, to hate and reprehend the flesh" (154). This, surely, is the critic,

the person who feeds off the creativity of others, who "judges" yet who "can never feel". "Getting the feeling right" is an abiding Fowlesian concern, made explicit in Daniel Martin; in order to attain "whole sight", the individual must combine both objective view and subjective perceptions, neither being quite adequate without the other.

Fowles's world-view is unquestionably tensional, one in which counterpoles define experience. But as he warns in The Aristos, "We shall never attain a state of perfect balance. For us, the only perfect balance can be the living balance. Even if a perfect balance is momentarily achieved, time ensures that it will not be sustained. It is time that makes this balancing real" (83). Certainly, in Mantissa, the perfect balance which exists for a while between Miles and Erato (given that their relationship is the defining tension) is only momentary; Fowles depicts the loss of balance in a comically grotesque manner. Miles's unwilling transformation into a satyr stresses the extreme swing from balance; he is horrified by this "ithyphallic self" (188)². Miles's violent and unbalanced reaction to Erato's transformation into geisha form results in his own transformation: from satyr back to "the pale and motionless body" (191) of Miles Green.

The relationship between the real and the fictional is undoubtedly the most crucial tension present in Fowles's work. In Mantissa, the distinction between "fiction" and "reality" is so blurred as to be almost indistinguishable; "What you forgot," says Erato to Miles, "is that I am not something in a book. I am supremely real." But, "I give you ten more sentences to make a full, proper and formal apology" (61). As Isobel in "The Enigma" suggests, "Nothing is real. All is fiction" (234).

In attacking the boundaries of fiction and querying the "illusions of text" (107), Fowles asserts his characters' independence and poses

questions about their ontological status. Docherty distinguishes "text" from "texte": the former is "the words on the page before us" while the latter refers to "a fictive construction of reality, i.e. . . . the world as seen or creatively distorted by the characters who exist within the text" (119). As Docherty has suggested about Fowles's writing,

[W]e see in Fowles's manipulation of narrative viewpoint a determination to raise the ontological status of characters from that of object within text to that of subject with potential for imposing his own texte. . . . Fowles creates the illusion that his characters, by virtue of their potential existence within a number of textual stories, can as it were "walk out" of the text which we are engaged in reading and thereby can choose to exist as subjectively as we do. (121)

Just as John Marcus Fielding walked out of his story in "The Enigma", Miles tells Erato that he is able to walk out of his own "metaphorical brain" (123).

Miles's references to other novels he has written enhance this illusion of his existence independent of the text. His resentment of Erato's interference in one of his previous works, for instance, underlines his equivalence in status with Fowles himself.

You've ruined my work from the start [says Miles], with your utterly banal, piffingly novelettish ideas. I hadn't the least desire to be what I am when I began. I was going to follow in Joyce's and Beckett's footsteps. But oh no, in you trot. Every female character has to be changed out of recognition. She must do this, must do that. Every time, pump her up till she swamps the whole shoot. And in the end it's always the same bloody one. I.e., you. Again and again you've made me cut out the best stuff. That text where I had twelve different endings--it was perfect as it was, no one had ever done that before. Then you get at it, and I'm left with just three. The whole point of the thing was missed. Wasted. (126)

The French Lieutenant's Woman with twelve endings?

The stories which Fowles's characters create about themselves are many and varied, and significantly, are more closely connected with his

female characters than with the males. The mystery inherent in Lily-Julie, Alison, Sarah, Isobel, Catherine, and Jenny, results partly from their potential existence independent of the text. Erato, too, lives (and has lived) beyond the confines of Mantissa: her mythological origin is distinct from Fowles's work. In addition, Erato maintains that she provided the inspiration for Shakespeare, Milton, Rochester, Shelley, H.G. Wells. "I even," she says, "spent a wet afternoon once with T.S. Eliot" (147). Her association with these historical figures suggests that she is as real as they; once again Fowles challenges the fiction-reality dichotomy.

Miles is enraged by Erato's claim that she wrote the Odyssey: "Every classical scholar since scholarship began knows Homer was a man," he retorts (170). In Islands, Fowles discusses the authorship of the epic at length.

I am one of the heretics who believe the Odyssey must have been written by a woman. . . . Whoever did write it seems markedly more knowledgeable about domestic matters, the running of a large household, than about nautical ones. The one bit of showing-off in the latter field--the description of the boat Odysseus builds to escape from Calypso's island--is shipyard stuff, not sea-going expertise; and in the very first pages nothing is more striking than the loving detail bestowed on the provisions for Telemachus' voyage and the total absence when it comes to the craft itself. Throughout history it has been man who worships and polishes the vehicle, and woman who packs the suitcases. (51-2)

But Miles disagrees. In his opinion, "Homer had his bloody wife's number, for a start. All that weaving bit. Everyone knows why female spiders fancy males" (171). Such perceptions are obviously not shared by Fowles.

As in so many other matters, and for obvious physical and social reasons, it seems probable that if man went out and brought home the raw material, it was always woman who cherished, 'cooked' and wrought it. With men, it was always the challenge of getting; with women, the elaboration of the

got. We know that women tend to be the main 'carriers' of folk-song and folklore among primitive peoples. Men must perforce have had a closer knowledge of external reality, however superstitious they were; and women a closer knowledge of the internal imagination--of the store-room of the reported image, not the directly apprehended one. Weaving and embroidery lie at the heart of all story-telling, as they do at the root of all decoration. The Greeks knew it. Their very word for a recited epic, rhapsody, means simply 'stitched song'. Plaiting the real and the imagined defines all art. . . . (52; emphasis mine)

It is this interwoven quality which so characterises Fowles's work. In each one of his novels, the imagined is intertwined with the real, and on a larger scale, Fowles's fiction is inescapably intertwined with his non-fiction. Like strands in a tapestry, each work is significant both in itself and in the corpus; to isolate solitary strands is to lose the overall harmony of the whole.

Since Miles has indeed "welshed" on his and Erato's deal, and "tried to write all this down", the muse (as she threatened) has no doubt "[gone] back to being a shadow on the brain-cell stairs, a boring old ghost in the machine" (167). But there is every possibility that Fowles will forbid this oblivion, and that her presence will indeed continue to provide the stimulus (as he would have his readers believe) necessary for Fowles's art. With characteristic irony, finally, Fowles --like the bird in the clock--

obliged one last time to re-affirm [his] extraneity, [his] distance from all that has happened in that room . . . or as if dream-babbling of green Irish fields and mountain meadows, and of the sheer bliss of being able to shift all responsibility for one's progeny (to say nothing of having the last word), stirs, extrudes and cries an ultimate, soft and single, most strangely single, cuckoo. (192)

Notes

Chapter One

¹ Alain-Fournier is the name under which Henri Albans-Fournier published his poetry and prose. In Fowles's own words, "The demi-pseudonym Alain-Fournier is simply explained. There was another much more famous Henri Fournier at the time: an ex-bicycle champion turned racing motorist. Alain was the name of a grandfather. Fournier himself was always known as Henri" (Afterword to Le Grand Meaulnes 209). In accordance with convention, then, the writer's "demi-pseudonym" is used throughout.

² Ellipses in original.

³ Fowles mentions South Africa in connection with "social inequalities and conflicts". "In Machiavellian terms," he suggests, "the great error of the Ancien Regime (one that had been carefully avoided, for instance, by the plantation colonies of . . . America and is still avoided today in South Africa) was not to see the profoundly subversive effect of education on a society that depends on stasis for its survival" (Epilogue to Ourika 61).

⁴ In each one of these works, Fowles has written the text which accompanies photographs taken by the Gibsons of Scilly, Frank Horvat, Fay Godwin and Barry Brukoff respectively.

⁵ Fowles's essay reflects not only his abiding love for and detailed knowledge of nature, but also suggests some of his literary interests--Cinderella and Hamlet, for instance. The purse-web spider,

according to Fowles, "strikes with its specially adapted fangs through the silk envelope, rather as Hamlet killed Polonius behind the arras" (20). Hamlet is an important influence in Fowles's short story "The Cloud", published four years earlier in The Ebony Tower.

Chapter Two

¹ As Barry N. and Toni A. Olshen note, "Fowles gained fame and fortune immediately upon publishing his first work in 1963. . . . Even before actual publication, Fowles had earned several thousand pounds from the sale of translation, film, and paperback rights" (xii).

Chapter Three

¹ Articles which analyse the difference between the two versions of The Magus include those by Ronald Binns, Michael Boccia and Cory Wade. Wade suggests that "[t]he disappearance of supernaturalism in the [revised version] greatly improves the book, supporting Wallace Stevens' idea that the imagination loses power as it departs from the real" (716). Robert Huffaker points out that although there are significant revisions, Fowles has "[shown] restraint; he has clarified the novel without eroding its mystery" (45).

² The mythological references in The Magus and their importance in the structure of the novel have been dealt with in some length by a number of critics, notably Rebecca Rubenstein, Barry N. Olshen, Avrom Fleishman and Robert Huffaker. Nicholas's references to himself in a mythological role abound. After his first encounter with "Lily", he has "the strangest feeling . . . of having entered a myth; a knowledge of what it was like, physically, moment by moment, to have been young and

ancient, a Ulysses on his way to meet Circe, a Theseus on his journey to Crete, an Oedipus still searching for his destiny" (157). Fowles's interest in the Odyssey is well evidenced in Islands, the non-fictional work most closely related to The Magus.

³ Nicholas's "participation" in the events in Bourani becomes increasingly more intense. From his originally distanced vantage point --he does not take part at all in the Apollonian drama--he "becomes" the Greek traitor, is physically ill-treated, and witnesses the brutal beating of the captured resistance fighters (379).

⁴ The Tempest and The Magus have something else in common. Shakespeare's final plays (Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest) have often been described as masque-like, distinct from the comedies and tragedies. They are studies of a larger kind which have been integrated into a more cosmic scene, and in which death and rebirth form the dominant motif.

Chapter Four

¹ This point of view is reminiscent of that held by William Blake. In "Eternity", for instance, Blake warns against the desire to possess: "He who binds to himself a joy / Does the winged life destroy; / But he who kisses the joy as it flies / Lives in eternity's sun rise." Fowles has a deep admiration for Blake; he describes Blake as "a [great] human being" (The Enigma of Stonehenge 123).

² "The George of her fancy, the ideal of truth and steadfastness, was dissolved, and had disappeared leaving a mean vulgar object behind from which she shrank. To him [Elijah Rebow] whom she had hated, with whom she had fought and against whom she had stiffened her back, she now flew as her only support, her only anchorage" (Mehalah 300).

³ The butterfly is far too powerful an image in the Fowlesian corpus (most notably in The Collector) for this usage to be merely coincidental. The process of metamorphosis, too, is a significant one for Fowles, taken to its comic extreme in Mantissa.

⁴ Fowles's introduction to Thomas Hardy's England reveals his characteristic concern with the biography of the writer. In addition, Fowles outlines many of the social issues of Hardy's day which he described earlier in The French Lieutenant's Woman.

⁵ While the narrator is explicitly omniscient at times, Fowles consistently undermines the mode of omniscient narration (particularly as employed by Victorian writers). The variety of endings in the novel are a direct consequence of this attack on omniscience as a technique.

Chapter Five

¹ Fowles does not believe that Stonehenge was designed to be a purely functional astronomical observatory, that "the great 'scientific' phase of the monument was the first" (Stonehenge 69). "[T]he most interesting thing about Stonehenge", argues Fowles, ". . . is the growth of [the] obsession with durability. . . . One vital function of art has always been to provide the means for [the desire to project one's existence, or evidence of it, beyond one's immediately surrounding generations]" (52).

² Robert Huffaker explores the mythological aspects of both mouse and weasel in some detail (145-46).

³ Miranda's tragedy in The Collector is that she is unable to act her "transformation of personality".

⁴ Fowles discusses the detective-tale genre in his afterword to Conan Doyle's Hound of the Baskervilles. He identifies an "innate flaw"

in the genre: "However fantastic and far-reaching the first half of a detective 'mystery', the second half is bound to drop (and only too often, flop) towards a neat and plausible everyday solution. The determination is the negation of everything inherent in the theme except the identity of the murderer. A degree of bathos is inevitable as soon as the mundane processes of the law take over" (195-96). This "neat and plausible everyday solution" is what Fowles takes pains to avoid in his own detective tale, "The Enigma".

Chapter Seven

¹ Fraser is concerned with a number of authors afflicted by paedophilia: among them, Barrie, Walpole, Lewis Carroll, and Henry James.

² Ironically, "ithyphallic" also refers to licentious poetry --an unbalanced aspect of Erato, who is the muse of love poetry.

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