METAFICTION, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND MYTHOPOEIA IN THE NOVELS OF
JOHN FOWLES

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Abstract

This thesis concerns the novelist John Fowles and analyses his seven novels in the order in which they were written. The study reveals an emergent artistic trajectory, which has been variously categorized by literary critics as postmodern. However, I suggest that Fowles's work is more complex and significant than such a reductive and simplistic label would suggest. Specifically, this study argues that Fowles's work contributes to the reinvigoration of the novel form by a radical extension of the modernist project of the literary avant-garde, interrogating various conventions associated with both literary realism and the realism of the literary modernists while still managing to evade a subjective relativism. Of particular interest to the study is Fowles's treatment of his female characters, which evolves over time, indicative of an emergent quasi-feminism. This study counters the claims of many contemporary literary critics that Fowles's work cannot be reconciled with any feminist ideology. Specifically, I highlight the increasing centrality of Fowles's female characters in his novels, accompanied by a growing focus on the mysterious and the uncanny. Fowles's work increasingly associates mystery with creativity, femininity, and the mythic, suggests that mystery is essential for growth and change, both in society and in the novel form itself, and implies that women, rather than men, are naturally predisposed to embrace it. Fowles's novels reflect a worldview that challenges an over-reliance on the empirical and rational to the exclusion of the mysterious and the intuitive. I suggest that Fowles's novels evince an increasingly mythopoeic realism, constantly testing the limits of what can be apprehended and articulated in language, striving towards a realism that is universal and transcendent.

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Acknowledgements

CHAPTER 1 — CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

> 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.[1]

Fowles and Literary Modernism

In the epilogue to John Fowles's last novel, *A Maggot* (1985), in what proved to be his final published words of fiction, the writer dedicated the book to an unusual recipient. Intriguingly, this "convinced atheist"[2] chose to close his final novel gesturing "to a form of Christianity"[3], The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, better known as 'The Shakers'. This dedication is revealing severally, indicative of the complexity and contradictory nature of the writer and his work. First it is significant that the dedication acknowledges Fowles's respect for the Shakers' "striking feminism" and for his belief "[…] that a Holy Trinity that has no female component cannot be holy"[4], since several feminist critics, to whom I will refer specifically below, have found much of Fowles's work incompatible with such a professed feminist ideology.

Second his acknowledgment of the Shakers is revealing because it both foregrounds and problematises the male-dominated Trinity. Interestingly it is a triad or trinity of central characters, with various combinations of men and women, that is structurally central to most of Fowles's novels, including the last. In *A Maggot*, the central triangular relationship comprises a woman and two men: the prostitute, Rebecca Lee, putative mother of Shaker founder, Ann Lee; Mr Bartholomew, who

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[1] T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding", from "The Four Quartets", T.S. Eliot. *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 222.

[2] John Fowles, *A Maggot* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), 456. All future references pertain to this edition.

[3] Ibid., 455.

[4] Ibid., 456.

hopes to uncover the mystical secrets of his "life's meridian"[5] by re-enacting a mystical ritual in Dolling's Cave; and his mute manservant, Dick Thurlow. This crucial 'trinity' reconfigures that of *The Magus* (1966), his first novel. An extract from *The Key to the Tarot*, which appears before this novel's title page in its first edition (Fowles would revise *The Magus* in 1977), emphasizes the significance and constituent roles played by a man and two women in this particular configuration: "The Magus, Magician, or Juggler, the caster of the dice [....] Beneath are roses and lilies."[6] The central female characters of the novel are, or at least first appear to protagonist Nicholas Urfe to be, "Lily" and "Rose." Such combinations of characters dominate his work, just as they as they dominated Fowles's early life, and I suggest that they be considered a central element of any informed reading of his fiction.

   Perhaps the complex and contradictory nature of Fowles's work, its tendency to elude attempts at definition or simplistic categorization, coupled with the writer's refusal to acquiesce to notions of political correctness or pander to transient literary tastes, have contributed to his rather contentious relationship with the English literary field in the academy and the decline of his public profile. In contrast, Fowles's work enjoys enduring critical and commercial success in America. As Sarah Lyall noted in her obituary for the writer, Fowles was well aware of this disparity, and he had his own theories for its basis. As she writes,

> For whatever reason - he always said it was because he was mistrusted by the British literary establishment he had rejected - Mr Fowles was always far more celebrated, both critically and popularly, in the United States than he was in his native country. In America, his books became mainstays of college literature courses while managing to achieve that rare combination: admiring reviews from serious-minded critics and best-selling sales in the stores. [...] Not so in England, at least not all the time. [7]

In a 1974 interview with the *New York Times*, Fowles, barely concealing his bitterness, tried to explain the disparity between his reception in America versus Britain. "I get slammed in Britain. [...] It's for not being Anthony Trollope or C.P.

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[5] Ibid., 149.

[6] John Fowles, *The Magus* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), n.p.

[7] Sarah Lyall. "John Fowles, British Author of Ambiguous Endings, Dies at 79," *New York Times* November 7, 2005, 25.

Snow. I'm really persona non grata."[8] Despite the influence his work has exerted on both British literature specifically and Anglophone literature in general, examples of which I will discuss in subsequent chapters, Fowles's work has been in recent years generally underappreciated and overlooked, most especially in terms of academic responses and particularly in his native country. In part, therefore, this study is an attempt to revisit and perhaps even contribute modestly to a recuperation of his work both in the academy and more widely. Many previous literary examinations of Fowles, to which I will refer specifically later in this chapter, have not examined Fowles's entire fictional *oeuvre*, and as a result, present conclusions that overlook the overarching direction or trajectory of his work. This study will analyze all seven published novels as well as alluding briefly to two, as yet unpublished, works of fiction.[9]

What will inform my critique in this thesis is a recurrent and yet varied consideration of the possibility of re-reading Fowles's engagement with the literary and theoretical concepts of realism as a strategy of textual reflexivity, driven less by a formal self-obsession than by a compulsion to synthesize and explore a radical aesthetic method of articulating the parameters of reality in a manner that more adequately reflects the complexity and plurality of lived experiences of contemporary Britain in the aftermath of two world wars and in an age marked by the emergence of a late capitalist culture[10]. Without preempting my argument here, I will suggest that when studied in its entirety, Fowles's works are indicative of a complex overarching project in excess of attempts to reconcile his work with aspects of postmodern literary theory, which has been variously applied to the novelist, examples of which I will discuss in detail below. Rather, I will suggest the works illustrate both an ongoing fascination with, and an extension and augmentation of, the modernist project of the literary avant-garde more generally. Such an interest manifests itself in a preoccupation with the philosophical

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[8] Mel Gussow. "For Fowles, Novel Mostly Means New." *New York Times*, November 27, 1974, 24.

[9] The complete unpublished manuscripts of *Someone's Got To Do It* (completed in 1971) and *Tesserae* (written in the 1950s) are housed in the Harry Ransom Center for the Humanities at the University of Austin, Texas.

[10] Frederic Jameson characterises postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late capitalism" in his 1991 work, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* to which I will allude later in this chapter.

complexities of narrative fiction, the epistemological contradictions inherent in writing fiction in a post-Heisenbergian and post-structuralist world. It is in this context that Fowles focuses on the act of writing as precisely a vehicle for apprehending, framing and articulating lived experience (rejecting the naiveté of realistic mimetic verisimilitude) in terms that are intended as a radically self-conscious rendering of the existential self, mediated through language, and inevitably affected by the subjectivity of the perceiver.

Moreover, Fowles has a distinctly different set of basic assumptions about the world than those posited by postmodern literary theorists that render readings informed by such theories problematic. Specifically, Fowles's work and documented personal reflections are generally in conflict with much postmodern theory regarding language, a linguistic consensus or linguistic turn[11], and with the antecedent critical positions regarded generally[12] as poststructuralism[13] and deconstruction[14].

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[11] In general terms, such a linguistic consensus is posited on an underlying assumption that fundamentally the only 'reality' question (concerning objectivity, truth, the experiential and so forth) is that which is ultimately concerned with the relationship between language and the real, and implicitly, that such a relationship is fraught. The linguistic turn describes the focusing of philosophy, and consequently also the other humanities, primarily on the relationship between philosophy and language. Ultimately, the linguistic turn advocates that language is not a transparent medium of thought and should be considered rather as a structuring agent, and this concept is the organizing principle of structuralism and poststructuralism. A detailed examination of the linguistic turn can be found in Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) and in subsequent volumes such as *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982) and *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989). Rorty also edited a canonical anthology *The Linguistic Turn* in 1967.

[12] In *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), Linda Hutcheon states that poststructuralism and deconstruction are among the "obvious" theories contributing to postmodernism: "Postmodern theory today has also challenged humanism's assumptions, and by "postmodern theory" I do not mean just the obvious: deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, and poststructuralism." *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction,* (London: Routledge, 1988), 188.

[13] According to Catherine Belsey, "poststructuralism names a theory, or a group of theories, concerning the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meanings. […] poststructuralists affirm, consciousness is not the origin of the language we speak and the images we recognize, so much as the product of the meanings we learn and reproduce." (from *Poststructuralism. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5).

[14] "Deconstruction," as Johnathan Culler reminds us in *On Deconstruction. Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1983), 85), "has been variously presented as a philosophical position, a political or intellectual strategy, and a mode of reading." Deconstruction is a process that does not seek to persuade (i.e., it is not

Similarly, Fowles's extensive use of the mythopoeic, his numerous allusions to classical myth, his use of familiar patterns in plot, and his implicit suggestion that the mystery inherent in the mythopoeic offers a more authentic alternative to scientific "certainty" are at variance with Jean-François Lyotard's characterization of the postmodern condition as an increasing incredulity "towards metanarratives"[15], since myth itself might be described as one such overarching, explanatory narrative. Fowles's use of myth is part of an attempt to indicate a transcendent element of human experience and is suggestive of the mystery that lies beyond the realm of our understanding or awareness, a reaching for transcendence[16]. Such a disposition is largely inconsistent with postmodern literary theory, and as I explore below is ubiquitous in the author's work. Indeed, Fowles repeatedly stresses the importance of mystery. From his earliest philosophical reflections in *The Aristos* (1964), to his preface to his final novel written towards the end of his life, Fowles stresses the importance and power of mystery in contrast to the reductive scientific impulse to solve and explain:

> We go on living, in the final analysis, because we do not know why we are here to live. Unknowing, or hazard, is as vital to man as water.[17]

> Mystery, or unknowing, is energy. As soon as a mystery is explained, it ceases to be a source of energy. If we question deep enough there comes a point where answers, if answers could be given, would kill. We may want to dam the river; but we dam the spring at our peril.[18]

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critique), instead it promotes undecidability, asserts that binary oppositions (implicit in Saussure's diagrams of language as structures of signifier and signified) "do not hold, but can always be undone" (Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism. A Very Short Introduction*, 87). Poststructuralism and deconstruction are both common to postmodern literary theory in that both wish to "show how a previously trusted relationship, like this one between language and the world, will go astray." (Ibid.)

[15] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 80-81.

[16] My discussion of Fowles's use of myth below is informed by theorists such as Mircea Eliade's *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Or Cosmos and History* (1954), Michael Bell's *Literature, Modernism, and Myth. Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century* (1997), Ernst Cassirer's *Language and Myth* (1953), and Colin Falck's *Myth, Truth, and Literature. Towards a True Post-Modernism* (1989).

[17] John Fowles, *The Aristos,* (London: Jonathan Cape, (1964), 26.

[18] Ibid, 27.

In his unpublished preface to *A Maggot*, Fowles explains that the novel is his

> attempt at writing a true mystery. […] because the lack of a sense of existential mystery in twentieth century man seems far graver to me than the too frequently bemoaned lack of religious faith. […] The great hordes of bad science, of fact-maniacs, statisticians, logicians, the main vulgar current of our century, bury their heads in the sand of their insufficient figures, their 'exact' definitions, and deny that mystery which is the great sky above the sand.[19]

Fowles's work is self-conscious, ambiguous, and innovative, and as such, might be interpreted as an example of postmodern experimentation. Nevertheless, the author is always confident of the medium's ability to apprehend reality. As Edith Warburton states in her meticulous, authorized biography of the writer, *John Fowles, A Life in Two Worlds* (2004), "[h]e believed that language referenced reality and that the writer was the originator of his own text."[20] Fowles was not hostile to postmodern literary theory, just reluctant to see his work pinned and dissected in the pursuit of one single, pseudo-scientific explanation of the novel's (and not necessarily the author's) intent. In one of the countless letters written generously and patiently in response to questions about his work, Fowles asserts that he was by no means universally contemptuous of criticism or literary analysis but instead, he rejects the

> conscious post-mortem dissection of text (in itself a perfectly valid discipline and enterprise) presented as a conscious and calculated intention in the author at the time of writing. The game really is much more mysterious than that.[21]

Fowles's commitment to a version of humanism, his interest in existential freedom, and his emphasis on the innate or archetypal essential differences between male and female, are also difficult to reconcile with postmodern literary theory. The Fowlesian protagonist must also conquer the "absurdity of his condition" in the manner of the "de Beauvoir/Camus view of man"[22], to which Fowles alludes for the first time in an early 1953 journal entry. The core of existential belief is that in an

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[19] John Fowles. Unpublished preface to *A Maggot* (n.d.). Ray Roberts Collection 14.10, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

[20] Eileen Warburton, *John Fowles: A Life in Two Worlds*. (New York: Viking, 2004), 416.

[21] John Fowles letter to Mr Van Damme, 22 September 1980. Ray Roberts Collection 14.10, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

[22] John Fowles, *The Journals Volume 1*. Edited by Charles Drazin, (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), 302.

apparently meaningless universe an individual can give his or her life meaning by making active choices relative to identity and belief. Such a philosophy is irreconcilable with postmodern literary theorists' approaches to human identity since this approach is generally dismissive of the individual's ability to effect change in his or her own identity or existence. Specifically, Michel Foucault's work on the individual as social construct, and particularly, his attitude towards sexuality and gender identity, is in direct conflict with existentialism. Foucault posits that we have only a degree of choice about how we represent ourselves; our sexuality, for example, is not essentialist in the sense that we are predisposed towards either masculinity or femininity. Instead, Foucault opines that only by (artificially contrived) convention, there are two pronouns, one masculine and one feminine, and therefore one is forced to gravitate towards one of them. One's own personality and appearance, according to such postmodernist theory, is the result of a complex network of social forces that impinge upon the self and how it is expressed rather than the sum of decisions or actions taken by the individual.

Fowlesian female characters are not, I suggest, indicative of such a postmodern worldview. In contrast, there is in Fowles's work a recurring suggestion that male and female are not only distinct, innate characteristics, powerful biological principles"[23], but moreover the latter holds the cure to what ails contemporary society by virtue of an innate feminine ability to "encourage innovation and experiment, and fresh definitions, aims, modes of feeling."[24] . In a typical Fowlesian paradox, the existential notion of there being no previously defined essence before existence coexists in the writer's work alongside an almost idealization of woman and a universal essence of the feminine. I suggest this signifies a reluctance to privilege one theory or philosophy (for example, existentialism) above all others. Instead, Fowles sustains an ambivalence by alluding frequently to various philosophies while suggesting that there are circumstances when such a worldview cannot contain all possibilities.

This contradiction is implicit throughout his work, but can be seen within the space of a few pages as he articulates his own philosophical framework in *The*

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[23] *The Aristos*, 157.

[24] Ibid.

Aristos. For example, he suggests that the traits of femininity and masculinity precede essence (thus contravening a fundamental existential proposition):

> The male and female are the two most powerful biological principles; and their smooth inter-action in society is one of the chief signs of social health.[25]

but he also asserts that existentialism

> is the true antidote to fascism […] [re-establishing] in the individual a sense of uniqueness, a knowledge of the value of anxiety as an antidote to intellectual complacency (petrifaction), and a realization of the need he has to learn to choose and control his own life.[26]

For the reasons briefly described above, postmodern literary theory as applied to Fowles would be problematic, and therefore I have turned instead to Frank Kermode's essay and his concepts of paleo- and neo-modernism rather than attempting to artificially and reductively reconcile Fowles's work with concepts of postmodernist literary theory.

The influence of modernism and the literary avant-garde, I will suggest, is evident in the prevalent pattern of the "return"; a predominant feature of Fowles's work, characterized by the cyclical nature of the central (generally male) protagonist's development, culminating in his "rebirth" after experiencing an epiphanic event or events under the influence of a catalyst, generally a female character. To support my assertion that such a dominant feature is indicative of an attempt to extend the project of the literary modernists (rather than an affinity with aspects of postmodern literary critical theory), I will refer to the work of Kermode, rehabilitating and re-contextualizing his work. I will show that the dominance of the trinity of characters described above is indicative of a very personal "return" for Fowles himself, and one that can be traced precisely to his own childhood and early influences.

John Fowles was born in 1926 in Essex into a comfortable, middle-class family. He lived in a conventional suburb of Leigh-on-Sea with his mother, father, and his cousin, Peggy. Edith Warburton notes the significance of the triadic two women and an older man in Fowles's formative years to which I alluded above. She writes:

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 116.

> [Fowles] in his earliest days was an adored only child, attended by two young, pretty, affectionate women. In the novels he published decades later, the configuration is often similar: A young man is lost in wonder in a green, enclosed natural place, instructed by an authoritarian older male and teased, cherished, and tempted by a pair of lovely young women.[27]

This observation is profound, identifying as it does this prevalent pattern that will recur in Fowles's first five novels written in the tumultuous post-war period between the 1950s and 1970s. Additionally, when this combination of characters and situations described by Warburton appears, it is consistently accompanied by a teleological progression on the part of the protagonist towards a more authentic existence and a greater appreciation for the complexities and richness of life. This evolution occurs under the influence and guidance of a 'Magus' figure and the two women (between whom the protagonist must often choose) and transpires in a location which is geographically remote from the rest of society, or in what will become known as the 'Fowlesian domaine.' The protagonist's life changes only after an intense re-evaluation of his history and a subsequent acknowledgment and rejection of all that he identifies as artificial and contrived in his past life.

Specifically in personal terms, Fowles's reengagement with his own past (as evidenced by this recurring pattern from his own childhood), and his protagonists' reengagement with their respective pasts, is evoked as a way to move toward more authentic lives and healthier psychological attitudes. This strategy, I will suggest, is indicative of an affinity with specific developments within literary modernism, for it is aligned with a philosophy of history with which two main schools of modernism are associated. In particular, it has an affinity with classic modernism, or what Kermode has identified as "palæo-modernism".[28]

Kermode defines palæo-modernism as the precursor of 'neo-modernism,' which may in turn be the ancestor of that latterly problematic and contested literary period, postmodernism. Although any attempt to identify literary periods is fraught, nevertheless I believe Kermode's analysis and catalogue of the traits he associates with palæo-modernism, which I will discuss in more detail below, is revealing when considering Fowles's work. Kermode's classification provides tangible criteria against which one can chart the development in Fowles's novels in the

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[27] Warburton, *John Fowles: A Life in Two Worlds*, 3.

[28] Frank Kermode, "Discrimination of Modernisms," in *Continuities* (New York: Random House, 1968).

degree to which they cohere with or diverge from such observed criteria. Hence it can be argued, as I do in this study, that Fowles's novels are a radical extension of the ideas that originated in the work of the palæo- and neo-modernists. This may seem intrinsically contradictory, since these two forms of modernism are diametrically opposed in many of their philosophies. However, I hope to show that the complexity of Fowles's work can be better appreciated, and a more nuanced reading generated, if one avoids conflating the novelist's myriad interests and perceived experimentation into any artificially narrow, if convenient, label. He embraced contradiction, paradox, and a diversity of implication, a tendency that manifests itself both in his fiction and in his own actions (his surprising dedication of *A Maggot* to the Shakers, in light of his self-professed atheism, is one indication of this proclivity).

Fowles describes this deliberately elusive position, and his reluctance to be labelled or pigeon-holed, in his foreword to Harald William Fawkner's work, *The Timescapes of John Fowles: Toward a New Model of Consciousness* (1982):

> I have a perhaps irrational dislike of the usual placing-and-marking context that seems congenial to so many teachers of literature: the fussing over 'influence' and position in the league, as if the most important thing is pinning the poor writer on a genealogical map, or filing him in the right pigeon-hole. [...] I write fiction very much to discover myself through texts—more precisely during the process of writing them—and very little to stake a claim on the flagrant quicksand of contemporary reputation. [...] My fictions are far more experiments than anything else—that is, in search of something, or things always beyond the outward narrative and themes. [29]

Such a self-conscious attempt on the part of Fowles to explore the possibilities inherent in the form renders his work almost impossible to categorize. Instead, this analysis will focus in part on describing the ways in which Fowles's work expands and problematizes definitions and conceptions of realism, modernism, and postmodernism. Additionally, I will focus on three major concerns as regards Fowles's *oeuvre*: mythopoeia, historiography, and metafiction, terms for which I will also provide specific definitions and any context necessary for this analysis.

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[29] Harald William Fawkner, *The Timescapes of John Fowles: Toward a New Model of Consciousness* (London and Toronto: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1982) 9.

Kermode's Distinction between Palæo- and Neo-Modernism

Kermode defines palæo-modernism and neo-modernism as periods within modernism that are characterized by diametrically opposed but mutually dependent philosophies of history. The two terms can be distinguished chronologically, although both emerged at the same time: palæo-modernism dominated artistic (including literary, visual and musical) thought before the Second World War, while neo-modernism came to the fore after 1945. In *The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern Literature* (1984)[30], Jeffrey Perl traces the emergence of the philosophical ideas that would shape palæo-modernism, asserting that that many of the characteristics of palæo-modernism can be traced back to the first "modern", Friedrich Nietzsche. According to Perl, Nietzsche's legacy for literary modernism lies in his recognition, later shared by other key modernist thinkers including Sigmund Freud, that Europe was collectively in need of an intervention; that it needed a form of cultural psychoanalysis to prevent its further decline. This cultural psychoanalysis, he suggested, would involve a reconnection of Europe *with its past*, "For", he suggested, "psychology is now again the path to the fundamental problems."[31]

This return, Nietzsche suggested, would cure Europe of the "disorder of mind" with which it was afflicted. This process of return, according to Kermode, is one of the major identifying features of palæo-modernism, and significantly, one of the characteristics that distinguishes palæo-modernism from neo-modernism. Such a return, a reconnecting with one's past, is central to the regeneration and reawakening of Fowlesian male protagonists. Daniel Martin, the flawed male protagonist whose life experiences bear a striking resemblance to Fowles's own, realises in an epiphanic acknowledgment of his past, that we must all embrace our pasts and in so doing reject that "total burial, that vile, stupid and inhuman pretence that our pasts are not also our presents."[32] The significance of such a return and the

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[30] Jeffrey Perl. *The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[31] Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), 32.

[32] John Fowles, *Daniel Martin* (London: Triad Grafton, 1977), 407. All future references pertain to this edition.

degree to which it is essential in the "rebirth" and regeneration of the protagonist is emphasised by its recurrence in each of Fowles's novels.

The palæo-moderns' enthusiasm for a resurgence of Hellenic classicism contrasts with the neo-moderns' own preferred process of return: a re-examination of the everyday and the common—a re-evaluation of the often-overlooked elements of life, and a rejection of what they considered to be the excessively complex and elitist esotericism of the palæo-modernists. Fowles's novels are all realistically rendered in terms of their language, and often focus on the commonplace or everyday with a view to casting a thing or experience in a startlingly new way. Part of the rehabilitation of the flawed protagonist in Fowles is a re-evaluation and acknowledgement not only of the past but of that which has been rendered banal or commonplace by the tone of modern existence. With this greater awareness of one's surroundings and feelings comes a greater appreciation for the complexity and mystery of human existence.

Interestingly, the neo-modernist opposition to the ideals of classical antiquity (a characteristic of paleo-modernism) manifests itself in a return or reevaluation of the mundane or the simple and every day. This return attempts to illustrate the complexity and majesty inherent in what might be otherwise overlooked due to its being deemed unexceptional and ordinary. Therefore, Fowles's work may also be considered neo-modernist in this regard. Therefore, in addition to its affinity with Kermode's paleo-modernism in terms of the importance of the "return", I will also indicate an affinity with the neo-modernist tendency to reappraise and elevate the every day and the commonplace. Additionally, I will suggest that the author has an interest in extending the human realm by focusing on a reconsideration of what seems to be "normal" and quotidian but in fact turns out to be the source of an epiphanic moment, or what Ernst Cassirer might call a "monumental deity"[33], during which the protagonist becomes aware of scope and dimensions of life and its transcendence which may have previously eluded him or her.

Cassirer's concept of the "monumental deity" is pivotal to this study since it convincingly asserts a connection between life world and language, (which contradicts poststructuralist theory), as well as between language and myth. To

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[33] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, trans. by Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover, 1953), 35.

summarize, Cassirer posits a theory of language in which words evolved in response to a dramatic or epiphanic moment. Such a moment, the evasion of imminent death by hiding behind a tree, for example, might elevate that tree momentarily to the status of a "deity". The impulse to bring this event into his conscious mind after the event, and subsequently to retell and share this experience would, Cassirer suggests, encourage the protagonist to pin this event with language development and use. Cassirer's connection between language and experience and his association of the emergence of language with that of myth are helpful when considering Fowles's work.

With increasing frequency as his work progresses over three decades, events occur in the novels that lie at the very extreme of language's ability to articulate them: from the bizarre events depicted in the stark realism of *The Collector* to the unexplained quasi-religious events of *A Maggot*. Many of these events are pivotal, revelatory in an obscure fashion for the protagonist, and such events tend largely but not entirely to elude description, stretching the ability of language to its very limits, approaching a mythic quality (what others might regard as almost constituting a magical realism). I suggest that Fowles's novels celebrate the power of an evolving language to articulate and capture such evanescent, momentary events, while at the same time revealing language's inability to reflect reality with any sustained or prolonged exactitude. However, his work does not lament the limitations of language nor, importantly, does it suggest that language imposes limits on what we can think in the sense that philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, who famously opined "language speaks us."[34] Significantly, in his final novel *A Maggot*, Rebecca attempts to explain the enormity of what she has experienced in Dollings Cave but is unable to do so in the language of her interlocutor. She maintains that she is unable to describe the events "in thy alphabet"[35], but interestingly, the language she chooses illustrates the connotative power of language to clearly evoke an anachronism. Surely, this is in conflict with poststructuralist literary theorists such as Louis Althusser (who opines that our

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[34] Specifically, Heidegger wrote, "Language is not a work of human beings: Language speaks. Humans speak only insofar as they co-respond to language." Martin Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking: Essays by Martin Heidegger*. Trans. James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976), 25.

[35] *A Maggot*, 420.

awareness of self and the world is determined largely by our role within that world and by the contemporary prevailing Ideological State Apparatuses — family, the media, religious organisations, and the education system, as well as the received ideas they propagate[36]), and Roland Barthes (who suggests that language imposes limits on what we can think in the form of a "bourgeois norm"[37]). Rather, Fowles seems to insist that Rebecca Lee's language does not impose limits on what she can think, nor is she constrained by her extremely low social position (having been a prostitute, and latterly a servant). Indeed, the final words of the novel seem to refute the idea that language without an obvious direct connection to a signified is evidence of a language that comprises, to use Ferdinand de Saussure's phrase, only "differences *without positive terms*."[38] Specifically, when Rebecca sings a lullaby to her sleeping child, her words "Vive vi, vive vum"[39] are described dismissively, with a clear irony by the implied author, as "not rational words, and can mean nothing."[40]

The palæo-modernists' impulse towards the past and a collective endeavour to bring about a modern 'renaissance' by reinstating Hellenic classicism as the ultimate aesthetic endeavour is evident in the recurring theme of the return in paradigmatic palæo-modernist works. In one such work, *Ulysses* (1922), James Joyce employs the Homeric adventures of Odysseus as a shaping and directional (as well as metafictional) device. Not only is this strenuous return to antiquity implied in the mythical source for the story (the intertextual allusion to Homer's Odysseus), but this "return", or homecoming, is reflected in Leopold Bloom's own return to his wife, Molly. Joyce's use of the Homeric myth was so esteemed by palaeo-modernist T.S. Eliot that he identified the work as epitomizing his "mythic method". This method, Eliot opined in his 1923 essay, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," was historically necessary for contemporary artists, a method for interpreting an existence that had become almost unbearably complex and inscrutable. He writes:

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[36] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 135-9.

[37] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 9.

[38] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* reprinted in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 125.

[39] *A Maggot*, 454.

[40] Ibid.

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. [....] It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious. It is a method for which the horoscope is auspicious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. [41]

Such a need to return to the past in order to move forward is explicit in T.S. Eliot's own "The Four Quartets":

> And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the
>   way back.
> You cannot face it steadily, but this thing is sure,
> That time is no healer: the patient is no longer here. [42]

Significantly, such a strenuous urge to return is also explicit in the quotation, also from "The Four Quartets," with which I opened this chapter, and which is also the same passage, helpfully bookmarked, in a collection of poetry left for Nicholas Urfe to discover on the beach in *The Magus*. This underscores, I suggest, the importance of a sense of return and the importance of personal historicism, both to this novel and to those that would follow.

> 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. [43]

It is also interesting to note that *The Magus* was written in the same period as the as yet unpublished novel *Tesserae*[44], which has remarkable similarities with James

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[41] T. S. Eliot, "'Ulysses', Order, and Myth," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (New York: Harvest Books, 1975), 177-178.

[42] T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages", from "The Four Quartets", *T.S. Eliot. Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 222.

[43] Ibid.

[44] According to the journal entry for July 6, 1959, published in *John Fowles The Journals Volume 1*, ed. Charles Drazin (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), the first draft of *Tesserae* was completed on or around that date. In the entry for August 3, Fowles reflects that he must now "get published: *Tesserae*, *The Aristos*, the play about the young officer (which needs rehandling), and the Spetsai novel, the Magaristes, or Magus. Then dimly, it will be Robin Hood." (427-428). This would suggest that *The Magus* and *Tesserae* were composed at around the same time, with The Collector being written shortly after in 1961. The reference to a "Robin Hood" novel probably anticipates *Daniel Martin*, which draws heavily on this English myth.

Joyce's modernist masterpiece, *Ulysses*. According to the annotated original manuscript, Fowles felt a considerable debt of gratitude to Joyce, and *Tesserae* is written almost as an homage, using the same "mythic method" but taking as its Homeric counterpart *The Iliad* rather than *The Odyssey*. In a foreword to the novel written in 1976, Fowles acknowledges the remarkable influence this modernist writer had on his work:

> I have also not suppressed an aspect of the book my older self finds pretentious: the use of the frame of the Iliad. I have kept it because a state of siege is at least an honest analogy of the unsuccessful writer's largely paranoiac feelings about the ungrateful outside world; and because the ability to create public myths begins in an inability not to create, however absurdly, a personal one. I have retained it also as a debt of honour to James Joyce. I tried to avoid his influence … as well a plant, that of the sun.
> *Tesserae* was by someone who really wanted to be a poet, not a novelist. It is as much an epitaph to a former illusion as a record of past self.[45]

Perl suggests that the importance of a sense of return is one of five major defining characteristics of palæo-modernism, which I will suggest are present variously in Fowles's fiction. A second major characteristic is a commitment to the establishment of a modern Renaissance, which would imply the incorporation of specific classical ideals of (particularly Hellenic) antiquity. Of significance to this examination will be the prevalence of myth and mythopoeia, in particular, T.S. Eliot's "mythic method" from which Fowles's work will diverge in interesting and radical ways.

A third characteristic of palæo-modernism is a respect for beauty and knowledge and an appreciation of worldliness rather than the parochial, all of which are implicit in Renaissance values. Significantly, these traits are present in Fowles's "elect" characters such as the well-travelled Nicholas Urfe in *The Magus*, and Charles Smithson in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, art student Miranda Grey in *The Collector*, internationally famous screenwriter Daniel Martin, and the artists, and the art critics and writers of "The Ebony Tower" and *Mantissa* respectively.

Only the elect in Fowles's novels have the potential to evolve past the various "disorders of mind" with which they are afflicted at the beginning of his novels. Such a view is congruent with the Greek thinker and scientist Heraclitus' separation

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[45] John Fowles. *Tesserae* (unpublished manuscript). Foreword dated 1976, Ray Roberts Collection 8.8, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

of humanity into two groups: a moral and intellectual elite, the *aristoi*, and an unthinking, conforming mass, *hoi polloi*. In the preface to his philosophical pensées, *The Aristos*, however, Fowles creates a more nuanced reading of Heraclitus' division of humanity. "[T]he dividing line between the Few and the Many must run *through* each individual, not between individuals"[46] (italics are mine).

The exploration of a person's innate propensity towards being "elect", which may be biologically determined and at least partly conditioned by access to education, is the thematic focus of Fowles's first published novel, *The Collector* but will recur in many of his novels. Interestingly, the culmination of Fowles's fiction, *A Maggot*'s heroine is the prostitute-cum-religious visionary, Rebecca Lee who is neither worldly nor educated by traditional standards. However, I hope to show that Fowles's definition of "worldly" and "educated" also seems to undergo a re-evaluation as part of the author's emerging, but extremely problematic, quasi-feminism. As such, Fowles reassesses and elevates knowledge areas or abilities generally considered to be essentialist feminine qualities, such as intuition, creativity, tolerance, and the ability to affect change, abilities that have been traditionally ignored or undervalued by patriarchal societies.

A fourth characteristic of paleo-modernism is a belief in the Nietzschean concept of man's "will to power" (or the will to reproduce) as the driving force behind all of his actions, thus negating any supposition of a human faculty of reason. This drive to survive and reproduce, surrendering to instinct rather than rational thought, underpins several of Fowles's novels. Specifically, Sarah Woodruff's behaviour in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: her pursuit and seduction of Charles Smithson, and her ability to survive in the hostile circumstances in which she finds herself, suggests that only one of the three possible endings to the novel provided by Fowles is both logical and possible. This ending is also implicitly privileged by its being the last of the three endings. Sarah surely chooses her new life in an artists' commune with her child over marriage to Smithson as a means to ensuring her own authentic survival, both spiritually and physically, a reflection of her own drive or

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[46] *The Aristos*, 9.

will to power. She is also frequently associated with the "Sphinx" [47]. The myth of the Sphinx when read in Sarah's post-Enlightenment context, could be interpreted as a critique of man's over-dependence upon and misplaced faith in logic and rationality. The unprecedented systematic horrors enacted by humanity in the twentieth century have surely rendered such faith similarly worthy of a critique. Additionally, this ending, the bereft Smithson contemplating "the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea"[48], directly parallels the opening of the novel where the bereft figure staring out to sea was Sarah. Implicitly, the novel suggests that Charles must also reevaluate his faith in logic, rationality, and the status quo if he is to survive.

Fifth and finally, Perl suggests that support for Aristotelian tenets in the development of tragedy (fiction): mimesis, action, teleology, and mythos are indicative of palæo-modernism. Interestingly, Fowles's work variously problematizes or interrogates several of these tenets. Specifically, he considers the reliability of mimetic verisimilitude and finds it wanting in *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* where little is what it appears to be, or what its apparent label or name would suggest. His novels often defer or suspend action rather than adhering to teleological development: *The Magus* concludes with a suspended present tense, and in *A Maggot*, the reader is not privy to the central events—what happened in Dollings Cave—and we never discover what actually happened to Mr Bartholemew, the central male character of the novel.

Fowles's works demonstrate a complex relationship with such classical systems, appearing at once to adhere to such conventions, but undermining them from within. He often uses familiar or recognizable novelistic genres, for example, the detective genre in *The Collector* and the romance in the case of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, only to subvert the particular genre from within, defying the reader's expectations. Thematically, I will suggest, such a tendency is encapsulated in the title of Fowles's last novel, *A Maggot* in which Fowles's increasing ambivalence towards these tenets is most evident. A maggot, a polysemic word for a morphologically inconsistent entity, exists by consuming that which is dead or

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[47]John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Triad/Panther Books, 1985), 399. All future references to this novel pertain to this edition.

[48] Ibid.

dying. Fowles's radical challenges to the traditions of the novel form might be similarly described.

Although rather artificial, such a distillation of paleo- and neo-modernist characteristics facilitates a more systematic examination of Fowles's fiction because it provides a framework of philosophical approaches within which his work can be usefully analyzed. By examining Fowles's work chronologically, using palæo-modern characteristics as a touchstone, I hope to chart and explain how his work evolves, radically extending the philosophies of both palæo-modernism and neo-modernism, and in so doing, revitalizing and energizing the British novel and influencing many of the novelists who would follow. Ultimately, I suggest that Fowles radically extends Virginia Woolf's modernist approach to realism in the novel, by attempting to describe what lies behind the surface, "a token of some real thing behind appearances; . . . I make it whole by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole"[49], which he manages to accomplish while still evading a relativistic subjectivism.

Literary Modernism and The Contemporary British Novel

Literary movements do not occur in a vacuum, and literary modernism is no exception. It is hardly surprising then that literary modernism, situated as it is in perhaps the most tumultuous and self-consciously barbaric period of human history to date, would evolve as a savage indictment of its Victorian forebears. The writers who reflected upon the horrors of the First World War only to be faced by a second, turned their backs on those who had placed their enthusiasm and trust in the Enlightenment project. Thus, literary modernisms, both palæo- and neo-, might be broadly characterized as a reaction against a misplaced post-Enlightenment faith in science; a faith too enfeebled to address the ills of society, but instead amplifying them, exposing horrific depths of depravity and inhumanity. Britain in particular felt such changing times immediately and viscerally, emerging from the Second World War as an emasculated, almost bankrupt empire, no longer a significant player on the world's political stage. In *The English Novel in History. 1950-1995*, Steven Connor describes these post-war years as those during which the nation

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[49] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1985), 71.

experienced "a stripping away of Empire, and as effect and cause of this from the 1950s onwards, the loss of British power and influence in the world in political, military and economic terms."[50] For this reason, British fiction in the years following the Second World War reflected a disillusioned and disorientated society.

Fowles's career spans a period characterized in Britain by a break from modernism, or what Frederic Jameson describes as a "mutation in the sphere of culture," leading from the old humanist to the new postmodernist "cultural dominant"[51]. Leading to this fracture, the novel form in particular was beginning to show the inevitable strain of Ezra Pound's uncompromising 1934 edict to all contemporary artists to "Make it New"[52]. The form was under pressure to evolve, not only in response to the call from Pound, but also to remain relevant in a rapidly changing British society. In the decades after the Second World War, it began to seem as though novelists were proving inadequate to the task. John Barth famously declared that the novel form was "exhausted"[53] in 1967. In the following decade, B. S. Johnson[54] observed persuasively that the role of the storyteller appeared to have been taken up by the cinema. As late as 1979, the magazine, *Granta,* pessimistically summarized the state of the British novel as:

> […] neither remarkable nor remarkably interesting [… it] does not startle, does not surprise, is not the source of controversy or contention... British fiction of the 50s, 60s and even most of the 70s variously appears as a monotonously protracted, realistically rendered monologue. It lacks excitement, wants drive, provides comforts not challenges.[55]

In an essay, presumably intended for publication as a foreword to *The Ebony Tower* (1974), but ultimately never published, Fowles indicates his own concerns for the form, which echo those of Johnson. However, one can also infer from the essay

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[50] Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History. 1950-1995*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.

[51] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 6th edn (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 4.

[52] Ezra Pound, *Make it New. Essays by Ezra Pound*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935).

[53] John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion" *The Atlantic Monthly* 220.2 (1967), 29-34.

[54] B. S. Johnson, *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), 140.

[55] Bill Buford. "Editorial" *Granta*, September 1, 1979, 3-10.

Fowles's own personal conviction that both the novel and the sign-system it employs, despite being "under siege" (which is the way he describes the contemporary human condition, particularly that of the artist), are both entirely valid, and what is more, *needed* in our society:

> The rise of all the new visual forms of narration has profoundly altered and limited—some would say usurped—the novelist's territory. People under siege can only turn inward, and the retreat from the pleasures of public achievement into those of private creating has not been simply a matter of perverse choice, but also of enforced outer circumstance. Never in history has the novelist been less likely to be read, more probably faced with public failure; and for him the word "deadline" has gained an ominously literal meaning—it is the point after which the main pleasures of the creative experience cease. Once issued, his text loses its ambiguity, malleability, fluidity, all its alternatives and dreams and hopes. It can no longer be improved; and it is cast into a world where many consider the sign-system it employs is rapidly becoming obsolete as a vehicle for narrative; as one might throw a small fish into a pool of sharks—then drain the pool of water, just to make sure.[56]

Even as late as 1970, Michael McNay's interview with John Fowles for *The Guardian* (on the occasion of the author having won the W.H. Smith £1000 award for *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) opens with a generalization as depressing as it is broad: "Everyone knows that the English novel is dying on its feet."[57] Despite this bleak series of declarations, Fowles's novels represent an unwavering commitment to the form, incorporating a blend of mythopoeic and storytelling traditions, carefully-observed and rendered realism, self reflexivity, and the interrogation and investigation of the textuality of history to reinvigorate the novel. Therefore, this examination also seeks to determine the ways in which Fowles's writing contributed to the vibrant state of the British novel in the twenty-first century, and how his attempts to reinvigorate the form anticipated and informed the works of enduring British writers such as the magical realism of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), the reinterpretation of the historic as seen in Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) and Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983), and the blurring of history and fiction in A.S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) and Bruce Chatwin's *Utz* (1985). More recently Fowles's influence can be seen in Zadie

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[56] John Fowles. "Behind the Scenes." Unpublished introduction to *The Ebony Tower*. No date. Ray Roberts Collection 2.3, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

[57] Michael McNay. "God in his Victorian heaven," *The Guardian*, December 5, 1970, Arts Guardian section.

Smith's complex plots and so-called "hysterical realism"[58] as epitomized in *White Teeth* (2000) and *On Beauty* (2005). All of these writers investigate and acknowledge, as Fowles had, what is contiguous with yet other than the rational life world, blurring and fusing the real with the historic and peering into the emergent interstices, just as Fowles's works had done twenty or more years earlier.

Perhaps most relevant to his enduring influence is Fowles's constant formal concerns and adaptations. In particular, I will examine Fowles's interest in the novel's ability to evolve and remain consistently viable and relevant, despite the demands of a rapidly-changing zeitgeist. Fowles's work suggests that the novel is admirably equipped as an aesthetic form to apprehend the complexity and evanescence of contemporary reality because his work clearly attempts to extend the human realm beyond the confines of a reductive, empirical, and scientific worldview. His novels increasingly focus on the importance of a more intuitive and expansive view of human experience. More than this, Fowles's work suggests that the novel is perhaps the only artistic form with which we can extend the human realm and allow an investigation of what lies at the periphery of our experience and at the extremity of our abilities to perceive or articulate.

Such a constellation of interests would suggest the extension of the modernist project rather than an affinity with postmodern literary theory, which, as I have suggested above, is built upon an entirely different set of basic assumptions about the world and reality. I shall examine the degree to which Fowles writing continues and extends modernism, which has its own claim to a radicalized manner (or aesthetic mode) of representing being. A development of such a dominant mode of what is a little acknowledged attempt at a version of a basal, experiential narrative realism, which aims to represent the most authentic sense of lived consciousness as experienced by the greatest number (an unspoken universality), is evident in Fowles's writing. Since this examination focuses on Fowles's interrogation of techniques associated with literary realism, it is useful to situate his work within the context of a conventionally accepted definition of realism.

Realism as a literary term has become so widely used that it is difficult to define meaningfully when considered in isolation from other movements. According to

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[58] James Woods. "Tell me how does it feel?" *The Guardian*, October 15, 2001, 8.

The Oxford Companion to English Literature, realism might be characterized by its insistence on

> […] accurate documentation, sociological insight, an accumulation of the details of material fact, and avoidance of poetic diction, idealization, exaggeration, melodrama […] and subjects were to be taken from everyday life, preferably from lower-class life.[59]

This definition originates in the manifesto, *Le Réalisme*, 1857, by Champfleury, which documents this movement's concern for accurate, detailed description in contrast with romanticism, its literary predecessor . This new artistic development emerged alongside the ascent of scientific methods and discoveries, and therefore not surprisingly reflects the priorities of an increasingly scientific and positivist age. Early practitioners of such a realism included Balzac and Stendhal. English realism, by contrast, is descended from writers of the early novel, like Defoe, with "its own unlabelled strain of realism,"[60] and can traced through the writings of George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell, and into the twentieth century via

> H.G Wells and Arnold Bennett, to the post World-War II evocations of English middle-class life of Angus Wilson and the Northern working-class fiction of the 1950s, best exemplified by Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1959).[61]

At the risk of over-simplifying such a fraught term, the unifying characteristics of realism might be summarized as an observation of conventional chronology, plausible events, and accurate representation facilitated by adequate detail.

   Fowles's novels at least appear to be broadly in the realist tradition in the sense that the plots of his novels follow a predicable trajectory and all have central characters who experience unusual yet plausible events or who are placed in dramatic yet credible situations. There is always a coherent plot, although the veracity of individual character's versions of events is challenged by the physical juxtaposition of accounts as seen in *The Collector*.

   The endings of *The Magus* (revised version) and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* might be described as experimental and interrogative of traditional realist

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[59] *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* ed. Margaret Drabble, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 813.

[60] Ibid., 814.

[61] *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature* ed. Ian Ousby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 822.

conventions (the former's unresolved present tense evocation of a cinematic freeze-frame, and the latter's famous alternative endings), but these examples are dwarfed by such radical rejection of narrative convention as seen in works by B.S. Johnson, who eschews the conventions of fictionalization. As he states in *Albert Angelo*, "Telling stories is telling lies" and in *The Unfortunates* (1969) the chapters are unbound, implying that its physical organization, and thus any implicit chronology, is irrelevant. Fowles's interrogation of simplistic notions of realism is more subtle, and particularly in the novels of the 1970s, I will suggest, Fowles explores a more radical destabilization of narrative conventions while still adopting a mantle comprising seemingly traditional genre codes.

Informing my examination of Fowles's fiction is the work of Georg Lukács whose influence is particularly evident in the novels published in the 1970s. The Hungarian Marxist philosopher and literary critic wrote extensively on the novel and on realism in particular. In *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1963), Lukács contrasts two attitudes towards angst provoked in individuals by the complexities and horrors of contemporary existence: the modernists, who Lukács characterizes as pessimists, believe change from a permanent state of angst is impossible and choose instead to focus on the effect on the individual of such an existence (an attitude represented in Lukács' work by Franz Kafka); and the contrasting optimistic view of the realists who desire change and believe that it is possible. These realists, with whom I will associate Fowles, choose to focus on the relationship between the individual and society (represented in Lukács by Thomas Mann). As Lukács describes, they reject the

> ideology of most modernist writers [who] assert[s] the unalterability of outward reality (even if this is reduced to a mere state of consciousness) human activity is, *a priori*, rendered impotent and robbed of meaning. [62]

Lukács is read by both Jane Mallory and the eponymous hero in Fowles's *Daniel Martin*. This novel's optimistic (and often criticised as implausible) conclusion, the reunion between Jane and Martin, could be read as evidence of Fowles's confidence in the ability of the individual to change trajectory in spite of societal pressures. Fowles's works, particularly his later novels, are increasingly optimistic in terms of

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[62] Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2006), 36.

their prognosis for both the novel form and for humanity itself, again suggesting a complex relationship with the modernists, particularly as defined by Lukács.

Fowles's novels hold the mysteries of the imaginative process, and in particular the novelistic impulse, in highest esteem— the theme of artistic creation being the subject of the work, or at least a defining characteristic of a central character, in the majority of his novels: specifically, Miranda Grey is a painter in *The Collector* (1963); Nicholas Urfe a (failed) poet in *The Magus* (1966 and revised in 1977); the novella 'The Ebony Tower' (1974) focuses on the artist Henry Breasley; the eponymous protagonist in *Daniel Martin* (1977) returns to novel-writing (putatively creating the novel that bears his name) after a career as a screenwriter; and *Mantissa* dramatizes the relationship between a novelist and his muse. The mystery which surrounds the artistic process is revered, in part, because it cannot be explained. "Mystery," as Fowles writes in his philosophical pensées, *The Aristos* (1964), "or unknowing, is energy. As soon as a mystery is explained, it ceases to be a source of energy."[63]

In Fowles's novels, mystery and the creative process are inextricably linked, as are mystery and his female characters. Fowles's female characters are less reliant on logic and rationality as filters to reality, being more amenable to change and possibilities, and less suspicious of that which lies beyond common experience or explanation. In his final novel, *A Maggot*, the central female character, Rebecca Lee, epitomizes this contrast between the intuitive and the rational, the "other" of lawyer Henry Ayscough. For Rebecca, the mysterious events in Dollings Cave are nevertheless instinctively understood, and she interprets the events as quasi-religious, withstanding Ayscough's relentless cross-examination on the witness stand, and maintaining calmly and assuredly what she saw.

Fowles's increasing focus on his female characters, their comparative importance dramatically compared to their male counterparts, demands attention in this study. For this reason, I will examine the evolution of Fowles's female characters, and I will suggest that there is a chartable change in their significance and function from the comparative marginality of Alison Kelly in *The Magus*, to the central role of Rebecca Lee in his final novel, *A Maggot*. As part of this endeavour, I hope to counter some of the more hostile reactions to Fowles's work on the part of several

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[63] *The Aristos,* 27.

feminist critics, several of whom I will mention (along with their concerns about Fowles's depiction of women) later in this chapter.

Mythopoeia, Historiography, and Metafiction

In addition to examining the degree to which Fowles's novels cohere and diverge from Kermode's definition of paleo- and neo-modernism, I will also focus on an examination of mythopoeia, historiography and metafiction as the title of this thesis suggests. By using these terms as a lens through which to examine Fowles's novels, I will demonstrate the pivotal, although not always overtly experimental, direction in which Fowles's fiction has evolved, tracing its trajectory. Secondly, focusing on those three terms, I will explore Fowles's engagement with the challenges facing British fiction.

Since these three terms have been associated so closely with postmodern literary theory, it will be impossible to avoid a discussion of how Fowles's worldview differs from that of postmodern literary theorists such as Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, but this is not primarily the focus of my study. Rather, responding to Fowles's texts and the contexts of their production, I assert that Fowles's use of mythopoeia, historiography, and metafiction is perhaps unique, and renders his frequent association with postmodern theorists as essentially open to interrogation and challenge.

I will assert that Fowles's interest in history, both as text and as scientific document, pervades his fiction. In John Barkham's interview with Fowles, "Among Books and Authors", Fowles states that "The novel is intended to show that history is constantly deceiving us about the nature of reality."[64] The fact that this comment could easily be associated with any of his novels (Fowles was actually referring to *The Magus*) is telling, indicative of the thematic importance of historiography and its interrogation in Fowles's work. The historic is used by Fowles both as a literary distancing device and as a concept for evaluation and examination, encouraging the reader to observe putatively authentic historic characters as if (and this allusion is used specifically in *The French Lieutenant's*

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[64] John Barkham, "Among Books and Authors." *Saturday Review*, February 19, 1966.

Woman) looking through a telescope at a distant object and evaluating that object in light of contemporary norms and values. Fowles often mixes historical fact with imagination, and it becomes difficult to discern where historical fact ends and fabrication begins. Also in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, extracts from documents contemporaneous with the novel's setting appear between the chapters, often exploding popular myths about repressed and sanitary Victorian England with their graphic descriptions of pornography and the appalling lack of basic sanitation. In *A Maggot*, verisimilar documents are reproduced as part of the novel itself. The sources in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are authentic and cited (taken from verifiable magazines or texts) whereas in *A Maggot,* it is (by design) difficult to differentiate the real from the fictive, reflecting the dominant theme and central event of that novel.

Linda Hutcheon's term 'historiographic metafiction', defined in her work, *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), offers an interpretation of the relationship between fiction and history that I suggest differs from Fowles's, despite the fact that Hutcheon cites *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and *A Maggot* as novels that illustrate her theory. Hutcheon's explanation of historiographic metafiction is complex, and without wishing to oversimplify it, I will summarize elements of the concept germane to Fowles's works and explain how my interpretation of his novels differs from Hutcheon's.

Hutcheon asserts that "the separation of the literary and the historical"[65] is artificial, with both history and fiction having "definitions and interrelations [that] are historically determined and vary with time."[66] I suggest that this is in conflict both with Fowles's worldview and with the view presented in his novels, particularly *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. As I will explore more deeply in chapter two, in this novel Fowles explores the boundary between fiction and history, but ultimately, the reader is left with the impression that the two are identifiably distinct. Moreover, this work implies that to suggest otherwise (i.e., that history and fiction are interchangeable) is untenable. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* contains numerous fraught instances of what could perhaps be called

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[65] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 105.

[66] Ibid.

"ontological slippages", where references traverse boundaries between the historically real and the fictional. For example, Ernestina Freeman informs Charles Smithson that they are walking on "the very steps that Jane Austen made Louisa Musgrove fall down in *Persuasion*"[67] (a fictional character referring (intertextually) to another fictional character as if she were historically "real"); and Mary, Mrs Tranter's servant girl, is described incongruously by the implied author as having a

> great-great-granddaughter, who is twenty-two years old this month… and her face is known over the entire world, for she is one of the more celebrated young film actresses.[68]

In both cases, the reference to a seeming empirical or historical "truth" (in the second, most extreme example, the suggestion that there is an actual historical descendent of a fictional character alive in the world of the reader), pushes the fictional construct beyond the boundaries of realism into nonsense. I will suggest that Fowles, rather than engaging in postmodern play by focussing solely on problematizing the boundary between history and fiction, instead elevates the importance of both modes as disparate, yet vital, elements in any comprehensive apprehension of reality.

Fowles's protagonists are increasingly aware of the degree to which they have incorrectly reconstituted their pasts in their own memories, how they have led lives swayed by convention rather than guided by authenticity. They are led to re-examine their pasts, often drawn to re-vision them as part of a literary enterprise as Daniel Martin does. Increasingly in Fowles's novels, personal histories that have been suppressed must be acknowledged as part of a "whole sight" towards which Fowles's protagonists strive, rejecting the "stupid and inhuman pretence that our pasts are not also our presents."[69] Daniel Martin and the reader are reminded that history and fiction contribute separate and vital aspects of recorded reality, both necessary if "whole sight" is to be attained.

A Maggot highlights the sense that history would fail to reflect its mysterious events, and thus be incomplete and flawed, because the only witness was a woman. In this sense, the novel does cohere with one defined aspect of historiographic

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[67] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, (London: Triad/Panther Books, 1985), 12.

[68] Ibid., 68-9.

[69] *Daniel Martin*, 407.

metafiction, displaying a "new skepticism or suspicion about the writing of history."[70] Hutcheon identifies *A Maggot* as sharing with novels like *Shame* and *The Public Burning* the same "internalized challenges to historiography".[71] However, I suggest Rebecca's inability to articulate her experience, and thus history's anticipated failure to reflect her story, is not the only important aspect of the novel. Instead, Rebecca's vision, her willingness to embrace such supernatural events, and the degree to which she is depicted as Ayscough's "other" (mythopoeic and intuitive to his rational and empirical) are suggestive of Fowles's own pursuit of a realism that permeates beyond the events and facts of history.

The historic, or what has been documented and archived by the quotidian determinants of history as historical fact, is also problematized by Fowles in several ways. In *The Magus*, for example, Conchis creates a web of fake documentation, including photographs, documents, and supposed news footage, to lure Nicholas Urfe into his 'god game'. Urfe ultimately "relives" Conchis' experience as mayor of the town under German occupation, surrounded by artefacts of such authenticity, he is unable to differentiate what is real from choreographed theatrics. However, after Urfe leaves the island, these events, including Conchis' very identity, are impossible to verify by traditional means. In *A Maggot* Fowles's blending of the fictive events at Dollings Cave with the historically verifiable founding of the Shaker movement by Ann Lee, putative daughter of the central female character in the novel, similarly confounds the reader.

His central characters seem to be aware of the slippery relationship between fiction and history, and as a result are (misguidedly, as it will transpire) drawn to archiving—a frantic "pinning" of facts, to use the same metaphor as Fowles in his second novel, *The Collector*, as a remedy for disconcerting disorder. The ramifications of this urge to archive are examined in great depth by Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* (1995)[72]. In this work, Derrida examines the impulse to archive and posits that such behaviour is an attempt to regain a sense of stability and order, and restore an *earlier state* of things. This is the drive, perhaps, that

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[70] Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, 106.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 113.

coerces *The Collector*'s Frederick Clegg to collect and label, and Miranda to write a diary; it compels Urfe in *The Magus* to revisit and relive historical events and ultimately to reconnect with his own past and himself. It induces Daniel Martin to write his autobiography in the novel of that name. It attracts Charles Smithson in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* to archaeology, David Williams in "The Ebony Tower" to research and write about painting, and it encourages Miles Green in *Mantissa* to examine and articulate the writing process itself in a conversation with his Muse. It might also explain Ayscough's rational and logical deconstruction of events, a dogged pursuit of "truth" in *A Maggot*.

Fowles's use of mythic thought and historical awareness, according to Philip Tew in *The Contemporary British Novel* (2004),[73] reflects one of the dominant factors in British fiction of this period. Tew suggests its use allows the writer to diffuse what he characterises as dogmatic interpretations by "postmodernism, [of] the reductively rational and the dominance of the scientific."[74] Similarly, Fowles's fiction renews its response to the dramatic changes in the identity of "Britishness" and of the British culture, and it is within this context that this writer's use of myth and the mythopoeic will be central to this study.

To avoid confusion and a misleading conflation of terms such as 'myth' and the 'mythopoeic,' it seems useful to provide brief definitions of each at this point. Michael Bell's definition of the mythopoeic is helpful. In *Literature, Modernism, and Myth. Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century* (1997), Bell explains his conscious choice of the word 'mythopoeic' over the word 'mythic' when describing the phenomenon, because his concern is "not with myth as a traditional content or as a means of literary organization. It is rather with the underlying outlook that *creates myth*; or, more precisely again, *sees the world in mythic terms*"[75] [my italics]. Bell's quotation, below encapsulates well a clear definition of both myth and mythopoeia, together with a clarification of their use by *modernist*

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[73] *Philip* Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), xi.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism, and Myth. Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-2.

writers which, I will assert, is the basis for Fowles's use of the mythic and
mythopoeic in his novels:

> … myths increasingly became an emblem of any set of living convictions making up
> a world-view, including therefore science itself. The microscope of anthropological
> science turned out to be a mirror. And it is the shock effect of this, the denaturalizing
> of your own world-view even as you perform its most sophisticated and committed
> functions, that the notion of myth keeps alive. Whereas the term 'myth' is usually a
> relational see-saw whereby one person's belief, religion, or science is looked down
> on as another's myth, the mythopoeic consciousness of modernity combines these
> two viewpoints in a difficult balance. However positivistic your beliefs, as a citizen
> of modernity you inhabit a world of conscious myth, for the mythic lies not in the
> belief itself but in the internal relation to it. Hence the use of archaic myth in
> *Ulysses* or *The Rainbow* is emblematic of the ontological status of the modern
> world that is being represented. Of course, the particular content and provenance of
> these myths is important too, and has received plenty of recognition, but their
> underlying function of emblematic philosophical self-reflection is constantly missed.
> By the same token, to say that science is mythic, of course, is not to deny its truth
> value; it is only to note its function as an authoritative organization of values within
> the culture. Myth is an evaluative, as well as a cognitive form.[76]

In addition to the function of myth as a kind of "emblematic philosophical mirror",
Bell also implies that myth functions, at least for modernist writers, as a kind of
cultural shorthand by which writers can allude to certain elements which comprise a
(culture's) world view without having to make the connection explicit. The mythic
distils a world-view into an emblem that might be evaluated by the reader. Hence,
the quest myth, which is present in each of Fowles's novels to one extent or
another, has the effect of representing, among other things, the quotidian social and
psychological approach to male/female courtship relative to the setting of the novel
(i.e., the Victorian in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the Augustan in *A Maggot*,
the early 1960s in England in *The Collector* and *A Magus*, and the 1970s in *Daniel
Martin* and *Mantissa*).

The most evocative use of the quest myth is seen in "The Ebony Tower" which is
saturated with echoes of the Celtic myth of "Eliduc". The myth of "Eliduc" with its
chivalry, self-sacrifice, and devotion is viewed in stark relief against a background
of promiscuous 1970s England. This emblematic use of myth encourages a
detached evaluation and cognition by the reader of whichever culture's inherent
attitudes and philosophies are being depicted in the novel, but additionally it
encourages the simultaneous interrogation of them. This use of the myth as a form

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[76] Michael Bell, 'The Metaphysics of Modernism', in *The Arts and Sciences of Criticism*,
ed. by D. Fuller and P. Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 238.

of self-reflection, or in Bell's words, as an "evaluative" and "cognitive form", one that "condenses phenomena", is critical to understanding Fowles's use of myth. The mythic has the richness to capture and reflect the worldview of a particular period that eludes mimesis.

There are several parallels between the impulse to archive, the mythic, and language, since both language and myth might be described as archives of culture. The myth is a form of archive, capturing the complex elements of human existence, which may need clarification or explanation (aetiological myths), structure, patterning, or defining as ritual[77] so that it becomes acceptable to a community. That myth is then embraced by a group as an aid to creating meaning, coherence, or justification of rules, behaviour or social organization (charter myths). Language too can be viewed as an archive, since it captures the development of culture linguistically[78], evolving as existence becomes more complex and demands a larger vocabulary with which to reflect this complexity. It also archives more immediately, however, since (pre-photography) it has been the sole mechanism by which an event or object not currently in view might be conjured, articulated, and considered.

Fowles's attempt to extend the human realm by using mythic elements in his novels has direct affinity with the work of Cassirer to whom I have referred above. In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume Four, The Metaphysics of Symbolic Thought*, Cassirer describes the mythic as the fusion of the artistic activity of seeing with discursive thinking in language, which, when they interact, results in a "cloak of reality."[79] In situations where the boundaries of contemporary thinking are being challenged or extended there is a tendency for the author to use mythic language or patterns. Such is the case in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* where Charles Smithson finds it impossible to untangle the enigma that is Sarah Woodruff. Her

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[77] A comprehensive analysis of myth, generally speaking, as a residual of human ritual can be found in Sir James Frazier's *The Golden Bough* (1890).

[78] Max Müller's allegorical interpretation of myth is articulated in his 1861 work, Lectures on the Science of Language, which included the now infamous assertion that mythology was a "disease of language," positing that as words changed meaning through time, they were misinterpreted.

[79] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Volume Four: The Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms,* ed. by John Michael Krois and Donald Philip Verene, trans. by John Michael Krios (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 83.

mystery is foregrounded by the use of names such as "Calypso"[80] and descriptions of her suggest that she is somehow otherworldly, a "figure from myth."[81] It is also evident in *A Maggot,* in which Rebecca Lee describes what she encounters in Dollings Cave. The word, "maggot" suggests potential for change, metamorphosis, and decay simultaneously. Such complexity and inherent self-contradiction eludes more scientific, precise labelling. Similarly, the *fluidity of meaning* inherent in the word "maggot" is associated by Fowles with recurrent yet elusive mythopoeic images, which, he suggests, are vital to his creative process. Such "mythopoeic stills"[82] will be described later in reference to Fowles's essay, "Notes on an Unfinished Novel" in which he explains the importance of these fleeting and recurrent remnants of myth to his writing.

Cassirer draws a distinction in his work between mythical and scientific thinking, and I will suggest that a similar dichotomy might be observed in Fowles's writing. Cassirer emphasizes the proximity between mythical thought and its origin and the equivalent relationship between scientific thought and its corresponding stimulus:

> […] a mere glance at the facts of mythical consciousness shows that it knows nothing of certain distinctions which seem absolutely necessary to empirical-scientific thinking. Above all, it lacks any fixed dividing line between mere "representation" and "real" perception, between wish and fulfilment, between image and thing.[83]

Thus, Cassirer advocates that mythic thought, rather than scientific thought, is closer to "real" perception, lacking the "fixed dividing line" that is present in empirical-scientific thinking. Interestingly, *A Maggot* explores this same differentiation, dividing its main characters between two modes of thinkers: the scientific and the mythic. The latter thinkers seem to possess an ability to perceive that which eludes their rationally and empirically-obsessed counterparts. Cassirer highlights the compulsion of the scientific thinker to explain away mystery, thereby excluding all mythic significance, and this sentiment is echoed by Fowles

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[80] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 125.

[81] Ibid., 5.

[82] John Fowles, "Notes on an Unfinished Novel" later published in *Wormholes* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1998), 13.

[83] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Volume 2: Mythical Thought.* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), 36.

specifically in *A Maggot*. The reader is forced to reassemble events from multiple sources, to construct meaning from fragments just as Ayscough does, but the power of the novel, and the essence of the "monumental deity" that Rebecca Lee experiences in Dollings Cave, lies in the inherent inability to deconstruct the experience into explicable, coherent events.

Biographical Details and Critical Reception

As I have suggested above, Warburton's comment on the importance of the magus figure and the two nurturing women in the remote domain is an organizing feature of this study. The recurring pattern not only suggests a development in Fowles's thematic focus as the novels progress (as the pattern evolves and changes through the novels, such a development might be analyzed and described), but also, the source of the pattern itself is suggestive of Fowles's interest in the influence of the "life-world" on the creative process and the complex relationship between fiction and reality. In addition, the relationship between the known past and the future is another central concern of Fowles and is indicative of a more profound and overarching project that will constellate his work.

Without acceding to any notions of either a simplistic concept of intentionality or a reductive sense of autobiographical framing, I will examine Fowles's biographical information, (much of which has been made accessible via the recent publication of Fowles's personal journals in two volumes, 2003 and 2006 respectively, and the authorized biography of Fowles by Edith Warburton in 2004), along with a consideration of his other non-published writings and materials from the archives held by the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Austin, Texas, precisely where such material extends or complements my critical and theoretical analysis of the primary texts. A brief examination of Fowles's life is helpful in gaining a sense of how certain recurrent themes and patterns, other than the ones to which I have already alluded, intersperse his work.

Fowles was privately educated at Alleyn Court Preparatory School and Bedford School. After leaving school at eighteen in 1944, he joined an officers' training programme with the Royal Marines after which he was offered a regular

commission but chose instead to attend Oxford University. After being demobbed in December 1947, he enrolled at New College to read Modern Languages. He ultimately dropped German to concentrate exclusively on French, and as Warburton also notes, it was at Oxford that Fowles first experienced writers whose sensibilities were to echo his own work:

> [… the] courtly lyric poetry of the twelfth century […] the romances of Marie de France; […] the self-exploring essays of Montaigne in the Renaissance; the witty wordplay and psychological probing of seventeenth century masters such as Honoré d'Urfé[84] and the enigmatic Pensées of Pascal; […] the psychological realism of writers as diverse as Baudelaire, Flaubert, and Proust.[85]

Fowles would reflect in 1962 (just before the publication of his first novel) that he felt little connection to the English literary tradition and that "almost all the novelists, historical and modern, I admire most are French (although Jane Austen would top my list). I *feel* more influenced by writers like Gide and Camus, and even Laclos, than by any English writers"[86] (italics in original).

After graduating with a second class degree, Fowles accepted an appointment to teach English Language and English Literature at the University of Poitiers. Throughout his time at Oxford, Fowles had been a committed and prolific diarist, perhaps stimulated by his numerous bouts of illness (particularly amoebic dysentery), which often necessitated extended periods of hospitalization. These episodes of isolation and immobilization encouraged bouts of self-reflection, which ultimately became the first outpourings of his narrative imagination.

Of note during the period spent in Poitiers is an emergent interest in epiphanic experiences as reflected in this seemingly everyday observation of a migratory flock of birds:

> […I] felt profoundly that I was a link between two worlds. That I was standing … and listening to the wigeon whistling, belonging to a wilder, more mysterious world than anyone else in this whole city, that I understood faintly the ways and impulse that was hidden away out there in the night, that I was immeasurably privileged.[87]

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[84] It is interesting to note that Fowles's first protagonist is named Nicholas Urfe, who traces his putative lineage back to this seventeenth century master.

[85] Warburton, *John Fowles: A Life in Two Worlds*, 48.

[86] John Fowles, *The Journals Volume I*, ed. by Charles Drazin, (London, Jonathan Cape, 2003), 514.

[87] Warburton, *John Fowles: A Life in Two Worlds*, 77.

As I have already mentioned, sudden glimpses of a world that lies at the periphery of our consciousness occur frequently in Fowles's work and are often described in terms that suggest a Burkean sublimity as Fowles struggles to capture the complexity or evanescence of an experience. This impulse to interrogate and explore the extremes of our perceptions can be charted and exhibited in several of his novels, to which I have already alluded above. Nicholas Urfe's first experience of Greece illustrates such an extreme; his journey from London to Greece renders him not only alien to his surroundings but also to his own physical being. It is described as being "a journey into space […] my pale London hands […] seemed changed, nauseatingly alien, things I should long ago have disowned."[88] Similarly, Charles Smithson alone for the first time with Sarah Woodruff, describes the Undercliff, which defies topographical representation. It is a place where

> people have been lost […] for hours, and cannot believe, when they see on the map where they were lost, that their sense of isolation—and if the weather be bad, desolation—could have seemed so great.[89]

Here, Charles's own connection with his present seems irredeemably and mysteriously fractured:

> in those brief poised seconds above the waiting sea, in that luminous evening silence broken only by the waves' quiet wash, the whole Victorian Age was lost[90]

This emphasizes the power of both Sarah Woodruff and the Undercliff to exert some kind of uncanny or otherworldly force on Smithson. Similarly, when Charles catches a glimpse of his own familiar reflection in a mirror, the event is described in terms which evoke the uncanny. It is the Charles in "another world," in the mirror who "seemed the true self"[91] not the one in the room confronting Ernestina who seems like "an observed other." He has, in this glimpse of an alternative existence, effectively encountered himself, and it is this implied contiguity between possible realms of existence that the uncanny seems to inhabit.

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[88] *The Magus,* 49.

[89] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 61.

[90] Ibid., 62-63.

[91] Ibid., 330.

Charles's epiphany might invoke an awareness of what Freud describes as "the uncanny" [92] in his celebrated essay published in 1919. At the risk of oversimplifying Freud's concept, the uncanny might be summarized as our recognition of the point at which our confidence in scientific or empirical knowledge of the world is momentarily fractured or pierced, and we become aware of the (sometimes repressed) pre-scientific explanations for such feelings or events. Thus we confront a common, familiar occurrence as if it were unknown to us. In that momentary encounter, we acknowledge our fragility and our doubts. We experience a slippage – embracing, perhaps only fleetingly, that which cannot be explained by post-Enlightenment rationality. Freud recognizes what Fowles would later exploit in his work: that "fiction affords possibilities for a sense of the uncanny that would not be available in real life"[93].

After teaching in France for a year, Fowles's contract at the University of Poitiers was not renewed, and he applied for various jobs, finally accepting a position teaching English at the Anargyrios and Korgialenios School on the Greek island of Spetsai. Fowles's experiences in Greece would be the realization of a recurrent fantasy; a stumbling into a mysterious, hidden place—where one could escape from a life of absurdist mortality and one which contrasts on all levels with the surroundings to which one is accustomed.

Such a location, much like the hidden village in one of Fowles's favourite works, Alain Fournier's *Les Grandes Meaulnes*, offers a glimpse of an existence where quotidian societal norms, and even some natural laws—death, gravity, etc.,—seem to have no purchase, anticipating the magical realism of writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie. The influence of Greece, saturated with myth, mystery, and history, provided a fecund location in which Fowles could write. The importance of locations which seem other-worldly or uncontrolled (which include the Fowlesian domains of the Undercliff in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the remote Coëtminais in 'The Ebony Tower', Tsankawi and Thorncombe in *Daniel Martin*, and Dollings Cave in *A Maggot*) and their relative transformative and transcendent effects to which I have already alluded, will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

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[92] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

[93] Ibid., 157.

Whilst teaching on the Greek island of Spetsai, Fowles met his future wife, Elizabeth. At the time, she was married to his friend, Roy Christy, with whom she had a young daughter, Anna. Elizabeth's subsequent bitter divorce from Christy and her custody battle for Anna, together with Fowles and Elizabeth's subsequent tempestuous marriage, haunt the novelist's works. The writer's journal entries frequently allude to his turbulent marriage, which was punctuated with bouts of (his and Elizabeth's) depression and violent reactions to Elizabeth's inability to conceive his child (which vacillate between despair and relief). But the journal entries also exude his complete and utter dependence upon her. Fowles's female characters seem to reflect this ambivalence: they are mysterious, complex, and enigmatic, but inescapable and wholly indispensable to his male protagonists.

An analysis of Fowles's female characters is central to this study, and yet it is inherently problematic. The author has been described as a "chauvinist"[94] by William Palmer. Peter Conradi describes Fowles's self-professed feminism as "oddly complacent"[95] perhaps identifying the same paradox as Bruce Woodcock, who identifies a contradiction in Fowles's "progressive recognition that men must change [combined with] a nostalgic desire that women should do the job for them."[96] Pamela Cooper regards Fowles's female characters as "essentially passive […] objects of male desire or inspirational muse figures but not independently creative themselves."[97] In Jan Relf's 1985 interview with Fowles, the author disputes the charge levelled against him by "several" women writers that he was "the greatest block to intelligent feminism in the British novel"[98], restating that he

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[94] William J. Palmer, *The Fiction of John Fowles: Tradition, Art, and the Loneliness of Selfhood* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1974) 75.

[95] Peter Conradi, *John Fowles* (London: Methuen, 1982), 91.

[96] Bruce Woodcock, *Male Mythologies. John Fowles and Masculinity* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984), 15.

[97] The reference to Cooper's attack on Fowles's female characters is discussed in Dianne Vipond's 1995 interview with Fowles, "An Unholy Inquisition" (rpt in Wormholes), 381. Interestingly, Fowles accepts the reproach as justified, but adds that this is because "woman remains very largely a mystery to me." Additionally, he stresses the increasing importance of his female characters, stating that "If I ever do finish *Hellugalia*, the central character will be female."

[98] Jan Relf, "An Interview with John Fowles" *Conversations with John Fowles*, ed. Dianne Vipond, (University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 123.

believed himself to be a "feminist"[99]. He reiterates this point in a 1986 interview with Carlin Romano: "I know at heart I'm a feminist"[100].

Much of the hostile criticism leveled against Fowles stems from his voyeuristic sexual depiction of women, who are often victims of male violence. Miranda Grey in *The Collector* is kidnapped and sexually assaulted (perhaps raped) by Frederick Clegg; Urfe, in *The Magus*, watches an explicit pornographic film of Alison Kelly, the woman with whom he is romantically involved, as part of Conchis' metatheatre, and assaults her physically on two separate occasions; and Erato, in *Mantissa* (1982), appears in a bewildering succession of manifestations which tend towards clichéd male fantasies of geishas, schoolgirls, and masochistic nurses. Fowles also frequently creates female characters who appear to be polarized to such an extent regarding their respective sexual proclivities that they recall Sigmund Freud's "Madonna-Whore complex". This extreme bifurcation is often amplified and extended by Fowles's frequent representation of twins or sisters, one of whom is sexually adventurous and the other chaste, who are both cast variously in relationships with the male protagonist. For example: the seemingly repressed Julie/Lily and the sexually experienced June/Rose in *The Magus*; the sisters (sexually accessible) Nell and (seemingly cold) Jane in *Daniel Martin*; and (chaste Diana) the "Mouse" and (punk-like) "Freak" in 'The Ebony Tower.' Miranda Grey is viewed by Ferdinand Clegg as his perfect woman when she adheres to his vision of virginal "Madonna", but left to die from pneumonia when she, in his eyes, becomes the "whore" who tries to seduce him to secure her freedom. The enigmatic Sarah Woodruff appears to encapsulate both extremes of Madonna and Whore simultaneously, since she is a virgin before her single sexual encounter with Smithson, despite her reputation in Lyme as the French Lieutenant's whore. Similarly, Rebecca Lee (literally a whore recruited from a bordello) participates in the mysterious rite central to *A Maggot* during which she is adorned as the virginal May Queen in what appears to be an abortive attempt at a virgin sacrifice.

Rather than being symptomatic of an outright male chauvinism, instead, I will suggest that such an extreme bifurcation is a symptom of two elements of the male psyche which Fowles's work seeks to interrogate: first, it foregrounds the male

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Carlin Romano, "A Conversation with John Fowles" Ibid., 139.

protagonists' compulsion to label and to know—part of their "collector compulsion"—the urge to solve complexities in human emotions and behaviour by imposing artificial and ultimately reductive (or destructive in the case of Frederick Clegg) labels on women in a frantic attempt to understand them. Such collectors and "puzzle-solvers" abound in Fowles, and all are flawed in their initial outlooks. All are driven by a need to acquire knowledge, and as a result, they often resort to methods of understanding that are necessarily reductive. The quintessential and most literal collector is Clegg in the novel of that name, but other collectors include Nicholas Urfe in his tireless pursuit and categorization of women; Charles Smithson is an amateur palæontologist and follower of Linnaeus. Significantly, Linnaeus is described in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as "fossilizing the existent" and having an obsession with "classifying and naming [...] a fore-doomed attempt to stabilize and fix what is in reality a continuous flux."[101] As if to confirm the futility of such activity, we are reminded in the text that "Linnaeus himself finally went mad; he knew he was in a labyrinth, but not that it was one whose walls and passages were eternally changing."[102] David Williams is less a collector than a dissector of art (as opposed to an artist) in his role as an art critic, and Daniel Martin is a botanist who seeks out and names new varieties of orchids. Nicholas Urfe's response to the bewildering experiences on the island of Phraxos is a desperate, and characteristic, attempt by a collector or puzzle-solver to "decode" their meanings. However, he finally realizes that his ability to derive meaning from the masques is not the desired end-state of the metatheatre, and he comes to a sudden realization concerning how he has approached life in the past:

> That was the meaning of the fable. By searching so fanatically I was making a detective story out of the summer's events, and to view life as a detective story, as something that could be deduced, hunted, and arrested, was no more realistic (let alone poetic) than to view the detective story as the most important literary genre, instead of what it really was, one of the least.[103]

Secondly, the artificial polarization of women into "madonna" or "whore" is indicative of what Bruce Woodcock characterises as a "Victorian middle-class

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[101] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 47.

[102] Ibid.

[103] *The Magus*, 552.

man's misreading of women"[104]. Such a misreading, Woodcock explains, occurred when Victorian men, in response to a worrying emergent feminine emancipation, felt compelled to keep women in their place.

> Victorian patriarchy produced its own versions of those archetypes common to male-dominated societies, the Madonna-magdalen syndrome, as part of its social control. […] For Victorian women this involved living up to male imagery that both condoned and condemned their sex, the redemptive domestic angel and the outcast harlot.[105]

As a Victorian phenomenon, it is not surprising that the "madonna-magdalen" syndrome appears writ large in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, but this syndrome is not confined to one novel. Woodcock suggests convincingly that this novel charts the male anxiety of the late 1960s at a "newly-emergent female autonomy"[106] rather than one born a century earlier. Fowles himself noted the origins of the twentieth century as being "roughly between 1850 and 1870"[107], contemporaneous with the setting of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. This might explain why a writer of Fowles's generation, so close to and informed by the Victorian age, would be so influenced by its extreme gender stereotyping. Fowles's numerous depictions of madonna-magdalens in his novels are, as Woodcock suggests, indicative of the writer's own attempts to deal with his own male anxiety. Therefore, as Woodcock posits, much of the criticism leveled at Fowles's allegedly dubious feminism could be countered by an acknowledgment that Fowles's novels are, in part, a deconstruction and interrogation of "masculinity […] the myths that contemporary men impose on themselves in their perpetuation of power [which] have a historical root in the legacy of Victorian England."[108]

Such a view is supported by Fowles's text. Nicholas Urfe and Daniel Martin, both of whom closely resemble Fowles in age, education, and worldview, putatively recollect past events (which include failed relationships and a divorce) and acknowledge that their past behavior is culpable. The tone of their respective

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[104] Woodcock, *Male Mythologies. John Fowles and Masculinity*, 82.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 11.

narratives implies a condemnation of their past behaviour, it can be deduced that they are somewhat reformed. The novels examine and expose male mythologies (Urfe's promiscuity, voyeurism, and callous disregard for the feelings of others, Martin's obsession with personal advancement at the expense of meaningful relationships), foregrounding the destruction and misery such mythologies perpetuate both for the protagonist and for their unfortunate partners.

The male is the focus for critique and reeducation, surely suggesting that Fowles's feminism is not, as Conradi suggests, "complacent" but instead an authentic rendition of a reality grounded in Fowles's recognition of his own flawed and destructive male mythologies. Fowles knows his male protagonists must change, and most of them do. Indeed, none of his male characters is sympathetic from the beginning of the novel, with the exception of Charles Smithson, clearly the most attractive of his male characters, which perhaps explains this novel's commercial success.

My investigation of Fowles's approach to gender politics, particularly in the so-called "second wave" of feminism that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, will be additionally informed by feminist writers such as Mary Daly. In *Gyn/Ecology, The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978), Daly reclaims the matriarchal mythology from the suppressive force of Christianity and other male institutions, and articulates the inherent power in the female as distinct from that of the male. This offers an alternative interpretation of feminism to those who sought to erase the distinction between the male and female natures. Fowles elevates the power and mystery of the female as distinct from the male. This is also an element of Fowles's focus on the power of the matriarchal myth whose influence has been eroded by a powerful and fearful patriarchal society, which has attempted to undermine the importance of the maternal and the feminine. Equally this context manifests itself in the power of the female Muse, and the superiority of mythic and intuitive thought (associated by Fowles with the feminine) over the scientific and the empirical (associated with the male). Again, I hope to show the intensification of this interest as the novels progress, specifically the increasing influence and autonomy with which these female characters are imbued (despite oppressive patriarchal societal impediments) and the degree to which they affect the lives of their relative male protagonists.

Fowles's feminism, like many aspects of the author, is complex. However, one cannot dispute his support for female writers. He translated *Ourika*[109]*,* a 1823 novel by Claire de Duras, originally published anonymously, thus promoting the work of a neglected female writer, and he also translated Marie de France's 12th century work, *Eliduc,* including it in *The Ebony Tower*. Interestingly, he would also attribute his abilities as a novelist to his being "a sort of chameleon genderwise. I am a novelist because I am partly a woman, a little lost in mid-air between the genders… I certainly think that most novelists are a result of not being clearly typed sexually."[110] Such gender instability is also evident in his original conception of Conchis as a woman, which was changed because of certain "technical difficulties."[111] It is also interesting that in an interview following the publication of *A Maggot*, Fowles indicated his interest in another central female protagonist, this time inspired by the "diary of a lady who was a militant suffragette in 1906."[112] Unfortunately, there is little evidence that any substantive work was completed on this novel.

In An Introduction to Metaphysics , Henri Bergson, a philosopher closely associated with the modernists, suggests that to interpret the complexity of reality, the intellect reduces reality's inherent fluidity and state of becoming. Bergson characterizes the real as "variability itself" while the analyzed form of reality is, he states, invariable, "a simplified reconstruction, often a mere symbol, in any case a motionless view of the moving reality."[113] Fowles's male protagonists' flawed attempts to apprehend and articulate the complexity of their realities, including the imposition of artificial, bifurcating labels on various female characters, might be

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[109] Claire de Duras, *Ourika,* translated by John Fowles (Modern Language Association of America, 1994).

[110] Dianne L. Viapond "An Unholy Inquisition," *Conversations with John Fowles*, 200.

[111] John Fowles, "Notes on an Unfinished Novel," Republished in *Wormholes,* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc.,1998), 23.

[112] Hilary DeVries, "Searching for a Moral Perspective. John Fowles scans past for that which he can't find in the 'amoral' present." *The Christian Science Monitor*, Tuesday October 8, 1985, 23-24. There is no indication in the archives that any substantive work was begun on the novel.

[113] Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by T. E. Hulme, (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 42.

described by Bergson as "simplified reconstructions"[114]. For Bergson, metaphysics or philosophy attempts to dispense with symbols and to grasp the inner reality of things by intuition: a non-conceptual, empathetic seeing-into. Intuitive knowledge, which I will compare to Fowles mythopoeic representation of reality, "installs itself in that which is moving and adopts the very life of things."[115]

Such behaviour is seen in (female) characters like Sarah Woodruff, who possesses a chameleon-like ability to adopt and adapt to whatever external or psychological forces she encounters. Her knowing is intuitive, all-embracing, and internal rather than restrictive and analytically reductive. She knows how to win over Mrs Poultney by selecting appropriate passages from the Bible to read aloud which subtly expose and pierce that lady's hypocrisy and cruelty. Similarly she knows and exploits Charles Smithson's weaknesses, and ultimately she secures a position with Dante Gabriel Rossetti as an artist's model. She knows that existence "beyond the pale" frees her from the strictures that would impede other women of her class and station. So, she adopts the mantle of "fallen woman," perpetuating the myth of her affair with the French lieutenant. To exacerbate this fall, rendering her more mysterious and alluring to Smithson, she must facilitate her dispatch from the employ of Mrs Poultney's which she does by walking in "forbidden" areas. Finally, she appeals to Smithson's own suppressed sexual desires and overwhelming need to solve her enigmatic mystery by feigning injury so that she and Smithson might be alone in her bedroom at the Endicotte hotel. Sarah is a reader of fiction and poetry, and as a result "judged people as much by the standards of Walter Scott and Jane Austen as by any empirically arrived at."[116] Smithson by contrast is "pure intellect, walking awake, free as a god with the unslumbering stars and understanding all."[117] Her knowledge can be contrasted with Smithson who knows only how to analyze, label, and dissect knowledge, which is inert. He fails to see broader connections, anticipate the political and social shifts that will make his kind extinct, predict

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[114] Ibid., 42.

[115] Ibid., 5.

[116] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 50.

[117] Ibid., 42.

Sam's betrayal (choosing upward mobility over employer loyalty), or recognize that Sarah is not a puzzle to be solved or married.

Similarly, in *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge* (1945), Georges Bataille characterizes scientific knowledge, the kind of knowing I have associated here with Smithson but which is common among all Fowles's male collectors and puzzle-solvers, as a form of knowing which is necessarily reductive.

> Scientific work is more than servile, crippled. The needs to which it responds are foreign to knowledge. They are:
> The curiosity of those who do crossword puzzles … scientific truths fundamentally only have value when *new* …;
> The needs of the collector (to accumulate and organize curiosities):
> Love of work, intense output;
> The taste for a rigorous honesty;
> The worries of an academic (career, honour, money)….
> Science is practiced by men in whom the desire to know is dead.[118]

Bataille differentiates this system of knowledge, characterized by a nullifying distillation of reality to a static decay, with the possibilities offered by a system of "nonknowledge" which thrives when "we give up the will to know… [and] have the possibility of touching the world with a much greater intensity."[119]   Similarly, Fowles contrasts this kind of reductive and simplistic knowledge with what I will call "mythopoeic knowing" which suggests a less restrictive, more intuitive knowing: one that is less associated with solving puzzles and pinning meaning in the manner of a collector, and more directed to the "whole sight" to which Daniel Martin aspires.

Key Works of Criticism

Numerous key works of literary criticism have responded to the author's work, a summary of which, including the key areas this study hopes to augment or extend, is provided below. The first monograph on Fowles, William Palmer's *The Fiction of John Fowles: Tradition, Art, and the Loneliness of Selfhood* (1974), focuses on the theme of art and the existential quest for authenticity traced in Fowles's

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[118] Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) 82.

[119] Ibid., 115.

characters. Subsequent works return to the issue of existentialism and the balance between male and female principles (for example, Peter Wolfe's *John Fowles, Magus and Moralist*, 1976). Barry Olshen's 1978 monograph concentrates on the stylistic variety of Fowles's work despite a consistency of thought and theme. The 1980s see a flurry of interest in Fowles's fiction, with monographs from Peter Conradi[120], who turns his attention to Fowles's adoption and violation of genre conventions; and Bruce Woodcock, whose seminal work, *Mythologies: John Fowles and Masculinity (*1984) to which I have already alluded in this chapter, is the first to reconsider Fowles's fiction in the context of contemporary sexual politics, offering a contextualized examination of Fowles's feminism. This latter work is informed by a consideration of the author's own "especially rigid" masculinity and his concept of male power which, both Fowles and Woodcock agree, was partly a result of his exposure to "public school […] and military service."[121] This work helpfully counters attacks on Fowles's much maligned feminism, reminding readers that part of Fowles's artistic project was an often uncomfortable, frequently contradictory, consideration of "the appalling crust of masculinity"[122] in contemporary England from the 1950s onward.

  Katherine Tarbox's work, *The Art of John Fowles* (1988), returns to an examination of identity, metamorphosis, and the "survival of individual freedom". Of particular relevance to this study is Carol Barnum's detailed examination of Fowles's use of myth and archetype in her 1988 work, *The Fiction of John Fowles: A Myth for Our Time*, in which she concludes that:

> Fowles stands firmly in the tradition of "the mythical method" which Eliot describes: one that combines psychology, ethnology, and myth to give shape to modern experience and provide man with guidelines for living life in the wasteland. In pursuing this method Fowles is not an imitator, for he charts new paths in the novel by combining the ancient tradition of the mythic quest with the modern discovery of the archetypes that Carl Jung catalogued in this century. The combination of the two provides the quester with the vital connection to the energy that once came from the re-enactment of ritual but which ceased to come from such a source when man lost

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[120] Peter Conradi. *John Fowles* (New York: Methuen, 1982).

[121] Woodcock, *Male Mythologies. John Fowles and the Masculinity Myth*, 11.

[122] Ibid., 11.

his relationship to the meaning of the ritual. Now energy comes to the quester once more through his encounter with the archetypes.[123]

Although I agree with Barnum that myth and archetype occupy a central position in Fowles's work, I suggest that rather than being "firmly in the tradition of 'the mythical method'" as Barnum suggests, instead Fowles's use of myth and mythopoeia is a radical departure from Eliot's conception of the method. I will not preempt my argument here, but briefly, I will suggest that Fowles's use of the mythic and the mythopoeic is used not as a means to "shape to modern experience and provide man with guidelines for living life in the wasteland" as Barnum contends, but instead he uses myth as a means to subvert the expectations of the novel form, to extend the human realm beyond that which can be easily described, and as a means to draw attention to events that are in excess of the language available, thus emphasizing the historically contextual nature of all accounts of externality. Thus, Fowles does not use Barnum's (T.S. Eliot's) 'mythic method' as a way of "controlling" or "ordering" the anarchy of contemporary history; rather, he uses the mythic as a method of augmenting a potentially reductive, denotative, narrative process and thus imbuing it with a connotative richness. In works written with a mythopoeic rather than a mythic sensibility, as seen in the works of Fowles, old stories are *transformed*: no longer metaphoric but *metonymic*--not as in *Ulysses;* similar to the Homeric original, but transformed. Characters in Fowles's novels enter a magic realm (like Alain-Fournier's mentioned earlier in this chapter) that is somehow contiguous with the real world; where what is apparently the same can be radically different.

Interest in Fowles's work continued in the 1990s and beyond, despite no further publication of fiction after *A Maggot*. Of particular interest to this study is Pamela Cooper's *Fictions of John Fowles: Power, Creativity, Femininity* (1991), one of the more hostile feminist investigations of the novelist, in which Cooper suggests that creativity (for Fowles):

> […] requires a consistently maintained association between the feminine and the inarticulate. In the physical sexuality of woman, her inhibited or reduced creative capacity, and her separation from language, the artist finds the inspiration and sign of his own power. [His female characters possess a] passive power, a suggestive

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[123] Carol M. Barnum, *The Fiction of John Fowles: A Myth for Our Time* (Greenwood, FL: The Penkevill Publishing Company, 1988), 147.

contradiction in terms […] constantly at the service of the shaping, defining capacities of the male artist.[124]

Although I agree with Cooper's overall assessment of the relationship between Fowles's male and female characters as suggestive of a hierarchical master/slave arrangement reflected in an active/passive dynamic, as I have already intimated above, I believe that the reality of this correlation is more nuanced than such a strident binary classification suggests. Indeed, at the heart of much of Fowles's writing is the proposition that this kind of cataloging of relationships, which presupposes that such bifurcation is even possible, is reductive and does little to reflect the complexity and multifaceted nature of reality particularly as it pertains to human relationships. On the contrary, Fowles often sets out to deliberately undermine such a proposition. As I have intimated above, Fowles often personifies a pattern of binary opposites in his female characters, only to thwart our expectations of an individual's behaviour.

As Cooper states, Sarah becomes the artist's model for the putative Rossetti in one of the three endings of *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* which might suggest that she is satisfied with a passive role in another artist's creative process. However, I will suggest that this analysis overlooks the significance of Sarah's own startling autonomy, the advancement of which she has secured by engineering her "seduction" and impregnation by Charles Smithson, and her subsequent flight to London where she secures a position with the Rossetti household. On numerous occasions in the novel, the putative narrator/author's interjections suggest that Sarah acts in defiance even of his own will, challenging his intentions to "pull the right strings [so that] his puppets will behave in a lifelike manner"[125]. Sarah's power manifests itself in ways that are more sophisticated than Cooper's allusion to traditional power dynamics might suggest.

James R. Aubrey's *John Fowles: A Reference Companion* (1991) is significant because it is the first work to consider all of Fowles's writing, not just his fiction. It examines lesser-known nonfiction work by genre: philosophy, autobiography, biography, translations, book reviews, literary and visual-art criticism, history, and

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[124] Pamela Cooper, *Fictions of John Fowles: Power, Creativity, Femininity* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1991), 12-21.

[125] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 85.

social commentary. Mahmoud Salami's 1992 work, *John Fowles's Fiction and the Poetics of Postmodernism,* rather startlingly identifies all of Fowles's novels as postmodern, stating that, "this is the literary movement within which Fowles's novels must be placed and against which his narrative techniques must be analyzed since he traverses the narrative space between modernism and postmodernism."[126] As I have mentioned, this has been the predominant literary category for the author, despite his own misgivings regarding such a definitive label. Similarly, the novelist also merits a chapter in Bertens and Natoli's *Postmodernism. The Key Figures* and multiple entries in both Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* and Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction*. Rather misleadingly, the references in all three works are confined almost exclusively to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Adding to the rather confused nature of Fowles's literary classification, the author's style has also been described variously, and somewhat contradictorily, as "[a] continuation of the 'great tradition' in English fiction"[127] by John B. Humma, "fundamentally traditional," but also "modern,"[128] by Ackbar Abbas, and "experimentalist," and "postmodern"[129] by James Campbell. In Campbell's interview, the latter referred to Fowles as an "innovator" and "traditional" within the space of three questions, and when asked to explain this contradiction, Campbell replied ambiguously and somewhat unconvincingly that he meant that Fowles was "an innovator in a traditional vein." Such recurrent contradiction would suggest that this kind of categorization has little validity. More interesting is the belief that Fowles's writing actually evades and resists labeling, which is, I believe, partly due to the writer's own complex and paradoxical nature and especially given the radical and innovative nature of his work. Therefore, rather than attempting to identify or refute postmodern allegiances in his writing, I seek to restore its synthesis of experiential and innovative energies misread by

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[126] Mahmoud Salami, *John Fowles's Fiction and the Poetics of Postmodernism*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1992), 23.

[127] John B. Humma, "James and Fowles: Tradition and Influence", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 54 (1984) 2.

[128] Ackbar Abbas, "Walter Benjamin's Collector: The Fate of Modern Experience," *Critical Reconsiderations*, Autumn (1988), 217-237.

[129] James Campbell ,"An Interview with John Fowles", *Contemporary Literature*, 17 (1976), 455-469.

many critics. Whilst not abjuring postmodernism completely, I will suggest that Fowles has other possibilities, dispositions, and emphases that also have purchase in such a study, and which might account for Fowles's perceived experimentation and postmodern tendencies in a way that is less reductive and contrived.

Organization of Subsequent Analysis

Because Fowles's first five novels display significant similarities, while the final two novels appear to deviate from previously established patterns and themes, it seemed logical to consider Fowles's works chronologically, which itself suggested certain phases and groupings of texts. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will focus upon the novels published in the 1960s: *The Magus, The Collector,* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The two subsequent chapters will examine the novels of the 1970s: *The Ebony Tower* and *Daniel Martin*, and the works of the 1980s: *Mantissa* (1982) and *A Maggot* (1985).

Chapter two, in which I will examine Fowles's first three novels, will focus on Fowles's reinvigoration of the novel form and his attempt to reconnect the reader (and his characters) with reality. In these first three novels, Fowles seems to employee traditional mimetic realism and familiar patterning, including mythic elements, archetypes, and genre conventions, only to re-present them in unusual or even startling ways.

In the third chapter, which focuses on Fowles's novels of the 1970s, I will suggest that these works reach the pinnacle of the project begun in the previous decade, exploring the extremes of the novel form, from the short stories and novella which comprise *The Ebony Tower* to the overtly autobiographical and almost encyclopedic range of *Daniel Martin.*

In the fourth chapter, "Culmination and Resolution" dealing with Fowles's final two novels, *Mantissa* and *A Maggot*, I will chart the new direction that Fowles followed in his final published literary works. *Mantissa* seems to directly undermine and challenge his previous elevation of the creative process in a crassly materialistic rendition of the relationship between an author and his muse. The ineptness of the putative author, Miles Green might suggest that to take such a complex and mysterious process for granted, as Green seems to do, might risk the

continuance of any further creative inspiration. Finally, in *A Maggot*, I will suggest Fowles produces his most experimental and interesting work, one that takes for its subject the making of meaning and mythopoeia; one that begins with a consideration of the source of inspiration and culminates in the evolution of a new religion, and which is centered upon meaning- making within a specific historical context.

After his death in 2005, there has been relatively little acknowledgment of the significance of the writer's work, or of his contribution to the British novel. Moreover, as Fowles himself noted, his work was received more enthusiastically and regarded more highly outside of his native England. It is telling that a proposal to nominate him for the 1999 Nobel Prize for Literature[130] was written by Professor Susana Onega Jaén and co-signed by four of her Spanish colleagues. It is my hope that this study might engender a greater appreciation of Fowles's contribution to British Fiction. As such, this study hopes to illustrate the degree to which Fowles's novels respond to the demands of a rapidly changing, complex society, avoiding the potential pitfalls of nihilism that lay before contemporary writers. In Fowles's novels, there is no wringing of hands exclaiming that the relationship between signifier and signified is to blame for the inability of the writer to communicate experiential realism. Instead, Fowles explores the following broad features among others: deferred meaning, that is the refusal to close interpretation of an event or experience, such as a closed ending to a novel; a focus on existential freedom both as a theme of the novel but also in terms of appearing to give his characters such freedoms despite the tyrannies of omniscience; the recurrence of representational art as a metaphor for the scientific, closed system of conveying reality; the need for history to include the heteroglossia of alternative interpretations and experiences; and, further the elevation of mythopoeia as a means of relating experiential realism in fiction. The mythopoeic, I suggest, offers the ultimate deferred meaning. It is an open system, is non-scientific, and is a manner of communicative understanding that arguably even pre-dates language. For Fowles, capturing and relating experience in a manner that is understandable, coherent and open to the interpretation of the reader is the ultimate prize. Fowles does not want to pin one

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[130] The letter containing the proposal is held at the Harry Ransom Centre for the Humanities in Austin, Texas, in the Ray Roberts Collection (Box 15, folder 3). In 1999, the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Günter Grass.

meaning to an event; to convey such a meaning in relation to a singular occurrence removes its mystery and its life. Fowles conveys this through the figurative and symbolic significance of the title of *The Collector* and its major themes. This is precisely what Clegg does as he captures and pins his butterflies as concrete representations of particular memories in his life, something he attempts to extend to the human realm. It is what the lawyer, Ayscough, does in *A Maggot* where his literal, scientific interpretation of the metaphoric "maggot", denying the mystery of the event, reduces it to an empty lie. When meaning is pinned it dies like Miranda in the stifling cellar of a closed system, devoid of imagination and mystery.

Fowles's dedication to the novel form and the written word endures. In an article in for the *New York Times*, Fowles explained his view of the novel explaining that the word "novel" has particular associations which inform his ambitions and hopes for the form and which may help to explain the variety and range of genres (mystery, thriller, detective, romance, sci-fi, etc.) with which he experiments during his career:

> The word 'novel' suggests a story never heard before or some view of life never examined before. That's one reason why I like to change approaches and styles. It's still my ambition to write one book in every imaginable genre.[131]

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[131] Mel Gussow. "For Fowles, Novel Mostly Means New." *New York Times*, November 27, 1974, 24.

CHAPTER 2 — EXPLORATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

During Fowles's first phase, which I have characterized as being one of exploration and experimentation, he establishes the locus of certain aesthetic and conceptual interests relative to the novel form. Specifically, he examines how through the novel form one can apprehend reality and yet paradoxically how the traditional conventions of narrative realism both support and detract from this possibility. Fowles's novels of the 1960s, particularly *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, have generally been described as experimental and postmodern. Specifically, the novel is cited as a paradigmatic postmodern text in Linda Hutcheon's, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, Christian Gutleben's *Nostalgic Postmodernism* (2001), and Alison Lee's *Realism and Power: Postmodern British Fiction* (1990). Referring to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Neary describes Fowles as "a postmodernist, metafictional experimenter."[132] However, I will suggest that this experimentation is more the result of Fowles's interrogation of traditional realism and less the result of any overt, self-conscious attempts at an avant-garde or deconstructivist or postmodern aesthetic, although there are at least implicitly certain reflexive elements.

In an interview with Katherine Tarbox, Fowles rejected the view "that all good resides in being experimental" asserting instead "that belief now seems thoroughly provincial to me. I should have thought the interest now is how you can restructure traditional modes."[133] The focus of this chapter, therefore, will be the identification and discussion of Fowles's restructuring of such traditional modes of realism.

In this chapter I will also investigate the prevalent triadic combination of characters (one "magus" figure plus two women), which, as I suggested in chapter one, implies an affinity with what Kermode described as "paleomodernism". The recurring triadic combination of characters, a dominant influence in Fowles's own past, will be examined as an example of a "return," (a characteristic of paleomodernism as defined by Kermode). I will consider the theme of return as

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[132] John M. Neary. *Something and Nothingness: The Fiction of John Updike & John Fowles* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 3.

[133] Katherine Tarbox. *The Art of John Fowles* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1988),179.

evidence of the novels' engagement with, and extension of, the characteristics of paleomodernism.

Another recurring consideration in Fowles's novels of this first decade is his examination of multiple art forms, not just the novel, as vehicles for apprehending reality. These include other non-fictional forms of representing reality such as historical documentation. Fowles is concerned with not just genre distinctions, but with the capacity of each in allowing an apprehension of the concrete and the lived experience that cannot of course be truly and completely recreated. Another area of interest, associated with the first, is Fowles's consideration of the imaginative process itself; the means by which ideas coalesce into narrative, precisely how apprehending subjects in the world becomes a work of fiction, and the act of writing. Fowles compares this process to the historical re-enactments by Conchis in that each has a capacity to convey something of both the present and the past. Fowles is increasingly preoccupied with the precise nature and process of conceiving and writing a novel, and thus he often encourages the reader to confront traditional narrative conventions and examine their ramifications. His overturning of Conchis' conceits run parallel to an invitation to subvert his own literary engagement, but in each case the ambition conveys something beyond the unmasking, further than simply a rejection of mimesis as artificial.

Such confrontations of conventional attitudes and expectations (or artistic norms) on the part of the author are often given a parallel structure in the plot of the novel; specifically, the (male) protagonist will often find himself in an environment where previous quotidian norms are invalid. As a result, he too must attempt to examine the reality behind the surface appearance, and after so doing, re-evaluate social expectations. The departure from traditional realistic narrative convention, which accompanies an examination (and ultimately a rejection) of quotidian norms, is most explicit and therefore apparent in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (which *seems* to adhere to the traditions of Victorian classic realism, the zenith of realistic narrative fiction). The departure from convention is the least apparent in *The Collector*, suggesting a conscious shift in Fowles's interest in evolving British fiction by increasingly and progressively challenging the conventions of traditional fiction with each subsequent novel.

Fowles's examination of the creative process manifests itself in the increasing level of metafictionality in this first period, with multiple references to the means by which the

novel is created, a reflexivity. *The Magus* is a fictional autobiographical novel written by the protagonist recalling his experiences on a Greek Island, which, of course, mirrors Fowles's own past, and *The Collector* comprises the diary of an imprisoned woman that is both prefaced and followed by the words of her captor. The dramatic extreme of this process appears in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, when the novelist effectively shatters the reader's suspension of disbelief (by announcing that the events described are, of course, figments of his imagination) and then again by the novelist appearing as a character in the novel. Interestingly, Fowles does this several times, at crucial points, thereby increasing the tension of the plot, so the genre expectations are not deconstructed in any overarching fashion, but quite specifically. The reader wonders whether the narrative will continue or not be resolved at all.

Significantly, Fowles's focus on the restructuring of traditional modes of narrative and his attempt to affect a more authentic representation of reality is accompanied by the evolution of his female characters, whose role, specifically in the journey of the male protagonist, is a central and recurrent theme. The conventions of the novel form are subverted in other subtle ways, for instance, by challenging the genre's tendency to have a masculine hero, the rational and enlightened figure of male writing in the naturalist era. In a parodic way, Fowles's male protagonists represent the status quo: the world as it is, the traditional approach to creativity, and an adherence to social norms and conventions. His female characters, in contrast, apprehend the mythopoeic, rendering them susceptible to intuitive and counter-rational qualities in the ontological process. And yet in many senses there is a logical core, a wish to liberate themselves from masculine constraints.

As Fowles is more drawn to evolving new forms of realism, he simultaneously and recurrently depicts a tendency in his female characters, which is beyond or beneath accepted, traditionally inclined social conventions, as if penetrating the banality of the topographic surface of a realist text, shattering both forms of convention. Increasingly, Fowles associates this power with the mysterious, the innate, the intuitive. Not only are Fowles's female characters mysterious, they are also far more comfortable with an enigmatic understanding of themselves and the world than their male counterparts.

Mythopoeic realism, a realism not based in the realm of mimetic verisimilitude or scientific observation and labelling, but on a richer and more elusive apprehension of reality, is the means by which Fowles attempts to capture an increasingly

complex reality that demands a different approach from traditional realistic narrative to facilitate its apprehension. The mythopoeic is inextricably linked with storytelling, the origins of language, and creativity (all of which will be investigated in this chapter). Fowles's female characters are more able to apprehend a reality that lies beyond surface quotidian norms because they are more aligned with the mythopoeic: privileging the intuitive over the scientific, and are therefore more receptive to possibilities beyond the status quo.

Fowles's female characters are also more closely associated with myth: in terms of their names, their descriptions, and their "powers", which are often described in terms of the supernatural. Sarah Woodruff, when she first appears in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, is described as a "figure from myth," [134] as "Calypso,"[135] as an anachronism with the mysterious power to analyze the worth of a person just by looking at them, as if she had "a computer in her heart"[136] and also, as I have already discussed, as a "Sphinx." Similarly, in *The Magus,* Alison is described in ways that suggest her qualities are mythical, enigmatic, almost beyond language. She is a "human oxymoron,"[137] "innocent-corrupt, coarse-fine, an expert novice,"[138] "ambiguous" and "unpredictable."[139] Both Sarah and Alison are complicit in drawing their respective male protagonists into the god-game, and in this sense, and in the sense that they fabricate elements of their own stories, they are also powerful "myth-makers." Specifically, Sarah fabricates the story of her entanglement with the French lieutenant and facilitates her seduction of Smithson using a series of elaborate hoaxes, and Alison conspires with Conchis to bring Urfe to Bourani and fakes her own suicide as part of the unravelling of Urfe's inauthentic persona.

I will trace the evolution of the seemingly peripheral and underdeveloped female characters in *The Magus* as they evolve through the potentially self-actualized Miranda Grey (in *The Collector*), to the mysterious and powerful (yet

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[134] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 5.

[135] Ibid., 125.

[136] Ibid., 50.

[137] *The Magus*, 24.

[138] Ibid., 28.

[139] Ibid., 32.

almost voiceless) Sarah Woodruff, the eponymous heroine of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In tracing this evolution, I will also indicate parallels between Fowles's growing recognition of the power innate in the feminine apprehension of reality, increasing reference to the mythopoeic, and an increasing interest in the possibilities of the mythopoeic (female) response to contemporary reality.

Fowles's male characters are more comfortable with solving mysteries than with inhabiting them. The power with which Fowles's female characters are imbued, that which empowers them to inhabit and co-exist with mystery, also manifests itself in an ability to transform and engage in a dialectical process, and additionally in moving their own existence from the immediate and conceivable to the realms of the apparently impossible and the intangible. As I alluded in the previous chapter, Georges Bataille's categorization of scientific (restrictive, reductive) knowledge contrasted with that of alternative systems of (non) knowledge seems to parallel Fowles's delineation between his male and female characters' reactions to mystery and ambiguity. Bataille contrasts this system of knowledge, characterized by a nullifying distillation of reality to a static decay, with the possibilities offered by a system of "nonknowledge", which may occur when "we give up the will to know… [and] have the possibility of touching the world with a much greater intensity."[140] In this chapter, I will attempt to show that this is exactly what Fowles's female characters accomplish: they touch the world with a "much greater intensity" than their male counterparts because of their ability to see beyond the status quo. Interestingly, this tendency intensifies as his novels progress. From Alison Kelly's rather tentative and mediated interventions (aided by Conchis) in Urfe's evolution, there is a palpable change in Miranda Grey's increasingly strident attempts to change Frederick Clegg. Subsequently, Miranda's enigmatic complexity is completely eclipsed by Sarah Woodruff, who not only creates her own myth, but uses it to seduce Charles, bringing him to his own realisation regarding the banality of his present existence.

In the following close readings of *The Magus*, *The Collector*, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, I wish to illustrate within Fowles's exploration of the conventions of realism in British fiction, in terms of reconfiguring reality as depicted, and the role of women in changing perception in their male counterparts

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[140] Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 115.

relative to their own looser, potentially more radical perceptions of reality. Such female perception moves from a surface apprehension (associated with traditional realism) to a disturbance of that plane by a transcendent, complex and more authentic sense of the interrelations between subjects and things.

The Magus

The Magus is a creative blueprint for all of Fowles's subsequent work, presenting the major recurring theme and vehicle for all of his novels: namely, the single, white, educated, middle class male's quest for authenticity and meaning after leading a hitherto unimpressive, wasteful, and narcissistic life, and hence one that is detached from the reality of engagement, of intersubjective awareness and any notion of the externality of truth. Essentially these male protagonists' lives have been characterized by inauthenticity, which must be displaced by a sense of authenticity, as discussed below. However, one must stress that Fowles's critique and tentative resolution is narratival, formal in a sense. Implicitly, the subsequent regeneration of the central male character can be read as a metaphor for the regeneration of the novel form; both must evolve to survive, and both must change in the way they perceive events that occur around them in order to be authentic. The novel establishes a link between the storytelling impulse (and implicitly the author) and the "creation" of reality, and between the events in the novel, the "godgame", and the movement towards a perception of a "really" real by a more authentic protagonist.

It is germane here to expand upon some of the terminology associated with existential philosophy, since existential authenticity underpins the journey of both of Fowles's central male characters in *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and, I suggest, it also underpins the journey of Miranda Grey in *The Collector*. Its theories greatly interested Fowles, a Francophile, who writes in 'A Modern Writer's France.' *Studies in Anglo-French Cultural Relations* (1988) that he would "happily claim to have been deeply formed by France and its culture."[141]

The overarching appeal of existentialism for Fowles, and its relevance to this discussion of a mythopoeic realism, is the existentialist's recognition that there is a large element of life that does not conform to any logical flow of argument, that to

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[141] John Fowles. 'A Modern Writer's France.' *Studies in Anglo-French Cultural Relations*. (Ceri Crossley and Ian Small. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988). Rpt in Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings, 43-55.

fully comprehend and live life to its fullest, one may have to move beyond that which is rational and immediately explicable.

Existential philosophy may be seen in part as a reaction against the positivist preference for limiting the knowable to what can be quantified or known by sense experience or rationalizing perception. By attempting to inject the knowing, personal subject into scientific explorations of phenomenon (for example, space and time), the existentialists add a qualitative, human dimension to these phenomena. At the heart of existentialist philosophy is an examination of 'objective' and 'subjective' reflection. Although objective reflection leads to the objective truth, it also disregards the subject. Indeed, objective, scientific truth is defined and validated by the fact that it disregards the subjective. As Kierkegaard observed, "The way of objective reflection leads to abstract thought, to mathematics, to historical knowledge of different kinds; and always it leads away from the subject, whose existence or non-existence, and rightly so, becomes infinitely indifferent."[142] Traditional mimetic realism has more in common with this apparently objective perception of reality; i.e., the experience of reality from an empirical, positivist perspective depicted by following an accepted series of narratological conventions and a shared understanding of what can be known and described. By contrast, the mythopoeic world-view is predicated on a more symbolic order rather than that of the scientific, objective notion of reality, and the former is essentially in at least an implicit fashion intersubjective.

In addition to this central concept of the opposition of objective and subjective reflection, five central themes[143] may be isolated that occur in existentialism, all of which are integral to Fowles's exploration of the individual's move towards authenticity and the apprehension of the profoundly ontological, or the "really" real. This "really" real moves beyond the mediation and conventions of literary realism, challenging assumptions and reorganizing experience. Robert Eaglestone observes a similar attempt to move towards such a "really" real in Angela Carter's work, which Carter herself describes as

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[142] Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Third Edition edn, trans. by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 173.

[143] Thomas Flynn, *Existentialism. A Very Short Introduction.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 8.

> a means of expression for an infinitely greater variety of experience than has been possible heretofore, to say things for which no language previously existed… transforming actual fictional forms to both reflect and to precipitate changes in the way people feel about themselves—putting new wine in old bottles, and, in some cases, old wine in new bottles. [144]

The first of the five themes of existentialism relevant to Fowles's work is that existence precedes essence; that one's choices as an individual determine the person rather than any other *a priori* elements. This observation is counter to the modernist decentring of the (Kantian) universal subject; the insistence that a universal subject is impossible because of discoveries by Marx (all individuals are the construct of social and economic forces), Freud (individual personalities are formed by experiences), and the post-structuralists (a universal subjectivism is impossible because there is no direct association between the signifier and the signified, thus undermining the primacy of language). For example, in *Speech and Phenomena* (1967), Jacques Derrida rejected the primacy of language by instituting an approach to the signified concept in which every concept "is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences."[145] This preference for a deferral of meaning is echoed in postmodern fiction's tendency to evade or defer closure in the narrative.

On a linguistic level, evolution within this closed context seems impossible since language cannot have any kind of relationship with anything outside itself. As Colin Falck notes in *Myth, Truth, and Literature. Towards a True Post-Modernism* (1989), Derrida's apparent separation of language from experience, and his startling rejection of perception as a concept, tends to separate language from those aspects of the life-world that are comprehensible as the basis of the experiential. It also neglects the fact that every day, language must evolve and adapt to encapsulate experiences that have never before been experienced. If language is able to evolve, and it has evolved, so this is not in question, it cannot be a closed circuit or what

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[144] Robert Eaglestone. "The Fiction of Angela Carter" in *Contemporary British Fiction*, ed. Richard J. Lane, Rod Mengham, and Philip Tew (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 200.

[145] Jacques Derrida. *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 140.

Frederick Jameson describes as a "prison house."[146] If language is to capture and relate true experience—that is become engaged in Fowles's sense—it must be rooted in corporeal life and engagement: i.e., experience. This argument begins to unravel some of the more extreme tendencies of the poststructuralist theorists and offers a more helpful approach to the analysis of Fowles use of myth in his novels. The need for language, as well as for the novel, to evolve is central to Fowles's work. One of the first veils removed from the eyes of Fowles's male protagonists is that his life is not determined by his social roles and his history, and that therefore, the individual has the capacity to effect change and must do so if he is to live an authentic and psychologically healthy life.

A second existentialist theme is that time is of the essence; we are time-bound beings, but lived time is not the same as 'clock' time. Fowles's protagonists are often drawn into experiences that are outside of clock time. Hence, Nicholas Urfe's experiences in Bourani seem to elude clock time:

> First of all, I had missed a day. The trial had not been that morning, but the day before; it was Monday, not Sunday. I had been drugged again for over twenty-four hours; and I wondered what else. What probing into the deepest recesses of my mind. No film company had been in Monemvasia; no large group of tourists; no foreigners since ten days ago...[147]

Similarly, in the final chapter of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the author himself appears to adjust time by fifteen minutes to allow the events of the previous chapter to be replayed with an alternate outcome, thus reducing 'clock' time to a dramatic device.

The third theme of existentialism is humanism. As Thomas Flynn states, existentialism is not "anti-science"[148] but it focuses upon the individual's struggle for identity and meaning in the face of often overwhelming social and economic pressures, mass culture, and conformism. Existentialism, like the mythopoeic, is sympathetic to the intuitive and metaphysical.

The fourth theme, freedom and responsibility, will recur as a subtext in all of Fowles's novels. All of his protagonists, including Miranda in *The Collector*, and

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[146] See Frederick Jameson's *The Prison-House of Language*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

[147] *The Magus*, 83.

[148] Flynn, *Existentialism*, 8.

Rebecca in *A Maggot* struggle for their own authenticity in the face of strictures imposed by quotidian norms.   Finally, ethical considerations are considered in existentialist philosophy to be paramount. There is no Platonic ethical Form in existentialism, no one source of ethics, but each existentialist understands the ethical to be associated with authenticity in his own life.

   Fowles alludes to existentialist philosophy frequently in interviews, maintaining that it was "the twentieth century individual's answer to the evil pressures of both capitalism and communism."[149] However, Fowles was to revise his commitment to existentialism in the 1980s, stating in a 1985 interview with Jan Relf that:

> [...] it [existentialism] was the great movement of my youth, but many years have passed since then. [...] I ... still have existentialist moments, but it can be rather limiting—you feel as if you must behave as you have behaved in previous similar circumstances.   You take decisions which are against your own natural instincts. There was always for me something in it of doing what you didn't really feel like doing, of going against where reason or convention might lead you. It was really a pressure not to conform to what most people would do.[150]

   In addition to an exploration of existentialism, the novels of this decade focus upon the overwhelming compulsion in contemporary Western man to decode existence — to control and know by analysis and rational vivisection. In this view of the world, there is no room for mystery and ambiguity, which are viscerated. Fowles reacts against such a reductive world-view, spurning fiction that propounds a related account of events where the documentary and realistic impulse structures the genre as with many of his contemporaries. However, Fowles's own fiction incorporates both traditional and contemporary narrative codes so that he might illuminate their deficiencies. Hence at the beginning at least, *The Magus* is written in a seemingly conventional, pseudo-autobiographical, almost documentary style without any problematic subversion. Indeed there is a striking similarity between the opening of *The Magus* and that epitome of traditional realism, *Robinson Crusoe*:

> I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner, of Bremen, who settled first at Hull; he got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York; from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson. [. . .]

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[149] From an interview with Roy Newquist, 1963, rpt in *Conversations with John Fowles,* ed. Dianne Viapond (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 8.

[150] Ibid., 199-120.

> Being the third son of the family, and not bred to any trade, my head began to be filled very early with rambling thoughts [. . .] I would be satisfied with nothing but going to the sea.[151]

It is as if the opening of *The Magus* stresses its affinities with the novelistic tradition, with accounts that purported to be real and unproblematically accurate, by the closeness with Defoe's opening:

> I was born in 1927, the only child of middle-class parents, both English, and themselves born in the grotesquely elongated shadow, which they never rose sufficiently above history to leave, of that monstrous dwarf Queen Victoria. I was sent to public school, I wasted two years doing my national service, I went to Oxford; and there I began to discover I was not the person I wanted to be.[152]

However, this represents a point from which Fowles restructures the novel form, the first hint being his attack upon Victorianism that by echoing Lytton Strachey's phrase for the queen, evokes a modernist realignment of history, narrative and the fixities of the past. Fowles's nuanced indications are too subtle to be postmodern, and the realist narrative tradition is thus both established as a framework and yet also its rescission, adopting as a coordinate in *The Magus* one of the points of departure or origin of the modern English novel[153] itself. This is interesting since Fowles, in using this at the start of a radicalizing text, reminds the informed reader of the unfixed and innovative potential in that form, its power to use the imaginary to shape and influence new ways of thinking. This is the path Fowles's protagonist undertakes, just as Urfe's point of departure is his historical and social programming that has led him to the point at which he has decided he is unhappy with his life.

   The challenges inherent in both perceiving and comprehending contemporary experience are therefore seen as a challenge for both the author of this novel as well as for its central character. Urfe attempts to adhere to the realist conventions of the social version of the autobiographical novel in which he intimates he is trapped, as he relates, and yet is clearly unhappy with, his ancestral lineage in a manner

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[151] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (London: Marshall Cavendish Ltd., 1988), 1-2.

[152] *The Magus,* 1.

[153] Fowles acknowledges the influence of *Robinson Crusoe* on *The Magus* in his journals. In April of 1963, he writes: "Sources: *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Tempest.* As in *The Collector*, but different, more direct aspects this time."John Fowles, *The Journals Volume 1*, ed. by Charles Drazin (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), 553.

familiar from other traditional realistic novels. The novel's dynamic means the reader establishes many of these nuances retrospectively, once the rational kernel has been destabilized. One recognizes the parodic intention on the author's part, the inclusion of genuine historical literary figures in Urfe's lineage, (e.g., Honoré D'Urfé[154]). The inclusion of historical figures in a work of fiction appears to serve a particular, significant purpose, lending apparent authenticity and verisimilitude to the account. However, one questions these coordinates once events occur that cannot be logically explained and are overtly imaginative and fantastical, which in an uncanny doubling undermines the "historical" contents and contexts upon which the narrative appeared to be based.

Fowles creates in this strategy a vertiginous overturning, a disruption of readerly norms, of rational expectations. The novel enters into a state of flux, or destabilization. And yet many familiar coordinates remain, the core of the nightmare is experiential, its basis for what appeared existentially authentic to that point. The overarching effect also foregrounds a central theme of the novel: the thin line between reality and fiction, between history and fiction, and the permeability of those spheres or economies. Fowles suggests neither nihilism nor anarchism of the text, but rather that artificial constructs must be augmented with other modes of perceiving the real in order to approach something potentially "really" real. The structural demand is suggestive, for the reader just like Urfe is constantly challenged to discern what is real from what is fiction.

Urfe's "Magus" is Maurice Conchis, who uses a combination of art and education to bring Urfe to a greater level of understanding of the extremes of human suffering. Conchis, in ways that are never fully explained in the narrative, is able to conjure elaborate experiences and re-enactments, and in this way Fowles can evoke the power of aesthetics to transcend the rational. These dramatized events include: an apparition of the Reverend Robert Foulkes, executed in 1679 for murdering his unborn child; Conchis' desertion of his trench-bound military unit during the First World War; a mythic masque depicting Apollo and Artemis; and finally, the execution of Greek villagers, where, during the German occupation, Conchis had, he implies, been mayor. These episodes force Urfe to re-evaluate his own

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[154] D'Urfé was the author of a novel, *Astrée*, written between 1607 and 1610, which, according to George Saintsbury's *A History of the French Novel (To the Close of the 19th Century) Volume 1* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), is widely considered to be among the first modern French novels.

ambivalence towards specific historical events, to examine his desires and impulses on a deeper, subconscious (mythical) level, and to break through his desensitized reactions to extreme situations.

Although Urfe tells us he was "eighteen when Hitler was dead,"[155] the spectre of both world wars hangs over the novel. The unconscious sense of a world disrupted is strong, along with the notion that culturally events have undermined both collective stabilities and individual certainties. And yet among the actions of the young, one senses Fowles recognises that by the 1960s the immediacy of these horrors have become diluted as he indicates by Urfe's chilling ambivalence towards some of the events of both wars. Narcissism and the demands of the quotidian have conspired to offer a banal account of reality, a loss of depth provided by terror and anguish. Urfe, like many of his contemporaries, has become desensitized. His experience of history has been mediated: through books, movie images, and newsreels. Although educated, he has no sense of the fundamental brutality and horror of war. Urfe is brought to recognise the artificiality of his life as he reflects, "… all my life I had tried to turn life into fiction, to hold reality away."[156]

An insincerity manifests itself in Urfe's numerous adopted guises, one of which is, ironically, the guise of "existentialist." In the opening pages of the novel, Urfe recalls the artificiality of his life before his experiences at Bourani. He describes his Oxford days and his membership of a club "Les Hommes Révoltés" which was based upon a crass misinterpretation of existentialism. Initiates of the club "argued about essence and existence and called a certain kind of inconsequential behaviour existentialist. Less enlightened people would have called it capricious or just plain selfish."[157] Significantly, Urfe recalls that he and his fellow club members misinterpreted the complex "metaphorical descriptions of complex modes of feeling for straightforward prescriptions of behaviour," [158] indicating an inability for Urfe and many of his contemporaries to differentiate complex metaphorical descriptions from mimetic representation. Such a sense of both life and narrative would tend to

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[155] *The Magus*, 16.

[156] Ibid., 539.

[157] Ibid., 17.

[158] Ibid.

negate many of the possibilities of both the intuitive and aesthetic. Nuance and subtlety have also become casualties of two World Wars. Urfe's propensity for taking the surface or literal meaning instead of seeking one that is more transcendent or at least more complete will be challenged as soon as he enters Bourani.

Urfe's faith in his analytic mind to decode mysterious events is immediately challenged by the events on Phraxos. During an early trip to the beach, he discovers an anthology of T.S. Eliot's poetry, left deliberately where he is bound to discover it, and with a particular passage marked:

> A shock. […] I looked round again. […] A book had been left […] I recognized it at once by the cover design: one of the commonest paperback anthologies of modern English verse, […]. It was so unexpected that I remained staring stupidly down with the idea that it was in fact my own copy, stolen. I picked it up to see.
> It was not mine. The owner had not written his or her name inside, but there were several little slips of plain white paper, neatly cut. The first one I turned to marked a page where four lines had been underscored in red ink; from "Little Gidding."
>
> 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.
>
> The last three lines had an additional mark vertically beside them.[159]

This episode not only stresses the mysterious nature of the events which are about to envelop Urfe, but it also reminds the reader of the implicit need for Urfe to re-examine his past in order to progress towards a more authentic future. Also as I have suggested earlier, this passage might be indicative of a paleomodernist impulse of return. Urfe's tendency to diminish the mystery of extraordinary events with (improbable) yet rational explanations is evident in his assumption that the poetry book must be "his own copy, stolen." Urfe's insistence that everything can be analysed and understood, that everything can be reduced to one unambiguous meaning, emerges as a naïve and unworkable system when faced with the complexities and subtleties of Conchis' Bourani.

Fowles's rejection of surface reality is not simply an acceptance of post-structuralist theorists who advocated that reality *could not* be known via language. There is no indication that Fowles loses faith in the ability of language to represent reality, rather that it may suggest something beyond its narrow sphere. This is a

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[159] Ibid., 69.

similar reaction to language expressed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and The Invisible* (1968) who suggests that language is a world itself, enriching in its ability to describe rather than simplify its subject:

> Far from harboring the secret of the being of the world, language is itself a world, itself a being—a world and a being to the second power, since it does not speak in a vacuum, since it speaks *of* being and *of* the world and therefore redoubles their enigma instead of dissipating it.[160]

For Fowles, it is the inchoate nature of the novel that allows it to evolve and remain a viable vehicle for apprehending contemporary experience. It can free language from reductively rational and descriptive tabulation or description. Fowles's view, which sets him apart from much of the contemporaneous debate that raged around him at the time, is that language *is* as stable and reliable as anything can be in a world of change. It links the different personal and historical phases, and it allows as far as can be achieved a categorization of the perceptual flux. This places Fowles in opposition to poststructuralist literary critics and philosophers of deconstruction such as Derrida.

As I have discussed above, Derrida posits that language depends on binary oppositions for its meaning, being "essentially inscribed in a chain or system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences."[161] These binary oppositions are hierarchic, with one term privileged over the other, and this, Derrida asserts, is the weakness that undermines the system. Ultimately, therefore, meaning is indeterminate. By contrast, Fowles's faith in language as a stable basis for the representation of meaning, despite its innate need to evolve, finds concurrence in the philosophy of Ernst Cassirer.

Cassirer, as I have discussed above, demonstrates the derivation of language and myth in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Language: Volume I Language* and *Volume II*, and in *Language and Myth* thus countering the suggestion of an arbitrary association between the signifier and signified. Cassirer's work is especially germane to this discussion because he defines a link between the evolution of myth and language, which underpins Fowles's faith in language to apprehend reality. As

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[160] Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 96.

[161] Jacques Derrida. "Différance" published in *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*, eds. Antony Easthope and Kate McGowan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 127.

I have mentioned previously, according to Cassirer, both language and myth have the capacity to articulate intense feelings or emotions, and the roots of both can be traced to a human urge to acknowledge a momentous or awe-inspiring event. Cassirer's approach to the evolution of language (and its association with mythic thought) anchors language in the real, but by layering its referentiality across its evolution suggests a counter-argument to the vicissitudes of language theory that would succeed him and which would spawn such movements as deconstruction and poststructuralism (so active in the 1960s and 1970s) rooted in the historical immediacy of that which is rationally apprehensible. Cassirer also underscores the ability of the mythic to apprehend complex experiences with greater acuity than other narrative methods, which again lends credence to Fowles's own artistic trajectory towards a mythopoeic realism.

Cassirer's work on language and myth also underscores the innate relationship between storytelling or myth-making (mythopoeia) and language on an evolutionary continuum. Language has evolved as a necessary medium to apprehend experience by fixing it. However, this allows an individual to experience reality whilst being at one remove from the real. The word has effectively replaced the event, and this allows us to examine reality at one remove, objectively, and analytically, but it can also encourage a misplaced trust in the ability of surface reality or the representation of surface reality to convey the really real as it becomes distanced from that original thought or experience. Accepting a surface reality as "truth" or short-circuiting a thoughtful consideration of an experience by proceeding immediately to logical analysis ("labelling" that experience), robs the individual of the concentrated experience that Cassirer describes in *Language and Myth* as the "monumental deity" or "momentary god."[162] Many of Fowles's male characters, and particularly Urfe, have this tendency to privilege the label over the experience. They exist at the level of surface realism engendered by language and have lost the ability to appreciate or even recognise momentary deities. At its worst, this tendency manifests itself in the use dead and clichéd language. This is the language of Ferdinand Clegg in *The Collector*, a being devoid of all imagination and empathy.

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[162] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 35.

Fowles's novels suggest that the "flaw" in language, if there is one, is *not* the same kind of flaw advocated by the poststructuralists and the deconstructivists. There is little suggestion in Fowles's work that there is a relativistic relationship between the signifier and the signified that makes representation of reality impossible. What is of concern, particularly in *The Magus*, is that language appears to render reality without the individual having to experience the emotion and experience behind the words, meaning the experiential kernel of all authentic experience is suppressed and lost. The individual, because he or she already has a formed language on which to draw, does not experience the same monumental rapture that brought about the origin of that word, phrase, or myth. As a historical progression, language encourages one to live life at one remove, which Fowles manages to convey to the reader experientially through various strategies, and it is this process that lies at the heart of Conchis' initial and curiously reflexive rejection of novels and fiction as inadequate to the task of conveying the real. When Nick Urfe tells Conchis that he enjoys reading novels, Conchis replies:

> I have not a single novel here. […] The novel is no longer an art form. […] The novel is dead. As dead as alchemy. […] I realized that one day before the war. Do you know what I did? I burnt every novel I possessed. […] Why should I struggle through hundreds of pages of fabrication to reach half a dozen very little truths? […] Words are for truth. For facts. Not fiction.[163]

Significantly, after this denunciation of fiction and novels, which acts as a challenge for Urfe to consider his stance on that position, Conchis presents Urfe with a pamphlet, "An Alarme for Sinners, Containing the Last Words of the Murderer Robert Foulkes, 1679" and encourages Urfe to "See if it is not more real than all the historical novels ever written."[164]

Thus begins a series of re-enactments and masques which Conchis uses to engender a change in Urfe's reliance on logic and analysis, and to reengage him with the visceral experience that lies beyond a textual representation of reality. Urfe reads the Foulkes pamphlet and finds it "more moving, more evocative, more human"[165] than any work of fiction he has ever read perhaps because it is

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[163] *The Magus*, 96.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid., 140.

immediate, visceral, and personal. Urfe, the everyman, has become desensitized to events, particularly those at a historical remove. Interestingly, when he awakens to find the subject of the pamphlet miraculously before him and attempts to talk to the mysteriously invoked characters, he finds that words are "no use"[166] perhaps a realisation on Urfe's part that he has moved into a realm where his usual passive and detached modes of expression and perception will be inadequate to the task at hand. Characteristically, however, Urfe's reaction is limited to the analytical and the logistic as he ponders the practicalities of such an impressive dramatic re-enactment.

   In addition to the appearance of Foulkes, Urfe is also exposed to the events surrounding Conchis' apparent desertion during the First World War. Conchis discusses his life and experiences at Neuve Chapelle in the trenches during the First World War. Such is the carnage Conchis sees during this period that he deserts his unit. Urfe's preconceived ideas about deserters' cowardice prejudices his response to Conchis' harrowing narrative. To stimulate an empathetic understanding of Conchis' predicament, a more visceral representation is required. Subsequently, Conchis presents Urfe with a game that epitomises the absurdity of the trenches. He offers Urfe a die and a suicide capsule. Challenging Urfe to roll the die, he explains that should he (Urfe) roll a six, he must ingest the suicide capsule. Highlighting the pressure exerted on the individual by societal norms and expectations, Conchis appeals to Urfe's sense of honour and fear that previous visitors to the island would appear braver than he, should he refuse to participate and under this (societal quotidian) pressure, Urfe accepts. The gamble, as Conchis explains, illustrates Plato's perfect republic: potentially killing one in six satisfies the human race's lust for risk, but makes the process of war cleaner, and more efficient. Such logic epitomizes the same clinical approach to a complex emotional situation as Urfe's detached evaluation and condemnation of Conchis' desertion of his unit. The premise is absurd, and Urfe refuses to take the poison, thus proving the validity of Conchis' decision to abandon his unit in the face of such absurdity.

   Urfe is forced to re-examine his condemnation of Conchis after experiencing this, albeit simulated, life-or-death situation. The didactic event is intensified and reinforced, rendered more "real" to Urfe by subsequent auditory and olfactory

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[166] Ibid., 124.

authentication: a recording of men's voices singing patriotic war songs from the trenches wakens Urfe that night, and he is overwhelmed by the stench of decomposing flesh and excrement, the past seeming to invade the present.

Such an invasion of the present by the past has been the subject of study by Derrida, who describes the appearance of the past in the present as the "deferred past" or "supplementary delay" which is, "[an event] whose meaning has never been lived in the present.[167] This deferred past has a dynamic relationship with the present, in which it is reinterpreted but in which the truth of the past is endlessly deferred. Similarly, these re-enactments recur for Urfe until Conchis feels that he has grasped the true meaning and significance of the events. This particular re-enactment serves to compound the impact of Conchis' narrative, reminding Urfe that it is only by reliving an event, not by listening to or reading about it, that one can truly attempt to construct meaning. Traditional mimesis alone is inadequate to the task of provoking a profound response particularly in those whose sensitivity and imagination have been eroded.

Conchis continues to assail Urfe's senses with a series of mythic masques. The first is a tableau from Greek myth in which a satyr attempts to rape a nymph. Urfe watches the satyr's pursuit of the nymph and the former's stylized death from Artemis' arrow. Again, Urfe learns little from the masque, since he attempts only to analyze the symbols contained within the myth as if it were some kind of mystery to solve. Thinking that Conchis has embedded some kind of hidden meaning in the masque, Urfe attempts to deconstruct it. He reflects, "I saw the Apollo scene in a different light. Conchis was evidently like certain modern poets: he tried to kill ten meanings with one symbol." [168]

Urfe is confounded by the masques because they appeal directly to his senses which he has become accustomed to repressing in favour of logic. However, it is the 'otherness' of these experiences, their complete antithesis to all he has known, that forces him to abandon inductive logic. Their 'otherness' reminds Urfe that he is "a long way from home"[169]. Ultimately, distancing Urfe from all that is solid and

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[167] Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), 214.

[168] *The Magus*, 186.

[169] Ibid., 182.

stable is key to Urfe's realisation that there is more to human existence than that which is open to logical apprehension and comprehension. The mythic masques reconnect Urfe to his less rational and empirically dependent self, forcing him to consider alternate modes of thinking, which are alien to his post-Enlightenment roots.

The most significant of the experiences orchestrated by Conchis is described in the thematic and physical heart of the novel. It is the only chapter in *The Magus* given a title: *Ελευθερια,* or *eleutheria,* meaning *"freedom."* This experience surrounds Conchis' re-enactment of an event that supposedly occurred during the German occupation of Greece during the Second World War. Conchis, Urfe has learned, is condemned by some on the island as a collaborator[170], but the information Urfe has about the events on the island in the years after first the Italian then German occupation of Greece is incomplete and contradictory and thus incompatible with logical and rational analysis. This masque differs from those experienced earlier because Urfe is not a passive observer, rather he is drawn into the action of the masque, sustaining physical injuries from the "German soldiers" thereby becoming the subjective experiencer of events rather than merely an objective observer.

Initially, Urfe remains characteristically impressed by the logistics of the metatheatre and unaffected by its narrative, perhaps because of his sense of the hierophantic possibilities of Conchis:

> I calculated: thirteen men, at least half of whom were German. Cost of getting them to Greece, from Athens to the island. Equipment. Training-rehearsing. Cost of getting them off the island, back to Germany. It couldn't be done for less than five hundred pounds. And for what? To frighten – or perhaps to impress – one unimportant person. At the same time, now that the first adrenaline panic had subsided, I felt my attitude changed. This scene was so well organized, so elaborate. I fell under the spell of Conchis the magician again. Frightened, but fascinated; and then there were more footsteps.[171]

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[170] Mitford, one of Urfe's predecessors at the school describes him as a "collaborator", (44), Demetriades, a fellow master at the school, tells Urfe that Conchis "worked for the Germans in the war. He never comes to the village. The villagers would kill him with stones. So would I, if I saw him." (72).

[171] *The Magus,* 376.

However, as the realism of the masque intensifies, Urfe is less rapt by the prospect of solving the puzzle and more willing to surrender to Conchis "the magician," just as a reader might suspend disbelief and continue to turn the pages of a novel, assured that all will be revealed in the final chapter.

As the masque progresses, Urfe realizes that he is playing the role of Conchis, observing the vicious beating of the Greek prisoner. This is part of Conchis' use of meta-theatre to "allow the participants to see through their first roles in it…to see through the roles we give ourselves in ordinary life"[172]. In this sense, the meta-theatre has a metafictional, reflexive function, encouraging Urfe to examine the role he is assuming as well as the role he has created for himself.

Conchis prefaces this re-enactment by telling Urfe that the story he will be telling is:

> . . . a true story […] its events could have taken place only in a world where man considers himself superior to woman. In what the Americans call "a man's world". That is, a world governed by brute force, humourless arrogance, illusory prestige and primeval stupidity. […] Men love war because it allows them to look serious. Because they imagine it is the one thing that stops women laughing at them. In it they can reduce women to the status of objects. That is the great distinction between the sexes. Men see objects, women see the relationships 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 and one that makes war abhorrent to all real women – and absurd.[173]

This statement is significant because it indicates Fowles's interest in the power of women to see beyond the surface appearance of reality, beyond "objects," which is an essential component of living authentically and perceiving mythopoeically.

The disparity between superficial meaning and reality is at the heart of the re-enactment in which Urfe participates. After the masque has concluded, Conchis tells Urfe of the decision he was required to take as mayor of the town, and of how the events that followed his decision could be interpreted in several ways; the most obvious one being that he was a collaborator. But as Urfe is now increasingly aware, surface appearance is misleading. Conchis tells Urfe about his leadership of the town as mayor, first under the innocuous Lieutenant Anton Kluber, and then the under the vicious Colonel Wimmel. The latter personifies the ultimate terminus of

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[172] Ibid., 409.

[173] Ibid., 413.

the logical and the rational; he had "eyes like razors…without a grain of sympathy. Nothing but assessment and calculation…They were the eyes of a machine." [174] Wimmel's characteristics are Urfe's *in extremis*. He is detached, a calculator of risk and benefit, neither a feeler nor an empathizer. Urfe relives Conchis' memories of being taken to the torture room, where the Greek guerrillas have been horrifically mutilated and tortured, and is coerced into encouraging one guerrilla to betray his contacts. The guerrilla's dramatic refusal is encapsulated in one word: "eleutheria"[175] and this utterance costs the guerrilla his tongue.

 In the dénouement of the metatheatre, the Germans suggest Conchis might gain a reprieve for the hostages — he must kill the guerrillas in front of the Greek hostages in the village square. Conchis is handed a gun but discovers that it is not loaded. Horrified, he realizes he is expected to club the guerrillas to death. This is Conchis' existential moment of choice, the point at which he realises the true meaning of the guerrilla's cry that transcends reason:

> It was eleutheria: freedom. He was the immalleable, the essence, the beyond reason, beyond logic, beyond civilization, beyond history. He was not God, because there is no God we can know. But he was proof that there is a God that we can never know. He was the final right to deny. To be free to choose. He, or whatever manifested itself through him, even included the insane Wimmel, the despicable German and Austrian troops. He was every freedom, from the very worst to the very best. The freedom to desert on the battlefield at Neuve Chapelle. […]The freedom to disembowel peasant girls and castrate with wire-cutters. He was something that passed beyond morality but sprang out of the very essence of things— that comprehended all, and stood against only one thing — the prohibition not to do all.[176]

It is this 'freedom' that Conchis encounters at this moment. He chooses to throw down the gun rather than beat the guerrilla to death. The hostages are executed, he is shot; the stigma of having collaborated with the Germans remaining with him for the rest of his life

 Cassirer provides an explanation for the power that is reignited in the utterance of this word, "eleutheria," in this particular, extraordinary situation. Its power comes from the emotion and experience that lies at the heart of its inception, and because this emotion is recalled by the event, it is closer to its true meaning. The meaning

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[174] Ibid., 419.

[175] Ibid., 428.

[176] Ibid., 434.

of the word 'freedom' is no longer dulled by its passive (over)use. Urfe, in experiencing 'freedom' is confronted by raw, mythic experience, the reality that is encapsulated by a simple word finally apprehended and appreciated.

   Cassirer describes such a decoupling of the mythic from its "positive power of formulation and creation"[177] in *Language and Myth*. According to Cassirer, over time, we have ceased to recognize the degree to which myth (and language) are rooted in the real and not, as advocated by Max Müller, the result of a "weakness of language"[178], or in the "pathological"[179] influence of speech. It also seems to present a tacit rejection of Saussure's theory of structuralism.   Merleau-Ponty considers the degree to which language has become decoupled from the powerful origin of the thought in *The Visible and the Invisible.*   As he writes,

> Ideas that are too much possessed are no longer ideas; I no longer think anything when I speak of them, as if it were essential to the essence that it be for tomorrow, as if it were only a tacking thread in the fabric of the words. A discussion is not an exchange or a confrontation of ideas, as if each formed his own, showed them to the others, looked at theirs, and returned to correct them with his own... Someone speaks, and immediately the others are now but certain divergencies by relation to his words, and he himself specifies his divergence in relation to them.[180]

This is the relationship between language and experience, a decoupling of the word from the power of the meaning that lies behind it, that leads to an over-simplification of the complexity of experience. The post-Enlightenment confidence in the intellect to describe reality within the confines of language has curiously resulted in the rejection of anything that lies beyond language. In a sense this realm no longer exists. It does not exist for Urfe until he is forced to confront experiences that lie outside of his vocabulary.   Urfe is reminded of the source of an event that has shaped the lives of the people of Phraxos, but he is also reminded of the dilution that occurs when narratives become decoupled from the power of the events they codify over time.

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[177] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 6.

[178] Ibid., 4.

[179] Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 19.

[180] Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 118.

After experiencing powerful and disturbing events such as the one described above, Urfe becomes aware of what Cassirer would describe as the "naïve realism which regards the reality of objects as something directly and unequivocally given— tangible."[181] This is the kind of realism that has resulted from a language that has been decoupled from its powerful origins. The reality that Urfe expects, and to which he has become accustomed, is a reality that is as lifeless, lightless, and as static as the London Fowles describes at the beginning of the novel. It is in mythic Greece that a reality that is more directly associated with the origins of language can be experienced and described. This is the reality that will affect a change in Urfe's perceptions.

As Urfe is experiencing these dramatic events, the reader too is thrust into a bewildering confusion of unexplained events and unresolved plot twists. Like Urfe, the reader suspends disbelief as the events in the novel become more and more extreme, trusting in the author as Urfe trusts Conchis, that all will finally be revealed and explained or at least decoded and analysed. Finally, however, both Urfe and the reader are forced to acknowledge that the "truth" of this novel does not lie in the events themselves. As Tew reminds us, "the essence of the truth is not an equivalency outside of the novel."[182] There is more to the potential relation to realism of narrative than the narrowly mimetic. The events or experiences that Conchis conjures for Urfe are not simply an imitation of life. Fowles suggests that a concept of the real in an age defined by the legacy of traumatic terror must be more than this, and his descriptions of events as much as Conchis' meta-theatre present the experiential as both an object for intellectual apprehension but also as an intuitive sensory happening which evokes a richer way of knowing. This 'richer' way demands an acknowledgement that narrated events are mediated events. Writing in a post-Holocaust world, events must be depicted in such a way that they can break through the inertia of the banality of the everyday, eluding shallow expectations, conventions, and its jaded cynicism. Like Urfe, the reader is swept along by unexpected and intense depictions that approach yet do not attempt to

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[181] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 6.

[182] Philip Tew, 'Exploring an Economy of Exegetical Structures through Cassirer and Bourdieu', in *Metaphors of Economy*, ed. by Nicole Bracker (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 40.

faithfully reflect a surface reality. Rather, they force the reader to confront expectations of any reductive sense of verisimilitude and thus look beyond them.

If mythic thinking, as Cassirer advocates, has been eclipsed in contemporary thought because language has been separated from its mythic roots, the power of language has similarly become diminished because it lacks the immediacy of the "monumental deity" which originally brought its signifier into existence. As a result, descriptions of reality provide only an external, surface trace of the remarkable experience that originally brought a particular word into being. What Urfe experiences on the island of Phraxos under Conchis's direction, is a baptism into such remarkable experiences, which forces him to reconsider the banal and conventional appreciation he has had for reality. The reader, by proxy, has a similar experience. He or she recognizes that certain conventions in the novel are anticipated because the reader expects the author to adhere to patterns inherent in the pseudo-autobiography and *bildungsroman*. When these conventions are flouted (absence of a satisfying and unambiguous conclusion, plethora of baffling events which have no explanation, absence of a "heroic" protagonist) the reader must also re-examine these expectations. As a result a more conscious, evaluative, and interrogative reader response is generated, just as Urfe's passive acceptance of events is altered by his encounters with the strange and unexpected.

When confronted by experiences that lie outside his experiential framework, Urfe struggles for a vocabulary with which to articulate them. For example, after being hypnotized by Conchis, he attempts to recall what a particular experience was like, and he struggles to find the right words:

> There was no word, it arrived, descended, penetrated from outside. It was not an immanent state, it was a conferred state, a presented state. I was a recipient. . . . I was having feelings that no language based on concrete physical objects, on actual feeling, can describe. I think I was aware of the metaphoricality of what I felt. I know words were like chains, they held me back; and like walls with holes in them. Reality kept rushing through; and yet I could not get out to fully exist in it. This is interpreting what I struggled to remember feeling; the act of description taints the description.[183]

This feeling of the act of description tainting the description recalls the existential philosopher's awareness of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, the scientific dilemma of the experimenter being unable to extricate himself from the experiment

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[183] *The Magus*, 239.

and thus compromising the results of the experiment. However, this dilemma has an answer in language. This attempt to capture what is experienced, a reality that is powerful and which evades any existing vocabulary, can be compared with Cassirer's description of the emergence of language to capture the intensity of an experienced reality. According to Cassirer, the human consciousness, when confronted by an awe-inspiring event or when enthralled by an occurrence or sight, will be momentarily lost in that experience (as Urfe is lost in his hypnosis-induced vision). This focusing on a single point, event, or sight is the "prerequisite for all mythical thinking."[184] The resulting tension between the subject (the person who has experienced the event) and the object (the outer world) causes a "spark" to "jump somehow across, the tension finds release, as the subjective excitement becomes objectified, and confronts the mind as a god or a daemon."[185]

Fowles focuses the reader's attention on this doubling effect of reality masked by a veneer of conventional behaviour and appearance to assert that the real does exist (and can be represented, albeit tangentially in modern fiction) but that it must be apprehended and described using a method other than surface reality (in effect via traditional mimetic realism).

Throughout the novel, both the reader and Nicholas Urfe are confronted with the fact that to unquestioningly accept surface realism as an indicator of truth, to attempt to understand events based solely on empirical or logical reasoning, is to be deceived. Rather, one must think other than logically—mythically. Fowles does not imply that the ability to think mythically eludes all of the characters in *The Magus,* but it is an ability that is more clearly associated with his female characters. Conchis, who, as I have mentioned earlier was originally conceived as a female character, is able to think mythically, which may also explain his propensity for narrative and for creating elaborate masques. Repeatedly, it is the female character in his novels who avoids the modern impulse to fix and to dissect. In *The Magus*, the central female characters orbit Nicholas Urfe, peripheral in a sense, but each has her own contribution to Urfe's movement towards becoming elect or fully perceptive. There is a palpable shift in the gender balance of the novels as they progress, for increasingly, Fowles positions female characters at the centre rather

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[184] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 33.

[185] Ibid.

than the periphery of his narrative, as will be demonstrated below in *The Collector* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Such an orbiting female character is Alison Kelly. Alison, to whom I have alluded above, is described in terms that evade labels. In her paradoxical nature, language fails to capture her and the implication is that she is too complex to be distilled into any singular term or characteristic. Although Alison has an affinity with the mythic, this does not make her, nor any of Fowles's other female characters, ethereal. By contrast, Alison's association with reality is emphasized throughout the text. Urfe comes to see that Alison is "without … madness"[186] and "a constant reality"[187], the one person who cannot be captured by language is, ironically, the best barometer for Urfe of what is real.

Fowles's female characters are typically less restricted by the Western tendency to view reality through the narrowing and reductive lens of scientific empiricism. Alison Kelly, bearing not one but two female names, is the single personification of double female that Urfe then encounters on the island, the twins, Lily and Rose, who finally reveal themselves to be the actresses, Julie and June Holmes, employed by Conchis as part of the god game on Phraxos. The double female (the appearance of two women, often representing opposing female characteristics–typically the Madonna and the Whore to which I alluded in chapter one) will be examined in more detail below and in later chapters. In these doublings an "uncanny" quality is suggested about which Freud wrote in his celebrated essay on the topic written in 1919, and in which he attempted to describe the feeling provoked in an individual by an encounter with something beyond new or unusual. The condition for the emergence of a sense of the uncanny, according to Freud, is "intellectual uncertainty."[188] Engendering a sense of the uncanny in his male protagonists is surely part of the "deprogramming" process. It is necessary to eradicate preconceived notions of the boundaries of the real so that the individual might be receptive to a broader and richer interaction with events and experience that lie outside of a human realm that has been artificially defined by language.

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[186] *The Magus*, 566.

[187] Ibid., 539.

[188] Sigmund Freud. *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003), 125.

Fowles's female characters are of particular interest in this first novel, for as indicated previously, increasing the focus upon the role of women in the evolution of the male character is pivotal, and each phase of Fowles's *oeuvre* seems to mirror the strides made in the "real world" by the Women's Movement in the seventies and eighties. As feminism reformulated gender, Fowles's women also evolve, ceasing to be marginal. Their centrality is not just in the lives of the men, but within the creative process itself. This revitalization culminates in Fowles's final novel where the protagonist is, for the first time, a woman. Clearly in developing a new (and increasingly mythopoeic) reality, women's affinity with the intuitive and the mysterious centres this creative process, gradually changing its logic and disposition. So influenced, Fowles's men re-evaluate their lives, religions, histories, and in a process that reflects Fowles's own creative journey, their relative relationships with art and creativity. The latter sphere is explored not simply as a mode of representation, but also in terms of a capacity to comprehend life or ontology.

Initiated in *The Magus*, the quest pattern recurs in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and repeatedly during Fowles's central phase in *The Ebony Tower* (1977) and in *Daniel Martin* (1978) and again to a lesser extent in his final phase: *Mantissa* (1983), where the female character is in ascendance, before the pattern finds a resolution with *A Maggot* (1985), Fowles's final novel, in which the female character becomes the locus for the novel's action.

Emerging throughout Fowles's work is what he at least regards as a quasi-feminism, which is first manifested in the strength of the female characters and the degree to which they contribute to the journey of male characters towards existential authenticity. Moreover, perhaps beginning with *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the female characters are defined less by how they contribute to the male and more by how they bring about change, both for themselves and for society. As Fowles's novels progress, his female characters are increasingly depicted as social catalysts: tentatively in Miranda Grey, in Sarah Woodruff, who shows the beginnings of a quasi-feminism, stridently in Jane Mallory, and reaching a zenith with the creation of Rebecca Lee who, is putative mother of the founder of an entire religious (and social) movement.

Fowles has been ambiguous about the future of the novel form when compared to other art forms. He acknowledged the power of the cinema and agreed to the

filming of four of his novels, but criticized the "distressingly amoral nature" of film and TV, "possibly because the photographed image denies the spectator virtually all use of his own imaginative powers."[189] Yet he remained finally optimistic about the novel as a genre, stating in a 1995 interview, that he felt that "the novel is not dying" and that "the greater complexity of technique caused by its added self-consciousness does or can fulfil the ultimate purpose of both explaining and teaching more."[190] *The Magus* is an example of a novel at the crossroads of the development of the post-World War II British novel. It appears to be a classic "realist" novel in the sense that the events at Bourani are entirely plausible, even if they are not completely explicable. What is confronted in *The Magus* is not the dynamics of realism but the underlying ones of a wider representation: How is the fullness of human experience to be represented? The conclusion of *The Magus* offers an indication of the direction in which Fowles believed the novel should evolve. The narrative abruptly shifts to the present tense—the fictionality of the text is exposed and foregrounded. As Urfe turns to leave Alison, the freeze-frame description of action is suspended in an unresolved pause:

> 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.[191]

In Fowles's change in tense from third person perfect past to present tense at the end of the novel he may be introducing an element of indeterminacy indicative of what Mikhail Bakhtin identifies as the primary artistic and creative force of the novel and one that distinguishes it completely from other genres. Novelization, he says, "inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with the unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)"[192]. As such, *The Magus* epitomizes this very force.

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[189] Vipond, "An Interview with John Fowles," *Conversations with John Fowles*, 66.

[190] Ibid., 208.

[191] *The Magus*, 656.

[192] Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M.M.Bakhtin,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982) 7.

Importantly, this is not a matter of a linguistic economy for Bakhtin, but part of seeking an ontological knowledge through the very formulations and depictions allowed by such narrative. In allowing such a radicalizing, creative force precisely in the context of historical possibility, in *The Magus* Fowles anticipates a central concern of the post-war British novel, the examination of the relationship between reality and fiction. Fowles attempts to capture for the reader, as Conchis tries to do for Urfe, a sense of the unexplained and intense nature of comprehending events beyond oneself and one's control, the full ontological depth that defies a contracted, rationalizing language.

The catalyst for the reader, as it is for Urfe, is exposure to extraordinary events, a denial of both expectations and reductive explanations, and an immersion in confusion. He creates, what Cassirer might describe as a "primary "experience" itself, […] steeped in the imagery of myth and saturated with its atmosphere".[193] As Cassirer posits, for the possibility of a mythmaking consciousness to emerge, the world must be perceived gradually as derived from the whole. Importantly in Fowles the process is not entirely unresolved, for rather than total confusion, a certain epiphanic possibility is inherent in a broader understanding.

In the original version of the novel, Urfe strides away from Alison in Regent's Park denying any likelihood of a reunion between them. Alison's attempt to change Urfe's perspective and behaviour is no match for his hurt pride and anger. This original version of *The Magus* was published in 1966, the revised version in 1977. Michael Boccia,[194] among others, has completed a comprehensive analysis of the changes made by Fowles in his revision of the novel. This original ending, however, conforms more to the conventions of the novel (a definite ending is provided, and male pride is restored). However, in the revised version, Fowles adds to the text the metaphor of the cinematic freeze-frame quoted above in which Alison fails to respond to Urfe's entreaties to come back him, and the reader must decide whether the two characters are destined to reunite or to part. This change to the original novel is significant, since it indicates Fowles's dissatisfaction with one of the conventions of traditional realistic narrative; namely, the conclusive and

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[193] Cassirer. *Language and Myth*, 10.

[194] Michael Boccia. ""Visions and Revisions" John Fowles's New Version of the Magus."*Journal of Modern Literature*, 8 (1981), 235-242.

unambiguous ending (romantic reconciliation or the lament of parting). In his attempt to render a more "truthful" version of contemporary experience, Fowles recognizes the inappropriateness of any such traditional ending or resolution, with in a formal thematic sense all loose ends tied, confusion resolved, and stability ensured or implied.

By the end of the novel, Urfe has undergone a sufficient enough transformation to enable him to recognize his overreliance on the logical rather than the intuitive to make meaning or comprehend the objective not under his control, rejecting the underlying egoism of the enlightenment that persists in intellectual and rational reconciliations of the paradox and problematics of the life-world. Looking back on the events at Bourani, Urfe realizes that the meta-theatre was meant to be experienced rather than analyzed:

> That was the meaning of the fable. By searching so fanatically I was making a detective story out of the summer's events, and to view life as a detective story, as something that could be deduced, hunted, and arrested, was no more realistic (let alone poetic) than to view the detective story as the most important literary genre, instead of what it really was, one of the least.[195]

The mythic episodes used in the novel may, therefore, be *contrasted* with the modernist use of myth as a refuge from the chaotic present. Fowles rejects the modernist use of myth as either consoling or unifying, a refuge in a mythological, coherent past. By contrast, Fowles uses myth and the mythopoeic to serve as the converse of empirical and historical modes of thinking to illuminate the shortcomings of these latter modes. Given this, it seems inappropriate to co-opt Fowles as simply a postmodern writer of contemporary existence, merely deconstructing the rational core of the novel as a form.   Finally, myth suggests uniquely ahistorical understandings; it is the closest humanity has come to the expression of a universal experience; a meta-narrative in a post-enlightenment world where labels and any talk of a universal anything is viewed with suspicion.

The Magus epitomizes this first segment of Fowles's novel-writing career. What was to emerge at the end of what I have represented as the first phase of Fowles's *oeuvre* is the work which was to be considered his most "postmodern," although as I have suggested, Fowles could more accurately be described as extending Virginia Woolf's modernist approach to realism in the novel as, "a token of some real thing

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[195] *The Magus*, 552.

behind appearances; … I make it whole by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole."[196] Where Fowles and Woolf diverge, I suggest, is in Fowles's resistance to a relativistic subjectivism in attempts at apprehending something altogether more universal, and his departure from the convention of closely observed, surface reality as epitomized by his contemporaries, Allan Sillitoe and Margaret Drabble. I would not suggest that this is an experimental novel but rather as Malcolm Bradbury describes it: "a spectacularly inventive book – not nakedly experimental, but imaginatively bold and also imaginatively self-analytical.[197]" In this sense, *The Magus* summarizes the trajectory of Fowles's vision for the British novel: a rebirth of the importance of the imagination and the mythopoeia as the creative force for change, education, and evolution.

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[196] Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1985), 71.

[197] Malcolm Bradbury, "John Fowles's *The Magus,*"in *Sense & Sensibility in Twentieth-Century Writing*, ed. by Brom Weber (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 28.

The Collector

In *The Collector*, Fowles further explores the novel form and its representation of realism, focussing on the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the form itself and juxtaposing the scientific and intuitive worldviews as part of this exploration. One strategy adopted in exploring these aspects of the novel is a close reading of Fowles's use of a seemingly traditional surface realism and his inclusion of subtle, but explicit, strategies to undermine this apparently conventional mimetic process from within the text. Thereby, Fowles problematizes traditional narrative strategies and suggests alternative means of apprehending human motivation and its depiction by adopting a disturbing scenario, an extreme act, the kidnapping and death of a young art student. As in *The Magus*, he adopts a highly realistic narrative mode, but subtly introduces variations so that the reader is left to consider the likelihood that he or she has not been presented with a "truthful" account by either of the novel's two central characters. This is the modernist technique of the unreliable narrator *in extremis*. Fowles also manipulates readers' expectations by adopting genre codes that imply the novel is close to the crime sub-genre (a synthesis of the thriller and murder mystery) only to undermine and circumvent such expectations.

Fowles presents other modes of depiction such as non-representational art, photography, and music to investigate other ways of apprehending and representing complex experiences beyond the written form. *The Collector* explores multiple shifting perspectives and ultimately presents reality as mutable rather than static, the antithesis of which is captured thematically in the theme of the "collector" whose ambition seems to be personified by council clerk, Frederick Clegg.

Undoubtedly the darkest of Fowles's creations, Clegg gravitates from collecting and pinning butterflies in an attempt to capture, control, and own elusive beauty, to collecting and pinning Miranda Grey in his warped attempt to include her in his vision of the perfect life with the perfect woman. Clegg's own perception of personal relationships, his relationship with art and beauty, his use of language, and his views on life and death are placed in conflict with those of Miranda Grey, his captive. Grey's character is Clegg's diametric opposite, not only in gender (with the potential we have seen in *The Magus*'s female characters to be less reliant on the logical and rational), but also in terms of class, education, and politics. Her

bourgeois education seems opposed by Fowles to his reductive, uneducated working-class view of the world.

   This novel further explores the quasi-feminism alluded to earlier in this chapter, considering the many ways in which the feminine, mythic mode of perception differs from the male, specifically in terms of apprehending the real, affecting change, and facilitating communication. It is in the latter of these explorations, the investigation of language and its use, that we see an emerging sense of how Fowles distinguishes between the use of language as a powerful, dynamic evolving system versus its use in cliché, as 'dead language', language that is used as a vehicle for pinning meaning and in impaired communication. As Miranda struggles to win her freedom from Clegg, she is faced with a person who is immune to empathy, imagination, and metaphoric or connotative language.   Ultimately, she discovers, he is also impervious to the concept of change, literally destroying life in order to reach an imperfect understanding of the object of his gaze, rendering it lifeless so as to control the immensity of its ontological and aesthetic presence.

   The novel is a seminal one, since while still working on *The Magus,* which represents his first major engagement with the novel form, Fowles began writing *The Collector* in 1960, completing it within only three months.[198] In contrast, *The Magus* was not completed in first draft form until November 7th, 1964[199], and Fowles had been actively working on this novel as far back as 1956. Not surprisingly, therefore, *The Magus* is a far more complex and significant work, and many of the themes and issues of *The Collector* reappear in a more developed form in *The Magus*. *The Collector* also seems to adhere more to the tastes of the contemporary reading public who had become accustomed to the stark and often grim realism of British fiction.   In the late 1950s and early 1960s, works by male writers such as John Braine, Stan Barstow, and Alan Sillitoe were enjoying

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[198] In the first reference to *The Collector* in *The Journals, Volume 1*, Fowles notes that he started writing the novel in late November of 1960. In March 1961, he noted that his wife had read the novel (458). Cape finally took the novel on July 4th, 1962. The film rights were sold before the novel was published.   Concurrently, Fowles was also revising *The Aristos*, but he also refers to working on *The Magus* (553) throughout 1963. The first reference to *The Magus* in his journals is in 1956, at which point he was "halfway revising *The Joker* – now *The Magus*" (379), which means that the novel was at least ten years in the making, not including the revisions which culminated in the revised version of 1977.

[199] *The Journals, Volume 1*, 621.

commercial and critical success in novels characterized by Philip Tew as part of a zeitgeist "in flight from modernism."[200] Such novelists also focus on central characters with working-class backgrounds, similar to Clegg's, and exemplify the new social realism, which characterized many novels written in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a rejection of the established socio-political system and the mediocrity and hypocrisy of the middle and upper classes. Fowles's ambivalence towards the bourgeoning working classes is exemplified by his attitude towards artistic creations referenced in the novel such as Arthur Seaton in Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*. Both Sillitoe and John Braine are mentioned directly in *The Collector* as part of a critique undertaken by Miranda. Sillitoe's *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning* shocks Miranda when she reads it, "in the same way as *Room at the Top* shocked me."[201] She is disgusted by Sillitoe's character, Arthur Seaton, and horrified that the author of that novel does not condemn his creation. The root of her disgust is Seaton's attitude towards life:

> I hated the way Arthur Seaton just doesn't care about anything outside his own little life. He's mean, narrow, selfish, brutal.[202]

The reader might be tempted to dismiss this comment by Miranda as the naive mutterings of a privileged and sheltered bourgeois; after all, Miranda is depicted as snobbish prig, who gradually deconstructs her own artificiality during her captivity via her daily journal reflections from which we derive her narrative. However, Miranda's sentiments resonate with Fowles's own reflections on this subject. This would suggest that Miranda's assessment of Seaton is not to be disparaged or discounted. Fowles's condemnation of such characters is indicative of his attitude towards the working classes, and Clegg was conceived partly as Fowles's response to the growing number of uneducated, inarticulate anti-heroes who had risen to prominence in the work of the "Angry Young Men" like John Osborne, Braine, and Sillitoe. Such writers created a new kind of character who gave a voice to the emerging working-class hero, but who also threatened the tradition and high modernism which Fowles and the "elect" were trying to protect. Five years before

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[200] Philip Tew, "(Re)-Acknowledging B.S. Johnson's Radical Realism, Or Re-Publishing The Unfortunates," *Critical Survey*, 13 (2001), 37.

[201] *The Collector*, 230.

[202] Ibid.

The Collector was published, Fowles had written enthusiastically about seeing a performance of Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* on the London stage. He marvelled at the oppressed and trapped Jimmy Porter. But by the time *The Collector* was published, he had grown weary of the dominance of the "'good' inarticulate hero … whose inarticulateness is presented as a kind of crowning glory."[203]

In Fowles's reworking of the Heraclitian dialectic, Miranda is "the intelligent trapped in the world of the stupid."[204] The character of the collector, he explains in his journal, "… symbolize[s] the mediocrity of our present society; the girl he kidnaps stands for its hope and its vitality, pointlessly and maliciously crushed."[205] In an interview with Roy Newquist in 1963, Fowles explains that he thought of *The Collector* as a parable.

> You see, I have always wanted to illustrate the opposition of the Few and the Many (*hoi polloi*). I take these terms from the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who's been a major influence on my life. For him the Few were the good, the intelligent, the independent; The Many were the stupid, the ignorant, and the easily moulded. Of course he implied that one could choose to belong to the Few or to the Many. We know better. I mean these things are hazard, conditioning, according to one's genes, one's environment, and all the rest.[206]

The relationship between Miranda Grey and Clegg has already been exhaustively and successfully analysed by critics in light of its representation of the struggle between the Heraclitian "Many" *(hoi polloi)* and the "Few" (*élite).* Examples include John Neary's article from 1992, "John Fowles's Clegg: A Metaphysical Rebel,"[207] and Susan Onega's "Self, World and Art in the Fiction of John Fowles" published in 1996.[208] My focus instead will be an examination of Fowles's commitment to a reinvigoration of the form, not by choosing a different social group as a focus for the narrative, as had been the case with many of the authors to whom I have alluded above, but by re-examining realism itself.

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[203] Warburton. *John Fowles. A Life in Two Worlds*, 191.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Roy Newquist, "John Fowles" in *Conversations with John Fowles*, 1.

[207] John M. Neary. "John Fowles's Clegg: A Metaphysical Rebel," *Essays in Literature (ELWIU),* 15 (1988), 45-61.

[208] Susana Onega. "Self, World and Art in the Fiction of John Fowles" *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal (TCL),* 42 (1996), 29-57.

In *The Collector*, Fowles challenges the reader's perceptions and expectations of a novel written adhering to (as Fowles himself stressed) "surface realism."[209] Fowles encourages such an interrogation by suggesting that a surface realism only hints at the reality that lies beneath it. The starkly realistic style of *The Collector* is a deliberate and perhaps overtly artificial one for Fowles. In "I Write Therefore I Am," Fowles describes his attempt to write this novel:

> ... in terms of the strictest realism; to go straight back to that supreme master of the fake biography, Defoe, for the surface "feel" of the book. To Jane Austen and Peacock for the girl. To Sartre and Camus for the "climate." It is only very naïf critics who think that all one's influence must be contemporary. In the noosphere there are no dates; only sympathies, admirations, loathings.[210]

The novel is constructed using a combination of two first-person accounts of the same events providing a seeming verisimilar depiction of the events leading up to and following Miranda's abduction and ultimately her death. Miranda's diary entries are written during her captivity and allow the reader to follow her journey towards existential authenticity as she embarks upon her own modernist "return." Clegg's account fluctuates between moments that approach confession and, more predominantly, moments of audacious pride in a plan executed with cunning and forethought.

The first person narratives used in this novel, while *seeming* to offer the most verisimilar and honestly rendered accounts possible, ironically foreground the degree to which both protagonists repeatedly misconstrue or misunderstand events and conversations. The events of the novel, experienced by two subjects and subsequently rendered in juxtaposed narrative accounts, present the reader with a complex and often contradictory version of reality. The narratives are often at variance from each other, and from these conflicting, incomplete reports the reader must construct meaning. Fowles's choice of this narrative structure foregrounds a central theme of the novel: specifically, the disparity between surface reality and ontological truth, a theme which is explored further in the representations of reality afforded by literature, art, and photography. All are found wanting, but the ones that are the most mimetically verisimilar in their representation of reality, (examples

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[209] *The Journals, Volume 1*, 220.

[210] John Fowles. "I Write therefore I Am," rep. in *Wormholes. Essays and Occasional Writings.* ed. by Jan Relf (New York: Holt and Holt, 1964), 5-12.

of which will be examined below) turn out to be at greatest variance from the "really" real.

  One example of the variability of the accounts presented by Clegg and Miranda is the walk outside. Miranda begs Clegg for a breath of fresh air, and finally he capitulates. Miranda's account of the walk and Clegg's account of the same are different, both in terms of the events described, and the language used to articulate them. Clegg, for example, stumbles to find adjectives to describe the night and even his own feelings, resorting to the following simplistic, exclusively denotative, cliché-ridden description (the italics are mine):

> It was a *funny* night, there was a moon behind the cloud, and the cloud was moving, but down below there was hardly any wind.... I took her arm *respectfully* and led her up the path between the wall that ran up one side and the lawn.... I really would have liked to take her in my arms and kiss her, *as a matter of fact* I was trembling.[211]

This use of the word "funny" recurs later in the novel as Clegg attempts to describe how Miranda has changed, both from the girl he first kidnapped, and from the vision he had of her before she became his prisoner. "It's *funny*," he recalls "she didn't look quite like I'd always remembered her."[212] "Funny" is obviously not a profound or appropriate word choice, since it has connotations that are completely unsuitable for the current situation, but Clegg's vocabulary and imagination are so inhibited that he is unable to articulate how he feels. Such an inability to communicate is also indicated by Clegg's frequent need to resort to hackneyed and clichéd phrases, such as: "as a matter of fact"[213]; "I didn't want to spoil the ship for the little bit of tar"[214]; "Hung for a sheep as well as a lamb"[215]; and "shall I be mother?"[216]. He also uses "dead" language such as: "as they say" and "so to speak"; and euphemisms like "guest" to describe Miranda's situation as his prisoner. The use of the word "respectfully" to describe the way in which he takes her arm in the walk outside described above is startling since one cannot possibly

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[211] *The Collector.* 59.

[212] Ibid., 187.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Ibid., 29.

[215] Ibid., 53.

[216] Ibid., 56.

conceive of a more inappropriate adjective to describe the relationship between a male stalking kidnapper and his victim. Such a lack of imagination, as well as a complete absence of empathy, is also reflected in Clegg's over-simplistic analysis of people and situations, showing a tendency towards positivistic and reductionist views as well as a total solipsism.

By contrast, Miranda's description of the walk outside not only captures the atmosphere of the night, but is also sensitive enough to determine, even while blindfolded (and gagged), that Clegg is experiencing an inner turmoil, completely absent from his account of the event:

> Then suddenly in the darkness I knew something was wrong with him. I couldn't see him, but I was suddenly frightened, I just knew he wanted to kiss me or something worse. He tried to say something about being very happy; his voice very strained. Choked. And then, that I didn't think he had any deep feelings, but he had. It's so terrible not being able to speak. My tongue's my defence with him, normally. My tongue and my look. There was a little silence, but I knew he was pent up.
>   All the time I was breathing in beautiful outdoor air. That was good. [...]So living, so full of plant smells and country smells and the thousand mysterious wet smells of the night.[217]

Miranda correctly ascertains that Clegg's "trembling" is evidence of his unnaturally, long-suppressed sexuality. She is right to be afraid of Clegg, and her *intuition* proves to be accurate, as he will later sexually assault her, perhaps (it is unclear from the text) rape her.

Repeatedly, Fowles contrasts these characters through their opposing modes of perception and through their use of language. Miranda's language demonstrates her ability to articulate experience that can transcend her imprisonment, for example, when she recalls listening to Bach:

> [it was] beautiful beyond words or drawing or anything but music, beautiful there in the moonlight. ... No past, no future. All intense deep that-time-only feeling. A feeling that everything must end, the music, ourselves, the moon, everything. That if you ever got to the heart of things you find sadness for ever and every, everywhere; but a beautiful silver sadness, like a Christ face.[218]

By contrast, Clegg struggles to apprehend anything that exceeds a concrete or superficial description of his experience. This is demonstrated dramatically by Miranda's attempt to evince some compassion from Clegg regarding her

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[217] Ibid., 128-129.

[218] Ibid., 190.

imprisonment. She tells a "fairy story" in which she depicts herself as a "princess" and Clegg as the "ugly monster" who holds her captive. In a desperate attempt to reduce her feelings of helplessness to a form that even Clegg can conceive, she reduces her plight to that of a children's story, an ugly monster letting the princess go and magically, "he wasn't ugly any more, he was a prince who had been bewitched."[219] Clegg is unmoved by the story, and he replies simply, "I love you."[220] As a stark depiction of the social, ideological, and philosophical chasm that exists between them, Miranda describes the effect of Clegg's blunt declaration of love: "[the words] were quite hopeless. He said it as he might have said, I have cancer. His fairy tale."[221] Words for him are barely even vehicles of meaning beyond those that signify the concrete and empirical.   Significantly, this episode is completely absent from Clegg's account.

Miranda repeatedly uses language and narrative, as well as art, to escape the confines of her imprisonment.   She resorts to reliving past memories to transport her mind from her physical prison. When she finds herself unable to sleep after trying, in desperation, to work out the logistics of digging a tunnel, she decides, " I am going to write about the first time I met G.P."[222] G.P. is her "magus" figure, an artist and would-be lover, significantly older than she, who has been attempting to seduce her.   Miranda is immediately transported to a reliving of this incident, demonstrating the power of imagination to elevate and transform even the most extreme of situations. Similarly, she draws upon traditional realistic fiction as a benchmark from which she can assess her own behaviour. She recalls Jane Austen, the epitome of the comedic English novel tradition, in particular, "I am Emma Woodhouse," Miranda writes in her diary,

> I know she does wrong things ...yet all the time one knows she's basically intelligent, alive.... Her faults are my faults: her virtues I must make my virtues.[223]

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[219] Ibid., 174.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Ibid., 175.

[222] Ibid., 141.

[223] Ibid., 12.

This reliance on fictional characters to assist her in this situation compounds the reader's sense of Miranda's innocence, her lack of exposure to life events because of her youth and comparatively sheltered upbringing. It also reminds the reader, however, that such fiction conforms to a worldview where the comedic tradition ensures a logical and rational return to harmony and the status quo by the final page. Such a guaranteed resolution no longer has purchase in contemporary fiction or in the life world. There are germs of discomfort in Miranda's seeking guidance from such a source, and this and other realistic novels (particularly Austen) are ultimately exposed as a source of childlike escapism from her present misery. There seems to be an implicit warning that one should not read and use (particularly realist) literature to interpret one's life.

Showing the same misplaced faith in social norms and logic, Miranda makes the fatal mistake of attempting to "play" Clegg's game by predefined "rules." She believes that, like a chess game, another prevalent metaphor in the novel, she can "outplay" Clegg. She mistakenly believes that he will adhere to his promise to let her go after a certain period of time if she acquiesces to some of his demands, that if she can communicate with him and educate him, she can make him see "reason."

In resorting to a logical attempt to play a game, she *feigns* affection for him. Again taking her lead from the rational rules of a game, she plans to seduce Clegg. Her logic is that Clegg will be unable to "imprison someone who's given herself to you,"[224] it is "like a really good sacrifice at chess."[225] Of course, in reality, the situation is far more complex. Miranda is only dimly aware of the element of herself that makes her "collectable" to Clegg, and one key aspect that she overlooks is the importance of her own adherence to the vision of perfection Clegg has of her. This final disparity between surface appearance and reality, Miranda's false *representation* of a seduction, and her subsequent descent from Clegg's *illusion* of the virginal heroine, leads to her downfall, and she condemns herself. Clegg feels justified in casting her aside as he would a damaged specimen. She becomes less than human to him, and he leaves her to die of pneumonia in the cellar.

Miranda attempts to teach Clegg about literature and music in vain attempts to nurture his impoverished mind. Even at the end of the novel, her dominant feeling

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[224] Ibid., 217.

[225] Ibid.

towards Clegg is pity, as she compares him to Shakespeare's Caliban five days
before her final diary entry,

> The pity Shakespeare feels for his Caliban, I feel (beneath the hate and disgust) for
> my Caliban. Half-creatures.[226]

She makes him read *The Catcher in the Rye*, but this too is doomed, in part, by his
lack of imagination. Clegg dislikes the novel, ironically because he does not
believe it is realistic[227]. He complains that Salinger's depiction of Holden Caulfield
is not true to life because he cannot believe someone with Caulfield's advantages in
life could behave so badly: "Going to a posh school and his parents having money.
He wouldn't behave like that."[228]. Clegg's reductive over-simplification of
Caulfield's situation is a grim portent of his callous judgement of Miranda's later
desperate actions.

   Similarly, Miranda discusses art with him, but again, unless the representation has
a direct correlation with the "real" world, he is unimpressed, revealing again his
inability to grasp anything beyond a surface reality. Miranda, an art student,
attempts to explain the difference between "good" and "bad" art. After drawing a
series of still lifes, she asks Clegg to pick out the best. His estimation of "best" of
course, correlates to the most life-like, despite Miranda's patient attempt to explain
the concepts of modern art and its mission to capture something in excess of the
individual piece being represented in an image. For Clegg, art is irrelevant. As
Miranda recalls:

> Of course he picked all those that looked most like the wretched bowl of fruit. I
> started to try to explain to him. I was boasting about one of the sketches (the one
> I liked best). He annoyed me. It didn't mean anything to him.[229]

Clegg's account of the event illustrates his inability to grasp the attempt on the part
of the artist to extend the boundaries of mimetic verisimilitude, to represent
something that extends the boundaries of surface reality. He describes the picture
Miranda prefers in his own account as looking "half-finished to me, you could

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[226] Ibid., 223.

[227] Ibid., 190

[228] Ibid.

[229] Ibid., 124.

hardly tell what the fruit were and it was all lop-sided."[230] He recalls Miranda's attempt to show him why one drawing is superior. Showing him an image in a book of pictures by Cézanne she explains, "There [...] He's not only saying everything there is about the apples but everything about all apples and all form and colour."[231] Clegg recalls Miranda's words in his account of the event, but the meaning behind them is incomprehensible to him.

   Such an inclination towards surface reality and realism is one aspect of Clegg's character that is reinforced throughout the novel as he is contrasted with Miranda's female, intuitive, and mythopoeic sensibilities, and this predilection manifests itself most dramatically in his second hobby, photography.

   Clegg's great faith in a direct correlation between appearance and truth contributes to his compulsion to photograph. It also gives him the ability to live vicariously through the lives of others. His photography descends rapidly from harmless voyeurism to crass pornography because he can see nothing beyond the surface image, no harm in violating another's identity, a reduction to mere object. He can see no disparity between the beauty of a living butterfly and one pinned to a display board, just as he believes he can capture and own Miranda's beauty. Superficial reality is a sufficiency for him; he is able to feel fulfilled without the emotional depth and complexity behind the image, something he avoids.

   His interest in photography is spurred by his occasional encounters with couples when he is out collecting, sharing that,

> ...you'd be surprised the things couples get up to in places you think they would know better than to do it in, so I had that too.[232]

This simulation of the sexual act through pornography (of which he has a significant collection) and his own photographs of strangers, anticipates his rape of Miranda. Unable to perform sexually (Clegg's impotence is implied earlier in the novel), Clegg rapes metaphorically with his camera. When Miranda has shattered his *image* of her by attempting to seduce him to win her freedom, thus making her a "vulgar woman" in his eyes, he feels justified in tying her to a bed, and taking her

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[230] Ibid., 58.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Ibid., 13.

"till I had no more bulbs left"[233]. Looking at the pictures later, Clegg confesses to enjoying, above all, the pictures where the face is missing, reinforcing the sense that Clegg's desire for Miranda is a reductive one. Even her individuality, her face, is not important to him. He accepts a topographical representation of both desire and the world, artificial visual representation satisfying him.

Photography is also an important concept in the novel because of its association with inherent reproducibility (which associates it with mass culture and kitsch). Walter Benjamin in his 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction"[234] suggests that as technology advances and the effective duplication of art becomes increasingly possible, this has a corresponding human impulse to bring that object "'closer' spatially and humanly." Benjamin describes this human compulsion in the age of reproduction as an urge to suppress the individuality and uniqueness of human existence,

> [...] toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.[235]

Such is Clegg's obsession with Miranda. At first, he is happy to observe her, circling dates on his calendar when he has a "sighting" of her. But when Clegg gains the financial means to do so, the urge to "get hold of an object at very close range" is overpowering.

Clegg is bemused by Miranda's horror at his reproduction art on the walls. Rejecting the influx of the mass-produced kitsch in Clegg's house, she destroys the plaster ducks that hang on the wall of Clegg's living room and attacks the house's décor in its entirety, condemning it as,

> Ghastliest colour-clashes, mix-up of furniture styles, bits of suburban fuss, phoney antiques, awful brass ornaments. And the pictures… He told me some firm did all the furniture choosing and decorating[236]

By contrast, Clegg is unaware of the difference between the authentic and the reproduced, happy to replace Miranda with "Miriam" another girl he has spotted

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[233] Ibid., 110.

[234] Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations,* (Berlin: Schocken Books, 1978), 233.

[235] Ibid., n.p.

[236] *The Collector*, 125.

towards the end of the novel to be his next victim. He is the ultimate consumer of the mass produced, the kitsch, happy to take the surface reality over any other potential that might lie beneath.

   After her abduction, Miranda recognises the connection between herself and the dead butterfly specimens Clegg has displayed, pinned on a board. She compares their plight with her own, both reduced to the status of specimens, their authentic existence extinguished. The inherent anonymity of the collected butterflies is an ironic prediction of how eminently replaceable Miranda turns out to be– she *becomes* a piece of kitsch art – eminently reproducible. Clegg wants her appearance, not her deeper, ontological presence because such a less mediated reality does not fit with the fiction he has created of her. Miranda suspects this is the case:

> It's me he wants, my look, 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. [237]

Miranda and Clegg might be described not only as representatives of the Heraclitian dialectic, but also as representatives in the struggle between the modernist (elite) and the encroaching mass culture which threatened to overwhelm it. In *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (1986), Andreas Huyssen examines the social and political ramifications of the complex relationship between high and mass culture and its implications for art forms, including literature. According to Huyssen, modernism had always been constituted though a "conscious strategy of exclusion, an anxiety of contamination by its other: an increasingly consuming and engulfing mass culture."[238] Huyssen describes mass culture as being a necessary companion to modernism; a means by which the former could define itself, but in its attempt to remove itself from the taint of mass culture, many artists, Huyssen suggests, had rendered their work so complex, so elite, that the works became islands: highly eclectic and esoteric, and unreachable by all but an elite few. Similarly, in *The Aristos*, Fowles describes this paradox thus:

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[237] Ibid., 161.

[238] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism.* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii.

> Increasingly art has to express what the non-scientific intellectual *élite* of the world think and feel; it is for the top of the pyramid, the literate few. When the chief fields for intellectual expression and the main channels for the stating of personal views of life were theology and philosophy, the artist was able to remain in close contact with a public. But now that art has become the chief mode of stating self, now that the theologican-philosopher is metamorphosed into the artist, an enormous gap has sprung.[239]

Fowles sees the changing role of the artist, (moving from being an intermediary between the theologican-philosopher and the masses, to *replacing* the theologian-philosopher), as key to the many challenges being faced by the artist. The artist, he suggests in *The Aristos* and intimates in *The Collector*, is now faced with a chasm between himself and the masses with whom he must communicate. Miranda experiences this chasm first hand as she tries to communicate with Clegg.

There are two additional concepts in Huyssen's description of modernism that are particularly interesting when considering *The Collector*. Firstly, Huyssen identifies modernism as the antithesis of mass culture. Secondly, he identifies modernism with the rejection of classical systems of representation, authorial voice, verisimilitude and realism. In *The Collector*, we see Miranda as the representative of the modernist struggle to resist, unsuccessfully, the domination of mass culture in the form of Clegg. Fowles's writing career corresponds with this shift in class structure, which demanded a re-examination of the relationship between art and the elite, and between art (specifically literature) and the "many". The British novel, like all art forms, must be affected by a need to be relevant to an audience beyond the cultural elite of high modernism, and it is this struggle, which forms a major component of *The Collector*. The fact that the elite, represented by Miranda, ends up being crushed by the ignorant and arrogant Clegg suggests that Fowles identifies more with the modernists in this regard, indicating that his attempts to evolve the novel form can be interpreted more accurately as an extension of modernism rather than its rejection. To suggest otherwise would be to imply that Fowles embraces one of the central tenets of postmodernism: that of the dissolution of the boundaries between elite and mass culture. If nothing else, *The Collector* illustrates Fowles's horror at the engulfing power of mass culture and the threat it poses, in his eyes, to the culture of the elite, and interestingly the power of mass culture is closely identified with the urge to label, collect, own, and render static.

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[239] *The Aristos*, 187.

The static, surface reality of the photograph seems to Fowles unable to capture reality on the same profound level as that of the abstract artist or the composer. In *The Collector*, photography is associated with power and domination and also with fixing reality in a way that robs it of its vitality. In both *The Magus* and *The Collector*, photography is also associated with pornography and Fowles rejects such surface knowledge, a reductive imitation of passion as insufficient. In *The Magus*, Conchis places a book comprised entirely of photographs of naked breasts in Urfe's room. The images are disturbing to Urfe because they are extreme close-ups, devoid of context, and therefore removed from any association with sexuality. As Urfe notes, the pictures are "much too obsessive to be erotic."[240] In both *The Magus* and *The Collector*, the photographs are not associated with art (although Clegg maintains that they are "artistic") or sexuality, but with domination and sterility. Labelling, organizing, analyzing, and establishing hierarchies are all equated with obsessive strategies that attempt to solidify and fix what is innately dynamic.

Examples of this impulse to fix and to know abound in *The Collector* and are associated with Clegg who personifies one who has complete faith in science, logic, and empiricism to the exclusion of all other modes of knowing. Fowles's personification of Clegg has a striking similarity to Georges Bataille's characterization of scientific (restrictive, reductive) knowledge to which I alluded in chapter one. Bataille contrasts this system of knowledge, characterized by a nullifying distillation of reality to a static decay, with the possibilities offered by a system of "nonknowledge," which may occur when "we give up the will to know… [and] have the possibility of touching the world with a much greater intensity."[241]

The domination of the logical and the practical to the exclusion of all other possibilities, Fowles suggests, has created a dangerous sociopath in Clegg. Clegg privileges knowledge of the concrete, practical skills and planning, and cunning over all else. This is demonstrated in the lengths he goes to kidnap Miranda and remain undetected. When planning his abduction of Miranda, he turns to his copy of *Secrets of the Gestapo*[242]. He memorizes the map of the area where he knows

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[240] *The Magus*, 103.

[241] Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 115.

[242] *The Collector*, 40.

Miranda walks alone and learns the "knowledge" of the London streets, "the A to Z for that part off and how to get quickly away down to Fosters."[243] His "knowing" of this area is complete, apparently comprehensive. He executes his plan with such extreme attention to detail that there seems little possibility of his being apprehended for the crime. He ensures, for example with meticulous care, that no rubbish leaves the cellar that might betray Miranda's presence, and he attempts to anticipate ways in which she might try to kill him. Rather bizarrely, he projects that she might interfere with the light switches:

> I used to go and sit in her room and work out what she could do to escape. I thought she might know about electricity, you never know with girls these days, so I always wore rubber heels, I never touched a switch without a good look first. I got a special incinerator to burn all her rubbish. I know nothing of hers must ever leave the house. No laundry. There could always be something.[244]

Clegg exhibits other practical skills, for instance as he creates a prison for Miranda in his basement, he uses a bookshelf to craft a door. Significantly, this traditional repository for the storage and retrieval of knowledge becomes the object by which he physically imprisons Miranda. Clegg's knowledge is restricted entirely to the concrete and the practical, but applied in a manner that is so perverse that its utilitarian validity is both underscored and yet undermined.

In *The Collector* Fowles does not suggest that the arts should *not* be accessible to the masses. Quite the opposite, its narrative expounds the historical avant-garde view that arts should be an integral part of life rather than an appendage accessible only to the élite few. Again from *The Aristos*:

> Because in general we approach the arts and entertainment from outside, because we go to art, we regard it as external to the main part of our life. We go to the theatre, to the cinema, the opera, the ballet; to museums; to sports fields (for a part of all great games is as much art as theatre or ballet). Even our reading is outside the main occupations of our day; and even the art that is piped into our homes we feel comes from outside. This holding at a distance of art, this constant spectatoring, is thoroughly evil.[245]

Fowles seems to imply that if Clegg had been exposed more to the arts rather than being obsessed with only science and non-fiction, (significantly, he "got O level in

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[243] Ibid., 26.

[244] Ibid., 23.

[245] *The Aristos*, 187.

Maths and Biology"[246]) he may have been able to evolve something approaching the ability to empathise.

Clegg's compulsive behaviour also manifests itself in other character traits which Fowles has previously attributed to his other flawed, male protagonist, Urfe, although not to this extreme degree: a lack of imagination and empathy, an urge to collect and possess (sexual conquests, in Urfe's case, beyond the reach or ability of Clegg,) a detachment from emotions, and as discussed above, a propensity to rely on logic, rationality, and empiricism over intuition and emotion. These traits will recur in later male protagonists, always accompanied by a female character who will act as catalyst, as Miranda tries and fails to do with Clegg, in the male's journey (or "return") whereby he re-evaluates his past attitudes and identity before embarking on a new path.   This novel is rather an aberration, since it is Miranda, not Clegg, who is changed by the encounter. Clegg is, the reader might deduce, beyond help. He is too damaged, too prejudiced against Miranda's attempts to expose him to art, beauty, and imagination, to allow her influence to affect him. He dismisses her attempts to educate him as her using her class against him, which is presented as a continual barrier to their communication throughout the novel:

> I don't hold it against her, she probably said and did some of the shocking things she did to show me she wasn't really refined, but she was. When she was angry, she could get up on her high horse and come it over me with the best of them. There was always class between us.[247]

Henri Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics* attacks what we have seen in Clegg as a privileging of the scientific and analytical over the intuitive as a mode of understanding reality. It is significant that, as Mary Ann Gillies points out in her work *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (1996), that Bergson is so closely associated with that literary movement and that his ideas were so influential, particularly on the British modernists. There are striking similarities between areas of philosophical interest associated with Bergson and those central to Fowles's fiction. Space constraints prevent an extensive survey of these similarities, but Gillies summarizes two particular concepts that are germane to this discussion.

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[246] *The Collector*, 170.

[247] Ibid., 39.

Firstly, Bergson investigated the human impulse to make sense of the world by artificially spatializing it. Gillies cites Bergson's *Time and Free Will* (1910) thus:

> By introducing space into our perception of duration, [we corrupt] at its very source our feeling of outer and inner change, of movement, and of freedom.[248]

The artificial reduction of evanescent experiences is a symptom, Bergson suggests, of a need to control the natural environment. I have suggested in my analyses of *The Magus* and *The Collector* that this reductive response is a flaw in Fowles's male characters who share this need to "pin" meaning (to borrow the metaphor from the latter novel) in order to make sense of the world. Similarly, the role of language as mediator of reality was central to Bergson's work and to the literary modernists. Again, Gillies cites *Time and Free Will*:

> The influence of language on sensation is deeper than is usually thought. Not only does language make us believe in the unchangeableness of our sensations, but it will sometimes deceive us as to the nature of the sensation felt... In short, the word with the well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness. To maintain the struggle on equal terms, the latter ought to express themselves in precise words; but these words, as soon as they were formed, would turn against the sensation which gave birth to them, and invented to show that the sensation is unstable, they would impose on it their own stability.[249]

Bergson and Fowles explore this complex interaction between language and reality in their work. Both consider that language, although the best means of communication available to spatialize experiences so that they might be communicated to others, is still artificial, reductive, and ultimately falsely reassuring that the reality surrounding us is somehow immutable. This close affinity between Fowles and Bergson is, I suggest, indicative that the impetus for much of what has been described as an experimental impulse in Fowles might be traced back to radical ideas central to the modernist movement rather than the self-conscious experimentation of the postmodernists.

Extending Gillies' observations, I believe a Bergsonian influence can be detected in *The Collector*. Specifically, in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson proposes two methods of knowing a thing: firstly, one can know the thing from the

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[248] Mary Ann Gillies. *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Quebec, 1996), 11.

[249] Ibid., 22.

outside. With this view of the thing, both the point of view and the symbols used to describe the thing are relative. The type of knowledge one can glean from such a mode of thinking is analytically based (contingent upon other symbols for its explanation and the point of view from which the symbols emanate.) This point of view is also restricted to the analysis of a static world. Its analysis can only comprehend mobile states by establishing (artificially) points of stasis along its trajectory, which are then examined. The second, and preferred, method of knowing advocated by Bergson is that of absolute knowledge. Absolute knowledge occurs when one examines a thing as the thing itself; one becomes the thing, i.e., empathises. Such knowledge can only be derived via the imagination and intuition. This latter mode of knowing is, as Bergson asserts, a superior form of knowledge because it does not force artificial stasis on the thing in order to know it. Bergson suggests that the dominance of analytic and scientific thought after the Enlightenment has led to a prevailing system of thought that excludes the intuitive and the imaginative.

Such artificial means of knowing is exemplified by Clegg whose knowledge of butterflies is extensive but static (literally, since it leads to the death and pinning of the objects of his knowledge.) It is also exemplified in his gravitation towards photography, and his rejection of non-representational art as a true reflection of reality. This approach to knowledge is ultimately seen as destructive not creative. Ultimately, Clegg's attempts to pin meaning in an otherwise overly complex world, are evidence of a frantic modernist impulse to solidify reality; in Marshall Berman's words (citing Marx) attempting to make solid what "turns into air."[250]

These strategies are associated directly with Fowles's male protagonists, all of them flawed, and each attempting variously to solidify, label, analyse, dissect, and organize reality. In so doing, they omit the ontological depth of experience revealed by the mythic, whose ineffable qualities elude analysis and solidification. However, it is this essence, this "mystery" to which Fowles has referred before in *The Aristos*, that holds the power of direct experience. Miranda becomes aware of this power in her last days. Reflecting Fowles's own optimism and faith in her sex

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[250] Marshall Berman. *All That is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity.* (London: Penguin, 1988).

to prevail in a world dominated by the logic, empiricism, and rationalism of the post-Enlightenment, she writes:

> The power of women! I've never felt so full of mystery. Men are a joke.[251]

In *The Collector*, Fowles not only interrogates traditional representational realism, he also destabilizes established mythic structures, challenging such ritualized stabilities, until such myths are subverted. Examples of myths deconstructed in *The Collector* include the *princesse lointaine* (the distant princess), who resorts to attempting to seduce her captor thus shattering the myth of her purity and innocence. The traditional princess imprisoned in the castle is also destabilized. Miranda is specifically referred to as *une princesse lointaine*[252] when G.P. dedicates one of his pictures to her, yet she is imprisoned, not up in a tower, but beneath the earth in a tomb-like cellar. Similarly, her jailor and potential liberating white knight are one and the same person, since Clegg's very name—Clegg – clef or "key"—implies that he holds the key to her freedom. Finally, this *princesse lointaine* dies after her virtue is debased, both by her desperate attempt to seduce her captor and win her freedom, and by her metaphoric rape.

There is absolutely no exonerating feature present in this social outsider. Unlike the archetypal social outcasts and misfits personified by Sillitoe, Braine, Osborne, and Salinger, Clegg seems devoid of any quality that might excuse his behaviour. He is, Miranda notes, full of "hate of other things and other people outside his own type."[253] For Miranda, this makes Clegg worse than other such outsiders, and she makes this distinction between Sillitoe's character and Clegg:

> If Arthur Seaton saw a modern statue he didn't like, he's smash it. But Caliban would drape a tarpaulin round it. I don't know which is worse. But I think Caliban's way is.[254]

Clegg's "selfishness and brutality and shame and resentment"[255] prevent him from joining the ranks of such mythical outsiders as individuals who at least demand our respect if not our pity.

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[251] *The Collector*, 226.

[252] Ibid., 165.

[253] Ibid., 212.

[254] Ibid.

Unlike the modernist's use of the mythopoeic as a nostalgic glimpse of the past which precedes the chaos and disruption of contemporary times, Fowles adopts the logic and articulation allowed by a fuller mythopoeic economy of meaning, and its radical subjectivity that underpins the transience of contemporary existence. Such a mythic vision enables an understanding of the present as largely coterminous with the past, aligning Fowles with Ernst Cassirer's examination of myth in his work *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Volume Two: Mythical Thought.* This is more radical than Eliot's view of myth as a "continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity", as Cassirer advocates myth as articulating in a manner beyond words representations of "monumental deities" rather than Eliot's common and universal symbolism.

With *The Collector*, Fowles draws the readers' attention to the nature of the contemporary world: its complexity, its implausible superficial division between good and evil in the light of the Cold War, and its equally implausible division between the classes. *The Collector* is thus is an example of literary discourse which has the capacity, as Tew describes, to "reveal while veiling, or to produce a de-realizing 'reality effect'"[256] which allows one to look beyond the novel to the social and psychological condition of the individual and the society which produced it. Each of his novels as Conradi suggests,

> can best be read as in pursuit of the particular integrity of its own incompleteness, which is to say as braving a new kind of fictional logic by which to foreground, however inconclusively, its necessary inauthenticities.[257]

The Collector exemplifies and anticipates the development of a successor to realism in British fiction in which the relationship between language and reality is explored. Although all of Fowles's novels can be described as realistic in their inclusion of detail and observation, Fowles presents the reader with the sense of difficulty inherent in this attempt to reconcile reality and fiction. The difficulty of [this] task," as Lodge writes, "[is] his subject":

> The reality principle is never really allowed to lapse entirely – indeed, it is often invoked … to expose the artificiality of conventional realistic illusion… The kind of novelist I am talking about [Fowles] retains a loyalty to both ['reality' and

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[255] Ibid.

[256] Philip Tew. *The Contemporary British Novel*, xi.

[257] Peter Conradi. *John Fowles*, (London: Methuen, 1982) 22.

fiction], but lacks the orthodox novelist's confidence in the possibility of reconciling them.[258]

The Collector investigates the possibilities of realism in a manner that relinquishes and rejects the lineage of the dominant realistic narrative. Fowles does so examining the reality of the archive, of intertextuality, and the mythopoeia. Faced with Clegg, Miranda, like the reader, is pushed to the limits of his or her knowledge of the real. *The Collector* is part of a continuum in Fowles's work which shows a movement away from the traditionally realistic – evidenced by a problematization of rationalism, empiricism, mimetic representation, and surface realism — towards alternative modes of interpreting and conveying reality such as the mythic and the historiographic, and through the intertextual relationships created between other works of fiction and the experience conveyed in the resulting interstices. These elements will be extended further in the final novel of this first decade, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

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[258] David Lodge. "The Novelist at the Crossroads", *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 11 (1969), 105.

The French Lieutenant's Woman

John Fowles's 1969 novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, epitomizes the shift in the British novel towards an engagement with the literary and theoretical concepts of realism that has been seen in both *The Magus* and *The Collector*. At its heart is the need to find a method of articulating reality that more adequately reflects the complexity and plurality of experiences of contemporary Britain in the aftermath of two world wars and in a period marked by the emergence of a late capitalist culture. Essentially, in this novel Fowles interrogates realism, a dominant literary mode, via the "parodic" use of the Victorian novel form and conventions, and in so doing highlights its strengths and weaknesses. The strategies that emerge anticipate a new realism demanded by the complexity and multilayered nature of contemporary consciousness, anticipating innovations in the form that can be seen in the later works by Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*, 1981), Ackroyd (*Hawksmoor*, 1985) Swift's *Waterland* (1983), Byatt's *Possession* (1990) *Utz* (1985), and, more recently Fowles's influence can be seen in the complex plots and so called "hysterical realism"[259] of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) and *On Beauty* (2005).

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles attempts to capture that most elusive of elements: a realism that is rooted in the "really" real; a reality, in Robert Scholes's words, that "is too subtle for [traditional literary] realism to catch…"[260] Although, unsurprisingly, much criticism centred upon Fowles's novel focuses on its apparently postmodern tendencies, I will suggest Fowles's exploration of realism informs his well-recognized experimentation in this narrative. Fowles uses historiography, metafiction and intertextuality, and the mythopoeic in his interrogation of the conventions of literary realism and thereby radicalizes this flawed, narrative mode so as to achieve a new and truer reflection of the real, arguably one of the legacies of literary modernism.

My analysis of the novel is informed in particular by Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, to which I have already alluded, but in my analysis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, I will be concerned more specifically with the relationship between reality and the way in which it is interpreted by the intellect. As mentioned above, Bergson posited that in order to interpret the complexity of reality, the

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[259] James Woods, "Tell me how does it feel?" *The Guardian*, October 15, 2001, 8.
[260] Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction,* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 13.

intellect reduces its inherent fluidity and state of becoming. Bergson characterizes the real as "variability itself" while the analyzed form of reality is, he states, invariable, "a simplified reconstruction, often a mere symbol, in any case a motionless view of the moving reality."[261]

This has an interesting correlation in Fowles's interrogation of traditional mimetic realism. His exploration of the literal pinning of existence as a central theme of *The Collector* is revisited and varied in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where in a sense this metaphor is even more pervasive. Once more the male protagonist, Charles Smithson, is a collector, but this time of fossils – a curious natural process over aeons that captures life. Charles collects and labels this residue, evidence of life that once thrived but died. Similarly, he lives his life contained by duty and convention, existing in stasis and sterility.

It is significant that Fowles chooses to mimic the Victorian novel to provide the setting for two reasons. First, historically, the period marks the zenith of narrative realism, the previous evolutionary point in the novel's trajectory having been, according to Kettle's *An Introduction to The English Novel. Volume I*[262], its inception, which was a realistic reaction to the medieval romance and its courtly descendents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Secondly, his narrative is set in 1867, eight years after Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), which superseded the Linnaean "Scala Naturae," thus establishing the concept of evolution as a pervasive and central organizing metaphor. Thematically the work foregrounds the reduction of the complexity of life to a blunt and horrifying realization that life is simply the manifestation of a brutally logical progression of extinction and modification as species struggle to exist. This is contrasted with the degree of freedom possessed by Sarah Woodruff, who exhibits an existential freedom, setting herself beyond quotidian social restraints by virtue of her own mythopoeic abilities.

The novel's narrator describes Linnaeus' obsession with "classifying and naming, with fossilizing the existent" associating this endeavour with "a fore-doomed

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[261] Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* trans. by T. E. Hulme, (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 42.

[262] Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel, Vol I.* (London: Hutchinson, 1951), 28.

attempt to stabilize and fix what is in reality a continuous flux."[263] This was Darwin's realization that, much like Bergson's observation of reality, there is no such thing as an accurate and all-encompassing reflection of the state of all life-forms, since evolution is a continuous process. As soon as all life-forms have been catalogued, that catalogue is already obsolete. Such futile labelling and pinning on the part of Linnaeus, (who was, as Fowles reminds us in the text, eventually driven mad by this enterprise), are not simply symbolic of a mindset displaced by intellectual evolutionary forces in the scientific field, but may also indicate a similar supersession in the artistic field where methods of representation are subject to subversion and change, a point made by Fowles's imitation of aspects of the genre's historical evolution.

Fowles underscores the futility of rendering reality realistically in his apparent inclusion of "realistic" dialogue or *oratio recta*, characteristic of the Victorian narrative.   Fowles used dialogue so that it should appear more "realistically" Victorian.   In his essay "On Writing a Novel," however, Fowles explains how he adjusted the genuine dialogue of 1867, adapting that of fictions of the period, because it would have struck readers at the end of the 1960s as "far too close to our own to sound convincingly old."[264]   His comment is revealing, acknowledging as it does Fowles's engagement with a central challenge inherent in writing in a supposedly 'realistic' narrative, that of the expectations of the reader. The need to align with such expectations, ironically, leads to an explicit and conscious departure from authenticity in the dialogue of his Victorian characters, a formal demand that alters genre and historical patterns.

The novel repeatedly underscores the futility of attempting to capture realism by pinning meaning, not because of a lack of faith in language, but in the explicit and implicit suggestion that reality is inherently fluid and in excess of understanding. Any inherent implied stasis is artificial. The very title of the novel itself is what Bergson may have called a "simplified reconstruction"[265] of the complexity that is

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[263] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 47.

[264] John Fowles, "On Writing a Novel," *The Cornhill,* No. 1060 (1969), 281.

[265] Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 42.

Sarah Woodruff; only one aspect of her character is that of "the French lieutenant's woman" and that facet, we learn from the text, is in fact untrue.

Charles Smithson attempts, with typical post-Enlightenment zeal, to solve the enigma of Sarah Woodruff's condition and identity, and in so doing, abandons not only his fiancée and a comfortable financial future, but the entire nature of his previous existence. Artifice is at the heart of the novel, tracing as it does the relationship between the falsely-labelled "French Lieutenant's Woman", and Charles Smithson, a Victorian gentleman. Although Sarah has constructed this aspect of her character, or her perceived reputation, a significant cluster of 'truths' underlie the narrative that Sarah constructs. She has embroidered upon an event in her past when, serving as a governess, she helped nurse a French sailor back to health. The story retold by the gossips of Lyme Regis, initiated by Sarah herself, is that the sailor, Varguennes, promised to marry her, lured her to Exeter on a false pretext, seduced her, and then abandoned her. This would be morally suspect and make her a social pariah, but as Charles later discovers, the account is untrue since she is a virgin before their first and final sexual union. This is a central thematic representation of the disparity between truth and the attempt to realistically depict that truth. Fowles suggests that this quotidian social narrative depends upon a reductive, prejudiced, and obscure depiction of the truth: an attempt to stabilize if not reduce to a static condition a far more complex reality which actually fluctuates constantly and is in excess of the conventional comprehension of the apparently logical values of the community rooted in their ethical limitations. Fowles suggests, in his oblique references to the zeitgeist of the 1960s, that this may well be equally true of the world contemporaneous to him.

Conceptually, a notion of such a state of flux, this constant state of becoming, informs or structures the disconcerting way in which many of the characters in the novel vacillate between their supposed (conventional) characteristics (the characters of type which we would expect in a traditional, Victorian novel) and their "true" or more complex natures, aspects of which are elusive and defy conventional logic and direct representation. Sarah is the obvious example. She adopts the role of the cast-out woman, but the label is exposed as being highly inappropriate and artificial. Her drama reduces the intricacies of both her desire and any wider apprehension of reality, for Charles as well as herself. Her account does capture one aspect of her

character and existence; a self-projection adopted for reasons of psychological and practical need, a social inscription that turns out to be false.

Equally, Charles's character also appears to vacillate between the "real" or authentic nature of his visceral presence and the artificiality of his conventional world and its set of values and expectations. His self-image fluctuates too, epitomized by his realization of a bifurcated identity. His epiphany occurs when he views his reflection in a mirror and identifies it as being the more real version of himself, "The one in the room was … an imposter; … an observed other."[266] Other characters exhibit such schisms in their own identities, the artificiality becoming apparent under duress, just as Ernestina, who, abandoned by Charles, slumps with studied artificiality into a delicate heap, horrifying Charles in her falsehood, her "catatonia of convention."[267]. It is a culturally conditioned construct.

Fowles also challenges the expectations of the reader by another innovative strategy extending the boundaries of conventional mimetic realism, by moving his fictional characters between two planes of existence: the historically real, and the fictional. For example, the implied author himself moves abruptly in and out of the action of the narrative. He speaks directly to the reader in the often-quoted chapter thirteen, at which point he admits that everything he has written up to this point has been fiction. Later, he writes himself back into the novel as a fellow Victorian passenger on the train carrying Charles back from London, during which time he observes the sleeping Charles and warns the reader that he or she should look out for the gaze of the novelist who, he suggests, will observe you with a particular look thinking, "Now could I use you? Now what could I do with you?"[268]

This is one of several examples of a dissonance introduced to the perceived ontological relationship between the author and his characters. Traditionally, the relationship between the author and the characters depicted within a work of fiction is one that exists between the real and the imaginary. However, by representing the implied author in the same ontological plane of existence (i.e., describing the implied author as being present on the train in which the fictitious Charles is

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[266] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 329.

[267] Ibid., 331.

[268] Ibid., 348.

sleeping), Fowles foregrounds and problematizes the relationship between the imaginary (Charles) and the putatively "real" but fictionally depicted author, thereby encouraging the reader to consider such ontological questions as 'what truly exists?' and 'what is it that constitutes the real?'.

Other examples of such ontological problematization include an incident depicted in the novel when Sam, Charles Smithson's manservant, is compared by the implied author to Sam Weller from Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers.* The two characters are subsequently contrasted in terms of the degree to which each is satisfied (or not) with being a servant. The ontological dissonance occurs when Sam mentions he has himself heard of Sam Weller, "not from the book, but from a stage version of it."[269] The implication is that Sam, in the historical world depicted in Fowles's novel, was a real person who existed after the publication of Dickens' work and who curiously went to see its theatrical adaptation (seeing the very artifice from which he originates). This in some implied fashion shifts Sam from the realm of fictional character to the "real" world, observing a fictional artefact (from within another such artefact) in a stage version of Dickens' *Pickwick Papers.*

As I have alluded previously, other examples of such ontological dissonance include Ernestina's reference to "the very steps that Jane Austen made Louisa Musgrove fall down in *Persuasion*"[270] as if they were "real", and the description of Mary, Mrs Tranter's servant girl, as having a

> great-great-granddaughter, who is twenty-two years old this month… she is one of the more celebrated young film actresses.[271]

This blurring between the two orders of being, the fictive and the real world, has the effect of defamiliarizing any claim to a literal, material base for realism and impinges upon our expectations of the boundaries of the fiction we are reading. By creating a kind of permeable membrane between the fictional and the historic, between art and life, and by perpetuating movement in both directions, Fowles changes the relationship between the reader, the novel, and the author, complicating and modifying the exchanges that occur among them.

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[269] Ibid., 41.

[270] Ibid., 12.

[271] Ibid., 68-9.

Making the ontological connection between the fictional world and the real world initially has the conventionally accepted effect (establishing plausibility via adopting the convention of historical realism – assertion, objective, factual proof or scientific evidence) but in this fictional context, it simply highlights the distance between the two worlds.

Surely such a disparity between realism in the novel and the empirical and scientific, as conveyed in this example, is indicative of Fowles's exploration of alternative modes of not only representing reality, but an oblique way of suggesting that the grounds of historical truth and its material account may be themselves fluctuating. Such examples demonstrate that commonly accepted modes of authenticity or mimetic verisimilitude (in essence historical and empirical evidence) are often incompatible with and detrimental to capturing the fundamentally real.

Fowles's novel also highlights the inherent affinity between traditional realist and quotidian social and moral conventions. Such realist standards are themselves dependent on a somewhat static world upon which they can reflect. Of course, the reliance on such stasis is fraught. Fowles highlights the flaws in traditional realist conventions (such as in the examples cited above). He also foregrounds the problem of any adherence to quotidian norms of Victorian behaviour (primarily Victorian codes of expression, social conventions, its sense of duty, and its tradition more broadly) and Victorian thinking (a limitedly scientific rationalism) and the ways in which the adherence to such norms threaten any putative sense of both authenticity and a broadly ontological understanding. Examples of this include the reaction of Dr Grogan, a respected local physician, to Sarah Woodruff. Grogan is sought out by Charles when the latter realizes that he has fallen under the spell of the mysterious Sarah. Dr Grogan misinterprets Sarah's behaviour, using typically scientific and reductive reasoning, and pronounces her insane. Similarly, Smithson, vacillating between his recognition that Sarah is an enigma, and yet wanting to solve her mystery, ultimately loses her when he succumbs to convention and duty. Specifically, instead of returning to Sarah after their union at the Endicott Family Hotel, out of respect for duty and convention he writes her a letter telling her that he is duty bound to break his engagement before they can be together. His letter never reaches Sarah as the letter goes astray (itself an example of a traditional literary device), and she flees to start a new life in London. Hence, Smithson's adherence to the conventions of duty and tradition contribute to his loss. The implication appears

to be that the bounds and conventions of traditional realism are too closely associated with the empirical and the scientific to capture the fluidity and multiple ontological perspectives that constitute contemporary consciousness, just as Smithson's attempt to pursue and marry the mythic Sarah (thus pinning her in a traditional Victorian relationship) is also doomed to failure.

The mode of knowing and existence that is exemplified by Sarah Woodruff is, I suggest, offered by Fowles as an alternative to the scientific and empirical. Sarah, as I have intimated earlier, is closely associated with the mythic: specifically, she is described as a "figure from myth,"[272] "from a dream"[273] and subsequently, associated with "Calypso,"[274] and the "Sphinx."[275] She is set apart from the society in which she exists and is a living anachronism, being able to judge the good from the bad by virtue of having "a computer in her heart."[276] Sarah, like Fowles, rejects the verisimilar and the mimetic in favour of the mythopoeic. Such a mode of knowing is based in the real, yet is not confined by that mode's conventions and affiliation with the scientific and empirical.

This Fowlesian mythopoeisis informs the often-cited three alternative endings to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, which strongly suggest, if synthesized, concurrent possibilities rather than end-states and can be interpreted to imply Fowles's rejection of a narrow mimesis. The first, the narrator informs us, the traditional Victorian "happy" ending in which Charles is reunited with Ernestina, is the one Charles daydreams during his train ride back from London. The ending is rendered implausible by the implied author's repeated comments that suggest his indifference to the novel's conclusion. He can barely be bothered to supply the reader with sufficient detail to sustain a semblance of verisimilitude:

> [Charles and Ernestina] begat what shall it be – let us say seven children,"[277]

and,

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[272] Ibid., 9.

[273] Ibid, 78.

[274] Ibid, 125.

[275] Ibid, 399.

[276] Ibid, 50.

[277] Ibid., 293.

> Sam and Mary – but who can be bothered with the biography of servants? They married, and bred, and died, in the monotonous fashion of their kind.[278]

The intrusion of the implied author facilitates the second and third endings, taking a watch from his pocket,

> He makes a small adjustment to the time. It seems … that he was running a quarter of an hour fast. It is doubly strange for there is no visible clock by which he could have discovered the error in his own timepiece.[279]

 These fifteen minutes, of course, allow the reader to rejoin chapter sixty and the third ending to the novel. The second ending sees Charles introduced by Sarah to his daughter, Lalage, and suggests that the two lovers will be reconciled. Rewinding fifteen minutes, there is a third ending: Charles's realization, in the closing words of the novel that the mythic Sarah is beyond the restrictive bounds of convention:

> not a symbol, is not one riddle and one failure to guess it, is not to inhabit one face alone or to be given up after one losing throw of the dice; but is to be, however inadequately, emptily, hopelessly into the city's iron heart, endured. And out again, upon the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.[280]

Additionally, these final words in the novel remind the reader of the mechanistic nature of industrial London's heart to which Charles must return. In the notes to his Russian translator, Fowles suggests that this final paragraph is better understood when read in conjunction with "[Matthew] Arnold's great poem in Chapter 58."[281] The poem, 'To Marguerite' (1853) is quoted in its entirety in the novel, and the metafictional allusion also affects the way in which the novel is perceived. The informed reader is aware that the poem is authentic and that it was published at about the same time as that in which Charles' and Sarah's story is set. Yet the textualization of such an artefact alongside their story also foregrounds an awareness of the constructed nature of both story and poem. Arnold's poem is also the source of the "unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea" with which the novel concludes, and its theme is the plight of human beings to be divided, as islands, separated by

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[278] Ibid., 294.

[279] Ibid., 395.

[280] Ibid., 399.

[281] John Fowles letter to Irene Komarova, 8 September, 1984. John Fowles Papers 26.3, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

this unplumb'd sea. Such a division might also be read as that dividing not only Sarah from Charles, but also the past from the present, and the real from the imagined. The fact that Charles is poised to endure but also to journey "out again" upon that sea suggests that the islanded state in which we find ourselves might be overcome, but not with "one riddle" and "one failure to guess it." Reality and existence, relationships (between people and between the past and the present) are more complex and demanding than a reductive or simplistic solution would imply.

Thus, variously Fowles uses techniques to transcend the conventions of realism by undermining its effects. Fowles is not implying that attempts at creating a fictional but authentic real are doomed, but that in the interstices of some of the innovative strategies I have discussed, that "real" may be glimpsed. Such a view is articulated by Christine Brooke-Rose when she suggests that:

> the sense that empirical reality is not as secure as it used to be is now pervasive at all levels of society. Certainly what used to be called empirical reality, or the world, seems to have become more and more unreal, and what has long been regarded as unreal is more and more turned to or studied as the only "true" or "another equally valid" reality.[282]

Finally, Fowles's sense of his realism, I suggest is grounded in the life-world, an impressionistic eventfulness, an authenticized existential being. He seeks to explore such reality via modes that include the mythic, historiography, metafiction and intertextuality as devices that allow this reality (that is quite apart from literary naturalism and traditional realism) to be concealed and revealed in such a way that it appears, ironically, even more real or authentic *vis a vis* ontology.   Again, this concept is explored in Bergson, who advocates a mode of knowing that gets as close to the original as possible. He calls this a kind of "intellectual auscultation" in which one can feel the throbbing of its soul. This true empiricism, he says, "is the true metaphysics."[283]   Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is, I suggest, a movement towards such a 'true metaphysics.'

In this chapter, it is evident that Fowles's first three novels are, in great part, products of an adapted form of a modernist aesthetic. However, it is possible to detect several ways in which Fowles is already expanding upon the dominant ideas

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[282] Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 9.

[283] Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 37.

of this modernist aesthetic and changing the trajectory of modernist fiction. Specifically, at the close of the 1960s, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* engages with many of the concerns of the Modernists only to reinterpret and redirect them. Among these concerns are the external objective contemplation of reality (metafiction, the problematization of history), the linguistic "turn," (the (in)ability of language to apprehend the complexities of contemporary experience), the role of women in society (the power of women), and the use of the myth (extending and reinterpreting the mythic method described and advocated by T.S. Eliot).

Despite an interest in a certain kind of myth, perhaps best summarized by the work of Eleazar Meletinsky[284], the focus of modernist works emerges as the external contemplation and interpretation of experience which, according to Michael Bell, is due to the dominance of the triumvirate (Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) on contemporary thought[285]. The overriding nature of the modernist period was, he posits, one of external contemplation. Specifically, an external contemplation of the social and economic realm, a detached examination of inner suppression and the outer domination of human existence, and an objective, scientific examination of the inner realm of the psyche.

The sum of this knowledge suggested not only that surface appearance was an unreliable indicator of the truth, (both Nietzsche and Freud emphasized the prevalence of misleading surface indicators), but also, more disturbingly, that this surface unreliability was misleading by design. According to Nietzsche and Freud, human beings deliberately set out to challenge and subvert their natural inclinations or attempted to adapt their behaviour and appearance to mask true feelings or aspirations in keeping with quotidian expectations or norms. Not surprisingly, therefore, modernist writers of narrative fiction sought an alternative to traditional mimetic, representational fiction since surface reality was increasingly a poor indicator of truth and reality, or the "really" real.

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[284] Eleazar Meletinsky wrote extensively on myth. Specifically his *The Poetics of Myth* (translated and published in 2000) considered myth the "prehistory" phase of literature, exploring the mythological legacy of specific images, myth as a form of oral literature, and the formulas and structure of myth as the basis for literature. In this sense, his approach to myth can be seen to have greater affinity with the modernist "mythic method."

[285] Michael Bell. "The Metaphysics of Modernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Ed. Michael Levenson. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 9.

If surface reality itself was inherently misleading, language too had been challenged as a reliable mode of conveying reality. Saussure's groundbreaking *Course in General Linguistics*[286] articulates this doubt, which was reinterpreted and metamorphosed into post-structuralism in the 1960s[287] and draws attention to the arbitrary relationship that exists between the signifier and signified and the interdependence (for the determination and construction of meaning) and inherent self-referentiality of language. The modernists were not the first to challenge language as the preferred means by which we apprehend and describe reality. Mathematics and science had already deposed the written and spoken word as the preferred mode of interpreting and describing reality during and after the Enlightenment. Therefore, not only the value of the creation of literary art (traditional, realistic fiction) that attempted to represent the external world was called into question, but also the very material with which this art was constructed: language, it was suggested, might be inadequate to the task. Meaning, therefore, is a dominant focus for modernism. As Bell points out, this focus on meaning helps explain the phenomenon that came to be known as the linguistic "turn" that emerged during this time. This linguistic "turn" suggested that language was not simply a means by which to describe the world, it was seen to form it, a variation on the Wittgenstein theme: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world"[288].

In his first three novels, Fowles engages with this modernist concern with meaning, the creation of meaning, and the use of language to construct meaning. His examination of language suggests that there *is* a world that is outside of language, or outside of the text, that can be apprehended, and somewhat successfully described. Also according to Fowles, meaning is not something that is entirely dependent upon language. In the novels of this decade, there is a focus upon this "extra-linguistic" world where language is shown to be inadequate to describe or apprehend extraordinary events or experiences. These early novels also

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[286] Published posthumously in 1916.

[287] See Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966) and Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972).

[288] Cited in Bell's essay (above), p.16. (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 1916), 115).

suggest an association between attempts to stabilize and fix existence with psychopathic, neurotic, and/or anti-social behaviour. With the exception of the grimly pessimistic *The Collector*, all of Fowles's male protagonists in these novels of the 1960s realize the restrictive and misleading nature of the attempts to pin meaning or label living things. Such stasis is incompatible with the living. Even Clegg realizes that his impulse towards collecting women will demand either an inexhaustible supply of women, or a lowering of his standards towards a more malleable, less independent subject.

The focus upon the function of language and its relationship with the formation of meaning is a recurring theme in Fowles's work, which extends the work of his modernist predecessors precisely in his foregrounding of the tenuous line of division between a work of fiction, history, and the "really real". *The French Lieutenant's Woman* epitomizes this with its frequent blurring of fiction and "history"; with the obvious falseness in the meaning of the title of the novel; when characters refer to other characters in fictional novels as if they were real; when characters' lineages are traced to "real" people living at a time contemporaneous with the novel's production; and when each chapter is preceded by a epigram from either history, fiction, or poetry that is decontexualised, so that it loses its identity as being "real" or "fictional" by its inclusion in that text.

The modernist use of the myth, and Eliot's description of the mythical method, emerged in part because of the realization that the human world was a construct, the result of creating a series of methods by which the elements of human existence could be apprehended and fixed. The myth is an attempt to explain events and beliefs and as such is entirely reflective of a modernist aesthetic. Myth is evidence of a human construct, an attempt to fix and know, and as such it is embraced by modernist writers as a vehicle that epitomizes the attempt for man to make sense of a world that consists of misleading surface apparitions.

Fowles's mythopoeia in this first group of novels is not, however, a mechanism for fixing and knowing. Its lure is its very instability: it is inherently authorless, it has no point of view, and it engenders myriad possibilities for interpretation. The richness, ambiguity, and formlessness of the myth is what makes it attractive to Fowles, and this is a departure from the mythic method advocated by the modernists.

The increasing distrust in the scientific and empirical in the modernist period created a growing distrust in the realist form as one that could probe beyond the deliberately misleading nature of surface reality. At the same time, there existed a growing concern that this partial knowing was perhaps the only way reality could be known. History, that most "scientific" of the humanities with its pretensions of objectivity, was also challenged because of that very objectivity. Fowles challenges history throughout these three novels, but particularly in *The French Lieutenant's Woman.* In *The Magus*, Urfe relives events from history that have been interpreted for him by quotidian and documented versions of events. As he experiences them viscerally and personally he realizes how history often dilutes human experience and encourages a clinical or even false understanding of events. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the meticulous detail with which Fowles recreates 1869 Lyme Regis is tempered by the author's admission that details of the novel have been altered to conform to conventional ideas, on the part of his readers, of "Victorianism." Adherence to convention is a dominant factor in the acknowledgement by readers of something being "true." With the problematization of history as well as the rejection of traditional verisimilar realism, Fowles again shows that although his work is rooted in modernism, he is moving his work in a new and contemporary direction.

The modernist novel itself attempted to cohere with the genre's traditional attempts to "extend and revise a shared knowledge of the world which might yet constitute the basis for community."[289] It also began to associate itself more with the epic and focus less on reflecting its own age. There began, as David Trotter describes it, to be a dialectic between the poetic and the mimetic, between Naturalism and Symbolism. Fowles occupies an interesting place in relation to this issue. In the novels of the 1960s he *seems* to be adopting an almost naturalistic approach to realism, yet this quickly becomes problematized and more complex. Although he cannot be described as symbolist in his writing, his language is rich and reverberates with allusions to myth, history, and intertextual references.

Of all Fowles's female characters of the works in this phase, Sarah Woodruff is most closely associated with the emerging "New Woman" of the feminist

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[289] David Trotter, *"The Modernist Novel"*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson , 8th edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 70.

movement, although she, ever anachronistic, would have been born too early to have seen the suffrage movement. The power of Fowles's female characters does not lie in their maternal power, but in their mythopoeic sensibilities and in their mystery. In the novels of the 1970s, the female characters will become more powerful, the importance of mythopoeic sensibility more pronounced, and the influence of mythic patterns, this time more explicitly from English folklore and Celtic Romance traditions, even more evident.

CHAPTER 3 - REFLECTION AND ANTICIPATION

In the 1970s, Fowles appears to be engaged in a period of reflection and anticipation. The two novels published in this period revisit areas of aesthetic focus in his works up to this point: specifically, the nature and value of the traditional realistic novel, especially in relation to other artistic media, and the different ways in which men and women respond to the pressures of quotidian norms as they strive to live authentically. In addition, Fowles seems drawn more to the concept of Englishness and the English novel than has been seen previously. His fiction of this decade closely examines English identity and any expectations of the novel form such Englishness might present for both author and reader.

   I make a distinction here between investigating English rather than British identity, not only because of the obvious difference between the two, but also because Fowles makes it clear in his essay, "On Being English but not British" (1964) that he is explicitly conscious of not conflating English with British identity. Britishness, Fowles characterizes as

> a superficial conversion of my fundamental Englishness, a recent façade clapped on a much older building. "Britain" is an organizational convenience, a political advisability, a passport word. In all the personal situations that are important to me, I am English, not British; and "Britain" now seems in retrospect a slogan word that was most useful when we had a historical duty to be a powerful military nation, for which patriotism was an essential emotional force.[290]

Critics who have made a similar differentiation between Englishness and Britishness in forming a cultural aesthetic isolate the following as characteristics of the contemporary English novel. A.S. Byatt cites Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as illustrative of the English novel's tendency towards "experimental game, with layers of literary precedents and nostalgias,"[291] and in the conclusion of the same essay, summarizes the characteristics of that particular variety of the genre thus:

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[290] John Fowles. "On Being English but not British" (1964) rp. in *Wormholes. Essays and Occasional Writings* ed. Jan Relf (Henry Holt and Company: New York, 1998).

[291] A.S. Byatt. "People in Paper Houses: Attitudes to 'Realism and Experiment' in English Postwar Fiction." *The Contemporary English Novel*, eds Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (Edward Arnold: New York, 1979), 24.

an awareness of the difficulty of 'realism' combined with a strong moral attachment to its values, a formal need to comment of their fictiveness combined with a strong sense of the value of the habitable imagined world, a sense that models, literature and 'the tradition' are ambiguous and problematic goods combined with a profound nostalgia for, rather than rejection of, the great works of the past.[292]

Unlike his novels of the 1960s, which closely parallel Byatt's observations concerning the contemporary English novel, the novels of the 1970s demonstrate Fowles's movement in new artistic directions. Byatt's characterization of the English novel has purchase when applied to Fowles's first three novels. *The Magus* and *The Collector's* seeming strict realism, their "strong sense of [an] habitable imagined world," frequent inter-textual allusions, and problematization of conventions associated with particular genre codes, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s meticulously recreated Victorian façade, which embraces the influence of the past only to interrogate those very genre codes of realistic fiction from the vantage point of 1960s England, are illustrative of the kind of English novel to which Byatt is referring in her essay cited above.

However, Fowles's novels of the 1970s show little regard for the "difficulty of 'realism'," although they are not naively realistic. By contrast they often reflect on cultural habits associated with fictional realism. "The Ebony Tower," for example, concludes with a "realistic" yet unsatisfying conclusion—unsatisfying in that it deviates from the chivalric romance upon which it is based, but realistic because it concedes that most of us would rather conform to societal norms than sacrifice all for an existential authenticity. Similarly, *Daniel Martin* is thematically less focussed upon the interrogation of genre codes of realism. Instead, Daniel Martin, aspiring novelist, reads Georg Lukács, and by association, introduces to the novel an awareness and reconsideration of history and its forces on the individual, nineteenth-century bourgeois realism, and finally, twentieth century modernism, to which Lukács, as I described in chapter 1, was so vehemently opposed.

It cannot be coincidental that in the novels of the 1970s, the works have a common theme: that of fictional literary creation and the creation of art in general. Specifically in the novella, "The Ebony Tower," (one of a collection of five short stories, published collectively as *The Ebony Tower*) focuses upon the creation of a

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[292] Ibid., 34.

piece of art criticism by David Williams, the subject of which brings him to
Coëtminais, rural Brittany, to interview the infamous recluse, Henry Breasley.

Daniel Martin, the longest of Fowles's published works, is a complex novel
within a novel, depicting its own putative creation by the eponymous protagonist. It
is, significantly, the last of his works of fiction to include the pattern of magus
figure, two women, and a male protagonist (which, as I indicated in the
introduction, would be so central to his *oeuvre*), and it is also the final novel which
focuses on the protagonist's "return" so reminiscent of Kermodian
paleomodernism. It is significant, however, that the final iteration of this trinity of
familiar characters bears such a striking resemblance to Fowles's own life. Martin
is a screenwriter in Hollywood, (Fowles's first three novels all underwent the
Hollywood treatment as they were adapted for the cinema in or before this decade),
he is an Oxford graduate, lives in the south-west coast of England, has one
daughter, and is an avid botanist. It is almost as if, with this novel, Fowles's
personal "return" is completed, and he is thus liberated from it. In the course of this
novel Martin too reconnects with his past, emotionally and physically, as he returns
from the strangely artificial Hollywood to England to visit a dying friend, which is
the catalyst for his rejuvenation.

Both "The Ebony Tower" and *Daniel Martin* present Englishness in characters
who are displaced (temporarily) from England: Williams travels to a remote part of
Brittany, and Martin is forced to return to England as events unfold early in the
novel. Both novels allude to a specific aspect of Englishness, a compulsion to hide,
mask, and obfuscate, which Fowles associates with the Robin Hood myth. In "The
Ebony Tower" it is Breasley who epitomizes the impulse to hide,

> the wily old outlaw, hiding behind the flamboyant screen of his outrageous
> behaviour and his cosmopolitan influences, was perhaps as simply and inalienably
> native as Robin Hood.[293]

In *Daniel Martin*, the eponymous protagonist demonstrates this affinity with a
quintessentially English mythic figure:

> the notion of retreat, […] 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
> symbolizing folk aspiration in social terms to enshrining a dominant mental
> characteristic, an essential behaviour, an archetypal *movement* (akin to certain

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[293] John Fowles. *The Ebony Tower* (London: Granada Publishing Limited, 1985), 83.

major vowel-shifts in the language itself) of the English imagination.[294] (italics in original)

It is this particular aspect of Englishness, the need to hide or to evade scrutiny, that Fowles explores in both works. Such a compulsion might promote a need to obfuscate, construct fiction, or it might encourage one to be a practitioner in an art that allows the creator to remain anonymous. The ramifications of Englishness for the English writer of fiction is explored explicitly in *Daniel Martin*, and two modes of representation, the cinema and literature, are compared and contrasted as means of authentically apprehending reality, particularly by an English author or script writer. Also common to both works is the emphasis on the act of creativity as observed from a detached vantage point. Williams comes to recognise and contrast his sterile, objective form of "creativity" (art criticism) with that of the true artist in Breasley, and Martin considers his previous writing projects (plays and screenplays), and how each has been, or has failed to be, a true reflection of his artistic intent.

"The Ebony Tower," is based on a medieval myth, "Eliduc."[295] Superficially, there is a parallel in the plot between the story of Eliduc and that of David Williams. "The Ebony Tower" and "Eliduc" both foreground the theme of choice on the part of the male protagonist between two women and therefore two potential lives the protagonist might follow. The character Eliduc chooses, honestly and dramatically, his lover over his wife, startling, because it completely contradicts the tradition of courtly love and duty. However, not only does Eliduc's wife embrace her husband's lover, accepting her into their household like "a sister," but the three then devote themselves to the "salvation of Eliduc's soul."[296]

In David Williams' case rejecting the socially established preference will send him on a trajectory that involves confronting societal norms, thereby opting for the visceral affiliation that allows an experience of existential authenticity. Such a choice might also involve an allusion to the decisions taken by the author to adhere to or reject established patterns and genre codes, with perhaps, similar

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[294] *Daniel Martin,* 290.

[295] Fowles's translation of "Eliduc" is one of the short stories comprising *The Ebony Tower*.

[296] John Fowles. "Eliduc," from *The Ebony Tower*, op. cit., 143.

consequences. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Fowles repeatedly adopts the mantle of a form or style only to subvert it or the reader's expectations of that form or style. It is, I suggest, another form of what Steven Connor might call "unhousing […] to disclose more permanent forms of dwelling"[297]; forcing the reader to consider what is familiar in an unfamiliar light and thus to come to know it better or to question previously unchallenged conventions or assumptions. Fowles seems to adhere to the conventions of traditional realism while drawing attention to the ways in which it impedes such an endeavour. The characters too experience an "unhousing"; as I have already described, both leave, or have left, England, giving them the opportunity to examine their Englishness, and past lives, almost at one remove. This affords an opportunity to re-evaluate their lives with a more detached objectivity with a view to choosing a more authentic path.

Uniting both "The Ebony Tower" and *Daniel Martin* is an ongoing mythopoeic realism, the only creative organizing principle adequate to accommodating the complexity of contemporary reality. It represents a primary imaginative escape or response to an increasingly mechanized and scientific worldview, as epitomized here by David Williams (the art critic). It also appears in *Daniel Martin* when Martin writes a play, "The Victors" to fix a distorted view of the failure of his marriage, apportioning blame to others; and in Anthony Mallory, the Oxford Philosophy don who is described by Martin as only knowing "how to look *at* orchids, not for them."[298] This is suggestive of a myopia, which contributes to the breakdown of Mallory's own marriage to Jane. Williams, Martin, and Mallory, like previous flawed male characters, wish to apprehend and fix the essentially elusive and transient, and these attempts result in reduction or even distortion.

In contrast, a mythopoeic approach permits a certain elasticity in what has been considered the conventions of realism (i.e., an observation of conventional chronology, plausible events, and accurate representation facilitated by adequate detail), particularly in the English traditions. According to George Levine, "Whatever else [realism] means, it always implies an attempt to use language to get

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[297] Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), 85.

[298] *Daniel Martin*, 194.

beyond language, to discover some nonverbal truth out there."[299] Levine also points out that, unlike the movement in France, realism in England does *not* focus on

> the dregs of society [or] on the degradations and degenerations of humans in bondage to a social and cosmic determinism. It belongs . . . to a "middling" condition and defines itself against the excesses, both stylistic and narrative, of various kinds of romantic, exotic, or sensational literatures.[300]

and that

> [at the same time] what is unconventional and most exciting about the [English] tradition of realism is its pleasure in abundance, in energy, and the vivid engagement, through language, with the reality just beyond the reach of language[. ..] Realistic novels contain more than they formally need. The antiliterary thrust of realism can be taken either as an assertion of the power of the real over the imagined, and hence of a determined world, or as an assertion of the variety and energy against the enclosing and determining forms of art.[301]

Similarly, Fowles moves away from attempting to capture a surface reality, while still supplying sufficient details or minutiae to satisfy the previous consensus as to what constitutes a sufficient "reality". Such a rejection of mimetic verisimilitude might be seen as a movement away from traditional realism as defined and discussed in chapters one and two. Particularly in *Daniel Martin*, much of the discussion related to apprehending reality in the written medium centres on the importance of history and time, the treatment of history as either a linear and vertical, or horizontal concept. Much of the novel examines the degree to which a novel written within the conventions of traditional realism must have established parameters of time and place. *Daniel Martin* ultimately challenges this view. In the work, Fowles experiments with chronology and explores the mythic quality of specific settings in the novel. For example, the genre conventions associated with autobiographical writing and the bildungsroman are complicated by frequent cinematic techniques such as flash-back, flash-forward, freeze-frames, and the insertion of chapters putatively by authors other than Martin. Abrupt tense changes, sometimes within the same chapter, dislocate any suggestion of traditional realistic narrative, drawing the reader's attention to the shifting perspective of the author as

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[299] George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 6.

[300] Ibid., 5.

[301] Ibid., 56.

he creates a mosaic series of impressions from different perspectives in time and place. For example, the second sentence of the novel begins with a traditional third-person narrative, the omniscient narrator, who turns out to be Martin, setting the scene: the harvest in 1942, a childhood memory.

> The last of a hanger ran down under the eastern ridge of the combe, where it has always been too steep and stony for the plough.[302]

By the third paragraph, the tense has shifted to the present. The narrative proceeds, recalling dialogue, yet Fowles omits all traditional punctuation associated with reported speech, lending the account a more cinematic immediacy, the action described as if it were happening before the reader's and the author's eyes.

> There are four figures in the field, besides Lewis on the reaper binder.[303]

The dialogue emerges unpunctuated from these present tense descriptions:

> a plate of pink meat and white fat, both sides of the bread nearly an inch thick; the yellow butter pearled and marbled with whey, a week's ration a slice.
>   Thic for thee, thic for thee, says doling Mr Luscombe, and where's my plum vidies to?
>   Beauty of Bath, crisp and amber-fleshed, with their little edge of piquant acid. Still Primavera's, thinks the boy; and much better poems than bruised and woolly Pelham Widow. But who cares, teeth deep in white cartwheel, bread and sweet ham, all life to follow.[304]

The shifting perspectives of time reach a crescendo in the final lines of the opening chapter, as the putative author appears to enter the scene he has just created. Reaching into the pocket of the young boy helping at the harvest he has just described, evidently himself as a child, Martin describes the final event of the harvest:

> I feel in his pocket and bring out a clasp-knife; plunge the blade in the red earth to clean it of the filth from the two rabbits he has gutted; slit; liver, intestines, stench. He stands and turns and begins to carve his initials on the beech-tree. Deep incisions in the bark, peeling the grey skin away to the sappy green of the living stem. Adieu my boyhood and my dream.
> Close shot.
> D.H. M.
> And underneath: 21 Aug 42.[305]

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[302] *Daniel Martin*, 7.

[303] Ibid., 8.

[304] Ibid., 10.

[305] Ibid., 16.

The rapid shift between tenses, together with the conflation of the traditions of narrative fiction and the screenplay, suggest an examination on the part of the novelist of the degrees to which each medium is able to apprehend such a complex and evanescent reality.

Similarly, various settings of the novel, for example Thorncombe (Martin's home in England) and Tsankawi, New Mexico, which he visits on at least three occasions, are imbued with a quasi-magical significance, reflecting the effect each has on Martin and other characters in the novel. The mythic quality of these settings is associated with their ability to invoke feelings of a possible transcendent ahistoricity and timelessness in the protagonist.

Even in "The Ebony Tower" which seems to adhere more closely to the conventions of traditional realism (traditional chronological organization, closely observed detail, and omniscient narrator), a mythical, transcendent quality is evident in the presentation of two possible seemingly coexistent lives between which Williams ultimately must choose, and this quality is amplified by the dream-like, remote setting of Coëtminais. Fowles's radical innovations, once again, lie beneath the surface. For these reasons, the novels of the 1970s represent a radical departure from the conventions of the traditional mimetic.

The Ebony Tower

The short story, "The Ebony Tower," has been widely ignored by scholars concerned with Fowles and his fiction. As the annotated typescript for the novella from the Fowles archive shows, this work was originally titled "The Parallel,"[306] due to its close artistic relationship to *The Magus,* Fowles having stated in an interview that his intent in writing this short story was partly to "demystify" the latter since it was "altogether too full of mystery" [307]. Therefore, it should be no surprise to the reader that the two works bear a strong resemblance to one another. Unfortunately, the similarity has contributed to its being dismissed as a mere postscript to *The Magus*[308] or considered simply as a lens through which to view and interpret that novel. I will focus on the work's significance as a crucial milestone in Fowles's journey in developing his mythic realism, part of his natural progression in achieving a fuller fictional apprehension of reality.

   Its major characteristics are an apprehension of an evanescent reality in ways that are connotative and not reductive or fixed, and suggestive of a world that lies beyond, yet is contiguous with, that which is immediately apparent and experienced. Mythic realism encourages the re-examination of everyday things and events that have magical or transcendent possibilities. Thus, Williams' visit to Coëtminais, though realistically rendered, offers glimpses of a magical (but more authentic and therefore surely more "real") life. The similarity between Coëtminais, its hidden and magical quality, and the mysterious Bourani of *The Magus* is immediate and striking. Both are mysterious locations for the inexplicable and home to enigmatic magus figures. At Coëtminais, Williams compares his prior existence with his wife Beth to the rich possibilities of Brittany,

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[306] John Fowles, "The Parallel" typed manuscript of what would become the novella, "The Ebony Tower," John Fowles Papers 11.6, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

[307] Robert Robinson, "Giving the reader a choice—an interview with John Fowles." *The Listener*, 31 October 1974, 584.

[308] Richard Bevis, in his article, "Actaeon's Sin: The 'Previous Iconography' of Fowles's "The Ebony Tower," *Twentieth Century Literature* 42.1 (1996) 114-123, observed that "Katherine Tarbox found the book "so similar to *The Magus*" that she did not give it a chapter in *The Art of John Fowles*." 1.

> the faintly gamy ambiguity that permeated [Coëtminais] after predictable old Beth
> and the kids at home, the foreignness, the curious flashes of honesty, a patina …
> fecundity, his whole day through that countryside, so many ripening apples.[309]

Williams is intrigued by the mythic possibilities of "so many ripening apples" yet, as the reader learns from the text, he lacks the courage to leave behind the stability and predictability of his marriage, a theme paralleled in the tentative and safe medium to which his promising artistic talents have been unsatisfactorily yoked.

David Williams, an art critic, has been dispatched to France to conduct an interview with the infamous Henry Breasley. Williams leaves behind his comfortable and conventional life and therefore the apparent stabilities of England and Englishness (which of course echoes *The Magus*). Both departures are important. As we will also see in *Daniel Martin*, the removal of the protagonist from England allows him to focus on those aspects of himself shaped by that national identity. Williams is plunged into a world that makes him challenge his previous satisfaction with a life that has been the culmination of innumerable decisions (or compromises) seemingly framed by a preference for what appears safe and predictable, paradoxically as is revealed, the coordinates of an inauthentic existence.

Fowles's narrative takes on the familiar, third-person omniscient narrator as seen in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, but the tone is less parodic and invasive. It is an openly and deliberately traditional, realistic narrative reflecting the nature of a detached and observing protagonist, David Williams. Immediately, the reader is aware of an apparently conscious and traditional attempt to capture realism by a careful observation of surface detail. This is reflected in Williams' reductive catalogue of his journey to Coëtminais, which, despite his being surrounded by the natural beauty of rural French countryside, he manages to summarize textually, into "the date, the time of day and the weather"[310]. This betrays the germs of discomfort of Williams' own identity as an artist. By focusing primarily on this reductive surface realism, the reader infers a sense of how Williams' life has become deprived of the richness that he will experience during his brief stay at Coëtminais with Henry Breasley. This focus on looking at the surface will reappear in *Daniel*

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[309] "The Ebony Tower", 34.

[310] Ibid., 9.

Martin, a theme of 'looking at' versus 'looking for', encapsulated by the dominance of mirrors in Daniel Martin's life, allowing him to see the surface of himself (looking at) but preventing him from looking beyond the surface (looking for).

The influence of the Celtic myth on the novella "The Ebony Tower" is evident from the inclusion of "Eliduc" in the collection, since there are obvious similarities between them. However, this myth has a wider significance. This is apparent in "A Personal Note" which precedes his translation of the twelfth-century text. In this short essay, Fowles explains his interest in the "strange northern invasion of the early medieval mind,"[311] which, he suggests, is one of the sources of a mythic mindset that helps shape his novelistic framing of experience. Eliduc is

> a model of his type, […] and he had a wife of excellent and influential family, […] and she was faithful to him. They lived happily for several years, since it was a marriage of trust and love.[312]

Such parallels between "The Ebony Tower" and the Celtic tale are numerous. Breasley's paintings, which seem to embody the essence of what might be described as a mythic realism are described as "less explicit, more mysterious, and archetypal … 'Celtic' […] with the recurrence of enigmatic figures and confrontations."[313] This allusion to archetypal, Celtic figures is indicative of a formally reflexive aspect of the novella.

The interesting detail, and the one that is the most pertinent to this discussion, however, is the episode in which Guilladun, the lover of Eliduc, having discovered that the latter is already married, falls into a death-like coma. She is carried to a chapel where Eliduc visits her daily. His wife, Guildelüec, rather than flying into a rage, visits the chapel and weeps for the apparently dead Guilladun. A weasel strays into the chapel during this scene and is killed by a servant. The dead creature relinquishes a magical "blossom from between its teeth"[314], which Guildelüec uses to revive Guilladun, reuniting her with Eliduc. She declares that she will take herself off to a nunnery, wishing the couple happiness in her absence. The scene

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[311] Ibid., 125.

[312] Ibid.

[313] Ibid., 19.

[314] Ibid., 142.

engages in the magical, transformative qualities of myth, where the restorative qualities become a symbol and motif, a conceptual challenge the character must comprehend to transcend the limitations of a prosaic world. By contrast, when Williams, having chosen his wife over the art student, Diana, leaves the enchanted domaine of Coëtminais, highly significantly in symbolic terms, he strikes and kills a weasel

> One of his wheels must have run straight over it. It was dead, crushed. Only the head had escaped. A tiny malevolent eye still stared up, and a trickle of blood, like a red flower, had spilt from the gaping mouth.[315]

This incident recalls the death of the weasel in "Eliduc" where the blood-red flower in its mouth is a symbol of magical regeneration. The allusion foregrounds several layers of the narrative. First of all, it foregrounds David Williams' inability to grasp the life he could have had (and wanted to have) with Diana: the life of a true artist. He kills off the dying creature, symbolically ending any chance he may have had to revive his relationship with Diana. In the contemporary story, where Williams' life becomes thereby inextricably linked with surface reality and pinned meaning, the death of the weasel suggests that, devoid of mythic power and perception, all transcendent and magical qualities are lost. Without their possibilities nothing can resuscitate his relationship with Diana. The weasel of the mythopoeic domain is thus reduced from signifying the potential for miraculous resurrection to road-kill.

Fowles's interest in this Celtic tale stems from his great love of French literature, which he acquired during his undergraduate studies at Oxford. Its inclusion in this collection, however, demands rather more exploration, since clearly it foregrounds many of the issues concerning women and the relationship between the genders that centre Fowles's fiction. The medieval tale is suggestive in terms of its influence on Fowles's recurrent use of a central dilemma with symbolic pertinence, the choice between two women, something that all of his protagonists to date have faced. As discussed previously, this includes: Urfe (*The Magus*) who chooses between Alison and Julie/June; Frederick Clegg in *The Collector*, who it could be argued, must choose between real Miranda that he has trapped in his cellar and the imaginary "perfect" woman he has created in his head; and Charles Smithson who must select either his fiancée, Ernestina Freeman, or the scarlet woman of Lyme, Sarah

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[315] Ibid., 108.

Woodruff, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In all three cases, the choice involves not only selecting a female companion, but also having to opt to either to adhere to or to reject social convention and societal norms. In a sense the two women often personify opposite ends of the spectrum of socially acceptable behaviour, mostly a "Madonna/Whore" bifurcation. As in *The Magus*, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, both women in "The Ebony Tower" have alternative names, and it is of little surprise that both, Mouse (Diana) and Freak (Anne) manifest Fowles's familiar Madonna/Whore complex first seen in *The Magus* (Julie/June).

The Mouse first appears in a virginal white "galabiya"[316] and is described as "unmistakably English"[317] and "handmaidenly"[318] "preternaturally grave" and "almost Victorian" [319] which recalls the enigmatic distance of Sarah Woodruff. The power of the female over the male is emphasized by the ability of the female to adapt to given situations. Such characters vacillate between several identities, which might be singly appropriate for the dynamics of any given situation, much as Sarah does in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, evolving from governess, to scarlet woman, to the artist's muse, "Mrs Roughwood." The changing names of Fowles's female characters will recur and intensify in the final group of novels, written in the 1980s, where in *Mantissa* one character evolves into many individual representations of women, and in *A Maggot*, the central female character is known by four different names. Alison even vacillates between being alive and being dead in *The Magus*, in addition to alternating between the various self-contradictory labels she has been afforded by Nicholas (innocent/corrupt, etc). It also demonstrates that Fowles's female characters are less easily constrained and identified ("pinned") by any one reductive label.

Whereas Diana epitomizes typical female beauty and chastity as suggested by her mythic name, "The Freak" (Anne), by contrast, is described by Williams as an

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[316] Ibid., 13.

[317] Ibid.

[318] Ibid.

[319] Ibid., 15.

"absurd sex-doll."[320]   However, this label too is misleading since the reader learns

that it is Diana who is sexually involved with Breasley, rather than Ann. It is also

Ann who is observed reading, contradicting Williams' original deprecatory

suggestion that she is a mindless doll, and he is mistaken again in assuming that her

choice of reading matter would be trivial: he "guessed at astrology, she would be

into all that nonsense"[321] In fact she is reading *The Magus*, another reflexive detail

on Fowles's part.

   Surface reality in Fowles, as the reader should now expect, is not the best

indicator of an underlying truth. Williams constantly misreads situations,

reaffirming his inability to grasp any truths or deriving flawed conclusions from his

observations. Having initially dismissed Diana, her beauty notwithstanding, as

"simply a rather attractive bit of 'seventies bird …'"[322] he discovers that she is an

accomplished artist in her own right, having a DipAD and "two terms at the

RCA."[323] Williams also mistakenly casts the "chaste" Diana as the helpless

princesse lointaine whom he must rescue from the clutches of Breasley, scripting

and defining her existence with increasing yet, as it turns out, unwarranted

confidence.

   As with all of Fowles's novels so far, the action of the narrative of "The Ebony

Tower," occurs in a "domaine," which for Williams is "Coëtminais,"[324] a pastoral

retreat in Brittany. Such a geographical location is, by definition, removed from the

protagonist's home or "comfort zone." There are many similarities with Fowles's

earlier works that use remote *domaines* as the setting for their pivotal events,

particularly the female as catalyst for the male protagonist, and the shift from

superficiality toward existential authenticity. Williams travels to Coëtminais,

unaware of the tumultuous effect the experience will have on him and the

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[320] Ibid., 34.

[321] Ibid, 65.

[322] Ibid, 37.

[323] Ibid, 38.

[324] As Richard Bevis points out in his paper, "Actaeon's Sin: The "Previous Iconography" of
Fowles's "The Ebony Tower," *Twentieth Century Literature* 42.1 (1996) 123-146,
"Coëtminais is situated in the forest of Paimpont or Broceliande, where several of
Chretien's romances are set." The geographical setting again reinforces and foregrounds
the connections between the present and the past, and between the real and the mythic.

satisfaction found in his life. This emphasis on the movement away from an implied centre, both geographically and psychologically, as a necessary prerequisite for genuine self-examination and reflection, will be explored in more depth in the analysis of *Daniel Martin.*

The familiar pseudo-boundaries of the Fowlesian *domaine* are quickly apparent in the opening pages of "The Ebony Tower": "a white gate, which he had to open and shut" and then shortly afterwards, "he found his way barred […] by yet another gate […] padlocked on the inner side."[325] However, like the barriers to Bourani in *The Magus* (broken barbed wire) and the difficult terrain that hampers entry to the Undercliff in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the barrier only *seems* insurmountable. The *domaine* is thus clearly differentiated from its surrounding area and is designed to warn and to dissuade the thinking and logical part of the mind that the way is barred when in reality it is not. Surface reality, as Fowles continues to remind the reader, should not be relied upon to provide all necessary or important information.

Williams enters the domaine at Coëtminais in a buoyant, self-satisfied mood. He is married to Beth with two children, the older of whom has chicken pox (an illness that forces Williams to travel alone rather than with his wife on this occasion). Given the implication of a domestic English complacency, his journey to meet an English artist living in exile ought to offer him a sense of superiority. It has other implications, however, since the absence of his wife gives Williams the unfamiliar thrill of "bachelor freedom."[326] Williams, the reader learns, was himself an accomplished artist, the child of architects, who could have followed his own successful artistic career, but chose instead the safer route of critical writing to support his wife and children. The difference between the artist Breasley and the art critic Williams is thus foregrounded in the opening pages.

As Williams drives to Coëtminais, he makes notes about the landscape but draws nothing. His current preference is for the descriptive, observational written word over the drawn or coloured image. His careful noting of "the date, the time of day and the weather"[327] aligns him squarely with previous Fowlesian male "collectors"

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[325] "The Ebony Tower," 10.

[326] Ibid., 9.

[327] Ibid.

(cataloguers and observers) like Clegg, Urfe, and Smithson. By contrast, Breasley has an "almost total inadequacy with words."[328] This is illustrated in another inter-textual reference to Eliduc, where Breasley, using the tale in an attempt to explain the presence of archetypes in his paintings, is unable to recreate the story without using his own "shorthand manner of narration […] more reminiscent of a Noel Coward farce than a medieval tale of crossed love."[329] The reader is reminded that instead of Williams' ability with words, which has been associated in Fowles's previous novels with the compulsion to fix meaning, Breasley "could express himself with paint."[330]

This contrast between the artist and the collector or cataloguer is also intensified by later discussions between Williams and Breasley about art. Williams' view of art is aligned with the theoretical and mathematical (logical) rather than the intuitive and the spiritual (mythic). This is characterized in the novel by Williams' allegiance to the abstract school of art, an approach which Breasley finds repugnant. In an early conversation between the two men, Williams attempts to defend his preference for abstract art, both as an art critic and as a past practitioner himself:

> "But if philosophy needs logic? If applied mathematics needs the pure form? Surely there's a case for fundamentals in art, too?"
> "Cock. Not fundamentals. Fundaments." He nodded at the girl beside him. "Pair of tits and a cunt. All that goes with them. That's reality. Not your piddling little theorems and pansy colours. I know what you people are after, Williams."
> Once again the Mouse interpreted in an absolutely neutral voice. "You're afraid of the human body."
> "Perhaps more interested in the mind than the genitals."
> "God help your bloody wife then."
> David said evenly, "I thought we were talking about painting."[331]

This contrast between the two men encompasses not only contrasting views on art but also contrasting views on perceiving and apprehending reality (which manifests itself in Breasley's bold, honest and increasingly valuable work when compared with Williams' timid and conventional preference for art criticism) and in the lives chosen by the two men and their relationships with women. Breasley lives outside

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[328] Ibid., 59.

[329] Ibid.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid., 48.

of society. He is a self-proclaimed exile, both from English society and from academic artistic circles. By contrast, Williams, like Urfe, represents an "Everyman" figure. He has led a relatively successful life, and he does not seem overtly unhappy with his lot at the beginning of the narrative. It is not until, like Urfe, Williams enters the domaine, that he realizes what has been missing from his life.

Coëtminais itself seems to capture some of the magical nature of the mythic in the sense that it seems to exist beyond normative values and would not be endorsed by societal norms. Coëtminais lies physically and spiritually beyond the restraints of English society; it is a home for a true artist, not one who writes about them, like Williams, a man who lives life at one remove, vicariously. At Coëtminais, Williams has glimpsed, "more than the fact of being: but the passion to exist,"[332] a meaningful existence that transcends the ordinary, superficial act of simply existing, allied to the vision and fulfilment rendered in the mythic realm.

Williams' departure from Coëtminais is therefore not simply the withdrawal of a disappointed man who has been rebuffed; it is a rupture in his existence. He feels surrounded by chaos, has visions of "Beth's plane [crashing]"[333], drives too fast, doubts his own "fundamental nature" feels in a "dead end"[334], and has a feeling of his own "castration"[335]. When he stops on the way to pick up his wife, he reads the article he has composed on Breasley, but the phrases that had pleased him only the day before, had now turned to "ashes, botch."[336] His attempt to classify and label Breasley's art has failed, only now he is aware of his own shortcomings and the inadequacy of his compromised life. He feels that he has awoken from a dream "a numbed sense of something beginning to slip inexorably away"[337] as he leaves a mythic realm more attuned to the subconscious and the intuitive than the unmitigated reality of rational consciousness.

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[332] Ibid., 103.

[333] Ibid., 108.

[334] Ibid., 110.

[335] Ibid., 111.

[336] Ibid., 112.

[337] Ibid., 115.

As we have come to expect in Fowles's novels, the two women who live with Henry Breasley participate in a re-education of Williams, and the women are these familiar female catalysts who bring about a change in the protagonist before he must make a fundamental choice about his future. At first, Williams believes he can revisit this same but "suitably translated" existence at Coëtminais, by deconstructing the relationship between Breasley and the two women into its key but artificially reductive components, so that he might reproduce it himself with Beth

> the relationship worked because if its distances, its incomprehensions, the reticences behind its façade of frankness … as a contemporary arrangement, a *ménage a trois* of beautiful young uninhibited people, it would very probably fail. There would be jealousies, preferences, rifts in the lutes … and its being so locked away, islanded, out of David's own real and daily world, Blackheath and the rush-hour traffic, parties, friends, exhibitions, the kids, Saturday shopping, parents … London, getting and spending. How desperately one could long for … for this, suitably translated. Beth and he must definitely attempt it; perhaps Wales, or the West Country.[338]

Gradually, the bifurcation between two possible futures is evident. As Diana suggests that she and Williams might have a future together, he has already, subconsciously chosen the path of safety and convention, musing rhetorically "If one only had two existences," to which the intuitive Diana responds, "Glimpses",[339] suggesting that she is able to visualize two possible futures simultaneously, where for Williams, it is necessary to choose between them. Williams, although increasingly aware of the magical spell being cast at Coëtminais, "that uncanny sense of melted time and normal process; of an impulsion that was indeed spell-like and legendary,"[340] is ultimately immune to its lure. Having finally made the decision to be faithful to his wife, after Diana has walked away, he glimpses in desperation that which he has lost:

> He knew it was a far more than sexual experience. A fragment of one that reversed all logic, process, that struck new suns, new evolutions, new universes out of nothingness. It was metaphysical; something far beyond the girl; an anguish, a being bereft of a freedom whose true nature he had only just seen.[341]

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[338] Ibid., 82.

[339] Ibid., 98.

[340] Ibid.

[341] Ibid., 103.

At this pivotal point in the novel, Williams is able to see what Diana had glimpsed earlier, unhindered by Williams' restricted, practical and empirical sense of reality: a magical version of the real, contiguous with it, yet transcendent, offering myriad possibilities. During the drive away from Coëtminais to pick up Beth from the airport, Williams' mind swims with alternate imaginary scenarios:

> Beth's plane would crash. He had never married. He had, but Diana had been Beth. She married Henry, who promptly died. She appeared in London, she could not live without him, he left Beth.[342]

But these scenarios are "Futile, they would have disgraced an adolescent."[343] Away from the magical influence of Coëtminais, Williams is unable to grasp the mythopoeic possibilities contiguous with the real, since he has resumed his prior attitudes and behaviours.

Eliduc not only foregrounds this element of choice between women and between adhering to, or rejecting, social convention, but also intimates the importance of another theme that will be a leitmotif of both "The Ebony Tower" and *Daniel Martin*: that of the 'life not lived.' Eliduc appears not to struggle with his decision to commit adultery. To Eliduc, social codes are important to the point at which they interfere with love and sexual impulses, which, he seems to feel, transcend such social norms. By contrast, David Williams hesitates at the point at which he could have chosen the art student, Diana over his wife, and as a result he loses Diana forever. The significance of the obvious similarities between "The Ebony Tower" and the six- hundred-year-old myth lies in the power of the female characters and the importance of the choice made by the male. In both cases, the female holds a position of power. She is the catalyst in the male character's evolution (to a life dedicated to God in Eliduc, and to a life of artistic authenticity in "The Ebony Tower.")

The comparison that Fowles draws in his introductory essay ("A Personal Note") between Marie de France and Jane Austen is also significant here, as Fowles seems to imply that Marie de France's careful and sensible rendition of Eliduc's choice of his lover over his wife and his wife's subsequent acceptance of the situation is

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[342] Ibid., 108.

[343] Ibid.

ironically depicted. This, he suggests, has parallels in Austen's observation of many of the ridiculous extremes of English well-bred society where its strict adherence to decorum were also ridiculous. Both depict and ultimately inscribe the nuances and minutiae of value systems they breach, on one level upholding them and on another, undermining them. Both this mythic tale and all Jane Austen's novels involve a return to stability, in Austen's case dictated by the code of the English comedic tradition. Both, however, possess a radical sense of irony. Hence, there is a disparity between what the reader may construct drawing on the ironic discourse as real and what that reader would perceive as real by simply adhering to the dominant codes of a particular mode of writing (i.e., the realistic novel) that appear topographically to constrain the author. It is in this space between evident and implied meaning that much of the efficacy of fiction lies, especially in the case of Fowles. Clearly these influences and perceptions had been working through Fowles's aesthetic consciousness, and in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* he foregrounds formally the sense that the reader's perception of reality in any artistic form is shaped by the subtleties and complexities of the form as it is rendered. In that novel, Fowles attempts to circumvent the demands for resolution in a Victorian novel by providing endings from which the reader might choose, thus operating multiply on the reader. In "The Ebony Tower", Fowles also explores the possibilities in such an apparent pressure to conform to expectations, both on the part of the novelist and the protagonist.

The novella is preceded by a five-line quotation from Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*[344] reemphasizing, along with the allusions to Marie de France discussed above, the importance of the mythopoeic influence on the novella. In the case of *Yvain,* the source of the tale is Arthurian rather than Medieval, as described in Eliduc. The legend from which the *Yvain* extract is taken also surrounds a choice that must be made by the protagonist between paths at its thematic heart, foregrounding the central theme of "The Ebony Tower:" the path not taken by the protagonist. Written during the 1170s, Chrétien de Troyes' work tells the story of Yvain and his defeat of the knight, Esclados, to avenge his cousin. The widow of the defeated Esclados, Laudine, becomes the object of Yvain's desire. He eventually wins the lady's love, but is convinced by Gawain to embark upon an

adventure. Laudine consents to Yvain leaving for this adventure, but demands that he return within a specific period of time. When he fails to return within this timeframe, she refuses to receive him. Eventually, Laudine relents and allows him to return. The similarity between this story and "Eliduc" is striking. Both tell the story of a man who must choose between two paths. By being true, even selfish, to their own needs, both male characters (Yvain and Eliduc) are eventually reconciled with their original partners without having to sacrifice or suppress their desires or live inauthentically.

The title of the novella, and the fact that it was chosen as the title for the collection of Fowles's five short stories published together in 1974, requires further discussion. An "ivory" tower connotes a physical location separate from the practical and mundane demands of life. Often used pejoratively, the term also suggests a detachment from reality often associated with those immersed in esoteric academic studies. I will suggest that the substitution of the word "ebony" denotes a location for one who has rejected the elevated and the cerebral for the practical, immediately useful needs of everyday life. Such a description could be applied to the protagonist Williams, who has rejected artistic pursuits, choosing to abandon his natural artistic talent and an art-teaching career for a more stable and lucrative career as an art critic. However, the "ebony" tower life he has embraced appears increasingly to be reductive, even to the protagonist himself; a pale shadow of the life lived by the true artist, Breasley.

It is this contrast between one who is living a life immersed in the artistic, the conceptual, and the visual (Breasley) and one who is living a life of the practical, empirical, and the literal (the art critic, Williams) that is the central theme of the novella. The novella implies that those who embrace the life of the ebony over the ivory tower, those who chose the empirical, safe, and the quantifiable life, are not only compromising and accepting a less rich life, they are also failing to see the truth in the reality around them. Those who accept this surface reality inhabit lives that lack richness. Those who can look beyond this surface, as Diana does, glimpse the mythic, transcendent quality beyond the surface. This play on the connotations of the word "ebony" and its implied substitution for the more commonly used "ivory" when used in conjunction with the word "tower", also foregrounds the power of the hierarchical binary system of opposites in language and the power it exerts on our expectations and perceptions. Although Fowles does not ally himself

with the literary theorists of the poststructuralist movement, nor with any literary theorists for that matter, he does repeatedly acknowledge the power of traditional expectations to affect or even to construct meaning.

The empirical and logical Williams is associated with the need to label and deconstruct art (in the manner of a critic), a compulsion shared with Ferdinand Clegg, Nicholas Urfe, and Charles Smithson. He is able to distance himself from the emotional. As a critic he can step back from the creative process and appraise the work with the eye of a technician. Fowles implies that such a schism is unnatural and undesirable when Williams, able to objectively analyze the tumultuous effect such a decision will have on his life, pulls himself back from the brink of an affair with Diana and instead returns to his wife. The ability to make this artificial separation is absent in Breasley who lives completely without compromise. This, Fowles implies, is an example of an authentic life.

The remaining four short works in the collection also foreground the disparity between superficial appearance and the reality that lies beneath. This is clear in "Eliduc" as discussed above. "Poor Koko" recounts the story of a novelist whose manuscript is burned before his eyes by a burglar, but whose title is pregnant with multiple meanings explored in the narrative itself. This story is also preceded by an epigram, this time in old Cornish. "Byth dorn re ver dhe'n tavas re hyr, Mes den hep tavas a-gollas y dyr," which is, by the narrator and putative author's own admission, an "incomprehensible epigraph."[345] The closing words of the short story itself provide an approximate translation: "Too long a tongue, too short a hand; But tongueless man has lost his land". "Poor Koko" foregrounds the alienation between a generation effectively educated to use language (the generation of the implied author in the short story) and one that has been denied this education (the generation of the burglar who destroys the author's manuscript during a break-in). The epigraph thus implies that the tongueless man (the one that is unable to use language effectively) is at an economic disadvantage when compared to the man with the long tongue but a "short" hand (perhaps less skilled at physical labour). This could be interpreted as a variation of a recurring theme in Fowles: the division between the "Few" and the "Many".

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[345] *The Ebony Tower*, 187.

"The Enigma" relates the fate of a fifty-seven year old, supposed happily-married Conservative M.P. who goes missing, but beneath the surface are implied layers unseen and unproven, for it is implied that he may have rejected the superficiality of his existence, rebelled, and engineered his own disappearance. Fowles's actively betrays or undermines the "enigma" of this story, the mystery of the disappearance. No solution for his disappearance is provided and Fowles demands the reader imagine possible solutions, rejecting the resolution of the English realist tradition, and dismissing its simplistic version of reality. Rather the reader is induced to add complexity, to provide a richness of interpretation. If irresolution is productive, conversely a literal apprehension becomes reductive, based on an empirical literalism that Fowles summarily rejects.

As the central female character of "The Enigma" explains, this tendency for fiction to adhere to literary conventions with static expectations of readers cannot possibly be as real as a narrative that flouts such rules. As she offers her suggestion as to what may have happened to the missing man to the policeman interviewing her, the latter is unconvinced by her speculation. She explains that "… if our story disobeys the unreal literary rules, that might mean it's actually truer to life…."[346], and suggests that this approach might be more transcendent as "nothing lasts like a mystery."[347]

Finally in "The Cloud" a group of friends and relatives meet up in France, one of whom who has recently been bereaved after her novelist-husband's suicide. Significantly, this last story refers directly to Roland Barthes' *Mythologies,* which takes as its subject, the disparity between seeming and actuality and the richness of meaning behind the innocuous and the everyday. Barthes' work (originally published in 1957) focuses upon the meaning behind ordinary everyday artefacts and activities (wrestling competitions, cars, clothing, hairstyles, etc.). These seemingly innocuous items are examined in detail. Nothing, according to Barthes, is innocent and devoid of a deeper meaning. His overarching thesis is that everyday cultural assumptions (and myths) together with the connotations of everyday artefacts are all part of a larger system which comprises and enforces a complex set of societal norms to which we are (subconsciously) compelled to adhere. This is

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[346] Ibid., 236-237.

[347] Ibid., 239.

interesting and germane to this study, since it has in common with Fowles an insistence that the surface and superficial interpretation of reality is deficient, missing as it does the richness and intensity of meaning that exists upon closer examination.

A thematic consistency among these short works is provided by the common insistence upon an examination of surface reality and the conclusion that everything is richer and more complex upon closer examination than comprehension of surface reality or received meaning would suggest. The final story's direct reference to Barthes anticipates Fowles's interest in that writer's work, one that will intensify and be reflected in the novels of the 1980s, especially *Mantissa*.

Zygmunt Bauman identifies the impulse to use labels and to classify events and objects as an attempt to control the disorder that we feel around us in an increasingly complex age, to impose structure on that which appears to be random. We feel compelled to classify and name in order to impose order on chaos, randomness and contingency. It allows two of our most important survival adaptations to continue: memory and the ability to learn. Since modern life has become so complex, it becomes inevitable that language may not always develop quickly enough to capture the nuances that arise with new situations, concepts, objects, etc. Bauman posits that the resulting inability to classify an object or event as belonging to a single category results in ambivalence[348]. Modernity, by virtue of its focus on emerging technology and management, has been accompanied by intense efforts to restrict ambivalence. Modernity is a time of confidence in science to illuminate and explain, to label and to know. As Bauman suggests, however, this vigorous attempt to eradicate ambivalence actually has an opposite effect. As we struggle to name and explain that which surrounds us, the language and labels that we use become less rather than more able to reflect that reality. The result is a paradox that confounds rather than assists us in this regard. "Ambivalence" Bauman explains

> can be fought only with a naming that is yet more exact, and classes that are yet more precisely defined: that is, with such operations as will set still

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[348] The significance of Bauman's work will be revisited in the next chapter where the titles of the novels themselves are deeply ambivalent: both "Mantissa" and "Maggot" are words which have ambivalent, even antagonistic, meanings.

tougher (counter- factual) demands on the discreteness and transparency of the world and thus give yet more occasion for ambiguity.[349]

William's vocabulary is shown to be similarly inadequate for his communication with Breasley. The female characters in "The Ebony Tower", especially Diana, act as translators for the male characters who are lost in this ambivalence. When Breasley asks Williams whether he is following in the "Footsteps of Pythagoras"[350], he has to rely on Diana to translate: "Henry's asking if you paint abstracts"[351]. Breasley, in turn, cannot understand Williams' explanation of his own painting technique: "What the hell's he talking about?"[352] after which it is again Diana who must translate for Williams. Breasley does not have the same problem with language as Williams does. He is not a collector or a labeller. He is, "not verbal at all. … It's partly having lived abroad so long. But something much deeper. He has to see and to feel. Quite literally."[353] Because Breasley has a more direct relationship with the world around him, he can "see" and "feel it," he does not have the urge to label it in order to know it. As we will see in the next novel, *Daniel Martin*, the protagonist identifies this need to label and to know as a tendency to 'look at' rather than to 'look for'; a blindness to seeing beyond the surface of something to its reality because of a tendency to linger with its appearance rather than its essence.

   "The Ebony Tower" is, I suggest, the bleakest of Fowles's works since *The Collector*, because it offers the flawed protagonist no second chance at an authentic life. By contrast, both Nicholas Urfe and Charles Smithson lose their female magi, only to have them returned (albeit only temporarily in Smithson's case) after they have been punished and have become aware of their respective failings. Williams gets no such second chance. The themes of "The Ebony Tower," the need for authentic artistic expression, the power of female characters to act as catalysts in the male's transformation, and the use of myth as a means by which to apprehend

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[349] Zigmunt Bauman. *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1991), 3.

[350] "The Ebony Tower," 42.

[351] Ibid.

[352] Ibid.

[353] Ibid., 39.

reality in a way that avoids "ambivalence" recur in Fowles's next novel, but they are developed in a more complex manner and, in Fowles's longest work, they are explored in greater depth and to different ends.

Daniel Martin

Daniel Martin is the longest and most complex of Fowles's novels. The problematic nature of realism, the challenges inherent in adhering to realist conventions, is explored by Fowles through the character Daniel Martin reflexively in the novel itself. The length of this novel (668 pages[354]) suggests an attempt to evoke the scope and reach of a historically accurate depiction of the first part of the protagonist's life. It is an encyclopaedic attempt—panoramic in its setting, containing chapters set in England, America, and parts of the Middle East (Egypt and Syria), spanning a period of around twenty years.

At this central point of Fowles's *oeuvre*, this longest and most autobiographical work, also comes closest to a fully developed statement of Fowles's views on the novel, women and feminism, and myth. In this analysis, I will attempt to demonstrate how the aesthetic aspects of the works preceding *Daniel Martin* culminate in his aesthetic manifesto (if it can be so conceived) and how this statement will be extended in his final two novels, *Mantissa* and *A Maggot*. *Daniel Martin* (1977), like the novella "The Ebony Tower" discussed above and all of Fowles's previous novels before it (perhaps in some senses with the exception of *The Collector*), takes for its focus a male character at a pivotal point in his life, a point where he must examine and re-evaluate his existence, reconsider his direction, and make a choice.

The subtitle of this chapter, "Reflection and Anticipation," alludes to the focus of Fowles's male characters on their respective existences, and also, perhaps to Fowles's examination of his own aesthetic and the direction in which he was taking his novels for the next decade. My examination of "The Ebony Tower" above discussed the decisions being faced by the protagonist, David Williams, who proves inadequate to the challenge of living the life of an artist. In contrast, by the end of the novel, the eponymous protagonist, Daniel Martin, seems to achieve the prerequisite degree of authenticity and self-knowledge required, in Fowles's estimation, to represent reality authentically in his novel; to create art, not a reductivist rendition of reality as reflected in David Williams' methodical sketches.

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[354] The 'Triad Grafton Books' edition of this novel, published in 1986, is 668 pages long.

Martin, the implied author of the novel, is in the employ of Hollywood at the beginning of the narrative, and the plot is concerned with his rejection of Hollywood and screenwriting as part of his rejection of an inauthentic self. In purging his life of an unfulfilling career, Martin embarks upon writing a novel. In so doing, he recuperates his own past, which he has effectively suppressed by physically relocating to Hollywood and immersing himself in a culture and capitalist enterprise steeped in the eternal present. Hollywood is a place of "constant flowing through nowness […] chained to the present image"[355].

Key to his regeneration, and a reconnection with his past, is a reunion with his female catalyst figure, Jane Mallory, with whom he was in love at Oxford. An interesting development in this relationship, however, is the fact that unlike previous female characters, Jane also is regenerating. Previous Fowlesian females have been catalysts in the development of the male, but their own regeneration has not been included as a dynamic of his fiction.

In Hollywood, Martin's entrapment in an eternal "nowness" is characterised in part by his relationship with his much younger girlfriend, actress Jenny McNeill. This relationship is ailing as he begins to feel a certain nausea with his existence, associating it with their relationship. He feels increasingly unfulfilled by screenwriting, a medium that in Martin's mind, lacks the ability to transcend the present and articulate the real. Martin muses:

> I suppose it was about reality. Failures to capture it. Those stages, the flats still standing there. Movies no one even remembers any more. How all the king's plays and all the king's scripts … and nothing in your present can ever put you together again.[356]

and,

> Film excludes all but now; permits no glances away to past and future; is therefore the safest dream. That is why I had given so much of my time and ingenuity to it.[357]

Martin's transition from cinema, (unarguably the closest mimetically verisimilar representation of reality, though not, as this novel suggests, the most authentic), to novel and from the present to his past, is the organizing framework and metaphor of the novel.

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[356] *Daniel Martin*, 19.

[357] Ibid., 168.

To briefly summarize the plot, Martin, a middle-aged screenwriter in Hollywood has separated himself geographically and psychologically from an emotionally troubled past. He is divorced from Nell, whom he met at Oxford. Now, after a series of unsuccessful and unfulfilling relationships, Martin is involved with an actress only three years older than his daughter. While an undergraduate at Oxford, he was in love with Nell's sister, Jane, who returned his feelings, but because she was already engaged to his best friend (Anthony Mallory) and because it was expected that Martin would marry Nell, their promising relationship is not permitted to develop beyond one secret sexual tryst at Oxford. Because of his subsequent divorce from Nell (and because of one of his play's portrayal of the breakdown of his marriage in very unsympathetic terms) he becomes estranged from Jane and Anthony. Anthony (latterly an Oxford philosophy don and devout Roman Catholic) and Jane's marriage, as it turns out, has also been unhappy, but less obviously so to outside observers. Anthony's terminal cancer brings Martin back to Oxford, as it is his dying wish to speak to Martin before he dies. A shocking telephone call to Martin's California apartment conveying this request from Oxford thrusts Martin back into this repressed past. Jane's increasingly loveless marriage to Anthony has changed her from an outgoing, enthusiastic, budding actress, to a repressed and bitter atheist, and it is Anthony's final wish of Daniel that he (Daniel) tries to befriend Jane again and unearth the old Oxford Jane from beneath the cynical and unhappy woman she has become.

Thus begins Daniel Martin's return to authenticity. His attempt to overcome the process of "banalisation,"[358] to use Merlin Coverley's expression, of his immediate surroundings because of his previous lack of attention to them results in his analysis of specific places and their effects on his psyche. A more mindful examination of his experiences, perpetuated by the act of writing a novel, equips him to enter a new phase in his life. These experiences are contrasted with the artificiality of his contemporary existence – dominated by the superficial, the transient, by antiseptic and non- (or anti-) pedestrian environments, particularly in Hollywood, Los Angeles, obscured by car, taxi, and plane journeys, insulated from reality: a world viewed through glass — be it camera lens, or window. Hollywood is cast as the epicentre of capitalism and capitalist art production, and Daniel, in moving away

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[358] Merlin Coverley. *Psychogeography,* (Harpenden, Herts: Essentials, 2006), 13.

from the eternal present and reengaging with his past (exemplified by his reunion with Jane Mallory), also engages with left-wing politics as he moves away from a life of eternal present and instant gratification.

Geographically, the novel moves from the West and capitalism, increasingly eastward, through various alternatives to capitalism as economic and political systems: from California to Oxford, England, and then to the Middle East, specifically, Egypt and Syria, before returning to England. This is suggestive of a mythic quest on the part of Martin, who ultimately returns to England reconciled with Jane and on a trajectory towards his own authenticity. It also represents a metaphorical revisiting and return: the Middle East and Kitchener recall a return to the pinnacle of a "glorious" past for the British Empire[359], and a reexamination of the consummate Victorian male, Lord Kitchener. The Victorian male, as I have already discussed, has been associated with various dominant and problematic male mythologies inherited by subsequent generations. Kitchener is the subject of the screenplay for which Martin is conducting research.

Significantly, Martin revisits his own masculinity and his own Englishness during this novel, and it is his research into Kitchener that presents Martin and Jane with the opportunity to travel together, ultimately contributing to Martin's deconstruction of his own past, his masculinity, and his Englishness. This process facilitates the possibility of a rejuvenated life with Jane. Syria, and specifically Palmyra, the final location of Martin and Jane's journey, is a desolate "wasteland" described by Jane as making her feel that she has reached "the end of the world."[360] Surely, this revisiting of Britain's past, the investigation of a British hero regarded with some ambivalence by historical accounts, the journey through ancient civilizations, a literal looking into history, and the explicit association with a "wasteland" as the culmination of this journey, would associate the quest with what could be described as a paleomodern return. Jane and Martin reach this "wasteland", the terminus of

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[359] The Middle East is described by Rufus Fears as the "graveyard of empires." The Heritage Foundation, December 19, 2005, 'The Lessons of the Roman Empire for America Today', http://www.heritage.org/research/politicalphilosophy/hl917.cfm (accessed May 15, 2009). Additionally, the "Suez Crisis" of 1956, to which Fowles also directly alludes in the novel, is generally identified as being the defining event leading to the end of the British Empire (see Niall Fergusson's *Empire. The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, (London: Penguin, 2002), 348).

[360] *Daniel Martin*, 622.

their outbound journey, which is also the term used by T.S. Eliot to describe the deteriorated state of the contemporary psyche, and is the title of his most famous and quintessentially paleomodern work. The wasteland thereby represents a physical and psychological location where the couple are finally able to peel away the artificiality that has up until this point prevented their successful reunion and rejuvenation. In a letter written in 1980, Fowles explains the novel's conceptual framework in response to questions from a reader about *Daniel Martin*'s rather fluid organizational structure using this same metaphor. He writes, "I see it as a quest, a journey out of a wasteland, if you like." [361]

During his journey, Martin describes the effect certain locations have on his emotions and behaviour suggesting that the journey is as much psychological as it is physical. From these observations, he extrapolates a theory about the English race as a whole and how the tendencies of the race towards hiding (the Robin Hood phenomenon) have affected the kind of art that is produced in England compared to that of the United States.

A "Robin Hood" Englishness manifests itself most clearly to Dan when he arrives back in England, at Paddington station on his way to Oxford. Dan remarks on the behaviour of his fellow English passengers in the first-class compartment of the train:

> Something about those five other masked faces, buried in their evening newspapers and magazines, at last landed me back in England: that chosen isolation, that hatred of the other, as if we were all embarrassed at having to share our means of travel, even though it was first class, with someone else.[362]

Gradually, Martin makes further observations about Englishness: its reluctance to reveal inner thoughts and specifically, the workings of particular social codes. When Martin's California clothing misleads his fellow travellers into thinking he is foreign, these passengers feel obliged to teach him "the English way," discouraging conversation, disapproving of Martin closing a window, even though the compartment is drafty. Daniel notes that he does not disapprove of it, and being English, recognises the unspoken code:

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[361] John Fowles, Letter to Mr. Van Damme, 22 September 1980. Ray Roberts Collection 14.10. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

[362] *Daniel Martin*, 143.

> Being forced to share a confined space with people to whom you have not been introduced was an activity dense with risk: one might be held to ransom and forced to give some item of information about oneself. Perhaps it was a matter of accent: a terror of revealing, in even the smallest phrase, one's class, or some dissonance between voice and clothes, opinion and vowel-sound.[363]

This detached examination of key cultural characteristics (the need to hide, and protect one's inner thoughts and identity) have an effect, Martin (and, we deduce Fowles) suggests, on the English author. A central event in the novel is Martin's examination of the effect of the Robin Hood myth on the English literary aesthetic.

Such is the influence exerted on the English psyche by this myth that, Martin suggests, the Robin Hood myth has been deliberately diluted by subsequent cinematic Walt Disney depictions and the vagaries of afternoon children's serials:

> It is too profoundly about being English not to need endless camouflage, belittlement, relegation, good-humoured contempt … for eternal children, not contemporary adults.[364]

Martin's detached examination of such English characteristics and his subsequent reappraisal of the cinema as a mode of representing reality, lead him to a conclusion about what an authentic, truly realistic English novel might entail. He concludes that film should not be his chosen artistic vehicle if he wants to accurately reflect the English psyche, because:

> The film cannot be the medium of a culture all of whose surface appearances mislead, and which has made such a psychological art of escaping present, or camera, reality.[365]

Additionally, it concludes that the cinema's apparently superior mimetic verisimilitude actually detracts from its ability to capture the real, especially when dealing with such an enigmatic subject as the English. Where the word, and therefore, the novel triumphs over the cinema is, ironically, in its absence of mimetic accuracy, its comparative imprecision:

> Images are inherently fascistic because they overstamp the truth, however dimmed and blurred, of the real past experience; as if, faced with ruins, we must turn architects not archaeologists. The word is the most imprecise of signs. Only a science obsessed age could fail to comprehend that this is its great virtue, not its

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[363] Ibid.

[364] Ibid., 289.

[365] Ibid., 292.

defect. What I was trying to tell Jenny in Hollywood was that I would murder my past if I tried to evoke it on camera; and it is precisely because I can't really evoke it in words, can only hope to awaken some analogous experience in other memories and sensitivities, that it must be written.[366]

This is the closest approximation to a treatise on the novel form that Fowles provides. Here, he defends the novel form from any suspicion that the cinema is better equipped to render reality more effectively and accurately because it is in its imprecision, its ability to veil and reveal, that its power lies. Such a veiling and revealing, it is also implied, would appeal to a race that has a preternatural predisposition for such obfuscation.

His final epiphany occurs when he decides what his novel might look like.

> The tiny first seed of what this book is trying to be dropped into my mind that day: a longing for a medium that would tally better with this real structure of my racial being and mind … something dense, interweaving, treating time as horizontal, like a skyline; not cramped, linear and progressive. It was a longing accented by something I knew of the men who had once lived at Tsankawi; of their inability to think of time except in the present, of the past and future except in terms of the present-not-here, thereby creating a kind of equivalency of memories and feelings, a totality of consciousness that fragmented modern man has completely lost […] so infinitely beyond camera and dialogue and dramatic art, as unreachable as all the landscapes beyond the limits of my eye. In that most pure and open of places, I felt like a man in prison.[367]

Martin experiences this epiphany at Tsankawi, and this setting, like other settings in Fowles's novels is imbued with great significance, for reasons suggested in Martin's musings above. Tsankawi has a mythic quality, one that transcends time and place facilitating an appreciation of a "totality of consciousness" or a "whole sight" to which Fowles refers in the opening sentence of the novel.

The appeal of Thorncombe and Tsankawi lies in their ability to transcend the "cramped, linear, and progressive" contemporary concept of history. In these locations, Martin sees the potential for a mythic consciousness, which will be an important component of his novel. One crucial aspect of an alternative to the "cramped, linear, and progressive" nature of contemporary concepts of history is that it should be "dense, interweaving, treating time as horizontal, like a skyline." It could be argued that the opposite to linear and progressive is circular and repetitious, which is a characteristic of a mythic consciousness as described by

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[366] Ibid., 95.

[367] Ibid., 353-4.

Mircea Eliade in his work, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History* (1954)[368]. Eliade's work focuses upon the human experience of history and how it has evolved. The modern (post-Enlightenment) view of history, with its sense of a linear progress, is the view from which Martin is trying to escape. In contrast to this optimistic and now rather discredited view, Eliade describes ancient man's perception of historic events as "many creative repetitions of primordial archetypes[369]" or "paradigms." Eliade's approach parallels the concept of the return, which I have described previously and might illuminate the tendency of this novel towards a more complex, non-chronological patterning, why it contains a circular pattern (ending and beginning with the same sentence), and why its organizing framework is a return, both geographically, historically, and metaphorically for Martin. Conceptually, Fowles seems to have rejected a simplistic linear development. This observation is supported by Fowles's admission that episodes that constitute the novel were arranged rather arbitrarily after their individual composition. As Fowles states in personal correspondence related to this novel:

> The book [*Daniel Martin*] remained rather fluid in terms of chapter order until the very end of the writing. I though of it in terms of various metaphors during the writing—'mosaic', 'stained glass', 'fragments', etc. That is, as formed of much more discrete (in time, space and voice) pieces than my previous books. One intention was to show—in narrative terms—some sort of order gradually forming out of chaos. Normal narrative order does not take place until the end of the book (along with continuous third-person narration). It is only in retrospect that I expect the reader to realize whatever buried echoes of order there are in the early chapters. Because of my view of the nature of memory—that it should properly be categorized by degree of emotion, personal significance, etc., and *not* by chronology—I did deliberately 'distort', as you put it, various kinds of normal sequence in terms of tense and person. But you must take my word that there was singularly little 'planning' in all this. Like most writers (whatever they say!) I write essentially for myself, not eventual book readers.[370]

   Martin too must confront the expectations inherent in the contemporary novel and decide whether or not he will adhere to them or flout them. He is evidently frustrated, and so is the "ill-concealed ghost [who] has made that impossible last his

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[368] Mircea Eliade. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, Or Cosmos and History*, trans. by W. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1954).

[369] Ibid., xv.

[370] John Fowles, Letter to Mr. Van Damme, 22 September 1980. Ray Roberts Collection 14.10. Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

own impossible first"[371] (obviously Fowles), by the whims and demands of convention. Martin is chafing at the thought that his novel might have a "happy" ending and that this will offend the expectations of his readership, particularly since he has experienced such a privileged existence. According to contemporary expectations of the genre, one should then avoid revealing one's own good fortune:

> It had become offensive, in an intellectually privileged caste, to suggest publicly that anything might turn out well in this world. Even when things – largely because of the privilege – did in private actuality turn out quite well, one dared not say so artistically.[372]

Martin, (and Fowles) evidently conclude that adherence to convention must be sacrificed in the pursuit of authentic rendition. Instead of eschewing the happy ending, or choosing "the agnosticism of the 'open' ending"[373] for the novel he is writing, Martin declares that he will pursue the same reality that seems to be encouraged by Thorncombe, his sacred combe:

> To hell with cultural fashion; to hell with elitist guilt; to hell with existential nausea; and above all, to hell with the imagined that does not say, not only in, but behind the images, the real.[374]

It is during the process of writing the novel that Martin comes to identify what is missing from his life and from his creative work that has rendered both inauthentic. Martin's reflections reveal that one of the shortcomings of the moving image is its inability to capture the complexity of geographic settings; their richness and their ability to affect emotion, thoughts, and the actions of the individual. Not only has Martin been immersed in a medium that is incapable of reflecting this complexity, he has been ignoring the effects of these geographic settings and their associations with his repressed past. In returning to these places, Martin rediscovers the richness and complexity of Thorncombe, which has a dramatic effect on his emotional and psychological state, and this holds the key to his reconnection with an authentic and artistically fulfilled existence. The vivid depiction of these psychogeographies in

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[371] *Daniel Martin*, 668.

[372] Ibid, 429.

[373] Ibid.

[374] Ibid.

the novel also reflects the superior ability of the written rather than the visual to apprehend such richness and complexity.

Readers of Fowles will be accustomed to the prevalence and importance the writer affords to setting, the "Fowlesian domaine" having entered the lexicon of literary criticism after the publication of *The Magus* and its allusions to Henri Fournier's 1913 work, *Le Grande Meaulnes*. *Daniel Martin*, I suggest, marks a new emphasis by Fowles on geographic location and its effects on the protagonist's emotions and behaviour. The secret places, or sacred combes, in *Daniel Martin* are Thorncombe, a farm in Dorset, and Tsankawi, New Mexico, to which I have referred variously above. Thorncombe, the setting of the novel's opening chapter, is where Martin helped the farm's owners, the Reed family, with the harvest during his early teens in the last year of the Second World War. It is the location of his first tentative sexual encounter, teeming with memories and emotions associated with a time when he was less adept at suppressing them, the place to which he returns, at the end of the novel after having purchased the farmhouse for himself to live in. Fowles's practice of fragmenting the narrative, juxtaposing "present" action in Martin's life (his reunion with Jane) with recollections of his past, often triggered by physical locations, suggests a more tangible contiguity between the past and the present. This is particularly evident in Tsankawi, and later various locations on the Nile cruise, and the ease with which the past is evoked in these locations is indicative of the timeless and the transcendent.

Past and present locations merge in phrases that describe Thorncombe yet anticipate Martin's future home in Los Angeles: "The sky's proleptic name was California; the imperial static blue of August."[375] The setting is alive with mysteries, with rites and rituals, which lend a sense of a renewing mythic pattern, which might be described by Eliade's as a "primordial archetype[s][376]". When a bomber en route for Totnes flies over the field, the birds anticipate it and are gone before it arrives on the horizon. Daniel wonders "how the pheasant heard the bombs before the men. Who sent the ravens and that passage"[377]; a flower

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[375] Ibid., 8.

[376] Ibid., xv.

[377] Ibid., 12.

entrances him, "the first moschatel, strange little transient four faces, smelling of musk. Another mystery, his current flower and emblem, for reasons he cannot say"[378]; as the workers rest and take refreshments, they sit beneath the ash-tree "as ritual as a Holy Communion"[379]; and the work of the harvest provokes a physical pain from the exertion, one that Martin recalls as being "a harvest pain, a part of the ritual."[380] Finally, Martin describes his past self in the harvested field as being "without past or future, purged of tenses […] pregnant with being."[381]   The mythical, transcendent nature of Thorncombe is underscored by its associations with these rites and rituals; specifically the harvest, and with events and phenomena that cannot be easily explained by reductive rational reasoning processes.

These mythic elements infuse Fowles's descriptions of his "sacred combes," suggesting the power these locations have over the protagonist. At the heart of this power, Fowles seems to imply, is the sense that these locations seem to transcend history. They are the sites of rituals or rites (as described above); they recur numerous times in the narrative (the central character returns to that location multiple times at different stages in his life, as if drawn by unknown and unnamed forces), they are locations in which characters experience epiphanies or life-changing events, they encourage a degree of introspection during which time the protagonist learns something about himself or about his companion(s), and they are often imbued with rich historical pasts which are evident in their presents.

Thorncombe punctuates Daniel's life. It is at Thorncombe that he experiences first love and first loss. When driving with his daughter, Caroline, after his divorce, he has no idea what to do with this eleven-year-old in his car and in desperation he drives to the vicarage where he was raised. Here, he discovers that Thorncombe is for sale. On a whim, and behaving completely out of character, suggesting forces that are beyond his control, he buys it. This sets in motion of a chain of events during which Martin must confront his past.

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[378] Ibid., 15.

[379] Ibid.

[380] Ibid., 9.

[381] Ibid., 16.

The first of these characters from the past is Nancy Reed, Martin's first love, daughter of the farmers he helped in the opening "Harvest" chapter. Also mysteriously drawn, Nancy drives past her old home, not knowing Martin has purchased it. The farmhouse becomes the setting for their stilted and artificial reunion, but Martin recognizes, again under the influence of Thorncombe, the inauthenticity in himself after the meeting. Nancy, who has become "heavy-limbed and stout, her tinted hair done back [...] in a pathetic last attempt at attractiveness,"[382] asks Daniel if she can look around her old home. After the visit, Daniel is horrified at the artificiality of his behaviour and his inability to acknowledge an important event from his past. Back in that August of 1942, Daniel and Nancy's supposedly secret relationship was abruptly terminated by Mrs Reed, when Nancy was suddenly dispatched to visit a cousin. Daniel was never to discover what provoked this desperate intervention, but he suspected at the time that Mrs Reed had learned of Daniel and Nancy's tentative sexual exploits and felt compelled to stop them. Daniel recalls how he suffered that summer after Nancy's unexplained departure. But during Nancy's visit, he feels unable to ask her what happened. After she leaves, Daniel chastises himself for not asking about that dreadful day and allowing his past into his present:

> if only I had broken through the wretched plastic shell of that meeting, through her frightened gentility and my equally odious urbanity. We think we grow old, we grow wise and more tolerant; we just grow more lazy. I could have asked what happened that terrible day; what did you feel; how long did you go on missing me? Even if I'd only evoked a remembered bitterness, recrimination, it would have been better than that total burial, that vile, stupid and inhuman pretence that our pasts are not also our presents.[383]

This epiphany begins Martin's journey towards a more authentic life, one in which he acknowledges and embraces his past.

In a similar incident, after Anthony's funeral, Martin invites Jane and her twelve year old son, Paul, to Thorncombe, and it is during this visit that he realizes the positive effect Thorncombe is having, recognizing at last that it is helping him to "distinguish his real self from his putative fictional one."[384] Jane, the most

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[382] Ibid., 406.

[383] Ibid., 407.

[384] Ibid, 441.

significant aspect of his past, together with Thorncombe encourage "an interweaving of strands, […] an obscure amalgam of rain, landscapes, pasts, fertilities, femalenesses […]"[385] It is significant that Martin uses the same phrase here; an "interweaving of strands" to connote an authentic rendition of himself at Thornecombe as he uses at Tsankawi (his other sacred combe) to connote an authentic depiction of history and racial self. At Tsankawi he first identifies a "medium that would tally better with this real structure of my racial being and mind … something *dense, interweaving*, treating time as horizontal, like a skyline; not cramped, linear and progressive."[386] This is the nature of the "whole sight" towards which Martin strives in his attempt to attain a realism, intersubjective and mythopoeic, in nature, that surpasses one offered by traditional literary realism in its authenticity and honesty.

The transcendent nature of Thorncombe is also evident in Paul's appetite for archaeology which is sated by a walk in the grounds of the farm to see the "faint remains of two Iron Age tumuli" and "ancient plough rigs."[387]   The mythic element of Thorncombe is also evident in its association with the cyclical Harvest, one of the more potent and obvious mythic patterns. The pagan English mythic pattern of the harvest connotes a "recurring renewal of life."[388] This suggestion of renewal is compounded by Fowles's inclusion of the quotation from George Seferis' "Mr. Stratis Thalassinos Describes a Man" as an epigram to this opening chapter:

> But what's wrong with that man?
> All afternoon (yesterday the day before yesterday and to-
> day) he's been sitting there staring at a flame
> he bumped into me at evening as he went downstairs he
> said to me:
> 'The body dies the water clouds the soul
> hesitates
> and the wind forgets always forgets
> but the flame doesn't change.'
> He also said to me:
> 'You know I love a woman who's gone away perhaps to

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[385] Ibid, 441.

[386] Ibid., 353-4.

[387] Ibid., 434.

[388] H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 25.

> the nether world; that's not why I seem so deserted
> I try to keep myself going with a flame because it doesn't
>   change.
> Then he told me the story of his life.

This poem encapsulates a central theme of the novel itself, and the opening line, "But what's wrong with that man?" suggests the pivotal question Martin's journey of self-reflection must answer. Martin renews his life by examining, not rejecting and obliterating, the past. This is the key to the first words from the implied narrator: "Whole sight; or all the rest is desolation"[389] which reinforces the sense that this renewal can only occur when an individual embraces the present and the past. But also, it suggests that the novel itself must strive towards "whole sight" in its apprehension of reality.

Like Thorncombe, Tsankawi, New Mexico is a setting imbued with power over the individual. It affects Martin's emotions and behaviour, and there are numerous similarities and common threads used to connect these two seemingly unlike geographic locations. Tsankawi is an ancient Indian settlement about 30 miles North West of Santa Fe, just North of Los Alamos. This geographic location has great significance for Martin, and he attributes this resonance with its humanity. The attraction of Tsankawi lies in its timeless or transcendent nature. Daniel is haunted by the "loss and mystery" of the place. Such is the reverence in which Daniel holds this location, that he uses it as a method for evaluating people's worth. He brings individuals to this location (Abe and Mildred, then Jenny) and judges them based on their reactions to it, whether or not they feel it is as special and mysterious as he does. Those who do not share the same emotional response to the location are reduced in his eyes.

The power of Tsankawi for Daniel is also in its ability to invoke associations not only with Thorncombe, but with "all similar movements of supreme harmony in human culture; to certain buildings, paintings, music, passages of great poetry." Martin also values the place for its transcendent quality and its ability to "validate":

> 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 the other sites, in them there was a sadness, the

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[389] *Daniel Martin*, 7.

vanished past, the cultural loss, but Tsankawi defeated time, all deaths. Its deserted silence was like a sustained high note, unconquerable.[390]

Powerful places, for Daniel, transcend time. Tsankawi is also like Thorncombe in this respect; it is a place where "one's past seems in some mysterious way to meet one's future, one was somehow always to be there as well as being there in reality."[391] Part of the power of these locations is their ability to reconnect Daniel with his past, something that he has managed to suppress and ignore during his stay in California.

   Like Thorncombe and Tsankawi, Cairo has the same ability to collapse and encompass history. The city itself contains a "unique mixture of the medieval and the modern," "European clothes and flowing galabiyas,"[392] "layers of time, so many stages of history still co-existing here."[393] The most enduring element of the ahistorical is the river itself:

> The river moved and the river stayed, depending on whether one saw it with the eye or with the mind; it was the Heraclitian same and not the same. It was the river of existence, and it reminded Dan of those magnificent opening lines of Ecclesiastes […] the earth abideth forever and there is no new thing under the sun. They both noted these Biblical echoes, […] They decided it was because the river, like the Bible, was a great poem, and rich in still relevant metaphors.[394]

While the cruise progresses, the ship is surrounded by the extreme poverty of the fellaheen, and overshadowed by the Aswan Dam. Capitalism has found its way to Egypt, epitomized in the traffic: the "almost Californian stream of crawling headlights […] a continual blaring and hooting of horns […] the same stress behind all the human and architectural differences […] Cairo was simply denser, older, more human." [395]

   Among the passengers on the cruise, Mitchell and Marcia Hooper represent the American contingent, and the exchanges between Jane and Daniel and Mitchell and

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[390] Ibid., 347.

[391] Ibid, 346.

[392] Ibid., 489.

[393] Ibid., 490.

[394] Ibid., 524.

[395] Ibid., 489.

Marcia demonstrate the ambivalence Fowles's visits to the U.S. had elicited towards this country. The exchanges demonstrate as much about Fowles's understanding of Englishness as it does about American-ness. Dan and Jane seem conspiratorial and secretive in the face of the American couple. During their first dinner together, Jane takes control of the dinner conversation, ensuring that it proceeds with decorum and politeness. After Dan's snub of Marcia's questions about his Kitchener script, Jane diverts the conversation, then:

> For the merest fraction of second Jane's eyes met Dan's, though with a studious correctness of expression. Perfidious Albion had struck again; and the key of duplicity was set. They talked, or Jane and Dan listened, between courses.[396]

In the conversation that follows, Dan and Jane identify the things that differentiate American-ness from the perfidy of the English. According to them, the differences include the tendency to do things "by the book" and a transparency that is "less based on an intrinsic honesty than on a lack of imagination."[397] These comments themselves are less revealing about Americans as they are about Fowles's conceptions about Englishness and reveal how Martin must transgress such psychological barriers if he is to pursue authenticity. The national characteristic of Americans least attractive to Dan is "the need to overwhelm you with personal information and then demand yours."[398] This offends the sensibility Martin associates with Robin Hood (the national symbol used here to represent not, as his myth traditionally defines him, as an avenger of poverty and feudal oppression, but instead one who can easily hide, blending into natural foliage to make good his escape, and, most importantly, concealing his true identity). This is the characteristic of Englishness to which the novel repeatedly alludes: a tendency towards secrecy and veiling, the antithesis of the open, communicative Americans.

Although this discussion appears less than complimentary towards the American couple and American-ness in general, the comparison between American and Englishness is rather more complex. At its heart, Fowles's observations about the English focus upon their reluctance to confront issues and do something about

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[396] Ibid., 518.

[397] Ibid., 519.

[398] Ibid., 505.

them.   Mitch and Marcia are driven to find help for their inability to conceive a child; they confront the complexity of the situation in Vietnam over dinner with strangers. Dan and Jane listen then criticize the couple after the dinner. As Dan muses earlier in the novel "Perhaps this is getting near the heart of Englishness: 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."[399] After all, Jane and Dan having both realized they were in love with each other at Oxford, chose to sublimate their needs and happiness, waiting twenty years to renew their relationship.

Fowles has contrasted Englishness with French identity in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* to the same effect. In this novel, Varguennes's willingness to sacrifice social convention and propriety in the pursuit of satisfaction is characterized as being very "French" (and this perhaps influences Sarah's daring flight to London that eventually allows her to adopt a Bohemian lifestyle with a colony of artists), and Varguenne's attitudes are in stark contrast with Charles Smithson's adherence to duty and what is proper (despite his passion being restricted by propriety and doing nothing until it is too late and Sarah has fled). Through such contrasts Fowles implies that such an existential approach to life could hardly have evolved in England. Even language, the use of metaphor, is characterized as being quintessentially English.

> 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.[400]

Ultimately, the English psyche, Fowles seems to imply through Martin, will endlessly defer resolving a problem by hiding it behind metaphor rather than confronting it. Daniel has demonstrated this tendency before: refusing to confront Jenny at Tsankawi for collecting pieces of ancient jewellery as souvenirs but instead, making a mental note of it, and keeping silent score as he decides whether or not to end their relationship; wanting to confront Jane with his feelings for her at the hotel but hiding those feelings so well:

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[399] Ibid., 78.

[400] Ibid., 78-9.

had there been witnesses upstairs, none would have realized that he had left the bar determined to have it out with Jane. When it came to it he walked past her door without a glance.[401]

The desolate Palmyra in central Syria is the final destination of Jane and Daniel's journey, a destination added partly by Daniel to extend the period of time they have left together after the Nile cruise fails to bring about a complete resurrection of the old Jane. It is a desolate place, "extraordinary", the "End of the world."[402] It is a place where Daniel and Jane, pushed to an extremity of existence finally confront the fact that they married the wrong people. Jane buries her wedding ring in the sand of Palmyra, where East and West met and "sybaritic Rome married the languorous Orient."[403]

These geographical settings are imbued with dramatic significance for the reader and psychological significance for the protagonist, I suggest, because in these places past and present are simultaneously apparent. Authentic existence for Martin will occur only when he has been able to resolve his past with his present. His failure to do so has resulted in his feeling of malaise at the beginning of the novel, as sense of being on a wrong path. At the conclusion of the novel, Daniel recognizes the significance of his past.

This significance of past and present is also foregrounded in the novel by Fowles's inclusion of an epigraph from Gramsci which appears on the title page of the novel: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears."[404] The interregnum for Gramsci was the period between revolution and post-revolutionary reinvention. The epigraph is entirely appropriate for a post World

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[401] Ibid., 612.

[402] Ibid., 622.

[403] Ibid.

[404] Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* were composed between 1929 and 1935. They cover a range of ideas and concepts. The ideas central to Daniel Martin, other than the concept alluded to in the epigraph discussed above, is the concept of cultural hegemony: the means by which capitalism dominates and proliferates (by encouraging the populace to believe that the ideas of the bourgeoisie are "common sense" and should be accepted and adopted without question). This idea, that surface reality is a misleading and artificial construct, is a central theme of the two novels produced in this decade. Ironically, these novels are also the most traditionally realistic.

War Two protagonist, and in *Daniel Martin* Fowles wanted to write about one individual's thoughts as generationally representative. Gramsci suggests that after the upheavals of revolution, the path to a "new" order is being impeded by the remnants of the old. Martin inhabits the interregnum of his own past and future as well as that of his generation. The same could also be said of the novel form itself.

Martin, perhaps articulating the feelings of the "ill-concealed ghost" of the "real" author of the novel, his frustration at the pressure to write the kind of novel that is expected of a "bourgeois" like himself, describes this situation in terms of "traps". These traps not only apply to him as a writer, but also as an individual who is trying to take control of his own life rather than surrendering himself to the events that occur around him as he has done for much of his life up to this point. These traps can be analyzed in terms of the "reification" process described by Lukács, and this process is as applicable to the challenges facing the novel as they are to the challenges facing Martin.

For Lukács, reification is the process by which capitalism erodes the sense that individuals are responsible for the production of anything, including society itself and its structure and rules, and instead perceive themselves as passive things, products rather than producers of society. This manifests itself in the individual as a feeling of an extreme alienation from society to the degree that he or she is paralyzed by angst, passively accepting events as they occur without opposition, eventually succumbing to despair. In *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (1923), Lukács describes the individual whose fate is

> typical of society as a whole in that this self-objectification, this transformation of a human function into a commodity reveals in all its starkness the dehumanised and dehumanising function of the commodity relation.[405]

By confronting the "traps" or predetermined roles or circumstances that society presents, the individual acknowledges angst while believing that it is possible to overcome it. According to Lukács, this is the "choice between social sanity and morbidity,"[406] or as Daniel relates, describing the line of Lukács that has impressed him most, "Between the methods of Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann, the

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[405] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972) 92.

[406] Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, 88.

contemporary writer will have to choose."[407] Fowles chooses the latter in *Daniel Martin*, reuniting the couple, again confounding the norms of contemporary fiction, which had tended towards inconclusive or at least less optimistic endings, but the novel reflects on the turmoil experienced by Martin as he decides how his novel will end.   Both Jane and Daniel extricate themselves from the traps of expectation, convention, or society, and move forward in a direction that reflects authenticity and regeneration. Martin can be understood as a man who is privileged but still not fully in control of the direction of his life:

> In short, he felt himself, both artistically and really, in the age old humanist trap: of being allowed (as by some unearned privilege) to enjoy life too much to make a convincing case for any real despair or dissatisfaction.   How could there be anything tragic in a central character that had some fictional analogue of a Jenny, a Thorncombe and a still-warm window just back there up the hill, announcing a long-wanted reconciliation. With all his comparative freedom, money, time to think. His agreeable (despite his present grumbling) work? All artistic making, however imperfect, however tainted by commerce, was contenting compared to the work most of the rest of the world was condemned to.[408]

Martin feels that his life is just too comfortable to allow him to produce a profound work of art. Here, he feels that his artistic direction is being impeded by his social privilege because the conventional direction of the novel has been the avoidance of the "happy ending"; "he thought, for a revealing instance, how all through his writing life, both as a playwright and a scenarist, he had avoided the happy ending, as if it were somehow in bad taste."[409]

   In surrendering to the impediments in his life, which are ironically privileges rather than deficiencies, Martin begins to feel he has nothing to offer to the novel form in terms of artistic contributions. But by avoiding challenging the events that have made "avoiding the happy ending" a convention, Martin is also surrendering to reification. It is this feeling of being "determined" by events and external forces that induces the feeling of *angst* and nausea that he describes in the beginning of the novel, which he then attributes to his dislike of his working in Hollywood. It is the same angst that he feels when he considers he is unable to contribute to the development of the realistic novel, because he leads such a good life:

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[407] Ibid., 80 and *Daniel Martin*, 500.

[408] *Daniel Martin*, 428.

[409] Ibid.

> They were all equally brainwashed, victims of the dominant and historically understandable heresy (or cultural hegemony) that Anthony had derided by beatifying Samuel Beckett. It had become offensive, in an intellectually privileged caste, to suggest publicly that anything might turn out well in this world.[410]

There are several other traps into which Martin realizes he has fallen. Throughout his life, he has allowed events and situations to dictate his behaviour and reactions, all of which have contributed to his current state of reification and resulting *angst*. From the beginning of the novel, Daniel's (and Jane's) failure to insist that they (and not Jane and Anthony) marry, this failure to act has resulted in at least four, rather than two, unhappy people.

This act is symbolized in the discovery by Jane and Dan (in the events leading up to their single illicit sexual union) of a dead woman's body in the reeds. While sharing a punt ride on a summer afternoon in Oxford, Jane and Dan discover a corpse in the river. Despite their having found the body, the events following the discovery are quickly redirected by two other Oxford undergraduates who happen on the scene. Both Jane and Dan surrender control of these events to other people; calling the police, moving the boat, and keeping people away from the crime scene. Dan's immediate comment to the horror of this discovery is the seemingly inexplicable: "When I was a kid, helping with the harvest during the war, a rabbit got caught in the mower blades of the reaper."[411] Viewed within the context of Daniel's reification, however, the statement is significant. Daniel, in this crisis situation, feels as helpless as he did as a child watching the rabbit caught in the blades. Events occur around him and he is trapped, as if eternally required to be behind the camera lens rather than being in the position to dictate the action from before it.

Martin repeatedly relates experiences of feeling imprisoned or trapped: "transitorily, though not for the first time, [I felt] a paradoxical sort of determined imprisonment"[412] or feeling as if he were acting in someone else's narrative with no

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[410] Ibid., 429.

[411] Ibid., 32.

[412] Ibid., 431.

control over its progress: "ominous, unpleasant; as if he, all around him, was an idea in someone else's mind"[413]

As Martin begins to include more direct quotations from *Lukács on Critical Realism* (an anthology loaned to him by Jane at the beginning of their trip to Egypt) in his novel, he begins to recognize that his regeneration will be both artistic and personal as he refuses to surrender to the reification of his art and his life. Lukács, therefore, not only provides the diagnosis of Martin's nausea, attributing it to his being "determined" by external forces and events, but he also provides a solution to his feelings of being "determined" and reified by the conventions of realistic novelistic convention (i.e., the need to avoid a "happy ending".)

A similar pattern of acceptance and reification can be detected in Jane. She, like Daniel, allowed the fact that she was already engaged to Anthony, despite her feelings for Daniel, to determine her course of action. She would rather honour her engagement to Anthony, suppressing her own feelings and alienating Daniel, than risk the shame and humiliation that she would bring on herself and Anthony by changing her mind. There are numerous examples of her choosing not to act, believing herself to be (or describing herself in terms of being) trapped in a static set of circumstances that cannot be changed. Daniel sees a dramatic change in her as she talks to him after Anthony's funeral. The change manifests itself in a tendency to cling to

> a deep intuitive belief, as she had once in Catholic doctrine, that all, at least in her own life, was determined, predestined; which had led her into the oldest fallacy of all, that any external change was better than no change … a credo no more tenable than her one-time whim for the Rabelaisian dream-land where anything goes.[414]

Her marriage, however, has a deleterious effect on Anthony, herself, and her children. Anthony's adherence to logic and exclusion of emotion is diametrically opposed to her personality. She gradually rejects the Catholic faith, which she had originally embraced when she married Anthony, and her children have done the same. She has become bitter, abandoning her talent for the stage and becoming subsumed in her husband's career.

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[413] Ibid., 567.

[414] Ibid., 327.

Unlike other novels in which the development and growth of the male protagonist is always the centre of attention, in *Daniel Martin*, Jane's state of becoming is considered with almost as much care as Daniel's. Jane's movement away from reification and her eventual reunion with Daniel are concerns as central to the plot as that of the protagonist's development. This focus on the development of the female character, which had not been central to Fowles's earlier novels, (a point made by critics who accused Fowles of being chauvinistic in his peripheral, superficial treatment of female characters[415]), may have been partly in response to the "second wave" of feminism that swept the US and then England from 1960 to the present day. According to Fiona Tolan, by the "1970s, feminist discourse began to address literary texts."[416] Fowles, however, insisted all along that "he believed himself to be a feminist"[417], even attributing his abilities as a novel to his being "partly a woman, a little lost in mid-air between the genders… I certainly think that most novelists are a result of not being clearly typed sexually."[418]

Fowles's feminism is clearly not aligned with de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex,* since de Beauvoir argued that there was no such thing as 'feminine nature' and Fowles stresses throughout his novels that women are distinctly different from men. Fowles differentiates, and elevates, women from men in numerous ways: firstly, he casts women repeatedly in the role of catalyst in the 'becoming' process of male protagonists (usually towards existential authenticity). According to Fowles's 1963 work, *The Aristos*, the ability of women to act as catalysts is attributed to their association with "kinesis, or progress […] Eve societies are those in which the woman and the mother, female gods, encourage innovation and experiment, and fresh definitions, aims, modes of feeling."[419]

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[415] Many critics doubted Fowles's sincerity as a self-professed feminist because of his depictions of women in his novels of the 1960s. With the publication of "The Ebony Tower", critics such as Linda Hutcheon criticized Fowles's failure to "break through the limitations of his treatment of women" (cited in the foreword to Pamela Cooper's *The Fictions of John Fowles*. Ottawa and Paris: U of Ottawa P, 1991, viii).

[416] Fiona Tolan. 'Feminisms', in *Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Patricia Waugh. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 319.

[417] Dianne L. Viapond(ed). *Conversations with John Fowles* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999).123.

[418] Ibid., 200.

[419] *The Aristos*, 157.

Secondly, he increasingly (as his novels progress) associates them with the mythic (usually in contrast to the scientifically oriented male protagonist) as I have described in earlier chapters, and similarly Jane is described as "not the sort of woman ever to be understood empirically, logically"[420] and as "the infallible Pythia"[421]. Therefore, Fowles's "feminism" if it is to be defined, cannot be aligned with that of de Beauvoir's. Instead, Fowles's feminism is essentialist in nature. Fowles praises and elevates female values in a way that can be more accurately aligned with Mary Daly. Published one year after *Daniel Martin*, Daly's work *Gyn/Ecology* celebrates the immanence of the feminine and connects this immanence to nature and the body.

In these two novels, the movement towards expressing a mythopoeic realism is accompanied by the choice between two women. The more appropriate of the two women, Fowles implies, is the one who encourages the male protagonist to evolve towards a more authentic existential existence and one who is a more authentic and effective artist. Martin, in choosing the enigmatic and mythically described Jane, seems destined for greater artistic success than David Williams. In these novels, which *seem* to adhere to conventions of traditional realism, Fowles subtly foregrounds the inability of surface realism to apprehend reality. Both David Williams and Daniel Martin come to a realization that they have been mislead or seduced by a reality that is actually false or contrived. Williams' adult life has been a compromise to social expectation; Daniel Martin has devoted much of his career to the cinema and feels that his life has been somehow scripted by the expectations of others, but unlike Williams, he is adamant that this novel, his current artistic work, will no longer be subject to such limitations. In reuniting with Jane Mallory, at least he has a chance at redeeming his creative and personal life by returning to a path of more authentic self-expression and existence.

One central theme of *Daniel Martin* is the richness of existence and the sense that every experience is pregnant with meaning derived from our pasts and other experiences. This is not simply a Freudian suggestion that our reality is shaped by experiences, but that such meaning is more transcendent, implying a connection

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[420] *Daniel Martin*, 321.

[421] Ibid., 420.

(often suggested by the presence of myth) between the immediate present and the distant past. In "The Ebony Tower" it could be argued that David Williams' misunderstanding of art lies in his belief that it can be compartmentalized. He believes that he can pin and examine art just as he believes he can inhabit and understand Coëtminais and then leave it without being affected by it. He appears to be incorrect in both cases.

"The Ebony Tower" and *Daniel Martin* thus constitute a pivotal phase in Fowles's *oeuvre*. In these works, Fowles examines the creative process, considering the efficacy of the novel when compared to other artistic media. He exposes the different ways in which men and women respond to the pressures of quotidian norms as they strive to live authentically and by extension, how artistic endeavours are also subject to external traditional pressures, which impinge upon the author's ability to be artistically authentic.

In addition, Fowles considers the concept of Englishness and subsequent ramifications for the English novel that are revealed. In so doing, he revisits the complex legacy of Victorian male mythologies and their effects on contemporary perceptions and relationships. Fowles might concur with Cassirer's preface to the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms (Volume II)*:

> Today it is openly asserted that no clear logical division can be made between myth and history and that all historical understanding is and must be permeated with mythical elements.[422]

and,

> It is not by its history that the mythology of a nation is determined but, conversely, its history is determined by its mythology—or rather, the mythology of a people does not determine but is its fate . . .[423]

After reading Fowles's novels, one might infer that the author shares Cassirer's elevation of myth above history regarding its influence on culture. In his later novels, particularly *Daniel Martin*, Fowles's implies that the mythology of a people, the English in this novel, does influence behaviour.

The implication of such an observation is surely that the English novel demands a more rigorous interrogation of quotidian norms, exposing implicit restraints and opportunities for inaccuracy and obfuscation, if a truly authentic artistic response is

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[422] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,:Volume II*, xvii.

[423] Ibid., 5.

to be achieved. With these two novels, Fowles again eludes popular modes of critical deconstruction and analysis. In his final two novels, such labelling will prove even more problematic as he embarks upon his most challenging and experimental works: *Mantissa* and *A Maggot*.

CHAPTER 4 - CULMINATION AND RESOLUTION

Fowles's final two major works of fiction, published long before his death in 2005, present the reader with perhaps his most challenging aesthetic demands to date. They represent a culmination in Fowles's attitudes towards the possibilities inherent in the form and its efficacy as a meaningful work of art. Both novels investigate the bifurcation of the artistic (intuitive and imaginative) and scientific (rational) modes of thought; and the manifestation of this divergence in the relationships between men (associated with the rational, the Apollonian) and women (associated with the imaginative, the Dionysiac). In an overarching sense, in these final works Fowles engages in a re-evaluation of some of the tenets he examined in previous novels: specifically, the role of women and their association with change and progress, the importance of the creative process and its connection with the establishment of meaning, the source of meaning (implying a challenge to the views of the linguistic consensus), and the role and future of the novel.

The relationship between Fowles and the linguistic consensus demands some attention here, since it amplifies my contention that Fowles's relationship with both modern and postmodern aesthetic accounts is more complex than some earlier studies might suggest. This is particularly evident in *Mantissa* (1982), which depicts the relationship between the author and his inspiration, and *A Maggot* (1985), which foregrounds the relationship between language and reality. In both cases, Fowles is working against quotidian norms of contemporary British and European fiction.

The demise of the centrality of the artist and writer in the late-twentieth-century is epitomized by Roland Barthes in "The Death of the Author" (1968), still influential well into the 1970s and beyond, as evidenced by the inclusion of his essay in numerous collections of modern criticism, including *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (2000) and in his enduring influence on the post-structuralists. In "The Death of the Author" specifically, Barthes discourages any attempt by the reader to incorporate aspects of an author's identity into the act of interpreting a text. Barthes opines that the political views, historical context, religion, ethnicity, psychology, or other biographical or personal attributes of the author are superfluous or even

deleterious to an authentic reading of a work, and instead they represent an interpretative tyranny artificially elevating the intent of the author or creator as paramount, an inherently political inversion of the traditional hierarchy which had placed the writer above the reader. *Mantissa* reinterprets, and parodies, Barthes's assertion that the author, or "scriptor" to use Barthes's term,

> is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now.*[424]

Interpreting Barthes' definition of the author as being born "simultaneously with the text" quite literally, the consciousness of the central character and putative author of the novel, Miles Green, appears to physically and psychologically coalesce in the opening lines of the novel, as he, or rather "*it* was conscious of a luminous and infinite haze, as if it were floating, godlike, alpha and omega."[425] The tone of the novel is clearly ironic, a fact which seems to have escaped many critics who received the work with derision and ridicule. Martin Amis's review of *Mantissa* (*The Observer*, October 1982) is unremittingly hostile, characteristic of its generally poor reception. Even in America, where Fowles's novels had always been more enthusiastically received than in England, *Mantissa*'s reception was lukewarm at best. Fowles notes in his journal that the only "faintly kind" reviews came from David Lodge and Malcolm Bradbury[426]. *The New York Times'* response: "I think there's a chance that *Mantissa* will contribute in time to a sensible downward revision of Mr. Fowles's reputation"[427] is a fair reflection of the unimpressed majority. In a letter to his editor, Ray Roberts, Fowles predicted this cool reception even during the novel's composition. Of *Mantissa* he writes simply, "It will be short, and a severe test for my more serious admirers, I'm afraid. But I warned you

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[424] Roland Barthes. "Death of the Author," rpt. in David Lodge and Nigel Wood, eds., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* 2nd ed. (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2000), 148-149.

[425] John Fowles. *Mantissa* (London: Triad/Panther Books, 1984), 9.

[426] *The Journals, Volume II.* 268.

[427] Benjamin DeMott, "The Yarnsmith in Search of Himself," *The New York Times,* August 29, 1982, 3.

of that."[428] This is surely indicative of a staunch commitment to an artistic direction in the face of commercial failure and critical disapproval, proving that he was no hostage to success.

Like *Mantissa*, the position Fowles adopts in *A Maggot* can be interpreted in a fashion that interrogates certain aspects of contemporary literary criticism, specifically, the 'linguistic turn'[429], to which I alluded in the introductory chapter, whose "dogmatic complex" according to Edward Pols, "has so dominated analytic-empirical philosophers […]" for "the greater part of this century."[430]

I suggest such literary critical theories are problematized in Fowles's final works of fiction. Specifically, I suggest that *Mantissa* overtly parodies the suggestion that language creates our reality by describing the incongruous yet simultaneous coming into existence of a novel and the subject it depicts: its putative author, Miles Green, who, like the novel, finds himself trapped within the walls of his own brain, surely a parody of the structuralist and poststructualist conception of language as being purely self-referential, deriving meaning only from within its own structure.

Similarly, the plot of *A Maggot* revolves around an eighteenth century woman's attempt to articulate phenomena familiar in the twentieth century but for which no vocabulary yet exists. This surely challenges poststructuralist literary theory: specifically that language, rather than any innate or pre-language, human faculty, determines meaning, since the female protagonist is, arguably, able to describe the mysterious apparition of a spaceship without having the vocabulary to do so.

By contrast, all of Fowles's work begins with an assumption that language is rooted in the real (as seen in the broadly realistic nature of all of his novels up to and including the novels of the 1970s) but they also generally acknowledge the challenges inherent in language as the medium by which to apprehend an evanescent reality, as explored variously in *The Magus* through Urfe's desensitised

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[428] John Fowles to Ray Roberts, September 9, 1981, Ray Roberts Collection 13.5, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

[429] As Pols describes in *Radical Realism. Direct Knowing in Science and Philosophy*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), the linguistic consensus, with which he also associates the 'linguistic turn' of the structuralists and poststructuralists (although he concedes that these latter groups "never shared the analytic community's interest in philosophy of science of the kind that is oriented toward physics" (58)) advances a "dogmatic complex", which Pols "unfold[s] into seven related dogmas" and then refutes.

[430] Ibid, 55.

state, unable to empathise almost to a complete solipsism, and Miranda's vain attempts to communicate with her damaged interlocutor in *The Collector*. The works also advocate that language remains the best vehicle we have to articulate ideas, as *Daniel Martin* explores, but is not simply reflexive or contained within its own parameters or codes. A similar stance is advocated in the philosophy of Edward Pols, especially in *Radical Realism: Direct Knowing in Science and Philosophy* (1992), in which he describes a mode of knowing, asserting that there can be a direct knowledge of the real. Key to this thesis is Pols's description of a realism that conflates reason and experience, and a differentiation between "direct" and "indirect knowing". Direct knowing,

> brings together the two realms traditionally known as reason and experience […] and insists on the interfusion or interpenetration of those realms, which so many philosophers have thought to be so distinct that a body of recondite theory must be devised to show how they can possibly be connected with and relevant to each other.[431]

In terms of Fowles's novel, such interfusion and interpenetration of the realms of reason and experience is illustrated in Rebecca Lee's attempt to articulate her quasi-religious experience in Dollings Cave. Her experience in the cave is beyond anything she has witnessed before, and therefore she has no vocabulary with which to describe it. The nearest thing to which she can draw a comparison is that it is

> like a maggot, tho' not. Its great eye shone down upon us, my blood did curdle in my veins; and I must perforce call out in my fear, ignorant that I was. […] Of white, yet not of flesh, as it were wood japanned, or fresh-tinned metal, large as three coaches end to end, or more, its head with the eye larger still; and I did see other eyes along its sides that shone also, tho' less, through a greenish glass. And at its end there was four great funnels black as pitch, so it might vent its belly forth there.[432]

When asked by Henry Ayscough, the lawyer charged with discovering what occurred in Dollings Cave, why she called the object "a maggot" she replies: "So I first believed it to be. For it had a seeming head, and a tail, and was fat, and like in colour."[433] Rebecca's attempt to describe something that lies outside completely out of her experiential realm results in such an interpenetration of experience and

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[431] Edward Pols. *Radical Realism: Direct Knowing in Science and Philosophy*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 3-4.

[432] *A Maggot*, 359-360.

[433] Ibid., 360.

rationality. She rationalizes that since the object looks *like* a maggot, it *is* maggot. This experience, of perceiving something that is of this world yet outside of its mode of articulation, is instrumental in Rebecca's new-found religious fervour, another example of a character experiencing an epiphany which brings to light an extension of the human realm. It is as if this glimpse of something that lies beyond the banal and every-day and yet contiguous with it encourages Rebecca to see the possibilities of change inherent in such a mode of perception.

This interpenetration of the real and the mysterious, which is surely mythopoeic in nature, causes a radical reappraisal of the self and society. Rebecca interprets this quasi-religious experience as a calling, and embarks upon a new life, one in which she strives to see the possibilities not the actualities of superficial appearance: "Change," she explains to Ayscough, "that is my purpose."[434]

By contrast, indirect knowing, according to Pols, is drawn from the "world of common sense, most of them convertible to direct knowing in certain circumstances."[435] Pols cites the internal structure of the atom as an example of such knowledge. We cannot directly *know* the structure of an atom, but we can know it indirectly, via prediction and rational projection, and this does not undermine its relevance and soundness as knowledge since "events we suppose or image to be there on the basis of theory [are] in effect, a useful fiction in the present stage of science."[436] The linguistic consensus claims any such knowledge is simply "a function of language cum theory"[437] and reflects a relativism that underpins post-structuralist and postmodern literary theory.

It is this relativism, and the suggestion that something cannot be directly "known" because of the inherent relativism of language, that Fowles seems to counter in *A Maggot* (1985). The title itself is an example of a word with multifarious meanings, yet indicative, according to Fowles, of language's ability to enrich rather than impede meaning *because* of its ambivalence and richness. Pol's description of indirect knowing will inform my analysis of Fowles's most mythopoeic work, in

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[434] Ibid., 429.

[435] Pols, *Radical Realism: Direct Knowing in Science and Philosophy*, 4.

[436] Ibid., 3-4.

[437] Ibid., 5.

which the central premise is a series of events that cannot be described or explained in the language of eighteenth century England, and which are therefore deemed by the quotidian dominant (personified by Asycough) as inadmissible, non-events. In Pol's terminology, the mythic serves as a "useful fiction" when we are faced with events that lie beyond our comprehension or articulation, and the characters who remain the most open to these events which lie at the furthest outposts of our comprehension and articulation, are always female in Fowles's novels.

Mantissa (1982) extends the division between men and women (and mind and body) to its most extreme, examines the creative process, and also confronts contemporary literary and feminist theory, revisiting themes now familiar to the reader. *A Maggot* (1985), extends these themes significantly in terms of radicalizing notions concerning men, women, science and art, and how the mythopoeic has the power to encapsulate and express much of what confounds science. Most fascinating of all, *A Maggot* hints at the possibility of a quasi-religious paradigm anchored in a trinity that includes a matriarch, surely the culmination of Fowles's own quasi-feminist beliefs. Ultimately, the reader is left to confront an aporia, since there is no explanation of the true nature of the 'maggot,' but the reader is left with a sense that mythic mystery is a more creative and preferable state than artificially static resolution or status quo.

Underscoring the potentially misleading nature of objective reality and an over-reliance on analytical or fixed language (labelling) as the only mediator of reality, the titles of Fowles's two final novels *Mantissa* and *A Maggot* have polysemic, even contradictory meanings. 'Mantissa,' according to the Oxford English Dictionary, in addition to meaning "an addition of comparatively small importance, esp. to a text or discourse; a supplement," also means, "the fractional part of a common logarithm." Thus, this single word simultaneously represents conflicting meanings: something of no importance (i.e., defines a supplement) and something of great importance (i.e., defines the meaning of a number by its position). Similarly, the word 'maggot,' as Fowles explains in the novel's prologue, means "whim", "quirk", or an "obsession", a snatch of music or "earworm" in addition to its more immediate contemporary meaning of the larval stage of a fly. This multivalence simultaneously foregrounds both the imprecise nature of language and, paradoxically, its richness of meaning. The two novels in this final decade of

Fowles's creative career reflect and interrogate the paradoxical yet supremely fertile relationship between reality and language.

Levels of meaning, objective and subjective meaning, and the quite different ways in which, if one can generalize, men and women perceive meaning is at the heart of these two final novels. In my analyses, I hope to show that these two novels lead to a culmination of Fowles's views on women (an emerging quasi-feminism), the novel (its place as the ultimate vehicle for apprehending objective and subjective reality), and the use of myth as a means by which a more comprehensive apprehension of objective and subjective reality might be achieved.

As I have described in an earlier chapter, by objective reality, this includes that offered by mimetic observation – which is the reality of the observed external object, implying the intervention of an external consciousness, supplemented by various relations of a community of individuals. Fowles's choice of settings for these final two novels, the inside of a writer's brain and that of the remote historical past, suggests both, and yet one might consider that on one level these novels are concerned with intertextual rather than extratexual existence. Neither work attempts to describe anything that exists outside of the texts. In a curious paradoxical fashion, this might suggest that the novels are not "realistic," and yet both are rendered adhering to the conventions of traditional realism (i.e., "accurate documentation, sociological insight, an accumulation of the details of material fact, and avoidance of poetic diction, idealization, exaggeration, melodrama […] and subjects were to be taken from everyday life, preferably from lower-class life."[438]) However, both novels, while reliant on such realist strategies to engage and establish expectations in the reader, quickly challenge the conventions of the genre by incorporating events that are in excess of what is traditionally accepted to be "realistic" in the narrative sense.

Thematically, in *A Maggot*, Fowles seems to suggest that reality cannot be completely encapsulated in the language that we have, yet it remains best vehicle we at our disposal for communicating a shared existence (again an intersubjective element). For post-structuralists such as Julia Kristeva, the richness and adaptive flexibility of language is generally overlooked, instead attention is directed towards

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[438] Definition of realism in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* ed. Margaret Drabble, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 813.

the inexplicable or unscientifically verifiable relationship between signifier and signified, which is relentlessly scrutinized in a process of tearing at "the veil of representation to find the material signifying process."[439]

Words such as "maggot" are time-bound in the sense that meanings specific to the past are lost to later generations. If words as ordinary as "maggot" have such rich, connotive meanings, generally lost on the majority, it is hardly surprising that the linguistic consensus would have such little faith in language to have a stable, verifiable meaning. I suggest that *A Maggot* counters the view of such a linguistic consensus by advocating that although language may *seem* to have only a tentative and relative relationship with the real, the connection between signifier and signified was once explicit. In his preface to *A Maggot,* Fowles provides the reader with an extensive explanation of the derivation and meaning of the novel's title thus foregrounding the opacity and obscurity of much of our contemporary vocabulary.

As Elizabeth Vandiver explains in her lecture on *Classical Mythology*, even the simple English word "clue" has rich connotations today, associations with detection, crime, and evidence, yet its original old English meaning is simply a "ball of yarn."[440] The rich meaning with which this word is imbued is derived from its association with the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, and with Ariadne's ball of thread (or the "clue") that led him to safety through the labyrinth. Since we are not conscious of this rich layering of meaning in the majority of our language use, it is not surprising that we feel that words have, at best, a slippery relationship with the meaning which they purport to represent.

These final two novels are therefore radical, both in terms of their subject matter (seemingly realistic, but overtly imaginative) and in their thematic concerns with language and meaning. *A Maggot* and *Mantissa* reflect a culmination in his focus on the differentiation between the objectively or observed real (the latter apparently exemplified in the implied autobiographic *Daniel Martin*) and the subjectively real (or the real as imagined).

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[439] Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique*. Paris: Seuil. Translated as *Revolution in Poetic Language*, by Margaret Waller, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 103.

[440] Prof. Elizabeth Vandiver. *Classical Mythology.* (DVD lecture, The Teaching Company, Chantilly, VA, 2007).

Mantissa

There is, as Jan Relf points out in her 1985 "Interview with John Fowles,"[441] "very little criticism available" focused on *Mantissa*, which may be variously accounted for: perhaps because it seems such a departure from Fowles's other works, because it gives the impression of being outrageously male chauvinistic, or even as a result of its plenitude of allusions (few of them complimentary) to literary critics and criticism. *Mantissa* can be read as a reflexive work focusing on the art of writing, creativity, and how *in extremis* the real is depicted. As such, it is firmly part of Fowles's aesthetic, a formal exploration of fiction's apprehension of life, of the world, and of the inner self. Together with *A Maggot* this phase of Fowles's creativity is the most overtly and self-consciously mythopoeic. It focuses upon the means by which an author is inspired, and how the ideas that come to make up a novel are contingent, subject to the internal wranglings of the author and, perhaps, his muse.

Mantissa's narrative perspective expresses an extreme, solipsistic subjective position, that of a depiction of the inside of the implied author's brain, and represents an examination of how one individual male perceives and constructs a fictional world, one that becomes inextricably confused with the "real" world. The focus of the narrative is the creation of a novel, or its "birth," and the relationship between the male implied author and his female muse, Erato, who also enters the frame of the narrative precisely to confront the author about how she is depicted in his apparent novel (within the overall, actual novel by Fowles).

Mantissa occupies an interesting position in Fowles's literary output, as by the time of its publication in 1982, he was by his own estimation, and by that of certain literary critics, occupying an almost untenable position as an author. He remained a stubborn bastion of realism and humanism in a literary world given over to postmodernism, deconstruction, and third-wave feminism. Fowles's journal entries from this period reflect the author's own feelings of alienation from the literary

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[441] Relf, "An Interview with John Fowles," Reprinted in *Conversations with John Fowles*, 130.

scene. Reviewing a recent *Granta* magazine anthology of "promising young British writers" in March of 1983 (the year after *Mantissa*'s publication) Fowles noted in his journal the "voguish bitterness" of "Martin Amis, who:

> makes his father seem like a warm-hearted humanist by comparison. Nausea, in the Sartrean sense, seems far from dead; and a decided cold shoulder turned on any humanist view of life – tolerance, generosity, any classical observer role for the writer. There is a marked shift away from common reader-writer assumptions into a generally waspish personal hatred of all that is not similarly waspish. A literary century gone very sour.[442]

Mantissa may therefore be read as an ironic parody of many of the voguish critical theories which proliferated in the 1980s, and which elevated works by writers such as Amis while dismissing the works of liberal humanists like Fowles.

The novel is a playful account of the birth of a novel and the relationship between the male novelist (Miles Green) and his female muse (Erato). There are parallels between *Mantissa* and his previous novel, *Daniel Martin*, in that both take as their *mise en scene* the creation of the novel with which the reader is currently occupied. Unlike *Daniel Martin*, however, the implied author is not content to ignore the conventions of contemporary theorists and quotidian standards and conventions and instead pursue his own approach to realism. Instead, *Mantissa* confronts and ridicules directly much contemporary theory popular among academics, and is more of a treatise on the creative process and aspects of the male and the feminine within this creative process. If taken seriously, the novel is disturbing in its gratuitous sexual depictions and dismissive comments on feminism. However, when viewed as a playful dialogue with contemporary views on the novel and sexual politics, it becomes a more palatable and interesting work.

Typical of the badinage between Green and the muse, Erato (Muse of lyric poetry, especially love and erotic poetry), is the following exchange which occurs in the third section of the novel:

> 'I was trying to get it through your thick skull that I have not *just* become visible to you, I have *always* been invisible to you. All you've ever seen in me is what you choose to see. And that's metaphorically no more than this.'
>   Most bizarrely, suspended in the air, some three feet from the door and five feet above the old rose carpet, appears a little cocked finger; but almost as soon as he sees it, it disappears again.
>   'I can think of another portion of your anatomy that would have summed you up a damned sight better. They call it delta in Ancient Greek.'

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[442] John Fowles, *The Journals Volume 2*, ed. by Charles Drazin (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 272.

'That's disgustingly cheap.'
'And accurate.'
'I forbid you to say another word. You're just a degenerate tenth-rate hack. God, no wonder the Times Literary Supplement calls you an affront to serious English fiction.'
'I happen to regard that as one of the finest feathers in my cap.'
'You would. Since it's the only claim to distinction you have.'
There is a silence. He leans back and looks down at the bed.
'At least you've done one thing for me. I now realize that evolution was out of its already highly confused mind when it dragged women into it.'
'And you out of one of them.'[443]

Here, Erato, Muse of erotic poetry, is absurdly conflated with a life-world depiction of a contemporary 1980s woman, and the result is dissonant and bizarre. This is surely Fowles's intent: to remind the reader that the life-world and the world of the imagination cannot be confused, and when they are, chaos and the absurd ensues.

Fowles insists in numerous interviews that *Mantissa* was never meant to be taken seriously.   In Carol Barnum's interview with the author in 1984, he reiterates that, "I did mean the title *Mantissa* (a minor addition) quite literally," [444] and a year later while being interviewed by Jan Relf, he insists that the novel was from a commission for a private press in America "on the side" and not to be "taken with the appalling heavy seriousness of some of its critics."[445] However, since the novel was twelve years in the making, and was composed alongside such works as *The French Lieutenant's Women*, *The Ebony Tower*, and *Daniel Martin*, it can hardly be dismissed as being as insignificant as the more diminutive of its two definitions would imply. Instead, it offers an interesting glimpse of a radical experiment, which much of the literary establishment has dismissed or entirely overlooked.

The novel is divided into four sections, each preceded by an epigram dealing with either the relationship between men and women, or the division between mind and body, thus focusing the reader on two of the central themes of the novel. From the beginning of the novel, the male is associated with the mind, or the Nietzschean Apollonian (Green is associated with changes in consciousness in the opening words of the novel) and the female is associated with the body, the Nietzschean

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[443] *Mantissa*. 146-7.

[444] Interview with Carol Barnum (1984), in *Conversations with John Fowles*, 116.

[445] Interview with Jan Relf (1985). Ibid, 130-131.

Dionysiac, which manifests itself in the sexual interventions provided by the female Nurse and Doctor. However, the power of creativity lies with the female character by virtue of her association with the Muse, and it is the struggle for creativity that Miles Green must overcome throughout the novel.

In the opening pages, the "it" of the novel plunges from an unknown place into a less pleasant consciousness associated with "images and labels" which, as Green becomes more aware of his surroundings, begin to "swim here momentarily to coalesce, here to divide, like so many pond amoebae."[446] This constant division of labels and images representing a growing complexity of naming is reminiscent of Bauman's description of an eternally proliferating labelling system in a modern society desperate to escape from ambivalence, discussed in an earlier chapter. Ambivalence and ambiguity in this novel are represented as the elevated state from which the "it" (which eventually recognizes himself to be Miles Green) descends. Thus the pre-labelling, even pre-language, world is presented as the paradise from which Green "falls". Also, this description of Miles Green, entering consciousness at the same time as the novel itself is being written, again suggests an affinity with Barthes, deconstructing the hegemony of the author, suggesting that the author is born with the text and therefore cannot furnish a transcendental signified for the work.

Such a postmodern interpretation of the novel is typified by critics such as Jane O'Sullivan, whose paper, "Cyborg or goddess: Postmodernism and its others in John Fowles's *Mantissa*," (2003), presents a reading of the novel that focuses on Erato as "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self."[447] O'Sullivan also suggests that the novel is an exploration of various discursive modes, including feminism,

> that is defined in relation to postmodernism within the largely gender-specific binary structure of *Mantissa*. Another is that of the Cartesian concept of subjectivity which, in *Mantissa*, is aligned with realism, liberal humanism, and the masculinist mind of Miles Green, and set in opposition to postmodernism, poststructuralism, and the feminine body of Erato.[448]

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[446] *Mantissa*, 9.

[447] Jane O'Sullivan. "Cyborg or goddess: Postmodernism and its others in John Fowles's *Mantissa*." *College Literature*. 30.3, Summer 2003, 109-123.

[448] Ibid., n.p.

As O'Sullivan herself points out, suggesting that *Mantissa* might be read as a postmodern feminist attack on realism, liberal humanism, and the masculine mind is immediately problematic because "postmodernism is politically ambivalent for it is . . . both complicitous with and contesting of the cultural dominant within which it operates," whereas "feminisms have distinct, unambiguous political agendas of resistance."[449] Instead, Susana Onega's suggestion that the novel is a rejection of "Beckettian solipsism and nouveau roman formalist excesses"[450] is a more accurate depiction of the inherent complexity of the novel, which resists simplistic and reductive notions of postmodernism.

   Fowles's description of the novelist literally seeming to enter consciousness at the same time as the novel is being conceived is a humorous rejection of Barthes's theory. The reality of Barthes' suggestion seems ridiculous, as the hapless author is plunged into a reality where he is at the mercy of the women who attend him, and who have to remind him that he has "given birth" to the novel. The opening of the narrative is deliberately and overtly surreal—the novelist being presented with the novel to which he has just given birth within the confines of his own brain— yet is a literal rendition of the ideas Barthes's presents in his essay "The Death of the Author." This is the first of many incidents where Fowles humorously disparages postmodern literary theory by rendering them literally in the novel's plot.

   The plot focuses on the protagonist, author Miles Green, and in the opening pages of the work he is in a changing state of consciousness, as if awakening after an accident. He fails to recognize his wife, and is left with a Dr Delphie and Nurse Cory to try to help him regain his memory. The mythic associations between the female characters are evident: "Delphie" seeming to be a corruption of "Delphi," the site of the Delphic oracle, the most important oracle in the classical Greek world, and the site for the worship of the god Apollo; and more obscurely, a derivation of the name "Cory" could be the The Korykiai (or Corycidae) who were Naiad nymphs of the Korkykian cave of Mount Parnassos. Cory and Dr Delphie are projections of the same female character, which becomes evident when Green

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[449] Ibid., n.p.

[450] Susana Onega, "Self, World and Art in the Fiction of John Fowles," *Twentieth Century Literature* 42, no. 1 (1996): 29-57.

points out that both women "have exactly the same eye colour"[451] an uncanny doubling among female characters that may be indicative of a formal reflexivity, referring to Fowles's previous novels where the male protagonist must choose between two women.

The "treatment" for Green's amnesia (or writer's block) turns out to be an attempt to bring Miles Green to orgasm, and following his climax, he is presented with "a lovely little story" that he has made "all by himself."[452]   Thus from the start of the novel, it is established that creativity is associated with a libidinal economy, with the sex act and that the female characters appear to be in complete control of overcoming writer's block. However, the male character alone is given complete credit for writing the "lovely little story."   This extreme correlation, and implicit parody in Fowles's treatment of its rendering, between the sexual act and fiction has parallels in another work of contemporary literary criticism, Robert Scholes's *Fabulation and Metafiction* where the critic maintains that "the archetype of all fiction is the sexual act."[453]

The three epigrams at the beginning of the first section of the novel are from Descartes, Marivaux, and Lemprière. The epigram from Descartes is from the *Discours de la Méthode* (1637), and the specific section quoted from this work is a paragraph in which Descartes makes his famous distinction between mind and body, culminating with the observation that "the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from my body … and furthermore would not stop being what it is, even if the body did not exist."[454] The distinction, appearing as it does before a disembodied consciousness descends, somewhat unwillingly, into a corporeal existence, stresses the focus of the novel on this same distinction. However, the second epigram from Marivaux's play *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard* (1730), contains a short interchange between two characters Sylvia and Dorante. The premise of this play is the courtship of two aristocrats who use their respective servants in their places to find out more about their betrothed partners. In a familiar

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[451] *Mantissa*, 20.

[452] Ibid., 47.

[453] Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 27.

[454] *Mantissa*, 5.

exchange, both aristocrats make the switch, so the servants end up courting each other. At this point in the play, Dorante has revealed his aristocratic status to Sylvia, but Sylvia maintains the charade to see if Dorante will renounce his fortune to marry a "servant" girl. In this play, the adoption of the superficial garments of different strata of society fools the male but not the female, suggesting that the female character is less dependent upon surface reality than her male counterpart as the basis for making judgements about a situation. The angry exchange between Sylvia and Dorante anticipates the animated conversations between the author and his muse, and, I suggest, predicts a state of affairs where the female character continues a dialogue whilst in possession of more information about a situation than the male, a dilemma that will come to dominate *Mantissa*.

We are first introduced to the Erato character at the culmination of the first section of the novel with the door of Miles Green's hospital room being kicked open by a manifestation of Erato, this time dressed as a "punk." Erato's appearance as a punk rocker recalls the predominance of the punk movement in the mid- to late-1970s, her description is thus contemporaneous and associated with a movement in popular music and culture which was also allied with a more aggressive form of feminism and a general resistance to appropriation and commercialization. As the novel progresses, the female character takes more control of the dialogue, changing from a manipulated puppet, spouting dialogue provided to her by Miles Green, to suggesting plot developments herself. On numerous occasions, there are thinly veiled references to Fowles's own works and to the works of his contemporaries. When Erato suggests a particularly bizarre plot development and is questioned by Green as to his ability to write that scene, she replies:

> "I'd hate to lose it … it feels right."
> "It feels right?"
> "Feeling right is terribly important to me, Miles.[455]

This Rabelaisian urge to do something because it "feels right" is taken directly from *Daniel Martin*'s character, Jane, and aligns the female character with an intuitive rather than a logical mode of perception.

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[455] Ibid., 108.

Like the first, the second section of the novel is preceded by an epigram, this time from Lemprière. The definitions from Lemprière's dictionary are the entries for Mnemosyne and Erato, and the entry for Mnemosyne reminds the reader that the mother of the muses was ascribed the art of "reasoning and giving suitable names to everything, so that we can describe them, and converse about them without seeing them."[456] This brief allusion to the origin of naming and a suggested mythic basis for the naming of things, reminds the reader of one of the central arguments of modernist and postmodernist literary theory, that of the validity or otherwise of a logocentric paradigm.

The mythic allusion to the naming of all things "so we can describe them, and converse about them without seeing them" suggests a point in time where such a naming occurred, and therefore implies the origin of meaning from one pure source. Such a paradigm is central to a system where meaning is fixed by a logos; be it a transcendent ego or by some other pure source. The modernists took this paradigm as the point of departure for their inversion of binaries (the modernist disruption of logocentrism), so it is significant that Fowles spends considerable time in this novel humorously dramatizing the association of meaning with words, and the naming of things and concepts.

Miles Green attacks Erato for her naïve assumptions that modern fiction is about assembling "characters" and "stories on paper"[457] which is Fowles's opportunity to attack those critical theorists who attempt to dictate what a novel should be. He begins with an attack on those like Barthes who divorce the author from the novel, who textualize narrative both cultural and fictional. The pompous Green attempts to explain these theories, ironically to Erato, the Muse of poetry, who listens to his explanations like a "school student being forced to confess that she has not done her homework."[458] Of course Erato does know all about the theories, (she is simply playing one of several roles to which she is assigned in her exchanges with Green), a fact that is reaffirmed later when Erato refers to "Tzvetan Todorov"[459] who,

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[456] Ibid., 49. This is one of the first of many references to the origination of language which hints at a logocentric view where meaning originates from one pure source.

[457] Ibid., 117.

[458] Ibid.

[459] Ibid., 137.

significantly, contributed extensively to the field of literary theory with his definitions of the fantastic, the fantastic uncanny, and the fantastic marvellous[460]. Green first "reminds" Erato of the literary critical movement that has definitively separated the author from his work. In what seems to be a gloss of Barthes, Green explains, rather short-temperedly:

> At the creative level there is in any case no connection whatever between author and text. They are two entirely different 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 a doubt. The author's role is purely fortuitous and agential. He has no more significant a status than the bookshop owner or the librarian who hands the text *qua* object to the reader.[461]

In a thinly-veiled, ironic reference to Fowles's own beliefs, he goes on to explain, at Erato's prompting, why novelists, if they have had nothing to with the novel's creation, continue to put their names on the title page. They do it, he explains, out of vanity and because "most of them are still under the positively medieval illusion that they write their own books."[462] In another related attack on the academy's self-perpetuation of its own subjects of study, he continues to berate Erato, warning her that:

> You really haven't a hope of inspiring anything worth even doctorate-level analysis when your first thought is always the same: how quickly you can get people's clothes off and have them hop into bed.[463]

In one of many extreme male-chauvinist comments, he suggests that Erato would have been better suited as a "geisha girl" or a writer herself, as long as it was of a "certain kind of women's novel"[464] and later, "Is there anything you'd like before I go? Some pretty clothes? A magazine, *Woman's Own*? *Good Housekeeping*?

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[460] Tzvetan Todorov. *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre.* Trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975).

[461] *Mantissa*, 117.

[462] Ibid., 118.

[463] Ibid.

[464] Ibid, 119. Green suggests Erato read Jong, but Erato responds "The Swiss psychologist?" suggesting she thinks he means 'Jung' rather than the feminist writer, Erica Jong. This entire conversation is undermined within a few pages, when Erato reveals that she not only knows all about literary criticism, but that she is well-versed in the vocabulary.

Vogue?"[465] In response to these sexist and patronizing suggestions, Erato feigns ignorance of this literary critical theory. However, she later reveals that she is only too well acquainted with its contents, suggesting not only that she has been manipulating Green throughout the previous exchanges, but also that Green and Erato seem to swap roles continually throughout the novel, each taking it in turns to be the mouthpiece for the "real" author. It becomes clear that Fowles is constructing a dialogue in which he has the opportunity to counter criticisms about his [Fowles's] own work, current discussions in literary critical theory, and current discussions in feminist theory. Gradually, the Erato character seems to reject the situation being written for her, and lays out the author with a punch. This attack concludes the second section.

In the third section, the epigram from Descartes refers to the conflict inherent in the claims of the philosophers that "nothing can enter the mind that has not first passed through the senses."[466] This focuses on the empiricist notion that nothing can be known until it has been known empirically. Since the events of this novel are all set inside the novelist's brain, this statement becomes problematic. This work of the imagination circumvents empirical experiences, or at least only draws upon them peripherally as a source of "realistic" detail in order to construct an alternative sequence of possible events. As such, Fowles seems to be setting the imagination in conflict with the Cartesian notion of knowledge. Indeed, from the setting of the novel, Fowles seems to suggest that all of the material he needs to fuel the creative process lies within the brain, and is not dependent upon any empirical input.

As Ian Gotts points out in his article, "Fowles' *Mantissa*: Funfair in Another Village"[467] one of the most useful companion pieces to *Mantissa*, in terms of determining Fowles's published thoughts about the creative process, is the author's article, "Notes on an Unfinished Novel."[468] This work, which was not published until 1977, was written much earlier, whilst Fowles was still working on the first draft of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and contains many of the ideas and

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[465] Ibid., 121.

[466] Ibid., 129.

[467] Ian Gotts, "'Fowles' *Mantissa*: Funfair in another Village'", *Critique*, (1985), 81.

[468] John Fowles, "'Notes on an Unfinished Novel" reprinted in *The Novel Today*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury.

philosophies related to writing and the creative process that are the central themes of *Mantissa*.

In "Notes on an Unfinished Novel", Fowles recollects the "mythopoeic stills"[469] that first announce the beginning of a new novel for the author. This renders Fowles's own explicit notion of a mythopoeic influence on his own creative process. He stresses the "mysterious" and "romantic" nature of imaginative writing, which manifests itself in the Erato figure and her relationship with Miles Green in *Mantissa*, and he spends a significant portion of his article refuting Robbe-Grillet's position in *Pour un Nouveau Roman*[470] and the kind of criticism that reduces the composition of a novel to the assembly of a clever mind game.

Fowles's method of creation is, by contrast, essentially mythopoeic. He is drawn into the creation of a novel by the power of the story rather than a primary compulsion to advance the form or to enter into the ongoing academic discourse regarding the state of the novel, yet in *Mantissa* he manages to do both. His antithesis is a writer like Miles Green, who begins his novel with an idea of the contemporary theories to which he must adhere and the expectations of academic readers "who are the only who count nowadays."[471] The revolt of his muse, therefore, is hardly surprising, for it is she who appears to be more representative of Fowles, a "preeminent creator," rather than someone like Green who is "simply skilled with words."[472]

In "I Write Therefore I am," Fowles discusses his division of the Few and the Many, into those who are creators (like Miranda) and those who are skilled practitioners (like Clegg), and he suggests that this former ability is somehow innate, not a learned skill. "In Notes on an Unfinished Novel", Fowles reiterates this belief that writing cannot be taught, describing the American "strangely pragmatic view of what books are" which, he posits, could be due to the "miserable heresy that creative writing can be taught."[473] The choice of the title of this first

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[469] "Notes on an Unfinished Novel," *Wormholes*, 13.

[470] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour Un Nouveau Roman*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, Inc, 1965).

[471] *Mantissa*, 118.

[472] Ibid.

[473] "Notes on an Unfinished Novel", *Wormholes*, 25.

essay, "I Write Therefore I Am", also places an interesting twist on the Cartesian privileging of thinking over writing or creating.

After Erato has delivered her knock-out punch to Green at the end of section three, there follows an interesting exchange between a confrontational ward sister and Dr Delphie. The older ward sister complains about the doctor's unusual methods, referring to her treatment of "Mr Lawrence" and his "new mastectomy incision,"[474] the implicit reference being that D.H. Lawrence, a writer whom Fowles greatly admired[475], may also be present at the hospital. The ward sister, with her nostalgia for the work of "Dr Bowdler"[476] and the values of "Mrs Thatcher,"[477] berates Dr Delphie for her part in the demonstration with Mr Lawrence of this new medical procedure, "with surgical crayon upon your naked bosom […] before twenty-four male students."[478] This section of the novel seems to place the ward sister in the role of the conservative, prudish writer or critic. The ward sister rejects such explicit sexual content as unnecessary, as simply an attention-seeking strategy. Interestingly, since Fowles's novels are not known for their sexual frankness, this would appear to run parallel to Fowles's view and opinion. In an interview with James R. Baker in 1989, Fowles explains his dislike for "unnecessary sexual explicitness in so much American fiction: it becomes infantile, destructive of the truly erotic, in the end."[479] His implicit criticism of D. H. Lawrence is, perhaps, clarified later in this interview when he explains that "Mantissa was meant to make

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[474] *Mantissa*, 134.

[475] Numerous references to Lawrence and his influence on Fowles can be found in interviews with Daniel Halpern, "A Sort of Exile in Lyme Regis" (1971), 14; with James Campbell, "An Interview with John Fowles" (1974) 36; with Aaron Latham, "John Fowles on Islands and … Hidden Valleys" (1977) 48; with Devon McNamara, "Staying Green. An Interview with John Fowles the Novelist" (1979) 69; and with Raman Singh, "An Encounter with John Fowles" (1980) 87. All page numbers refer to *Conversations with John Fowles* in which all of these interviews are reprinted.

[476] *Mantissa*, 132. Dr Bowdler famously published an expurgated edition of Shakespeare that he considered at he considered more appropriate for women and children.

[477] Ibid., 133.

[478] Ibid., 134.

[479] "John Fowles: The Art of Fiction" an interview with James R. Baker (1989), reprinted in *Conversations with John Fowles*, 192.

fun of that [unnecessary sexual explicitness], in part, and also of the poor novelists, like Hardy, Fournier, D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller and countless others, labouring under this monstrous erotic succubus they have to carry on their backs." Fowles here suggests, perhaps, that the sexual act, like the creative writing process, is too mysterious to be captured in writing and is somehow denigrated and reduced when one attempts to describe it in pragmatic or concrete terms.

In the final section of the novel there are two epigrams: the first from Marivaux again, this time from "La Colonie" (1729):

> Deux beaux yeux n'ont qu'à parler.

This epigram is followed by one from Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*,

> By God she can do the talking. She has seen more of the world than you and me, of course, that's the secret of it.

although significantly the gender is changed from the original. This again implies the power increasingly afforded by Fowles to his female characters, particularly in this novel, where the creative impetus is placed firmly in the realm of the female.

The two epigrams are linked in their identification of the female as the communicator. In the first, the female ability to communicate is such that it can be accomplished non-verbally. This work is also significant, because, according to Peter V. Conroy, Jr., it is an early "depiction of the struggle for women's rights … in terms that have a distinctly modern resonance."[480]

The second epigram from O'Brien is significant for two reasons. First of all the novel from which it is taken has a thematic similarity with *Mantissa*, and it is the novel to which Fowles attributes the inspiration for this work[481]. This similarly metafictional novel, published in 1939, relates the story of a student who writes a novel about a novelist who only writes Westerns. The Western writer falls in love with his own description of female character, summons her to his room, and seduces her. The remaining characters in his Western novel, unhappy with the way the plot is developing, drug the author. The nature of creativity, the way in which

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[480] Peter V. Conroy, Jr., 'Marivaux's 'The Colony', *Signs,* Vol. 9 (1983), 336.

[481] Carol Barnum "An Interview with John Fowles" (1984), reprinted in *Conversations with John Fowles*, 116.

the characters have more autonomy over the author than the reader might imagine, is central to both *At Swim-Two-Birds* and, of course, to *Mantissa*.

Also significant is the sense, in both novels, that the power of the female character, above that of the male, lies in her ability to communicate and to derive information about the world. Allusions to this novel are not restricted to the epigram. On the final page of the novel, Miles Green, in the form of a satyr, crashes (fatally) into the wall of the hotel room. His death (or return to the pre-conscious state from which he descended at the beginning of the novel) is heralded by the cuckoo of a clock:

> Its undying regard for its first and aestho-autogamous (*Keep the fun clean, said Shanahan*) owner; or as if dream-babbling of green Irish fields and mountain meadows, and of the sheer bliss of being able to shift all responsibility to one's progeny (to say nothing of having the last word), stirs, extrudes and cries an ultimate, soft and single, most strangely single, cuckoo.[482]

The direct quotation from *At Swim-Two-Birds,* (italicized above as in the original) emphasizes the connection between the two self-conscious works. The cuckoo clock also, as Fowles explains, stresses the "absurd and monotonous obsession […] the not being free to do anything but this [writing …] it is also the traditional sign of the cuckold—the man made a fool of."[483]

The creative process is something that takes control of the writer rather than the other way around. When Green attempts to dictate to the Muse, he is humiliated and ejected from her presence. It is Green's arrogant assumption that he can write a book without the influence of anything but the pragmatic drive to continue a literary critical discourse that condemns him to silence at the end of the novel. Green is condemned and the reader is left in no doubt as to the complexity and mystery of the creative process, and comprehends that ideas, at least implicitly for Fowles, manifest themselves via an intuitive process from a muse-like source, and so is finally unknowable in a rational sense. *Mantissa* emphasizes the mystery involved in this process, the affinity of this process with the mythic and the feminine, and the futility of attempting to analyze this process too closely.

The female character in *Mantissa* is central to this novel with Miles Green *seeming* to control the action but functioning merely as an inept foil to Erato's barbs. As Fowles's novels have progressed, the female characters have become

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[482] *Mantissa*, 190.

[483] Ibid., 116

increasingly central to the novels, and in these final two works, the female characters begin to surpass the male in terms of significance and development as is evident in *Mantissa*, and as I will show in my examination of *A Maggot*.

The idea of the creative source of the novel as both an activity and a structure explored in *Mantissa* recurs in *A Maggot* and involves Fowles's most powerful female, Rebecca Lee. Not only will she be the locus around which the narrative evolves, she will be the implied mother of a new religion and a new (or a return to a very old) philosophical paradigm: the female, matriarchal, Holy Ghost.

A Maggot

The mythopoeic impulse is foregrounded by Fowles in his prologue to *A Maggot*, where he describes an "obsession with a theme,"[484] the recurrence of a series of images that repeatedly presented themselves in Fowles's mind:

> a small group of travellers, faceless, without apparent motive, went in my mind towards an event. […] I do not know where it came from, or why it kept obstinately rising from my unconscious. […] They simply rode along a skyline, like a sequence of looped film in a movie projector; or like a single line of verse, the last remnant of a lost myth.[485]

This account resembles the description of the "mythopoeic 'stills'"[486] that preceded the composition of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The mystery of the story and the mythopoeic impulse will be the focus for this, Fowles's final published novel, as will the role of women as agents of change in society. In this novel, Fowles produces his strongest and most powerful female character in terms of the effect she has on those around her and in terms of her contribution to the inception of a new religious movement.

The novel centres on the travelling group of people alluded to by Fowles in his description of the haunting mythopoeic stills noted above. The group appears as if in a stream-of-consciousness, in the imagination of the narrator/author. Leading the travellers is Bartholemew, a nobleman, and his manservant and "foster brother" Dick; Lacy (an actor posing as his uncle); Jones, another actor posing as their military escort; and Rebecca, apparently the 'maidservant, Louise', but recruited from a bordello where she was formerly known as the prostitute, "Fanny". This group of travellers, each acting his or her assigned role, has been told by Bartholemew that the artifice is needed so that he might secretly meet with and marry his beloved. It becomes apparent that this, too, is a fiction. Bartholemew finally reveals the nature of his true quest to Lacy when they reach an Inn in the countryside near Stonehenge; namely that he is seeking his "life's meridian" which will involve him travelling on alone, except for Louise and Dick, and which is

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[484] *A Maggot*, 5.

[485] Ibid.

[486] "Notes on an Unfinished Novel," *Wormholes*, 13.

beyond the rational and empirical: something "even our Newtons and Leibnizes cannot reach"[487].

The source of this "life's meridian" lies in Dollings Cave. After entering the cave with Dick and Louise, only the woman emerges, having experienced a quasi-religious vision. It is the unravelling of the meaning of this vision and its explanation which emerges as a result of a trial. The cross-examination of these characters tried unsuccessfully to determine the whereabouts of the vanished Bartholemew, and what happened to Dick the manservant, who is found the day after the events at Dollings Cave, hanging from a gibbet, a posy of violets growing from his mouth. Using the restrictive narrative form of trial notes, (i.e., only transcribed dialogue), the reader learns some of what happened inside Dollings Cave through the questioning of witnesses by the lawyer, Ayscough. Ayscough is under the employ of an unnamed Duke, father of the missing Bartholemew. Despite, and perhaps because of, Ayscough's dogged and aggressive pursuit of the "truth", the reader completes her reading of the novel without a clear sense of what actually happened. It is a novel about *not* finding out what happens. For veteran readers of Fowles, of course, this will not be a surprise.

It is interesting to examine *A Maggot,* not only within the work of Fowles himself, but also within the context of the development of the British novel. As Rod Mengham indicates in his 'General Introduction' to *Contemporary British Fiction* (2003), there had been in the last thirty years of the millennium, a focus on the "historical novel" among British writers, and specifically, an "attempt to understand the individual's relationship to these narratives, with the extent to which individual experience confirmed or denied their meanings."[488] This volume groups the work of four novelists: Pat Barker, Jim Crace, Graham Swift, and Iain Sinclair, under a common heading of 'Myth and History', the implication being that a "new phase of the historical novel"[489] was emerging. Dominant characteristics of this emergent

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[487] *A Maggot*, 149.

[488] Richard Lane, Rod Mengham, and Philip Tew (eds) *Contemporary British Fiction* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2003), 1.

[489] Ibid., 11.

sub-genre include: a "reworking of the past as fiction," and "the creation of myth within a perspective framed almost entirely by recognizable everyday events."[490]

Jim Crace's work is identified as being typical of this new phase of the historical novel, and his works *Quarantine* (1997) and *Signals of Distress* (1994) are cited specifically as paradigmatic. I suggest that *A Maggot*, some ten years previously, anticipates this emerging strand of fiction before it crystallizes in the work of the four novelists cited above. As such, it explores history's reach for an "extended sense of interpretative possibilities (in myth, and in the placing of signification or meaning), [and] drawing themes from the present."[491] I will explore the "extended sense of interpretative possibilities" implicit in Fowles's novel, which unfolds via a series of individual accounts, thus complicating and proliferating possible connotations. I will also examine the central motif, the "maggot," which is used to describe the appearance of what a modern audience would interpret as a space vehicle, and which is as a word open to numerous semantic interpretations. Rebecca Lee's putative historic roots suggest a far-reaching signification of the events at Dollings Cave, since the experience leads her to a life with the Shaker sect, which would lead to the founding of the Shaker movement in America.

Such an examination of the novel within the framework of the British contemporary novel as described above facilitates a more nuanced reading than attempts to catalogue the novel as a postmodern text. Of course, the novel employs many of the devices that lead it to be described by Thomas Foster as a "quite typical postmodernist stew"[492], and in this observation Foster is quite accurate. The "stew" contains the right ingredients for a postmodernist novel; it is a conglomeration of multiple novel forms, part gothic novel, historical novel, science fiction, detective fiction, and thriller. For this reason, I will explore the devices that have led to the novel being categorized as such, but in addition, I hope to explore the novel within the broader contexts of contemporary British fiction with a view to indicating the degree to which Fowles anticipated emerging thematic and structural innovations.

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[490] Ibid.

[491] Ibid., 12.

[492] Thomas Foster, *Understanding John Fowles* (University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 141.

A Maggot foregrounds its historicity by including various supporting historical documentation, and the author addresses the reader directly in a typical postmodern and self-reflexive metafictional dialogue.   The novel begins in the tradition of a typical historical novel using a conventional narrative, but the reader only gets to the second page before the traditional expectations of an omniscient narrator are undermined.   For example, the author reveals that he knows little about the characters whose putative histories he relates.   Instead, he speculates on their relationship and whether they know one another:

> Yet if they had been chance-met, the two gentlemen would surely have been exchanging some sort of conversation and riding abreast, which the track permitted. These two pass not a word; nor does the man with the woman behind him. All ride as if lost in their own separate worlds.[493]

In a familiar metafictional, self-conscious statement the exact date of these events is confirmed to be 1736:

> This particular last day of April falls in a year very nearly equidistant from 1689, the culmination of the English Revolution, and 1789, the start of the French[494].

This metafictional reference distances the author from the events he is describing, shifting the reader's expectations from that of a traditional work of historical fiction, and also positions the events of the novel at a historical fulcrum: a period of calm between two historical torrents.

One of the significant threads common to historiographic metafiction is that it is more concerned with examining the experience rather than the event.   This appears to be the case in *A Maggot* as the reader never really observes or even receives a precise account of any of the major, contentious events, least of all what happens in Dollings Cave.   Rather the novel is structured around apparently real documents which reinforce the sense that one might be experiencing the interstices of history through the eyes of those who witnessed the actual events, the narrative text acting as if it were the unexplained marginalia of such documents.   As Margaret Scanlon observes, this is a particularly British trait.   Referring to the novels of Swinden, Higdon, McEwan, and Bergonzi, she writes that these writers "concern themselves with the question of how private lives and consciousnesses intersect with public

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[493] *A Maggot,* 8.

[494] Ibid., 16.

events; how it is that we experience our history"[495]. The reader may be assisted by the apparently authentic facsimiles of historical documents interspersed throughout the narrative, but they offer no direct information concerning the events at Dollings Cave. However, they certainly indicate the harsh and capricious nature of English justice in the early eighteenth century. The events central to this novel occur *between* the lines of official history and therefore would be lost to the future. What other items of history are overlooked, deliberately excluded, or misrepresented, is another theme in this novel and is reflected in other contemporary literature in the rise of historiographic metafiction as a literary form. In this form, of which *A Maggot* has been identified as an early example, postmodern historiography represents history, not, as Linda Hutcheon highlights, in a mimetic way, but instead "fiction is offered as another of the discourses by which we construct our versions of reality."[496]

Inhabitants of the early- to mid-1700s existed in an age still writhing from the explosion in scientific knowledge emanating from the seventeenth century. As Richard Hooker describes,

> Of all the changes that swept over Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the most widely influential was an epistemological transformation that we call the "scientific revolution." In the popular mind, we associate this revolution with natural science and technological change, but the scientific revolution was, in reality, a series of changes in the structure of European thought itself: systematic doubt, empirical and sensory verification, the abstraction of human knowledge into separate sciences, and the view that the world functions like a machine. These changes greatly changed the human experience of every other aspect of life, from individual life to the life of the group. This modification in world view can also be charted in painting, sculpture and architecture; you can see that people of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are looking at the world very differently."[497]

Significantly, this period heralds the emergence of the early form of the novel as a genre, dedicated, uniquely, to a reflection on the self. In the novel, Fowles highlights the emergence of the Age of Reason (personified in Henry Ayscough),

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[495] Margaret Scanlan. *Traces of Another Time. History and Politics in Postwar British Fiction.* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 7.

[496] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction.* (Routledge: London, 1988), 16.

[497] Richard Hooker, "World Civilizations: An Internet Classroom and Anthology", Washington State University, http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/WORLD.HTM (accessed November 9, 2007).

and with it a growing intolerance of superstition and tradition. Among the travelling group at the beginning of the novel, the influence of animistic tendencies is still evident. The group is aware of the "reputation"[498] of the ravens and their association with foreboding and "secretly fear that snoring cry."[499] The traditions of the countryside (sheep farming, spinning, and weaving), dominate the landscape, and Fowles takes pains to include such details as the name of the prevalent breed, their appearance and difference from "modern sheep," and the dominance of the wool trade in Devonshire establishing a historical accuracy and realism difficult to reconcile with later inexplicable, magical events.

Gradually, pieces of information about the members of the travelling group are revealed. Lacy, the actor, is confided in partially by Bartholemew when he reveals that he is going to meet a learned one who has shown him how to glimpse the future. We know very little about how he has gained this knowledge, but he carries with him many mathematical manuscripts and books. This construction of meaning on the part of Bartholemew, as he deciphers the future from his mathematical textbooks, is one of many strands of meaning-making present in the novel. Fowles himself makes meaning from the fleeting mythopoeic stills which inspired the novel. The reader must make meaning from the pieces of information gleaned from the introductory narrative. Part of the power of this narrative, however, is its lack of detail. The reader is ensnared by the gradual revealing and veiling of details related to the characters at the beginning of the novel. This lack of conclusive information about the characters and about what happened in the cave contributes to its power. The absence of complete details, the antithesis of the nouveau roman, a hinting at reality, proves seductive to the reader. Making meaning is central to this novel, occupying its thematic heart and constituting its core events. In addition to Fowles and the reader interpreting and relating their understanding from the information provided to them, similarly Ayscough must attempt to reconstruct events from the accounts he hears, just as the other characters, during their cross-examinations, must attempt to make meaning from what they have witnessed.

In addition to the various levels of nuance and understanding that occurs in the novel, there is a suggestion that different levels of meaning are derived from events

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[498] *A Maggot*, 8.

[499] Ibid.

depending on the degree to which one is distanced from events by time. The appearance of the "maggot" and the clothing of the female figured dressed in silver as described by both Rebecca and by Jones is quickly interpreted by a contemporary reader as a space ship and the clothing of a space traveller from the future. Such a determination is obviously dependent upon knowledge that could not possibly be available to characters in 1736.

Michel Foucault posits a detailed view of the diachronic nature of meaning in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and *Discipline and Punish* (1977), discussing specifically that it is shaped or defined by historical discourse and hegemony rather than by any *a priori* concept of fixed meaning. Illustrating this point, Foucault reminds us in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that the historical document is:

> […] no longer for history an inert material through which it tries to reconstitute what men have done or said, the events of which only the trace remains; history is now trying to define within the documentary material itself unities, totalities, series, relations. […] The document is not the fortunate tool of a history that is primarily and fundamentally memory; history is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.[500]

This observation is especially germane to a discussion of *A Maggot*, since Foucault suggests that history is not a passive response to existing historical documentation which is then interpreted to "create" history, but the active assembly, recognition, and development of a mass documentation which is then linked to a particular context and period. This active gathering and assembly of material illustrates a far greater affinity to the artistic and creative pursuit of the artist than to the analytical, detached activity of the scientist. The assembly of documentation (both real and composed by Fowles) is the creative and organizational principle of *A Maggot*, in which Fowles gathers documentation and mythopoeic stills to construct fictional events against a backdrop of apparently authentic historical events. Thus, the opening of the novel may be mythopoeic and imaginative, "In the late and last afternoon of an April long ago …,"[501] but it remains punctuated by historical facts such as "child-death from childbirth (of the 2,710 deaths registered in England in the by no means unusual month previous to this day, very nearly half were infants

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[500] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by Rupert Swyer (New York: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1972), 7.

[501] *A Maggot*, 7.

below the age of five.)"[502] This section is followed by a facsimile of the *Historical Chronicle, 1736,* which, as Gian Balsamo points out, was the "section devoted to historical information of a British Journal called *The Gentleman's Magazine*."[503]

   The historical information provided by the extracts from *The Gentleman's Magazine* is scant, including such trivia as a man witnessing the collision of a flock of birds, collecting several of them, and selling them "in Preston Market the same day."[504] Gian Balsamo sees no apparent function for this artefact as a narrative device, but reminds us of the "metaphysical aporia" into which historiographers had been plunged in the 1730s, with respect to the notion of reality, by the works of Descartes, Locke, Bacon, and Hume. The function of this artefact is to serve as a reminder that this arrangement of documents is as arbitrary and personal as most constructions of history. They are, Fowles seems to indicate, no more "authentic" and reliable as the mythopoeic stills that inspired the story being told in the novel. While giving the surface appearance of an authentic reality, the artefact is no more "real" than the imaginative prose that precedes it. This blurring of the line between historical and imaginative recurs throughout the novel, its pinnacle being Rebecca Lee's testimony of what actually happened in Dollings Cave. In the editor's notes on the typescript of *A Maggot*, Fowles indicates that the extracts from *The Gentleman's Magazine*

> are intended to be no more than 'illustrations', impressions of what 18th century language and lettering, etc.. really looked like, and what was going on in the months of the story. I don't think it matters at all if they are rather difficult to read: so long as a reader who wants to decipher them can at a pinch (or with a magnifying glass). [505]

This would suggest that Fowles intended the artefacts to contribute to a general topographical realism, just as later in the notes he explains that his depiction of dialect and idiom in the novel is "not at attempt to reproduce 18th century language

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[502] Ibid., 56.

[503] Gian Balsamo, 'The Narrative Text as Historical Artifact: The Case of John Fowles", in *Image and Ideology in Modern/PostModern Discourse*, ed. by David B. Downing and Susan Bazargan (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991) 130.

[504] *A Maggot*, 196.

[505] John Fowles. "Editor's notes for *A Maggot"*. No date. Ray Roberts Collection 4.1, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Austin at Texas.

exactly, in terms of contemporary usage."[506] This is suggestive of an attempt by Fowles to provide sufficient realistic detail to suggest and support his setting in 1736 England, without attempting a strict mimetic depiction.

   After the extract from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Fowles includes the examination and deposition transcriptions from various witnesses in his attempt to reconstruct the events leading up to the disappearance of Mr Bartholemew and the death of Dick, his manservant. The use of only dialogue, stripped of any commentary, again gives the impression of historical authenticity, any unmediated aspects implying the same is true of the subsequent account. Of course, the depositions are part of a work of fiction, as are the letters from Ayscough, also included in the narrative, in which the lawyer provides updates to his patron, concerning the progress of his investigation.

   A Maggot can therefore be viewed as what Foucault might have described as the "synthetic activity of the subject"[507] at work. *A Maggot* does not illustrate that it is impossible to derive meaning, but that meaning and reality are complex, illusive, and contextual. They may only be glimpsed during an examination of multiple accounts of an event, but, even then, might never be fully or truly known. Similarly, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault traces the changing conception of what is appropriate in terms of punishment and what constitutes the transgression of law. He illustrates that the concept of what is right and what is normal, (essentially what is "true"), is the product of discourse, which in turn is dictated by the prevailing hegemony:

> Historically, the process by which the bourgeoisie became in the course of the eighteenth century the politically dominant class was masked by the establishment of an explicit, coded and formally egalitarian juridical framework, made possible by the organization of a parliamentary, representative regime. But the development and generalization of disciplinary mechanisms constituted the other, dark side of these processes. The general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle was supported by these tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms, by all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that we call the disciplines.[508]

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[506] Ibid.

[507] Michel Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by Rupert Swyer (New York: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1972) 14.

[508] Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1975), 222.

This would certainly seem to be the case when examining the plight of Rebecca/Louise/Fanny in *A Maggot*. Her voice is effectively silenced by her gender and social class and the prevailing attitudes towards these classifications in the 1730s. She is purchased by Bartholemew to be some kind of sacrifice in the mysterious rite that is performed in Dollings Cave. Even her name is unstable, reflecting the seeming insignificance of her existence. It is Ayscough's voice that becomes authorized as, by default, the voice of history. His line of questioning, and his ultimate unsatisfactory explanation of what happened at Dollings Cave is documented by the court stenographer, and in his official letters to the Duke.

The text makes clear that Ayscough's view of the events is skewed by his social position and snobbery, his bullying, bigoted nature, and by his scientific thinking. However, his voice is destined to be inscribed and heard through the annals of time, rather than Rebecca's, which will be obscure and marginalized. One of the reasons that Rebecca's story is not told, other than the obvious one that she is a woman, is because she does not have the "alphabet" or written register and vocabulary to tell it. The ability to articulate thought verbally in a convincing way has been a vital constituent in history and is a central theme of the novel. The importance of the ability to articulate ideas and conduct a winning verbal argument is a theme that has been seen before in Fowles. In *The Collector*, Miranda Grey's inability to argue with Clegg, to make herself understood, contributes to her death. Miranda's frustration with Clegg's refusal to hear her point of view is very similar to the frustration seen in Rebecca when she accuses Ayscough of deliberately failing to see what she is trying to convey: "Thee play blind. Thee play blind."[509]

Despite the fact that Rebecca's account is impenetrable and ridiculous to Ayscough, it is clear and evocative to a modern audience, largely because Rebecca relies on the intuitive and mythic to describe her experiences, so penetrating the prejudices and blindnesses of her age. Cassirer's perspective on the connection between language and myth illuminates further the power of myth to convey truth by pointing out the origins of language in mythic thought. Myth, Cassirer asserts, connects reason and language (two core motifs of *A Maggot*) since

> reason is not man's primitive endowment, but his achievement. The seeds of it--fertile yet long dormant—lie in language; logic springs from language when that

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[509] *A Maggot*, 430.

greatest of symbolic modes is mature (as it is by the time we meet it in history or ethnology).[510]

As I have discussed above, mythic thought, according to Cassirer, was the first attempt by man to capture and process thought before capturing it in language. Thus, because of myth's closer proximity to the original experience of the individual, it is a more reliable and direct reflection of the experience than the textual, scientific thoughts of history.

As I have described in the first chapter of this study, for a new experience to be captured and transferred to the conscious it must be fixed with a name:

> Before the intellectual work of conceiving and understanding of phenomena can set in, the work of naming must have preceded it, and have reached a certain point of elaboration. For it is this process which transforms the world of sense impression, which animals also possess, into a mental world, a world of ideas and meanings. All theoretical cognition takes its departure from a world already performed by language; the scientist, the historian, even the philosopher, lives with his objects only as language presents them to him.[511]

Rebecca experiences such a "momentary deity" [512] in Dollings Cave, but what she sees eludes her vocabulary for two reasons; first, the experience contains elements that are anachronistic. She has no word for space ship, so she calls it a "maggot" thus rendering her account even more risible to Ayscough. Second, the experience is outside the normal scope of human experience: it is transcendent—a momentary deity for which no language has yet been created. Thus Rebecca's recounting of the story will "not fit [Ayscough's] alphabet."[513]

Since Rebecca is unable to put the correct name to the experience, she is unable to communicate it, and Ayscough, lacking her mythic vision, is unable and unwilling to interpret it for her. Rebecca's verbal response on leaving the cave, according to Jones, is to mutter "A maggot. A maggot"[514], perhaps alluding to "The Horror! The Horror!", where in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* another character is unable to verbalize the enormity of what he has experienced. The words that Rebecca uses to

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[510] Cassirer. *Language and Myth*, ix.

[511] Ibid., 28.

[512] Ibid., 17.

[513] *A Maggot*, 420.

[514] Ibid., 241.

convey her new religious commitment are "more love". Love is the grail at the end of the quests in *The Magus*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, "The Ebony Tower" and *Daniel Martin*, and these are the words that also mark the end of her quest.

Cassirer's explanation of the origin and function of mythical thinking (the essence of a life-changing or life-saving experience processed and eventually captured in language) seems to be most allied with Fowles' use of myth, mythical thinking, and myth-making in his novels. The myth-makers in *A Maggot* are Bartholemew and Rebecca. Bartholemew creates a myth as he initiates the quest that ends in his meeting with the Silver Lady and his transcendence to what Rebecca calls "June Eternal". Bartholemew uses myth, in the form of the quest, to free himself from the bounds of his destiny, imposed by history. Rebecca, despite her inability to put her experience into language, still embraces the quest and is also able to leave her past life of prostitution and servitude. Since she is unable to communicate her experience effectively by the end of the novel during her examination by Ayscough, the reader infers that a true resolution to Rebecca's quest does not end in the same way as Bartholemew's. She has no transcendence to June Eternal. Instead, Rebecca's legacy is not her language, but her child, Ann Lee (another historically accurate figure) who will go on to found the Shaker religion. Rebecca's quest is therefore not a failure. This fact is underscored by the optimistic presence of the mythic yellow bird at the end of the novel, echoing the "thin yellow shaft of light" towards which the questers journeyed in the opening pages. Rebecca has reached the goal of her quest. She has an "affirmation of her selfness no words she knows can describe"[515]. She affirms the naming of her daughter, which she insists, despite her husband's alternate request, must be "Ann".

It is surprising that existential atheist Fowles considers any organized religion worthy of attention or praise in his novels. However, this dissenting Shaker religion stands out at this time as the religion that embodies a quasi-feminism, equality, and democracy at a time when all three concepts were completely alien if not complete anathema. Dissenting religion would also have been the only path to freedom of behaviour and speech open to Rebecca in this oppressive, male chauvinist era.

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[515] Ibid., 453.

Cassirer also draws a distinction in his work between mythical and scientific thinking, perceiving and emphasizing myth's capacity for unification and universality, in contrast to scientific thought of stimuli and externalities.

> a mere glance at the facts of mythical consciousness shows that it knows nothing of certain distinctions which seem absolutely necessary to empirical-scientific thinking. Above all, it lacks any fixed dividing line between mere "representation" and "real" perception, between wish and fulfilment, between image and thing.[516]

Cassirer advocates that mythic thought, rather than scientific thought, engages in a fuller perception of the correspondence of the subjective and objective worlds, and has a sense of their underlying intersubjectivity in the social and communicative domains. The novel explores this differentiation between such overarching codes of thought and comprehension by dividing its main characters into two categories of thinkers conditioned by these conceptual frameworks; the scientific and the mythical. Rebecca is a mythical thinker, Ayscough a scientific thinker. Fowles speaks to this differentiation directly only when he comments on Rebecca and Ayscough's inability to understand one another after Rebecca's vain attempts to articulate her experience in Dollings Cave:

> In truth these two were set apart from each other not only by countless barriers of age, sex, class, education, native province and the rest, but by something far deeper still: by belonging to two very different halves of the human spirit, perhaps at root those, left and right, of the two hemispheres of the brain. In themselves these are neither good nor evil. Those whom the left lobe (and the right hand) dominates are rational, mathematical, ordered, glib with words, usually careful and conventional; human society largely runs on an even keel, or at least runs, because of them. A sage and sober god of evolution must regard those dominated by the right lobe as far less desirable, except in one or two very peripheral things like art and religion, where mysticism and lack of logic are given value. Like Rebecca they are poor at reason, often confused in argument; their sense of time (and politic timing) is often defective. They tend to live and wander in a hugely extended now, treating both past and future as present, instead of keeping them in control and order, firmly separated, like honest, decent right-handers. They confuse, they upset, they disturb. So truly are these two human beings of 1736. They speak for opposite poles, …[517]

Although here Fowles praises the mythical thinker as potential agent of change, he also acknowledges their weaknesses. He is not naïve enough to dismiss in its entirety the benefits of the enlightenment and the scientific. However, he appeals to

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[516] Ernst Cassirer, *the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Volume Two: Mythical Thought*, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms., trans. by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 36.

[517] *A Maggot*, 430.

the mythical thinkers to use their vision and foresight to be agents of change, a function of which scientific thinkers are incapable. Rebecca possesses a mythopoeic consciousness, an innate quality. She is contrasted directly with Ayscough who is her complete opposite conceptually and therefore ideologically. He is a rationalist, all thinking and no body, in his first appearance in the narrative, Fowles describes him as being "little", "puny", and "frail"[518]. He believes, along with his fellow social equals, that "change leads not to progress, but to anarchy and disaster"[519].

Fowles seemingly suggests that the ultimate combination of both mythical and scientific thinkers would be a perfect state, one to which he alludes in *Daniel Martin*. This is a state in which the positive aspects of both thinking types are harnessed in the concept of "whole sight". The character in *A Maggot* who seems closest to having whole sight is Bartholemew. Bartholemew is a more complex but sketchily-defined character. We learn from Nicolas Saunderson's[520] letter to Ayscough that Bartholemew was one of his students at Cambridge. In his letter he tells of Bartholomew's interest in the *Liber Abaci* by Fibonacci. Fibonacci is a mathematician but does not restrict himself to the purely empirical aspects of the discipline. He is also interested in astrology, and the magical nature of numbers. Bartholemew also displays the traits of myth-maker in his arrangement of actors in his own myth. Bartholemew is thus portrayed as an intellectual but not exclusively a scientific thinker. He is not a specialist, something that Fowles abhors. We learn from Francis Lacy's deposition, the actor hired to play his uncle, that Bartholemew discussed his interested in "divine cipher" and perfect proportion, and bemoaned that he had "neglected the arts since leaving university"[521].

There is obviously something lacking in Bartholemew's personality. The fact that he is searching for something that is missing in his life is obvious since he is the originator of the quest for his "life's meridian". It is also implied in the text that he

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[518] Ibid., 114.

[519] Ibid., 234.

[520] Saunderson held the Cambridge Lucasian Chair of Mathematics after Whiston was removed in 1710 because of his Arian views doubting the Trinity. The intertextuality invoked by the reference to *Liber Abaci*, is another example of a postmodern device.

[521] *A Maggot*, 146.

is impotent, and the complement to his scientific, intellectual, rationalist tendencies is Dick, his mute manservant. Dick embodies the extreme of the mythic thinker, an example of the "right lobe"- dominated, described by Fowles as "poor at reason, often confused [or in this case silent] in argument[522]." The two characters of Dick and Bartholemew personify this schism in personality, the split between the mythic and the scientific thinker, and it is implied in the text that they are dependent upon each other. Dick was a foundling (emphasizing the mythic nature of his character):

> born on his [Bartholomew's] father's estates, his mother was his own - … they were suckled at the same breast…[523]

Ayscough, in his typically rationalistic way, misinterprets the relationship between Bartholemew and Dick as being homosexual, and as a man of his social class, is more shocked by the fact that the dominant sexual party seems to be the socially inferior Dick, than he is horrified by the implied homosexuality. Upon Bartholomew's disappearance Dick dies, confirming Bartholomew's prophetic confidence to Lacy:

> I am his animating principle, Lacy, without me he's no more than a root, a stone. If I die, he dies the next instant. He knows this as well as I. I do not say by reason. It is in his every vein and every bone.[524]

Mythical thought, personified in the form of Dick, is further allied with truth, when Bartholemew describes Dick as being unable to "… dissemble what he feels"[525]. This echoes Cassirer's observation that myth arises in a "region where there is no time for invention, either by individuals or by a people, no time for artificial disguises or misunderstandings".[526] Dick as the embodiment of mythical thought is the potential source of truth but is mute. It seems that mythical thought is the source of truth but it is difficult, or even impossible, to articulate that truth.

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[522] Ibid., 430.

[523] Ibid, 170.

[524] Ibid, 171.

[525] Ibid.

[526] Ernst Cassirer. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Volume Two: Mythical Thought*, trans by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 6.

The Maggot appeals to the scientific and the mythic thinker within the reader.
The rationalist within wants to solve the enigma of Dollings Cave and feels cheated
when the neat ending is denied. The mythical thinker within takes away one's own
version of what one thinks happened in terms of choosing an ending to the myth,
which contradictory (dialectical) process Fowles hopes serves precisely as an
interrogation and as an agent of change. Myth, therefore, rather than scientific,
mimetic representation in historical terms might offer more reliable vehicle for
articulating certain essential truths.

Lynn Wells suggests that in Fowles' models of narration and seduction "which is
a specialized sort of storytelling… [he] is readjusting the contemporary British
reading tastes."[527]   Change is evidently not only something Fowles expects from his
existential heroines; he demands it too from his readers. Fowles seduces us with his
storytelling, luring us by seeming to adhere to conventions of familiar sub-genres
by appropriating forms with which we are comfortable (historical, detective, and
science fiction) and then forcing us to re-evaluate these forms. In so doing he has
helped to adapt the British novel "to the challenges raised by its post-war critics
while remaining true to its domestic conventions and audience expectations".[528]
Fowles has created in *A Maggot* a novel that caters to the British propensity for
readability, tradition, and history at the same time incorporating the contemporary
trends of self-conscious interpretation and intertextuality.   The novel differentiates
between fiction and history but doubts the ability of history to be captured in a
reliable, unbiased manner. As he has shown in the novel, the scientific model that
history uses to create a documentary realism is flawed. Some parts of history, as
Jeffrey Roessner highlights, "remain[s] beyond [the ability of writers of
historiographical fiction] to represent."[529] These parts belong to the realm of myth.
Fowles shares the contemporary reader's panic identified by Margaret Scanlan that:

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[527] Lynn Wells, *Allegories of Telling. Self-referential Narrative in Contemporary British Fiction*, (New York: Rodopi, 2003), 7.

[528] Ibid, 163.

[529] Jeffrey Roessner, 'Unsolved Mysteries: Agents of Historical Change in John Fowles' *A Maggot*. *Papers on Language and Literature*. Volume 36. Issue 3 (2000) 302.

> … we may not be able to recognize and account for our biases, with the problematics of establishing documentation, with the knowledge that most of the evidence has already "been lost.[530]

Very largely as an agent in intellectual and conceptual change that is for him implicit in the purpose of fiction, Fowles' solution is myth. Novels like *A Maggot* will be the fictions "by which we know our history"[531]. David Leon Higdon identifies a trend in contemporary British novelists. This trend is of a concern with "recreating the past" and using "the past as a force to shape the future." [532] In *A Maggot*, Fowles uses a set of characters from a time distanced from our own by nearly three hundred years to illustrate how mystery and mythical thinking are a force for change, and a force for authentically articulating the human experience.

The mythic qualities of the novel are established and highlighted throughout. The novel is set on the eve of the great Celtic festival of May or Beltane. This fact brings with it more mythic overtones, the expectation of rebirth, renewal, and change. Fowles acknowledges the Celts as the nucleus of the problem of the search and quest which he considers to be the root of all fiction "from the tenth century onwards."[533] Although on the surface, the myth appears to have a nullifying affect on freedom, the myth or a mythic element (the quest) is seen as a means of escape from the bounds of history, both for Bartholemew and for Rebecca. However, one knows that in the myth of the quest, there is a journey, a challenge and a return, a formal expectation. Hence overall the formulation is predictable. A free individual, in contrast, appears at least topographically to be the author of his or her own future. However, in previous novels, particularly in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the reader knows that this is not the case. Charles is trapped by his own history. He is trapped by his education, social station and gender to fulfil a life that has to all intents and purposes already been mapped out for him. Bartholemew bemoans exactly the same feeling of being trapped in a role he has no wish to play:

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[530] Margaret Scanlan, *Traces of Another Time. History and Politics in Post-war British Fiction*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 6.

[531] Ibid, 7.

[532] David Leon Higdon. *Shadows of the Past in Contemporary British Fiction* (Georgia: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985), 14.

[533] Carol Barnum. *The Fiction of John Fowles: A Myth for Our Time*, (Greenwood, FL: The Penkevill Publishing Company, 1988),147.

> I am, as you might be, offered a part in history, and I am not forgiven for refusing to play it.[534]

In Lacy's deposition, he conveys a conversation he had with Bartholemew where the latter describes his affinity for the ancient people of Stonehenge who were not weighed down by knowledge of history:

> We moderns are corrupted by our past, our learning, our historians; and the more we know of what happened, the less we know of what will happen; for as I say, we are like the personages of a tale fixed it must seem by another intention, to be good or evil, happy or unhappy, as it falls. Yet they who set and dressed those stones lived before the tale began, Lacy, in a present that had no past, such as we may hardly imagine to ourselves.[535]

Ayscough too, as Fowles explains is: "equal victim(s) in the debtor's prison of History, and equally unable to leave it."[536] Ironically it is via a mythic quest that Bartholemew can escape this pattern of behaviour and find his "life's meridian".

Like myth, history is a patterning device that sets expectations for behaviour and social norms. The renewed interest in historiography has centred on the concern that our history has been contaminated by historians whose work is biased, leaves out important voices, and misrepresents those voices that it does capture. History in *A Maggot* highlights the observation that recorded, accepted history results not from the truth but from the triumph of one narrative voice over another.

Mikhail Bakhtin, in his work *The Dialogic Imagination,* stresses the fragility and historical nature of language and its constant state of becoming. He uses the word "heteroglossia" to define the interaction between the two fundamentals of all communication: the language system and the particular instance and context within which it is being used. This interaction produces the potential for a plurality of experiences. *A Maggot* dramatizes this plurality of experiences on two levels: by including multiple points of view related to one event (and the inclusion of multiple different forms of investigating this event: depositions, letters, narrative prose, historical documents); and by focusing on the language used by Rebecca in an extreme experience at a specific moment in history. The gap between what is experienced and the ability for language to accurately reflect that experience might

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[534] *A Maggot*, 43.

[535] Ibid., 151.

[536] Ibid., 237.

be explained by the plurality of experiences caused by what Bakhtin describes as heteroglossia.

Bakhtin goes on to explain the connection between the heteroglossia (the potential for numerous experiences as a result of the interaction between language and the instance within which it is being used) and the difference between history and the novel. History, Bakhtin asserts, insists on "a homology between the sequence of their own telling, the form they impose to create a coherent sequence in the form of a narrative on the one hand, and the sequence of what they tell on the other."[537] By contrast, the novel, "dramatizes the gaps that always exist between what is told and the telling of it, constantly experimenting with social, discursive and narrative asymmetries (the formal teratology that led Henry James to call them "fluid puddings")[538]. Herein, I suggest, lies the power of the novel. Whereas history is an encyclopaedia that catalogues the "brute things of everyday life," it still falls short of apprehending reality in all its complexity, whereas the novel, because it uses a language that is not "unitary, completely finished off" but is "a living mix of varied and opposing voices,"[539] comes closer to realizing reality in all its facets. This is what Bakhtin describes as the "indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)" with which he associates the novel. It is this ability that makes the novel the most appropriate medium through which one might attempt to apprehend reality.

In both *Mantissa* and *A Maggot*, Fowles begins with a seemingly arbitrary subject, or a series of mythopoeic stills which he uses as a vehicle to explore and expose elements of the novel form. In both novels, the imaginative mythic impulse is privileged over the scientific urge to solve and eradicate mystery. As Bakhtin reminds us, "we must never confuse the *represented* world with the world outside the text (naïve realism)" [540] however, there is an exchange that occurs between the two worlds. By blurring the boundaries of the real and the imagined, and between

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[537] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by M. Holquist, trans. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982) xxviii.

[538] Ibid, xxviii.

[539] Ibid., xxviii.

[540] Ibid., 253.

the historical and the fictional, Fowles forces the reader to consider the process of meaning-making. In so doing, Fowles does not suggest that meaning is source-less nor that reality is impossible to apprehend and represent using language. He reminds us that language is constantly evolving and that meaning cannot be determined by a scientific process of analysis.

These final novels represent a culmination in Fowles's attitudes towards the possibilities inherent in the novel, confirming his sense that the form, despite the pessimistic prognosis for its survival, to which I alluded in chapter one, has a future that is vibrant. By examining the bifurcation of the artistic (intuitive and imaginative) and scientific (rational) modes of thought, Fowles foregrounds the difficulties inherent in apprehending such a fragmented and complex reality, compounded by a parallel divergence in the relationships between men and women.

However, the reader is still left with the sense that reality might still be rendered both as an imagined (subjective) real (as seen in *A Maggot*), or one that is objectively (in the case of *Mantissa*, literally and ironically) rendered. The novels revisit and therefore foreground the importance of the changing role of women (specifically, if parodically rendered in *Mantissa*) and their association with change and progress (surely reaching a zenith in the character of Rebecca Lee). These final novels extend the roles previously afforded female characters, from the marginal to one approaching centrality.

The female characters in these novels are myth makers and meaning makers. Erato is the creative source of the novel, and provides information supposedly unknown to the putative author. Rebecca Lee is more adept at interpreting the mysterious events at Dollings Cave than the educated lawyer Ayscough. Both female characters are associated with the ability to bring about change, not only in their respective male protagonists, as we have seen in previous novels, but this time it is implied particularly in *A Maggot*, that the change will be wide-ranging, affecting a more radical, historical and social change. The creative process, associated directly with the female muse in *Mantissa*, is again thematically central to both novels. Profoundly innovative rather than experimental, *Mantissa* and *A Maggot*, though less commercially successful than previous novels, nevertheless indicate a willingness on Fowles's part to defy the expectations of his readers and of the literary establishment. Fowles undermines the prevailing poststructuralist literary theories of Barthes, instead advocating language as a flawed but still valid

medium, eminently capable of rendering what Pols might describe as a "direct knowing" of the world.

Fowles's irritation with such theories did not abate during or after what would be his final decade of publication. In a commentary written in 1992 for D.H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died*, Fowles appears to castigate Lawrence for his attempt to render honestly, in this short story, the complexity of humanity's relationship with religion and myth. In an ironic diatribe that might have been directed against his own work, Fowles writes, with bitter irony,

> Above all this isn't the age for sermons. We can tolerate smart slogans, good advertising copy, fluent jargon … but Lawrence sometimes seems impossible. Anyone would think the man hadn't read a single word on deconstruction, or postmodern theory, or political correctness… a dozen other vitally important matters. To say what you mean is hard enough; to sound as if you actually mean what you say is preposterous: ludicrously naïve.[541]

In the same commentary, Fowles reiterates his fascination for words, and professes that he is still unable to accept "dullard that I am, […] that since they all equally deal with signs, his poems […] must be classed with the dullest commercial or the most abstruse scientific texts."[542] Thus Fowles rejects the then prevailing postmodern view that all texts, not just those traditionally categorized as literature should be considered worthy of analysis. Fowles adamantly elevates the creative process, revering the process of inspiration and his mysterious appropriation of the mythopoeic stills that shape his fiction. His defiance of those who would "so homogenize, suburbanize, and "democratize" life that it loses all its varieties and roughnesses"[543] is evident in his work which remains even in the final decade of his output, strikingly original and innovative.

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[541] John Fowles, Commentary on D.H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died,* (New York: The Ecco Press, 2002), 89.

[542] Ibid., 90.

[543] Ibid.

C H A P T E R   5 - C O N C L U S I O N

John Fowles died on November 5th, 2005, and national public recognition of the loss was minimal. In their obituaries, *The Telegraph* described Fowles as a writer combining "rare narrative instinct with a scholar's interest in literary form,"[544] and by *The Times* as a writer:

> devoted to the craft of fiction, who clearly in this work demonstrated a mission to rescue the English novel from the insular parochiality into which it was seen to be falling, who, above all, was determined to resuscitate a realism of the 19th-century sort, which he thought to be the English novel's most natural province.[545]

However, there was little to indicate the complexity of his fiction or any suggestion of the importance of his work relative to the English novel. In this study, I have attempted to intimate the considerable complexity of Fowles's work, which has been variously misappropriated by critics attempting a rather reductive cataloguing or labelling of his work. Instead, I have focused on Fowles's putative quasi-feminism in an attempt to counter claims by contemporary critics that his work simply and reductively displays misogynism or at least a male chauvinism incompatible with today's climate of gender politics.

This is important since it may be this very set of presuppositions that has contributed to the eclipse of his works, its gradual marginalization. I have also explored the intriguing recurrence of the triadic pattern of the magus figure and two women, and I have associated this with the significance of such a pattern in Fowles's own life. In so doing, I hope to suggest that this pattern is indicative of a "return" on the part of the protagonist (and, I have suggested, also the author). Such a return, I have suggested, might suggest an affinity with certain paleomodernist characteristics as described by Kermode. More intriguing is the sense that Fowles's fiction presents this recurring triadic pattern up until his most autobiographical

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[544] Anon. "John Fowles," *The Telegraph,* 2005, Obituaries.

[545] Anon. "John Fowles. Author Whose Skilful and Cultured Fictions were Crowned by the Commercial Success of *The French Lieutenant's Woman," The Times,* November 8th, 2005. The BBC described Fowles "as bridging the gap between modernist authors such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf and contemporary writers like Salman Rushdie and Will Self," *John Fowles' Literary Contribution,* http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4415524.stm edn, 2008 vols, (accessed August 12, 2008).

novel, *Daniel Martin*, at which point, perhaps when his own personal return has been accomplished, the pattern seems to recede.

When considering Fowles's work as a whole, one of the more radical areas of his work is his engagement with the literary and theoretical concepts of realism. My re-reading of his works has focused on the degree to which Fowles's perceived experimentation manifests itself in a strategy of textual reflexivity, driven less by a formal self-obsession than by a compulsion to synthesize and explore the parameters of reality that more adequately reflect contemporary experience. Repeatedly, I have focussed upon how Fowles's novels emphasize a mythopoeic realism, one that is contiguous with but transcends a surface, mimetic verisimilitude. The latter perception of the real is repeatedly associated with his flawed male characters. By contrast, mythopoeic vision, increasingly stressed among his female characters in their reliance on an intuitive rather than an empirical and rational view, culminates in its most developed form in Rebecca Lee who is, like Sarah Woodruff, a dissenter.

Fowles's work constitutes a portion of British Fiction written in the period following the Second World War when there was considerable doubt about the relevance or even viability of the novel as an art form. Fowles, whilst being engaged with the serious problems that had beset British Fiction, still produced works that granted him considerable commercial success, particularly in America. His work illustrates his engagement with issues that continue to occupy contemporary writers: free will; realism; and the viability of the Enlightenment project.

Fowles's investigation of free will can be traced from his earliest novels and underpins all of the writer's work. In Fowles's novels, the protagonist is confronted by a choice between a passive acceptance of quotidian norms, the surrender to a determinism (which often manifests itself in the character feeling he or she is living a life that has been scripted by someone else). This sense of predetermination is often associated in Fowles with a collector mentality, a pinning and fixing of that which would be in flux. It may also indicative of Fowles's own sense that the novel form is itself a paradox, attempting to apprehend and contain that which is in flux. The opposite of this "pinned" existence is free will. Fowles's first protagonist, Nicholas Urfe, in *The Magus*, appears at the beginning of the novel, trapped in a pattern of behaviour that threatens to destroy him and Alison Kelly while,

ironically, he assumes an artificial mantle of existentialism. Similarly, other such collector types, a uniquely male trait in Fowles, attempt to enmesh female characters in their pre-scripted lives, imposing their needs and expectations upon them. This is seen *in extremis* in Frederick Clegg, but the impulse is also evident in Urfe, Smithson, and Martin, all of whom attempt to inflict their expectations upon prospective partners. Urfe, for example, expects Alison Kelly to flow into and out of his life as it suits him, Smithson anticipates a future for the enigmatic Sarah Woodruff as his wife, her mystery finally domesticated, and Martin catalogues a progression of failed relationships, all of which fail as each woman fails to live up to a set of expectations that are evident only to Martin. In each case, the male is confronted not only by a rejection of these potential strictures by a female character, but also this confrontation forces a reevaluation on the male character's part of his own freedom and identity.

Charles Smithson glimpses his own possible fate in the ammonites on the beach at Lyme, in the extinct "immortal bustard" in his uncle's display cabinet at Wynsyatt, and in his possible future with Ernestina. Clegg is the frightening manifestation of a mind devoid of imagination and empathy. He feels determined by his class and upbringing, and despite Miranda's efforts to change him, he is firmly anchored to collecting and pinning meaning, and Miranda cannot communicate with him. Free will manifests itself most clearly in the character of Rebecca Lee who finds a new path for herself and for her child.

Free will is often depicted in opposition to a scientific, empiricist orthodoxy associated in the novels with "collecting". However, the opposition between collector and creator is not absolute. Frederick Clegg's obsession with the systematic and methodical processes associated with pinning butterflies and taking photographs evolves *beyond* collecting when he imprisons Miranda. By contrast, Nicholas Urfe's detached collecting of women, and Charles's collecting of fossils, evolves or is rejected after interaction with a female catalyst who reveals the shortcomings of such a restrictive compulsion. Of course, Fowles himself personifies the complex co-existence of the collector/creator dichotomy, having been both an avid collector of many things, including pottery, books, and postcards[546], and having served as the co-curator of the Philpot Museum in Lyme

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[546] In *The Journals, Volume 1*, 284-5, Fowles reflects on his love of collecting books, New Hall pottery (483 and 543), and postcards (549).

Regis from 1978 to 1988[547]. But like his male characters, he does not succumb to the allure of collecting to the extent that it becomes a psychotic obsession. Such an impulse has been discussed above with reference to Zygmunt Bauman's work, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. As discussed earlier, Bauman makes the connection between the need to pin meaning with the modernist proliferation of increasing complex (and often technical) vocabulary. Ironically, Bauman suggests, this makes the ability to express meaning clearly less rather than more likely since concepts and things may have more than one meaning and thus resist being classified by such restrictive boundaries.

Broadly speaking, Fowles places his faith in the creators (the elite, elect, or the Heraclitian "Few"), which transitions in his career to encapsulate a broader, more inclusive "few". The collectors manifest themselves in all of Fowles's flawed male protagonists: in addition to the obvious Clegg; Urfe is a collector of women and solver of puzzles, Smithson is palaeontologist, Martin a collector of narratives, pinning meaning though cinematic images (at least at the beginning of the novel), Williams is a dissector of art (critic not creator), Green is an inferior novelist, a collector of literary theories, and Asycough represents Reason as the collector of facts and depositions, solver of crimes. Each male character is set in conflict with a creator who represents the opportunity to change and give the flawed male protagonist the opportunity to evolve towards a freedom that is often articulated in existential terms.

The creator character with whom each protagonist conflicts is a woman. Women in Fowles's novels seem to be imbued with the creator quality, while the male characters must go through the collecting phase in order to become creators. Clegg comes into conflict with the artistic creator, Miranda, but he never emerges from the collecting phase to approach creator status. Urfe's creator female character could be Alison or June/Julie, all of whom contribute to or help create his surreal experiences on Phraxos, but Conchis is the obvious creator. However, as I have pointed out previously, Conchis was originally conceived by Fowles as a woman and is the true creator to Urfe's collector. Charles's creator counterpart is Sarah Woodruff, ultimately herself an artist's muse, David Williams encounters the artist, Diana, and Daniel Martin regenerates as a result of his reunion with Jane, a mother,

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547 Warburton, *John Fowles. A Life in Two Worlds*, 386.

actress, and political activist. Miles Green literally encounters his muse, but fails, like Clegg and Williams to evolve.

Increasingly, the female characters are also transformed either before or during the encounter with the male protagonist. Miranda is transformed by her forced confrontation with Clegg and all he represents, forced to reevaluate her life and her rather shallow existence and attitudes. The marginal character, Alison Kelly, becomes a co-conspirator, even perhaps initiator, of Urfe's transformational experiences on Phraxos, albeit by implication rather than explicitly in the text. Sarah emerges from meek, abandoned woman to seductress magus, ensnaring Charles and securing for herself the child and home that would have eluded her in her role as governess. Although we know little about Diana, she is transformed, more by Henry Breasley than by David Williams, to become the quasi-mythic seductress who is ultimately rejected by the cowardly Williams. Jane Mallory, after subjugating her own needs to that of her husband and the demands of the Catholic faith, rejects both, and emerges from her morbidity, transformed by the returning influence of Daniel Martin, to reengage with her life. In Fowles's final novel, Fowles appears to elevate the female creator, Rebecca Lee, still further. She undergoes the most dramatic transformation, bringing forth not only new life at the end of the novel, but also putatively contributing to the formation of a new religion.

Fowles's female characters are intriguing and have been the subject of much (negative) criticism because they have been viewed as underdeveloped and marginal. I hope to have shown in this study that Fowles's female characters, far from being marginal, are central to the change that is affected (or attempted) in the male protagonist. Interestingly, as Fowles's novels progress, it is possible to see an increasing degree of power afforded to the female characters, accompanied by the increasing clarity with which Fowles articulates his feminism. As I have attempted to show, Fowles's feminism is centred in a view that women possess specific innate essential qualities, the source of their ability to affect change, intuition (an ability to see beyond the surface to a truth, or an ability to intuit what is right), a heightened ability to communicate, and the ability to see relationships between and among people and things. This is not a conventional feminism, and as such it has provoked attacks, particularly from feminists (to whom I have alluded specifically in previous chapters) who reject suggestions that one can predict traits and characteristics based purely on gender.

I have characterized the role played by Fowles's female characters as being that of a catalyst in the development of the male protagonist. While this true in the earlier novels, those works published in or after the 1970s depict a different kind of synergy between male and female. The latter cease to be solely catalysts, since they too undergo change as a result of their interaction with the male character. Jane Mallory is paradigmatic of this shift. She too emerges from her recuperated relationship with Daniel Martin as a more authentic person, having previously been immersed in a marriage with the logical, empirical catholic priest, Anthony. In all cases, the female character is associated with the ability (or at least the potential) to affect change in the male protagonist. By Fowles's final novel, that power has evolved to the point at which the change effected is not confined to the male protagonist, or even to the protagonist and the female character herself. In *A Maggot*, the potential for the female to effect change is felt by a whole emergent society when Rebecca Lee, it is implied, gives birth to Ann "Mother" Lee who will go on to found the influential Shaker movement in America. What appears to unite these women is first that they confound the reductive labelling (of the collector) and then they learn to exploit this labelling to their own advantage. Finally, they teach this to the collecting male figures.

The root of such power in Fowles's female characters is characterized by a creative impulse that is linked to myth and the mythopoeic. As I have illustrated, Fowles's female characters are not only linked with myth via their richly connotative names or situations (Miranda is the *princesse lointaine* imprisoned by a Bluebeard, Sarah is described as a "figure from myth," Diana is repeatedly associated with her mythic counterpart, Jane Mallory is "pyrrhic") but also via their actions—they are also mythic thinkers and creators. They all, to some extent, create their own fictions. Miranda writes her diary and as such, is the implied "author" of at least part of the text we read. Alison Kelly collaborates with Conchis (who Fowles originally wanted to be a female character) to construct the fictions that occur on Phraxos. Sarah Woodruff creates her own myth as a means of achieving a degree of freedom which would otherwise have been impossible for her. Rebecca Lee, despite the restrictions of language, responds to the inexplicable experiences in Dollings Cave intuitively, creating her own story with the words that she possesses.

The complexity of Fowles's female characters is also suggested in his depictions. Evading the impulse of their male counterparts, Fowles's female characters are

constantly outside the realms of concrete labels and descriptors. The female characters also increasingly evade the restrictive binaries seen so often in Fowles's marginal female characters. The Madonna/ whore bifurcation is seen repeatedly in his earlier novels, often in the form of twins or sisters (*The Magus*'s Julie and June, *Daniel Martin's* cockney twins Marjory and Miriam, and Mouse and Freak in "The Ebony Tower"). In each case, the women personify either end of the Madonna/whore spectrum. However, the more powerful female characters, particularly in his late fiction, evade this categorization by encompassing both extremes simultaneously, effectively decentring or decoupling this binary. The most extreme manifestation of this is Rebecca Lee, a prostitute who is given the label of "The Quaker Maid" at the bordello because she appears so innocent to her customers, is subsequently purchased by Bartholemew to be a virgin sacrifice at Dollings Cave. The ability to evade simplistic and static labelling is viewed by Fowles as a powerful and creative quality.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theories on the nature of the novel are, I believe, among the closest to those of John Fowles. In rejecting the strictures of Russian formalism, Bakhtin aspired to the articulation of a realism that was not a slave to the belief that science could explain all human behaviour on determinist grounds. In a world that contains genuine contingency and when reason cannot explain or predict all human events or things 'decided on the instant,'[548] how can a reductive, scientific, empirical surface representation of reality hope to apprehend or even approach such complexity? According to Bakhtin, after all such scientific analysis and categorization of events and concepts has occurred, reality itself is too complex to

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[548] For Bakhtin, writers such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky illustrate in their novels the concept of reality's refusal to be apprehended and analyzed scientifically. Both writers stress contingency and the 'surplus' of humanity that constantly overwhelms any attempt to apprehend or articulate it. This sense of contingency and excess is captured in the quotation from Tolstoy's *War and Peace* from which the phrase 'decided on the instant' is taken. As Gary Saul Morson explains in his essay, "The Russian Debate on Narrative," Bakhtin agreed with Prince Andrei's denunciation of a 'science of battle' as an impossible endeavour: "What science can there be in a manner in which, as every practical matter, nothing can be determined and everything depends on innumerable conditions, the significance of which becomes manifest at a particular moment, and no one can tell when that moment will come […] What are we facing tomorrow? A hundred million diverse chances, which will be decided on the instant by whether we run or they run, whether this man or that man is killed." From Gary Saul Morson's, "The Russian Debate on Narrative," in *Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. By Patricia Waugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 214.

be held within its strictures. There is always something in excess of what can be labelled, predicted, or explained. Bakhtin characterized this excess as 'the surplus of humanness'[549] that which evades or eludes categorization by any scientific or empirical means. It is this surplus that I believe Fowles attempts to apprehend by his attempt to evolve a mythopoeic realism, one that is sufficiently rich and malleable to encompass such an elusive and complex entity.

Fowles's enduring popularity, however, lies in his ability as a storyteller or mythmaker. He recognizes the shifting nature of existence, the powerful appeal of labelling as a means to make sense of such a bewildering state of being. The mythic is able to represent a multifaceted, transcendent rendition of the real. It is open to interpretation, enigmatic, ambiguous, like Fowles's female characters. His works suggests that the connotative should be selected above the denotative, the fluid above the static, and the syncretic over the analytic. The ability to apprehend the real with a "whole sight" as Daniel Martin attempts to do, facilitates a wider and richer approximation of contemporary experience, including the intuitive, or what Jane Mallory describes as what "feels right," elevating the non-rational and non-empirical apprehension of reality to one approaching the level of privilege that has been afforded post-enlightenment indicators and assessments of reality.

Fowles's women are predisposed to this lack of dependency on the empirical and the rational to the exclusion of all else. For this reason, they are less likely to ignore or diminish mystery. The degree to which Fowles's women, rather than his men, seem to epitomise whatever hope Fowles might have for future generations is evident in his two greatest female characters: Sarah Woodruff and Rebecca Lee. The former, repeatedly identified with the "Sphinx" reminds the reader of the timeless and, it is implied, pointless struggle to eradicate mystery and the unknown. At the end of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Charles has solved the riddle of Sarah's whereabouts, but he is no closer to solving her enigma. The myth of the Sphinx might be read as a reminder that man's over dependence upon logic, his believe that he can solve all puzzles with his superior intellect, is flawed, or even dangerous. For this reason, such an association with Sarah Woodruff is imbued with a greater significance, since Charles Smithson comes to a realisation at the end of the novel, that his post-Enlightenment zeal for pinning meaning and problem

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[549] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, 37.

solving is only one of several modes of knowing required in such a complex and nebulous world. We recall that Oedipus, even after solving the riddle of the Sphinx, ridding the land of the curse of this female creature, remains cursed. The eradication of mystery and the solving of puzzles is not the path to enlightenment and freedom. The conclusion to the Oedipus myth could be interpreted as a preference for literal blindness over a continued misguided reliance on empirical and rational dominance, which has led to a belief that one can outmanoeuvre one's fate (or in contemporary parlance, solve problems and humanity's ills) with intellect alone. Sarah, prototypical feminist, is equipped with intellect, imagination, and intuition as she navigates a perilous late-Victorian society.

Similarly, it is not only Rebecca Lee's intellect that makes her such an enduring character. Her willingness to embrace the mysteries that occur in Dollings Cave is indicative of openness to mystery, that which cannot be dissected or completely known. Fowles himself indicated impatience with readers who demanded less ambiguous or "pinned" meaning in his novels. In an interview for the *New York Times* in 1974, Fowles chides such readers who "say, for Christ's sake why don't you say what you mean? That's a crossword puzzle notion—the feeling that there is an ideal set of answers. For me, a story is much more of a Rorschach test."[550]

A mythopoeic realism (a realism that is fluid, connotative, and rich with multiple meanings) is Fowles's solution. Through such a mythopoeic approach to realism, Fowles suggests, the complexity and contingent nature of reality can be known. In Fowles's novels, we see the struggle of its inherent paradox: an attempt to apprehend reality through a medium that is fiction. Fowles compounds this paradox by focusing on the meaning of freedom to his characters whilst foregrounding the conventional restraints of the novel form, a form where, the ending must be predetermined. In so doing, Fowles extends the decentring and problematizing nature of the modernist zeitgeist: disrupting established and conventional forms from within. Unlike many postmodern theorists, however, he stops short of any implication of aporia. There is always a sense that meaning, though veiled in mystery (the events at Bourani in *The Magus*, the events in the cave in *A Maggot*) is present and knowable.

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[550] Mel Gussow. "For Fowles, Novel Mostly Means New." *New York Times*, November 27, 1974, 24.

I have suggested that through this mythopoeic realism —one that is ontologically anchored in distant and perhaps irretrievable origins, a realism that veils as it reveals — Fowles is able to apprehend the complexity of contemporary reality. Mythopoeic realism, unlike mimetic, surface realism or naturalism, avoids any kind of pinned or secure relationship with the world outside of the novel. In so doing, it avoids what Baudrillard might describe as the obscenity of excess signification: "no longer the traditional obscenity of what is hidden, repressed, forbidden or obscure; on the contrary, it is the obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible, of the more-visible-than-visible. It is the obscenity of what no longer has any secret, of what dissolves completely in information and communication."[551]

Above all, Fowles gives the reader a sense of the validity and relevance of the novel form itself. Despite the fact that three of his novels were adapted for the screen, Fowles leaves us in no doubt that the novel is superior to the visual image in terms of its ability to capture the polysemic, multifarious possibilities of the individual experience and perspective. In the final pages of his last published novel, Fowles describes the "universal human phenomenon" of dissent, not just, as is depicted in *A Maggot* with the emergence of the Shakers, but the human need to question and refuse to believe what those in power would have us believe. Fowles describes this need in terms of an evolutionary, biological mechanism; one that could be equally applied to the need for the novel to continue to evolve and evade the constraints applied to it by convention and the expectations of readers. In *A Maggot*, Fowles praises the need recognized at the founding stage of all religions to destroy a "superseded skeleton [one that] must be destroyed, or at least adapted to a new world."[552] This power to change and to adapt to a new world is something that Fowles achieves in his novels. The final words of *A Maggot*, however, are pessimistic. Fowles doubts the ability of contemporary humanity to change. We are, he suggests

> too selfish and too multiple, too dominated by the Devil's great I, in Shaker terminology; too self-tyrannized, too pledged to our own convenience, too tired, too indifferent to others, too frightened.[553]

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[551] Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in Hal Foster, ed, *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Port Washington, N.Y.: 1983). 131.

[552] *A Maggot*, 460.

[553] Ibid.

Fowles also mourns the "lost spirit, courage and imagination of Mother Ann Lee's word, her Logos; its almost divine maggot."[554] The imagination of Mother Ann is encapsulated in the creative impulse of Fowles's female characters, in the focus on the creative process in Fowles novels, and in Fowles's obvious reverence for the creative process. Fowles demonstrates his reliance on the mythic or storytelling origins of his work by his repeated reference to the mythopoeic "stills" which are often the basis or imaginative source of his novels[555]. The mythic for Fowles is neither consolatory nor nostalgic, but rather it engenders curiosity about the real world and an appreciation for the difficulty of knowing that world. Fowles's attitude concurs with the view expressed by Meletinsky, that the impulse towards a more mythopoeic apprehension of realism is a symptom of a failing in traditional rhetorical devices. As Meletinsky posits, "myth emerges more and more frequently in our century's great literature as the rhetorical strategies of realism and objectivity reveal themselves inadequate to the task of describing contemporary society."[556] As Meletinsky suggests, myth offers an alternative mode of apprehension in a society that has become too reliant upon sense perceptions to be the only admissible basis of human knowledge and precise thought. Contrary to the post-Enlightenment rejection of myth as being evidence of a culture that is ignorant or superstitious, Meletinsky advocates that the "mythic imagination blends the absolute with the particular and sees in the single part all the divinity of the whole."[557]

The strength of the novel form lies in this potential to combine the absolute with the particular. By employing a realism that is mythopoeic in nature, Fowles was able to evolve this form to encapsulate the complexity of reality. Fowles contrasts the power of the novel, and the written word in particular, with the inherent weakness of the photograph. When one attempts such mimetic verisimilitude, what is lacking is emotional veracity. In an essay that accompanies Fay Godwin's *Land,*

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[554] Ibid.

[555] Both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot* emerged from mythopoeic "stills" as Fowles describes them (in 'Notes on an Unfinished Novel', and the prologue to *A Maggot*') emphasizing the mysterious nature of the creative process.

[556] Eleazar Meletinsky, *The Poetics of Myth*, trans. by G. Lanoue and A. Sadetsky (New York: Routledge, 2000), viii.

[557] Ibid., 8.

a collection of photographs, Fowles contrasts the effect of a photograph on the viewer with that of an extract from a piece of prose on a reader, a description called *la bonne vaux* from Restif de la Bretonne's *Monsieur Nicolas*. He contrasts the two representations as follows:

> The passage is imprecise in almost all the ways where a photograph must be precise; yet for me it has an emotional vividness, an accuracy over an experience that every child has known, the first discovery of a secret place or landscape, which photography—even cinematography—is eternally barred from. The effect here is gained not just because the writing is sequential, describing a series of events, thoughts, reactions, but above all because it is so vague in its general detail that no reader will envision the place in the same way. It is both 'so far' and intensely close at the same time, like the memory […] of an older person; and this, I believe, is a faculty beyond exact representation; that is, even if exact representation of the bonne vaux had been possible—had Restif also been a ten-year-old genius with a pencil—it could only have diminished, not enhanced the experience. One can go blind with seeing, in more ways than one.[558]

Ultimately, Fowles's use of such a mythopoeic realism has a greater power and veracity than a realism that adheres to the expectations of mimetic verisimilar realism, and his exploration of such a "magic" realism has influenced or anticipated later writers of British fiction including Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith, Ian McEwan and Jim Crace. In so doing, Fowles provides a link between the Modernist problematization of realism in the works of Woolf and Joyce, and its extension in contemporary British writers.

Fowles's work is a radical extension of the work of modernists, exploring and expanding upon those elements found to be problematic by those writers and extending this exploration into the works of the twenty-first century. Fowles's fiction seamlessly joins innovation to tradition, linking the realist and humanist values of the 1950s to the extreme, experimental, and cosmopolitan writing of the late modernists such as Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges, and William Golding which led John Gardner to describe him in the 1970s as "the only novelist now writing in English who has the power, romance, knowledge, and wisdom of a Tolstoi or James."[559] His fiction reminds the reader to examine what it is to be human in an increasingly dehumanized and dehumanizing world, to examine the

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[558] Fay Godwin, *Land* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), xi.

[559] John Gardner cited in Jo Ann Levine's article, "England's new master of the novel," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 3, 1977, 14.

richness and mystery behind what has been rendered banal, to question and oppose the deadening effect of social class on relationships, to celebrate the power of women and their ability to affect change, and to recognise the importance of nature and the environment.[560] Such prevailing concerns have as much purchase today as they did when Fowles was writing his first novel, and are testament to the importance and enduring nature of his work.

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[560] Thomas M. Wilson's *The Recurrent Green Universe of John Fowles* (New York: Rodopi, 2006) explores this environmental aspect of the novelist's work.

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