The Ending of *The Magus*

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The Magus by John Fowles has continued to puzzle both readers and critics since its first publication in 1965. The immediate cause for this bafflement lies in its problematical ending. Malcolm Bradbury expresses a typical reaction: "The final pages are ambiguous; we do not know whether Urfe has been saved or damned by his experiences, whether the mysterious powers have withdrawn or remain in his life, whether he accepts Alison or ends the novel in renewed isolation."[1] Michael H. Begnal is extreme in his opinion: "there is no way of knowing whether or not Nicholas Urfe and Alison Kelly will meet in Paddington Station. Ultimately, why should we care?"[2] William J. Palmer, in the first monograph on Fowles, is equally uncertain about the outcome: "Whether this new beginning occurs or not, however, is matter only for conjecture because Alison's choice is made after the novel ends," though he is more hopeful about the fate of the two characters: "Perhaps the final words of the novel, the Latin epigraph, posit some hope that Nicholas and Alison will actually meet and learn to love each other in the future."[3] Ralph Berets also shows an optimistic view of the ending for different reasons:

> The novel ends without confirming or rejecting Nicholas' conclusions. Yet it leaves the reader with an optimistic feeling about his future. . . . Since the novel ends with no refutation of Nicholas' final interpretation and since this ending confirms an earlier definition of love provided in the novel, this reader tends to accept the earlier, more positive interpretation that Nicholas is now in the position of creating and acting out his own patterns and goals of existence.[4]

Fowles reflects on this point in the Foreword of *The Magus: A Revised Version*: "The other change is in the ending. Though its general intent has never seemed to me as obscure as some readers have evidently found it . . . I accept that I might have declared a preferred aftermath less ambiguously . . . and now have done so."[5] After the revision, however, the ambiguity seems to remain. William H. Pritchard, for instance, is still doubtful: "When the book is finished—in an ending Mr. Fowles, for reasons I can't see, thinks less ambiguous than the original one—we have undergone so exceedingly *literary* an experience that there may be nothing for it but to sit down some day and read it again."[6] Michael Boccia, on the other hand, confirming the uncertainty of the final outcome, takes the ambiguity as a positive factor: "First of all, if Conchis and the godgame are anything, they are unpredictable. For all we know, Nicholas might be snatched up as he leaves the park and the godgame continued. Fowles has made significant changes in the very last paragraph which indicate that we are not to

take the end as final."[7] Only Barry N. Olshen, without presenting any concrete evidence, says, "The new ending has been made less ambiguous and more conciliatory, perhaps in response to the numerous inquiries Fowles has received from his disappointed and perplexed readers," though he complains that "Changing the ending in this way, however, seems less in keeping with the general philosophy of the work, with the insistence on maintaining the quest and deferring the goal."[8]

These diverse opinions may be classified into three attitudes: it is uncertain whether Nicholas meets Alison again or not; there is no knowing as to the final outcome; the ending is not final. Keeping in mind these three ways of reading, I should like to consider the implication of the ending mainly through the examination of the revisions. As Fowles says, "Though this is not, in any major thematic or narrative sense, a fresh version of *The Magus*, it is rather more than a stylistic revision" (p. 5), the alteration in the last chapter considerably affects the reading of the finale, and consequently influences the general impression of the book as a whole. In order to understand the meaning of the ending, I plan to discuss in this paper the three major changes: the absence of the Tarot epigraph, the omission of the reference to the waiting room of Paddington Station, and the shift of tense and person in the last paragraph.

The Tarot

Berets reads the ending optimistically: "the novel ends with a confirmation of love and the necessary interrelationship of people who sought through their experiences to discover this interdependence of human behavior. The Tarot passage cited at the beginning of the novel foreshadows this conclusion" (Berets, p. 97). This quotation about the Magus from *The Key to the Tarot*, however, is entirely removed from the revised version, and Berets's interpretation, as the result, loses some of its validity. Besides, the Magician card also implies "mental disease, disgrace, disquiet."[9]

The omission of the Tarot epigraph may simply mean that Fowles does not want to make too obvious a connection between the title and the Tarot figure, embodied in the novel by Maurice Conchis, Master of Ceremony; or the author has avoided too much emphasis on arcane elements in the book just as he has erased the dedication to Astarte, an ancient Semitic goddess of love and fertility. Moreover, by the omission, the author can introduce specific meanings of the Tarot at strategic moments in the novel just as he reveals the characters Lily and Rose as the two flowers associated with the Magus: "There's a card in the Tarot pack called the magus. The magician . . . conjuror. Two of his traditional symbols are the lily and the rose" (p. 477). References to the Tarot and Tarot imagery, however, remain almost unchanged in the new version, and the number of the chapters stays unchanged at 78, the number of cards in the Tarot pack, despite the extensive rewriting of several chapters. For example, in the revised version, chapter 46 includes the content of the old chapter 47, thus making room for the new chapter 47 which is made up of entirely new material, without changing the total number of chapters.

If the Tarot cards, especially those of Greater Arcana stand for the characters in

the novel, the Fool shares some characteristics with Nicholas, and the World with Alison. The Fool, unnumbered or zero card shows "a young man in gorgeous vestments pauses at the brink of a precipice among the great heights of the world; he surveys the blue distance before him—its expanse of sky rather than the prospect below" (Waite, p. 152), which reminds the reader of Nicholas at the beginning of chapter 7:

> Four days later I was standing on Hymettus, looking down over the great complex of Athens-Piraeus, cities and suburbs, houses split like a million dice over the Attic plain. South stretched the pure blue late-summer sea, pale pumice-coloured islands, and beyond them the serene mountains of the Peloponnesus stood away over the horizon in a magnificent arrested flow of land and water. . . .
>
> It was like a journey into space. (pp. 48–49)

Waite's interpretation of the card: "He is a prince of the other world on his travels through this one—all amidst the morning glory, in the keen air. The sun, which shines behind him, knows whence he came, whither he is going, and how he will return by another path after many days. He is the spirit in search of experience" (Waite, pp. 153–55) and "Folly, mania, extravagance, intoxication, delirium" (Waite, p. 286) echoes Nicholas's words: ". . . I was filled with excitement, a strange exuberant sense of taking wing. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and, although I couldn't have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery" (pp. 18–19). Furthermore, Nicholas uses the word "fool" addressing himself such as in the poem he has written: "From this skull-rock strange golden roots throw/Ikons and incidents; the man in the mask/Manipulates. I am *the fool* that falls/And never learns to wait and watch,/Icarus eternally damned, *the dupe* of time . . ." (p. 95; italics mine), and in "On the other, I felt that he had after all taken a sort of liking for me. I thought, as I heaved at the engine, if this is the price, I'll seem *his fool*; but not be *his fool*" (p. 137; italics mine).

The World, the last card of Trumps Major, numbered 21, depicts a dancing naked girl partially clad in a scarf, holding a baton in either hand, surrounded by a wreath of leaves (and flowers in the Insight pack). The nude figure resembles Alison who is naked after swimming: "She was sitting up, turned to me, propped on one arm. She had woven a rough crown out of the oxeyes and wild pinks that grew in the grass around us. . . . and she wore a smile of touching innocence" (p. 268). The divinatory meaning of the card: "Assured success, recompense, voyage, route, emigration, flight, change of place" (Waite, p. 287) matches Alison because her occupation is an air hostess.

Since the cards, the Fool and the World are often placed side by side as in Waite's book (0–21) and in Marselles deck (21–0), the last scene in which Nicholas meets Alison may symbolically suggest the meeting of the two trumps. According to *Dictionary of the Tarot*, many commentators give the World positive meanings: "final union" (Case), "completion of the Great Work" (Crowly), "Completion, travel, arrival at a state of cosmic consciousness, success" (Gray), "Prize or reward. Longed-for goal" (Huson),

and "Beauty, love and happiness arising from the communion of souls" (Ussher).[10] Ellen McDaniel claims that the whole novel can be viewed as the Fool's journey through Trumps Major, and applies each card of Greater Arcana in the numerical order to the stages in the development of the story: "The world card of the Tarot, the last card, signified synthesis and creation, and with Alison, Nicholas will create a new life founded upon the lessons he has learned and the riddles he has solved."[11] Similarly Olshen regards Nicholas as the Fool who "passes through the experiences suggested by some of the other symbols of the Greater Arcana in order to become a Magus, or one who knows and accepts the World, the naked dancer (Alison) whose image is the last, number XXI, of the Greater Arcana" (Olshen, p. 45).

These interpretations based on the Tarot seem to suggest a happy ending, implying that Nicholas the Fool has arrived at a full knowledge of the mystery and become the Magus. The fable of "The Prince and the Magician" which Nicholas has found in the deserted underground chamber also seems to encourage this view. The Prince, despaired of the world of illusion, still prefers illusion when he faces the imminent death, and accepts the King/Magician's words that "there is no truth beyond magic." He then is told that "you too now begin to be a Magician" (p. 552). The application of the Tarot symbolism to the reading of fiction, however, often entails the danger of an arbitrary interpretation because the Tarot is essentially ambivalent. Each Tarot card, for example, has a "reverse" meaning, which prevails when the card appears in a reversed, upside-down position in the act of divination. The World, when reversed, portends "Inertia, fixty, stagnation" (Waite, p. 287), and the editor of *Dictionary of the Tarot*, after listing negative interpretations such as "the great work is negative, idiotic, . . . ultimately malicious" (Crowley), "a dangerous situation" (Kahn) and "Evil reward" (Mathers), concludes that "the World is ambiguous" (Butler, pp. 189–91). The withdrawal of the epigraph may be a warning to the reader not to take the Tarot symbolism too seriously.

The Waiting Room

The whole reference to the waiting room at Paddington Station is missing in the new version. In the original one, Nicholas gives Alison an elaborate instruction:

> 'No. You now have a choice. You do as I say. Or you don't. This. In a few seconds I am going to walk away from you. You will look after me, then call my name. I shall stop, turn round. You will come up to me. I shall turn and start walking away again. You will come after me again, and catch my arm. I shall shake myself free. Then. Then I shall slap you as hard as I can over the side of the face. And believe me, it won't hurt me half as much as it hurts you. I shall walk towards the gate over there on our right. You will stand for a few moments, covering your face with your hands. Then you will begin walking in the opposite direction to me, over to the north gate. To our left. It's about half a mile away. . . . When you get there you will take a taxi. . . . You will take a taxi and go straight to Paddington Station.

> The waiting-room. . . . And there you will wait.[12]

In the following scene, Alison behaves as prescribed, and Nicholas hits her and turns to walk away. The corresponding part of the revised edition goes:

> 'No. You now have a choice. And you'd better make it very fast. It's me or them. But either way, for good.'
>
> 'You have no right—'
>
> 'I have as much right as you did in that hotel room in Greece. Which is every right.' I added, 'And for exactly the same reason as you had then.' (p. 653)

The new scene is more compact, natural and plausible. By omitting the "waiting-room," the scene may lose its imagery link with other parts of the novel, but gains a new force in the urgency and importance of Nicholas's words. In addition, the new reference to the incident at the Greek hotel opens a new parallel.

Peter Wolfe says, "The meeting place Urfe suggests for himself and Alison, the waiting room of Paddington Station, unifies the novel. *Waiting* is the most important word in the book. Urfe must learn how to wait," and points out other instances of "waiting" in the novel.[13] Wolfe then anticipates a happy ending:

> Fowles's personal life also points to a happy future for Alison and Urfe. The novel's final waiting place, Paddington, is London's station for the west of England—where Fowles spent his happiest days as an adolescent, where he lives now, and where his ancestors came from. Paddington Station's waiting room thus stands as a benediction, a forecast, and a happy start. Urfe's waiting has been redeemed. (Wolfe, pp. 117–18)

Here he is going too far, forcing a biographical material to the interpretation of fiction, and in the new version his opinion loses relevancy.

The word "waiting-room" has a significant function in the novel. When Nicholas meets Mitford, his predecessor at the Lord Byron School in Greece, Mitford gives mysterious parting words: "Beware of the waiting-room" (p. 45). On arriving at the Greek island, Nicholas finds at the gate of Conchis's house a signboard, "SALLE D'ATTENTE" nailed to a pine tree, and that is the beginning of Nicholas's extraordinary experiences at Bourani. Palmer says, "The spatial imagery of *The Magus* takes still another form in the metaphor of 'the waiting room,' which defines Nicholas's existential situation during his education at Bourani. As a reprieved prisoner waits in the anteroom of the penitentiary to be released, Nicholas in his year on Phraxos also marks time between the worlds of death and renewed life" (Palmer, p. 89), and Olshen puts further emphasis on the recurrent images deploring their omission. "Exactly why Fowles has cut these echoes is not clear, but their loss seems to me regrettable. They provided a neat, economical, and unobtrusive recapitulation of some of the central

concepts and events of the novel. The new ending is more a conclusion to the tale, but less a summation of theme and image" (Olshen, p. 61). Yet the omission is preferable because in the penultimate chapter, Nicholas, weary of endless waiting for Alison, decides impulsively to cast everything away. "A violent reaction set on me, born of self-disgust and resentment," and makes a hasty choice with a wrong conception of freedom: "Freedom was making some abrupt choice and acting on it; was as it had been at Oxford, allowing one's instinct-cum-will to fling one off at a tangent, solitary into a new situation. I had to have hazard. I had to break out of this waiting-room I was in" (p. 643). Here the waiting room stands for the desperate situation Nicholas is in. He cannot leave the premises for he then loses the contact with Conchis group, and he has exausted all the means to find Alison. All he can do is to wait for Alison to get in touch with him on her own will. The waiting room for him is a kind of Purgatory, a place to repent and wait with little hope for the words of forgiveness from Alison. Thus it seems unnatural for him to choose a waiting room for the final reunion with Alison.

The reworked scene, however, gives a new perspective to the confrontation between Nicholas and Alison. By the omission of the waiting room and stagy instruction, the scene becomes less contrived, less theatrical, and more spontaneous. The reader knows Nicholas's ambivalent feelings toward Alison. He is angry at her for she has betrayed him by the false news of her suicide, and he is furious for she has kept him waiting incommunicado for three and a half long months. He at the same time feels guilty because he has been unfaithful to her and realizes how selfish he has been. Alison is the only hope left for him now; he sees what Alison truly is: the only reality in the world of illusion. Now that he understands her better: "it occurred to me that I must be feeling as Alison had so often felt: a mixture, before the English, of irritation and babblement, of having this same language, same past, so many same things, and yet not belonging to them any more. Being worse than rootless . . . speciesless" (p. 574), he speaks to her in a less imperative tone.

Although Nicholas forces Alison to make a choice in both versions, the nuance and implications are not the same. In the original text he manipulates her and denies her natural responses. Like an impresario, he tells her what to do in detail, and negates her spontaneous reactions and feelings by turning her actions into acting. Nicholas who has been made a puppet by Conchis now behaves towards Alison like a clumsy Conchis. In the revised text, Nicholas also demands her to choose, but his demand comes to have a more serious meaning by the addition of the episode in a Greek hotel. In Piraeus Alison delivers an ultimatum to him:

> Her voice sharpened a pitch. 'Yes or no.'
>
> I stared at her. She gave a tiny humourless twist of her lips and answered for me.
>
> 'No.'
>
> 'Only because . . .'
>
> She ran straight to the door and opened it. I felt angry, trapped into

> this ridiculous either-or choice, this brutal demand for total commitment. . . . (p. 276)

By making the parallel apparent, Nicholas shows the significance and seriousness of his demand; there is no room for playacting. He is also telling her that he now understands her, that he knows how she has felt in the hotel room; he is actually begging her to realize that the emotional implication of his demand equals that of her ultimatum. In the old version, Nicholas in this episode at the hotel does not comprehend the weight of the choice: "I felt angry, trapped into this ridiculous either-or choice, *when the reality was so much more complex*" (p. cclxiii; italics mine). Here he makes an evasive excuse to cover his inability to face reality.

Another important change results from the revision: Nicholas's slapping comes to have an entirely different meaning. In the former edition, Nicholas intentionally delivers the blow and Alison chooses to be hit:

> I hit her before she could speak. I flicked my arm out, held it the smallest fraction of a second, then brought it down sideways as hard as I could; so sure that she would twist her head aside. But in that smallest fraction of a warning second she finally decided; and decision was the savage but unavoided slap knocking her sideways. Even so her hand flashed up instinctively, and her eyes blinked with shock. (p. dcxvi)

By running after him and accepting the slap as pre-arranged, Alison has already made her choice. Her brave smile further confirms her decision: "Her eyes were wet, perhaps with the pain. But she was slowly smiling. That archaic smile, her variant of theirs, steadier, braver, far less implacable, without malice or arrogance, yet still that smile" (p. dcxvi). So the ending becomes predictable in the old version. Alison will surely carry out Nichlas's plan and they will meet at the waiting room of Paddington Station, though it remains uncertain whether they will live happily ever after.

If Nicholas can force Alison what to do and hit her in cold blood, he does not seem to have changed much from old Nicholas at the beginning. By making her act as he has planned, he may have achieved the status of the Magus, but he at the same time has made her a mere actress who mechanically follows his stage direction. Nicholas also becomes an actor without free will when he follows his own plan. Even though his plot is a charade to deceive unseen Conchis, his calculated, inhuman slapping is a violation of the eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not inflict unnecessary pain" (p. 641) which he has learned through his experiences on the Greek island and by the companionship of Jojo. Alan Kennedy defends Nicholas's action: "Nicholas is being brought to the moment at which his mental choices must be externalised in action. His period of waiting has given him the opportunity to think long and thoroughly about his decision, so it will not be characterised by blind or spontaneous action. He must, if he is to succeed in winning his love, no longer simply 'decide, and still not enact the decision'."[14] Enacting the decision is essential, but it does not have to be expressed in

this brutal fashion causing a physical as well as psychological pain. Hearing the news of Alison's suicide, Nicholas accuses himself: "I was tired, tired, tired of deception; tired of being deceived; tired of deceiving others; and most tired of all of being self-tricked, of being endlessly at the mercy of my own loins; the craving for the best, that made the very worst of me" (p. 400), and he must have truly realized what he is and how futile acting is:

> . . . but all my life I had tried to turn life into fiction, to hold reality away; always I had acted as if a third person was watching and listening and giving me marks for good or bad behaviour—a god like a novelist, to whom I turned, like a character with the power to please, the sensitivity to feel slighted, the ability to adapt himself to whatever he believed the novelist-god wanted. This leechlike variation of the super-ego I had created myself, fostered myself, and because of it I had always been incapable of acting freely. It was not my defence; but my despot. And now I saw it, I saw it a death too late. (p. 539)

Yet in the old version, Nicholas's speech and action negate all these feelings. He has not yet learned the lesson.

Although Nicholas belatedly realizes that he is not being watched: "And suddenly the truth came to me, as we stood there, trembling, searching, at our point of fulcrum. There were not watching eyes. The windows were as blank as they looked. The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre" (pp. dcxvi–xvii), he still continues to perform according to the pre-arranged scenario: "I have her bowed head one last stare, then I was walking. Firmer than Orpheus, as firm as Alison herself, that other day of parting, not once looking back" (p. dcxvii). He does not seem to have any doubt as to her obedience. He feels confident in gaining back her love as a new Orpheus who will not turn back, who will win his Euridice in the end. This Nicholas, however, rather than a heroic mythical character, looks more like a conceited, self-important, ridiculous figure, as he has been all the time. He should turn to Alison the moment he realizes that there are no watching eyes because he no longer needs playacting. By walking away without turning back, Nicholas proves himself less human than Orpheus.

In the new version Nicholas also hits Alison but in a dissimilar situation.

> I do not know why I did what happened next. It was neither intended nor instinctive, it was neither in cold blood nor in hot; but yet it seemed, once committed, a necessary act; no breaking of the commandment. My arm flicked out and slapped her left cheek as hard as it could. The blow caught her completely by surprise, nearly knocked her off balance, and her eyes blinked with the shock; then very slowly she put her left hand to the cheek. (p. 654)

Here his action is far less calculated, less deliberate, and not at all theatrical. It is almost a natural reaction to her unreasonable insistence that he has not changed, and he realizes *after* he has delivered the blow that it is a necessary act. As the quotation

shows, he believes that he has not broken the eleventh commandment. He has to inflict *necessary* pain just as his mental torture in the underground chamber has been necessary in disintoxicating him and in educating him. Although the blow is almost an impulsive reaction on his part, it contains a positive meaning. Nicholas has to make Alison realize that he loves her and that he is totally committed to her. When he gives her an ultimatum, he means it, and she has to respond accordingly without any excuse or evasion. He is showing her that they are in a real world, and that their actions have consequences in reality; if one is hit, one feels the pain. By hitting her, he himself feels her pain, and he genuinely realizes that the godgame is over: "The final truth came to me. . . . There were no watching eyes. . . . The theatre was empty" (p. 654). Alison resents being hit and repeats, "I hate you," but she does not leave him nor let him walk away, and Nicholas does not walk away. Instead he tries to find something "I had never seen, or always feared to see, in those intense grey eyes, the quintessential something behind all the hating, the hurtness, the tears" (p. 655), and asks her hand telling her how much she means to him: "You can't hate someone who's really on his knees. Who'll never be more than half a human being without you" (p. 655). In the new version, Alison behaves more humanly and is freer in her expression of her feelings. Nicholas also becomes less manipulative, more understanding, ready for total commitment, and ultimately a more complete man who is capable of love.

The Last Paragraph

In the last paragraph of the new version, the past tense is abruptly shifted to the present, and the first-person narrator disappears behind the third-person narrative: "She is silent, she will never speak, never forgive, never reach a hand, never leave this frozen tense. All waits, suspended. Suspend the autumn trees, the autumn sky, anonymous people" (p. 656). This new ending, like a freeze common in the ending of recent movies, discontinues the novel without giving the impression of finality. The story, as far as Nicholas and Alison are concerned, is over and their future has no relevancy beyond the last page. Up to this moment, the reader has been paying attention to the story of Nicholas, but here the character Nicholas and the first-person narrator Nicholas cease to exist, and the narrator in the third person conveys the last message.

This new ending, as Boccia points out, corresponds to the opening paragraph of the last chapter:

> The smallest hope, a bare continuing to exist, is enough for the anti-hero's future; leave him, says our age, leave him where mankind is in its history, at a crossroads, in a dilemma, with all to lose and only more of the same to win; let him survive, but give him no direction, no reward; because we too are waiting, in our solitary rooms where the telephone never rings, waiting for this girl, this truth, this crystal of humanity, this reality lost through imagination, to return; and to say she returns is a lie.

> But the maze has no centre. An ending is no more than a point in sequence, a snip of the cutting shears. (p. 645)

Unlike the rest of the narrative, this passage is written in the third person in the present tense, and the detached tone of the voice suggests an authoritative figure. Boccia comments: "This breaking away from the pattern of narration forces the reader to take special notice of this paragraph. . . . the narrator of this section stands outside of time. It is as though Fowles were lecturing us on the literary standards and traditions which we ought to be aware of. . . . Fowles makes it quite clear that we are not to see this ending as a resolution; it is merely one point in a long continuum" (Boccia, p. 246). In the light of the opening passage, the ending may be read as an unhappy one because "to say she returns is a lie," but it also says that "an ending is no more than a point in sequence." The narrator has just stopped the motion in the middle of a scene without giving any direction as to the following course of action. The new ending is far more ambiguous than the original if the reader's main concern is the future of Nicholas and Alison. When Fowles says that he has made the ending less ambiguous, he means something else.

If the ending is a conclusion to the relationship between Nicholas and Alison, the original version predicts far more positively a happy reunion of the two, while the new version, refusing to conclude, leaves the choice to the reader. I agree with Boccia in the sense that the new ending is not final, but when he says, "The fact that an answer which eliminates mystery is 'always a form of death' may explain why the end of the novel is so ambiguous" (Boccia, p. 245), he seems to be putting too much emphasis on ambiguity itself. The new ending, from a different viewpoint, is not ambiguous at all. The freeze is a positive indication that to worry about the future of the two characters is irrelevant to the meaning of the novel.

Conclusion

The Magus is not a simple love story. By making the ending indeterminate, the author calls the reader's attention back to the larger issue of the novel. The revised version puts emphasis on the question of "freedom as choice" which has a close relation with the ending. Nicholas, who always listens to Conchis's autobiographical tales as entertaining stories illustrated later with living dramas, fails to see the parallel between Conchis's life and his own. In the episode of the German occupation of the Greek island, Conchis, who is ordered to execute two Greek guerillas by a Nazi colonel, Wimmel, realizes the meaning of freedom:

> 'In mine life had no price. It was so valuable that it was literally priceless. In his, only one thing had that quality of pricelessness. It was *eleutheria*: freedom. He was the immalleable, the essence, the beyond reason, beyond logic, beyond civilization, beyond history. . . . He was the final right to deny. To be free to choose. . . . Saw that I was the only person left in

> that square who had the freedom left to choose, and that the annunciation and defence of that freedom was more important than common sense, self-preservation, yes, than my own life, than the lives of the eighty hostages.' (p. 434)

Freedom is not simply the right to do what one wants to do. Freedom is to make a choice at any cost in accordance with what one truly believes. One can have the freedom of choice only when one understands what one really is. In other words, freedom must be paid by the choice, which is actually a judgment upon oneself.

Nicholas does not understand the significance and is told so by Conchis in the newly added section:

> 'You are someone who does not understand what freedom is. And above all that the better you understand it, the less you possess of it.'
>
> . . . .
>
> I spoke sharply. 'You can't treat people like this. As if we're all just villagers to be shot so that you can prove some abstract theory of freedom.'
>
> He stood up and stared down at me. 'For as long as you cherish your present view of freedom, it is you who holds the executioner's gun.' (p. 439)

Nicholas discovers the meaning of freedom at the final stage of the godgame. When he is given the chance to revenge himself upon Lily who has deceived him from the beginning to the end, he is told to make a choice of either punishing her or forgiving her:

> 'If you raise your thumb in the sign of mercy, you will, apart from one last short process of disintoxication, be free of us for evermore. You will equally be free if you choose to punish, which will also demonstrate the satisfactory completion of your disintoxication. Now I ask one last thing of you: that you think carefully, very carefully indeed, before you choose.'
>
> At some unseen signal the students all rose. Everyone in the room stared at me. I was aware that I wanted to make a right choice; something that would make them all remember me, that would prove them all wrong. I knew I was judge only in name. Like all judges, I was finally the judged; to be judged by my own judgment. (p. 516)

Though Nicholas is partially conscious of the meaning of choice, he makes a wrong choice: "Not without hesitation, thinking, gauging whether I was free to choose, and feeling sure that this was not a pre-conditioning, I turned my thumb down" (p. 516).

Holding a cat-o'-nine-tails in his hand, he stands behind Lily whose back is exposed for flogging, and then he finally feels the weight of freedom and sees for the first time the parallel between his situation and Conchis's:

> I understood.
>
> I was not holding a cat in my hand in an underground cistern, I was in a sunlit square ten years before and in my hands I held a German sub-machine-

> gun. *And it was not Conchis who was now playing the role of Wimmel. Wimmel was inside me, in my stiffened, backthrown arm, in all my past; above all in what I had done to Alison.* (p. 518; italicized parts are additions in the revised version.)

Now Nicholas understands not only the meaning of freedom, but also what he has been and has done. He realizes fully that he has been essentially as sadistic and inhuman as the Nazi colonel.

Nicholas, now with a full knowledge of freedom and of himself, meets Alison in the final chapter. Alison gives him an opportunity to make a final choice. Over the past three and a half months Nicholas has suffered, waiting for her, but it has been a necessary pain for him; it has been an ample time for him to think over himself and his relationship with Alison. Meeting her, Nicholas confirms his love for her and gives her in return a choice, freedom to choose between Nicholas and Conchis's group. In the new ending, the godgame reveals its ultimate purpose. The whole point of Conchis's elaborate work is to give Nicholas a wide range of experiences through which he learns to think, feel, and above all, love. The reader, through Nicholas, vicariously undergoes the experiences, and follows Nicholas's ordeal to find at the end Nicholas a different, better man. Nicholas has made a final choice, and what happens later is of less significance. Nicholas has known illusion and reality, and he chooses reality, as he chooses Alison who stands for reality, over Lily, illusion. Nicholas is now capable of loving a person, not as a desirable object but as a living, human being. Whether or not Alison reciprocates his love is beside the point. Nicholas has learned to *be* in the present reality, which is implied in the new ending where everything is suspended in the present. The Latin epigraph on the last page: "Tomorrow let him who has loved no one, love; whoever loves will tomorrow love," summarizes what Nicholas has been, what he is and will be. Nicholas who has not loved, has learned to love, and he will continue to love.

cras amet qui numquam amavit
quique amavit cras amet

NOTES

1. Malcolm Bradbury, *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), p. 267.
2. Michael H. Begnal, "A View of John Fowles' *The Magus*," *Modern British Literature*, 3 (Fall 1978), 69.
3. William J. Palmer, *The Fiction of John Fowles: Tradition, Art, and the Loneliness of Selfhood* (Columbia, Missouri: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1975), p. 108.
4. Ralph Berets, "*The Magus:* A Study in the Creation of a Personal Myth," *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 19 (April 1973), 75.
5. John Fowles, *The Magus: A Revised Version* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), p. 7; hereafter the pagination will be given in parentheses after the quotation.
6. William H. Pritchard, "Early Fowles," *New York Times Book Review*, 19 March 1978, p. 41.
7. Michael Boccia, " 'Visions and Revisions': John Fowles's New Version of *The Magus*," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 8, No. 2 (1980/81), 246.
8. Barry N. Olshen, *John Fowles* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1978), p. 60.
9. Arthur Edward Waite, *Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (New York: Causeway Books, 1972), p. 285.

10. Bill Butler, ed., *Dictionary of the Tarot* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), pp. 188-91.
11. Ellen McDaniel, "*The Magus*: Fowles's Tarot Quest," *Journal of Modern Literature*, 8, No. 2 (1980/81), p. 259.
12. John Fowles, *The Magus* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. dcxv; further references from this text will be indicated with Roman numerals.
13. Peter Wolfe, *John Fowles, Magus and Moralist* (London: Associated Univ. Press, 1976), p. 116.
14. Alan Kennedy, *The Protean Self: Dramatic Action in Contemporary Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 256–57.

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