

POWER AND CONFRONTATION IN
THE FICTION OF JOHN FOWLES

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ABSTRACT

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The three novels of John Fowles, The Collector, The Magus, and The French Lieutenant's Woman constitute a trilogy of confrontations. Confrontation is the strategy for understanding a personal situation by putting that situation in other social, temporal, and spatial contexts, in other words, understanding something by what it is not. The understanding which results from confrontation of this kind enables the individual to have control, that is, exercise power, over himself as well as act with power and responsibility towards others. The Collector examines the social confrontation between the Few and the Many and predicts a victory for the Many unless there is a determined attempt to educate them to their own happiness. The Magus explores spatial confrontation with a view to defining the relationship of the individual to his environment, that is, his immediate situation as well as his place in the universal one, and acts as a summary of Fowles's major themes. The French Lieutenant's Woman treats temporal confrontation by comparing and contrasting the Age of Victoria with our contemporary world in an effort to come to some conclusions about history and time. The Ebony Tower functions as footnotes to the themes and techniques of Fowles's previous works. Fowles's literary technique consists of allusions to previous literature and provides an aesthetic aspect to his strategy of confrontation. A marked parallel between the shape of The Tempest and the novels of the trilogy is established.

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CHAPTER I

JOHN FOWLES: THE MAN, HIS WORK, AND HIS THOUGHT

It wasn't until the age of twenty-two that John Fowles, the English novelist, realized his vocation as a writer, and it wasn't until the age of thirty-nine that he published his first novel. In the interim, he wrote drafts of dozens of novels which were never published as they did not measure up to his standards of excellence. Nevertheless, it was during this period of his life that he was perfecting the technique which was to emerge much later and distinguish him as a writer of genius. In "Notes on Writing a Novel," he says, "You cannot create a world by hot instinct; but only by cold experience. That is one good reason why so many novelists produce nothing until, or do all their best work after, the age of forty."¹

John Fowles was born March 31, 1926, in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England, the son of Robert John and Gladys May (Richards) Fowles. He attended Bedford School where he was made a prefect at a very young age and became captain of the cricket team and head boy.² He did not consider himself an intellectual during

¹ John Fowles, "Notes on Writing a Novel," Harper's 237 (July 1968): 89.

² "Being a head boy was a weird experience. You had total power over 800 other boys; you were totally responsible for discipline and punishment. I spent my 18th year holding court really. I would have 20 boys before me every morning, who you were both prosecutor and judge of...and executioner,

his school years. Up to the age of twenty, he says, he was a very successful conformer. Near the end of World War II he left school and did military service with the Royal Marines (which he disliked intensely) and became a lieutenant. He completed a B.A. (honours in French) at Oxford University in 1950, taught English for three years in France and Greece and then returned to England where he married Elizabeth Whitton in 1954. He missed Greece terribly, though today is glad that he left when he did. At his time he started the first draft of The Magus, perhaps as a sort of exorcism of the agony he felt in having left Greece. For the next three years he taught at a variety of schools in England and eventually became head of the English department at a large London college. With the publication of his first book, The Collector, in 1963, he won critical acclaim and a place on the best-seller list. In 1969 he won the English Centre P.E.N. Silver Pen Award, and the W.H. Smith Award in 1970. The ensuing financial success from the publication of his first novel, The Collector, enabled him to devote full-time to his writing. Presently, he is living in an eighteenth-century house which overlooks the Channel, in Lyme Regis, a small tourist town on the Dorset coast.

of course. I suppose I used to beat on the average three or four boys every day..." Fowles feels that this is very evil and constitutes a terrible educational system. (Richard Boston, "John Fowles, Alone But Not Lonely," New York Times Book Review, 9 November 1969, p. 2.) Echoes of this experience of his youth are to be found in the trial scene of The Magus.

Since publishing The Collector in 1963 he has produced several other books: The Aristos: A Self-Portrait in Ideas (1964), The Magus (1966), The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969), Poems (1973), and The Ebony Tower (1974). Apart from the above works, he has contributed verse to Antaeus, an essay, "Notes on Writing a Novel," to the anthology, Afterwards: Novelists on Their Novels (1969), and an article on Kafka to the critical journal, Mosaic. He is a perceptive literary critic and translator. He is scheduled to publish a book entitled Shipwreck and to translate Cinderella from the French in the near future. His versatile and diversified intelligence expresses itself in many forms. Each of his novels, though similar in ideological concern, varies greatly in style, plot, and technique. An innovator of form, he continues to experiment with the novel in such a way as to create interesting and aesthetically valid variations of an art, which according to some people, is dying. He affirms the life of the novel when he says, "The delight of writing novels, is what you can leave out on each page, in each sentence. The novel is an astounding freedom to choose. It will last just as long as artists want to be free to choose. I think that will be a very long time. As long as man."³

Apart from his work as a writer, Fowles enjoys collecting old books, old china, and pursuing his dominant outside

³Daniel Halpern and John Fowles, "A Sort of Exile in Lyme Regis," London Magazine 10 (March 1971): 46.

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interest, natural history. As a boy he collected butterflies and was a hunter of animals. Now he loathes guns and people who collect living things and abuse nature. Probably as a result of this naturalist bent he tends to take an ornithologist's view of human beings. He enjoys watching people's behaviours in much the same way as he observes those of the birds in his garden. He feels slightly alien to people and says that if he were given a choice between leaving birds or people in the world, he would be in favour of birds. Some day he would like to try to write a science fiction novel which includes the image of a world populated solely by birds. He loves the idea of a pure, primeval world of bird song and wings and bird-shapes, and nothing else.⁴

Most probably allied to his sense of alienation from people is Fowles's feeling that he is living in a sort of exile in his own country. It is necessary for him as a writer, yet he does feel a need to keep in touch with his native country--linguistically, psychologically, and in many other ways. He does not fraternize with other British writers nor does he frequent the literary circles of London, which he despises. Perhaps his deeply ingrained belief in existentialism and desire to maintain his individuality keeps him from doing so. Like Maurice Conchis of The Magus, Fowles both literally and metaphorically cultivates his garden.

Fowles reads Victorian and French novels and tends to

⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

read contemporary English and American works several years after they have been published. He greatly admires craftsmanship in writing and has a deep respect for Raymond Chandler, Scott Fitzgerald, and Flaubert which seems to suggest something of the non/classic nature of his own work. He prefers the French attitude of writing for an international reading audience rather than that of the British and American writers who have only their own countrymen in mind. For Fowles: "Ideas are the only motherland."⁵ Fowles is adamant about identifying himself as an "English" novelist as opposed to a British one. Although he loathes the political and emotional associations of Britain (the British Empire, the Union Jack, the Queen), he is an Anglophile to the extent that he cherishes what England means to him--"landscape, and a certain kind of smell, and a certain kind of language, and a certain kind of behaviour in life."⁶

Fowles writes when the "spirit moves him" and admits to creating under the influence of something like the Muse. He tends to write the first draft of a narrative relatively quickly and with concentrated effort (working sometimes from 16 to 18 hours a day), usually as the result of an image which haunts his mind. He may leave the first draft for a considerable period of time (the longer the better, according to him)⁷ before researching the historical background and revision. For

⁵ Fowles, "Notes on Writing a Novel," p. 96.

⁶ Halpern, p. 37.

⁷ The Mapus was abandoned for 10 years before he took it up again and prepared it for publication.

Fowles, the research can be quite time consuming and during the revision stage he must force himself to write to schedule.

Fowles believes that the writer should try to write to demonstrate his personal view of life in such a way that everything taking place within the literary framework, no matter how bizarre the plot, be rendered realistic. Such an attitude may in part account for the romantic-realistic aspect of his work. When asked if there was a particular picture of the world that he would like to develop in his writing Fowles did not hesitate before responding that all his books are about how one achieves freedom. The theme obsesses him. "The question is, is there really free will? Can we choose freely? Can we act freely? Can we choose? How do we do it?"⁸ Thus, Fowles's world view is based on the idea of freedom and an exploration of its possibilities. He exercises his own freedom as a writer by accepting and rejecting certain traditional aspects of English literature, and by incorporating these into his own work, adds something new to that tradition.

As a student of French at Oxford, Fowles admits that he read "...omnivorously more out of ignorance than intelligenceI learned to value what I couldn't over the years, forget."⁹ Part of the student syllabus was Old French and one field of Old French literature, or "forest" as he calls it, which continued to haunt his imagination was that of the Celtic romance.

⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

⁹ John Fowles, The Ebony Tower, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1974), pp. 117-118.

Fowles regards the Celtic romance as the precursor of all that has since been called fictional--"the novel and its children." His translation and commentary of "Eliduc", a narrative poem written in the late twelfth century by Marie de France, which appears in The Ebony Tower, attests to the respect and allegiance he feels for the medieval tradition.¹⁰

The Celtic twilight tradition usually implies a fictional world of apparent surface calm which in reality hides great turbulence. Such are the situations Fowles creates in his novels. In The Collector, a supposedly quiet old country cottage provides the front for the violence and life-death struggle which is occurring in its basement; The Magus presents the reader with a seemingly serene Mediterranean island which is actually the site of a mind-upheaving psychological experiment; finally The French Lieutenant's Woman is set in Victorian England, outwardly a placid time but in terms of the social relationships between individuals (such as Sarah and Charles) it was a period of vast social, moral, and psychological change. Thus, one can see that when probed, each of Fowles's novels reveals a wealth of philosophical and psychological undercurrents. Similarly, the plots of his novels may appear merely popular when in reality, Fowles is grappling with the meaning of freedom in the contemporary world, examining the

¹⁰ Ronald Binns traces much of the Celtic and Gothic influence in Fowles's work in his critical commentary, "John Fowles: Radical Romancer," The Critical Quarterly 15 (Winter 1973): 317-334.

theory of the novel, and considering the significance and future of art. In this way Fowles's art represents a curious blending of the medieval and the modern--the Celtic romance and the kind of semiotics associated with Roland Barthes.¹¹ He is a strong believer in the value of mystery and one might even go so far as to characterize it as the life-force behind his fiction, once again an attribute of the Celtic twilight tradition. Fowles considers Alain Robbe-Grillet's Pour un nouveau roman (1963) essential reading for the modern writer, yet, at the same time, in his characteristically paradoxical manner, feels a great need to preserve the roots of the novel genre. For Fowles, it is the meshing of past and future which gives art its mystery and richness. He believes that the true sources of fiction are to be found in mystery, magic, and anomalous events and that contemporary writers who tend to ignore these features are in danger of surrendering to the realm of abstraction, a fragile bubble always on the verge of bursting into nothingness. Thus, John Fowles as an artist, feels a loyalty to his literary heritage yet is sensitive to a need for innovation in the novel of today.

Fowles has created a style of writing which some have called "metafiction". This concept of metafiction may be conveniently divided into three categories, all of which are evident in his work. In the first sense there is a borrowing from

¹¹Fowles refers directly to the semiotics of Barthes in his short story, "The Cloud," in The Ebony Tower, pp. 277-81, when he has Catherine, the protagonist of the story, expound upon this theory.

previous literature. He draws upon the tradition of his genre in a way that makes his novels a delight and challenge to read; they are filled with literary echoes, integrally woven into the main narrative in new and interesting ways. Secondly, one may associate metafiction with the term metatheatre, which usually involves a variation on the play-within-a-play device. In The Magus Fowles creates the play-within-a-novel situation and thus alludes to some of the ideas of Pirandello and Brecht, notably those of the thin line between life and the theatre, illusion and reality. The third aspect of metafiction is that it seeks to involve the reader in the fictional world. In two cases Fowles asks the reader to participate actively by choosing one of several endings to his novels. The purpose of ambiguous or multiple endings seems to be to establish the reality of the world of the novel, the whole course of which may have been changed had the protagonist taken a different path of action at one of several possible points in the narrative. Thus Fowles continues to extend the boundaries of his metafictional world in all that he writes.

In order to examine Fowles's view of life in more detail it is convenient to consider some of the more far-reaching concepts which he treats in The Aristos, the exposition of his philosophical ideas. Fowles's acknowledged mentor is the sixth century B.C. philosopher, Heraclitus, a proto-existentialist, whose extant work consists of brief fragments which declare that the universe is in flux, and that life is a ceaseless struggle of opposites. It is his pensée form which inspired Fowles

to write The Aristos in the telegraphic manner which he employs. Fowles shares Heraclitus's reverence for life, his clear-eyed contemplation of the tragic, and love of paradox.¹²

But in contemporary terms, Fowles is an existentialist. He feels that anyone who calls himself by such a name should try to commit himself to what is the best for the given situation. Such behaviour also defines the term "aristos".¹³ The individual who aspires to the aristos must be willing "to accept one's isolation, to accept this responsibility, to learn one's particular powers, and then to humanize the whole: that is the best for the situation," (p. 214). Such a being must necessarily understand that he exists in hazard, a concept integral to Fowles's idea of cosmic reality. He cites as the purpose in writing The Aristos "to preserve the freedom of the individual against all those pressures-to-conform that threaten our century," (p. 7).

The Aristos defines the philosophic theme of the singular and unique versus the many and mediocre which is behind Fowles's three compelling novels. He reminds us that we are all of the Many but we must strive to be of the Few by exercising our freedom to act reflectively, that is, with responsibility, in any given situation. "My freedom is the choice of action and the power of enactment I have within the rules of the

¹²"Misery in Eden," Time 20 (20 November 1964): 94.

¹³John Fowles, The Aristos: A Self-Portrait in Ideas, rev. ed., (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970), p. 7. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

game," (p. 69). For Fowles, the idea of social confrontation is a natural result of the distinction between the Many and the Few. A time will come when the Few will be threatened by the Many and their only hope of continued existence will lie in an attempt to educate the Many in the power to enjoy through knowledge. Yet though differentiation implies ultimate confrontation it is still a necessary condition for a world view based on the polarity of existence to which John Fowles adheres. Man and the world derive energy from opposition and mystery, both of which are necessary if the universe is to continue to exist. If tension is destroyed, so is the balance; if mystery is dissipated man becomes miserable.

For Fowles, art is an effort to destroy time. The artifact yields to its creator the power to survive the passage of time. He goes on to indicate two kinds of artefacts: "those we admire, and perhaps envy, because they survive us and those we like, and perhaps pity, because they do not. Both are aspects of feeling about time," (p. 188). This familiar attitude toward art is very closely related to his concept of power and that of the fight against the "nemo" (feeling of nobodiness):

We have different ideas of what constitutes a 'somebody'; but there are certain generally accepted specifications. It is necessary to make my name known; I must have power--physical, social, intellectual, artistic, political...but power. I must be remembered. I must be admired, envied, hated, feared, denied. In short, I must endure, I must extend, and beyond the body and the body's life. (*Italics mine.*)

(p. 49)

In this way art, as an extension of the creator, serves to defeat the nemo, assert the power of the individual, and in a

sense, conquer time. For Fowles, the true artist is essentially a defender of order and meaning. Though he may attack existing order and meaning or expose an underlying chaos or anarchy, it is in an effort to establish a better order and meaning. Ultimately, art reflects the mystery which is power and points to reason as the means to salvation.

The relationship between art and life is a recurrent theme throughout the fiction of John Fowles as each of his central characters exists "en passage" in trying to give form to the chaos of existence. In one sense, each of the characters is an artist trying to create a work of art, trying to compose his or her own life, that is, assume power and accept responsibility for his or her actions. They are actively involved in the process of becoming, which is an on-going, never-ending education and sub-category of the cosmic evolutionary "processus". For many of Fowles's characters (Miranda, Conchis, and Nicholas, to name a few) art becomes the primal stimulus to self-definition, moral action, and finally, existential life. In the final analysis, life must learn to imitate great art's powers for truth-telling and beauty-creating.¹⁴ Art as opposed to science provides this model as it is the all inclusive sphere which does not sacrifice understanding to precision.

Fowles elaborates upon his understanding of the concept

¹⁴ William J. Palmer, *The Fiction of John Fowles: Tradition, Art, and the Loneliness of Solitude*, Literary Frontiers Edition, (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1974), pp. 30-31.

of time in the following manner:

Only one process allows all conscious beings to have equal importance: an infinite one. If there were any end to which evolution was tending, then you and I would be slaves of a pharaoh, a builder of pyramids. But if there is no end, then you, from whatever world or age you come, and I are equal. For both of us the slope is the same, and reaches as far ahead and as far behind. This is the great proof that the whole is infinite. It was never created and it will never end, so that all that is may be equal in it.

(p. 22)

Thus evolution, as a concept in infinitely extended time, is merely a variation upon the theme of adaptation to environment. If the environment changes the individual will adapt to the new environment in order to survive. Despite the circumstances, the basic process remains the same. In this sense then, individual adaptations cannot be measured hierarchically; they are equal and, by extension, individuals are also equal.

Another important concept which Fowles treats in The Aristos is that of space--to which he directly connects the idea of freedom. He says that "We are perhaps,...machines, but we are machines so complex that they have developed a relative freedom to choose. We are in a prison cell, but it is, or can be made to become, a comparatively spacious one; and inside it we can become relatively free," (p. 68). This passage admits of a limited spatial environment, and implies that through exercise of the freedom which exists for the individual, he can accommodate himself within his environment, depending upon the extent to which he is willing and able to adapt to the "space" in which he exists.

Thus in The Aristos Fowles deals, among other things, with

a comprehensive view of mankind, one which I shall explore throughout the course of this thesis, that of the social, temporal, and spatial confrontations which man is necessarily involved in as the source of self-knowledge and power. As well, the sort of technical confrontation of past with present which Fowles engages in directly mirrors his thematic interest in confrontations of a more inclusive kind. In each of his novels Fowles illustrates that in order for the individual to fully understand his present place in society, time, and space he must first have grasped the significance of other aspects of society and understood different times and different spaces. Each of Fowles's protagonists must come to terms with the various permutations and combinations of this basic confrontation if he/she is ever to gain power over himself/herself and embrace self-knowledge and freedom.

Though Fowles's three novels differ in many ways, they are strikingly related by a primary concern in each--power, the power that one person can wield over another to violate him, annihilate him, or alternately to help him achieve a fullness of personality and humanity. In each work, Fowles explores the kinds of power and the methods by which a particular power effects the possessor's purposes.¹⁵

Because there are many synonyms for the word power: potency, potentiality, energy, ascendancy, control, omnipotence, efficacy, influence, compulsion, reinforcement, competence, and force, I shall

¹⁵ Rosemary M. Laughlin, "Faces of Power in the Novels of John Fowles," Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction, 13, No. 3 (1971), 71.

define the word in an effort to clarify the manner in which I shall use it in this thesis. Though any of the above words may provide an adequate brief definition of power in a broad sense, the eminent sociologist, Max Weber, offers a more precise and useful definition of the word: "'Power' is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which the probability rests."¹⁶ This is a good working definition for the way in which Fowles, in each of his novels, employs the concept. One must also be aware of the positive and negative effects of power. Someone like Frederick Clegg exercises power over Miranda with ensuing negative effects--her death; whereas Sarah Woodruff, who manipulates Charles Smithson, and Maurice Conchis, who has control over Nicholas Urfe, use power as a positive force effecting heightened self-awareness in the individual. Theirs is power coupled with responsibility and vision.

Domination, authority, and responsibility are concepts which generally accompany the use of the word power. Power over another person or thing necessarily implies domination of that person or thing. However, such domination need not always be bad if it is to achieve a positive effect for another. As Fowles says in The Aristos, "Consciousness has given us the power to destroy ourselves as well as the power to preserve ourselves," (p. 62). Usually authority implies that power vested in a person or thing is

¹⁶ A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, trans., Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947), p. 152.

legitimized for a good reason. But it is the responsible use of power which will culminate in the personal freedom that is the ultimate goal Fowles sets for his protagonists. Necessarily the positive use of power is dependent upon the individual's capacity for understanding, not only of himself but others. Chapters II, III, and IV will examine in detail the uses and abuses of various kinds of power in The Collector, The French Lieutenant's Woman, and The Magus. In all cases there exists an extension of power from one character to another. The gaining of power by one person does not deplete the power of another and it runs the gamut from physical to psychic manipulation with psychological, sexual, social, intellectual, and theatrical variations. By facing his characters with a variety of confrontations and exposing them to powerful individuals Fowles causes the reader to consciously ponder the responsible use of his own freedom.

Thus the three novels of John Fowles may be viewed as a totality in terms of confrontation and power. Each emphasizes a specific type of confrontation and the power theme runs through them all. The Collector, The French Lieutenant's Woman, and The Magus constitute a trilogy of confrontations. The Collector focuses on social confrontation and distinguishes between the Few and the Many, raising the question as to which sector of society will eventually wield power over the other. The Magus, confronting the reality of England with the very different reality of Greece, emphasizes space, both physical and metaphysical. The French Lieutenant's Woman is concerned with temporal confrontation. By setting the Victorian against the modern age Fowles

alerts his reader to the necessity of keeping his own place in history in true perspective and thus completes the trilogy of confrontation. The cumulative effect of the three confrontations: society, time, and space places the individual in a three dimensional position and enables him to consciously exercise power born of understanding, to the best of his ability, in his particular situation. Although I will be focussing much of this thesis on the themes of confrontation and power I intend also to provide a full overview of Fowles's fiction.

CHAPTER II

THE COLLECTOR: SOCIAL CONFRONTATION

In The Collector Fowles dramatizes the situation of a young man experiencing the liberation of his fantasies. A clerk, Frederick Clegg, wins a fortune on the football pools and uses his winnings to kidnap a pretty, young, art student, Miranda Grey, and imprison her in the cellar of a country cottage. Clegg's material liberation leads, however, only to an intensification of his narcissistic sensibility, a psychological descent into self-fabricated fantasy with a fatally destructive impact on the innocent victim of his delusions, but strangely enough, the physical imprisonment of Miranda effects the beginnings of her psychic liberation. Though the money liberates Clegg's fantasies, that is, provides the material foundation for them, he is still a product of society. His free fantasies are determined in some way and his resentment is directed against Miranda. Her art, her beauty, Hampstead, etc. gives her the social privilege of relative liberation compared to the life of the unattractive clerk.

Fowles elucidates his purpose for writing The Collector in the preface to the revised edition of The Aristos:

My purpose in The Collector was to attempt to analyse, through a parable, some of the results of [the] confrontation [between the Few and the Many, between 'Them' and 'Us']. Clegg, the kidnapper, committed the evil; but I tried to show that his evil was largely, perhaps wholly, the result of a bad education, a mean environment, being orphaned: all factors over which he had no

control. In short, I tried to establish the virtual innocence of the Many. Miranda, the girl he imprisoned, had very little more control than Clegg over what she was. She had well-to-do parents, good educational opportunity, inherited aptitude and intelligence. That does not mean that she was perfect. Far from it, she was arrogant in her ideas, a prig, a liberal-humanist snob, like so many university students. Yet, if she had not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately needs.

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

...I maintain the importance of the polar view of life; that individuals, nations, ideas, are far more dependent for strength, energy, and fuel on their opposites, enemies, and contraries than surface appearances suggest. This is true too of the opposition between the Few and the Many, the evolutionally over- and under-privileged....It is inequality which is wrong with our world. Hazard, the great factor we shall never be able to control, will always infest life with inequality. And it seems madness that man himself should continue blindly to propagate this vicious virus in our world instead of trying to limit it.

(pp. 10-11)

The metaphors which The Collector provides for such a view of society are sufficiently evocative to be regarded at several levels. The distinction between appearance and reality, as suggested by the passage above, is important to Fowles's work. The "polar view" mentioned above suggests the basis for a confrontation approach to his fiction. Things are understood and defined in

terms of what they are not--the "other"--hence "power of understanding" depends upon an understanding of the polarity principle: power to understand the "other" versus power to control the "other". I hope to explore the meaning, form, and relevance of the power of understanding in terms of attaining existential freedom. Due to the nature of the two major characters, Clegg and Miranda, the misuse of power and the subsequent block to freedom which it causes are of equal importance in a discussion of this kind.

Power, as I have indicated in Chapter I, may be defined as the ability to do or the capacity to act; the ability to control others; authority; influence; physical force or energy; or a spirit or divinity.¹ In The Collector Fowles explores the kinds of power and methods by which the power effects the possessor's purposes. He examines the most elemental power situation--the relationship between individuals, more specifically, the power that one person can wield over another to violate and annihilate him and the power which the individual may draw upon in order to achieve a fullness of personality and humanity. The Collector sets up four basic power situations: physical power--Clegg's advantage over Miranda in that he is in control of her physical freedom; social power--class tension and confrontation, the influence and threat of one class upon the other; psychological power--that which both Clegg and Miranda alternately exert upon each other as well as that which the character in absentia, G.P., wields over Miranda; and finally mental power--the ability

¹ Webster's New World Dictionary, concise ed. (1964), s.v. "Power."

to grasp meaning, extend understanding to other members of the human race, and ultimately free oneself from the confines of the immediate limited situation and live with a view to the universal one. Miranda is equipped to achieve this freedom but under the circumstances she is only allowed a glimpse of the power which might have been hers.

Fowles's use of the confessional form in The Collector springs directly from the epistolary-psychological tradition that Samuel Richardson began. The concentration upon the inner lives and motivations of its characters suggests the metaphor of the mirror. There is irony in the fact that Miranda knows herself through the mirror of books and fictional characters--she is a product of literature and a collector of ideas.² Yet it is at the same time basic to Fowles's view of Romanticism and modern life. His literary technique, that which proceeds by the incremental accumulation of previous literary echoes, seems to represent his view of the nature of modern society and modern art, his art. It is as if man is fettered by all that has gone before and his only hope of liberation lies in a reappraisal of his artistic and cultural heritage. He must extract that which is truly of value and eliminate that which is not applicable to his life today. The only way in which man can hope to create original works of art is by creating new forms or means of representation. There is only so much which exists in the repertoire of human experience, most probably all of which has been recorded,

²Palmer, p. 16.

though not necessarily with the same degree of excellence. Fowles's attempt to deal with this problem is reflected in his metafiction, that is, in his overt use of literary artefacts to create a new literature, a welding of mystery and tradition in an effort to evoke existential awareness and the responsible use of the power such awareness brings.

The epigraph to The Collector, "que fors aus ne le sot riens nee," is from the forty-second verse of La Châtelaine de Verri, a poem written circa 1250. In translation it reads: "so nobody but themselves, knew about it". This refers directly to Clegg's success in keeping his secret--his fantasy made reality was not discovered by the real world. This echoes the calm untroubled surfaces of the Celtic romance which hide the turbulence below. The country cottage maintained an illusion of peace and quiet while its cellar held two people struggling with their souls. Fowles's fiction consistently reflects such loaded tableaux.

Though the characters of The Collector will be presented primarily as dichotomies, this is necessary in order to clearly delineate the various kinds of power dealt with in the novel. In general terms, it is more profitable to consider Clegg and Miranda as different aspects of the same individual; both are collectors, both depend upon each other in order to exercise their own type of power, both are products of society (though differing ones) and neither achieves any real personal freedom. Miranda is not merely the creative spirit confronting, Clegg, the Philistine, but rather the butterfly

looking into the mirror and seeing its former lost self, which it really hates. But this butterfly has no wings to escape its past and fails to grasp that other deceptive promise of truth--G.P. Clegg looks to Miranda as Miranda looks to G.P. for answers, for a better life. The problem is that they don't realize that the only way to achieve freedom is to quell the dissonance between their warring selves. Because Fowles does not present the reader with a hero or heroine, and treats each character with a certain degree of irony, this dual aspect of man--scientist/artist, consumer/creator--remains unreconciled and freedom remains as elusive as the butterfly. While the scientist/consumer desires a physical power, a convenience, the artist/creator yearns for a less practical, more abstract power over the self.

In The Collector, the theme of power is quickly established as Frederick Clegg states that he "used to look down over the road" (*Italics mine.*)³ in the hope of catching a glimpse of Miranda. Thus the reader notes that Clegg fantasizes about himself in a position of control, that of occupying a vantage point with respect to Miranda--though the role is primarily an observational one, when in reality the social position of both characters is reversed.

Fred Clegg collects butterflies. When a stroke of luck (winning the football pool) provides him with the means to add a human butterfly to his collection, in the form of Miranda

³ John Fowles, The Collector (London: Pan Books, 1963), p. 1. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

Grey, he cannot resist the temptation:

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

(pp. 5-6)

Clegg prefers to think of himself as a "connoisseur" rather than what he is: a perfectly ordinary clerk. In the same way he considers many things common, vulgar, or "nasty", in an effort to raise himself above the general level of humanity. Thus he aspires to improve his social position and reject the class into which he was born. Ironically, things which he considers nasty (like bugs) are those which hold some attraction for him. He is fooled by outward appearances of things and is unable to appreciate their true worth.

Just as he would go off with his net and chloroform bottle to the fields in search of rare lepidopteras, he stalks Miranda with the same bottle. The underground chamber he has prepared for his 'guest' becomes her net. She is like the butterflies he captures and gazes upon simply for the pleasure of possession. All that he does with his thorough cunning is to preserve external beauty, to keep it in stasis (just as the rigid class system of society is also a static kind of classification). This is in direct contradiction to the essence of a butterfly. Its beauty consists of movement, transience, and freedom. Its fascination lies in the metamorphosis of what is essentially a worm to the beautiful creature which emerges in the final stage of the life cycle of this biological organism.

The tragedy of Frederick Clegg is that his growth is arrested at the initial worm-like stage; he never attains anything more than a semblance of humanity. Furthermore, he is incapable of producing life (his impotence) and therefore exercises his power by causing the death of his butterflies and Miranda. For him there is no essential difference.

The beauty of life confuses and causes resentment in Clegg just as it does with Caliban and Iago. The only response he is capable of in the face of such beauty is withdrawal and destruction of the offending freedom. He cannot respond to anything human. Miranda is aware of this as she records in her diary:

I could scream abuse at him all day long; he wouldn't mind at all. It's me he wants, my look, my outside: ~~not my emotions or my mind my soul or even my body.~~ Not anything human. He's a collector. That's the great dead thing in him.

(pp. 171-72)

Even Clegg himself confirms Miranda's assessment:

Of course, she made me feel all clumsy and awkward. I had the same feeling I did when I watched an imago emerge, and then have to kill it. I mean, the beauty confuses you, you don't know what you want to do anymore, what you should do.

(p. 87)

What is implied here is the lack of choice that Clegg feels in dealing the death blow, or in Miranda's case, letting her die of pneumonia--by asphyxiation, in the same manner as the butterflies. His madness denies him the power of insight and pleasure of experience: all that he is blessed with is the ability to derive enjoyment from the preservation and observation of dead things. The above quotation also contains a

relevant pun on the word "imago". Its literal meaning, insect, is appropriate to the context, but the alternative meaning, that of an idealized portrait of a loved one from childhood, refers to Clegg's inability to see Miranda for what she really is, but instead, must idealize her right out of existence. He is only capable of dealing with static things; the mutability of reality is beyond his scope. Clegg's other passion (if such a word may be used to describe such a passionless creature) is photography, in particular, pornographic photography. Once again, this hobby allows him to capture life and freeze it. Since he is incapable of any natural sexual involvement with Miranda he rapes her with his camera.⁴ For Clegg, this is the ultimate satisfaction in his non-relationship with Miranda. It is, however, only by virtue of his position of physical power that he is able to do this, that is, chloroform Miranda and tie her to the bed--brute force prevails. After he has developed the photographs he comments: "The best ones were with her face cut off," (p. 122). This indicates his inability to cope with even the frozen humanity of a picture. It is as if he has no inclusive view of man. Most pictures he liked best were those of disconnected arms, legs, and torsos. He was able to deal with anatomized life but not the whole. In Fowles's view of society, men have been reduced to seeing surfaces only--beauty, truth, ideas--hence, the camera as rapist is symptomatic of society and its reductiveness of values.

Surprisingly, Clegg shows a limited awareness of his misuse of power: "Power corrupts, a teacher I had always said.

⁴Similarly, the photographer "takes" his models in Antonioni's Blow-Up. (Palmer, p. 41.)

And Money is Power," (p. 23). He unquestioningly accepted the power which fortune put in his path but at the same time did not assume the responsibility to others that this power implied. Clegg was not an active man. The fact that he cannot enter into any meaningful relationship with another person, that he cannot give of himself supports this assumption. He is obsessed with possession and would rather let Miranda die and possess her corpse than risk her escape and subsequent freedom by calling a doctor.

Despite the fact that Clegg does control Miranda's freedom, throughout the book there is evidence which indicates that he needs to regard the relationship as one in which he exercises the power even though it is only in a one dimensional physical sense. Prior to the dream he has of smothering Miranda with a pillow he says, "I mean I thought I had some sort of power over her, she would do what I wanted," (p. 83). Clegg's consciousness of his power extends to speculation of Miranda's fate had she been the victim of someone else. "It is an effort, I said, sometimes. I didn't like to boast, but I meant her to think for a moment of what other men might have done, if they'd had her in their power," (p. 66). He likes to see himself in the benevolent role and yearns for her to feel grateful for any sexual restraint that he exerts on her behalf. But even this sense of chivalry that Clegg wants to feel is not genuine as the reader comes to know that there is no freedom of choice involved: Clegg could not violate Miranda even if he so desired. Clegg may be fooling Miranda but he is also fooling himself. He

constantly buys her gifts and secretly hopes that she will ask for something expensive so that she will feel ingratiated to him. It is important to remember, however, that in a material sense Clegg is quite generous--he would have liked to buy his uncle the best fishing rods if he were still living and he is financially generous to his aunt and cousin with his football pool money. But this is as far as he can go. Clegg is incapable of giving of himself--no warmth or sensitivity ever becomes a true facet of his personality. Thus his material generosity becomes a substitute for true giving; most of Clegg's attempts at living are merely artificial and yield him no true satisfaction.

Clegg's account of what happens is presented in very prosaic terms, and is loaded with clichés. His lack of originality in the use of language is a reflection of his social status and the literal chronology with which he tells of the events reveals the methodical plodding bent of his mind. What is fascinating about Clegg is his grotesque sense of imagination. It exists in a realm which is totally divorced from the artistic.

Fred's constant reference to a dream world indicates that he is not in touch with reality. It is only in his dreams that he is able to become the master of the situation. Once he acquires the power (money) to make his dreams reality he does not actively seize the opportunity but rather passively lets the dreams assert themselves. In the real world (working at the Annexe) Frederick Clegg is a nobody. After he has captured Miranda and everyone is searching for her he feels differently: "I sat in the van on

the road verge on the way back and read all the papers said. It gave me a feeling of power, don't know why. All those people searching and me knowing the answer," (p. 44). Yet Clegg possesses no real knowledge. He cannot communicate with Miranda nor can he perceive that the only truly generous and humane act would be for him to release her. The portrait of Clegg that Fowles draws for the reader is one of dehumanization-- despite his repeated assertions that he does have feelings but doesn't know how to express them there is no real evidence to that effect. Clegg is best described in negative terms.

Fred's consciousness of power is further reinforced when he tries to make Miranda believe that he is not totally responsible for kidnapping her: "There's other things I can't tell you. I'm in his power," (p. 34). Thus he equates mystery and power. Even the illusion of power suffices to make him happy-- when Miranda plays at being his Oriental slave he laughs and is pleased.

"The power of women! I've never felt so full of mysterious power. Men are a joke," says Miranda, (p. 258). It is indeed the mystery (attraction) of Miranda that causes Fred to notice her in the first place. It is this same mystery which leads to his obsessive idea of possessing her and subsequently to the kidnapping and his power over her. But finally it is Miranda's attempt to pierce the mystery of Fred and of herself which is of most significance. In this sense then, power and mystery appear to be interdependent elements.

Fred tells Miranda that his name is Ferdinand, thus evoking for the reader the Ferdinand of Shakespeare's The Tempest. Mir-

anda reacts by calling him Caliban--the sub-human slave of Prospero. But there is no Ariel or Prospero in her isolated island cellar who will save her from this creature. The absence of an Ariel or Prospero indicates the importance Fowles places upon isolation. Only the two seemingly opposite personalities will do battle in this island prison. Without a Prospero figure present, power without responsibility will prevail. Like Caliban, who attempts to rape Miranda and would have but for Prospero's intervention, according to Miranda, Clegg breaks "every decent thing that's ever happened," (p. 118) between his sex and hers. Fowles says in his "Notes on Writing a Novel," "I see man as a kind of artifice, and woman as a kind of reality. The one is cold idea, the other is warm fact."⁵ There is perhaps no apter description of Frederick Clegg; his cold idea is inspired by his compulsion to possess, to exercise fruitless power bereft of any human responsibility. This, in effect, makes him a madman and Miranda his madness. Clegg is Fowles's personification of madness. His power to wait, his patience, his singleminded tenacity, his total lack of guilt for Miranda's death, his inability to grasp the folly of his dream, his actions themselves, all point to madness. References to disease, associated with Clegg and appearing throughout The Collector, also serve to support this assumption. His is an unchecked, quiet, controlled, destructive, and efficacious madness. It is the madness of power. The final scene where Clegg

⁵ Fowles, "Notes on Writing a Novel," p. 94.

contemplates his next victim (Marian, another "M") so coolly, seems to bring home the point most effectively. At the beginning of the book Clegg says that he had considered collecting moths--the final page confirms his intention. Perhaps unwittingly he had already captured one, that is, if Fowles intended the reader to take Miranda's name, Grey (the Grey Moth), ironically. Nevertheless, Clegg's aspirations are not as high as they had once been but neither is his desire for power slaked.

Just as one may regard Miranda as the beautiful innocent maiden of The Tempest so may one question the authenticity of these traits in a modern young woman of the '60's. There is something artificial in the naming of a daughter Miranda in the first place. It is too self-consciously literary, certainly not a name given in innocence. Such a name is also perfectly in keeping with the neighbourhood from which Miranda originates. Hampstead itself is associated with art by virtue of the fact that the Romantic poet, Keats, lived here due to his tuberculosis. This double connotation of cultural pretension points to the irony with which Fowles is treating his would-be heroine. Miranda's romantic outlook cannot differentiate between that which is real and that which is illusion (literary artifact). The fact that she likes to see herself as Emma Woodhouse lends evidence to such a view. Thus Fowles has created a character trapped within her own misconceptions as well as those of another, Clegg. She does, however, partially discard these before her untimely death.

One of the first things that Miranda writes in her diary

is: "Power. It's become so real. I know the H-bomb is wrong. But being weak seems wrong now too," (p. 126). She later admits that, "His one superiority is his ability to keep me here. That's the only power he has," (p. 223). In every other way the power is hers: her mystery (for him), her beauty (for him), her knowledge, her intelligence, her social status, and most of all her power to grow in understanding. Clegg is in awe of all these powers except the last because he cannot even conceive of such a power. Despite her confinement in the cellar Miranda does attain a certain degree of mental liberation. It is as if this lack of physical freedom acts as a catalyst to the inner exploration of her potential freedom of mind. In mythological terms this experience may be likened to the descent into the underworld from which the protagonist returns with greater knowledge of the meaning of life. But Miranda's power falls short of her desire--she cannot control Clegg to the extent of convincing him to liberate her-- but she can begin to liberate her own psyche. It is unfortunate that she does not appreciate the full meaning and importance of such a feat. Physical freedom should be man's birthright, mental freedom his quest.

Miranda mourns the isolation of man, "we're all in aeroplanes," (p. 135), yet she refuses to come out of her aeroplane and make a concerted effort to understand Clegg. But then again, she is a neophyte, she may have insight but is still learning-- she is not yet in a position to fruitfully exercise her new-found knowledge. Indeed, her inadvertent insight is often a product of her own isolation.

It is important that Miranda is an aspiring artist, for as Fowles explains in The Aristos, the phenomena of power and art may be seen as a reaction to the nemo (See Chapter I, p. 11). In The Collector the life-art theme is overt, and is intrinsically welded to the theme of power. It is embedded in Fowles's characterization. Miranda is an embryonic artist, an emerging butterfly, while Clegg is anti-artistic and subconsciously intent upon perverting the art and beauty of life. Early on in her captivity Miranda asks Clegg:

"Do you know anything about art?"

Nothing you'd call knowledge.

"I knew you didn't. You wouldn't imprison an innocent person if you did."

I don't see the connection...I'm an entomologist. I collect butterflies.

"Of course....Now you've collected me."

(p. 45)

In this brief dialogue Miranda implies that art offers to all men an emotional, intuitive knowledge of man's moral responsibilities to his fellow men. Art represents justice for the innocent and the recognition of every man's right to be free. Unfortunately, the only kind of knowledge that Clegg respects is scientific, objective knowledge; knowledge that has been deadened by its certainty, which has but one static meaning. He must dissect the meaning out of life. An entomologist also studies the social life of insects--this Clegg cannot do, thus his limitations within his own particular sphere of expertise are subtly established. His perspective is always incomplete. Clegg's emphasis upon classification as illustrated by his butterfly collection is rejected by Miranda. What is implicit in the denunciation of

such a means to understanding is that classification erases mystery and destroys curiosity, both of which encourage the individual to experience life. Miranda treasures life; Clegg reveres stasis. Fowles dramatizes the conflict between art and science and possibly the impetus that each derives from the other in the intellectual impasse that develops between Clegg and Miranda.

Miranda is a budding artist, opening herself to art and life and just learning of passion and self-expression and freedom, when she is netted by the collector-photographer, Clegg, a closed being unable to feel, neurotically self-conscious yet terrified of self-definition or self-expression.⁶ Thus one of the basic tensions in the novel is that of the life force confronting the death force. Miranda screams in frustration:

Do you know that every great thing in the history of art and every beautiful thing in life is actually what you call nasty or has been caused by feelings that you would call nasty? By passion, by love, by hatred, by truth... Why do you take all the life out of life? Why do you kill all the beauty? (pp. 81-82)

The irony lies in the fact that Miranda's artistic metaphors have no meaning for Clegg. Their power to communicate (and possibly save her life) is lost because she does not realize that she is using the wrong medium in her verbal interchange with Clegg. Miranda is a kind of pseudo-version of the life force-- if she were real in this regard perhaps she would have lived. Because of her lack of experience, Miranda's life imitates art, she herself is a collector, albeit a collector of

⁶Palmer, p. 32.

ideas. For Fowles, it seems that we are all at least partially collectors of one sort or another.

Clegg's power enables him to exercise his idea of freedom, that is, pack his aunt and cousin off to Australia so that he is free to perpetrate his desire--possess Miranda. It is interesting to consider the contrasting values and essences of the two characters. Clegg is attracted by Miranda's beauty. Fowles could also be suggesting that people like Clegg want to acquire the character traits of people like Miranda but if biologically ill-equipped all they can do is simulate the appearance of such traits. Though Clegg wishes to be like Miranda he is too near-sighted to recognize her imperfection. Miranda may be as much a frivolous butterfly as Clegg is a nasty bug. All semblance of authenticity is lost and the imitator is forever condemned to, ~~an even less satisfying version of his former self.~~ Clegg can stare at pictures in art galleries for hours on end but that does not make him a connoisseur. Miranda can parrot G.P.'s ideas for people like Clegg and try to pass them off as her own but until she is able to actually live them the theoretical freedom of spirit which they represent remains elusive.

Fowles's use of light imagery in The Collector is extensive. Because Miranda is a young artist she is particularly sensitive to light and the rendition of true colour. Captivity in an underground room devoid of natural light is one of the deprivations she feels most keenly. She associates light with freedom and rightly so. Traditional symbolism also equates light with truth. Just as natural (true) light enables Miranda to paint

the truth, an accurate representation of reality through the medium of paint and canvas, so does traditional symbolism align the light of day with knowledge, understanding, and penetration to the truth. Except for the occasional glimpses of light through a crack in the door, a rare trip to the ground level of the house, or a retreat into memory before the days of her captivity, Miranda's only light is artificial. The microcosm that Clegg has created for her is an unnatural one: "It lies." His world is an attempt to deny reality. Miranda's refusal to accept this false light and all that it represents (compromise) places her beyond Clegg's grasp in any but the physical sense. As Miranda passes beyond the boundaries of despair she describes God as "a great loathsome spider in the darkness," (p. 264). It is as if she identifies Him with Clegg, "God is impotent. He can't love us. He hates us because he can't love us," (p. 264). She broods on this subject in the following manner:

It's as if the lights have fused. I'm here in the black truth....This pain, this terrible seeing through that is in me now. It wasn't necessary. It is all pain, and it buys nothing. Gives birth to nothing. All in vain. All wasted. The older the world becomes, the more obvious it is. The bomb and the tortures in Algeria and the starving babies in the Congo. It gets bigger and darker...I see but I can't feel.

(pp. 264-65)

Caliban's prison breeds dark, despairing thoughts. If God is mystery Miranda thinks she has solved it; if He is power she would like to deny it, but is unable to do so as her final words on the topic attest: "if there is a God,..." (p. 265).

Seemingly opposite concepts feed and give meaning to each

other. Thus the truth of darkness and the truth of light may merely be different ways of perceiving the same essence. Once again Fowles presents the reader with the theme of confrontation and raises another paradoxical question: Is the absence of God from the world evidence of his existence? The answer to this question would solve the ultimate mystery. Fowles refuses to do this; he seems to prefer to open up the questions and leave the answers to the reader, or maybe more accurately, assert that there are no unqualified answers. In some ways The Collector provides a somewhat static dissection of the problem. Man must descend from his ivory tower and delve into the secrets of the "ebony" tower, search for relevance amidst the darkness. A rapprochement between the two must be reached if mankind is ever to approach the truth.

Though most of Miranda's ideas are borrowed from her mentor, George Paston, (a Prospero figure, though a somewhat mutilated one) she seeks to re-evaluate what he has said and make it her own: "I remember....G.P. saying that collectors are the worst animals of all. They're anti-life, anti-art, anti-everything," (p. 132). "Everything free and decent in life is being locked away in filthy little cellars by beastly people who don't care," (p. 143). As Miranda quotes G.P. when he talks of the "hateful tyranny of weak people," we are faced with a central paradox: Clegg is weak yet he is in a position to tyrannize Miranda who is stronger in character, that is, exhibits more positive attributes. Fowles seems to be warning us of the horror which results from the misuse of power, power without responsibility. This po-

tential exists in every position of authority. The question still remains unanswered--does power over anything or anyone except the self transform the powerful individual into a tyrant?

Clegg is an extreme representation of the modern cultural diseases of conformity and exclusiveness, which are always a threat to those who try to reach the limits of the art of life. Miranda is a less extreme example of the same thing. But Miranda learns from Clegg. Whether she recognizes herself in him is debatable, but at least she determines never to become like him, thus subconsciously changing some of her own similar attributes. She formulates her own definition of life and contemplates her own humanity. Though her efforts to teach Clegg fail they do help her to come to terms with herself. One thing which she does learn as a result of her effort to escape is that: "Violence and force are wrong. If I use violence I descend to his level. It means that I have no real belief in the power of reason, and sympathy and humanity," (*Italics mine.*) (p. 238). Despite having reached this point of view, in experiments with and consideration of various kinds of power, Miranda underestimates the power of understanding others: "I often feel that with him-- a horrid little cringing good nature dominated by a mean bad one," (p. 193). She is close to an understanding of Clegg but stops too soon; she doesn't give him a tangible reason for changing, such as the promise of her love, and therefore fails to develop the good which might surface if nurtured in Clegg. Expediency is not considered a virtue but in this case it might indeed have effected the liberation of both Miranda and Clegg.

By realizing that her captor dehumanizes life by fragmenting and denying it its freedom to be, Miranda resolves to preserve the vision of art as a life-giving force. In all the fullness that is denied her Miranda longs to possess the promise of life:

It made me think of Collioure last summer. The day we went, all four of us with the French students. Up through the ilexes to the tower. The ilexes. An absolutely new colour, amazing chestnut, rufous, burning, bleeding, where they had cut away the cork. The cicadas. The wild azure sea through the stems and the heat and the smell of everything burnt in it. Piers and I and everyone except Minny got a bit tipsy. Sleeping in the shade, looking up, staring through the leaves at the cobalt blue sky, thinking how impossible things were to paint. How can some blue pigment ever seem the living blue light of the sky? I suddenly felt I didn't want to paint, painting was just showing off. The thing was to experience and experience for evermore.

(p. 210)

At the tower, again symbolic of a vantage point, Miranda seems to have gained some insight but not a complete one by any means. She appears to have reached a new appreciation of the beauty of nature and the value of participating in life not merely reading about it. She has not, however, been able to reconcile the relationship between art and life. Her view is a mutually exclusive one, because she recognizes the artifice of art she feels she must reject it as inauthentic, when what really is important is not art versus life but the fusion of art and life.

In a last desperate effort Miranda attempts to act, to emit power, gain control of Clegg and thereby win her freedom. She decides to seduce Clegg, "like a really good sacrifice at chess [because] you can't very well imprison someone who's given herself to you," (p. 247). Strangely enough, Miranda's rea-

soning at this point resembles the analytical bent in Clegg; perhaps this is why she fails--she has not been true to herself.

But Miranda is wrong. She cannot exert power over Clegg because she has not made any real effort to bridge the gap between them, and therefore they do not exist on the same plane. He cannot even operate sexually and is effectively a eunuch. He, therefore, confuses love with power over another by physical captivity. As Miranda puts it, "What you love is your own love. It's not love but selfishness. It's not me you think of but what you feel about me," (pp. 252-53). Accordingly Miranda dies, "power eats or is eaten."⁷ Miranda's only freedom is an intangible one--the freedom of the mind.

Miranda condemns traditional education when she says: "People who teach you cram old ideas, old views, old ways, into you. Like covering plants with layer after layer of old earth; it's no wonder the poor things so rarely come up fresh and green," (p. 171). This apparent contradiction of the "knowledge is power" motif is misleading. What she really seems to be saying is that the aim of education should be to free the young for experience and critical evaluation of that which they experience. Help them to sift through the old ideas and extract what is of intrinsic worth and that which is applicable; enable them to discard what remains. In this way the student will come to know himself and his world. This is the kind of knowledge which is power. The excessive and inevitable self-consciousness of our culture is part of the problem of the self, that is, what we "collect" (our accumulated cultural baggage) are ideas and models, abstractions

⁷ Laughlin, p. 71.

of the self.

In terms of temporal confrontation, Miranda comes to see that time in our modern world, is a relative thing, distinguishable by diurnal physical changes as well as variations in one's environment. In her situation, however, as a prisoner of Fred Clegg, the passage of time causes one day to be melted into another until it almost loses all meaning for her. Not until she admits that her days may be numbered does she begin to place a greater value on the time which she has left and consider how very precious the human "lifetime" really is. Likewise, the spatial confrontation which Miranda undergoes causes her to re-evaluate her former position in the world. Although she is never reconciled to her limited basement quarters, one believes that if she had lived she would have successfully accommodated herself to the environment in which she was to exist.

The "almost" dual ending of The Collector anticipates the more ambiguous conclusions of The French Lieutenant's Woman and The Magus. After Miranda's death Clegg contemplates suicide, in keeping with his comprehension of Romeo and Juliet, but later decides against it and merrily readies the crypt for his next 'guest'. Freedom implies rejection of the past, while all that Clegg can do is cling.

Another aspect of power which is yet to be considered is the social one. Miranda echoes G.P. when she says that the ordinary man is the curse of civilization. It seems to be the stultifying lack of imagination and limited vision which is the real curse. The question to be asked is: Is it the fault of the ordinary man? This question can only be answered in the negative and

be accounted for by hazard. Despite the myth of equality of opportunity, social class is an inherited boon or stigma. Miranda realizes this as she records these words in her diary:

I know he's a victim of a miserable non-conformist suburban world and a miserable social class, the horrid timid copycatting genteel in-between class. It makes me sick, the blindness, deafness, out-of-dateness, stodginess, and, yes, sheer jealous malice of the great bulk of England.

(p. 172)

Miranda comes to understand that "you have to face up to England and the apathy of the environment and the great deadweight of the Calibanity of England," (p. 173). What she fails to notice is that she also belongs to the "timid, copycatting class." Her saving grace is that she possesses the ability and the will to change. What is frightening is the potential power of the Many by sheer virtue⁸ of their great numbers. When Miranda recognizes the linked destiny of all social classes she longs to join the band of the Few who try to be human and intelligent and stand against the soulless onrush of the New People.

One of the stories, "Poor Koko," in Fowles's recently published collection of short stories, The Ebony Tower, may help to further explain the themes of social confrontation and social power in The Collector. The sin of the Few does not lie simply in the fact that they are middle class, intellectual, or appear to be comfortably well-off, but that they "are guilty of a deafness."⁸ Miranda is guilty of deafness--she doesn't understand Clegg's need for acceptance on his own terms--she wants to understand him but cannot really sympathize with his inadequacies, his limitations.

⁸ John Fowles, The Ebony Tower, p. 186.

She has many ideas for the worthwhile use of his football fortune, wants to improve himself, but she never lets him feel that she cares. Fowles is saying that we must care or we will be destroyed--"The Rape of Intelligence. By the moneyed masses," (p. 260). The Few are resented because they are the keepers of a secret which the Many desperately want to possess. This secret is that the Few live by words. They live in a secret introverted society which seems to shout, "Closed shop! Select club!" Though Clegg talks about Miranda's apparent classlessness, "I can't say what was special in her voice. Of course it was very educated but it wasn't la-di-da, it wasn't slimy, she didn't beg the cigarettes or demand them, she just asked for them in an easy way and you didn't have any class feeling," (p. 16) though he recognizes later that "there was always class between us," (p. 42). This refusal to hand down (or inability to do so) the magic (secret code; special language understood only by the Few) induces feelings of destruction in the Many. It is not unusual for people to envy, fear and at the same time want to destroy what they do not understand. It leads to an unconscious incoherence in their views and consequently to a word-deed paradox: Clegg chats civilly with Miranda and even tells her that he loves her while all the time he is unconsciously involved in the process of destroying her. His gesture becomes a substitute for an effective tool of communication such as that embodied in the meaningful use of language or creation of an artefact. Since gesture is a crude attempt at communication (language), in this case the symbolism implies that the match between the Few and the Many is about to begin unless

the secret is shared. This can only come about through education. The alternative is revolution, brute force, exercise of physical power.

The question that The Collector raises is that of futility. If the ending of the novel is to be understood as a symbol of triumph for the New People, then the stance of the Few is futile, and Fowles's view is indeed pessimistic. The tragedy of The Collector lies in the inability of creative, thoughtful, potentially fruitful power to overcome that which is physical, misguided, and misused. On the one hand it is an exposé of the triumph of negative power--power devoid of responsibility. Clegg survives; Miranda dies. That which is mysterious and full of wonder (meaning of the name Miranda), all those things which compel men to explore life, is crushed beneath the impotent spirit of mediocrity. But a shred of hope remains: Miranda's burgeoning awareness may be regarded as the first step in a process which may eventually infiltrate the ranks of the Many and awaken them to responsible action. An ontological interpretation of The Collector seems to be the most satisfactory one. It is Miranda's becoming rather than Clegg's being that matters. She is a precursor to Charles Smithson of The French Lieutenant's Woman and Nicholas Urfe of The Magus who do achieve some degree of existential freedom. The social hierarchy must be destroyed before the individual is free to exercise his total humanity--he must be removed from his Chinese box. Thus Clegg is an innocent victim of social power just as Miranda is a victim of his misuse of power.

CHAPTER III

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN: TEMPORAL CONFRONTATION

The Victorian Age is not merely history, it invades our contemporary reality, as John Fowles's third novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman,¹ so deftly indicates. The confrontation of worlds seems to be an explicit means of probing the nature of Fowles's work. He confronts the reader with the world of Queen Victoria, subtly shifts one's consciousness to its similarities, ironically enough, with the modern age, and points to the degree to which society has evolved since Darwin first put forward his idea of biological evolution.

The French Lieutenant's Woman is interesting both as an historical novel and as an experimental one. This chapter will be primarily concerned with content rather than form; principally in the sense that Fowles treats the subjects of power and freedom. Fowles himself regards The French Lieutenant's Woman as an exper-

¹ Because The French Lieutenant's Woman is the most recently published of Fowles's three novels, one might logically expect it to be treated last in a thesis such as this. In terms of the theme of confrontation: social, temporal, and spatial, however, The French Lieutenant's Woman focuses on the second of these three aspects, and although stylistically it is probably the most highly evolved of Fowles's works it does not provide such a comprehensive survey of his ideas as The Magus (actually written first and published second), which, for this reason, I shall discuss in Chapter IV.

iment in technique. It would, however, be wrong to dismiss the novel merely on these grounds. His narrative is rich in ideas and teeming with provocation. In an age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes, Fowles has opted for a voyage backward in time and adoption of a characteristically "demodernized" novel form. His purpose in doing so appears to lie in a wish to expunge the notion of absurdity from his fictional world and that of actual existence, and to replace it with the notion of continuing evolution towards personal freedom. Though the language of The French Lieutenant's Woman is not couched in existential terms one can't help but recognize their importance. In order to demonstrate the process by which mankind evolves Fowles employs such metaphors as mirror, mask, fossil, collecting, and tunnel. Each of these key words will be explored in an effort to shed light upon the existential conclusion of the novel. A detailed consideration of power play and a probing of the concept of time as used in the novel will be treated in hope of attaining a clearer view of Fowles's purpose in The French Lieutenant's Woman.

The central plot of The French Lieutenant's Woman can easily be summarized: Sarah Woodruff is the 'woman' of the title, a governess in her middle twenties who has been jilted by her lover, the lieutenant, and who evokes the curiosity, pity, and, eventually, the love of Charles Smithson. His gradually awakening passion carries him away from the security of his engagement to Ernestina, heiress to a fortune founded on an expanding London store, and alienates him from the comfortable ease of his intelligently cultured existence. The extent of his fall is marked by a horrific

episode in which Ernestina's father compels him to sign a form of affidavit that by his behaviour he has "forever forfeited the right to be considered a gentleman."² As Charles's degradation commences, so Sarah, for whose sake he has ruined himself, disappears. In one of his most interesting innovations Fowles has provided the reader with three different endings; the first of these preserves Charles's engagement and security at Sarah's expense, but later the alternatives are less easily understood and must depend largely on our 'reading' of Sarah.³

The enigraph to The French Lieutenant's Woman is a quotation from Karl Marx: "Every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself." Thus Fowles sets the tone for the message of his novel--a duly considered, almost scientifically borne out belief in the necessity and desirability of freedom. Sarah's emancipation is not merely a pose but something which she lives. Charles's flirtation with such a person proves to be more than a flirtation with this Marxist tenet. At the end of the novel he is actually embedded in the painful experience of making these words a reality, he is beginning to admit to himself that a certain degree of suffering, loss, and denial is the price one must pay for one's freedom, and more importantly, he acknowledges that this price is not too high. Charles has suffered for two years while the search has been going on for Sarah. Through this suffering he has been distanced from the catalyst, Sarah, and though he wishes to be reunited with

² John Fowles, The French Lieutenant's Woman (Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1969), p. 324. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

³ Michael Tatham, "Two Novels: Notes on the Work of John Fowles," New Blackfriars 5 (Sept. 1971): 406.

her, when the ultimate confrontation occurs, he does not question her reasons for wanting to remain free herself, rather, he seems to understand and respect her stand. One feels that he may even repeat them some day himself, under different circumstances. Though the disappointment is painful, and the loss, at this point in time, great, Charles gains stature by virtue of his ability to understand and accept. He has attained his own power of selfhood by being released from his obsession with Sarah and by recognizing the validity of her assertions.

Charles's emancipation did not occur overnight; it was instead, a slow evolutionary process, a peeling away of masks and constant soul-searching self examination in mirrors. The first detailed description of Charles is given as he stares at himself in the mirror. Apart from details about his life situation we learn that:

His thoughts were too vague to be described. But they comprehended mysterious elements; a sentiment of obscure defeat not in any way related to the incident at the Cobb, but to certain trivial things he had said at Aunt Tranter's lunch, to certain characteristic evasions he had made; to whether his interest in paleontology was a sufficient use for his natural abilities; to whether Ernestina would ever really understand him as well as he understood her; to a general sentiment of dislocated purpose originating perhaps in no more-- as he finally concluded-- than the threat of a long and now wet afternoon to pass.

(p. 15)

This passage establishes the fact that Charles does not merely use a mirror to examine himself physically but rather searches for the meaning of his life in the depths of the mirror. We note here his preoccupation with the "mysterious elements" and "a general sentiment of dislocated purpose." It is an intima-

tion of these things not any clearly defined sense of their origin or future significance in his life that he detects. Here also is a hint of slight ennui with regard to Ernestina--so that when he does finally abandon her in favour of Sarah his action is credible. Thus the mirror becomes a metaphor for psychological reflection, which is to be carried through the remainder of the novel.

Fowles, shortly hereafter draws the reader's attention to several traits which Charles possesses: his English soul which was one part irony to one part convention, his laziness, and his ambitions. "Charles set his sights high. Intelligent idlers always have, in order to justify their idleness to their intelligence. He had, in short, all the Byronic ennui with neither of the Byronic outlets: genius and adultery," (p. 19). It is not difficult to deduce that Charles is not particularly happy or satisfied in his present circumstances. Fowles has created a character on the brink of boredom; he need only supply the right diversion and a change will occur in Charles's perception of human relationships.

The mirror represents Charles's journey into self. He is always looking in mirrors, as if trying to penetrate his own self-deceit by looking himself in the eye. In Fowles's world, when a character looks at himself in the mirror, the seen image forces self-analysis. Self-realization in his fiction becomes a process of projection of the image of the external self outward (into a mirror, a godgame, or a love affair with a mysterious woman), and then the truth-telling reflection of that superficial image

backward upon the real self that the character has never known or has always avoided.⁴

Early in the novel, Charles carries on puzzled and insecure dialogues with himself via the mirror. Playfully, he can make faces at himself, "put a decade on his face: all gravity, the solemn young paterfamilias" or indulge in "affectionate contemplation of his features," but eventually he begins seeing reality in the mirror image: "Upon examination, it was a faintly foolish face.... Too innocent a face, when it was stripped of its formal outdoor mask." At this early stage of what will be a continuing and intense process of self examination, Charles avoids the shallowness reflected in his shaving mirror. He proceeds "to cover the ambiguous face in lather," (p. 38), unable yet to confront the fact of his own superficiality.

Later in the novel, he can no longer deny himself by simply smothering his face in lather. He sees that his mirror image is just as one dimensional as he is, a smooth, superficial reflection of the conventionality, class prejudice, and affection of the Victorian Age; man can so easily become an image.⁵

After his initial realization about men and their images, Charles begins to feel more comfortable with himself:

He still felt as he had told Sarah, a stranger to himself; but now it was with a kind of awed pleasure that he stared at his face in the mirror. He felt a great courage in himself, both present and future--and a uniqueness, a having done something, unparalleled. And

⁴ Palmer, p. 98.

⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

he had his wish: he was off on a journey again, a journey made doubly delicious by its promised companion.

(p. 291)

Having committed himself to Sarah, Charles can finally look himself in the eye, and he is ready to begin the journey through the looking glass into the inner self. In Charles's case that self has been so long repressed by the "catonia of convention" (p. 300), that he is indeed a stranger to himself. Having committed a major Victorian crime, a sexual sin, Charles stands on the threshold of the journey into the inner self, into the abstract loneliness of selfhood. Unfortunately and ironically, he must embark without his "promised companion" Sarah, who disappears into the depths of London.

But whether alone or with Sarah, Charles's most significant revelation is that the journey into self must be undertaken. When he catches "sight of himself in a mirror" he sees that "the man in the mirror, Charles in another world, seemed the true self" and the smug English gentleman outside the mirror had always been simply "an imposter, an observed other," (p. 299). Charles Smithson sees his potential future self, an existential self undistorted by social convention or hypocritical masks, coming toward him in the mirror. He journeys to meet that beckoning "true self".⁶

Another motif which recurs throughout the novel is that of the fossil. Charles is a paleontologist, one who studies the impressions of organisms long dead. He himself approximates a fossil until he meets Sarah--the antithesis of science--mystery.

⁶ Ibid., p. 103.

Those epigraphs which deal with social and biological evolution help to define the imagistic motif of fossils. It appears to be no accident that Charles Smithson is given the same first name as Darwin and that both Smithson and Darwin had a general not a specialized interest in biology. Smithson called himself a Darwinist but was secretly reassured by the "Linnaean obsession with classifying and naming, with fossilizing the existent" that is, with "orderliness in existence." "He knew that nulla species nova was nonsense," (p. 45) yet was ambivalent in his attitude toward eternal change.

Charles's world at the beginning of the novel is safely fossilized--classified, unchanging, in keeping with the past: he is to inherit his uncle's money, marry Ernestina, and live happily ever after. Such a future, however, because it is so fixed is also dead. Because Charles thought that he belonged to a species which was in no danger of extinction he did not take into account the precariousness of his existence. His life, like his tests or calcified sea urchins, was a dry fragile entity, and little did he think that his life would crumble as easily between his fingers as one of his tests might do. But a life can be rebuilt--and so it was with Charles.

Charles is a collector of sorts, collecting echinoderms along the Undercliff. He decides to give one of his specimens to Ernestina, knowing full well it would come back to him when they married. When Sarah presents him with the tests he wants to pay for them but they are given freely, thus indicating the difference in their attitudes to giving. This is the beginning of a relationship which is to end in Charles's realization that he

cannot collect Sarah as he does his tests. A psychoanalytic interpretation of Sarah's gift of tests to Charles would see the tests as symbolic of testes, by virtue of phonetic similarity, number, suggestion of shape, and context. As perceptive a novelist as John Fowles most certainly is aware of the symbolism implicit here. It is as if only Sarah can make Charles a "man" and lead him to power over himself. He has been emasculated by the repressive atmosphere of the Victorian Age and can only regain his sex by contact with a woman who has discarded the fetters of convention and chastity which characterize this same age. By accepting the "tests" which Sarah offers, Charles is symbolically though unwittingly accepting her challenge to prove his manhood. Not only does he reject convention and chastity as he progresses in his relationship with Sarah but he also throws duty to the wind and jilts his fiancée, Ernestina. He's no longer a fossil but an evolving organism.

Initially, Charles uses Darwin's ideas to reinforce his class prejudice as a gentleman about to marry into the commercial classes. If he is unaware of his intellectual naïveté and snobbery, he is also mocked as an amateur paleontologist marching with hammer and rucksack into the wood of the Undercliff. He is looking for fossil tests, but he will find the psychological and sexual test of Sarah Woodruff. His experience with her will introduce him to the disturbing side of Darwin's ideas.⁷

⁷ Prescott Evarts, Jr., "Fowles' The French Lieutenant's Woman as Tragedy," Critique, 13, No.3 (1971), 60.

Closely allied to the motif of fossils is that of collecting which has been briefly mentioned above. The motif of collecting in The French Lieutenant's Woman functions in almost the same manner and to the same end as in The Collector. Charles Smithson, in one of his more pompous moments, declares to Ernestina, "you forget that I'm a scientist. I have written a monograph so I must be," (pp. 12-13). Charles is a scientist as much as Clegg is a scientist. Where Clegg collects butterflies, Charles collects fossils and, like Clegg, is fascinated by beauty dead, by past life frozen in rock. Charles is certainly a collector, like Clegg and like Linnaeus, but unlike them he does not go mad. Charles is still tractable, still educable.

Charles is taught by Sarah to rebel against the classifying and fossilizing impulse of the Victorian Age. Sarah teaches Charles that human relationships cannot always be neatly classified and then filed away for future reference like the fossils in his collection. Charles wants to dehumanize his relationship with Sarah and turn it, as Dr. Grogan would, into a neatly labeled psychological "case" but he cannot:

Moments like modulations come in human relationships: when what has been until then an objective situation, one perhaps described by the mind to itself in semi-literate terms, one it is sufficient to classify under some general heading... becomes subjective; becomes unique; becomes, by empathy, instantaneously shared rather than observed. such a metamorphosis took place in Charles's mind...

(p. 115)

Charles Smithson, though he tried to "look at Sarah as an object of his past" (p. 153), cannot find any handy cubicle in which to file her. Sarah leads Charles out of the collector-conscious-

ness of the Victorian Age and into the timeless world of self-hood. She makes Charles become aware of the "priority of existence over death, of the individual over the species, of ecology over classification," (p. 192).⁸

Another important motif in The French Lieutenant's Woman is that of the mask. The Victorian Age itself was encumbered by many masks. Charles's journey to freedom may be plotted in terms of tearing away his many masks. We learn that Charles wears a "formal outdoor mask" with which he greets the world. One would imagine its components to be seriousness, gentility, imperviousness, and convention. When he removes this mask in his own privacy he admits that he is quite foolish behind this facade. Sarah herself wears a mask of "resigned sadness" in Mrs. Poulteney's house in order to conform to that lady's need to see the "sinner" contrite. Sarah, however, was playing a role which suited her own purpose. Ernestina puts on "a smile without humor, a mask," in order to achieve her own ends with Charles. Unfortunately he could see through the mask and for this reason it worked against her desires. The Victorians masked their furniture with skirts and their bodies with encumbering and totally concealing clothes. It was as if they were afraid to face the essence (nakedness) of themselves and the things around them. Maybe this can be accounted for by an inability to deal with anything other than the conventional and duly formal. Charles's experience with Sarah enables him to shed these unnecessary masks and face himself. By the time he has accepted himself for what he is, he no longer needs artificial insulation from other people or things. He has a grain

of faith in himself and that is enough assurance of his own integrity. He has discarded the "ashplant" support from the days of his fossil hunting expeditions and is now free to savour experience--learn and enrich his own awareness--not merely collect and classify it. He has exercised free will in rejecting the society which stifled his attempt to exert any and has attained the power to be himself, not a mummified mask suited to Victorian standards of behaviour. Another very telling use of the word mask appears in the context of Charles's train journey to Exeter. Fowles says:

[Charles] could not but feel that to have committed her to an institution, however enlightened, would have been a betrayal. I say "her" but the pronoun is one of the most terrifying masks man has invented. (p. 261)

A pronoun strips the designated person of his identity. It lumps him with the mass of mankind and denies the human being his individual personality, his uniqueness. What Fowles seems to be saying here is that the modern age, with its computers and identification card numbers is at least as guilty of this crime as the Victorian Age. We must guard against this thoughtless form of dehumanization or we will be responsible for the extinction of the heritage which has been that of the human being since Adam--individuality.

Another important image which is extended throughout The French Lieutenant's Woman is that of the tunnel. At times it is associated with the only way out of a destructive labyrinth, at others it is representative of the birth canal, signifying Charles's rebirth into a new mode of perception. The most expli-

cit tunnel is the one described at the Undercliff: "the entombing greenery" which is pierced by a shaft of light which illuminates Sarah's face. The other tunnel which one might metaphorically call Charles's descent into the depths, London's night life, allows him to come in contact with humanity and emerge with greater insight into the importance of people. It is the prostitute, Sarah, and her child, who make Charles realize that an attempt to dehumanize them by merely considering them as dispensible objects (dehumanizes himself as well.

The third and final journey which may be regarded metaphorically as a tunnel is Charles's wanderings on the continent and in America where he is trying simultaneously to find and forget Sarah. At the end of this tunnel is the light, Sarah herself, and her final rejection of Charles marks the beginning of yet another tunnel, that of his mind, which he must travel to emerge whole and free. This is borne out by the image of the river on the last page of the novel, the archetypal symbol of birth, or in this case, rebirth.

The titular character of the book, Sarah Woodruff, is in many ways an enigma. Her primary characteristic is that of mystery--and it is this mystery which originally captivates Charles and leads him on to involvement with her and eventual self liberation. Fowles ascertains in The Aristos the truth that "mystery is power" and indeed it is this particular power which Sarah wields over Charles--she captures and controls him, psychologically and sexually. She spurns him in the end, leaving him to the "deserted embankment" of life where the only

consolation he has is that "he has at last found an atom of faith in himself, a true iniqueness, on which to build," and the beginning realization that:

life ...is 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 it is to be, however inadequately, emptily, hopelessly into the city's heart, endured.
(p. 366)

Charles has no deus ex machina of any sort to guide his journey through the tunnel of life--it has only been through his own attempts to understand Sarah that he has come this far. There is no guarantee that he will be able to do anything more than stoically endure, that he will exert his own power again and truly live. "For I have returned, albeit deviously," comments Bowles-narrator, "to my original principle: that there is no intervening god beyond whatever can be seen...thus only life as we have, within our hazard-given abilities, made it ourselves, life as Marx defined it--the actions of men (and of women) in pursuit of their own ends," (p. 366).

Charles desires above all, the multi-faceted happiness he believes he will find through marriage with Sarah alone. Her allure has been more than merely sexual; she possesses an intellectuality, a strength, a depth of passion, and a seriousness of purpose that neither Ernestina nor the other Victorian women he knew has.⁹ Her uniqueness is the source of fascination for him, as well as the mystery that surrounds her own motivations. It is too simple to say that Sarah exists merely to practice power; to possess

⁹ Laughlin, p. 85.

another for the sake of possession that the following passage seems to indicate:

And perhaps he did at last begin to grasp her mystery. Some terrible perversion of human sexual destiny had begun; he was no more than a foot-soldier, a pawn in the far vaster battle; and like all battles it was not about love, but about possession and territory. He saw deeper: it was not that she hated men, not that she materially despised him more than other men, but that her maneuvers were simply a part of her armoury, mere instruments to a greater end. He saw deeper still: that her supposed present happiness [in the pre-Raphaelite commune] was a lie. In her central being she suffered still, in the same old way; and that was the mystery she was truly and finally afraid he might discover.

(p. 356)

In order to comprehend the meaning of this passage we must remember two things: that Sarah is a "liberated" woman and that Charles is in the process of becoming a liberated man. Sarah was a product of her environment and heredity, that is, she was a well-educated, intelligent girl who was not of aristocratic stock, therefore, from her perspective she was a misfit, an outsider. She had no hope of marrying into the upper echelons of society as "class" was a very real barrier in Victorian England, as it is today, though people are loath to admit it; nor could she marry someone from her own class as her education would prevent her from ever being happy in such circumstances. She was partially a prisoner of her own initiative as well as the social world into which she was born. For this reason she created the façade of preferring to be alone and a "bad" reputation. She reveals to Charles on the Undercliff that she feels her only salvation is to be an outcast and to flaunt her "shame", she questions

the justice of existence and tells her secret to a stranger; Sarah is an enigma. Sarah lives her ideas of freedom but has not yet found peace. She seems to have sensed the rather squelched but still evident free-spirit in Charles and realizes that she may help to effect his break with convention. Thus, under the guise of accepting his aid she manipulates him in a positive way. She knows he may be hurt by her defection but the mission that she sees for herself (that of helping others to attain freedom by exerting power over them) seems more important than the incidental suffering that this may cause them. When Charles and Sarah meet for the last time she preserves her own freedom and implicitly urges Charles to continue the search for his own. She destroys the myth that she is his happiness and once again refuses to be possessed. Maybe she still does suffer because she cannot truly share her freedom without retaining it. If that is the case it is because her vision of freedom is too singleminded and narrow, she refuses to admit that she has something to give. Sarah is presented by the narrator as a symbolic character: we see what she sees and hear what she says but are never permitted to enter her mind. Perhaps she was meant to represent the composite woman, embodying the mystery and temptation of Eve and the self-sufficiency and liberation of the contemporary woman. The Fowles-narrator says: "We can sometimes recognize the looks of a century ago on a modern face but never those of a century to come," (p. 146). Thus Sarah symbolizes both "chance" and "time". She was a woman born to live a life before her time-- caught between two worlds and suffering for it. She was instinct-

ively an outcast in a world of conforming convention--the new species emerging in an age where Linnaeus' theory was still the dominant one.

Charles, on the other hand, is uprooted by circumstance and chooses to pursue the mysterious woman. On one level he is experimenting with Darwin and Marx; on the other he is searching for a freedom which is parading under the guise of love. His only protection, once he has himself become an integral part of the experiment, is to rationalize as to Sarah's motives for rejecting him. He can't accept that she is a personification of an idea, the idea with which he is in love--freedom and power over the self--so attributes to her the suffering which he himself feels and convinces himself that he has pierced the mystery which has haunted him since he first set eyes on her on the Cobb. He is inadvertently saving himself from "the eyes that a man could drown in," (p. 180). Fowles comments:

You may think that she was right: that her battle for territory was a legitimate uprising of the invaded against the perennial invader.... For I have returned, albeit deviously, to my original principle: that there is no intervening god beyond whatever can be seen, in that way, in the first epigraph to this chapter.

(p. 365)

And that epigraph, a recent scientific definition of evolution, is the key to both an understanding of the Victorian Age and of the conflicts of Charles and Sarah: "Evolution is simply the process by which chance (the random mutations in the nucleic acid helix caused by natural radiation) cooperates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive," Man-

Vin Gardner, The Ambidexterous Universe (1967) (p. 361). Through her obsession with the idea of the individual over the species, the power to assert oneself, Sarah seeks to declare her person and to maintain its uniqueness apart from the things that seek to absorb her--Victorian society and Charles, albeit in completely different ways. In her own conception she is seeking to make herself, by exertion of power, achievement of possession, and rejection of both society and Charles, the fittest for survival.

The role of Dr. Grogan is important in terms of Charles's decision making and growth. He may be seen as a Prospero figure, Charles's mentor who advises and discusses Sarah's "case" with him. He is presented as a pleasant, sympathetic, man who has learned from life; he is the village intellectual and the only person who can talk knowledgeably to Charles about the ideas of Darwin. In fact, this common interest and belief in the new idea of natural selection might very well be the basis for their friendship. On one point, however, they do disagree; and that is Sarah. Grogan believes that her behaviour stems from a combination of "obscure melancholia" that makes her always choose "living misery" (Mrs. Poulteney) over happiness (The Talbots, Mrs. Tranter, and Grogan's colleague), and sexual repression. To warn Charles of the possible effects of the latter, he gives him several frightening medical case histories to read. Melancholia and sexual repression may in part have influenced Sarah's behaviour, but Charles's first intuitive feeling about the source of her power was probably correct: "[her eyes] could not conceal

an intelligence of spirit; there was also a silent contradiction of any sympathy; a determination to be what she was," (p. 99). All through the novel Fowles has prepared us for this. Again and again he has dwelt on evolution and its influence on the Age of Victoria. Charles discusses it intelligently with Dr. Grogan and understands its biological process in history through his fossil collection; but he does not see until too late how a particular case in process, on a psychological and emotional level, will hurt him deeply and attempt to override him.¹⁰ But Grogan may have been wrong in his diagnosis of Sarah; rather than being the epitome of despair, she may well have been frightened by the immensity of what she is doing--ignoring Victorian standards of behaviour and forging her own way on the road to freedom. She was refusing to fill a role that society dictated to her and instead chose to live.

The visits that Charles has with Dr. Grogan tend to reveal quite succinctly what he is feeling. The first time he visits the doctor he feels "himself in suspension between two worlds, the warm, neat, civilization behind his back, the cool dark mystery outside," (p. 123). Here we see once again Charles's attraction to mystery--a romantic bent of his which is later to be confirmed. This particular mode of expressing his feeling also neatly foreshadows the pioneering that he is to do into existential awareness. One also clearly understands that Fowles is playing with the concept of time and linking it to his lateral view of

¹⁰ Laughlin, p. 87.

history, a structuralist image in which layers of history accumulate, one upon the other, and which are all continually present at any given time. This attitude derives its meaning from a source similar to Linnaeus' stratification theory. In the next line the Fowles-narrator says: "We all write poems; it is simply that, poets are the ones who write in words," (p. 123). At this point he is aligning Charles with the artist rather than the scientist. His fresh perspective, his daring to look at life from a new point of view (as he is to do when he commits himself to Sarah) is much more the artistic search than the analytically scientific. Inadvertently he will be acting out the extinction of the Victorian mentality and pointing the way for a new species --the isolated modern man. It is easier to understand the at times scientific, at times artistic inclination of Charles if one regards him as a cross between two other Charles'--Darwin and Dickens.

Grogan admits to being a neo-ontologist. He says: "When we know more of the living, that will be the time to pursue the dead," (p. 125). Of course, Charles does later abandon his fossils, ~~that~~ is, when he becomes more interested in life and Sarah and leaves the dead past behind him. This is foreshadowed as he obliquely tries to learn more of Sarah from Dr. Grogan: "I was introduced the other day to a specimen of the local flora that inclines me partly to agree with you," (p. 125). Though the irony is obvious, one can tell that Charles has fallen under the spell of this local flower.

At yet another visit to Grogan's study Charles's dilemma is revealed. Grogan feels that Sarah is out to lure Charles into her

power and is using the pity she inspires to do this. He goes on to accuse Charles of being half in love with her and urges him to "Know thyself, Smithson, know thyself!" (p. 179). Charles loses his reserve and says:

Oh my dear Grogan, if you knew the mess my life was in...the waste of it...the uselessness of it. I have no moral purpose, no real sense of duty to anything. It seems only a few months ago that I was twenty-one--full of hopes...all disappointed. And now to get entangled in this miserable business...

(p. 180)

This confirms the suspicions aroused when Charles first looked in the mirror. Who is a better candidate for an experiment, or a pioneering exploit than a man disappointed with his present situation? The narrator tells us that "Charles was to live all his life under the influence of the ideal," (p. 180). Sarah had subconsciously become his ideal female and what could he do but follow her? Little does Charles know that Sarah is the future. Charles makes a supreme effort to tell Grogan the truth about the power that draws him:

I cannot say, Grogan. In all that relates to her, I am an enigma to myself. I do not love her? How could I? A woman so compromised, a woman you tell me is mentally diseased. But...it is as if...I feel like a man possessed against his will--against all that is better in his character. Even now her face rises before me, denying all you say. There is something in her. A knowledge, an apprehension of nobler things that are compatible with either evil or madness. Beneath the dross...I cannot explain.

(p. 181)

What Charles is trying to do here is apply rational thought, methods of scientific analysis to what he feels. He cannot pierce the mystery and romance and difference that Sarah represents for him because he doesn't really want to. A facile and superficial

explanation might satisfy a man less involved and less dissatisfied with his life as he presently lives it, but for Charles, Sarah cannot be explained away until he himself has begun to experience what she is--free to be herself, a being who cannot be possessed. At this point, Charles admits his ignorance of Sarah's true motives for trying to involve him in her plight but he also refuses to categorize her as one of his fossils--she will not fit into a convenient niche and he does not, any more than half-heartedly, attempt to create one for her.

At the third meeting of Charles and Dr. Grogan, after Charles has broken his engagement with Ernestina, we see the respect with which he regards the doctor:

As soon as Grogan had come into the room he had known that his previous self-assertions--that he was indifferent to the opinion of a mere bathing-place doctor--were hollow. There was a humanity in the Irishman Charles greatly respected; in a way Grogan stood for all he respected. He knew he could not expect a full remission of sins; but it was enough to sense that total excommunication was not to be his lot.

(p. 310)

We see Dr. Grogan cast in the role of raisonneur as he reiterates Fowles's philosophical message which appears very prominently in The Aristos and gives Charles his opinion of his conduct:

You believe yourself to belong to a rational and scientific elect...you wish to belong to that elect....All through human history the elect have made their cases for election, but time allows only one plea. It is this. That the elect, whatever the particular grounds they advance for their cause, have introduced a finer and fairer morality into this dark world. If they fail that test, then they become no more than despots, sultans, mere seekers after their own baser desires. I think you understand what I am driving at--and its especial relevance to yourself from this unhappy day on. If you be-

come a better and more generous human being, you may be forgiven. But if you become more selfish...you are doubly damned.

(p. 311)

The reader knows that Charles, at the end of the novel, is on the road to becoming "aristos", but whether or not he even attains this goal is left to the reader's imagination. We do know, however, that Sarah is one person who has achieved this stature and perhaps Dr. Grogan is another, both in their different ways. Maybe in the future Charles will also achieve this status and represent a cross between both of these characters, those who seemed most to have influenced him at the critical time of his life. Charles chooses to live beyond the acceptable bounds of society and I think we can have faith in his ability to endure with moral purpose and a generosity and understanding bred of his own personal suffering.

The literal use of the word power is first found on page 52 in a description of Sarah. "I cannot say what she might have been in our age; in a much earlier one she would have been either a saint or an emperor's mistress. Not because of religiosity on the one hand, or sexuality on the other, but because of that rare fused power that was her essence--understanding and emotion," (*Italics mine.*). Though she is the major exerciser of power, particularly over Charles, in this novel, one is to find the word repeated throughout the text with increasing significance. Farther down on the same page the narrator indicates that "Mrs. Poulteney placed great reliance on the power of the tract." Here we see that certain prescriptions for behaviour and "acades of religious good will relieved the guilty of their feelings of sin.. In this case Mrs. Poulteney also felt that Sarah was doing public penance

in the dispersal of these tracts and this made her sadistic heart glad.

Charles answers Sarah's plea for an answer to her plight of being born between classes without any hope of comfortably fitting into either, by saying "It is beyond my powers--the powers of far wiser men than myself--to help you here," (p. 116). Charles is not only admitting his inability to answer the incomprehensible but also is implying that he does not exert too much power over anything, not even himself. Though Sarah intimates that she is the interested party, at this juncture, we learn later that she is only playing a role with which to captivate Charles. Sarah goes on to say that she is powerless to avenge her solitude. The Fowles-narrator says, "Something new had crept into her voice, an intensity of feeling that in part denied her last sentence," (p. 139). The way she asserts her own freedom and forcefully encourages others to follow in her footsteps seems strongly to contradict the powerlessness she claims to feel.

Sarah believes in the wiles the more fortunate of her sex employ to lure mankind into their power, that is, she believes in the mystery of women. It is interesting that she excludes herself from that number when she proves to be the most influential member of her sex mentioned in the text. Most of what Sarah says and what she means is to be inverted if it is to be understood. Especially since most of her remarks are calculated to induce receptivity in her listeners.

The documented cases of psychological dementia given to Charles by Dr. Grogan further reinforce the theme of power:

La Ronciere was found guilty and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Almost every eminent jurist in Europe protested, but in vain. We can see why he was condemned, or rather by what he was condemned: by social prestige, by the myth of the pure-minded virgin, by psychological ignorance, by a society in full reaction from the pernicious notions of freedom disseminated by the French Revolution.

(p. 185)

People are terribly influenced by what they would like to believe, whether it be the truth or not. Sarah, in her own way is playing upon the same tendency as evidenced in the villagers -- the desire to believe the worst of her "affaire" with Varguennes, the French lieutenant, and thence to ostracize her from society. Little do they know that she thrives upon that particular brand of isolation, stigmatized or not, and exults in the freedom from conformity that it bestows upon her.

As Sarah is dismissed from Mrs. Poulteney's household, for committing the arch crime of walking upon Ware Commons she again deliberately mentions the concept of power: "...I suggest you purchase some instrument of torture, I am sure Mrs. Fairley will be pleased to help you use it upon all those wretched enough to come under your power," (p. 195). Thus she affirms her consciousness of the idea of control. Here we see the opposition of two very strong-willed women. Because Sarah possesses so much reverence for the idea of freedom and exertion of her own will there is absolutely no way in which she will subjugate herself to that of a tyrant such as Mrs. Poulteney for very long.

As Charles is being offered a share in Mr. Freeman's store he conceives of it as a power that on the one hand threatens him and on the other as something which would enable him to control

others. He rejects it on both counts:

...[the store] now showed itself full of power, a great engine, a behemoth, that stood waiting to suck in and grind all that came near it. To so many men, even then, to have stood and known that that huge building, and others like it, and its gold, its power, all lay easily in his grasp, must have seemed a heaven on earth. (*Italics mine.*)

(p. 232)

This kind of power, money tinged with hard work, is something that Charles cannot understand and does not desire as it would seem to strip him of his gentility. In contrast, Sarah symbolizes a catalyst to power over the self for those with whom she comes in contact, while the only power that Charles desires is that of control over himself--to have a destiny ruled by a moral purpose of his own choosing. Prior to Charles's liberation, the only power which he enjoyed was that of master to his servant, Sam. One might even more kindly see it as a sense of responsibility to an underling.

When Charles discovers that Sarah is really a virgin, contrary to what she had previously told him, he supposes that she wishes to put him totally in her power. He has no idea of how unwittingly correct he is. Her ends are attained almost instantaneously; he becomes even more obsessed with her as time goes on. The scene is prefigured earlier in the novel when Sarah pricks her finger on a thorn as she is telling Charles the details of her supposedly amorous encounter with Varguennes. On one level it forshadowes the relationship that they are to share in the future--that in which Charles will prove to be the metaphorical virgin, in the quest for freedom and selfhood, not Sarah. Closely linked

with both these scenes is the one in which Charles goes to the church to find solace. The solace he finds is not due to a deep religious experience of the conventional kind, but more of instantaneous insight of an intellectual character. Charles carries on a dialogue between his good and bad self. At first he perceives himself as crucified on Sarah but then realizes that she is meant to uncrucify him:

In a sudden flash of illumination Charles saw the right purpose of Christianity; it was not to celebrate this barbarous image, not to maintain it on high because there was a useful profit--the redemption of sins--to be derived from so doing, but to bring about a world in which the hanging man could be descended, could be seen not with the rictus of agony on his face, but the smiling peace of a victory brought about by, and in, living men and women.

(p. 285)

He realizes that "his previous belief in the ghostly presence of the past had condemned him, without his ever realizing it, to a life in the grave," (p. 286). At this point he resolves to live, to find himself again, and the only way in which he can do this is by throwing off his past and pursuing Sarah. He must reject his fossilized existence and become a new species. Though this may bear the mark of atheism it was actually a profoundly religious experience in the deepest sense of the word. He had discovered the meaning of Christ in his own terms. He has at last admitted his love for Sarah and now feels the strength to benefit from the transforming power of suffering, which though not always appreciated as such, is indispensable.¹¹ The understanding which Charles

¹¹Tatham, p. 410.

has achieved at this point is not one peculiar to Victorian England but could just as well apply to men and women of our decade. It is the courage to accept and follow a new path, as do both Charles and Sarah.

In the third ending to the novel where Sarah refuses to marry Charles because she says she cannot love him as a wife must, he uses what he regarded as "his most powerful though most despicable argument":

There was a time when you spoke of me as your last resource. As your one remaining hope in life. Our situations are now reversed. You have no time for me. Very well. But don't try to defend yourself. It can only add malice to an already sufficient injury.

(p. 363)

But Sarah refuses to compromise herself for any past services rendered to her on the part of Charles. She would sacrifice everything but her own spirit and she knew that to possess him was not enough. Charles seemed to understand the first part of her reasoning but as the narrator tells us, he would never know the latter. Sarah's manipulation was complete, even in the face of Charles's "most powerful argument," but strangely enough the reader cannot help but feel that Charles has not lost in the end and that Sarah's move is made out of kindness to him as well as loyalty to herself. Maybe what she possesses most is vision--the ability to estimate other people's worth and let them be free to discover it for themselves.

Though The French Lieutenant's Woman deals primarily with the power dynamics of human relationships on a one-to-one basis, there is also in progress a social power struggle concerning the

burgeoning middle classes. Despite the apparent placidity of Victorian England there was a distinct tension beneath; a tension caused by the dissatisfaction of the servants with their lot. Sarah articulates the stringent barrier of class when she says she is an outcast from both her own class and the one above it; she cannot hope to find happiness in either. But Sam is the overt example of a man with ambition and one who achieves it. His situation is an exemplification of grasping opportunity. Charles's manservant, it is claimed, is a descendent of Dickens's Sam Weller, but with a difference. Farrow has a very sharp sense of dress style and spent most of his earnings on keeping in fashion. His mispronounced a's and h's were signs of a social revolution and instead of being happy with his role of servant to a gentleman he suffered it. Sam Farrow, unlike Weller, had ambition too. He hopes one day to own a haberdashery, but to get as far as he did he betrayed his former employer, Charles, and went over to the side of the "enemy", Mr. Freeman. Palmer puts it well when he says:

Where moral decisions were resolved for the best immediately and instinctively by Dickens's Sam Weller, Sam Farrow's moral instincts are effectively anaesthetized in a very twentieth-century manner. Fowles's Sam, after all, is the precursor of the twentieth-century advertising man, Madison Avenue style. Evolution, so the stereotype proclaims, has favored the modern businessman with a highly developed sense of barracuda opportunism while dooming to extinction any moral inclinations he might have had. This is the way Darwinian natural selection operates--choosing, eliminating, and refining--from Sam Weller to Sam Farrow to the man in the grey flannel suit, and moral instinct becomes unfit for survival.

(p. 24)

The Sams of 1867 also resented being treated as inferiors; they wished to exert some control over their own lives. Sam is a prime example of upward mobility; he rose from the lower class to the middle class and then aspired to the status of Mr. Freeman, that of the nouveau riche.

Mr. Freeman provides yet another example of a play for power. He has certainly attained the power that money can buy but still yearns for the respectability of "class". He was very pleased that his only daughter, Ernestina, was about to marry a gentleman who would inherit a title. Charles was quite happy about the financial prospects of his marriage to Ernestina but secretly harbored some reservations about marrying into "trade". When he is disinherited due to his uncle's unexpected marriage so late in life, Mr. Freeman offers him a share in the business, to which he reacts in the following way:

It was to Charles as if he had travelled all his life among pleasant hills; and now came to a vast plain of tedium--and unlike the more famous pilgrim, he saw only Duty and Humiliation down there below--most certainly not Happiness or Progress....The abstract idea of evolution was entrancing; but its practice seemed as fraught with ostentatious vulgarity as the freshly gilded Corinthian columns that framed the door on whose threshold he and his tormentor now paused... (pp. 228-29)

Though there is nothing redeeming in Charles's rejection of Mr. Freeman's offer, not one noble motive, it does indicate a leaning in Charles to be himself:

He would never be a Darwin or a Dickens, a great artist or scientist; he would at worst be a dilettante, a drone, a what-you-will that lets others work and contributes nothing. But he gained a queer sort of momentary self-respect in his nothingness, a sense that choosing to be nothing--to have nothing but prickles--

was the last saving grace of a gentleman; his last freedom, almost. It came to him very clearly: If I ever set foot in that place I am done for.

(p. 233)

As Charles contemplates the Freeman's store, free will, and evolution, we see his hurt pride at even being considered a potential merchant and his resentment of Mr. Freeman's success which is based purely on the dollar. He has finally come to the conclusion that the store would not help him to find any meaning in life:

But underlying all, at least in Charles, was the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, and most especially...that a human being cannot but see his power of self-analysis as a very special privilege in the struggle to adapt. Both men had seen proof there that man's free will was not in danger. If one had to change to survive...then at least one was granted a choice of methods. So much for the theory--the practice, it now flooded in on Charles, was something other....He stood for a moment against the vast pressures of his age; then felt cold, chilled to his innermost marrow by an icy rage against Mr. Freeman and Freemanism. (*Italics mine.*)

(pp. 234-35)

Fowles's choice of surname here is quite an interesting one. On the one hand it is ironic because Mr. Freeman is enslaved to the idea of making money as many businessmen are, on the other hand he has been free to surmount some of the class barriers through his ability to honestly acquire money through a means other than inheritance. In this sense he proves that every man is free to improve his lot by the Puritan ethic of hard work. Charles resented this freedom as he saw evidence of his own species, the idle gentleman, retreating into extinction in the wake of the self-made man. In retrospect we can see, in the twentieth-century how fortune has all but replaced the old aristocracy. Power

is now in the hands of the successful businessman rather than the nobleman. Unfortunately the man of power is not always of the aristos or the elect as Dr. Grogan and Fowles have described them. "Freemanism" is the watchword of America. The battle for social power is an on-going struggle between those who have and those who have not. The nature of the participants may change throughout history but the context remains the same.

In The Aristos Fowles writes: "Money is potentiality; it is control of, access to, hazard; it is freedom to choose; is power," (p. 125). In The French Lieutenant's Woman he demonstrates the rise of the moneyed businessman almost to the level of aristocracy and exposes the roots of the modern upper and middle classes. Charles consciously rejects this type of power when he refuses Mr. Freeman's offer of partnership in the store.

Palmer very aptly divides the epigraphs that appear before each chapter into three categories. The first comprises those of Karl Marx and seems to offer a general definition of humanness: When a man is most free, he is most human. The second group includes scientific testimony to the nature of this world. The writings of Charles Darwin dominate this set of epigraphs but those of social as well as physical scientists are included, notably those of Martin Gardner, E. Royston Pike and G.M. Young. These scientific epigraphs help to define both Charles Smithson's situation in Victorian England, that of an aristocrat who has been naturally selected for extinction by a rising middle class more fit to survive, and the meaning of one of the main imagistic motifs of the novel, the motif of fossils. The third category,

by far the largest, is Victorian poetry. The Hardy excerpts help to set the scene; those from Clough concentrate on two conflicting ideas: duty, which for Clough means conformity to social demands in all their meaninglessness; and introspective self-analysis as stimulated by love. Tennyson's Maud examines the changes that occur in the personality of a man who becomes involved in a love relationship that rubs against the grain of Victorian propriety. In Memoriam captures the doubts and fears of Victorian England, the insecurity and fear of change. Arnold's poetry speaks of sadness and isolation: the isolation of a man aware that he must define his own identity and the sadness of a man who realizes that he must make painful decisions in accordance with that defined identity.¹²

Fowles deals very comprehensively with the Victorian Age, even to the extent of characterizing the Victorian way of thought:

In spite of Hegel, the Victorians were not a dialectically minded age; they did not think naturally in opposites, of positives and negatives as aspects of the same whole. Paradoxes troubled rather than pleased them. They were not the people for existentialist moments, but for chains of cause and effect; for positive all-explaining theories, carefully studied and studiously applied.

(p. 197)

It is perhaps for this reason that Charles was unable at first to understand his reactions to Sarah. He was at once attracted to her and at the same time distrustful. He could not initially grasp the enigmatic flavour of her attraction--innocence wedded to a clear sense of knowing who she was and an intuitive understanding of others. What his association with Sarah, both physical

¹²

Palmer, pp. 25-28.

and psychological, did for Charles was to free him from the above mentioned tedium of thought. By the time he is at last ready and willing to endure, his mind is capable of grasping paradox, even that which applies to himself: of his own volition he had become a slave to his memory of Sarah yet she was the one to free him from such unrealistic bondage. Whether he likes it or not he is able to understand the dialectical nature of events for the person upon whom they impinge.

Fowles states that "the whole Victorian Age was lost" in those brief seconds when Charles first comes upon Sarah asleep on the Undercliff. He goes on to say, "And I do not mean that he had taken the wrong path," (p. 63). This comment follows a description of the Victorian naturalist; a man serious in his approach to nature despite his disoriented values with regard to religion, convention, and society. He felt he had things to discover and that their discovery was important for the future. It is important that Charles is aligned with the scientist by dress and interest and then cast in the role of one who will unsmear the windows of reality by destroying his inherited notions of religion, convention, and society. It is just as important that man's perception of himself as a social being be as unclouded as his knowledge of the physical components of the universe, maybe even more so. In this way did Charles cease to be a Victorian gentleman and become that timeless species of humanity on the brink of existential awareness. He destroyed the order of the universe in his mind and accepted the greater truth of dialectical thought and the paradoxical nature of reality. He suc-

ceeded in restoring romance and mystery to a world which had become all but a scientific fossil.

When Charles asks Ernestina if they should "make the perilous descent," (p. 13) he is aware of the mythic significance of his innocent utterance. They had just been discussing how romance had been replaced by science. In all his dealings with Ernestina, Charles plays the part of the rational gentleman of science. In those he has with Sarah he descends into the irrational behaviour of the lovesick romantic. Though the second account of his behaviour may seem quite unattractive it is more real.

Sarah's confession evokes the following reaction in Charles:

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

(pp. 143-44)

This is one of the first instances where we see the effect that Sarah (and what she represents, freedom) has upon Charles's psyche. His romantic tendencies and penchant for mystery are confirmed. Shortly after he has admitted his too personal concern for Sarah's plight, and Grogan has given him the unfortunate account of La Roncière to read, Charles rejects science and becomes aware of destiny:

The day that other French lieutenant was condemned was the very same day that Charles had come into the world. For a moment in that silent Dorset night, reason and science dissolved; life was a dark machine, a sinister astrology, a verdict at birth and without appeal, a zero over all. He had never felt less free.

(p. 188)

Charles was to follow what he perceived as destiny--his instinct--and the end result proved to be far greater freedom than he had ever before imagined. This lesson which Charles was to learn--"the priority of existence over death, of the individual over the species, of ecology over classification," (p. 192) rocked the foundations of Charles's assumptions to the core. This was the message of the singing wren--and of his associations with Sarah--they were both outcasts but in a different sense: Charles had been expelled from Eden while Sarah could not become a part of the societal exile in which she lived. And, as Fowles asserts, in The Aristos, the role that hazard plays in the lives of men is not to be ignored. Just as Charles and La Roncière are linked by fate, so does Sarah come into his life by happenstance. Coincidence, chance, hazard, fate, all become the "quality X" of a person's life and exert an influence which is beyond measurement.

Two concepts which are integral to The French Lieutenant's Woman are those of history and time. The novel is riddled with references to time and the juxtaposition of worlds, Victorian and Modern, in such a way as to provide a basis for the theme of temporal confrontation. Fowles subscribes to a lateral view of history rather than a cyclical one, that is, instead of gratuitously repeating itself it may prove to be variations on the same theme played out on a never-ending continuum which should be compared as an educational tool. Possibly the simplest analogy would be the historical time line. History might be described as an infinite play which adds scene to scene with a cumulative effect. One might even say it is irreducible. In The

French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles uses an apparently Victorian story as the basic narrative of his novel. Yet the reader is constantly led to question what "Victorian" means, to recognize the frequent use of anachronism, parody, research, and quotations from Marx, Darwin, Victorian sociological reports, Tennyson, and Arnold as various means of demonstrating the conditional nature of time and history. Only in acknowledging the perspective of the present, the necessary boundaries in time and space of the creator of the novel, can the author begin to focus, with any depth or meaning, on the nature of the past. Fowles manipulates numerous literary, historical, and artistic allusions and devices to show what of his story is of the past, what of the present, and what indeterminate. For Fowles, history is always a subject that includes much of the time and perspective of the the historian.¹³

In The French Lieutenant's Woman Fowles seems to be distilling time--he is confronting two disparate ages in a way which is not merely a delightful momentary journey into Victorian England but one in which each reader can feel the Victoriana of his own soul. No matter how much modern man pays lip-service to the permissive society he is still in part a captive of the Victorian ethos, that is, unless he can achieve existential freedom and erect his own self-chosen allegiances not those established for him by society regardless of their applicability to the individual.

Under several circumstances do we see Charles grappling

¹³ James Gordin, "John Fowles," Contemporary Novelists, ed. James Vinson, with a preface by Walter Allen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), p. 423.

with his perception of time. As he held the prostitute's baby on his knee:

...he had a far more profound and genuine intuition of the great human illusion about time, which is that its reality is like that of a road--on which one can constantly see where one was and where one will be-- instead of the truth: that time is a room, a room so close to us that we regularly fail to see it.

(p. 252)

Charles now knows the preciousness of moments and that his life should be a quest for such humane ones as this. This quotation may also be fruitfully compared with The Aristos in which Fowles says that man must learn to live in his own limited space: time also is a room, a designated portion of the universal situation in which man must accommodate himself as best he can. It is the quality of a person's life in time and space that matters, not the length of his existence or the spatial borders that he crosses.

If the setting of the novel is the past, the reader the present, and Sarah the future, then Charles may be seen to function as the evolutionary "missing link" in temporal terms. He is a "man struggling to overcome history" (p. 234), who, during a moment of insight perceives that:

...all life was parallel: that evolution was not vertical, ascending to a perfection, but horizontal. Time was the great fallacy; existence was without history, was always now, was always this being caught in the same fiendish machine. All those painted screens erected by man to shut out reality--history, religion, duty, social position, all were illusions, mere opium fantasies.

(p. 165)

Charles's (and everyman's) social responsibility, or duty. (that of the human fittest towards the less fit, in evolutionary terms) is to utilize the hazard-given moment, the "now", and with the power of understanding help others to achieve personal freedom.

In the epigraph which appears to Chapter 42: "History is not like some individual person, which uses men to achieve its ends. History is nothing but the actions of men in pursuit of their ends," (Marx, Die Heilige Familie, 1845), we are given a theoretical point of reference from which to consider history. The difficulty for most people lies not in the action itself but in finding the most worthwhile ends to pursue. The French Lieutenant's Woman is in many ways a dramatization of this always contemporary dilemma which faces men and women everywhere. It is appropriate to regard Fowles's experiment as technical science fiction--a journey backwards in time. In The Collector Fowles shows us the confrontation of social class, that is, man divided against himself; in The Magus he explores the significance of space; and in The French Lieutenant's Woman he gives us man poised in a time other than our own and points out the timelessness of his quest for power to rule himself. None of his novels are exclusive considerations of one aspect of confrontation but rather provide a cumulative picture of the human situation.

On a slightly different level The French Lieutenant's Woman may be seen as a treatise on the novel, a questioning of literary form. Surely Fowles's "experiment in technique" is a very modest way in which to characterize an extremely rewarding reading experience and a thought provoking variation on the novel form. The French Lieutenant's Woman is a superb stylistic accomplishment. As in The Collector and The Magus, Fowles borrows from writers of the past but only to enrich the reader's

appreciation of the significance of the printed word, which lies before him. It also serves to underscore the confrontation theme by juxtaposing different periods of literature with one another. By adopting the Victorian habit of multiple endings and an intrusive narrator-author he places his creation in a genre. But to these commonplace techniques he adds the Pirandellesque notion of characters with a life of their own; invites the reader to participate in the world of the novel; injects the author into the narrative as a character; and interjects ironic anachronisms into the plot in an effort to blur time. Though Fowles repeatedly attempts to distance his reading audience from the action and the world of 1867, the authorial intrusion almost works in the opposite manner. The inserted tidbits from E. Royston Pike's Human Documents of the Victorian Golden Age totally enmesh the reader in the aura of the age and he forgets for a moment that what he is reading is actually fiction. Thus Fowles successfully combines history, experimental fiction, and literary criticism.

Fowles has a great interest in the evolution of the novelistic form as evidenced by his translation of "Eliduc", a Celtic romance, in The Ebony Tower. He is also very interested in Robbe-Grillet's plea for a new novel but does not completely agree with the necessity of a new form. His effort at a reconciliation of this problem seems to be a transmutation of past and present novelistic form: the extension of the genre rather than open revolt and complete divorce from the past. This attitude appears to embody an intelligent respect for the best of our tradition and an ability to build on this tradition while at the same time

questioning those remnants of the past which have little artistic or social relevance to the contemporary reader. His method unselfconsciously and without a heavy hand reflects the search for a different treatment of a simultaneously age-old yet modern concern--the individual. What human being's curiosity is not aroused by a new method of looking at himself?

The French Lieutenant's Woman illustrates John Fowles's romantic-realistic technique at its best. Certainly his detailed re-creation of the Victorian Age in the spirit of an historical novel yields a realistic backdrop or setting for the action of his book. Accompanying the tone of genuine past is the adoption of near-Victorian technique. The treatment of thematic concerns which are as relevant to a man of today is what finally and totally immerses the reader in Charles Smithson's microcosm. Graphic description of natural as well as psychological English landscape further advances the realism of Fowles's fiction. It is, however, his preoccupation with mystery, and it is a pervasive concept in nearly all of Fowles's work, which causes one to pause and consider the romantic aspect of his fiction. Ronald Binns has called Fowles the "Radical Romancer"; he calls himself a realist; I prefer to regard him as a romantic realist. His major characters always seem to be combinations of modern men (or women) in search of a romantic world or romantic men (or women) who are modern before their time. Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff are exemplifications of the second category. They are characters existing in a world whose thought is being revolutionized by the idea of scientific evolution. They are involved in the process of evolving

into freer yet more self-conscious people, but their actual inspiration is romance not science. Each of Fowles's three novels begins with the precise location of time and place, moves into dimensions of myth, and then gravitates back to the secure identity of English social landscape. Though the emphasis in each book is on a different aspect of confrontation: The Collector deals with man and society; The Magus with space; and The French Lieutenant's Woman with time, the basic formula remains the same. Fowles takes the romance situation and updates it, infusing it with psychological, metaphysical, and moral dimensions to which he adds realistic detail of time and place.¹⁴

In Chapter 13 the novelist intrudes to tell the reader that writers

wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is, or was.... We know that a world is an organism, not a machine. We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. It is only when our characters begin to disobey us that they begin to live.
(p. 81).

By implication, a 'real' fictional world is also unpredictable and ever-changing. What Fowles is arguing here is that once the creatures of his imagination become more than mere images, that is, once they are given a context, personality, and meaning they begin to take over of their own accord. Perhaps this is just a variation on the theory of credibility but I think not. It is an inversion of Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author. Pirandello's six characters had a life of their own before they even approached the playwright; Fowles's characters gain autonomy only after he has

¹⁴ Binns, pp. 319, 321.

breathed life into them. He is no longer the omniscient god of the Victorian novel but one whose first principle is freedom not authority. In some ways it is as if he merely records the thoughts and actions of those beings of his imagination whom he has set free. He has abandoned the traditional novelist's godgame in an effort to create an existential work of life--art. His characters demand that he justly portray their decisions and actions, the truth of their lives.¹⁵ The characters are more often than not people who could have been but never were. They are fragments of the author's experience, imagination, and life impressions until they begin to take on another dimension, the third, and inhabit a world of realistic romance. It is as if the characters are dictating their story to the novelist and for want of a more creative role in the artistic process he must write himself into the novel in a misleadingly minor role. But because Fowles is writing for a contemporary audience his aim is to engage the reader in the artistic process as much as possible. Fowles takes his cue from the new metatheatre, in which the play-goer is invited to actively take part in the performance he has gone to see. Fowles achieves this sense of metafiction by employing the multiple ending technique. His reason is twofold: first, it adds a Victorian flavour to The French Lieutenant's Woman and second it forces the reader to choose a suitable ending according to his own frame of reference. Fowles discusses the tyranny of the last chapter and plays the game of hazard by flipping a coin to see which of the last two endings will

¹⁵ Palmer, p. 70.

indeed be the final one. This is a ploy which he is entitled to use, in order to re-emphazize the role played by hazard, but the reader must be aware that the order in which the endings do appear has not been entirely left to chance. Any writer who takes pride in his work is sure to manipulate the "coin" so that the penultimate ending is the most artistically valid one. Naturally, the most credible (realistic) ending appears in the last chapter but those who are more conventional or more romantic are not denied their own right to choose. Ironically, in The French Lieutenant's Woman, the last chapter is not only a possible ending to the book but also probably the beginning of a new life for Charles, the major protagonist, and one on which the reader is free to let his imagination speculate. The reader is thus encouraged to relinquish his role as passive observer and actively participate in the creative/artistic process. According to James Gordin, the three endings of the novel have a different purpose: they demonstrate ~~that~~ three different possible resolutions, each characterizing a different possible perspective itself historically definable toward the events of the novel, could be thoroughly-consistent with the issues and characters Fowles has set in motion.¹⁶

The Fowles-narrator appears to give his opinion or comment on the behaviour of the characters until he can no longer be satisfied with his voice-from-outside role. He first enters the narrative as an anti-social gentleman on the train and later makes another appearance as a Frenchified impresario-like figure (resembling in some ways Conchis of The Magus) who witnesses Charles's

final moments of life as lived in The French Lieutenant's Woman. Although his appearance is brief and minimal he continues to haunt the mind of the reader, in fact, one is very tempted to identify with him, so great is the temptation to enter this fascinating fictional world, or to make this world reality, depending on one's perspective.

Fowles writes, "We are all in a flight from the real reality," (p. 82). Thus fiction becomes the reality after all, and every man is an artist who writes the novel of his own life. If everyman can liberate his central character, himself, as Fowles is liberating his characters, then each man can create art out of his own life.¹⁷

We are all novelists, that is, we have a habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves.... We screen in our minds hypotheses about how we might behave, about what might happen to us; and these are novelistic... hypotheses often have very much more effect on how we actually do behave, when the real future becomes the present, than we generally allow.

(p. 266)

Fowles feels that the novel is a form which will survive (inspite of the cinema) because there is so much which can be left out, that is, left to the reader's imagination: "Language is like shot silk, so much depends on the angle of vision," (p. 358).

The emphasis on personal choice is central to Fowles's philosophy; in The French Lieutenant's Woman he defines God as "the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist," (p. 82), and asserts that chance (hazard) is the opposite polarity to choice. Hazard, of course, also takes into account those "mutations" which occur outside the main line of evolution. In such a perspective the moral choices of the minority who contain a potential for growth

through the accident of being educated towards a certain consciousness in a particular situation at a precise historical moment, become all the more profound in a society governed by consumption, custom, and waste. The lack of transcendent design makes the battle between being and becoming, between good faith and bad faith all the more precarious.¹⁸

It is in Fowles's conception of character that we come more centrally to the dramatic persuasiveness of his existentialist philosophy, realized in the way moral growth springs dialectically out of the tissue of contradictions which his major protagonists embody.¹⁹ Charles, sensitivity allied to selfishness, is obsessed by the enigma of Sarah, "luring-receding, subtle-simple, defending-accusing," and he has come to terms with the contradictions in his own nature that she arouses before he can find his authentic identity. Such relationships find their meaning in a moment of Kierkegaardian decision, and The French Lieutenant's Woman presents much the fullest working-out of this existential moment and its aftermath when Charles makes his irreversible decision to sever his engagement with Ernestina and the world of bourgeois warmth and security that she represents, in favour of Sarah, and the radical alternatives to social custom that she poses. This leap in the dark, set against the suffocating environment of middle-class propriety, inevitably results in social damnation, and Fowles refuses to offer any solution to the future that waits around the corner of his open-ended fictions.

¹⁸ Binns, p. 324.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 325.

Existential choice may leave Charles naked against the future but it is, finally, precariously affirmative, allowing him to discover a hidden strength in himself and an atom of good faith on which to build a new and authentic life, with or without a female enchantress. If "True piety is acting what one knows," (Matthew Arnold, Notebooks, 1868) (p. 361) Charles has become a pious man because he has learned from his experience.

One might profitably compare The French Lieutenant's Woman to "The Enigma" of The Ebony Tower. In the latter work, a seemingly happy and successful British Member of Parliament disappears and cannot be traced. There is no motive to be found for his strange behaviour. The story concludes with two suppositions by a young writer, supposing she is writing a novel. In the first conclusion she has the man hidden for a few days by a sympathetic person while he makes arrangements to flee into obscurity without a trace; in the alternate conclusion he drowns himself in the pond of his country estate where no one is likely to look. Though the endings differ the cause implied for the protagonist's disappearance is the same: he wanted to escape from what he considered to be a meaningless form of existence. Apart from the obvious parallel with the multiple ending of The French Lieutenant's Woman, the story also deals with characters who are trying to escape stultifying lives. The success of both Sarah and Charles is open to question but their perceptions of a need for change and dissatisfaction with things as they are is self evident. Sarah is openly defiant at the beginning of the book as she stares out to sea (a symbol of flux; constant change), as if she is looking for

a better world. Her refusal to conform to conventional modes of behaviour establishes her stand. For Charles, the discovery of a need for change is much slower but no less singlemindedly adopted once realized. Sarah might be seen as the pioneer while Charles is the initiate who follows in her footsteps. At the end of the novel he also stares into water as if seeing the course he must take if he is to attain what he set out to accomplish. The novel has come full circle but at the same time it has progressed. What may be perceived as Sarah's victory is that she has saved a soul in greater need of salvation and in far less likely circumstances than herself. Neither commits suicide as is intimated in "The Enigma" and they are much less enigmas to themselves and to others of like kind than they had been before. "Opting out" of society, if it is a choice freely taken and duly considered, need not be a nihilistic act but a positive one. Once again Fowles uncovers some of the mystery of life and delineates the process of learning from experience, which is often bitter and therefore worthwhile. At the same time he does not totally solve the mystery which he sees as integral to, if not the vital factor, of life itself.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAGUS: SPATIAL CONFRONTATION

Though The Magus, John Fowles's most ambitious and complex novel, was published in 1965 and appeared as his second work, following The Collector, it was actually written first--at least a first draft--in 1953, and left for ten years before it was revised and subsequently published.¹ Fowles has admitted that it is the most autobiographical of his three novels and in my estimation it is the best. I have chosen to treat Fowles's first novel last in this thesis as it seems to provide answers to some of the questions raised in The Collector and The French Lieutenant's Woman, in particular those associated with the pervasive motifs of collecting, evolution, mirrors, and masks. On the other hand, maybe the fact that these questions are not answered in the later books, but are mentioned again, indicates Fowles's dissatisfaction with the answers in The Magus. Despite this, however, his attitudes toward these ideas are most definitively presented in The Magus whether he has since revised his outlook or not.

The Magus also deals very much with the ideas of power and space. Conchis, a Prospero figure, has almost complete power over Nicholas; in turn Nicholas exerts considerable power over Alison. In the first case the power is positive, in the second

¹ Halpern, p. 36.

negative. This chapter will explore the ways in which Conchita exerts his power over Nicholas in order to free him from his artificial sense of reality and selfish interaction with others. Nicholas's realization that the power he wields over Alison is unjust, unnecessary, even detrimental to them both as independent beings provides yet another important consideration of power and its uses and abuses in this novel. As well, the notion of space, inner and outer, figures strongly in the organization of the novel, structurally and thematically, and in the Fowles oeuvre as a whole. The idea of confrontation which noticeably pervades each of Fowles's novels is magnified in The Magus. The protagonist, Nicholas, is faced with both types of confrontation already described in Chapters II & III, social and temporal respectively, but in an overall context of spatial confrontation which is apparent from the three part arrangement of the book: England, Greece, England.

Fowles has revealed in an interview that "the basic idea of a secret world, whose penetration involved ordeal and whose final reward was self-knowledge," obsessed him.² The book was a metaphor, an allegory or fable, of his own personal experience in Greece. The book sprang from a very trivial visit to a villa on a Greek island where nothing in the least unusual happened. In his unconscious he kept arriving at the same place again and again; "something wanted to happen there, something which had not happened at the time."³

² Ibid.

³ Fowles, "Notes on Writing a Novel," p. 89.

Fowles feels that if one wants to be true to life, one should start lying about the reality of it.⁴ This is precisely what he does in The Magus both as John Fowles, private citizen, and as Conchis, the magus of the novel, which he seems to adopt as his persona: "Every truth at Bourani was a sort of lie; and every lie there a sort of truth."⁵ On one level The Magus is a never-ending mystery story which plumbs the concept of mystery itself; on the philosophical level it is an in-depth probing of the meaning of freedom and a compelling assertion of existentialism.

It is necessary though difficult to summarize the plot. Nicholas Urfe, a young Oxford graduate "handsomely equipped to fall" (p. 13), takes up with Alison, an Australian girl he meets at a party in London. Their affair becomes serious, "in our age it is not sex that raises its ugly head, but love," (p. 30). This is more than Nicholas's cynicism can stand, so he leaves Alison to accept a job as an English instructor at the Lord Byron School, a sort of Eton-Harrow enclave on the Greek island of Phraxos, "only a look north from where Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon," (p. 47).

Bored, immeasurably depressed by the self-revelation that he is not as he had thought, a talented poet and out of phase with the throb of the sultry, white-sunned Mediterranean island, Nicholas contemplates suicide, then takes to long solitary walks. On one of these walks he meets a wealthy English-born Greek named Maurice Conchis who may or may not have collaborated with the Nazis during the war and now lives as a recluse on his paternal, art-

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John Fowles, The Magus (New York: Dell, 1965), p. 273. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

encrusted island estate.

The estate is known as Bourani and it is there that Nicholas is ushered into the mysteries--Conchis's paradoxical views on life and his eccentric masques which, Nicholas later learns are part of what is called "the godgame."

At first Nicholas is very sceptical in his attitude toward the masques but as they grow more elaborate and intense, his perception of what is real and what is not dims and vanishes. Against his will, he becomes a performer in them, painfully he realizes they are not about Conchis's life--these enactments of an Edwardian romance, of the Nazi occupation; these absurd playlets after de Sade, obscene parodies of Greek myths, pretend meetings of psychoanalysts--but about his own; he becomes a conspirator in his own destruction or psychic rebirth--he does not know which.

The nightmare deepens as he falls in love with the beautiful Lily, who appears in the masques as Conchis's 1915 lover, and then turns out not to be Lily at all, but Julie--or perhaps her twin sister. Nicholas has a brief romantic interlude with Alison in Athens, then learns that she has killed herself.

Now everything becomes conspiracy, the fact that it is all so ludicrous in no way relieves his horror. Fired from the school, Nicholas returns angrily to London intent on ferreting out the reasons for his ordeal, Conchis's real background and the purpose of the godgame. But impossible things continue to happen; Alison turns out not only to be alive but somehow in league with Conchis and his cabal. Slowly, excruciatingly, Nicholas unravels, the truth or truths conveyed by lies.⁶

⁶ Elliot Fremont-Smith, "Players of the Godgame," New York Times, 17 January 1966, p. 45.

Though this novel may purport to be concerned with most of the questions which plague the responsible questing individual, its primary theme is a simple one--love and honesty which should accompany true love: "Thou shalt not commit pain" (p. 590) is implicit in all the lessons which Conchis seeks to impress upon Nicholas and have him incorporate into his everyday life.

Nicholas may very conveniently be seen as a modern Orpheus figure who descends into the truth-telling magical underworld of Conchis's masques and resurfaces to recognize his Eurydice's worth and the error of his former ways.

In an age which cries for power--be it black, red, brown, female, or "for the people"--Fowles examines the most elemental power situation--the relationship between individuals.

Conchis manipulates Nicholas physically, psychically, sexually, and psychologically in an effort to teach him the value of power over himself and how to responsibly emit power in order to help others gain a similar freedom and fruitful self-awareness. The process of becoming self-aware or attaining power is a relatively long, arduous process for Nicholas--a journey into the essence of his own human being. The "lessons" which Nicholas undergoes at the hands of Conchis only begin to take effect at the end of the trial. After he is given a supposed psychological report on the state of his psyche Nicholas is himself made the judge and therefore is seemingly in a position of power. After Nicholas is told that his life style is essentially negative he

learns that his judgement of them (the psychologists) will take a specific form. He may choose to strike or not to strike a scape goat among them--appropriately Lily. The cat o'nine tails is placed in his hands and Lily's back is bared to him. This is Nicholas's moment of truth. He sees that he is "judge only in name. Like all judges, I was finally the judged; to be judged by my judgement," (p. 464). He thinks he understands why Conchis has put him under his power and directly relates his present experience to that of Conchis during the war:

... I knew I had absolute freedom of choice. I could do it [strike] if I wanted. Then suddenly,

I understood what I had misunderstood.

I was not holding a cat in my hand in an underground cistern. I was in a sunlit square and in my hands I held a German machine gun....

All Conchis's maneuverings had been to bring me to this; all the charades, the psychical, the theatrical, the sexual, the psychological; and I was standing as he had stood before the guerilla, unable to beat his brains out; discovering that there are strange times for the calling in of old debts, and even stranger prices to pay.

(p. 466)

But Nicholas is wrong; Conchis had brought power to bear on him not merely for his moral purgation or aesthetic enjoyment. Only in the aftermath of his narcosis and disintoxication does Nicholas begin to understand how what has happened has been for his own good. For the first time he comes to grips with the truth of his own identity.

But he realizes this a "death too late." The death is Alison's. He realizes that he loved her after all but did not see it because of his spiritual blindness and selfishness. He knows now that "her special genius, or uniqueness, was her normality, her reality, her predictability; her crystal core of non-betrayal; her

attachment to all that Lily was not," (p. 502).

Just before the trial Nicholas begins to doubt the reality of Alison's death. His mind plunged into an abyss--a disbelief in anything and everyone--complete lack of faith. If Alison had been convinced to join Conchis's masque Nicholas's only anchor to reality would have been washed away and he would see his whole life as a conspiracy. His betrayal would have been complete, his mind vivisected until there was nothing left.

When he returns to Athens he sees Alison from a window in his hotel and knows that his greatest fear has been realized--she too is in league with Conchis. At this point, however, the purpose of his search changes: though still interested in the reality behind Conchis's maneuverings, his primary aim is to find Alison.

Nicholas contacts the former English masters of the Lord Byron School in an attempt to compare experiences at Bourani, but they refuse to talk about them as if out of loyalty to Conchis. He begins to see that the power of the magus has led them to their own moments of truth, too personal and sacred to share. Later, when Nicholas comes to better understand the purpose of Conchis's godgame, he too does not reveal his own "awakening" to the next victim, the American, John Briggs.

When in London he finally unravels the origins and truths about Conchis and his scheme, he is told by Lily de Selas (Lily/Julia's mother, and Conchis's old friend) that "love may really be more a capacity for love in oneself than anything very lovable in the other person... that the essential part of love is truth, the

trust two people build between their minds....the one thing that must never come between two people who have offered each other love is a lie," (pp. 549, 551). She reveals that Conchis and his colleagues have accepted the responsibility that their good luck in the lottery of existence has put upon them and that they are charting the voyage; that is, an evolution of moral responsibility and self-awareness bred of understanding of oneself and the gifts that others have to give. She tells Nicholas that Alison stays away of her own accord and implies that until Nicholas learns how "to handle fragile things," (p. 573) and appreciate the qualities that Alison possesses he will not be reunited with her.

In the interim Nicholas rents a room from Kemp, an authentic Bohemian from the thirties, who mothers him yet does not cater to his faults. Nicholas meets Jojo, a waif-like drifter who falls in love with him. Though the relationship remains platonic Nicholas's perception is still too blunted to avoid hurting Jojo. Once again he commits pain due to self-absorption and insensitivity to others. Symbolically, the fragile blue plate which Lily de Saitas gave Nicholas as she issued her warning about learning how to handle and value Alison, breaks as Jojo is hurt and leaves. Nicholas realizes the significance of his failure to have proven his worth to Alison in his behaviour with Jojo, and is beside himself. Kemp's attention soothes him until she finally leads him to Alison in the park. This reunion echoes Conchis's tale about Lily and himself who also met in a park before they were separated. They have a brief quarrel, and disagree until finally Nicholas gives her the choice to follow him

now or never; again an emulation of Alison's former ultimatum. But one thing is different: neither Nicholas nor Alison is wearing masks, and the choice that Alison makes is metaphorical. Nicholas is not free of Conchis or so he thinks, as he imagines unseen eyes in Cumberland Terrace. He concocts a plan to outwit the supposed spectators: Alison is to play her part and meet him in the "waiting room" of the Paddington Station. She is not to say yes or no but to do yes or no for Nicholas has at last realized the inadequacy of words, in fact, is attempting to eradicate the barriers which they erect, by action. He slaps Alison and the significance is twofold: first he is committing the arch crime of pain but in a physical rather than a psychological context, and secondly he is exercising her betrayal of him. He is exercising his power over her, but for once we know it to be the correct kind of power--by giving Alison the freedom to choose he is giving her identity and accepting his own.

The novel concludes with Nicholas walking

...firmer than Orpheus...not once looking back. The autumn grass, the autumn season, the autumn sky. People. A black-bird, poor foot, sings out of season from the willows by the lake. A flight of gray pigeons over the houses. Fragments of freedom, an anagram made flesh. And somewhere the stinging smell of burning leaves. (p. 604)

Nicholas has realized that the windows are faceless. The future is for Alison and himself alone, the gods have absconded: Nicholas's ultimate discovery is that there is no godgame--that he is absolutely free. Despite this, the ritual seems necessary as this is the "point of fulcrum" in both their lives. Nicholas is Orpheus, but does not commit his tragic mistake, and Alison, his Eurydice, according to one interpretation of the ending, is

recovered. This quotation, by virtue of the striking use of the present tense, emphasizes the timelessness of the seasons of people's lives and the constant relevance of the acquisition of freedom to mankind as a whole. In a sense one may see this scene as the statement of Nicholas's psychic rebirth. Autumn signifies the death of his old self as well as the phoenix's magnificent colours; death by fire purifies the spirit until it arises from the ashes of the "burning leaves." Thus, phoenix-like, Nicholas emerges to live again, with power and understanding and perhaps with Alison. Their new lives, together or not, will enable them to both become "elect," and to live by love rather than preconceived notions of a literary kind or sociological prescriptions for behaviour.

Nicholas is given freedom, which for Bowles's characters is "the ability to emit power." The power of Conchis has issue and positive effects because it does allow freedom of choice and action--the exercise of personal power. Conchis does not destroy Nicholas in the end but makes him more alive and aware, hence more free and powerful.

Maurice Conchis has Nicholas Urfe undergo four major masques or dramatizations of his (Conchis's) life in an effort to awaken Nicholas to the consciousness of his own. The first episode which Conchis relates is that of his love affair with Lily Montgomery in 1915 and of his experience in the First World War. What he tries to teach Nicholas by this story is that war is mad, a place without the possibility of reason, and thus prepare Nicholas for the decision which Conchis made later during World War II when he

was compromised by the Germans⁸ and Nicholas's own moment of truth when he is to decide whether to punish Lily with the cat or not. What Conchis became aware of during his experience in World War I was the passion to exist--and for that reason he forgave himself the failure to die by the act of "desertion". He tells Nicholas that "it is the self which must not be betrayed," (p. 128), but the problem for Nicholas is to discover his true self. Conchis goes on to tell Nicholas that he had resolved to tell his family and Lily the truth about his desertion until the actual moment of confrontation. At this point all he could do was lie because "some truths are too cruel" (p. 143). He does, however, eventually try to explain to Lily his reasons for deserting, but she does not understand. The point of this revelation, as with most others is to distill for Nicholas several truths about life. The relationship with Lily that Conchis outlines serves to give evidence for the statement that "love is the mystery between two people, not the identity" (p. 147). This is important for Nicholas to personalize in his relationship with Alison, for he is reticent about serious involvement with her for the wrong reasons (social background and convention). At times, when meeting old school friends, he feels embarrassed in her company. What he should realize is that their differences provide the love-engendering mystery (fascination) in their relationship and is something to be regarded as a positive attribute rather than a negative one. Her ability to deal with life as it is, in the raw, even, if necessary, to look at circumstances from a pragmatic point of view tends to compensate for

⁸ Whether Conchis's version of these incidents is true or not is never definitely established.

Nicholas's romantic and unrealistic approach to life. If he had been able to recognize the complementarity of their two different personalities from the onset of their affair much suffering on both their parts might have been avoided.

Following this narrative Conchis presents Nicholas with dramatizations of the incidents which he has related. In this way is he introduced to Lily/Julie. Of course Nicholas falls hopelessly in love with this romantic figure who is an extension of him -- a character in a literary setting; even as contemporary Julie she appeals to him because of their similar backgrounds and interests, their identity. It is the penetration of Lily/Julie's "mystery" -- the personification of his own selfishness -- which finally disintoxicates Nicholas from his craving for her and enables him to recognize Alison for what she truly is -- the salt of the earth. Alison can see the relationships between objects whereas Nicholas can only see the objects; therefore when he stoops to pick up the fragments of the broken plate he perceives the "missing" link which in fact is not missing, but merely unseen. He perceives "relationship" and the truth of the dictum "Thou shalt not commit pain."

The second important episode which Conchis tells Nicholas is that concerning his mentor, de Deukans. De Deukans was a rich man possessed by the idea of collection. Though Conchis could see his mistake (misplaced values) he was nevertheless enchanted by de Deukans's magnificent chateau, Givray-le-Duc, and therefore unable to act rationally. At his death de Deukans left Conchis a fortune and a question: "Utram bibis? Aquam an uinum? Which are you drinking?"

The water or the wave?" (p. 183). "Nicholas, of course, was trying to drink the wave, unable to see the life-giving quality of the water of life which forms the wave, unable to see the relationship. Nicholas is too concerned with form--he does not understand how hollow form can be if the content is worthless. He lives his own life in accordance with a search for form but fails to realize that only a meaningless existence results from separating movement, vitality, and feeling from appearance. One must integrate rather than dissect.

This idea is developed in the third narrative which Conchis relates to Nicholas. It is the story of his meeting with Henrik Nagaard of Seidvarre, a fanatic Jansenist who lived in isolation waiting for God. Conchis tells Nicholas that until this point in his life he had tended to classify the things of life in a scientific and rational manner. When he caught a glimpse of Henrik calling to God he realized that he was seeing "something of such power, such mystery, that it explained all" (p. 286) an experience beyond the scope of science and reason. Conchis began to regard reality no longer as a passive entity but one of "mysterious vigor, new forms, new possibilities" (p. 287). The message which Nicholas is to glean from this seems to be that of participation: feel, act, live! Trust that which cannot be qualified or quantified--discover. Conchis had said earlier that he envied Nicholas because he had all his discoveries before him. He now urges him to accept some things on faith and learn from them rather than discard all experience which cannot be observed and verified, that is, accept the potency of mystery.

The final significant story of Conchis's life is that of his experience with the Germans in Greece during the Second World War. He was given a choice, as appointed mayor of Phraxos, to beat three guerillas to death for shooting a few German soldiers, or to stand by and watch eighty of the village men, hostages, be machine-gunned. Conchis was aided in his decision by a Greek guerilla, who after having his tongue burned to the roots at the hands of the Nazis was still able to utter one word--eleutheria, freedom:

And the word was in his eyes, in his being, totally in his being. What did Christ say on the cross? Why has thou forsaken me? What this man said was something far less sympathetic, far less pitiful, even far less human, but far profounder. He spoke out of a world the very opposite of mine. 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 unmalleable, the essence, the beyond logic, beyond civilization, beyond history. He was not God, because there is no God we can know. But he was a proof that there is a God that we can never know. He was the final right to deny. To be free to choose....He was every freedom, from the very worst to the very best....something that passed beyond morality but sprang out of the very essence of things--that comprehended all, the freedom to do all, and stood against only one thing--the prohibition not to do all.

(pp. 394, 395)

Conchis dropped the gun and stood by the guerilla, thus announcing and defending the freedom to choose.

For Nicholas this story is of utmost importance: it illustrates the paradoxically cruel yet necessary freedom which is the heritage of every human being. Nicholas will have to accept and cope with the cruelty of life if he is ever to be free. What Conchis is trying to do for Nicholas is equip him with enough appreciation of life to enable him to choose freely and correctly--to

exercise fruitful power, power not devoid of responsibility to himself and to others; to survive.

In summary, each of these four episodes which Nicholas must listen to and others with which he is confronted in the form of the masque, represent an effort to teach Nicholas the lessons, components, and values of life--love, harmony, faith, and freedom. "Not all powers have to be discovered; some have to be regained," (p. 186).

Another important concept which runs through The Magus which is integral to understanding the significance of the structure of the novel and integral to the structure of understanding is that of space. In Part I of The Magus Nicholas is in Britain floundering around after his graduation from Oxford. He realizes that he is not achieving anything very worthwhile nor is he coming to know himself any better. He feels he needs "a new land, a new race, a new language," (p. 15) and a new mystery so he accepts a teaching post in Greece. He falls in love with Greece, declaring "it was like a journey into space," (p. 45). He had been deceiving Alison with a woman for months before he left London. That woman was Greece. The physical distance which he put between himself and his life in London allows for a new perspective. Once in Greece his initial isolation caused him to re-evaluate his aspirations. He writes poems about Greece and likes to consider himself a member of the literati; dreams of literary success, and allows these hopes and dreams to dominate his reason for being. But the unflawed natural world which was Greece made him see that his poetry was not great. This realization plunged him into a state of

nothingness which short of suicide (contemplated but rejected) provides a basis upon which to rebuild. It is in this frame of mind that he meets Conchis and presents himself as a *fabula rasa* on which the magus can inscribe truth.

Nicholas describes the light of the Mediterranean as being so strong that it reveals the corrosion of his old self. It is not the muted light of northern turf but so beautiful, all-present that the relationship of man to land can only be one of love-hatred, one of passion. What could be ignored in England could only be bared in Greece--Nicholas's self is stripped to the essentials and the lack of substance is devastating.

We may see Conchis as the personification of the truth-telling quality which Nicholas intuitively feels Greece possesses. He is the medium through which Nicholas is to learn about the "mystery of reality"; two seemingly contradictory terms but the only paradox which is an inclusive definition of life. The name Conchis suggests the conch shell--one which when held to the ear is said to imitate the sound of the rushing sea, itself a symbol of life. In another sense "Conchis" indicates the state of awareness or consciousness which is precisely the state which he effects in Nicholas.

So it is in the land of myth, Greece, that Nicholas undergoes his ordeal, descends into the depths and emerges victorious (in fact the name Nicholas, comes from the Greek word for victory). Nicholas must exile himself from his motherland, England, in order to gain understanding of himself. The bourgeois hero must pursue his quest for truth; this journey does eventually lead him back to his home and to Alison (Alison is a variation of Alice which comes

from the Greek for truth). But it is only when returned to his native soil that he is finally free to grasp what is rightfully his--power over himself. Significantly, Nicholas travels from England to Phraxos and back again. Both England and Phraxos are islands, which confirms Conchis's statement that "Every one of us is an island" (p. 141), islands connected by relationships but essentially isolated. It is, however, the relationships between people or "islands" which make the basic isolation bearable and give meaning to existence. Until Nicholas gains this insight he remains an insular being alienated from himself and others.

In yet another sense does the idea of space play an important role in the novel--inner or psychic space. Conchis, soon after meeting Nicholas, tells him that he is psychic, information at which Nicholas scoffs. Despite his attitude toward "psychics" he is so intrigued by Conchis that he permits himself to be used as a subject for an experiment in hypnosis. This passage seems to be a central one in the novel as it deals with the key concepts of mystery, power, freedom, and awareness. Contrary to Nicholas's expectations, Conchis succeeds in hypnotizing him. The experience which Nicholas describes is an exploration of a dimension which may best be described as a journey into inner space. The sensation which he has is that of a disembodied spirit "looking down into space, as one looks down a well," (*Italics mine*) (p. 224).

I remember very clearly this sense, this completely new strange perceiving of the star as a ball of white light both breeding and needing the void around it; of, in retrospect, a related sense that I was exactly the same, suspended in a dark void. I was watching the star and the star was watching me. We were poised,

exactly equal weights, if one can think of awareness as a weight, held level in balance. This seemed to endure and endure, I don't know how long, two entities equally suspended in a void, equally opposite, devoid of any meaning or feeling. There was no sensation of beauty, of morality, of divinity, of physical geometry; simply the sensation of the situation. (*Italics mine.*)
(p. 224)

This passage may be interpreted as an extension of the ideas of isolation and relationship mentioned above but instead of being intellectually comprehended they are actualized in this new dimension of experience which Nicholas is undergoing. He is forced to feel the truth of the ideas. The concept of balance is another very relevant concern in The Magus, as Conchis very early on in the novel tells Nicholas that:

There comes a time in each life like a point of fulcrum. At that time you must accent yourself. It is not anymore what you will become. It is what you are and always will be. You are too young to know this. You are still becoming. Not being.

(p. 105)

Again he makes Nicholas feel the "rightness" of this point of fulcrum in order that when it occurs he will be able to recognize the appropriateness of the attenuating circumstances. At Bourani Nicholas experiences

...a new self-acceptance, a sense that I had to be this mind and this body, its vices and its virtues, and that I had no other chance or choice. It was an awareness of a new kind of potentiality, one very different from my old sense of the word which had been based on the illusions of ambition. The mess of my life, the selfishness and false turnings and the treacheries, all these things could become a source of construction rather than a source of chaos, and precisely because I had no other choice. It was certainly not a moment of new moral resolve, or anything like it; I suppose our accepting what we are must always inhibit our being what we ought to be; for all that, it felt like a step forward--and upward.

(pp. 159-160)

This passage indicates that Nicholas, at Bourani, feels a sense of balance approaching his life. The point of fulcrum will not be reached until he has learned and suffered and pondered the meaning of his experience at the hands of Conchis, but it will be attained. This passage prefaces Nicholas's ultimate self-acceptance and concomitant freedom--his coming into being.

Nicholas finally achieves his balance (being) on the last page of the novel when he understands his relationship to Alison and the practical reason behind the godgame:

And suddenly the truth came to me, as we stood there, trembling, searching, at our point of fulcrum. There were no watching eyes. The windows were as blank as they looked. The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre. They had told her it was a theatre, and she had believed them, and I had believed her. To bring us to this--not for themselves, but for us. I turned and looked at the windows, the facade, the pompous white monumental figures. (Italics mine.)

(p. 694)

To continue with Nicholas's psychic experience we find that from the sensation of situation and balance he progresses to an awareness "of having power to attract and power to receive light," (Italics mine) (p. 225). From this he enters a state which "seemed to reveal something deeply significant about being; I was aware of existing, and this being aware of existing became more significant than the wind" (p. 225) which he felt "from all directions. Words become barriers to expression of the actual experience--there was no meaning only being. The intensity of interaction pervaded all else until "the endless solitude of the one, its total enislement from all else, seemed the same thing as the total interrelationship of the all," (p. 225). Harmony seems to be the only word to approximate the feelings described above.

The final stage of this psychic journey is described in the following way:

I felt like...[I] was in a situation in which [I] was infinitely significant. A condition of acute physical and intellectual pleasure, a floating suspension, a being perfectly adjusted and related; a quintessential arrival. An inter cognition.

At the same time a parabola, a fall, an articulation; but the transience, the passage, had become an integral part of the knowledge of the experience. The becoming and the being were one. (p. 226)

The last description of Nicholas's exploration of inner space may be directly related to his entire experience at Bourani. The ordeal which he undergoes, the masque, and Conchia's tutelage may be likened to an exorcism of his previous ways of interpreting life and his own personal experiences. At Bourani Nicholas is involved in the process of becoming a wiser and better human being. He does not, however, achieve this state of being until the gods have absconded and he is placed in a situation of hazard where he must independently exercise his own free will (with respect to Alison). The sense of peace and harmony which characterize this psychic experience prefigures the wholeness of Nicholas's being after he has fulfilled the conditions of his election. He will be able to act (emit power) with responsibility in a universe in which he feels to be an integral part.

In The Magus Cowles creates a spatially symbolic setting. Nicholas chooses to pursue the existential quest on an explicitly bounded island of the self. The island of Phraxos may be viewed as a symbol of Nicholas's interior space, which must be defined and understood before he can ever go outside himself and establish

a truly human relationship with another person.⁹ Nicholas's very first introduction to Conchis is an invitation to explore this interior space. On a secluded beach in a book of poetry planted by Conchis, Nicholas finds, especially marked for him, these lines from T.S. Eliot's "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.
(p. 65)

Exploring the island is a spatial metaphor for exploring the self. Once Nicholas can understand the secrets of Bourani (which means skull) and appreciate the motives of Conchis, then his own new consciousness will qualify him to return to the world of human relationships, first with Jojo and finally with Alison. In order to discover the secrets of Conchis Nicholas must descend into the "Earth" (the costume room), the subterranean depths, and emerge with knowledge, again a journey into hidden "spaces".

There are numerous instances in the text which further support and illustrate Fowler's use of spatial imagery, the most important of which seems to be in the succession of closed rooms: Nicholas's apartment in London, his room at the school, the underground room at Bourani, and the cistern where he is tried and disintegrated; juxtaposed with open spaces: the beach on Phraxos, Mount Parnassus, and Regent's Park. In each of these confined areas Nicholas experiences loneliness, or despair and his relationship with others in these rooms are stifled, contrived, and inauthentic. In the open spaces, however, the accompanying metaphor

of light sweeps over Nicholas and he feels alternately and simultaneously free and happy. As Fowles says in so many words in each of his novels: "Real life exists only in those moments when the otherness of the other" (p. 50) is defeated. The only time Nicholas achieves this state is with Alison on Parnassus when they make love outdoors. Such are the moments one knows only death can obliterate. At this time he does love Alison but the moment is marred by an emotional dishonesty which he is afraid to admit even to himself. When they meet again in Regent's Park the promise of the "anagram made flesh" is fulfilled--the "better part" of Nicholas triumphs.

The anagram referred to above is much more significant than it appears to be at first glance. When Nicholas and Alison are in the cabin on Parnassus she says to Nicholas:

"That reminds me. A crossword clue. I saw it months ago. 'Ready?' I nodded. 'All mixed up, but the better part of Nicholas'...six letters."

(p. 252)

Of course the answer is ALISON, a name which uses most of the letters in NICHOLAS ("the better part of Nicholas") and as we find at the end of the novel her qualities (especially honesty) are those which sustain Nicholas and those which he needs to complement his own (Alison brings out "the better part" in Nicholas). It's also interesting to consider the fact that two other words may be formed from NICHOLAS: CHAOS and CONCHIS (although for the latter one must add an extra "c"). The former is indeed the equivalent of the literal meaning of the phrase "all mixed up" and reflects as well Nicholas's frame of mind throughout the novel. Conchis, on the other hand, is the instrument through which Nicholas will quell the chaos

in his soul, become a responsible self-conscious being, and "victoriously" (Nicholas) embrace the "truth" (Alison). Though this contortion of words may merely seem like a literary variation of the game Scrabble, the deliberateness with which the author named his characters and the anagram episode seem to be confirmed by the last paragraph in the novel--"An anagram made flesh". The symbolism should not be ignored.

One important influence on The Magus is that of the Marquis de Sade's Les Infortunes de la Vertu. The epigraph that opens Part I--"Un débauché de profession est rarement un homme pitoyable" (One who is lousy in his profession is rarely a man to be pitied) prefigures the characterization of Nicholas Urfe in this short London-based introductory section. He is a cynical, professional rake, and like de Sade's libertine, he is unable to love Alison. The epigraph for the second section of the novel is a description of torturers mangling the loins of a miserable, helpless victim. This description prefigures Conchis's story of the violent deaths of the Greek freedom fighters at the hands of the Nazis and it stands at the beginning of a section in which successive descriptions of atrocity and violence culminate with Nicholas standing alone in a Sade-like situation. The de Sade influence may reflect satire on rationalism or reason. By mere imposition of will autonomy is destroyed. Knowledge and imagination can render this a fruitful process just as Conchis manipulates Nicholas through suffering to freedom. The juxtaposition of the tenets of Conchis's Society of Reason with his stories of inhuman action on the part of the Nazis causes Nicholas long-dead feelings to be awakened until he acquires

a sense of morality founded upon intuitive understanding of the feelings of others as much as rational process. Eventually Nicholas must choose between tearing Lily's back with the cat (which would culminate Conchis's history of twentieth-century violence in a temporally immediate act) or affirming his own and his prospective victim's humanity by denying the necessity of subhuman violence. The third de Sade epigraph is a definition of the purpose of philosophy. Philosophy should, de Sade wrote, illuminate the relationship between man and that providence which rules the world so haphazardly. It should trace a "plan of conduct" by which man could interpret the demands made upon him by his contemporary world. Fittingly, then, in Part III of The Magus Nicholas tries to understand the meaning of his experiences in the first two parts of the novel and finally apply this new-found, "philosophical" knowledge to his own personal existence.¹⁰ The final epigraph, "cras amet qui numquam amavit / quique amavit cras amet" (Tomorrow, he who has never loved will love, / he who has loved, tomorrow will love") affirms the transcendent importance of love and gives a note of hope to all that has gone before.

The symbolic significance of the note at the beginning of the novel is also important to an understanding of the novel as a whole, especially the mention of lilies and roses and the "magus, magician, or Juggler, the caster of dice." The Tarot cards immediately come to mind as a possible interpretive vehicle, and rightly so. The number of cards in the Tarot deck, seventy-eight, is the same as the number of chapters in the novel. The twelfth card in

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 21-22.

the deck is the "hanged man" whose omen is "life in suspension". In Chapter 12 Nicholas remarks, "I felt myself in suspension, waiting without fear for some impulse to drive me on" (n. 73). Nicholas later identifies himself as the hanged man. Lily arranges matchsticks into the Roman numeral twelve. The "four elements of the natural life" appear throughout the action. Bourani is on the edge of the WATER and the underground retreat is called EARTH. One remembers the FIRE at Civray-le-Duc and the burning leaves at the end of the novel. Alison is an AIR hostess and Nicholas is very aware of wind blowing at him from all directions during his experience with hypnosis.¹¹ It is also interesting to note Conchis's reference to "Death and water," (n. 80) when he tells Nicholas that Bourani means "skull". The old self must be purged (die) before the new self can be reborn (water). Conchis, the magician or magus, is also Aristos, one of the "elect" in Fowles's terms. Thus the Aristos "...knows the Many [Nicholas, average man] are ...under the spell of the conjuror, seemingly unable to do anything but serve as material for the conjuror's tricks; and he knows that the true destiny of man is to become a magician himself."¹² According to Waite, the roses and lilies which lie in front of the magus show the culture of aspiration. In traditional symbolism the lily represents chastity and the rose sexual love. Thus Nicholas's ordeal at Bourani is intricately bound up in his encounters with Lily/Julie and Rose/June. He tends to be somewhat

¹¹ Delma E. Presley, "The Quest of the Bourgeois Hero: An Approach to Fowles' The Magus," Journal of Popular Culture 6: pp. 394, 395.

¹² Fowles, The Aristos, p. 213.

fascinated by chastity yet persists in sexually exploiting others (Alison). The floral symbols of love at Bourani help him to recognize the true value of Alison's love when he returns to England.

In The Magus Fowles again aligns himself with the Celtic romance. He shipwrecks the protagonist on a symbolic island of the self. During his stay on that island Nicholas must explore every part of it, descend beneath its surface placidity to learn its secrets. He must define the real existential life of the seemingly unconcerned island of the modern self. As in the Celtic romance the surface calm of Phraxos hides the turbulence of the masque and that of Nicholas's soul. Also the forest of the Celtic and the castle of the Gothic romance are recreated in the woods of Phraxos and Conchis's villa, both places where eerie events occur and mystery is encountered. The Magus deals very centrally with the relationship between narrator, character, and reader. The Gothic plot serves as a metaphorical vehicle for the "godgame" played out between Conchis, the enigmatic maker of masques, and Nicholas Urfe, participant in the mysteries. It is Nicholas's puzzlement and expectations we share as readers and are foiled by the fictions which the omnisciently authorial Conchis weaves. The gothic is a deeply theatrical genre and in The Magus the properties of suspense and sensation are brought out into the open but Nicholas's rationalist sensibility which sustains a running commentary on the dramatic action together with an analytical forecast of what will happen next always proves to be one step behind Conchis's godgame. But as Conchis warns Nicholas with his story of de Deukans, there is no real answer to the mystery. The godgame is therapeutic and remains

a metaphor for an alternative imaginative order which Nicholas is to create when he returns to social reality. Conchis is both wise man and deceiver and the magus or trickster figure is emblematic of the mysterious otherness of reality, which can never be possessed. The female magus figure, Lily de Seitas, is endowed with considerable powers of fascination and possession. Together they constitute everything that a man can never get the better of and never finish coping with. The trickster figure affords a glimpse into the primitive animistic conception of the world as a deterministic universe which the individual most commonly experiences as coincidence.¹³ Though Conchis himself is portrayed as an existentialist he presents Nicholas with the aforementioned conception of the universe not only in contrast to the existentialist view but also to alert him to the part played by hazard in determining the outcome of certain events, an observation which can be questioned but not denied.

The motifs of collecting, evolution, mirrors, mask, and masque are present throughout The Magus and in Fowles's other novels as well. A consideration of these motifs helps to define the themes of The Magus and relates them to ~~these motifs~~ The Collector and The French Lieutenant's Woman thus illustrating the unity of Fowles's fiction while at the same time demonstrating the scope of his luxurious imagination.

The most overt expression of collecting, its meaning and effects, in The Magus is associated with Conchis's story of de Dukans, the epitome of all collectors, a collector of collections.

¹³ Sinns, pp. 321, 326, 330.

His chateau, Givray-le-Duc, is nothing more than a vast museum, organized in such a way as to provide de Deukans with certain ambiences in which he could live, closed off from the socio-economic reality of the world. He bathes himself in complete pleasure, a selfishness oblivious to the needs of others, and exists purely to gratify himself. "For him the most painful social confrontations and contrasts, which would have stabbed the conscience of even the vilest nouveau riche, were stingless, without significance except as vignettes, as interesting discords, as pleasurable because vivid examples of the algedonic [sic?] polarity of existence," (p. 174). His collection has totally extinguished any moral instinct which he might have possessed. As Fowles-Conchis says, "The object finally possesses the possessor," (174).

Thus in a brief narrative Fowles can aptly sum up his ideas about the evil of collecting--it is a worship of the dead. Yet, de Deukans's redeeming quality was that he was a poet and the legacy which he left to Conchis, an image in the form of an existential question, "Which are you drinking? The water or the wave?" is a statement which helps to give meaning to Conchis's and later, Nicholas's life. Just as de Deukans collects objects Nicholas would collect women. The latter is particularly unforgivable as he would treat his conquests not as human beings but as the most dispensable objects. Nicholas is forced to see the error of his ways when he is used by Lily/Julie just as he had used others. During the disintoxication he is confronted with the blue movie, anonymous bodies having sex, spliced with intimate scenes of Alison and himself on Parnassus. As contrast, the living Goya, Julie and

Joe make love, humanly, as two people in love. He comes to see the distinction that must be made: he is to stop collecting pornographic relationships, confrontations in which one person must lose due to the irresponsible use of power by another, and start to imitate the purity and humanity of art. Disembodied beauty, such as the volume left for Nicholas's perusal concerning the pectoral Beauties of Nature, is a desecration of life. The last time that Lily de Seitas meets Nicholas is in a museum. This is a subtle reminder to Nicholas that he must dissociate himself from the collectors of this world and seek to be a creator in the true sense of the word, that is, he must live authentically, in imitation of no one but himself.

The concept of evolution is a motif present in The Magus. The very process of Nicholas's journey into self-recognition at Bourani is an evolutionary one. Growth and change (both aspects of evolution) are integral to his final state of autonomous behaviour.

The first mention of evolution occurs when Nicholas discovers he will never be a great poet: "I felt no consolation in this knowledge, but only a red anger that evolution could allow such sensitivity and such inadequacy to co-exist in the same mind," (p.54). Nicholas is conscious of the importance of evolution and the part it plays in universal existence. Conchis continues the motif of evolution when he describes the face of his commanding officer: "The last smile of a stage of evolution," (p. 124). There are several other references to "species" and the idea of adaptation to environment. Yet the most damning

statement of all with regard to Nicholas and evolution, comes from the psychologists' assessment of his psychological state: "If nothing else he proves the total inadequacy of the confused value judgments and pseudo-statements of art to equip modern man for his evolutionary role," (p. 460). And what is man's evolutionary role? In terms of The Maquis it seems to be an ability to adapt to a rapidly changing and demanding social environment. He must constantly re-evaluate his position in the whole and be able to act in the best interest of himself and others in any given situation. In short, he must become "Aristos". The name of the game is survival of the fittest and this is precisely what Conchis tries to teach Nicholas to do. After his disintoxication Conchis says to Nicholas, "Learn to smile."

...the smile was essentially something cruel; because the freedom that makes us at least partly responsible for what we are is cruel. So that the smile was not so much an attitude to be taken to life as the nature of the cruelty of life, a cruelty we cannot even choose to avoid, since it is human existence....If anything, [learn to smile] meant "Learn to be cruel, learn to be dry, learn to survive."

(p. 479).

The motif of mirrors is continued through The Collector, The French Lieutenant's Woman, and The Maquis. As Conchis says when he first meets Nicholas, "Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn... To live. With things as they are," (p. 95). Metaphorical and literal mirrors play a major part in Nicholas's journey to selfhood. The harsh light of Greece does not lie and Nicholas is repeatedly forced to confront himself after each of his strange encounters with Conchis's masque. At the end

of his ordeal he is unable to live with illusions about himself and his life, so he strips them away in an effort to find and cope with reality. The morning after his psychic experience under the mesmeric power of Conchis he stares at himself in the mirror. One does not stare into a mirror unless one is looking for something, some change, or some feature never seen before.¹⁴

Alison is a mirror for Nicholas, "she was a mirror that did not lie; whose interest in me was real; whose love was real. That had been her supreme virtue: a constant reality," (p. 487). He does not understand this, however, until he has undergone many strange experiences at Bourani, including betrayal by Lily. This realization occurs as he is being transported by ship to his disintoxication and sees a mural painted on the wall of his cabin:

It was a huge black figure, larger than life size, a kind of living skeleton, a Buchenwald figure, lying on its side on what might have been grass, or flames. A gaunt hand pointed down to a little mirror hanging on the wall; exhorting me I suppose, to look at myselfI went and looked in the memento mori mirror.... Alison. I stared at my own dilated eyes in the mirror. Suddenly her honesty, her untreachery--her death--was the last anchor left. If she, if she...I was swept away. The whole of life became a conspiracy. (pp. 439-40)

In this mirror confrontation Nicholas begins to realize the difference between the illusion and the reality of himself. He expresses the hope that Alison is not one of the magician's many mirror illusions. He depends upon the fact of Alison's reality--and when the mirror also appears to be illusory he is thrown back upon the only possible reality--himself. Though he learns that Alison's death is an illusion and that she is actually in league with Conchis, he

¹⁴ Palmer, p. 99.

clings to the belief that her love is the reason for her collaboration and the reality of her love is never questioned.

Lily, too, is a mirror of Nicholas's own selfishness, and one which before the masque is over shatters into a thousand ambiguous pieces. As he later describes her to Alison as "a type of encounter" (p. 602), she is magnetic and at the same time necessary to his own self-evaluation: "Narcissus-like I saw my own face reflected deep in her own indecision, her restlessness," (p. 269).

The telling question: Which are you drinking? The water or the wave? is not just a precept, but yet another mirror.¹⁵ When Nicholas at last sees that he has been drinking the wave and has been oblivious to the water he grasps one of his many errors and misconceptions. The water-wave image defines the necessity of unity and flux, freedom and involvement, both within the individual man and among all men. How can you tell the dancer from the dance? Nicholas at last sees that he must integrate himself into the dance of life and accept his multi-faceted existence for what it is.

Conchis himself seeks to acquaint Nicholas with life as it should be lived by inducing him to identify with the episodes from his own life which he recounts. The task for Nicholas is that of extracting the kernel of truth from each story and making it his own by incorporating it into his own life and living the truth of it.

Once Nicholas has been exposed before these mirrors and sees his distorted image reflected back to him he yearns to live

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 100.

a genuine and natural life.

The mask/masque metaphor is an interesting and important leit-motif. Nicholas's progress is marked, like that of Charles Smithson, of The French Lieutenant's Woman, by a shedding of masks.

When we first meet Nicholas he is a young man who plays at being a poet and cultivates loneliness as a ploy to use on trusting young women. He succeeds in fooling most, but any experience or relationship in which he participates is unsatisfactory because he is necessarily distanced by the mask of loneliness and cynicism. No one can penetrate it, except perhaps Alison. Conchis recognizes Nicholas's masks and contrives to rid him of them. The Magus is riddled with references to metaphorically masked faces. Because Bourani is a place of mystery, and mystery in turn may exercise the limits of the imagination, everything is permitted under the guise of the mask or masque: "Nothing is true; everything is permitted," (p. 477) is not just pure licence but has a self-conscious moral purpose--to teach Nicholas value. The masks that Nicholas encounters, other than his own, may be perceived also as mirrors, a fitting repartee to his own inauthenticity. Because he is so adept at masking his own feelings, actions, and motives, Nicholas is very aware of others' use of this same defense. At first the mystery of what lies behind the mask intrigues him, later it becomes annoying (particularly in the case of Lily), under other circumstances he fears what lies behind the mask: "the reason behind the appearance....The eternal source of all fear, all horrors, all real evil, man himself," (p. 448). It is only after Nicholas has learned how to face life that he is able to discard

his own mask and face the reality of others. This occurs in the final episode of the novel when he is reunited with Alison.

The other masque which is integral to The Magus consists of Conchis's dramatizations that accompany the story of his life. Because the masque is a metaphor for life, all its components are highly symbolic. It is fitting that Conchis, the magus or magician should use such a method to lead Nicholas, a graduate in English, to existential awareness. Because Nicholas is a student of literature, very few of the details are wasted on him, they punctuate his enlightenment and enhance the experience for him. Nicholas tries throughout The Magus to edge his personal experience "out of the moral world into the aesthetic where it is easier to live with" (p. 363), but this sort of self-indulgence has no place in Powles's or Conchis's world. By practical illustration Conchis shows Nicholas that no matter how real the masque may appear, it is still an illusion, that art is always an approximation of life, not life itself. Because Nicholas is so attracted by the "literary" he even wants to participate in the masque, to play himself. He wants to believe that Julie is the girl she pretends to be and acts on that premise--his first and most fatal mistake. The climax of Conchis's masque occurs just prior to the trial scene. Here Nicholas is attired as an initiate and the so-called psychologists parade before him in their elaborate costumes from myth and magic. This is the last time that Nicholas is to be presented with a deliberately contrived connotative scene. At the end of the trial he perceives himself as Iago. But this is just one of the many roles in which he has been cast. Until Nich-

olas comes to understand that each carefully detailed presentation is equally applicable and has been designed to prod his thinking, the masque is wasted on him. Each scene represents a certain kind of confrontation with the past, present, and future, staged to bring Nicholas along the path to freedom. Conchis manipulates Nicholas by subtly having him personalize each confrontation of the masque. Perhaps the most inclusive analysis is that given by Nicholas when he has had time to "recollect in tranquillity":

The more I read the more I began to reidentify the whole situation at Bourani--or at any rate the final situation--with Tartarus. Tartarus was ruled by a king Hades (or Conchis); a Queen, Persephone, bringer of destruction (Lily)--who remained "six months with Hades in the infernal regions and spent the rest of the year with her mother Demeter [Lily de Seitas] on earth." There was also a supreme judge in Tartarus--Minos (the presiding "doctor" with a beard?); and of course there was Anubis-Cerberus, the black dog with three heads (three roles?). And Tartarus was where Eurydice went when Orpheus lost her.

(p. 531)

There is ample proof for such identification: Lily de Seitas glosses Urfe as "Orfe"--short for Orpheus--and he does return victoriously to earth. Conchis refers to Bourani as his "domaine" just as a king might refer to his kingdom; Lily almost does destroy Nicholas by luring him to fall in love with her; and Joe, who plays the part of Anubis-Cerberus is an American Negro, black like the mythical dog.

According to Cowles,

Unknowning, or hazard is as vital to man as water....
Mystery, or unknowing, is energy. As soon as mystery is explained, it ceases to be a source of energy. If a question deep enough there comes a point where an-

were, if answers could be given, would kill....In fact, since 'God' is unknowable, we cannot dam the spring of basic existential mystery. 'God' is the energy of all questions and questing; and so the ultimate source of all action and volition.

(The Aristos p. 28)

Thus it is fitting that The Magus should be dedicated to Astarte, the goddess of mystery and be described by Fowles as "a fable about the relationship between man and his conception of God,"¹⁶ Lily de Seitas explains to Nicholas that Conchis's masque is called the godgame "because there are no gods. And it is not a game," (p. 575). By manipulating Nicholas as one might imagine an omnipotent god would, he makes Nicholas suffer for the sake of freedom and truth. Madame de Seitas tells Nicholas that "The godgame is ended," (p. 575). When he tries to ask her further questions she quotes Conchis, "An answer is always a form of death," (p. 575). Nicholas's acceptance of this proves that he has come to value and appreciate mystery and to accept Conchis's statement that "The most important questions about life can never be answered by anyone except oneself," (p. 149).

Conchis makes Nicholas aware of the part that hazard plays in everyday life by having him risk his life with the loaded dice. He is the possessor of privileged information yet baits Nicholas-- "Think. In a minute from now you could be saying, I risked death. I threw for life, and I won life. It is a very wonderful feeling. To have survived," (p. 121). This episode underscores the trickery of the magus, alerts Nicholas to the major role of chance in the life of every individual, and introduces the game motif. Life,

¹⁶ Walter Allen, "The Achievement of John Fowles," Encounter 11 (1966): 55.

like the masque, is a game, one is born with certain potentialities, the dice of hazard are thrown and the play causes one to win or lose.

Conchis carries the weight of the novelist's responsibility as either omniscient narrator (relating stories of the past) or as dramatist (choreographing the scenes of the masque). Conchis reconstructs the past, complete with seventeenth-century murders, Victorian virgins, and Nazi sadists, brings the myths of Isis and Anubis-Cerberus to life, and manipulates the lives and loves of people in the present as if they were so many puppets on strings. The object of Conchis's godgame is self-realization in the victim, the audience of one, or whatever role Nicholas is playing at the time.

Aesthetic similes distance one from the reality of a person or scene. Conchis uses art as a ~~stimulant to consciousness~~ and introspection: he envisions himself as an artist of life, a master of ambiguity, one of the élite who has passed through his apprenticeship to become a maestro responsible for growth in others.
17

The formal experimentation of *Fowles's* play-within-a-novel emphasizes the artificiality of one form (the play) and heightens the reality of the other (the novel). He is adding a third dimension to the Platonic definition of the purpose of art which he affirmed earlier. He is saying that not only must art delight and instruct, but it must also involve.
18
Though Conchis says that "the novel is no longer an art form" (p. 12) *Fowles* proceeds to

17 Palmer, p. 59.

18 Ibid.

prove in The Magus that the novel can be resurrected if properly handled and written to embrace new concepts of form and content.¹⁹

Art must draw human life into aesthetic consciousness and subsequently, participation. Conchis's whole intention in mounting his elaborate play-within-a novel is first to seduce Nicholas into enjoyment of the unique theatre experiment that is being performed only for him; second, to teach Nicholas of the eternally expanding possibilities for moral action and moral choice that exist in the life of every human being; and, finally, to encourage Nicholas to enter into the play, place his own mind and body into dramatized situations in which he must make moral choices, and correlate those choices to physical action.

Once, however, Nicholas enters into the play he realizes that Conchis is staging more than a private masque. The metatheatrical play artistically represents the bigger play in which we "are all actors and actresses on the vast stage of the world," (p. 170).

The intention behind Fowles's creation of Conchis's professionally mounted metaplay is to bring together the world of art and life. It seems to be a reciprocal relationship in which art is composed of the stuff of life and a thoughtfully lived life would imitate the beauty of art. As Nicholas says when he first arrives in Greece, "Goodness and beauty may be separated in the north, but not in Greece," (p. 53); thus Conchis's masque inherently contains a moral dimension to be emulated by Nicholas

¹⁹ It may be argued that The Magus is a romance and therefore, in the strict sense, not a novel.

once he has absorbed and perceived the art-life relationship. Greece is also the home and site for myths which represent explanations for the apparently unfathomable mysteries of life. Conchis's myths and magical variations of myth are of universal significance and in some ways echo Jung's conceptions of the collective unconscious and archetypal behaviour. The hovering influence of the Tarot reflects a similar concern.

There is a difference between Nicholas's desire to live a novel and Conchis's re-creation of life through drama. Nicholas wants to do the literary thing for its own sake while Conchis wants to illustrate the truth of life via the medium of art. When Conchis says that words are for fact not fiction and that the latter is the worst form of connection what he is really saying is that Nicholas's understanding of literature is false as he himself admits:

...We didn't realize that the heroes, or anti-heroes, of the French existentialist novels we read were not supposed to be realistic. We tried to imitate them, mistaking metaphorical descriptions of complex modes of being for straightforward prescriptions of behavior.

(p. 13)

It is ultimately Nicholas's experience with Conchis which makes him aware that the writing of a novel is in fact, like taking part in the godgame. As long as everyone involved--the novelist, the characters, the reader--is capable of acting freely, then the novel can come alive. At one point in The Magus Nicholas actually characterizes Conchis as a "novelist sans novel, creating with people not words," (p. 229). Later, Nicholas envisions himself as a novelist and begins to understand the meaning of Conchis's state-

ments about dead art forms:

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 behavior--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. (p. 487)

This particular novelist, Nicholas, can write only dead novels because he has cut his real life off from his art and has taken away the freedom of his central character, his living self. His life, which he orchestrates at arm's length, is merely a dead novel. As a novelist-god he imposes an essence upon his central character, himself, and thus that character cannot exist. Nicholas, the novelist, is creating exactly the kind of dead, false art that Conchis has described: Nicholas's dead novel becomes also his dead life. 20

In The Macus Fowles seeks to integrate art and life in a way which is meaningful for himself and his readers. By creating a mystery beyond compare he hopes to immerse the reader in its solution, a much more worthwhile and thought-provoking solution than the usual "who-dunnit" conclusion. The ambiguous ending of The Macus in some ways echoes that of The French Lieutenant's Woman. By avoiding a direct statement of what happens Fowles invites us to participate (like a novelist-god) in the ending of the novel. Fowles once again inserts the authorial voice into the main narrative:

The smallest hope, a hope continuing to exist, is enough for the anti-hero's future; leave him, save 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 center. An ending is no more than a point in a sequence, a snip of the cutting shears. Benedick kissed Beatrice at last; but ten years later? And Elsinore, that following spring?

So ten more days. But what happened in the following years is silence; is another mystery.

(p. 594)

Here Fowles is drawing the reader's attention to the fact that he is writing in a particular genre and partly for this reason will he follow the formula, that is, insofar as it has any meaning for the narrative at hand. It does. But by doing this he does not deaden his novel, he points rather to the future and after having created a world expects the reader to imagine its destiny and that of its characters. He is willing to stop at a certain point in the sequence but not to admit that it is the end.

What has occurred in The Magus is capsulized in Eliot's "Little Gidding"-- Nicholas has returned to know his place for the first time. He has come full circle and at last is in a position to assess his life and start to live productively. Nicholas's end is his beginning. Fowles reiterates his belief in existentialism and creates Nicholas as the exponent of man seeking existential awareness.

Existentialists agree that the proper method of studying man, is a descriptive one, not only in the psychological sense involving the careful reporting of interior states of thought and mood, but also in the metaphysical sense of exploring what is really involved in the human mode of being. Existentialism sees man as best described as a being enmeshed in the external world and com-

pelled to work out his destiny within the temporal network of social relations. There is a certain transcendent aspect of human freedom which extends beyond man's individual limitations and renders him capable of shaping the direction of material instruments and human history and of creating a general meaning for existence. Existentialism insists on man's responsibility for his choice and values, and stresses the anguished dread that accompanies his awareness of freedom and his setting of values. Much existentialist literature concerns the individual's difficulties in society, his unique vision of historical events, and his attempts to either evade or shoulder responsibility.²¹ It is convenient to regard The Collector, The French Lieutenant's Woman, and The Magus respectively, as dealing in depth with each of these problems.

The Magus is also a successful attempt to reorder the structure of the novel. The real magus remains the novelist himself. Fowles's purpose in The Magus seems to be to create a context of illusion and a language of illusion which has the capacity to go beyond theatrical play and display and actually create structural myths. In an age of no-style the creation of such a delicate balance between modern historical experience and illusory mythology is indeed an accomplishment.²²

As with Fowles's other novels The Magus can be compared with one of the pieces in The Ebony Tower, in this case the title

²¹ Funk & Wagnalls Standard Reference Encyclopedia, 1963 ed., s.v. "Existentialism."

²² Malcolm Bradbury, "John Fowles's The Magus," Sense and Sensibility in Twentieth-Century Writing, ed. Brom Weber (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), pp. 37, 38.

novella. The parallels are obvious: Nicholas=David; Conchis=Henry; Lily=the Mouse; Rose=the Freak; and Alison=David's wife+the Freak. The "domaine" of the renegade expatriate painter, Henry Breasley, performs for David a similar function to that which Bourani served for Nicholas. Though the mechanics of the change in both young men differ the heightened self-awareness remains the same. In "The Ebony Tower," David, a successful abstract-painter and critic goes to interview a celebrated English artist, a non-abstract painter of scandalous reputation whose ménage consists of two English women. David is soon attracted to the Mouse and because of this undergoes a "rite de passage" which culminates in the crushing realization that he has arranged his life in such a way as inextricably to trap himself in a prison of decency and humane values, from which hazard, mystery, and the transforming potentiality of sexuality are excluded. This prison is given the image of "the ebony tower" of abstraction. Because David does not surrender to the moment and become involved with the Mouse he returns to his safe but sterile existence. He realizes that he has killed all risks and refused all challenge and thus become an artificial man.²³ Henry, on the other hand, lets nothing stand between self and expression. This was the secret that David learned but could not adopt. And as Fowles says: "he suffered the most terrible of all human deprivations; which is not possession, but knowledge,"²⁴ the knowledge he would have acquired by exploring

²³ Kerry McSweeney, "Black Hole and Ebony Tower," Queen's Quarterly 82 (Spring 1975):154.

²⁴ Fowles, The Ebony Tower, p. 113.

the mystery of Diana (the Mouse, the goddess of love). David has very successfully avoided the temptation hazard put in his path but the price he paid may have been his life. Ironically, he surrenders to abstraction and says that he survived. David's brand of survival is the self emasculated in the shiny blackness of non-mystery, hardly survival at all. Nicholas's survival, that is, assuming he has learned to smile, is the acceptance of constant re-definition of the given situation in terms of responsible power and freedom of the self, something that David sacrifices for the sake of decent mediocrity.

Though the stories are very similar a problem of final interpretation does arise. If one is to regard Nicholas's action at the end of The Magus not as a transfiguration but as the last upward movement, merely a gesture, in an endless cycle, then perhaps David and Nicholas are simply variations of the same being just as "The Ebony Tower" and The Magus are variations on the same theme. But because Nicholas does give Alison a choice, and is honest with her for the first time, as well as the mythological and symbolic nuances which favour a positive interpretation, it seems more likely that "The Ebony Tower" provides an alternate ending to The Magus. Nicholas, had he not benefitted from his apprenticeship to Conchis, might well have been in David's position. The tragedy in such a case is the knowledge that there is an alternative way of life, which though harder to live, is a fuller manifestation of being. In the light of such evidence I think it is fair to say that Nicholas "survives" and David does not.

CHAPTER V

INFLUENCES AND VARIATIONS: THE UNITY OF FOWLES'S FICTION

As mentioned in Chapter I, part of Fowles's literary technique consists of the juxtaposition of past with present works of literature. This method adds a further aspect to his pervasive theme of social, temporal, and spatial confrontation. It also indicates his faith in the ability of the artifact to endure. There are several writers whose influence appears in the work of John Fowles and to whom some mention is due. William Palmer argues convincingly for parallels between The Collector and Samuel Richardson's Clarissa. Plot and epistolary form are similar, but Fowles is writing for a "much less ordered world, and for an age in which evil can and frequently does triumph over justice."¹ Thus Fowles, though sensitive to tradition and alert to artistic catalysts, is creative enough to borrow, adapt, and metamorphose an idea from the past and make it his own. The Magus, Fowles has indicated, was inspired by Alain Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes,² the story of a young visionary bent on an adolescent search for the ideal. In The Magus Fowles skillfully blends illusion and

¹ Palmer, p. 17.

² Fowles, The Ebony Tower, p. 118.

reality until neither the protagonist nor the reader is quite sure which is which. Another possible influence on this novel is Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria Quartet and poem, "Alexandria," which contain numerous references and images strikingly similar to many in The Magus. On the other hand, this may just be coincidental and an example of Fowles's "hazard". The French Lieutenant's Woman probably owes something of its Victorian flavour to the characterization of Charles Dickens and the physical description of Thomas Hardy.

One influence, however, which merits special consideration is that of Shakespeare. Though there are many Shakespearean echoes in the works of John Fowles which are in no way limited to his last play, The Tempest, there are direct references to this play in terms of characterization, conflicts, setting, and concerns which do deserve special attention. The Tempest is a play about the responsible use of power as well as social, temporal, and spatial confrontation. For this reason I would like to point out some similarities between The Tempest and the works of John Fowles as a way of underlining the sense of a unified totality projected by the three novels.

The Tempest, like Fowles's three novels, is a play about history and time. Both recapitulate the story of man bounded by that ever-present reality, time. Jan Kott sees The Tempest as a play in which the history of mankind is acted out once again, but on a deserted island where the madness of it all can be exposed. We see that the struggle for power is not restricted to princes but is the law of the world. Prospero has been cheated out of his

duchy and has re-established his power, through a combination of knowledge and magic, over the island. At the end of the play he is prepared to give up his magic, return to Milan, and reassume his position as ruler there, using only his knowledge as an aid to rule. So, in the course of the play he has come full circle and objectively very little has changed, though like Nicholas of The Magus and Charles of The French Lieutenant's Woman, he has learned from his isolated experience and is prepared to live out the rest of his life in terms of the knowledge he has gained. Fowles seems to share with Shakespeare a similar view of history--a cumulative but very slightly differentiated process which is largely tragic. Throughout a man's life he must strive to know himself, learn about the world, and then assume the power which is his due. The indication in The Tempest that Prospero has indeed learned, occurs when he forgives those who have wronged him and assumes responsibility for the monster, Caliban.

According to Frank Kermode, The Tempest is a play about Art (the world of Prospero) and Nature (the world of Caliban). "Caliban represents ... nature without benefit of nurture; Nature, opposed to an Art which is man's power over the created world and over himself; nature divorced from grace, or the senses without mind....evil natural magic is the antithesis of Prospero's benevolent Art."³ Fowles is also concerned in all three of his novels with the relationship of art to life or nature. His reconciliation lies in a plea for life to imitate good art, which itself is rep-

³ William Shakespeare, The Tempest, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Methuen & Co., 1971), pp. xxiv-xxv.

representative of the truth of reality or life. Art is derived from life and should seek to guide and elevate human aspirations. Art is knowledge and should be employed to enlighten the "Calibanity" of the Many.

All interpersonal relationships within The Tempest mirror each other in that they involve a struggle for power. Likewise, Fowles uses the motif of mirrors to underscore his themes of confrontation, power, and self-awareness. Prospero, at the end of the play, renounces his power over the fate of others. In the same way does Conchis forfeit his power over Nicholas, Sarah hers over Charles, and Fowles his over Nicholas, Sarah, and the reader, in the hope that they are now in a position to assert their newfound power and freedom.

The Collector and The Magus contain overt references to The Tempest. In The French Lieutenant's Woman the influence is less obvious though no less important. It is as if in his growth as an artist Fowles is becoming more subtle in his use of past literature and more confident in the ability of his readers to detect nuances. This, however, does not negate the importance he places upon a confrontation of the past with contemporary literature. Power and its associated problems in the early 1500's were essentially the same as in the 19th. and 20th. centuries. A theme as universal as this does not lose its relevance.

In The Collector there is a designated Caliban--Fred Clegg, and a Miranda--Miranda Grey. Though Fred likes to think of himself as Ferdinand, (to play opposite Miranda) and first tells her that this is his real name, his nature is much closer to that of a

Caliban--a half-creature, of the human species but almost sub-human in character. Like the Shakespearean Caliban he is the bearer of wood and water--Miranda's slave. Miranda plays her role by trying to educate Fred's sensibilities--but as with her Shakespearean counterpart it is to no avail. And just as Miranda's knowledge of the world comes from Prospero so does the contemporary Miranda's attitudes toward life come from a pseudo-Prospero, a father-figure of the London art world, George Paston. The similarities are extended one step further when we realize that the insular environment of The Tempest is represented by the isolated cellar in which Miranda is imprisoned. Both in The Collector and The Magus as well as in The French Lieutenant's Woman Fowles seems to be saying that isolation is necessary if one is to achieve a worthwhile perspective of one's place in the real world.

Before Miranda actually despairs of her plight she reads The Tempest and sees the parallels with her own situation:

Prospero's contempt for him. His knowing that being kind was useless.

Stephano and Trinculo are the football pools. Their wife the money he won.

Not ill, would I. "I tried to guess again," Poor Caliban. But only because he never won the pools.

"I'll be wise hereafter,"

"To know my own world."

O sick, ungodly!

(p. 288)

Seeing her glimpse of Prospero is a veiled cry for sympathy which she feels she is incapable of getting. She knows her place in the world of the novel and is forced to live with it.

The same is true of the other two novels. In The Collector the Collector is a man who is isolated from the world of his fellow men. In The Magus the Magus is a man who is isolated from the world of his fellow men.

merely a variation of the old one and about to be peopled by Calibans--the Many--of whom Fred Clegg, with his collector-consciousness, is a representative. Consequently Miranda dies under the abusive power of this 'new' man. The social confrontation between the masses and the aristos yields a victory for the masses. Perhaps Fowles is warning us that if we hope to prevent such an occurrence we must indeed be brave and act now before it is too late: make a sincere effort to educate the Calibans of the world and free them from their slavery before they rebel.

Just as the characters in The Tempest return once again to Italy so does Nicholas in The Magus return to London and "know his place for the first time," after he has passed through his ordeal on the island of Phraxos. The main action of The Magus, like the entire dramatization of The Tempest, takes place on an island in the Mediterranean where the magician, Conchis, exerts his power over Nicholas. The events of The Tempest actually range over four hours but the island itself, as a setting for the exemplification of historical paradigms, exists outside time. Likewise, Nicholas is on Phraxos for six months but Conchis confronts him with incidents which are not of one time only. Another obvious parallel between the two works is the masque or play-within-a-play of The Tempest and the masque or play-within-a-novel of The Magus, produced and directed by Prospero and Conchis respectively.

In The Magus there are several references to Conchis as Prospero. The first occurs shortly after Nicholas's first visit to Bourani:

2

"Prospero will show you his domaine."
 As we went down the steps to the gravel I said,
 "Prospero had a daughter."
 "Prospero had many things." He turned a look on
 me. "And not all young and beautiful, Mr. Unfe."
 (p. 79)

Of course here the implication is that Caliban was as much a part of Prospero's domaine as Miranda. Like the world which is made up of opposing forces--the good and the evil, the beautiful and the ugly, Conchis is warning Nicholas that his island too, contains both, and that Nicholas must be exposed to both the pleasant and unpleasant in life if he is to attain knowledge and learn to face reality.

Later we are presented with another reference to The Tempest which confirms the multi-faceted life of the island: "Conchis had turned away--to talk with Ariel, who put records on; or with Caliban, who carried a bucket of rotting entrails; or perhaps with ..." (p. 132). Of course Nicholas hopes he is speaking with Miranda but Conchis knows that Nicholas's interest in women is still at the Caliban stage and he perceives his task as that of creating a Ferdinand fit for Miranda, a Nicholas worthy of Alison.

Fowles's use of The Tempest in The French Lieutenant's Woman is much more subtle. Although the themes of power, space, society, and especially history and time are in the foreground in both cases and may fruitfully be compared and although one may see Dr. Grogan as a partial Prospero-figure, there is no specific passage in the novel which refers directly to the play. The endings of both works, however, are worthy of comparison. In The Tempest there are two endings--the first where Prospero frees Ariel

and indicates that he will return to Milan to rule by knowledge alone, and the second, in the epilogue, where Prospero asks the audience to give him his freedom. Similarly, in The French Lieutenant's Woman, the impresario-like author enters into the novel and indicates a third ending, less romantic than the previous one, but on the whole more satisfactory, and asks the audience to indulge him by accepting the third ending. The novelist of The French Lieutenant's Woman parallels Prospero who says: "Now my charms are all o'erthrown, / And what strength I have's mine own" when he speaks of the "atom of faith" on which Charles is likely to build a new life for himself. By accepting Sarah's rejection of him and allowing her to continue her quest for freedom (on one level similar to Prospero's release of Ariel) he should also be allotted his freedom in the minds of the readers. Shakespeare asks for the audience's affirmation of the ending of his play through applause; Fowles invites the audience to affirm his final ending by accepting it and visualizing for Charles a future of authenticity rather than one of romance or despair. Both artists seek to directly involve their audiences in their respective works of art by approaching them on the one-to-one human level bereft of the magic of their trade.

The novels of John Fowles and The Tempest may also be compared in terms of the female figures of each. Fowles creates situations in which his male protagonists are unable to communicate with (Fred and Miranda), do not recognize the worth of (Nicholas and Alison), or are in pursuit of (Charles and Sarah) his major female characters. And in the frustration of these males,

Shakespeare, The Tempest, Epilogue, lines 1-2.

the necessity that they operate in a world where their knowledge is only partial, they act so as to capture (The Collector), desert (The Magus), or betray (The French Lieutenant's Woman) the female they can only dimly comprehend.⁵ Because the male is always limited (in knowledge and experience) he never completely pierces the nature of the attracting female who represents mystery. Though impenetrability is not the case in The Tempest there seems to be a common denominator in the characterization of the heroines of Fowles's novels: intelligence and chastity, the main attributes of Shakespeare's Miranda, and the most commendable ones of the Victorian lady. Though not all of Fowles's characters are literally chaste they do exude such an aura and this in part accounts for much of the attraction (sexual power) they exert over the males who desire them. Miranda of The Collector has Shakespeare's Miranda as her namesake; Lily is a more mature version of Miranda and in her Edwardian role mingles chastity as well as sexual promise; Sarah, the most liberated of all these women, is the female closest to the paradigmatic Miranda in terms of intelligence, chastity, and most importantly, intuitive understanding of others. And like the Shakespearean Miranda, each of these women is in one way or another, socially, temporally, or spatially, isolated from her particular world.

Thus, one may see how Fowles's oeuvre and The Tempest share many elements in common. Fowles's fictional world, like Shakespeare's dramatic one, is inclusive--it deals with society, time, and space in ever-expanding interrelated modes of literary

⁵ Gordin, p. 423.

presentation.

One of the most interesting aspects of Fowles's work is its variety of form and similarity of content. Though plots and technique may vary his message or "view of life" remains the same throughout his fiction. The Aristos presents his personal philosophy; The Collector clearly illustrates social confrontation and in a sense may be heeded as a warning; The Magus expertly depicts man's spatial relationship to his environment; while The French Lieutenant's Woman is most concerned with time and history. Throughout all of these books one is conscious of the importance of power in all human activity. Though each of Fowles's books seems to emphasize a particular aspect of confrontation it would be incorrect to take an exclusivist approach when considering each novel on its own. Fowles creates a cumulative effect--all elements of the designated confrontation are found in each novel with differing degrees of emphasis. The means by which he develops his ideas in his novels, apart from structure, are also very similar. The motifs (of mirrors, masks, evolution, and collecting), light-imagery, Prospero figures (who guide an initiate), isolated settings, light-handed religious symbolism, thematic polarities (the juxtaposition of science, art, and nature), the evocation of literary echoes and myth, and ambiguous or multiple endings recur in all his fiction. At this particular point in time Fowles's works take on a very neat and duly considered arrangement. The Aristos introduces his ideas, his three novels independently and cumulatively develop them, and his latest publication, The Ebony Tower, a collection of short stories and a novella,

reiterates them.

In "A Personal Note" in The Ebony Tower, Fowles tells us that he had originally planned to call these short stories Variations, as he perceived them as variations on previous themes and methods of narrative presentation. On the advice of the first professional readers, who could see very little to connect the volume with his previous books other than "a very private mirage in the writer's mind,"⁶ he changed the title to The Ebony Tower. I do not agree with these first readers and have tried to show direct links and relationships between particular stories from The Ebony Tower and The Collector, The Magus, and The French Lieutenant's Woman. In short, The Ebony Tower pieces act as footnotes to Fowles's novelistic trilogy.

Within The Ebony Tower there seems to be a marked structure. The title novella presents the idea that continued emphasis on abstraction in art as opposed to a concern with tradition and roots is destructive. Such an attitude may even go so far as to infect the individual's life and subsequently prevent him from truly experiencing concrete human pleasures. From a certain point of view one might say that the tyranny of thought threatens one's natural expression of feeling and hence human freedom is endangered. Fowles's image of the ebony tower of abstraction gives way in his final story, "The Cloud" to the ominous gray billow which towers above the heat of the earth. The cloud seems to represent the danger of abstraction--the vaporous, airy, vacuum which offers no solution to the problems which face art and people's lives to-day.

⁶Fowles, The Ebony Tower, p. 117.

What Fowles seems to be saying here is that if our art is to endure and our lives to have any meaning we must not lose touch with concrete objects, our roots, and the artist, like the scientist, must guard against too much theory and not enough practice. Perhaps he is suggesting some sort of compromise, something approaching Henry Breasley's method of coping in "The Ebony Tower" or that of Isobel Dodgson in "The Enigma." Neither of these characters is a paradigm but they are two of the most successful characters in the collection and both have managed to survive. Throughout The Ebony Tower Fowles contrasts those who are able to cope and those who are not, strong ones and weak ones, some lost in abstraction others almost of the earth.

This five-part parable about the abstraction of our times is literally as well as metaphorically filled with blackness. But again, as with most of Fowles's seemingly pessimistic writing this too can be interpreted as a warning rather than despair. Fowles's quintessential theme of freedom is implicit in all he writes. The Ebony Tower is no exception; it is an attempt to alert his reading audience to the various aspects of modern life which challenge the freedom of the individual both as artist and everyday man attempting to lead a creative life. We will only survive if we meet the challenge, preserve our authenticity, examine the conditions of the immediate situation, and finally choose a course of action. David Williams's solution is a "cop-out"--he surrenders to abstraction just as the implicit suicides of John Fielding and Catherine are evidence of inadequacy--they enter a void and become nothing themselves. Perhaps Fowles is saying something as innocuous as try to

reach a happy medium but without succumbing to mediocrity. His final word seems to be "endure" or "live" and is indicated by a sign, that which the ancient Romans used to signify mercy for a prisoner: the cocked thumb. Strategically this answer comes from the middle story of The Ebony Tower, "Poor Koko," further reinforcement for the theory of compromise, but compromise in a positive and responsible sense. Fowles's own solution, as I have attempted to demonstrate, is evident in his "power" as a writer.

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